



First Presbyterian Church

The Mustard Seed

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 2022, Issue 01

First Presbyterian Church, Helena, Montana

January 2022

“It’s the New Year! Let’s Talk About Sin ☹️”

You have heard that on the cross Christ took our sins upon himself, and died for those sins. [Why are we talking about this in January instead of Lent??] Karl Barth, the famous late 20th century theologian, the primary author of The Theological Declaration of Barmen in our Book of Confessions, has a different understanding on this statement. Yes, Jesus Christ died for our sins on the cross, but ...

John the Baptist called on all to come to the Jordan and be baptized; stating “I baptize you with water for repentance” (Matthew 3:11), for repentance from our sin. Earlier Matthew stated, “Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him [John the Baptist] in the Jordan River” (Matt 3:6). Many came. And then Jesus steps into the river to be baptized. Initially John the Baptist protests at this claiming Jesus should be baptizing him, but Jesus counters “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” (Matt 3:15)

Jesus Christ was fully divine, but also fully human - fully human yet without sin. Why would Jesus need to be baptized? What was there for Jesus to repent of if he was without sin? Did Jesus have John baptize him to simply show support for John’s ministry and messages? Was this more or less a show by Jesus, a “Do as I do” kind of statement?

This is where Karl Barth comes in. Karl argues that indeed Jesus Christ needed to be baptized to repent and be washed of sin. Just not *his* sin. Karl Barth’s position is that Jesus did not wait until his crucifixion to take our sins upon himself, but that he did it here, at the Jordan river, before the beginning of his ministry.

Jesus carried our sins into the Jordan to repent for us. Jesus carried our sins into the Jordan for us to be washed clean. Jesus carried our sins into the Jordan to “fulfill all righteousness.”

According to Barth, Jesus did not bear our sins only on the day of his death, but he carried our sins all through his ministry. When he healed the sick and lame he did so under the weight of our sin. When he told others that they were now free - go and sin no more - he had already taken the load of their sin (and yours and mine) upon him. When Jesus taught of God’s grace, mercy, and forgiveness he did so knowing exactly what we need to be forgiven of for he was intimately familiar with our sin, having taken it upon himself before walking into the waters of the Jordan river.



**Rev.
Scott Wipperman**

continued next page

January 9th is *Baptism of the Lord* Sunday. But it is slightly preceded by *Epiphany of the Lord* on Thursday, January 6th. This year we will be focusing the Epiphany on Sunday the 9th. So here is a time for us to *dip* into baptisms - specifically Christ's. What do you think of Karl Barth's perspective? Does it make a difference in your understanding of Christ's ministry if Christ carried our sin from the beginning? Does this shed a different light on your understanding of your baptism? Heck with making resolutions - try pondering these questions this New Year.

Peace,
Pastor Scott

NOTES FROM SESSION DECEMBER 21, 2021

The regular meeting of the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Helena was called to order on Tuesday, December 21, 2021, at 6:45 PM. This was conducted as a hybrid meeting. Reverend Scott Wipperman opened with prayer and moderated the meeting.

Pastor Scott Wipperman asked Session members to share their family Christmas traditions.

There was a quorum with the following Elders present: John Coefield, Kathy Chambers, Rose Leavitt, Carol Stebbins, and Mary Stiles. Also in attendance: Pastor Scott Wipperman, Clerk of Session John Gneckow, and CP Butch Plowman. Members attending on Zoom were: Elders Sheryl Eriksen, Linda Bench, Mary Wright, and Karen Witte, and Deacon Candace Coefield. Barb Leland was excused.

APPROVAL OF DOCKET: Noted that the listed Meeting Date and Membership Dates are erroneous. Pastor Scott indicated that a corrected docket will be placed in the official meeting records. A motion was made and approved to accept the docket with date corrections.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A motion was made, seconded, and passed to approve the minutes of November 16, 2021, as presented.

PASTOR'S REPORT: Pastor Scott reported that November is typically a negative month financially with quarterly insurance premium and semi-annual property tax coming due, FPC had a monthly shortfall is \$8,982. The YTD shortfall is \$37,144.

Any committee that used Anderson Trust funds during 2021 needs to provide a written report of how the funds were utilized. The report deadline is early January.

CLERK'S REPORT: The Clerk reported that FPC received thank you notes for recent donations from our Mission Committee to Serious Juju, God's Love, The Friendship Center, and the YWCA. FPC also received an acknowledgement of receipt of scholarship funds for Steven Foster from the Montana Technological University.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Administration Committee: Elder Linda Bench reported, and a written report was submitted.

The committee has moved its meetings to the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 4:00 PM. **ACTION ITEM:** The Administration Committee requests Session approval of Leo Potter and Ward Stiles as members of the Administration Committee. The request was approved.

Building and Grounds: Elder John Coefield reported, and a written report was submitted. The alarm system will be activated on January 1, 2022. The hours the alarm system will be automatically turned on or off is still being worked out. Members with after-hours access permission must provide a PIN number to FPC that they will use to deactivate and reactivate the alarm when entering and leaving the building during the hours that the building is closed.

ACTION ITEM: Request to lease office space to Ashley Burke for \$200 per month so she can work remotely in her state position. Motion failed.

Christian Education Committee: Elder Mary Stiles reported and a written report was submitted. With the lack of interest in any youth programs in the church, the youth funds proposed for the 2022 budget have been removed. The plan is to start some adult education programs during 2022.

Congregational Fellowship: Elder Linda Bench reported, and a written report was submitted. There has been a request for Fellowship Time following worship to be allowed with masks required and no food or drink. This will be tried beginning January 2, 2022. To-Go treats would still be available after worship.

Mission Committee: Elder Kathy Chambers reported, and a written report was submitted. United Way Christmas Giving is going well. The items will be picked up December 27.

Marsha Davis is the new Family Promise coordinator for FPC.

Starting in January, the Committee will be soliciting winter clothing to donate to God's Love.

Mission asked for and received permission to complete their 2021 budgeted donations despite the FPC deficit. Andrew Christofferson, a missionary to India, will visit FPC April 24, 2022.

Memorial Committee: No activity to report this month.

Nominating Committee: Elder John Coefield reported and a written report was submitted. The committee members have met every Wednesday since November 16. Potential candidates are being contacted about serving as either an Elder or Deacon and some people have already indicated their willingness to serve. Additional candidates are still needed to fill the Board of Deacons.

Personnel Committee: Carol Stebbins reported and a written report was submitted. The Committee recommended reduced hours and/or pay for the Organist, Admin Assistant, and elimination of the Christian Education Director and replace it with a new position—Director of Social Media on a six-month trial basis.

continued next page

During a Called Committee meeting December 7, 2021, the committee decided to postpone the hiring of Director of Social Media and to refer to Building & Grounds, a proposal by Bruce Luke to work part time cleaning the church.

ACTION ITEMS: Elimination of Christian Education Director position. Approved.

New office hours: Approved

Monday through Thursday 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM and Friday 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM

Required work must be completed during the office hours

Worship Committee: No Committee representative at Session and no written report was submitted. Pastor Scott reported that the Christmas Eve service will include Communion. Requests from the December 19 online service included more or different spacing of microphones to improve broadcast presentation of musicians and instruments.

Covid Task Force: Pastor Scott reported that the Task Force is continuing to monitor the situation in the Helena area, especially as pertains to the omicron variant.

Deacon Report: Deacon Candace Coefield provided a report of Board activities for November. Meals were provided to the Bill Jones family. Communion is still being served at Touchmark. The Deacons have received positive comments on the Grief books sent to FPC families on the death of family or friend.

Old Business: After discussion and removal of the salary figures from elimination of the Christian Education Director position, a motion was made, seconded, and approved to adopt a budget of \$301,163 with anticipated income of \$280,442 for 2022. The budget will be presented at the congregation annual meeting.

New Business: The annual congregational meeting will be held on February 13, 2022, immediately following the Sunday worship service. Elder Mary Wright requested permission to step down as President of the Corporation. Elder John Coefield offered to replace her as President. A motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept Elder John Coefield as the new Corporation President.

Bill Norris of the Basin congregation has indicated that he has a goal of becoming a CLP (Commissioned Lay Pastor). To pursue this goal, the aspirant must be an Elder. Because the Basin congregation does not meet the requirements for classification as a recognized Presbyterian church and doesn't have a Session, the First Presbyterian Church Helena has been approached to accept the congregation in Basin as a chapel. This would open the door for Bill to become an Elder in our church so he could pursue his goal of becoming a CLP. The Session asked for information regarding any expenses or liabilities should we agree to this request.

There being no further business, it was moved and seconded at 8:18 p.m. to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried. Pastor Scott closed the meeting with prayer.

Next Regular Session Meeting: January 18, 2022, at 6:30 pm.

John Gneckow
Clerk of Session

Uproot with Thankfulness

Over the past three years, I have enjoyed working at First Presbyterian Church. And as my time with you all comes to an end, two words come to mind that I would like to share with you now “thank you.”

Thank you for showing me the beauty of the Presbyterian faith.
Thank you for showing me the tenderness of the Presbyterian faith.
Thank you for showing me the generosity of the Presbyterian faith.
Thank you for being the best teachers I could have asked for to learn about the beauty of the Reformation.
Thank you for accepting me as I am; it is such a gift to know that we can work together as children of God to build his kingdom, no matter what denomination we were born into and or choose to practice now.

It has been a pleasure serving in the FPC ministry for the past three years. Thank you for the opportunity to serve First Presbyterian Church; I wish you all a life filled with the beauty, goodness, and truth of God. May God Bless you today and always.

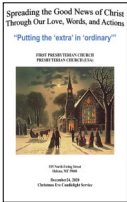
Sincerely,
Ashley Burke

The **Deacons' Benevolence Fund** has been used several times during the pandemic. Thanks to the congregation's generous gifts, we have been able to fulfill every request. We want to remind everyone that this fund is for you. If you need help to pay household or medical bills, buy groceries, medicine or gas, we are here, ready to help. Just contact Pastor Scott at the church office, and he will get the ball rolling. This is completely confidential; not even the deacons know who our recipients are. We are so happy to help! God bless!

FOCUS ON MATTHEW 25 - JANUARY

The Matthew 25 January focus will be “clothed”
I needed clothes and you clothed me. v 36

You may have noticed that the Mission Committee skipped *stranger* and moved ahead to *clothed* in our Matthew 25 outreach mission. Reason #1: we may have an opportunity in the future to help with the relocation of Afghan refugees. Reason #2: Ann Miller, from God's Love, assured us that they will be in dire need of outdoor donations in January. The supplies from earlier will have been donated and January brings greater needs with more homeless folks and colder weather. Therefore, our goal this month is to collect **socks** (always a most important need), **mittens, hats, scarves, and gently used coats and boots**. There will be a box in the Narthex for your contributions to help clothe others. If you prefer, cash donations will also be accepted. We will conclude this project 1/31/22.



Submission Deadlines for the Bulletin and Newsletter



To allow for the production and review of **worship bulletins** and the **monthly newsletters** we want to reiterate some submission deadlines for items to be included in those. It is always

appreciated if material can be received earlier than these deadlines, but these deadlines need to be met for inclusion in a particular issue.

The deadline for worship bulletins is the most straight forward deadline: items for inclusion need to be into Bruce by Tuesday at 10:00 am for inclusion in Sunday's bulletin, preferably in an electronic form. Given that the last day of the month moves, submissions for a newsletter needs to be made by 10:00 am on the sixth business day before the end of the month.

For instance, if the 30th or 31st is the last day of the month and it falls on a Tuesday, then six business days before the 30th/31st would be Monday the 22nd of the month.

For the **February Mustard Seed**, submissions need to be in by **10:00 am on Sunday, January 23rd**. Church holidays may require that submissions be made even earlier for both bulletins and newsletters.

Willing Workers will meet each Wednesday at 9am.

The group continues to plan for and organize future Craft Fairs and events. We invite everyone interested to attend the weekly gatherings. We need not only your ideas, but your crafts and your help to ensure the success of this event. We hope to put together many gift baskets containing hand crafted items, so we'd like your assistance with this new addition to the Craft Fair. Come one and all; we welcome your participation.

Thanks - giving

As you consider your Giving Tuesday and Year-End giving, please keep FPC in mind. Any and all donations help support FPC's missions and ministries.

BIRTHDAYS

2 - Carol Carpenter
5 - Ann Swisher
6 - Kristen Clausen
8 - John Gneckow
10 - Andrew Carpenter

11 - Carol Gneckow
14 - Glenn Phillips
23 - Deb Whitcomb
29 - Judy Patton

DEACONS ON CALL

Pending

DECEMBER COMMUNION SETUP

Pending

December

Lay Liturgists

Pending

My children and I want to express our heartfelt thanks and gratitude to our church family members, Deacons, and Elders for their prayers, cards, phone calls and concern for Jerry's passing on November 26th, and for our family afterwards. Without this we would have had a more difficult time adjusting to life without him. God bless each and every one of you. A memorial service is planned for sometime in late June 2022.

Sally Luke and family



DEADLINE

The deadline for February's newsletter is Monday, January 23rd.

UPCOMING FINANCIAL DEADLINES

Completed Credit Card Request forms, Completed Check Request forms, Personnel Forms / Time Sheets are due in the Financial Office mailbox on:

Monday, January 10, 2022
Monday, January 24, 2022
Tuesday, February 8, 2022

First Presbyterian Church
535 North Ewing Street
Helena, MT 59601
www.fpchelena.org

Weekly Sermon on HCTV Cable Channel 189
Wednesdays at 6 pm & Saturdays at 9 AM

OFFICE HOURS
Monday - Thursday
9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Fridays - 8:00 am - 12 Noon
406-442-4775

If you would like to be removed from this mailing list, and/or receive this newsletter via e-mail, please call **442-4775** or e-mail admin@fpchelena.org

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Helena, MT
Permit #42

Label here