

Waymarks

Plymouth Church | Helena Montana

December 2021

The Meaning of Christmas

In all of the rush of the holiday season, it's easy to lose sight of what's really important. We get so caught up in decorating, and buying presents, and finding the "perfect" Christmas tree, because society is constantly pushing the ideals of commercialism, perfection, and the dopamine rush of getting a really great deal. But, we all know that Christmas is more than that. Jesus wasn't born so that the US economy would get an annual bump during Black Friday. Jesus came to spread the message of peace, hope, love, and joy, which is why those are the four candles that we light during Advent.

When most people in the United States think about Christmas, they often think about snow: snowmen and snow angels, frozen lakes and a white winter wonderland. But, that's only because we live in the Northern Hemisphere. For everyone below the Equator, Christmas happens in the middle of Summer. As you all know, this is my first winter in Montana, and we haven't had much snow yet. While this has made my transition much easier than it could have been, it worries me, because I know this is not what the weather is typically like around here during this time of year. I worry, because the effects of climate change are real, and while we might not think about climate change as a social justice issue, it is. The poor will be disproportionately affected by this change in the Earth's weather, while the wealthy will be able to stockpile food and water, and escape to higher ground as the sea levels rise.

In the gospels, Jesus says time and time again to care for the "least of these": the widows and the orphans, the poor and the sick, the hungry and the thirsty. While climate change often feels like it's just too huge of a problem to tackle, one easy thing we can do right now is to simply remember the meaning of Christmas. The less we buy, the less we consume, the less we contribute to the warming of the planet. So, think about what really matters this Christmas: family and friends, good works and charity, kindness, and generosity. Fill your life with these things, and you will have a wonderful Christmas.

May peace, hope, love, and joy grow in your homes and your hearts this Advent season.



~ Pastor Charles

Plymouth's Menorah Project



European Jews first came to Helena in the 1860's during the gold rush on Last Chance Gulch. They stayed, eager to contribute to business starts, and as a group were instrumental in contributing to a firm financial foundation of the early settlement. By 1890 the Jewish community was large enough to support the construction of a synagogue, the first temple between St. Paul and Portland. The beautiful Romanesque/ Moorish building, completed in 1895, still stands and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, though the owners of the building have changed frequently over the past 90 years. The current occupant, the Catholic Diocese of Helena, is selling the building back to the Helena Jewish community, now consisting of approximately 100 people.

Plymouth Church – UCC is pleased to offer some financial support to the Jewish community in hopes that the transaction will come to a positive conclusion. In recognition of the ancient Hebrew

celebration, Hanukkah, Plymouth calls this fund-raising initiative "The Menorah Project". For every \$100 raised, a candle is lit to celebrate this accomplishment. During worship on November 21, lay leaders invited those in attendance to support the effort. By the conclusion of Fellowship Hour that very day, the congregation contributed over \$800. All Menorah candles were lit!

Hanukkah ends on December 5 this year. If you would like to help, we are happy to receive your gift. Checks should be written to Plymouth Church – UCC (400 S. Oakes, Helena, MT 59601), taking care to note "Menorah Project" in the memo section. We look forward to hearing from you and appreciate your kind gesture to support another faith community.

Welcome Charles, Merry Christmas to All, Brunch

PCC will be hosting a potluck brunch after worship on Sunday, December 19th, to welcome Pastor Charles and to celebrate Christmas together. Please see the sign-up sheet on the table in the Narthex.

Women's Fellowship Christmas Program and Brunch

Women's Christmas Fellowship will celebrate at the church on Tuesday, December 14th, at 10:00 AM in the lower level. A catered brunch will be provided, and Rev. Gloria Soja will be the speaker. The cost is \$10 (including gratuity) and reservations are kindly requested by December 9th. See the sign-up sheet on the table in the Narthex. Or you may reserve a spot by calling the church, 442-9883. Checks should be made payable to Plymouth (noting Women's Fellowship in the memo section), or you can pay cash to Jennifer Thompson or Susan Butler. Bring a friend, a loved one or someone you think may be interested in Plymouth Church.

All are welcome!

Veronica's Angel Gifted to Plymouth

Veronica's angel has presided in many churches over the years at Christmas, and came to live ever after at Plymouth Church UCC Helena, MT when Roger Lynn retired from the ministry in June 2021.

Veronica Lassen (1955 – 2010) was born in the Santa Cruse area of California; she and Roger were married for six and one half years before her passing in 2010. Roger was pastor at Plymouth Church UCC in Helena, MT from 2015 to 2021.

Veronica was a mid-wife, student and teacher of non-violent communication, a dancer, an artist, a poet and mother of two daughters, Maia and Zoe. Roger relates that she grew tired of seeing blue-eyed, blonde-haired angels, and created this unique and oversized celestial creature in 2005. It is fashioned from paper, clay, fabric, wire, cardboard, paint and starched cloth.



A Season for Giving: Moderator Jan and Treasurer Pat on Stewardship

Jan: Last week, I hung some outdoor Christmas lights without wearing a down coat and gloves, or tromping around in the snow! I like to give my neighbors something festive to look at, while I enjoy their lights. After all, it is the Giving Season. My email and street mailboxes have been filled with requests for year-end charitable giving. PBS is re-running their most popular shows, interspersed with pleas for viewer support. Generally, Plymouth Church begins its Stewardship Campaign in early fall, well before Advent. However, your Church Moderator procrastinated during a whirlwind summer and fall of new beginnings. Soon, the Congregation will receive letters and pledge cards in the mail. Could compressing our Stewardship Campaign into this Season of Giving be effective?

Pat: Our congregation has a history of pledging to sustain a healthy church and sometimes, exceeding their pledges when they give. Over the past few years, our official pledges have declined somewhat but our non-pledge donations from the community have been higher, part of a national trend of lower pledging among church members. This makes the budget process challenging since we are less confident that the non-pledged donations will occur in the coming year. But we are also confident that our members will continue to show their support throughout 2022.

Jan: *Why are pledges so important to Plymouth's spiritual leadership in our community?*

Pat: In addition to contributing to the financial viability and vibrancy of Plymouth, pledges are important to our community. How does this work? As you know, Plymouth has a voice and position within the Helena community where we are known for standing up for principles of fairness, inclusion, and care for the other. Without pledges of support, we couldn't be that voice – we wouldn't have the resources or, more importantly, the spiritual, emotional, and community support to continue doing what we do.

Jan: *When do we need to develop a budget for 2022 and do you predict any increasing needs?*

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Pat: Our budget needs to be ready for the annual meeting of the church which takes place in January, according to our by-laws. The date for the meeting has not been set, but we want to give the community a month to consider and discern the role of stewardship in their lives. I'm glad you asked about increased need! We know we very much need to upgrade our audio-visual and streaming capacity. If you have "watched" church lately you know we need improved sound quality. As we return to our normal schedule of programming, we would love to be able to share what we do with the widest possible community – which includes far-flung friends and family. With high quality equipment anyone can participate in Bible study or tune into a panel discussion or lecture in the sanctuary. Wouldn't that be great?

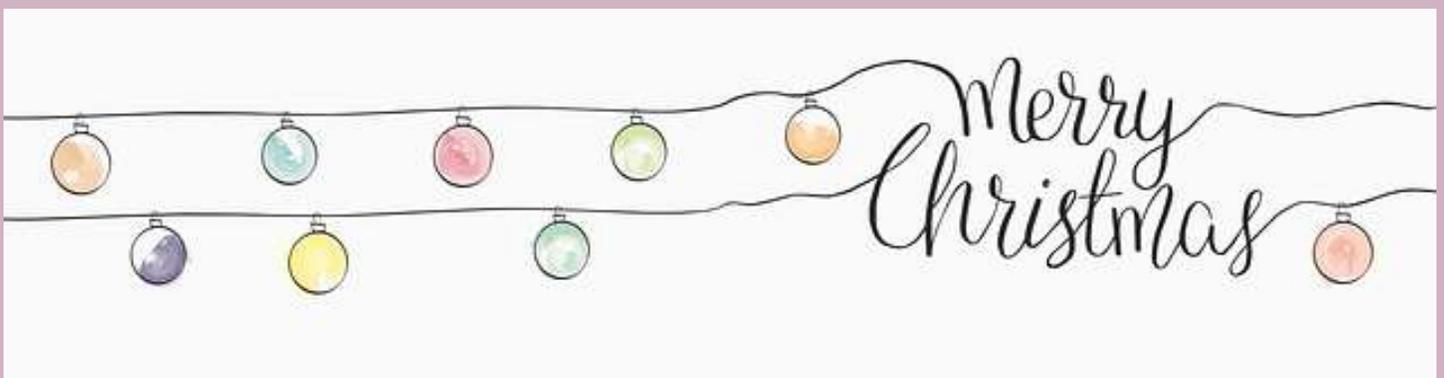
Jan: What are the most important budget categories?

Pat: Personnel, personnel, personnel! When you think about it, everything the church does depends on a person being in the right place at the right time. We have terrific volunteers, but we would be sunk without our pastor, office manager, bookkeeper, music director, custodian, and nursery attendant.

Jan: This month, I plan to turn on the Christmas lights for my neighbors every evening, send a few checks to my favorite charities, and make my yearly pledge to Plymouth. I actually hope to shovel some snow!

Pat: I will also be reflecting on my blessings of the past year, making my gratitude concrete by turning on those lights and supporting the source of spiritual nourishment I depend on.

~ Jan Clinard and Pat Christian





Caroling on Helena's Westside

Join Plymouth Singers on Tuesday December 14 as they carol in Helena's westside historic district. We will meet at 6:00 PM at Jennifer Thompson's (609 Holter St.) for a quick beverage and warm up by the fire; carol two blocks until arriving at Hal Fossum's house (631 Monroe) for refreshments; then proceed on to Mary Lou Weddle's home (520 Stuart) for warmth and hospitality. Making the return trip to Holter Street we will pass some of Helena's grandest old houses, decorated for the season.

There is on-street parking in and around Hawthorne School. If streets are slick, be sure to bring grippers and to dress appropriately. The total walk is approximately 8 blocks, with only a small portion an uphill climb. Allow approximately 2 hours for the walk and warm-ups. Song books are provided; bring your own flashlights, horses or sleighs. Invite friends; it will be fun.

In Our Prayers Today

At Home: Giles Walker, and Margaret Miller. Margy Kohl, Jay Shelden, and Nathan Schreder as they go through cancer treatment. Lorraine Hopgood, for continued recovery.

Touchmark: Evelyn Nelson, and Art and Clara Gilreath

Hunter's Point: Marlyce Taylor

Edgewood: Ed Canty

Continued prayers for Ron, Shasta, Pat, Greg, Pete McKinley, Robin McKinley, and our dedicated minister, Rev. Charles Wei.

To add someone to the prayer list, please call the church office at 442-9883 or email pccofficemgr@gmail.com.



Longest Night Service

PCC will be partnering with First Christian Church (311 Power Street) for a Longest Night Service, December 21st at 7:00 p.m. This service celebrates the darkest night of the year and will be a safe space for those struggling during the holiday season. We are looking for liturgists for this service.



Christmas Eve Service

December 24th

7:00 p.m.

Merry
Christmas

Plymouth Church, U.C.C.

400 S. Oakes St.

Helena, MT 59601

Plymouth's Mission is to nurture our congregation and the wider community with acts of love and a vision of God's image in all things.



Plymouth Church

400 S. Oakes St.

Helena, MT 59601

Office Hours

- Pastor Charles Wei: 9:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m. (Tues. & Thurs.), and by appointment.
- Office Manager Gloria Soja: 9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m. (Wed.-Thur.)
- Bookkeeper Gail Tronstad by appointment.

Sundays
10:00 a.m. Worship Service
In Person and Online

Contact Us

Church Office: 406.442.9883

Web: www.plymouthmontanaucc.org

Email: pccofficemgr@gmail.com

Also: www.facebook.com/plymouthcongregational