

# The Mustard Seed



## NEWSLETTER

### ORDINATION/INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

Newly elected Elders and Deacons will be ordained/installed Sunday, June 7.

#### ELDERS



Dianna Goodman  
Class of 2027



Patti Borsberry  
Class of 2029



Matthew Richards  
Class of 2029

#### DEACONS



Wanda Jewell  
Class of 2029



Alysia Ryan  
Class of 2029

### THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE!



**ELDERS**  
Jeff Chaffee



Barb Leland



BJ Burns



#### DEACONS

Kathy Chambers



Jill Cook



John Gneckow

### New Clerk of Session

This month we also welcome Max Oliver as our new Clerk of Session.

Thank you to John Gneckow for his many years of service as our clerk!



Max Oliver

# Lost Soles Walk Was a Little Chilly

We had a brisk walk May 17 at Prickly Pear followed by lunch at Smith's in East Helena.



Friendship's Lost Soles walk was challenged by snowy spring weather.



## ~ Fellowship Happenings ~

**\*6/11** — Attend the Senators Game(s). A double header at 11am and 1pm. Come and look for your First Presbyterian friends in the stands.



**\*6/29** — Last Chance Tour Train at 11:00. Meet at the Train at 10:30am. Lunch afterwards for anyone who wants to go. See sign-up sheet on Coffee Table, or let Barb know by email if you're going. She will purchase a ticket for you.

**\*7/10** — The second tour of the Heritage Center with Vic Reiman. 1pm.

**\*7/25** — A trip to Our Lady of the Rockies in Butte. 2pm tour.

**\*8/30** — FPC Summer Picnic at Kennedy Park in East Helena.

### Hand & Foot Cards

Fridays, 1:30 p.m.

Never played?

No problem!

The game is easy to learn and willing teachers abound.

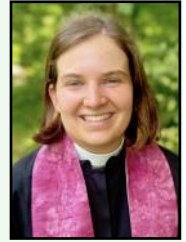
### Trivia Question:

Who did Abram take with him when he left Haran for the promised land?



(Answer on page 12.)

**D**ear friends in Christ,  
On the wilderness expedition that I led in May, I was once again reminded of the value of play.



This was my fourth year serving as an instructor on the Junior Leadership Expedition – an eight-day wilderness experience for the entire junior class at Williamson College of the Trades offered through the Coalition for Christian Outreach, a campus ministry organization. This expedition is a huge operation. Together, our group of twenty instructors took 104 students on canoeing trips on different rivers throughout Pennsylvania and Maryland.

Leadership development is the primary goal of the experience. The students, in pairs, have the opportunity to be Leaders of the Day and are responsible for getting the group down the river from one campsite to the next, caring for their peers' needs, and ensuring that our daily camp tasks are completed. We explore different leadership models that guide the students to adapt their leadership style based on the needs of their group and empower them to use their authority for the flourishing of their community. We also help the students to explore ways that they can lead even when they are not in a designated position of authority, such as through peer leadership, self-leadership, and active followership.

But even as the students grew in significant ways as leaders – learning to be vocal, check in on their peers, make decisions, delegate tasks, and stay committed until the work is done – one of the most formative aspects of the trip was play. Each year, I am struck by how playing together in God's beautiful creation is such a powerful part of this experience. From canoe tag to wiffle ball at one of our campsites with a stick as a bat to hacky sack competitions in the evenings, playing together was a highlight of the trip.

The shared peak moment for my group was jumping off a rock into the river one day. It was a cold, rainy day with 17.5 miles to paddle, and morale was low. I knew of a suitable rock for jumping from my time scouting the section of the Potomac River that we were paddling, and I pointed it out to the Leaders of the Day. At first, only one student wanted to climb the rock and jump, but the energy was contagious, and eventually, our

whole group was standing on the rock. We had so much fun jumping off the rock, and morale climbed quickly. Students described it as the moment that our group bonded together.

As I return to my ordinary rhythms back here in Helena, I find myself reflecting on my habits of play and pondering how play may be a formative practice for our congregation in this season of significant discernment, strategic planning, and weighty decision-making. For me, play in this season looks like hiking in beautiful places, rereading some of my favorite books from childhood, and exchanging letters with a friend. What might play look like for you in this season? As we play together, may we encounter God, the true Master of Play, who invites us to delight in the goodness of God's creation.

Grace and peace,

*Emily Cowser*

The Rev. Emily Cowser

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## Pentecost Celebration

The Chancel Choir and Handbell Choir provide special music for Pentecost Sunday, May 24. After the service, Max Oliver sang a Memorial Day tribute, "Requiem for a Soldier," accompanied by Ann Swisher.



**MINUTES OF THE SESSION**  
**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PC(USA)**

**May 19, 2026**

The regular meeting of the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Helena was called to order on May 19, 2026, at 1:25 PM by Pastor in Residence Reverend Emily Cowser who moderated “Dwelling in the Word” and subsequent Session meeting.

Reverend Cowser handed out a page of Scripture from 1 Kings 19:8-18 for the “Dwelling in the Word” for this month. The verses were read aloud twice and members were asked what stood out to them.

Treasurer Leo Potter opened the meeting with prayer.

There was a quorum with the following Elders present: Carol Gneckow, Patti Borsberry, Jim Meyer, Jeff Chaffee, Barb Leland, and John Bryan. Excused were Elder Arlyn “Butch” Plowman and Deacon Ward Stiles. Clerk of Session John Gneckow and Treasurer Leo Potter were also in attendance. Max Oliver attended as a guest and future Clerk of Session beginning June 1, 2026.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed to give Max Oliver voice during the meeting.

**APPROVAL OF DOCKET:** Reverend Cowser added a discussion on the future of the church, restructuring of the church committees, and selection of new committee chairs. She then asked if there were any other changes to the docket. Hearing none, a motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the docket as amended.

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

- a. Approve the minutes of the March 17 regular Session meeting.
- b. Accept the reports of committees and Deacons.

The Clerk asked to have the Administration Committee report removed from the Consent Agenda and considered separately.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the consent agenda as presented with the Administration Committee report to be considered during committee reports.

**CLERK’S REPORT:** The Clerk read a letter from Steve and Linda Granzow asking to be removed from the Active rolls of FPC Helena.

Former member and Elder Marshall Gingery passed away in Virginia in April.

<b>Active Membership as of March 31, 2026</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Active Membership as of April 30, 2026</b>	<b>78</b>

## RESIDENT PASTOR’S REPORT:

- Noted is that we had a good turn out for the home Communion training during which we explored the theology of the sacraments and Communion. We also explored the practicalities of extending Communion to folks at home.
- She has been working on training for deacons and elders. The deacons will gather on June 3rd to explore pastoral care and listening skills. We will meet on June 15th to explore discernment. Plan is to ordain and install deacons and elders on June 7th.
- The Strategic Planning Team has been informed that we are unable to begin forming a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) until we are closer to the end of Pastor Emily’s term. We are working on making plans regarding strategic goals and then have a town hall this summer to update the congregation.
- She has been working on ideas for restructuring our church governance to reflect the realities of our membership. She is wondering how the restructuring has been received by committees and congregation at large.
- Office Manager Julie Young is requesting permission to go through the old files in the filing cabinets looking for outdated or duplicates which can be destroyed and/or discarded. Max Oliver asked that he be allowed to review the files being considered for removal before any are thrown out or destroyed.

In April she was involved in:

- Meeting with her coach, counselor, her 1001 apprenticeship cohort, a mentor, her spiritual director, a pastor colleague, and two other pastors.
- Attended the meetings of the Strategic Planning Team
- Facilitated home Communion training.
- Attended the Habitat for Humanity event celebrating the progress on the plans for the new housing developments.

<b>Communion</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Home</b>
April	60	1

Pastor Emily posed the question, “What is an essential part of FPC’s call to bear witness to the good news of God?” Or “if we didn’t \_\_\_\_\_, we

wouldn't be FPC Helena." Answers included to continue doing what we are or have been doing, i.e., providing the Thanksgiving dinner to anyone who chooses to come, supporting other nonprofits in the area.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Administration Committee:** Treasurer Leo Potter served as interim chair in the absence of Chair Jim Meyer. A written report was submitted to Session.

The monthly General Fund Profit was high due to two larger pledges being paid in full for the year.

The Vanguard accounts are presently doing very well and the FPC budget is tracking as it should for this part of the year.

**The Memorial Committee:** The committee did not meet in February. It was proposed to Session that the Memorial Committee be designated as a Team.

### **Committee Old Business:**

Butch reported that there was a meeting with a company to upgrade the FPC internet equipment. After a new audit of the current equipment and wiring, FPC received a cost estimate of \$2800. We are moving forward with the upgrade.

Leo reported that all the requirements were met for the signees and account transfers for a new Vanguard account which has a higher interest rate, better transaction times and FDIC protection. Leo proposed keeping savings account \$40k in FPC checking and moving \$80k to the new account and moving \$100k from FPC savings account leaving approximately \$65k in the FPC savings account. A motion was made, seconded and passed to do as Leo proposed.

Session briefly reviewed whether the transfer of the amount of money proposed for the transfer to the new Vanguard account needs Session approval.

Internet provider TDS still does not have a date for connecting the church to their system.

### **Committee New Business:**

Leo is doing a long-range budget review looking for possible adjustments.

The annual accounting review has not been done for this year.

Jim is looking at some alternative sources of income. He is hoping to provide the congregation with some explanatory materials regarding the availability and use of specialty funds for donations to the church.

Butch noted that Pastor Emily is proposing a restructuring of the FPC committees. More details will be coming in June.

All the pieces are in place for the Darla's Child Play Preschool to start using the church space in June.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed that the Administration Committee report should be accepted as presented.

**Next Meeting:** June 9 at 1:00 PM

**Building and Grounds Committee:** Did not conduct any business due to the lack of a Quorum.

**Next Meeting:** June 10 at 10:00 AM

**Christian Education Committee:** Did not meet.

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

### **Up-coming Activities:**

May 31 Fifth Sunday potluck.

June 29 A Last Chance Tour train ride at 11:00 with lunch to follow.

July 10 Tour of the new Montana Heritage Center at 1:00 PM.

July 25 A trip to Our Lady of the Rockies in Butte for the 2:00 PM tour.

**ACTION ITEM: Approve the July 25 tour of the Lady of the Rockies. Motion carried.**

**Next Meeting:** June 2026.

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

Chair Carol Gneckow opened the meeting by reading a poem "A Blessing for the Seekers" by Rev. Sarah Speed.

### **Committee Old Business:**

Family Promise, Comfort Food Challenge: FPC collected \$1,135 in donations and ticket sales which was given to Family Promise April 21.

The next Family Promise host week will be May 24-30. Bonnie suggested that FPC pause our participation following this host week. The Mission Committee will put a memo in the Mustard Seed asking if anyone in the congregation would be willing to be the coordinator for the host weeks for Family Promise.

Girls Thrive: Dianna Goodman will act on our behalf for activities. FPC will assist Girls Thrive in the sorting and distributing of athletic clothes May 18, 19, and 20.

Tour of Intermountain Campus: Friday, May 29 at 10:00-11:30 AM. There will be a sign- up sheet for those interested in going.

### **Committee New Business:**

Women's Retreat in the Rockies: there will be a women's retreat at Glac-

ier Camp during the first weekend in August. Speakers will be from Inter-mountain Children's Home discussing the nature of trauma in the lives of children and families and how this is being successfully treated at Inter-mountain.

Several fun activities are planned along with fellowship and a time to worship together. Registration forms will be available in June.

**Next Meeting:** June 8, 2026, at 1:00 PM

**Nominating Committee:** Did not meet.

**Personnel Committee:** Chair Jeff Chaffee reported. A written report was submitted to Session.

Mary and Pastor Emily completed Julie Young's staff evaluation in April. Ann Swisher's evaluation is in June. Matt will ask Pastor Emily about it, and suggest Les be included. Mary offered to be part of the review, if requested.

### **Rewrite of FPC Policies**

The Antiracism policy has been completed and approved by Session.

A rough draft of the Child, Youth, and Adults with Vulnerabilities Protection Policy was completed by Jeff. Matt reorganized and edited the draft to be more useful for FPC Helena.

The committee discussed the requirements for staff and volunteer training before any upcoming events involving youth, such as the Pumpkin Patch Party in the fall.

We discussed whether we need separate policies on Sexual Misconduct and Harassment in addition to the CYAV policy noted above. Matt or Jeff will discuss with Pastor Emily.

Mary Stiles is taking the lead on background checks with help from the office.

### **Committee Reorganization:**

The group discussed the committee reorganization planned for June. Personnel is scheduled to merge with Administration. Both Matt and Mary expressed interest in moving to the Administration Committee to help address Personnel related matters.

The committee also discussed recent health-related issues experienced by members of our congregation and how to best respond to these types of events. Dr. Jim Meyer and Matt will work on recommendations to take to Session.

**Next Meeting:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of June at 1:00 PM

**Worship Committee:** Chair Patti Borsberry reported. A written report was submitted to Session.

### **Committee Old Business:**

Patti noted that this is the last meeting of the Worship Committee in the current format. Starting June 1, the committee will transform into the Congregational Life Committee and be the Worship Team made up of a group of volunteers who'll support the Pastor and a newly formed committee as relates to Sunday Services during Ordinary and Seasonal months of the year. Patti thanked each member for their generous servitude of our Lord and Congregation for ensuring meaningful Sunday worship services.

Summer will soon arrive bringing Earth Day, Mother's Day, Pentecost, and Independence Day. Pastor Emily will be presenting a Synergos series titled "Deeper in Faith," Some of the information is specific to churches without pastors.

The choir will sing through Pentecost Sunday and then take a break for summer. A group of individuals will also entertain us with the FPC hand chimes during Pentecost Sunday.

Patti also shared a draft Job Description that Pastor Emily had created. Patti offered a few additions that support the team, hierarchically and duty-wise.

Summer will soon arrive bringing Earth Day, Mother's Day, Pentecost, and Independence Day. Pastor Emily will be presenting a Synergos series titled "Deeper in Faith". Some of the information is specific to churches without pastors.

The choir will sing through Pentecost and then take a break for summer. A group of individuals will also entertain us with the FPC had chimes during the Pentecost service.

### **Committee New Business:**

Patti sent an email to the group to see who is available May 26 at 10:00 AM to plan June/July/August worship services.

Les told the group that Ann found a new contact to assist with our organ issues. He is Richard Uskovitz of Rocky Mountain Pipe Organs in Colorado.

Patti gave a short report about strategic planning. Since Emily will be leaving in May 2027, the Strategic Planning Team is working on updating our Mission and Vision statements in preparation for a new Pastor Nominating Committee.

**Next meeting:** June 2026.

**Board of Deacons Minutes:** A written meeting and activity report for March were submitted to Session.

Vicky Bryan shared a devotional based on Proverbs 3:5-6 "Wisdom be-

gins with seeking God through prayer and immersing ourselves in His word.”

**Deacon New Business:**

Ward Stiles suggested inviting the new deacons to the April and May meetings. Art will contact the new deacons and invite them.

Bonnie Anderson suggested that Deacon terms be reduce to two (2) years from the current three (3) years. This will be looked at by the Strategic Planning Team.

**Board Report:**

Pastor Deacon training June 3 from 10-3.

During April 2026, no meals were provided. Eight (8) cards were sent acknowledging birthdays, one (1) card sent acknowledging an anniversary, one (1) sympathy card, and two (2) get-well cards were sent out. One (1) Grief booklet was also provided for people who lost a family member during the past year. There were no hospital visits. Communion was served to one (1) person at Touchmark. No people received communion at home.

**Next Meeting:** June 14 following the Worship service.

**Session Old Business:** none

**Session New Business:**

Pastor Emily asked the question “What is an essential part of FPC?” Answers included: a minister, a Biblical based sermon, a building, a regularly scheduled worship service which includes the broadcast of the service, pastoral care, and community involvement and outreach by FPC membership.

Because of the of the FPC committee restructuring and end of term for some active Elders, new chairmen for some committees were proposed:

- Matt Richards—cochair Administration
- Diana Goodman—Nominating
- John Bryant-- Congregational Life

A motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the proposed committee chairs.

A motion was made and passed to recognize Mary Stiles as a member of the Administration committee

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

**The next Regular Session Meeting:** June 16, 2026, at 1:00 PM

John Gneckow  
Clerk of Session



## **ELDERS & DEACONS**

### **FPC Elders**

**John Bryan**

**Dianna Goodman**

**Jim Meyer**

**Butch Plowman**

**Carol Gneckow**

**Patti Borsberry**

**Matthew Richards**

**Max Oliver**

(Clerk of Session)

### **FPC Deacons**

**Bonnie Anderson**

**Ward Stiles**

**Vicky Bryan**

**Art Bumgardner**

**Rena Bumgardner**

**Ria Caussyn**

**Carole Massman**

**Wanda Jewell**

**Alysia Ryan**



## **Girls Thrive Clothing Drive**

FPC recently donated athletic clothing and provided volunteers to help sort and deliver the clothing to Girls Thrive participants.



## **Trivia Answer**

His wife, Sarai, and his nephew Lot.

Genesis 12:5



## **Thank you, Musicians!**

To the Chancel Choir, the Ringers, Ann Swisher, and all who contributed to the musical portion of our worship setting this past season, including Merle Korizek, Barb Leland, Mike Swisher, Pastor Emily, Vic Reiman, Lee Harrison, and others who enhanced our efforts:

We appreciate your kindness!

- Les Cramer, Director of Music and Media



# JUNE 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sa
	<b>1</b> <b>5 pm</b> Xpress Singers	<b>2</b> <b>Noon</b> Bridge <b>7 pm</b> Al Anon <b>5:30 pm</b> Scouts	<b>3</b> <b>10 am-3 pm</b> Deacon Training  <b>6:30 pm</b> Bridge	<b>4</b> <b>Noon</b> Bridge <b>7 pm</b> AA	<b>5</b> <b>8 am</b> Preschool Graduation <b>1:30 pm</b> Hand & Foot Cards <b>5:30 pm</b> Scouts	<b>6</b>
<b>7</b> <b>10 am</b> Worship w/Communion <b>11 am</b> Social	<b>8</b> <b>1 pm</b> Mission <b>5 pm</b> Xpress Singers	<b>9</b> <b>Noon</b> Bridge <b>1 pm</b> Admin <b>7 pm</b> Al Anon <b>5:30 pm</b> Scouts <b>6-8 pm</b> Childs Play Open House	<b>10</b> <b>10 am</b> Building & Grounds <b>1 pm</b> Congregational Life <b>6:30</b> Bridge	<b>11</b> <b>11 am &amp; 1 pm</b> Senators Games <b>Noon</b> Bridge <b>7 pm</b> AA	<b>12</b> <b>1:30 pm</b> Hand & Foot Cards	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b> <b>10 am</b> Worship <b>11 am</b> Social Time <b>11:15 am</b> Deacons	<b>15</b> <b>All Day</b> Session Retreat <b>5 pm</b> Xpress Singers	<b>16</b> <b>Noon</b> Bridge <b>1 pm</b> Session <b>7 pm</b> Al Anon <b>5:30 pm</b> Scouts	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> <b>Noon</b> Bridge <b>7 pm</b> AA	<b>19</b> <b>1:30 pm</b> Hand & Foot Cards	<b>20</b>
Child's Play Summer Camp 9 a.m.-noon						
<b>21</b> <b>10 am</b> Worship <b>11 am</b> Social Time	<b>22</b> <b>5 pm</b> Xpress Singers	<b>23</b> <b>Noon</b> Bridge <b>7 pm</b> Al Anon <b>5:30</b> Scouts	<b>24</b> <b>6:30</b> Bridge	<b>25</b> <b>Noon</b> Bridge <b>7 pm</b> AA	<b>26</b> <b>1:30 pm</b> Hand & Foot Cards	<b>27</b>
Child's Play Summer Camp 9 a.m.-noon						
Spanglish Kids Summer Camp						
<b>28</b> <b>10 am</b> Worship <b>11 am</b> Social Time	<b>29</b> <b>11 am</b> Tour Train <b>5 pm</b> Singers	<b>30</b> <b>Noon</b> Bridge <b>7 pm</b> Al Anon <b>5:30 pm</b> Scouts				
Child's Play Summer Camp 9 a.m.-noon						

## June Birthdays



6th	Robert Andersen	14th	Barb Leland
9th	Leo Potter	22nd	Sally Luke
10th	Joe Steffens Sr.	26th	Allen Chambers
12th	Janet Potter	26th	Jim Brainard
13th	Barrie Heinecke	27th	Melissa Stiles
13th	Matthew Richards	30th	Jeannie Pullin



## June Anniversaries

5th	Terry Healow & Deb Whitcomb	19th	Mike & Ann Swisher
12th	Allen & Kathy Chambers	19th	Jim & Mary Brainard
14th	John & Candace Coefield	20th	Robert & Susan Andersen
18th	Steve & Linda Granzow	27th	Bill & Marti Cook



### *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 April net giving is here:

	April 2026	YTD
<b>Income</b>	<b>\$49,024</b>	<b>\$129,863</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	<b><u>\$18,400</u></b>	<b><u>\$80,778</u></b>
	<b>\$30,624</b>	<b>\$49,084</b>

The online giving program can be found on the [fpchelena.org/giving](http://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!*



Teacher Darla Jackson invites the congregation to attend the Child's Play Preschool Open House June 9, 6-8 p.m., here at FPC.

### Cover photo

Cliffs along the Smith River

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

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

**Sunday Service 10 a.m.**

**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**

**[admin@fpchelena.org](mailto:admin@fpchelena.org)**

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here

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

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