



First Presbyterian Church

The Mustard Seed

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 2022, Issue 12 First Presbyterian Church, Helena, Montana December 2022

Family Promise volunteers needed

Volunteers are needed to provide dinner for Family Promise Dec. 4, 5 and 6. You can choose to provide an entrée, salad, bread, or dessert for the dinners, which will feed six adults and six small children.

A signup sheet for meals is in the Fellowship Room. Contact Joy Edgar at 406-202-2200 or Lucille Letcher at 406-465-0467 for details.

Family Promise Events

Festival of Angels & a John Floridis Concert will raise funds for Family Promise. Details on p. 5.



Sanctuary decorations

Many hands contributed to the placement of banners and tree ornaments in the sanctuary Nov. 20.



Worship Services in December



Sundays in Advent

Dec. 4, 11 & 18, 10 a.m.

in person at 535 N Ewing

or online at www.fpchelena.org

Christmas Eve

Saturday, Dec. 24, 7 p.m.

Christmas Day

Sunday, Dec. 25, 10 a.m.

Stewardship letter, pledge card in the mail

The annual Stewardship campaign is underway.

According to Wikipedia, “Stewardship is an ethical value that embodies the responsible planning and management of resources.” As Christians, we believe that God has given us everything, including our life.

Jesus does indeed indicate we should be managing our money well for his kingdom. In Matthew, we have the parable of the talents where the master gives his servants various amounts of talents (the talent is a measure of money at that time) and expects them to manage it while he is gone. He then rewards each according to what they have done. There are multiple other examples of the necessity and importance of giving to and for God’s work throughout the Bible.

We believe it is not a coincidence that the word “talent” was used in the Bible, and has a different meaning today. So, along with the prayerful consideration of your financial contribution, please include prayers about your “talent contribution.”

We are anticipating you will be receiving a stewardship letter and pledge card in the mail shortly. Please fill out the top portion of your card and keep it as your reminder. Return the lower portion to the church, either via mail, putting it in the offering plate, or dropping it off at the church office.

Again, what you pledge is between you and God.

Thank you.

The Administration Committee

Congregational Fellowship Opportunities

Hand & Foot Card Playing

Fridays, 1:30 p.m., Fellowship Room

Never played? No problem! The game is easy to learn and willing teachers abound.

Pinochle Card Games

Tuesday, December 6, 1 p.m.

If you've never played this fun card game before, don't worry, we can teach you. If there aren't enough people to play 4-handed, we can play 3-handed or even 2-handed.

From the Pastor's Desk

We are in the season of Advent!

The word Advent is based on the Latin word *Adventus* which means coming or arrival. We prepare for two events. We prepare our hearts to celebrate the coming birth of Christ as we wait for his coming again! This is a unique time in the life of the church and in our congregation. It's a time to pause, reflect rather than rush straight through to Christmas. During Advent, we remember the Old Testament story of exile, the need for a savior and the prophet's visions of deliverance on the coming great day of the Lord. During Advent, the words of Jesus who declares both "I make all things new!" (Rev. 22:5) and "Behold, I am coming soon!" (Rev. 22:22) echoes throughout the season.



Rev. Janet Potter



To help us prepare, the Worship Committee selected a devotional book, "Songs for the Waiting," which focuses on Advent hymns. Each Sunday, one of the hymns we sing will be selected from that book.

I invite you to join me on Mondays at 1:00 p.m. as we talk about the hymn of the week.

This year, we look forward to the new life in Christ which is being born in this congregation. God is doing a new thing; we just cannot quite see it, yet. While we wait and watch, let us pray and prepare for this new thing God will do among us!

Happy Advent!
Pastor Janet

FPC is at Cooney Health Care and Rehabilitation Home!

On most Tuesday mornings at 11:00, Pastor Janet along with Dianna Goodman, with her guitar, lead worship for the residents at Cooney Health. It is a time of singing, prayers, a message, and more singing.

Our service is about 40 minutes and is open to any resident. Typically, between 8 and 12 residents attend, plus a staff member or two.

We are grateful to worship with these faithful followers of Jesus and give him all the praise!

Blue Christmas?

2022 brought loss, grief, and heartache to many people. There are empty seats at the dinner table. People we love are declining physically or emotionally. Friends are no longer friends.



For you, life has changed forever.

If the holidays do not feel holly or jolly this year, you are not alone.

If your goal is simply to survive these weeks, know that God walks with you.

If the idea of a holiday gathering is too much, you have permission to say "not this year" or leave early or change your mind.

If you feel overwhelmed by it all, there is hope and help by calling 988 (Crisis lifeline).

Though life has changed, God's promises never do. Psalm 13 says God promises to be faithful and to love us. The LORD hears his people when they call to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed. When we walk through the darkest valley, God is with us.

Into our very dark and hopeless world, God loved us enough to send his only son, Jesus Christ, light of the world. In Jesus, God experienced life as we know it. Whatever you feel, Jesus felt it. He knows your pain because he felt it, too. God knows the agony of suffering and how it feels to bury a child. He weeps with you. While your world and life may feel full of darkness, the light of the world is still there, the darkness cannot overcome it. Hold on to the hope that one day everything will be set right. May the light of Christ and the promises of God break through your darkness and bring you love, peace, and comfort.

In Christ,
Pastor Janet

Coupon collection continues

We need your help by bringing in coupons for those in need here in our community. Please drop them off in the basket in the lobby as you come in the front door, or contact Tonna Strasko for more information.



Festival of Angels fundraiser Saturday, Dec. 3, at St. John's

The "Festival of Angels," a fundraiser for Family Promise of Greater Helena, and Lutheran Disaster Response, will be held Saturday, Dec. 3, at St. John's Lutheran Church, 1000 Helena Ave.

The festival, which runs 9 a.m. to noon, will feature a Scandinavian Bake Shop and handcrafted items for sale. All proceeds will be donated to Family Promise and Lutheran Disaster Response.



A Benefit Concert for Family Promise of Greater Helena

Tuesday, December 13th 7:00pm

*St. Paul's United Methodist Church
512 Logan St*

John Floridis

An Evening of Acoustic Guitar Carols

And Songs of Darkness and Light

- with Special Guests -

Cellist Jennifer Slayden

Percussionist Ed Stalling



Tickets by Donation at the Door



Live Stream on St. Paul's YouTube Channel
[StPaulsUnitedMethodistChurchHelena](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCStPaulsUnitedMethodistChurchHelena)



Donate: familypromisehelena.org

www.johnfloridis.com

~ Church Activities ~

Oh, Christmas Tree!

Tonna Strasko, Vic Reiman and Kathy Chambers assemble the sanctuary Christmas tree after the Nov. 20 worship service.



Light One Candle

From Advent candles to electric bulbs, the symbols of the Light of the season fill the sanctuary. Helping to decorate are, from left to right: Vic Reiman, Charlotte Meyer, Candace Coefield, Ann Swisher, Kathy Chambers and Tonna Strasko.





Pinochle Club

Barb Leland, Jane Ogle, Rose Leavitt and Carole Massman gather around a table for a game of pinochle. More players are welcome! The next games will be Tuesday, Dec. 6, at 1 p.m.

Potluck

The Fellowship Committee is scheduling church potlucks on the fifth Sunday of months with five Sundays. The next one will be Sunday, January 29, 2023, right after the worship service.



Bales & Shelves

We still have some straw bales and sturdy wooden shelves for sale, now that the Pumpkin Patch has concluded. Bales are \$10 each; shelves are \$20 obo. Contact the church office or John Coefield for details.



Christmas Giving – Back Packs for the Homeless



(sponsored by United Way of the L&C Area)

Our Christmas Giving Project this year reflects our Matthew 25 calling to provide for the homeless in our community. Items requested are:

Backpacks	Socks	Winter Gloves
Sunscreen	Jerky	Comb/Brush
Earplugs	Protein Bars	First Aid Kit
Hand Sanitizer	Water Bottle	Lotion
Wet Wipes	Feminine Hygiene	Toothbrush
Tissues	Products	Toothpaste
Apples	Trail Mix	Crackers w/
Tuna/Chicken	Razors	Cheese/PB
Snackpacks	Shave Cream	Shampoo
Toilet Paper	Tarp or Blanket	Conditioner
Soap	Flashlight	Nail Clippers
Deodorant	Winter Hats	Flashlights
	Laundry Soap Pods	

Thank you for your generosity. Please leave your donation under the tree in the Fellowship area by December 28th. Monetary donations may also be made through the offering plate, the website (specify Back Packs for Homeless) or directly to United Way of L&C Area.



Christmas Joy Offering



When we give to the Christmas Joy Offering, we share our Christmas blessings with the leaders of our Church - past, present and future. Please give generously.

50% Makes it possible for students to learn & grow in faith at Presbyterian schools.

50% Assists current and retired church workers with critical financial needs.



You Are Kind & Generous



Your compassion for the victims of Hurricane Ian in Florida allowed FPCH to send \$405 in financial support to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance for that cause. This is a great example of caring for “the least of these” as we were instructed to do in Matthew 25. Thank you!

Your generous donation for the Peace and Global Witness Offering also gave us the opportunity to support our local YWCA in its efforts for peace in our community. The total offering was \$245, which generated \$61.25 for the local charity. Your Mission Committee allocated an additional \$38.75, so the YWCA will receive a check for \$100. Thank you!

**MINUTES OF THE SESSION
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (PCUSA)
HELENA, MONTANA
November 15, 2022**

The regular meeting of the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Helena was called to order on Tuesday, November 15, 2022, at 6:30 p.m. by Reverend Janet Potter. Pastor Janet opened with prayer. Pastor Janet guided us through Ezekiel 37:1-14 using “Dwelling in the Word” followed by prayer. Pastor Janet moderated the meeting.

There was a quorum with the following Elders present in the church facility: Elders Sheryl Eriksen, Karen Witte, Rose Leavitt, Jim Meyer, “Butch” Plowman, Carol Stebbins, John Coefield, Barb Leland, Mary Stiles, and Jeff Chaffee. Also in attendance: Treasurer Leo Potter, Deacon Joy Edgar, and Clerk of Session John Gneckow.

APPROVAL OF DOCKET: The docket was amended to include information on the Farmers/Truck legal filings setting forth their issue of liability in the suit against FPC over the camp deck collapse. A motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the docket with the addition.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A motion was made, seconded, and passed to approve the minutes of October 18, 2022, Session meeting as presented.

INTERIM PASTOR’S REPORT: Pastor Janet reiterated upcoming work that she had listed in the November Mustard Seed. These include:

Heritage and History: Studying past history, traditions, and stories to see where we have come from and what got FPC where she is today.
Who are we?

Mission: Evaluate the mission and vision statements in light of current realities. Who is God calling us to be today?

Connections: Exploring the relationships that exist outside of the congregation with other churches, agencies, or organizations. Who is our neighbor?

Leadership: Review the current membership’s current needs for leadership and offer a spiritual gifts assessment. Who are the leaders God is raising up?

Recommit to FPC’s God-given mission as we live into the emerging future. What are faithful practical responses to new opportunities or possibilities?

CLERK’S REPORT:

Membership as of September 30, 2022		100
Membership as of October 31, 2022		100

Session Minutes (continued from page 5)

CLERK'S REPORT: The Clerk reported that FPC received donation thank you notes from Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, God's Love, Intermountain and the Basin Church.

In October, Glacier Presbytery Executive Beth McCaw presented "Boundaries" training, a requirement every three years for church personnel involved with staff and children. Attendees from FPC were Dianna Goodman, Rose Leavitt, Sheryl Erickson, Karen Witte, and Jim Meyer.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Administration Committee: Elder Jim Meyer reported, and a written report was submitted to Session.

Chairman Jim Meyer opened the meeting with prayer.

Treasurer Leo Potter reported FPC has had a positive revenue flow monthly resulting in a year-to-date positive revenue of approximately \$13,000. However, our savings account has decreased by approximately \$113,000.

The church has been given an extension until December 15 to respond to the lawsuit filed by Farmers/Truck. An Ad Hoc group is investigating hiring an attorney to represent us in this action.

Treasurer Leo Potter presented the proposed budget for 2023. The current proposal is approximately \$50,000 lower than last year. Unfortunately, projected income is also down approximately \$50,000. The shortfall appears to be the same as this year.

The plan for the stewardship campaign is similar to recent years when we will ask people to send in their pledge sealed in an envelope. However, we will not mail the pledge back as we have done in the past.

Pastor Janet closed the meeting with prayer.

Building and Grounds: Elder John Coefield reported, and a written report was submitted to Session.

Chairman John Coefield opened the meeting with prayer.

The cost of the elevator maintenance is going to increase.

The mechanism on the main door is wearing out. Burdick's indicates that the repair/replacement costs will be \$3,000.

B&G is contacting our electrician to replace burned-out bulbs in the Sanctuary.

The shelves used to display the pumpkins during the Pumpkin Patch sales are for sale.

Pastor Janet closed the meeting with prayer.

Christian Education Committee: Elder Mary Stiles reported, and a written report was submitted to Session.

Deacon Joy Edgar opened the meeting with prayer.

The Pumpkin Patch made a profit again. For a variety of reasons, next year's version of the sale will incorporate some changes.

Since FPC doesn't have youth for a confirmation class at this time, the committee has decided on several different approaches for a program that they have labeled "Reaching Out to Youth."

Pastor Janet closed the meeting with prayer.

Congregational Fellowship: Elder Sheryl Eriksen reported, and a written report was submitted to Session.

Committee Member Kathy Chambers opened the meeting with prayer.

The potluck on October 30 was a success with about 35 people attending.

The church group walk scheduled for November 13 was cancelled due to inclement weather.

The last date for bingo and pizza is November 18, at 6:00 p.m., in the Fellowship area. This will be the last one until Spring.

Committee Member Kathy Chambers closed the meeting with a Thank You Prayer.

Memorial Committee: Does not meet on a regular schedule. Meetings are held when business dictates.

Mission Committee: Elder Karen Witte reported, and a written report was submitted to Session.

Chairperson Karen Witte opened the meeting with prayer.

Donations for Peace and Global Witness totaled \$245. Twenty-five percent (\$61.25) went to the YWCA. The committee voted to add \$38.75 from its undesignated funds, bringing the total to the YMCA to \$100.00.

Donations for PDA for hurricane victims were \$405.00.

The Warm Hearts Drive will begin December 31 and end January 29, 2023. Donations of blankets, towels, etc., will be solicited for Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Associates of Helena who will distribute them in Helena to needy people.

Pastor Janet closed the meeting with prayer.

Nominating Committee: Elder John Coefield reported, and a written report was submitted to Session.

Co-Chairman John Coefield opened the meeting with prayer.

The committee reviewed the Session and Board of Deacons rosters for the past 8 years and the FPC active member list. After noting that Session and Board members constitute more than 25% of the total membership and have come to the point where there is no opportunity for breaks in service, the committee passed a motion to take to Session to reduce the current number of elders and deacons serving on Session and the Board of Deacons. The reduction in members on Session and the Board would take place gradually over the next three years by re-

Session Minutes (continued from page 7)

ducing the number of persons elected to the new classes of elder and deacon actively serving on Session and the Board.

Co-chairperson Rose Leavitt closed the meeting with prayer.

ACTION ITEM: To reduce the number of elders on Session to nine (9). To change Bylaw Article VIII Board of Deacons, Section 1 Number, Tenure, Qualifications from no fewer than twelve (12) and no more than eighteen (18) active deacons to read no fewer than nine (9) and no more than fifteen (15) active deacons elected The motion passed.

Personnel Committee: Elder Rose Leavitt reported, and a written report was submitted to Session.

Chairman Rose Leavitt opened the meeting with prayer.

John Warren reported that because FPC does not have to make payment to the Board of Pensions for the Interim Pastor, the Personnel budget can be cut by approximately \$28,000.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed to increase the Office Coordinator's salary by 10% and Les Cramer's and Ann Swisher's by 5%, respectively.

FPC is required to keep certain documents by rule and regulation in employee files. Mary Stiles will be reviewing the files for compliance.

Committee Member John Warren closed the meeting with prayer.

Worship Committee: Pastor Janet reported. No written report was provided to Session.

FPC will have a Christmas Eve service.

FPC will decorate the church following the service on November 20.

Advent booklets will be available beginning November 20.

Deacon Report: Deacon Joy Edgar provided a written report of Board activities to the Session.

Communion was served at Touchmark, and the Masonic Home. No meals were provided to FPC members during the month. No hospital visits were made.

Pastor Janet requested that minutes be provided to Session after Board meetings.

Covid Task Force: The Task Force is no longer meeting but continues to monitor the situation in the Helena area.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed accepting the Committee reports for the month.

Old Business: Pastor Janet noted that an Interim Pastor either continues the status quo or suggests adjustments to help the church and congregation move forward into the future. Session members voiced interest in moving forward rather than staying with the status quo.

(Continued on page 13)

New Business: Pastor Janet opened a brief discussion on the relationship of the Basin worshipping community to FPC. She indicated that the people who have been leading worship are now involved with churches and no longer able to travel to Basin on Sundays. She said that two of the Basin worshippers have express interest in receiving training on conducting services and giving sermons. Several ideas were presented for more FPC involvement with the Basin worshippers. Pastor Janet has a list of names of people who helped remodel the house/church and is hoping to meet with them for ideas on working with the Basin group on a regular basis.

Executive Session: There being no further general business, a motion was made, seconded, and passed to move into executive session in order to discuss pending litigation on the issue of Farmers/Truck liability for benefits for the church's defense in lawsuits resulting from the deck collapse at Glacier Camp.

Following a summary of the status of the Farmers/Truck request to a court to rule on their liability on behalf of FPC in the deck collapse suits, a motion was made, seconded, and passed to recognize an ad hoc committee consisting of "Butch" Plowman, Jeff Chaffee, John Coefield, Jim Meyer, and John Gneckow to pursue obtaining legal representation to respond to the liability issue filed by attorneys for the insurance companies.

It was moved and seconded at 8:45 p.m. to end the Executive Session. The motion carried.

Pastor Janet closed the Session meeting with prayer.

Next Regular Session Meeting: December 20, 2022, at 6:30 p.m.

John Gneckow
Clerk of Session



Deacons' Benevolence Fund

Is it the end of your pay period and you need some groceries? Have you had an unexpected dental emergency? Did your medical expenses exceed your budget this month? Need gas? Did your refrigerator blow up? We can help!

The Deacon's Benevolence Fund is for folks who attend our church. There are No Strings Attached! If you need help, call the pastor's office. She will contact the Benevolence Committee and explain your need. We will get a check cut to the doctor, the dentist, Home Depot, your grocery store, etc. This is held in the strictest confidence and not even the committee knows who we are helping.

This is possible because of the generous contributions of the people of First Presbyterian. God bless our donors!

DECEMBER 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 10 am Rebekah Circle	2 Noon Bible Study 1:30 pm Hand & Foot Cards	3
4 10 am Worship w/Communion 11 am Social Time	5 1 pm 'Hymns of Advent' Study	6 10 am Sarah Circle 1 pm Pinochle 5:30 pm Personnel	7 6:30 pm Choir	8	9 Noon Bible Study 1:30 pm Hand & Foot Cards	10
11 10 am Worship 11 am Social Time 11:15 Deacons	12 10 am Worship Comm. 1 pm 'Hymns of Advent' Study 3 p.m. Education	13 6:30 pm Mission	14 10 am Building & Grounds 2 pm CFC 4 pm Admin 6:30 pm Choir	15	16 Noon Bible Study 1:30 pm Hand & Foot Cards	17
18 10 am Worship 11 am Social Time	19 1 pm 'Hymns of Advent' Study	20 6:30 pm Session	21 6:30 pm Choir	22	23 Noon Bible Study 1:30 pm Hand & Foot Cards	24 <i>Christmas Eve</i> 7 pm Worship Service
25 <i>Christmas Day</i> 10 am Worship 11 am Social Time	26 <i>Church Office Closed</i>	27	28 6:30 pm Choir	29	30 Noon Bible Study 1:30 pm Hand & Foot Cards	31 <i>New Years Eve</i>

DEACON ON CALL

Joy Edgar — 406-202-2200

FOOD SHARE:

The Mission Committee has resumed collecting food for Helena Food Share.

Our Boy Scout troop will collect and deliver donations as an ongoing service project.

Thanks for your help.



REBEKAH CIRCLE

Thursday, Dec. 1, 10 a.m.

(Contact: Merle Korizek)

SARAH CIRCLE

Tuesday, Dec. 6, 10 a.m.

(Contact: Sheryl Eriksen)

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

22nd Jeff & Julie Chaffee

26th Michael & Marsha Davis



31st Marshall & Elaine Gingery

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1st John Coefield

18th Bonnie Anderson

22nd Joy Edgar

22nd David McNay

24th Carol Stebbins

24th Corky Lord

27th Mary Stiles

DEADLINE

**The deadline for
the December
newsletter is**

Friday, Dec. 23

FINANCIAL DEADLINES

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

Monday, December 12

Tuesday, December 27

First Presbyterian Church
535 North Ewing Street
Helena, MT 59601

www.fpchelena.org

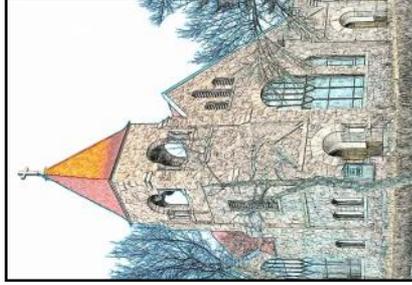
Weekly Sermon on HCTV Cable Channel 189
Wednesdays at 6 pm & Saturdays at 9 AM

OFFICE HOURS
Monday - Friday
9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

406-442-4775

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Celebrating 150 Years
1872-2022