



# First Presbyterian Church

# The Mustard Seed

## NEWSLETTER

Vol. 2023, Issue 1 First Presbyterian Church, Helena, Montana January 2023

### *Christmas blessings*

Clockwise from right: FPC group gathers to bring a bread basket to our new neighbors at Temple Emanu-El. Backpack donations cascade below the Christmas tree. Art Bumgardner helps assemble Christmas baskets for members and friends of the congregation.



*More pictures included in the email newsletter.*

If you aren't receiving an emailed edition, but would like to, please let us know.



*We'd be happy to send one to you.*

### *Happening at Camp*



### *Online Epiphany Bible Study*

Glacier Camp is offering an online Epiphany Bible Study, exploring the Book of James.

**Beginning Sunday, January 15, at 5 p.m.**

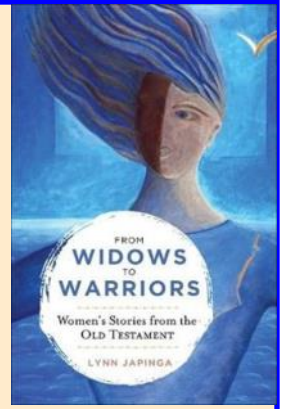
Contact Camp Director Tim Lanham to be added to the email list for this study: Email: [timothy@glaciercamp.org](mailto:timothy@glaciercamp.org)

Women's Study:

## 'From Widows to Warriors: Women's Stories from the Old Testament'

*by Rev. Dr. Lynn Japinga*

We will get acquainted with our foremothers in the faith in all their messy, yet redeemable, humanity. This Bible study introduces and retells every female character who contributes to one or more Old Testament stories, diving deeply into what each woman's story means for us today with questions for reflection and discussion.



### **Two opportunities! Sign up for 1.**

#### **Tuesdays (in person)**

1:00pm - 2:15pm

Beginning on Jan. 10, 2023, until Feb. 21, 2023

#### **Mondays ZOOM only**

6:30pm - 8:15pm

Beginning on Jan. 9, 2023, until Feb. 20, 2023

The book is available in paperback or Kindle. Please let me know which format you prefer by email ([pastor@fpchelena.org](mailto:pastor@fpchelena.org)) or call the office.

*Pastor Janet*

## **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

**Tuesdays, January 3 & 17, 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.

### Church Potluck

**Sunday, January 29, after the service**

Bring any item: hot dish, dessert, salad, rolls, etc.

# *From the Pastor's Desk*

Happy New Year!

How do you celebrate the new year?

When we lived in Illinois, our tradition was to invite my side of the family to come on Jan. 1. They would arrive around 1:00 pm to spend the afternoon. It was our time to celebrate Christmas and the New Year together. We'd serve a big meal, the cousins would play, the dogs would bark, football would be on the tv (though no one really watched it), an argument about politics would break out but overall, we would enjoy our company. We were grateful to be together. Those are good memories.

But life changed... the cousins grew up and moved away. And then we too moved out west.

Our New Year's celebration changed. Now, it's different every year!

We all know change is a way of life. Change is good when we are the ones who decide how to change or what to change. It's not fun or welcome when change is imposed on us, when we have no control over what is different or it happens without warning.

Here in the church, we like our routines, our patterns and traditions just as they are, just as they have always been. We remember when the pews were full with influential, powerful people and children were in all the classrooms. The parking lot was full during the week with circles, committee meetings, and children's programs. A large bank balance and high attendance numbers provided the crucial evidence of a successful church. We are grateful for those memories, even as we grieve the losses and changes.

Here we are, ready to celebrate and joyfully enter 2023.

We do this because we remember:

God is still here.

The steadfast love of the Lord never ends, it endures forever.

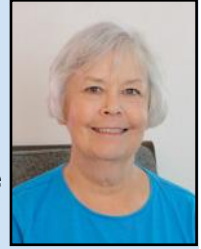
Faithful people still praise and worship God every Sunday at 10:00 am. Ministry and mission of FPC still happens! Coupons are collected, mission funds distributed, Deacons visit, and bread is broken.

We remember the past with gratitude as we look with hope and excitement to the future.

Please join me on New Year's Day, January 1, 2023, to celebrate the Lord's Supper and hear God's unchanging message: " Be Not Afraid!"

In Christ alone,

Pastor Janet



Rev. Janet Potter

# Snapshots from the Season



Jeff from United Way gathers backpack donations collected at FPC.



Top: Manger scene at the base of the altar.

Above: Carol and John Gneckow put the finishing touches on a gift basket.



The gift basket crew!



Mary Stiles welcomes you to social time.



BJ Burns and Pearle Plowman assemble gift baskets.



Mary Brainard, Candace Coefield, Carol Gneckow and Carole Massman



Jim Meyer, Mark Goodman and Ward Stiles chat during social time.



Above and to the right: A group from FPC took a gift of bread to our new neighbors at Temple Emanu-El, and visited with Rebecca Stanfel, president of the Montana Jewish Project.



# Fellowship Committee seeks your activity ideas

Fellowship Committee members, along with Pastor Janet, had a mini-brainstorming session in December. What activities can we add?

Events we've had in the past include: walking around Centennial Park together once a week, going to a ballgame in the summer together, taking a trip (possibly in the church van — or carpool) to an event in another Montana town, bowling together, showing a movie — with popcorn — in Richardson Hall.

Here's an idea for next summer:  
Pickleball lessons from Barb.

The committee decided to put out a sheet on the coffee table during January, asking for ideas from you! Please look for it and give us your thoughts.

Thanks!

*Barb Leland & the Fellowship Committee*



## *Warm Hearts*

“Warm Hearts” is a drive for new blankets and towels to gift the poor on Valentine’s Day. The drive, which begins December 31 and ends January 29, is an ecumenical ministry of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Associates of Helena.

Donated new **twin-sized** blankets, bath towels, hand towels and washcloths will be collected during January and distributed through organizations such as The Willis Cruse House, Family Promise, God’s Love, Florence Crittenton Home, Good Samaritan Ministries, Rocky Mountain Development Center, The Friendship Center and YWCA.

Please help us fill the box which has been placed in the Fellowship area.

**MINUTES OF THE SESSION**  
**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (PCUSA)**  
**HELENA, MONTANA**  
**December 20, 2022**

The regular meeting of the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Helena was called to order on Tuesday, December 20, 2022, at 6:30 PM by Reverend Janet Potter. Pastor Janet opened with prayer.

Pastor Janet read John 1 1:8. She then told of a young woman who works at the Cooney Health Center and attends the Tuesday morning worship that Pastor Janet conducts there. The woman uses her lunch hour to attend the service. Pastor Janet has been quite impressed by the woman’s commitment.

Pastor Janet moderated the meeting.

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

**APPROVAL OF DOCKET:** The docket was amended to include information on the Mission Outreach Team, the 2023 budget, the alarm system, and the January 8 joint Session/Board of Deacons meeting. 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 November 15, 2022, Session meeting as presented.

**CLERK’S REPORT:**

<b>Membership as of October 31, 2022</b>		<b>100</b>
<b>Membership as of November 30, 2022</b>		<b>100</b>

The Clerk reported that FPC received thank you notes for donations from Good Samaritan Ministries, God’s Love, Intermountain, and Food Share.

In December, eight (8) people plus Pastor Janet visited the Temple Emanu-El, the Jewish Temple across the street. We welcomed them to the neighborhood and gifted them with loaves of bread prepared by BJ Burns and Joy Edgar. To celebrate our visit and gifts, FPC was presented with a small Menorah.

Pastor Janet is officially employed by FPC having affixed her signature to the contract in early November. The Clerk of Session and the Chair of the Presbyterian COM also signed the contract.

FPC has hired an attorney in the firm of Browning, Kaleczyc, Berry, and Hoven to represent us in the Declaratory Judgement filing in court by Farmers and Truck Insurance Companies. They are asking the court to concur that they have no contractual requirement to represent FPC in the liability suit against the eighteen Glacier Presbyterian churches resulting from the deck collapse at Glac-

## **Session Minutes (continued from page 7)**

ier camp. Elder Jeff Chaffee is the contact person for questions or information related to this legal issue.

Truck Insurance Company has extended the date for receiving a response from FPC to February 15, 2023. They also have removed Elroy Letcher, Mike Davis, and Carol Gneckow as defendants to the action.

As to the suit filed against the eighteen (18) churches over liability for the deck collapse, negotiations toward a settlement are still ongoing. Elder “Butch” Plowman is the person to contact with questions.

Annual committee reports are due in the church office January 15, 2023, so that Julie can prepare the packet for the annual congregational meeting in February.

**INTERIM PASTOR’S REPORT:** Pastor Janet reported her activities during November. They include:

Leading weekly worship at Cooney Health Center

Leading a discussion group, based on this year’s Advent devotional book.

Helping decorate the Sanctuary and fill the Deacon Christmas gift baskets.

Attending committee meetings

Meeting with various church members and friends of the congregation.

Visiting shut-ins and those that are hospitalized.

c. Communion	<b>52</b>	30 in person, 19 online, 3 at home	
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### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

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

Chairman Jim Meyer opened the meeting with prayer.

Jim reported that the church has learned that although Pastor Janet is classified as retired, since she is temporarily filling a pastoral role and receiving pay, the Board of Pensions requires FPC to pay 12% of her effective salary into funds under the status of “Post Retirement Service.”

Also, FPC needs to appoint a Board of Pensions representative to replace Pastor Wipperman.

**ACTION ITEM: Appoint John Warren as the FPC representative to the Board of Pensions. Motion carried.**

Treasurer Leo Potter reported FPC has a net operating income year to date of \$7907.

Treasurer Leo Potter presented the proposed budget for 2023. Because of a decrease of \$7000 in the Richardson Trust funds and the addition of funds for the Board of Pensions, the money needed to meet expenses of \$260,584 is \$35,565



with projected income of \$225,019.

**ACTION ITEM: Approve the proposed budget of \$260,584 for 2023. Motion passed.**

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.

Clean Freak has notified us that the hourly rate for their services is being increased from \$38 per hour to \$45 per hour. They will be notified to reduce their services from 3 days per week to 2 days per week.

Water damage in the north entrance foyer has been repaired.

The building alarm system has been activated. Pastor Janet and Julie have been trained in its operation.

Light bulbs in the small chandeliers in the Sanctuary have been replaced and wiring improved.

The old part of the church is qualified for designation on the National Historical Registry. However, some Session members have concerns that rules may hamper any changes to the building. We will try to have a person come to a meeting to discuss this issue and other questions.

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 final Pumpkin Patch report is done. Gross receipts: \$5002.75. Expenses: \$3770. Net: \$1232.75. Boy Scouts (30% of net): \$370. And Pumpkin Patch: \$862.75

Les Cramer has volunteered to initiate a youth program in January with him as the leader.

Committee Member Les Cramer closed the meeting with prayer.

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

Pastor Janet opened the meeting with prayer.

Another fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) Sunday potluck will be held on January 29, 2023.

Committee Member Linda Bench closed the meeting with prayer.

**Memorial Committee:** The Committee assisted with the purchase of an easel for the Bible in the Sanctuary.

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

## **Session Minutes** *(continued from page 9)*

Chairperson Karen Witte opened the meeting with prayer.

FPC donated \$355 to Food Share during November. Town Pump matched the amount for a total donation of \$710.

In addition to budgeted donations, the Committee also approved donations for Mission Support to Reverend Courtney Arntzen, and PCUSA and Undesignated Mission Funds to the Salvation Army and the United Way Backpacks for the Homeless program.

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.

The Committee also completed the outline of a **Mission Outreach Team** with the purpose “To respond or orchestrate community events in order to build new relationships, with a strong desire for events which will build relationships with youth.” Events of Interest will be brought before the Mission Committee for discussion and approval. Ideas, input, and feedback from the congregation are invited.

Pastor Janet closed the meeting with prayer.

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

The committee has completed the list of Elder and Deacon candidates for the class of 2026. The Session will have nine (9) serving Elders and Board of Deacons will have ten (10) serving Deacons beginning June 2023.

**Personnel Committee:** Elder Rose Leavitt submitted a written report to Session.

Elder Jeff Chaffee opened the meeting with prayer.

Pastor Janet reported that the Board of Pensions wants payments equal to 12% of her effective salary.

Pastor Janet also noted that FPC needs to replace Pastor Wipperman on the Board of Pensions. The information was passed on to the Admin Committee.

Lastly, Pastor Janet noted the issue of FPC employees and federal holidays needs to be clarified in the Personnel Policy manual. This was discussed in Session and referred back to committee for further consideration and clarification.

**Worship Committee:** Pastor Janet reported. A written report was provided to Session along with a written report of the committee’s November meeting.

Committee Chairperson Dianna Goodman opened the meeting with prayer.

FPC will hold a Christmas Eve candlelight service at 7:00 PM.

CP Arlyn “Butch” Plowman” will conduct and preach at the Christmas Day worship service.

**Deacon Report:** Deacon Joy Edgar provided a written report of Board activities

*(Continued on page 11)*

to the Session.

Communion was served at Touchmark, and the Masonic Home. Two meals were provided to FPC members during the month. One hospital visit was made.

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

**Old Business:** Pastor Janet reminded everyone of the joint Elder/Deacon lunch and meeting on January 8, 2023. This will not be a business meeting. There will be worship and discussion.

**New Business:** A motion was made, seconded, and passed to hold the annual congregational meeting on February 12, 2023, following the morning worship service.

Pastor Janet led a discussion on the makeup of the nominating committee as outlined in the by-laws. The Clerk noted the suggestions for inclusion in the by-law changes to be brought to Session in January.

There being no further business, a motion was made, seconded, and passed to adjourn.

Pastor Janet closed the Session meeting with prayer.

**Next Regular Session Meeting: January 17, 2023, at 6:30 pm.**

John Gneckow

Clerk of Session

## 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.






## Backpacks Galore!

Thank you all for your donations of backpacks and miscellaneous requested items to fill them! At least 15 backpacks were donated for this cause!

While we may not be able to solve the problems of our unsheltered friends, we have certainly helped to provide essentials for them. And we have let them know they are valued and loved.

May God bless you for your generosity and caring.

# JANUARY 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	S
<p>1 <i>New Years Day</i></p> <p><b>10 am</b> Worship w/Communion <b>11 am</b> Social Time</p>	<p>2</p> <p><i>Church Office Closed</i></p>	<p>3</p> <p><b>10 am</b> Sarah Circle <b>11:30 am</b> Bridge <b>1 pm</b> Pinochle <b>5:30 pm</b> Personnel <b>7 pm</b> Al Anon <b>7 pm</b> Boy Scouts</p>	<p>4</p> <p><b>6:30 pm</b> Choir</p>	<p>5</p> <p><b>10 am</b> Rebekah Circle <b>6 pm</b> Flute Lessons <b>6:30 pm</b> District AA</p>	<p>6</p> <p><b>Noon</b> Bible Study <b>1:30 pm</b> Hand &amp; Foot Cards</p>	<p>7</p>
<p>8</p> <p><b>10 am</b> Worship <b>11 am</b> Social Time <b>11:15</b> Elder &amp; Deacon lunch meeting</p>	<p>9</p> <p><b>10 am</b> Worship <b>3 pm</b> Education <b>6:30 pm</b> Mission</p>	<p>10</p> <p><b>11:30 am</b> Bridge <b>1 pm</b> Women's Bible Study <b>7 pm</b> Al Anon <b>7 pm</b> Boy Scouts</p>	<p>11</p> <p><b>2 pm</b> Fellowship <b>4 pm</b> Administration <b>6:30 pm</b> Choir</p>	<p>12</p> <p><b>10 am</b> Building &amp; Grounds <b>6 pm</b> Flute Lessons</p>	<p>13</p> <p><b>Noon</b> Bible Study <b>1:30 pm</b> Hand &amp; Foot Cards</p>	<p>14</p>
<p>15</p> <p><b>10 am</b> Worship <b>11 am</b> Social Time <i>Committee reports for Annual Report due</i></p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p> <p><b>11:30 am</b> Bridge <b>1 pm</b> Bible Study <b>1 pm</b> Pinochle <b>6:30 pm</b> Session <b>7 pm</b> Al Anon <b>7 pm</b> Boy Scouts</p>	<p>18</p> <p><b>6:30 pm</b> Choir</p>	<p>19</p> <p><b>6 pm</b> Flute Lessons</p>	<p>20</p> <p><b>Noon</b> Bible Study <b>1:30 pm</b> Hand &amp; Foot Cards</p>	<p>21</p>
<p>22</p> <p><b>10 am</b> Worship <b>11 am</b> Social Time</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p> <p><b>11:30 am</b> Bridge <b>1 pm</b> Women's Bible Study <b>7 pm</b> Al Anon <b>7 pm</b> Boy Scouts</p>	<p>25</p> <p><b>6:30 pm</b> Choir</p> 	<p>26</p> <p><b>6 pm</b> Flute Lessons</p> 	<p>27</p> <p><b>Noon</b> Bible Study <b>1:30 pm</b> Hand &amp; Foot Cards</p>	<p>28</p>
<p>29</p> <p><b>10 am</b> Worship <b>11 am</b> Potluck</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>31</p> <p><b>11:30 am</b> Bridge <b>1 pm</b> Bible Study <b>7 pm</b> Al Anon <b>7 pm</b> Boy Scouts</p>				

# JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

2nd Carol Carpenter

5th Ann Swisher

7th Colleen Cleary-Boyer

8th John Gneckow

11th Carol Gneckow

18th BJ Burns

23rd Debbie Whitcomb

25th Rex Seeley

25th Sandi Clay

29th Judy Patton

## DEACON ON CALL

Patti Borsberry—439-6442

## 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.*



### SARAH CIRCLE

Tuesday, Jan. 3, 10 a.m.

(Contact: Sheryl Eriksen)

### REBEKAH CIRCLE

Thursday, Jan. 5, 10 a.m.

(Contact: Merle Korizek)

## Articles for the February

**Mustard Seed are due**

**Tuesday, Jan. 24**

## Deacons'

### Benevolence Fund

Is it the end of your pay period and you need assistance with unexpected expenses? 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 it is helping.

This is possible because of the generous contributions of the people of First Presbyterian.

God bless our donors!



## FINANCIAL DEADLINES

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

**Monday, January 9**

**Monday, January 30**

**First Presbyterian Church**  
535 North Ewing Street  
Helena, MT 59601

**[www.fpchelena.org](http://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**