



The Mustard Seed

Vol. 2017, Issue 2 First Presbyterian Church, Helena, Montana February 2017

Let's Work for Justice

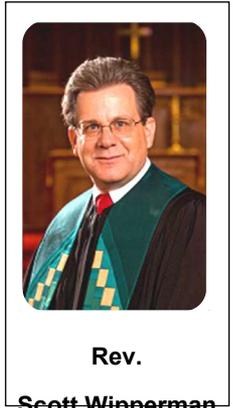
We have great hope for 2017, that it will be better than 2016. But January didn't start well. Many of us began the year with a bout of the flu. Then in mid-January we learned three disturbing facts.

The first, 2016 was the warmest year for earth yet, not just edging out 2015's record, but "trouncing" it. This is the third year in a row the earth broke all previous high temperature records. Temperatures are heading toward levels that many experts believe will pose a profound threat to both the natural world and to human civilization.

The next day we got two pieces of bad economic news. From the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau - the number of people 60 and older with student loan debt has quadrupled in the past decade. The vast majority (73%) are loans taken out by parents or grandparents to finance education opportunities for young people. In 2005, the average amount owed by borrowers 60 and older was about \$12,000. In 2015, it was more than \$23,000.

Worse yet, the increase in both the frequency and the magnitude of student loan debt has led to financial problems for some older borrowers. The CFPB report found multiple indications that people over 60 were struggling to repay student loan debt as they moved into retirement, including:

- An increased rate of late and missed payments by borrowers 60 and older.



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- A high rate of default among borrowers 65 and older (37% of federal student loan recipients in that age group are in default, compared to just 17% of borrowers 49 and under).
- Older student loan borrowers report they forgo basic health care needs more often than those without student loans.
- A growing number of Americans are losing part of their Social Security benefits due to unpaid federal student loans. Student loans are one of the few exceptions to rules that protect federal benefits from being garnished.

Then, on the same day we got an update from Oxfam. Oxfam International has released an annual report on global wealth inequity over the last several years. The numbers are startling: In the 2016 report, Oxfam said the world's richest 62 people owned as much wealth as the poorest 3.6 billion.

The update in mid-January was that they were wrong. In 2016 it turns out you only needed the wealth of 8 men, not 62, to balance the scales with the accumulated wealth of 3.6 billion people. Just 8 men, six of them from the US; from Michael Bloomberg with \$40.0 billion in wealth at the bottom of the list, to Bill Gates with \$75.0 billion at the top. 8 men with \$426.2 billion in wealth among them. The poorer half of the world consists of 3.6 billion people with \$409 billion in wealth. If you took all the billionaires on the Forbes 2016 list—1,810 people—they possess as much wealth as a full 70 percent of the rest of the world, Oxfam concludes. The charitable organization's executive director describes the disparity in wealth as "obscene." Even worse, the wealth and income gap has grown faster in America than in any other developed nation.

These trends (climate change and economic issues) have huge impacts on the earth and humanity. Both are issues of justice.

Climate change brings increased drought in some areas and flooding in others, greater extinctions, intensified storms, has great potential to cripple food production, and most significantly (heaven forbid) is leading to shorter ski seasons! And as you may expect, the poorer people face the greatest brunt of these changes (well, maybe not the shortened ski time).

Horrific income and wealth inequality, too, is a justice issue, tearing at the very fabric of societies. Those with the greatest wealth are contributing smaller and smaller percentages to the common good. Democracy is being weakened as those with wealth have “louder” voices compared to the rest of society, pushing our country and other democracies closer to plutocracies (a country or society governed by the wealthy). The gap pushes people farther apart. We increasingly interact mainly with people in our same wealth strata, meaning we know and understand less and less about people in other strata. This leads to forming opinions about the “others” based on hearsay, assumptions and innuendo - which holds true looking down on “others” in lower strata ... or looking up. And the opportunity to “move up” is slimming, often saddling those who attempt to do so with great debt for trying.

I am still hopeful for 2017. We are doing something about global warming, being one of the 195 countries participating in the Paris Climate Accord. More and more solar and wind generated electricity is coming on-line here and abroad, bringing a source of energy that doesn't contribute to greenhouse gasses. There are a few stalwarts: Wyoming has a bill in session that would prohibit power utilities in the state from using either wind or solar generated electricity.

On the other hand, Montana is putting in charging stations for electric cars, making cleaner transportation more practical to use. The US government is aggressively fining those auto makers that cheat on emissions testing. And, more and more firms and communities are setting goals to power by “carbon free” electricity by a certain future date around the world and here at home.

I am hopeful, but less optimistic, about realizing greater economic justice in 2017. The people on the high end of the “obscene wealth gap” are the ones who also have far greater influence on politics and the laws and policies that are put in place (which favor the continued widening of the income and wealth gaps). If income inequality had remained the same as it was in 1979, it is projected that those families in the 40-60% bracket (with an average household income of \$52,000) would be earning \$8,752

more per year. It is worth noting that the OT prophets are not evenly distributed over time. They come in clusters, around periods of greater income and wealth inequality in Israel. And they speak to the injustice of the oversized inequality.

We are taking steps to reverse climate change, to bringing greater justice to all those afflicted by the change. Let's also work to bring greater economic justice to our country and the world.

Peace, *Pastor Scott*



Family Promise of Greater Helena

First Presbyterian Church's next week with Family Promise will be **February 26**. Sign up sheets will be available in the Narthex. This is a mission of First Presbyterian Church, and our hope is that we can involve as many of our members as possible. We will be needing meals for Sunday and Monday dinner and hosts to spend the night at First Baptist Church. Look at the sign-up list and decide what you can do: a salad, a casserole, a gallon of milk or some cookies. There is something that should suit everyone's talents and budget.

The next one-hour training session will be February 9 at 6:30 pm at First Christian Church, 311 Power Street. This is a great opportunity to learn more about Family Promise.

If you know of someone who could use the help of Family Promise, the contact number for Nick Zollo, Director, is 465-9467.

Questions or to volunteer, call Lucille Letcher at 443-3497 or Elaine Gingery at 461-0561 or email at megingery@bresnan.net



Family Promise®
of Greater Helena

7th Annual Comfort Food Challenge

Lewis and Clark Fairgrounds Exhibit Hall
Sunday, February 12,
anytime Between 4:00 and 6:30 p.m.

*Enjoy unlimited samplings of comfort food specialties prepared by community churches and restaurants. Support your favorite entry to decide the champion!
Raffles, silent auction, music and a children's activity center.*

Tickets Required - \$15 – Children 10 & under Free

**SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND THEIR
FAMILIES OVERCOMING HOMELESSNESS**



KOINONIA WEEKEND MARCH 31st - APRIL 2nd

If you are interested in attending Koinonia weekend, please contact Lexsey Carpenter, Tonna Strasko, or Carol Carpenter, so you can be sponsored for the weekend. Koinonia is a spiritual weekend that allows you to grow in your own faith journey, worship the Lord, and make lifelong friends. The theme for this Koinonia will be Diamonds.

The Bible verse for the weekend is Romans 5:3-5 New International Version (NIV).

SUNDAY FUN DAYS!

Hello, Everyone at First Presbyterian Church! We had a wonderful month of Sunday school in January! On the 8th of January, our Sunday school lesson taught the children about the young King, Josiah, and how Josiah came to love and obey God. We learned that not all kings have to be adults, but can be children, and even babies! On January 15th we met a young sheep named *Woolina*, and *Woolina* taught the children that sheep have to be led by a shepherd, because they lack certain survival senses like smell. We learned that God is our shepherd and he will lead us if we let him! On January 22nd the children learned about the tax collector, Zacchaeus, how Jesus came to visit him in Jericho, and how his heart was changed forever. Finally on the 29th of January the children learned about Jairus' daughter who was ill. Jesus came to the city of Capernaum and healed his daughter even though there was still doubt in their hearts. The kids learned that Jesus cares for families. Not just for Biblical families, but ours too!

We have a very exciting month coming in February. We will continue to learn about Jesus' life, while focusing our lessons on love. We will be celebrating Valentine's Day on February 12th in Sunday School. We look forward to having many new memories made, and fun in the month of February!

God's Blessings Upon You,

Lexsey Carpenter

Director of Christian Education



Office Hours:

Monday - Thursday:

9 AM - 1 PM

DCE@fpchelena.com

NOTICE:

What a wonderful problem this is!!

We are having a greater amount of kids attending Sunday School now. We need volunteers to come sit in our class and be crowd control. Any help we could receive would be appreciated!

Contact Lexsey for more information!

EDUCATIONALLY SPEAKING:

The children have improved immensely in their Biblical knowledge! It is wonderful to see all of their hands shoot up when asked a question!

Presbyterian Women's Birthday Luncheon Tuesday, February 14 - 12 O'clock Noon Richardson Hall

All are invited to attend the annual PW Birthday Luncheon. Call Marie Fuhrmann, phone number 495-9154, for reservations no later than Sunday, February 12. The cost is \$5.00.

The Birthday Offering celebrates Presbyterian Women's history of mission giving. It was begun in 1922 and since that time has become an annual tradition and has funded over 100 major mission projects that continue to make a difference in the lives of women and children.

This year three different entities have been chosen to receive our birthday offerings.

1. The Family Justice Center Safe Haven for Victims of Domestic Violence, South Carolina.
2. Navajo Water Project, New Mexico.
3. First Hand Aid, Cuba.

Please join us for the dedication of these offerings, fellowship and for an entertaining program on Aprons! Wear your favorite apron, if you have one!

Game Night Returns!!

Back by popular demand.....

**GAME NIGHT at First Presbyterian
Friday, February 24th, 6pm**

Pizza - Pop - Snacks - Fun!

Bring a game (or play one of ours)...bring a friend.



| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THUR | FRI | SAT |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| | | | 1 Willing Workers 9:30 am CHOIR 7 pm | 2 Rebekah Circle 9:30 am Bridge Club 11:00 am Praise Band 4 pm District # 61 7 pm It's In the Book AA Group 7 pm | 3 Small Group 12 Noon Hand & Foot 1:00 pm | 4 * |
| 5 COMMUNION SUNDAY Small Group 8:45 am Worship & Education Hour 10 am | 6 Education 10 am C. F. C. 11:30 am (Lattes & Sundaes) Helena Xpress 6 pm Girl Scouts 7 pm | 7 Abigail Circle 9:30 am Esther Circle 9:30 am Bridge Club 11 am Personnel 5:30 pm Boy Scouts 7 pm AL-ANON 7:30 pm | 8 Willing Workers 9:30 am CHOIR 7 pm | 9 Bridge Club 11:00 am Praise Band 4 pm District # 11 7:30 pm It's In the Book AA Group 7:00 pm | 10 Small Group 12 Noon Hand & Foot 1:00 pm | 11 |
| 12 Small Group 8:45 am Worship & Education Hour 10 am | 13 Helena Xpress 6 pm Girl Scouts 7 pm | 14  Valentine's Day Worship Cmte 10 am Bridge Club 11 am Admin Cmte 5:30 pm Mission Cmte 6 pm B & G Cmte 7pm AL-ANON 7:30 pm | 15 Willing Workers 9:30 am CHOIR 7 pm | 16 Bridge Club 11:00 am Praise Band 4 pm It's In the Book AA Group 7:00 pm | 17 Small Group 12 Noon Hand & Foot 1:00 pm | 18 |

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| Small Group 8:45 am Worship & Education Hour 10 am | Staff mtng - 11 am Helena Xpress 6 pm Girl Scouts 7 pm | Bridge Club 11 am SESSION 6:30 pm ALANON 7 pm Boy Scouts 7 pm | Willing Workers 9:30 am CHOIR 7 pm | Bridge Club 11:00 am Praise Band 4 pm It's In the Book AA Group 7:00 pm | Small Group 12 Noon Hand & Foot 1:00 pm Game Night 6 pm | |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | * Feb. 4th - 1:00 pm - Leavitt & Gama Memorial Service | | | |
| Small Group 8:45 am Worship & Education Hour 10 am | Helena Xpress 6 pm Girl Scouts 7 pm | Bridge Club 11 am ALANON 7 pm Boy Scouts 7 pm | | | | |

February 2017

Greetings, brothers and sisters in Christ

Easter is coming a little late this year so Ash Wednesday is March 1. The Worship Committee and Fellowship Committee are again providing a light supper of soup, bread, and dessert for our Ash Wednesday Service. We will begin serving supper at 5:00 pm. Our service in the Sanctuary will begin at 6:00 pm. Pastor Scott along with the choir will be a part of this reflective service. We will have Communion by Intinction followed by the Imposition of Ashes.



Lent begins on Ash Wednesday culminating in Holy Week. Lent is a season of forty weekdays and six Sundays. This is a very important season in the life of the church. Please make a commitment to come and be a part of the fellowship and worship time together as the body of Christ. If you would like a ride, please contact the church office or any Deacon. Reach out to a friend and invite them to come with you.

In Him,
Dianna

Congregational Meeting Update

At the Congregational Meeting on January 29, a discrepancy between numbers in the Mission Committee's report and values in the Financial Reports in the Annual Report was raised. After the meeting, it was revealed that a preliminary version of the Mission Committee's report made it into the Annual Report, instead of the final version that had been submitted.

In the preliminary version of the report, donation values from 2015 had been put in as place-holders and highlighted to be edited later. Since these values were from 2015, they obviously didn't agree with the 2016 financial information.

Following is the Mission Committee report that should have been in the Annual Report. If any questions remain about finances surrounding the Mission Committee or any other aspect of our church, please see John Gneckow, chair of the Administration Committee, or myself.

Pastor Scott

continued next page

MISSION TEAM ANNUAL REPORT 2016

MISSION TEAM MEMBERS: Elder Melissa Stiles, Chairman, Elder Kathy Chambers, Lucille Letcher, Elaine Gingery and Carol Gneckow.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Family Promise: First Presbyterian Church is a partnering church with the Family Promise program. The Family Promise program provides temporary shelter for homeless families in our community. This church is partnering with First Baptist church that provides the housing and our church provides meals and personnel, along with the LDS Fifth Ward. We have provided meals for multiple weeks in this last year. The members of the congregation have been very willing to sign up to provide meals and host although we continue to need volunteers as well as someone willing to spend the night with the participants. We participated in the Comfort Food Challenge and helped raise \$2200 at the event.

Wheel Chair Mission: Richard Stepan has continued to work with the Wheelchair Mission in Israel full time. The church continues to support this program through prayer and a contribution of \$300 which will purchase a chair.

Food Share Program: Boy Scout Troop 228 continues to oversee the Food Share box as a service project to their sponsoring organization. They are collecting and delivering the food to Food Share. Thanks to Elaine for monthly ideas for donations.

Good Samaritan Mission: A \$2000 donation was made to the Good Samaritan Mission over several months. The church donates to Good Samaritan and refers those who come directly to the church for aid to Good Samaritan Mission. They are better able to assist those in need.

Florence Crittenton Home: A gift of \$300 was made to the Florence Crittenton Home for young mothers and babies. Elaine Gingery serves on the Board.

Intermountain Children's Home: \$250.00 to Intermountain Children's Home. Chris Haughee made a request for money to help fund a trip for kids to go to Yellowstone, to go snowshoeing and visit a hot springs. This is an opportunity for the students to work on trusting adults, overcoming anxiety and facing issues through relational skills they have learned during residence.

God's Love: A gift of \$300 was made to God's Love.

Presbyterian Disaster Relief: \$300 was given to help with disaster aid around the globe.

Sharing God's Bounty: Thanks to Jim Meyer, we were blessed with shared fruits and vegetables throughout the summer. This continues to be a

great opportunity for our church family to share what they grow. We are hoping to expand this program over time.

Angel Tree: This year the church members helped purchase toys that were donated to the “Children of Incarcerated Parents” program. Socks were also donated to a local nursing home. Options for Angel Tree donations in the future are being researched.

Special Offerings: This year the church participated in all four Presbyterian Special Offerings. One Great Hour of Sharing enables the church to share God’s love with our neighbors-in-need around the world by providing relief to those affected by natural disasters, provide food to the hungry, and helping to empower the poor and oppressed. This is done through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Presbyterian Hunger Program and Self Development of People. The Pentecost Offering helps the church encourage, develop, and support its young people, and also address the needs of at-risk children. 40% of the Pentecost offering can be retained by individual congregations wanting to make an impact in the lives of young people within their own community. This money goes towards programs for Young Adult Volunteers, Ministries for Youth and Children-at-Risk. And the Christmas Joy Offering raised money which helps provide financial assistance to current and former pastors, church workers and their families and also enables deserving students to attend Presbyterian-related racial ethnic colleges and schools.

Presbyterian Giving Catalog: The committee decided to offer opportunities throughout the year to donate money towards items from the giving catalog. This year we raised money for goats raising enough for 21.4 goats and started raising money for a fishing boat.

Memorial Bricks: Mission is working with Buildings and Grounds Committee to determine the best placement for bricks, looking into options to build a new sign at the entrance from the parking lot.

Stuff the Bus: Members of the church donated money as well as school supplies for local youth.

Glacier Camp: A donation of \$1250 was given throughout the year to help with costs for the camp as well as prayer, participation, support throughout the year.

Assisted with visitor packets and provide a free loaf of bread from Great Harvest.

Supported the Fellowship Committee with money to help with the Thanksgiving and Christmas Dinner as well as a dinner provided for Special Olympics.

Presented Mission information through articles in the Mustard Seed.

Presented Mission information through monthly Minutes for Mission.

Supported Mission of the Glacier Presbytery with prayer and a donation.

Contributions from the undesignated budget line item to those in need.

GOALS FOR 2017:

Continue support of Community Missions.

Emphasize hands-on mission projects.

Continue participation in the Family Promise Program.

Explore possibilities of working with a Mission Co-Worker (new term for missionary).

Continue to support New Beginnings activities, with money set aside for an event.

Continue donations through the Presbyterian Giving Catalog for world mission.

Respectfully submitted by Melissa Stiles

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

The Memorial Committee is a sub-committee of the Mission Committee. It consists of three or more members from the congregation. The members in 2016 were Carol Stebbins, Merle Korizek, and Kathy Chambers. The committee meets each quarter and more frequently as necessary.

The committee is charged with:

overseeing the collection of monies given as memorials to the church and recording the receipt of those gifts.

acknowledging gifts received, both donor(s) and honoree(s), with handwritten notes.

dispensing those monies for specific requests that may have been made by the donor(s).

reviewing specific requests and dispensing monies for memorials, projects, or perpetual gifts for the church.

recording of gifts received in the Memorial Book, located outside the sanctuary, for all to reflect upon.

This year the committee completed the following:

- reviewed and adopted guidelines for the committee

- provided regular reports to the Mission Committee

- sent acknowledgement notes for gifts received

- recorded gifts in the Memorial Book

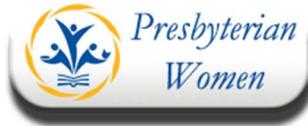
- participated in the following:

 - re-establishing and planting of the Memorial Garden

 - participated in funding for new sanctuary projector

 - provided table linens in the Narthex

Respectfully submitted by Kathy Chambers



CIRCLE MEETING SCHEDULES

| | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Abigail Circle | 1st Tuesday | 9:30 a.m. |
| Esther Circle | 1st Tuesday | 9:30 a.m. |
| Rebekah Circle | 1st Thursday | 9:30 a.m. |

FPC has received fewer pledges this year than last, and less in the amount pledged. In addition, the Richardson Trust came in approximately \$3,000 less than last year, a fund we count on for the operation of the church. If you have yet to make a 2017 pledge, we ask that you please do so. If you have already made a pledge, Session asks if you would consider increasing your pledge for 2017. Pledge cards are available by the Pledge Mailbox, just outside the sanctuary doors. We base our ministries for 2017 off the giving we anticipate receiving. Help support the ministries of FPC.

Deacons Meeting



**The next Deacons meeting will be held on
Sunday, March 12, 2017 at 11:15 a.m.**

Birthdays

1st - Charlotte Meyer
2nd - Karyn Kovich
6th - Eileen Salo
10th - Phillip Borsberry
11th - Elaine Gingery
12th - Linda Granzow
13th - Sheryl Eriksen
14th - Arlene Carpenter
15th - Linda Egebjerg
16th - Stephen Bayless,
Gail Danzer

17th - Tamara Laib,
Randy Boysen
18th - Elaine Power
19th - Chris Shove,
Annette Bertelsen
21st - Mary Craige
22nd - Jane Ogle
23rd - Jake Blade
24th - Craig Henrikson
29th - Ron Witte (*Leap Year*)

Anniversaries

1st- Les and Louise Cramer
12th- Vern & Yvonne Moody

14th- Jeremy & Janet Fadness
22nd- John & Carol Gneckow

Condolences

We would like to extend our deepest sympathies to Rose Leavitt, daughter-in-law Trena Gama and their families. Rose's husband Jerry and son, Don Gama, both passed away here in Helena on January 20th.

AUDIO/VIDEO OPERATORS

5 LaFournaise/Albright
12 Cramer/Albright
19 Albright
26 Moses

USHERS

5 Jim & Jan Benjamin
Mary Wright
12 John & Carol Gneckow
Richard & Sheryl Eriksen
19 Elroy & Lucille Letcher
Toston LaFournaise
Judy Bayless
26 Carole Massman
Kathy Chambers
Mary Wright

COMMUNION SERVERS

John & Carol Gneckow
John Coefield, Merle Korizek

COMMUNION PREPARATION

Corky Lord & Judy Birch

LAY LITURGISTS

5 Arlyn "Butch" Plowman
12 Carol Carpenter
19 Les Cramer
26 Mary Craige

DEACONS ON CALL

Need a ride, a meal or a home repair? Call a Deacon on Call:
Arlyn "Butch" Plowman 449-8705
Rena Bumgardner 843-408-5053

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

www.fpchelena.org

OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Thursday

9:00 a.m. - 5:00 a.m.

Friday

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

406-442-4775

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