Vol. 2025 Issue 9 First Presbyterian Church, Helena, MT September 2025



Picnic music

Vic entertains the church picnic crowd with a few harmonica tunes Sunday, Aug. 24, at Kennedy Park in East Helena. (Les Cramer photo)

Also In This Bible Studies Begin, Page 2 Pastoral Care Guide, Page 2 New Mission Project, Page 4

Tour Train ride September 4

The Friendship Committee is taking new Pastor Emily on a Tour Train ride — Thursday, September 4, at 1:00 pm.

If you'd like to join us, you may want to buy your ticket ahead of time on line. Look up "Last Chance Tour Train - Helena. Mt."

The tour is about one hour. Cost is \$13 for adults and \$12 for seniors 60 years and older.

Choir Season starts Wednesday, Sept. 3!

Just a reminder we will begin the choir season with rehearsal on **Wednesday, Sept. 3 at 2:00pm**.

Our first Sunday to sing for worship will be **Sunday, Sept. 14**. Then, we won't sing on the <u>21st</u> or the <u>28th</u>.

Beginning Sunday, Oct. 5, we will regularly sing for Sunday Worship, except the LAST Sunday of each month.

We have some exciting and meaningful titles to work on.



Zach and his son repaired our sidewalks in August. (Les Cramer photo)

Bible studies

Sarah & Rebekah Bible study meets Sept. 11

Sarah and Rebekah Circles are combining this fall into one Bible study that will meet monthly.

This month's study will be at Touchmark on Thursday, Sept. 11, at 10 a.m. Visit with Merle Korizek for details.

Friday Bible study starts September 19 at noon

The Friday Bible study resumes Sept. 19, at noon, and meets at the church. Contact leader John Coefield for details.

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: pastor@fpchelena.org.
- 2. If she is not available, contact Commissioned Pastor Dianna Goodman Cell: 406-431-8964; email: eastsidedesign@bresnan.net.
- 3. If she is not available, contact Arlyn (Butch) Plowman Home: 406-449 -8705; Cell: 406-558-9240; email: pearlynp@msn.com.

You may also get in touch with your shepherd. Depending on the nature of the situation, the shepherd may be able to address the situation themselves or be the best liaison for the deacons (e.g. if someone needs meals.)

We are a caring, supportive church family, and want to assure that our members receive pastoral care in time of need. Thank you.

Submitted by Art Bumgardner, Moderator of Deacons

ear friends in Christ,

I am grateful for how you have so warmly welcomed me to Helena. From an airport welcoming party to the beautiful quilt and basket to how you have begun to invite me into your lives and stories, I have felt embraced. Thank you.

I can see why you love it here. I am in awe each day of the beautiful mountains that surround us and the big sky that boasts gorgeous sunrises and sunsets. When I was driving back from an adventure on the Hiawatha Trail last weekend, I saw the biggest rainbow that I have ever seen, and I was overcome with awe for our Creator and the creation that God has made.

As we move forward in ministry for these next two years together, I wonder what it looks like to love this beautiful place and the people who inhabit it well. How do we steward the resources that we have for the flourishing of the community of Helena?

During the first phase of my time here, I will be focusing my energy on listening and learning. I will be walking the neighborhood, trying to meet different folks in the community, digging into our church's history, and seeking to hear your stories of faith and stories with the church. Here are some questions that will be guiding my listening and learning:

Where are we and how did we get here? I wonder about where we are at in our journey as a church and about our history that has brought us to this moment. I similarly wonder about the story of our city and this cultural moment in which we find ourselves.

What is God up to in Helena? I wonder about the Spirit's movement in our city, in our church, and in our individual lives.

How might we participate in God's mission in Helena? I wonder what next most faithful steps God might be inviting us to take to join in the Spirit's work in this time and place.

Would you join me in pondering these questions in the coming months? I invite you to explore these questions with me, to pray about them, to be curious, and to be open to being surprised. I look forward to seeing what we will discern together.

Grace and peace,

Emily Cowser

The Rev. Emily Cowser

Presbytery-wide Mission Project begins

A Presbytery-wide Mission Project has begun. Each congregation may sign up to buy a specific item from a list provided to all churches.

Our (First Presbyterian Church-Helena) responsibility for this project is to purchase 10 duffle bags suitable for (5) boys and (5) girls. They need to be a nice size, not particularly large. They are available in Helena at the box stores or you may prefer to purchase one online.

There is a sign-up sheet in the Narthex. Please put your name on the sign-up sheet and buy a duffle bag. There will be a gathering area in the Narthex during September for you to place your bag.

At the October Presbytery meeting,

all items will be brought to the meeting, and everyone can participate in stuffing the duffle bags with the items. Then each congregation can take a bag back to their local governmental or tribal CPS (Child Protective Services) office.

The items to be stuffed include soap, shampoo, wash cloth, towels, picture books, sweatpants, T-shirts, stuffed animals, games or puzzles. These items have already been assigned to other churches in the Presbytery and our congregation doesn't need to purchase any of these.

Thank you so much for participating in this Presbytery-wide Mission Project. Questions? Call Carol Gneckow, (406) 422-9914.

Habitat for Humanity grateful for your help

Jacob Kuntz, Executive Director, Habitat for Humanity sent an email to John and Carol Gneckow to share with you. This was written the day following the Open House dedication, July 29:

Yesterday we celebrated a major milestone: six families became



homeowners in East Helena through our Mutual Self-Help program. Through thousands of hours of sweat equity, these families helped build their own homes and each other's. In total, homeowners contributed more than 2,600 hours of labor. Volunteers contributed over 5,900 hours, and the Precision Volunteer Corps added another 2,970 hours. Together, these efforts totaled more than 10,000 hours to bring these homes to life. That is the power of community in action. Together, we build homes, community, and hope.

Yesterday's dedication was a powerful reminder of what that truly means. Thank you to all the community partners, volunteers, donors, and supporters who helped make this dream a reality. As we continue building homes in our community, we hope you'll stay connected to our work. If you would like to support future builds, you can do so here: http://helenahabitat.org/donate/ Thank you for being part of our mission.

With gratitude,

Jacob Kuntz, Executive Director

MINUTES OF THE SESSION

August 19, 2025

The regular meeting and devotion of the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Helena were called to order on August 19, 2025, at 6:35 PM by Resident Pastor Emily Cowser.

The meeting was opened with prayer by Pastor Emily. Elder Carol Gneckow gave a devotion using a speech given in 2019 by a physically disabled camper named Skylar to a group attending a fund raiser at Glacier Presbyterian camp. Skylar started attending camp in 2011. She relies on a golf cart to navigate the hilly terrain so she can participate in the camp activities.

She noted that her favorite part of camp is the light of God you find in other people and yourself. During the two summers prior to 2019, she "was blessed" to be able to help teach Bible study to kids during her time at camp. She told of one camper who at the end of the week hugged her. The camper told that before the week at camp, she didn't like God, didn't know God, and was confused by God. The camper went on to say that after she heard Skylar's and Camp Director Tim's stories about God, she knows that God loves her and that she loves God and commented, "Wow, was that Jesus guy pretty nice."

Skylar realized at that moment the impact of camp and how many kids are truly affected. Skylar is attending the University of Montana. She aspires to work at camp one day giving back the love, faith, and family hospitality she has seen and received.

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

A motion was made, seconded, and passed to give Joy Edgar and CP Dianna Goodman voice.

APPROVAL OF DOCKET: Resident Pastor Emily asked for any additions to the docket. Added "Update to Pumpkin Patch Party" to Old Business and the September Session meeting, Presbytery Mission Project 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 July 15, 2025, regular Session meeting and July 30, 2025, Called Special Session meeting as presented.

CLERK'S REPORT: The Clerk presented a painting of a mountain scene given to the Interim Pastor to Sunrise Church Dave Anson and his wife by Rose Leavitt to help decorate the Manse. The Ansons have donated the painting to the Session of FPC Helena in memory of Rose. Session is to determine what is done with it, i.e., offer it to Rose's "adopted" family, raffle it to the congregation, hang it in the church, or ????. A motion was presented, seconded, and passed to hang the painting in the church.

| Active Membership as of June 30, 2025 | 94 |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| Deaths: Sally Klein 07/17/2025 | |
| Rose Leavitt 07/21/2025 | |
| Judy Bayless 07/30/2025 | |
| Active Membership as of July 31, 2025 | 91 |

RESIDENT PASTOR'S REPORT:

Pastor Emily attended all Committee meetings this month.

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

Pastor Emily will be at a conference starting September 21 after worship and return September 26.

She attended communion at Touchmark with several of the Deacons.

She was involved in some one-on-one and small group encounters with several church members.

Visited with Darlene and Dave McNay and their family.

Pastor Emily plans to learn about our neighbors within one mile as outlined in a Presbytery Foundation study done during the preliminary stages of the pastoral search.

| Communion | Total | Breakout | |
|-----------|-------|-------------------------------------|--|
| July | 77 | 39 in person, 23 online, 15 at home | |

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Administration Committee: Chair Jim Meyer reported. A written report was submitted to Session.

Wanda Jewell attended the meeting and was given voice.

The prior month's committee minutes have been accepted by Session.

The financial report was reviewed. It was noted that net operating revenue for July was \$12.095 bringing the YTD net revenue to \$23,216. For

the year, we have received 63% of our projected (budgeted) income, while expenses are at 43% of budgeted. (58.3% of the year is gone). The Building Fund is listed as negative and funds will be transferred as appropriate.

The Vanguard accounts increased by \$7,762.60 for the month. The YTD income is \$13,673.27.

The Memorial Committee: did not meet.

ACTION ITEM: Recommend to Session that Wanda Jewell be added to the committee. Motion was approved.

Discussed the upcoming financial stewardship campaign anticipated to take place in October or November. Wanda Jewell and Jim Meyer will work on the letter to the congregation.

The Pumpkin Patch Party was discussed. We will add a cake walk as an activity to the ring toss. Live music and additional food offerings were also suggested.

Next meeting: September 10 at 4:00 PM.

Building and Grounds Committee: Chair "Butch" Plowman reported and a written report was submitted to Session.

Building committee project costs to date:

Kitchen renovation: Total Renovation costs \$10,182.00

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

Main Entry Way patches: Total costs \$2,300.00

Gutter Ice Jam and Bell Tower Drain: Ascension Electric bid \$10,997.50

Sidewalk repair: \$21,486 estimate

Known plus Estimated total costs: \$65,883

Resources:

Kitchen Fund (-\$47415)

Vanguard Funds:

Sigrid Underdahl \$45,166

Building Reserve \$54,391

Pending Challenges:

The electrician working on the heat cable/ice dams reported problems with the roof near the bell tower.

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.

There is interest in changing our internet/phone provider. Concerns about new equipment needed and infrastructure upgrades through rock walls.

Next Meeting: September 10 at 10:00 AM

Christian Education Committee July 14, 2025: CP Dianna Goodman reported. A written report was submitted to Session.

The committee needs to prepare a budget for Session's review/approval.

They are looking at hiring a Nursery Attendant for Sunday Worship services.

Dianna and Vicky will plan for a Vacation Bible School during Summer 2026.

They are discussing ways to attract youth for planned youth program. Also discussed space for a Youth Program.

The Committee wishes to have Scholarships return to their control.

Next Bible study will start toward the end of September and be on Hebrews.

Christian Education Committee August 11, 2025: CP Dianna Goodman reported. A written report was submitted to Session.

Dianna presented the committee with a proposed budget for 2026 and requested \$3000.00 for expenses for the remainer of fiscal year 2025.

A Nursery Attendant job description was reviewed. Pastor Emily will work with Joy to present it to the Personnel Committee.

Next Meeting: second (2nd) Monday of each month.

Friendship Committee: Chair Barb Leland reported. A written report was submitted to Session.

Past Activities:

Gifts presented to Pastor Janet Potter thanking her for her service as the Interim Pastor.

A church group trip to the Buffalo Jump at Ulm.

A group met our new Pastor Emily Cowser on her arrival at the Helena airport.

Up-coming Activities:

August 24-- church picnic at Kennedy Park in East Helena following worship.

August 30—kayak trip on the Missouri River followed by a potluck at Barb's cabin.

September 4—Accompany Pastor Emily on a Helena Tour Train ride.

October 10—Pumpkin Patch Party in FPC parking lot.

Discussed restarting "Lost Soles" walks following Sunday worship.

Next Meeting: September 10 at 1:00 PM.

Mission and Outreach Committee: Chair Carol Gneckow reported. A written report was submitted to Session.

The Committee heard a presentation from Heather Greene, Florence Crittenton Deputy Development Director, and Malena Aberra, Operations Coordinator. The facility is able to provide a variety of services for families from multiple clinical professionals under one roof, including psychiatrist, therapists, case management, addiction counselors, 24/7 crisis support, peer support specialist and parenting support specialist.

The speakers gave the committee ideas of their needs such as twin-size bedding sheets, mattress pads, and crib sheets. They also encouraged members to give of their time by sharing life skills such as cooking, cleaning, and simple tasks.

The Committee has received letters of thank you from various organizations for donations recently received from the church.

Church members gave \$1,595 to the Special Pentecost Offering. PC (USA) received \$957. Our 40% portion (\$638) was given to Girls Thrive.

Carol now has the schedule for our church participation in Family Promise for the rest of the year. Bonnie Anderson and Carol Gneckow got together over coffee to discuss our future with Family Promise.

An Action Item to participate in Crossroads Prison Ministries collection for Bibles was delayed pending merging with the Christmas Angel Tree campaign.

ACTION ITEM: Permission to host Dine Out Night Event for Special Olympics November 7 from 5-7:00 pm. Motion passed.

ACTION ITEM: Permission to collect the PC(USA) Peace & Global Witness offering, September 7-October 5. Motion passed.

ACTION ITEM: Permission to collect Coffee for Vets, October 13-November 11. Motion passed.

Next meeting: September 8 at 1:00 PM

Nominating Committee: Did not meet.

Personnel Committee: A written report was submitted to Session.

Chair Jeff Chaffee will follow up and provide a list of staff anniversary dates and also ensure that all employee files are in a secure cabinet in the office.

The committee discussed the renewed recommendation from the Christian Education (CE) Committee to hire a Nursey Attendant. Discussion include prior efforts to hire a person and the need for the position.

Personnel agreed that meetings should be regularly scheduled and set for the first Monday of each month at 10:00 AM.

Next Meeting: Labor Day ???

Property Oversight Committee: Did not meet.

Synergos Committee: John Warren noted that there are a couple of optional medical benefits that Pastor Emily can choose at her option. Pastor Emily noted that she has already opted for the Dental benefit.

Pastor Emily is now enrolled with the Board of Pensions.

Worship Committee: No verbal report. A written report was not submitted to Session.

Next meeting: September ??? at 10:00 AM.

Deacon Report: A written activity report was submitted to Session.

During July 2025, one meal was provided. Six (6) cards were sent acknowledging birthdays and anniversaries and 3 sympathy cards and 2 get well cards. Six 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 7 people at Touchmark and 8 people were serve at home.

Deacons discussed and requested permission to use the preprinted church name tags. Session felt that it looks cliquish to visitors and more welcoming when everyone wears name tags on which they have printed their name.

Next Meeting: September 14 following the Worship service.

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

Old Business: Carol Gneckow asked that committees finalize their Pumpkin Patch Party plans, if they haven't already. She noted that there are other activities no one has proposed, for example face painting, if a committee needs an idea.

New Business: Carol Gneckow reported that Presbytery is promoting a mission project where. member churches are being asked to purchase age-appropriate bath/shower supplies, books, and/or duffle bags in which to put the items. The items and duffle bags are to be brought to the Presbytery meeting where the duffle bags will be filled with the items so they can be given to tribal or local child protect services. A motion was made, seconded, and passed to participate in the Presbytery mission.

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

Guest Joy Edgar closed the meeting with prayer.

The next Regular Session Meeting: September 16, 2025, at 6:30 PM

John Gneckow

Clerk of Session

MINUTES OF THE SESSION (Called Meeting) July 30, 2025

The called meeting of Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Helena met on Wednesday July 30, 2025, at 6:00 PM. CPL Dianna Goodman opened the meeting with prayer and moderated the meeting.

There was a quorum with the following Elders present: John Bryan, Barb Leland, John Warren, Carol Gneckow, and Butch Plowman. Elders on Zoom: Jim Meyer. Elders Absent: Patti Borsberry and Jeff Chaffee. Clerk of Session John Gneckow was also present.

ACTION ITEM: To ask Session approval of the revised Lease agreement for Sarah George Childcare LLC. Approval given.

The meeting was requested by the Property Oversight (Elder John Warren) and Administration (Elder Jim Meyer) committees, for Session action on a revised commercial lease with Sarah George Childcare LLC to begin operating on or shortly after August 1, 2025.

Advanced notice of the date and time of the Called Session meeting was given IAW the by-laws.

She had a previous Session approved lease, but because of Helena City fire codes and Lewis and Clark County Health Department requirements that were difficult and expensive to meet, a new lease was negotiated. The revision added a restriction of no children in diapers as part of her childcare operation.

Elder Jim Meyer moved to adjourn. Motion was seconded and passed.

John Warren closed the meeting at 6:14 PM with prayer.

John Gneckow Clerk of Session





Welcome, Pastor Emily!

The congregation welcomed Pastor Emily Cowser to FPC in August.

Backpack, sundries drive generates generous giving

The Mission & Outreach giving campaign for United Way Homeless Backpack and sundries concluded Aug. 24.

Looking at the picture, the First Presbyterian Church members and friends are awesome and so very much appreciated for your generosity! There are many homeless people who will be blessed by your ministry!

On behalf of the Mission & Outreach committee - Thank You!

Blessings!

Carol Gneckow, Committee Chair



Trivia Question:

What is "the temple of the Holy Spirit"? (1 Cor. 6:19)

(Answer on page 15.)





Installing heat cable to prevent ice dams.



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 July net giving is here:

| | July 2025 | YTD |
|----------|------------------|------------------|
| Income | \$26,897 | \$167,472 |
| Expenses | <u>\$14,803</u> | <u>\$144,256</u> |
| | \$12,095 | \$23,216 |

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

September 2025

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|---|--|---|--|---|--|
| | 1 Labor Day Church Office Closed | 2 11:30 am Bridge 7 pm Al Anon 7 pm Scouts | 3 2 pm Choir | 4 1 pm Tour Train Ride 6:30 Bridge 7 pm AA | 5 1:30 pm Hand & Foot Cards 5:30 pm AA District | 6 |
| 7 10 am Worship w/Communion 11 am Social | 8 Noon Christian Education 1 pm Mission 5 pm Xpress Singers | 9 10 am Worship Committee 11:30 am Bridge 7 pm Al Anon 7 pm Scouts | 10 10 am Building & Grounds 1 pm Friend- ship 2 pm Choir 4 pm Admin | 11 10 am Sarah & Rebekah Bible Study 6:30 Bridge 7 pm AA | 12 1:30 pm Hand & Foot Cards | 13 |
| 14 10 am Worship 11 am Social Time 11:15 am Deacons | 15 5 pm Xpress Singers | 16 11:30 am Bridge 6:30 pm Session 7 pm Al Anon 7 pm Scouts | 17 2 pm Choir | 18 7 pm AA | 19 Noon Friday Bible Study 1:30 pm Hand & Foot Cards | 20 11 am David McNay Service |
| 21 10 am Worship 11 am Social Time | 22 5 pm Xpress Singers | 23 11:30 am Bridge 7 pm Al Anon 7 pm Scouts | 24 2 pm Choir | 25 6:30 Bridge 7 pm AA | 26 Noon Bible Study 1:30 pm Hand & Foot Cards | 27 |
| 28 10 am Worship 11 am Social Time | 29 5 pm Xpress Singers | 30 11:30 am Bridge 7 pm Al Anon 7 pm Scouts | | | | |

September Birthdays



2nd Bob Korizek
6th Lonna Weidemann
14th Marie Fuhrmann
21st Bruce Luke
21st Bonnie Belden
22nd Kya Clausen
25th Terry Healow

26th Tyler Kaiser 26th Zachary Kaiser 27th Steve Granzow 30th Mark Goodman 30th Mike Swisher 30th Art Bumgardner



September Anniversaries

2nd Barrie & Bill Heinecke 4th John & Kay Warren 20th John & Vicky Bryan

Ongoing collections

Helena Food Share

Creating a Hunger-Free

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.

<u>Cover photo:</u> Autumn leaves at Mount Helena Trailhead

Memorial Service

for

David McNay Saturday, Sept. 20



at 11 am. at FPC Helena

Reception to follow.

Join us for worship!

Sundays, 10 a.m. or online @ www.fpchelena.org

Trivia Answer

Your body.

Stamp here

admin@fpchelena.org

Weekly Sermon on HCTV Cable Channel 189

Sunday Service 10 a.m.

Wednesdays at 6 pm & Saturdays at 9 AM

406-442-4775

Label here



Spreading the Good News of Crrist trrough Our Love, Words, and Actions

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

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

OFFICE HOURS