

# First Presbyterian Church

# The Mustard Seed

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 2025 Issue 10

First Presbyterian Church, Helena, MT

October 2025

# The Pumpkins are Coming!

The FPC Pumpkin Patch returns again this October!

Your help is needed with set up, unloading pumpkins, covering up the pumpkins, and taking a shift to sell pumpkins. (And, of course, to buy pumpkins!)

Unload Pumpkins & Set Up Patch: Thursday, Oct. 9, at 4 pm

#### **Pumpkin Patch Open:**

Saturday, Oct. 11, 10 am -6 pm, and Sunday, Oct. 12, noon-6 pm. The patch will then close until the Pumpkin Patch Party on Saturday, Oct. 18. The patch will be open daily after that until Halloween. Hours are weekdays, 2-6 pm; Saturdays, 10 am-6 pm; Sundays, noon-6 pm.

Signup sheets are available outside the church office the first week of October.

You're Invited!

Pumpkin
Patch Party!

Saturday, Oct. 18 Noon to 2 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church 535 N. Ewing St.

Kids' Games!

Free Hotdogs!



**Bounce Houses!** 

Treat Bags!



# Walk Returns Oct. 26!



On October 26, we will bring back our "Lost Soles Walk" with a twist! Instead of walking later in the day, your Friendship Committee thought that right after the Church service should be a better time. So, wear your walking shoes to Church on October 26, and we'll leave around 11:30am for our walk around Spring Meadow Lake.

We will choose a place to eat and have lunch after the walk.

# **Ringers Invited!**

Practices start Wednesday, Oct. 8, 3:30 p.m.

Our approach to the handbell (tone chime) season will be starting early! In order to keep things less hectic for ringers, we will start the practices on <u>WEDNESDAY</u>, OCTOBER 8, 3:30 <u>PM</u>, and subsequent Wednesdays at the same time. You will have time to acquaint yourself with chime-ringing do's and don'ts, and how to have success with ringing.

If you have rung before, or would like to give it a try, you are invited. It helps if you can (A)



read music, and (B) <u>count.</u> Practice on Christmas season music will be emphasized, and we will plan on participating in worship for the CHRIST-MAS MUSIC SUNDAY, which will be December 21. We will be working on at least three pieces for the occasion, with and without the chancel choir and other instrumentalists. Promise it will be fun and fulfilling!

Any questions? Call Les at 406-465-0873.

Les Cramer, Director Music and Media Dear friends in Christ,

I am part of a cohort of ministry leaders through 1001, the PC(USA)'s New Worshipping Communities movement. As we gathered for our first cohort meeting of the fall, our facilitator asked us to bring an object that in some way represents our worshipping community.

I chose a picture that is in my study of the stained-glass window in our sanctuary of 12-year-old Jesus sitting among the teachers in the temple. This stained-glass window represents to me our church's love of tradition. We are a "traditional" and tradition-filled church in many ways. We have a large building with stained glass windows and pews in our sanctuary. Our liturgy very closely aligns with the liturgy in our denomination's *Book of Common Worship*. We have traditional church infrastructure with committees and minutes and action items (How many Presbyterians does it take to change a lightbulb? A committee of at least 8 but no more than 12, made up of equal parts teaching and ruling elders.) We are gifted with a talented organist, a talented music director, and talented musicians and vocalists among us. And tradition is beautiful. Our sanctuary has held our congregation's hopes and sorrows and praises for many years. Our infrastructure can enable us to make thoughtful decisions. Our music can enable us to experience God's touch.

Yet, sometimes, God is doing a new thing in our midst, and our traditions can hold us back from becoming aware of and participating in new things. Sometimes God surprises us, overturns our assumptions, and acts against our expectations. The teachers in the temple experienced this when a 12-year-old boy astonished them with his understanding about God and about Scripture.

Like our stained-glass window of 12-year-old Jesus, I wonder what resources we already have for imagining and seeing God's new work in our midst. I wonder what other stories from our Holy Scriptures point to God's unexpected ways of acting. I wonder what experiences of God surprising us we already have in our collective memory that can help open us to surprise now. I wonder what practices in our Christian tradition might cultivate discernment about the next most faithful steps for us to take as a congregation. I am excited about the new things that God is doing, and I can't wait for us to take part.

Grace and peace,

Emily Cowser

The Rev. Emily Cowser

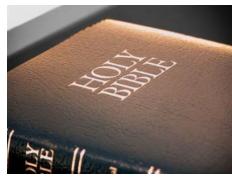
# River Float

Several from the congregation gathered to float the Missouri River in August, and then met at Barb's for a picnic.



## **Bibles for Prisoners**

# Each \$10 sends a Bible to someone in prison



For three Sundays in October (12, 19, 26), the Mission & Outreach Committee is campaigning for Bibles for Prisoners.

In prison, authority is everywhere - but not all of it brings hope. The Bible carries a higher authority, one that speaks of mercy, truth and redemption. When a man or a woman behind bars opens

God's Word, they encounter the only authority that can truly set them free from shame, addiction, fear, and hopelessness.

Crossroads Prison Ministry program is running a campaign to raise \$100,000 to cover the cost of sending Bibles to men and women in prison who are desperate for God's Word. Every \$10 you give sends a Bible.

Questions? Call Carol Gneckow at (406) 422-9914. Thank you!

## Trivia Question:

To whom was it said: "Upon this rock I will build my church"

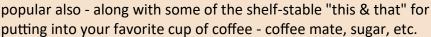
(Answer on page 15.)



#### Coffee for Vets starts Oct. 13

The Mission & Outreach Committee will seek donations for Coffee for Vets, October 13 through Veterans Day, November 11.

We are hoping to collect coffee - either fresh roast in a can or the coffee pods are quite



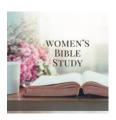
Thank you for helping with this giving opportunity! Questions? Call Carol Gneckow, (406) 422-9914.



## **Bible studies**

# Sarah & Rebekah Bible study meets Thurs., Oct. 2

The Sarah and Rebekah Circles have combined this fall into one Bible study that meets monthly.



This month's study will be at the church on Thursday, October 2, at 10 a.m. Visit with Merle Korizek for more information.

# Friday Noon Bible Study Reading Book of Hebrews

The Friday Bible study meets at noon at the church.

The group is studying the book of Hebrews. Everyone is welcome to participate and you can join in any time.

Contact leader John Coefield for details.

# Ongoing collections Helena Food Share



Creating a Hunger-Free Community The Mission Committee continues to collect food for Helena Food Share. The donation bin is located

just inside the main office doors.

## **Toiletries/Coupons**

Donations of toiletries (small, travel size) and coupons can be dropped off in



the collection basket inside the main office doors.

Tonna Strasko delivers the donations to individuals in need of help with expenses, and also to God's Love, Friendship Center, and YWCA.

#### MINUTES OF THE SESSION

#### **September 16, 2025**

The regular meeting and devotion of the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Helena were called to order on September 16, 2025, at 6:30 PM by CLP Dianna Goodman who Moderated the meeting in the excused absence of Resident Pastor Emily Cowser.

The meeting was opened with prayer by Dianna. She then read an article from a book of devotions written by A. W. Tozer

There was a quorum with the following Elders present: Arlyn "Butch" Plowman, Carol Gneckow, Patti Borsberry, Jim Meyer, John Bryan, and John Warren. Elder Jeff Chaffee attended through Zoom. Elder Barb Leland and Deacon Ward Stiles were excused. Clerk of Session John Gneckow and Treasurer Leo Potter were in attendance.

APPROVAL OF DOCKET: CLP Dianna asked for any additions to the docket. Added a discussion of "Thank you" to the congregation for their generosity toward the church budget, patience with the sidewalk and parking lot maintenance projects, and kitchen upgrades to New Business. Also added a discussion about changing the day and/or time of Session meetings to New Business. A motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the docket with the additions.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** A motion was made, seconded, and passed to approve the minutes of August 19, 2025, regular Session meeting as presented.

CLERK'S REPORT: The Clerk read an invitation from Pray Montana to join a Community Prayer Banquet on Friday Evening October 17, 2025, at the Mount Helena Community Church. This is replacing the Mayor's Prayer Breakfast previously held at the Civic Center Ballroom. A motion was made and seconded to participate in the Helena Community Prayer Banquet. After discussion, the motion failed.

Active Membership as of July 31, 2025	91
Deaths: Dave McNay August 11, 2025	
Jerry Klein August 30, 2025	
Active Membership as of August 31, 2025	89

#### RESIDENT PASTOR'S REPORT:

Pastor Emily will be on vacation September 12 through September 20.

September 21 to 26, she will attend a Stewardship Kaleidoscope conference with Synergos. October 10 and 11, she will attend the Glacier Presbytery meeting at Glacier Camp.

From October 13 to 16, she will be at the 1001 National Gathering.

Since August 14, Pastor Emily has:

Met with a group of Glacier Presbytery pastors on Zoom, the Helena Ministerial Association, a staff member from United Way, and the Executive Director of Glacier Camp.

She had one-to-one and small group conversations with various church members.

Communion	Total	Breakout		
August	107	48 in person, 49 online, 10 at home		

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Administration Committee: Chair Jim Meyer reported.

The financial report was reviewed. Income for the month was \$22,559 and expenses were \$23,092. Unusual expenses included \$3,000 realtor fees and \$1,360 for a laptop computer. For the year, we have received 71% of our projected (budgeted) income, while expenses are at 56% of budgeted. (67% of the year is gone). The Building Fund is listed as negative and funds will be transferred as appropriate.

In August, Vanguard Funds showed a gain of \$7,793.17, bringing the YTD gain to \$21,466.44.

The Memorial Committee: did not meet.

Although the major projects are mostly completed, the bell tower needs a couple of simple(?) roof repairs which will necessitate the use of special equipment.

A bid has been received from TDS for internet and phone services. The bid will be accepted after clarification of a couple of items. We anticipate savings of over \$100 per month.

Karen Witte reported for the kitchen ad hoc committee. They are planning a raffle consisting of 9 prizes with a value of over \$3,000. Tickets are \$5.00 for a single ticket, \$20 for 5 tickets.

ACTION ITEM: Ask Session to allow tickets to be sold at the Pumpkin Patch Party. Motion passed.

ACTION ITEM: Ask Session to allow tickets to be sold at community enterprises. Motion passed.

Discussed the upcoming financial stewardship campaign anticipated to take place in October and November. Wanda Jewell has completed a letter to the congregation that is to be given out with pledge cards on October 12 (any cards/letters not picked up by November 2 will be mailed). The stewardship drive will close on November 16.

The Pumpkin Patch Party was discussed. We will add a cake walk as an

activity to the ring toss. John Warren will spearhead the cake walk.

Budget projections will be distributed to the committees the first week of October and need to be returned by the November Session meeting. After review by the Admin Committee, Session will vote on the 2026 budget in December.

**Next meeting:** October 8 at 4:00 PM.

Building and Grounds Committee: Chair "Butch" Plowman reported.

Building committee finished project costs:

Kitchen renovation: Total Renovation costs \$10,182.00

Parking lot maintenance project: Total costs \$21,618.00

Main Entry Way patch work: Total costs \$2,300.00

Gutter Ice Jam and Bell Tower Drain: Ascension Electric bid \$10,597.50

Sidewalk repair: \$21,486

Total costs: \$66,083.00

#### Resources:

Kitchen Fund (-\$61,699)

Vanguard Funds:

Sigrid Underdahl \$46,368 Building Reserve \$56,043

#### Pending Challenges:

The electrician working on the heat cable/ice dams reported problems with the roof near the bell tower. Repair may require eight (8) hours of labor to fix and specialized equipment to access the repair site.

The sidewalk work has uncovered problems with our sprinkler system. Meanwhile, the gentleman who has been maintaining the system and knows its quirks and eccentricities has announced his retirement. We will initiate recruitment for a replacement maintainer.

There is interest in changing our internet/phone provider. We had concerns about new equipment needed and infrastructure upgrades through rock walls. These questions have been resolved and we endorse the change of the internet/telephone provider.

Next Meeting: October 14 at 10:00 AM

Christian Education Committee: Chair John Bryan reported.

The committee has prepared a 2026 budget for Session's review/approval.

Vicky Bryan and Mollee Jones, the new Youth Group co-leaders, need to have background checks completed. They are looking to see what curricu-

lum the church already has or design their own curriculum once youth have been identified. They are discussing ways to attract youth for youth program. They hope to distribute informational materials in the neighborhood and send "save the date" postcards to the parents of youth.

ACTION ITEM: Ask Personnel to complete background checks on Vicky Bryan and Mollee Jones so they can work with and on a youth program. Approved.

They are looking to hire a Nursery Attendant for Sunday Worship services. FPC will also need one other person in the childcare area as well. If we are unsuccessful in hiring someone, we will look for a couple of volunteers from the congregation or ask the Youth Group Program Leaders to help with childcare when needed.

The Committee wishes to have management of scholarships return to committee control.

ACTION ITEM: a motion was made and seconded to return control of church Scholarships to Christian Education committee where it previously resided. Approved.

Pastor Emily informed the committee that the Child Abuse Prevention Policy needs revision before a Nursery Attendant can be hired and before a youth group is in place.

John Coefield's next Bible study will begin September 19 on Hebrews.

John Bryan is interested in leading a new Bible study beginning in January 2026.

Next Meeting: October 14

Friendship Committee: Elder Carol Gneckow reported.

**Up-coming Activities:** October 18--Pumpkin Patch Party in FPC parking lot. Discussed marketing for the party. Carol will be in charge of flyers, postcards, and TV. Barb will ask Julie to handle Facebook and Barb will list the event in Helena Events.com, notify radio and do a write-up for the newspaper. Sheryl will look for new banners for the Fellowship room.

ACTION ITEM: Session approve reinitiating Lost Soles walks beginning October 26 following worship. Motion passed.

ACTION ITEM: Session approve the FPC Community-wide Thanksgiving dinner on November 27. Motion passed.

ACTION ITEM: Session approve having a Christmas Caroling Event. Motion passed.

Next Meeting: October 8 at 1:00 PM.

Mission and Outreach Committee: Chair Carol Gneckow reported.

Bonnie Anderson provided an update on Family Promise. The Sunday meal is now served family style and all families are invited along with the cooks and hosts.

The committee discussed Siloam Eye Hospital, a worldwide mission based in Korea. After discussion, the committee decided to postpone any decision for the present time.

The committee selected "Bag of Moringa Tree Seeds from the <u>Presbytery Giving Catalog</u> for our January-February worldwide mission giving.

The Bibles for Prisoners, a giving campaign of Crossroads Prison Ministry will be presented to FPC in October. Every \$10.00 given to Crossroads sends a Bible to a prisoner. The goal of the campaign is \$100,000 to cover the cost of sending Bibles to men and women in prison.

ACTION ITEM: Permission to participate in Crossroads Prison Ministries collection for Bibles during October. Approved.

ACTION ITEM: Approve Bonnie Anderson as a member of the Mission & Outreach Committee. Approved

Next meeting: October 13 at 1:00 PM

Nominating Committee: Did not meet.

Personnel Committee: Did not meet.

Property Oversight Committee: Did not meet.

**Synergos Committee:** Did not meet. The Clerk of Session noted that arrangements have been made for Pastor Emily to stay in Spruce Lodge at Glacier Camp for the Fall Presbytery meeting.

Worship Committee: Chair Patti Borsberry reported.

#### August 12, 2025

Pastor Emily Cowser arrived August 1, 2025. She gave her first sermon on August 10.

The choir begins rehearsal September 3 and sang for the September 14 worship service.

The new Lay liturgist volunteer list was distributed.

An outdoor Sunday service is planned for September 21.

Five worship committee job descriptions (JD) and duty lists were handed out to members of the committee to review and recommend changes as appropriate.

Committee meeting dates and times were set for the second Tuesday of the month at 1:00 pm.

#### September 9, 2025

Pastor Emily will be in the pulpit every Sunday this month except September 14. CLP Dianna will substitute on that Sunday.

October 5 will be Worldwide Communion Sunday.

Choir Director Les Cramer reported:

The choir has some new members with the potential choir members being 15. The choir will wear choir robes on Communion Sundays.

Les would like to purchase a hearing aid enhancement called "Auracast" for \$60 from Amazon.

Les would like to start a Hand Bell choir.

Christmas Music Sunday will be December 21.

An Outdoor Worship Service will be held on Sunday 21. Help is needed to set everything up.

The Rules and Responsibilities of the committee remain under review.

The Committee will contribute the same activities to the Pumpkin Patch Party as they did last year: photo panel, coloring, hay bales for decoration, and bags of popcorn.

The committee will approach Tonna about training some members to create and run Power Point slides.

We have been invited to participate in an ecumenical service on Tuesday November 25 at 6:30 pm at Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church.

Joy suggested we honor graduating seniors during a church service with recognition and cake.

Next meeting: October 14 at 1:30 PM.

**Deacon Report:** A written report for the August meeting was submitted. And a written activity report for August was submitted to Session.

#### **Deacon August Business Meeting**

#### **Committee Business:**

Updates for the Deacon's Reference Manual were provided: Nominating Committee, Communion Preparation, Transportation Guidelines, Deacon's Benevolence Fund, and replacement of the Deacons-on-Call function with Shepherds.

Discussion on music for the Pumpkin Patch Party. Ward will arrange for a speaker system.

Discussed Name tags for church services rather than the stick-on type which have to be written each time. Building and Grounds will need to be involved regarding storing the name tags. A motion was made, seconded, and passed to create name tags. Ward will take the recommendation to

Session.

Pastor Emily spoke on pastoral care. She wants to make sure that all congregants are aware of who to contact when there is a need for pastoral care. Congregants should call the church office when pastoral care is needed. The office manager (Julie) will pass the information to the appropriate deacon. "Butch" or Dianna will be contacted as necessary, and Butch or Dianna will contact Pastor Emily when appropriate. Art Bumgardner will prepare an article to appear in the Mustard Seed to inform the congregation of this process,

During August 2025, no meals were provided. Twenty-one (21) cards were sent acknowledging birthdays and anniversaries and 4 sympathy cards and one get well card. Two Grief booklets were also provided to various people who lost family members during the past year. There were no hospital visits. Communion was served to 10 people at Touchmark and no people received communion from a Deacon at home.

**Next Meeting:** October 12 following the Worship service.

A Motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the committee reports.

**Old Business**: Carol Gneckow handed out a diagram of the parking lot and asked committee chairs to provide her with information on where their committee event will be located. The only parking areas will be by the Pumpkin Patch, and on the streets around the church.

**New Business:** Carol Gneckow asked if we should consider holding Session meetings at a different time in the day or a different day and different time. After a brief discussion, it was decided to wait for Pastor Emily's return and input.

Butch brought up that Session should verbally thank the congregation for the financial success we are enjoying this year. A motion was made, seconded and passed to verbally thank the congregation.

He also reminded the Session that the church will experience increased expenses over the next year or two as the Omaha Seminary's pastoral financial aid decreases. He reminded us that we need to start preparing for this.

There being no further business to conduct, a motion was made, seconded, and approved to adjourn the meeting.

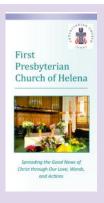
Elder John Bryan closed the meeting with prayer.

The next Regular Session Meeting: October 21, 2025, at 6:30 PM John Gneckow, Clerk of Session

## New FPC Helena Brochures Available

Updated FPC Helena brochures are available on the fireplace in the entryway.

Take as many as you like to share with those people you've been wanting to invite to church!





Thank You for Your Generosity

Thank you for your faithful giving to the ministry of FPC Helena.

Your financial support makes the proclamation of the gospel possible throughout the world! Our August net giving is here:

	August 2025	YTD	
Income	\$22,559	\$190,031	
Expenses	<u>\$23,092</u>	<u>\$167,348</u>	
	(-\$533)	\$22,683	

The online giving program can be found on the fpchelena.org/giving website.

If you have any questions, please contact Treasurer Leo Potter at 815-980-5236.

This is the day that the Lord has made: let us rejoice and be glad in it!

# Elders & Deacons FPC Elders

Patti Borsberry (Worship Chair)

Jeff Chaffee

(Personnel Chair)

**Barb Leland** 

(Friendship Chair)

John Bryan

(Christian Ed Chair)

John Warren

(Nominating Chair Synergos Chair)

Jim Meyer

(Administration Chair)

**Butch Plowman** (Building & Grounds Chair)

Carol Gneckow

(Mission Chair)

John Gneckow (Clerk of Session)

**FPC Deacons** 

**BJ Burns** 

**Kathy Chambers** 

Jill Cook

**Bonnie Anderson** 

**Ward Stiles** 

Vice-moderator

**Vicky Bryan** 

Art Bumgardner

Moderator

Rena Bumgardner

Ria Caussyn

**Carole Massman** 

# October 2025

	October 2023								
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat			
Ř		8	1 2 pm Choir	2 10 am Sarah & Rebekah Bible Study 6:30 Bridge 7 pm AA	3 Noon Friday Bible Study 1:30 pm Hand & Foot Cards 5:30 pm AA District	4			
5 Worldwide Communion Sunday 10 am Worship w/Communion 11 am Social	6 10 am Person- nel	7 11:30 am Bridge 7 pm Al Anon 7 pm Scouts	8 10 amB & G 1 pm Friend- ship 2 pm Choir 3:30 Ringers 4 pm Admin	9 4 pm Pump- kin Patch Set Up 6:30 Bridge 7 pm AA	10 Noon Friday Bible Study 1:30 pm Hand & Foot Cards	11 10am-6pm Pumpkin Patch open			
12 10 am Worship 11 am Social Time 11:15 am Deacons Noon-6pm Pumpkin Patch open	13 1 pm Mission 5 pm Xpress Singers	14 11:30 am Bridge Noon Christian Ed 1:30 pm Worship Committee 7 pm Al Anon 7 pm Scouts	15 2 pm Choir 3:30 Ringers	16 7 pm AA	17 Noon Friday Bible Study 1:30 pm Hand & Foot Cards	Noon- 2pm Pumpkin Patch Party			
19 10 am Worship 11 am Social Time	20 5 pm Xpress Singers	21 11:30 am Bridge 6:30 pm Session 7 pm Al Anon 7 pm Scouts	22 2 pm Choir 3:30 Ringers	23 7 pm AA	24 Noon Friday Bible Study 1:30 pm Hand & Foot Cards	25			
26 10 am Worship 11 am Social Time 11:30 Lost Soles Walk	27 5 pm Xpress Singers	28 11:30 am Bridge 7 pm Al Anon 7 pm Scouts	29 2 pm Choir 3:30 Ringers	30 7 pm AA	31 Noon Friday Bible Study 1:30 pm Hand & Foot Cards				

# October Birthdays



4th Sandi Smith
9th Carole Massman
10th Michael Davis
10th Linda Bench
13th Catherine Lovell
17th James Moses

17th Joe Strasko 22nd Eddy Crowley 22nd John Warren 27th Jeff Chaffee 28th Jacob Borsberry 29th Vicky Bryan

#### <u>Coming in November</u>

### **Community Thanksgiving Dinner!**

The Friendship Committee will again organize a Community-Wide Thanksgiving Dinner on Thursday, November 27, from 1 to 3 p.m.

If you're not doing anything with family on that day, be sure to attend. A sign-up sheet for food donations will appear on the "coffee table" in the near future. Thanks for helping!

# Hand & Foot Cards

Fridays, 1:30 p.m.

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

#### Pastoral Care: Who to contact

Members of First Presbyterian Church, Helena who are in need of pastoral care, or know someone who is, should take the following steps:

- 1. Contact Resident Pastor Emily Cowser Church: 406-442-4775; Email: <a href="mailto:pastor@fpchelena.org">pastor@fpchelena.org</a>.
- 2. If she is not available, contact Commissioned Pastor Dianna Goodman Cell: 406-431-8964; email: <a href="mailto:eastsidedesign@bresnan.net">eastsidedesign@bresnan.net</a>.
- 3. If she is not available, contact Arlyn (Butch) Plowman Home: 406-449 -8705; Cell: 406-558-9240; email: <a href="mailto:pearlynp@msn.com">pearlynp@msn.com</a>.

You may also get in touch with your shepherd.

Join us for worship Sundays, 10 a.m. or online: www.fpchelena.org

Trivia Answer

Simon Peter (Matt. 16:18)

Stamp here

OFFICE HOURS
Monday - Friday

9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

406-442-4775

admin@fpchelena.org

Label here

First Presbyterian Church 535 North Ewing Street Helena, MT 59601 www.fpchelena.org Sunday Service 10 a.m.

Weekly Sermon on HCTV Cable Channel 189

Wednesdays at 6 pm & Saturdays at 9 AM



Spreading the Good News of Christ through Our Love, Words, and Actions