

January 2024

Dear Friends,

It's nearing the end of December as I write this, just a few days before Christmas. The ground is free of snow and the temperatures have been warm. Unlike the bitter cold of last December followed by quick warming, this season has been so far a moderate one. It's easy to become complacent when things are 'moderate'. My shovels are somewhere - not where they are supposed to be. They were moved and used during the first snow in October and then never put away properly. The same goes with mittens, hats, and other accoutrements of winter.

I think about faith and church and how wonderful it is to be in a moment - today - when things are "moderate". As it should be, there are tasks to accomplish, people to visit, phone calls to make, and always enough to do, but without a sense of panic or overwhelm. The aura overall is one of sensible peace. Not the sort of tranquil peace that lulls one to sleep, but the peace in which life is balanced - at least for today.

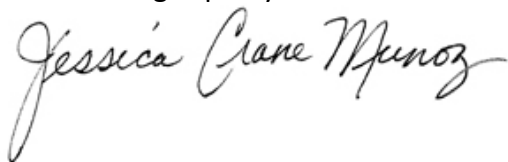
As Christians living in America, in Montana, we are blessed to be living in a moderate place and time in faith. We have a freedom of religion that is legally protected, something that is not true for many others around the globe. At the same time, we are part of an organization (the Christian church universal) that is culturally shrinking and feeling the effects of that shrinkage. Such a moderate moment may feel good but can easily allow us to slip into a mode in which we become complacent. Metaphorically, we have misplaced our shovels and haven't bothered to find them. Because it doesn't seem that there's anything that needs shoveled at the moment.

I frequently spend time when coaching clergy talking to them about metaphors and how they can be helpful. Metaphors can help us to see and name things as comparative or similar or that have the same feel about them. I wonder if our unseasonably warm - moderate - temperatures can be a metaphor for the church of the moment. (*Again, church universal not Sunrise individually.*) How can we motivate ourselves as Christians to find our winter gear and prepare for times of cold, bitterness, or trial? How do we enjoy this moment, living fully into it, while at the same time looking realistically into the future of the church? Matthew tells us to keep watch - to not let our lamps run out, in Matthew 25:

'Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ²Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; ⁴but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. ⁵As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. ⁶But at midnight there was a shout, "Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him...." ¹³Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

In church, we "keep awake" through our continued attentiveness to faith. We participate in worship but also in the other areas that feed our faith. We do not become complacent in the presence of 'moderate'. Indeed, we should enjoy it to the fullest! It's quite wonderful to be in a position of moderate as long as we remain aware that Jesus may call to us at any moment, moving us into action.

God's blessings upon you in 2024.



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SHARING OUR SUNRISE JOYS AND CONCERNS

"In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see - I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.' " (Luke 2:8-11)

It was Christmas Eve in the mid to late 1970's. The evening was especially cold and snowy with large snowflakes floating to the ground. Perfect. Exactly what I envisioned Christmas Eve to be. Bundling up three small children for Christmas Eve worship was no small task given the fact that they were bursting with excitement for what the next 24 hours would bring. We kept them occupied with talk of the lights on the tree and distracted them on the way to church pointing out the brightly decorated homes reflected on the new fallen snow. Everything right on schedule. My thoughts preoccupied with food and gifts and Santa - a picture perfect Christmas. Oh yes, and incidentally there was this birth of a tiny baby in a manger we were headed to church to celebrate.

Entering Sunrise there were the greetings of "Merry Christmas" as we were given our little hand held candles for the end of worship and found our seats in the front pew. Everything as planned. Children in their festive clothes, the tree ornaments shining brightly on the lit tree, the choir with a beautiful Christmas introit, the Christ candle lit on the advent wreath. Then it happened. The first scripture barely finished, all the lights in the church extinguished. No tree lights, no sanctuary lights. Darkness save the Advent Candles and the candles in the sconces on the pews. A hush settled in.

The ushers stepped forward to light our hand held candles and in the near darkness with the sanctuary cooling rapidly on this cold winter's night, we continued to welcome our Savior. Though the service was admittedly a little abbreviated, our attention was focused on the beautiful words of the Christmas story and the sounds from the choir especially beautiful. For this brief time it was easy to be in the stable, dark and cold, and not worry about all the "to do's" of Christmas. As the Grosse family led us in Silent Night our thoughts went back to that lonely stable on a dark night where the only light was the star above and the songs of the angels. A tiny babe was born to save us all, and the light would lead us on and the darkness could not enfold us.

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome us." (John 1:5)

For those struggling with loss, grief or illness as the new year begins, we ask that the light in the darkness come into their lives. We ask comfort for those who have lost loved ones this month, especially remembering Duncan Anderson and his wife on the loss of her father. We also celebrate the life of Steve Stephens who passed away in Florida this past month. He was a light in the ministry of Sunrise for many years and we hold fond memories of him in our hearts.

Our prayers continue for Doug Hickey, his wife Tammie and the whole Hickey family as they pray, wait and hope as Doug battles a virus to the brain. He is hospitalized in Mis-

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soula. Helen DeVoss is in Benefis hospital undergoing treatment for severe kidney and heart issues. Prayers for Helen and John. Continued prayers for Ed Maki, Tana's brother, David, and Janette's brother Mike. As well we remember Chuck Carlson, our executive presbyter as he deals with changes with the illness of his wife. Dave and Marsha Anson ask for prayers for their son, Tim, battling cancer. Janna Ferry Pfeifle continues to recover after serious back surgery and Chandelle McCullough is recovering from a concussion. Richard Benson had a fall and we pray he heals quickly.

The sounds of children's voices have filled our worship this past year, and thanks to the hard work of Erica Rusinski and Rowena Fitzgerald, a beautiful and meaningful Christmas program was presented and with the use of technology even able to include some of the children not able to be with us in person. The light of the world lives on through them.

As the new year comes and we pack away the lights from our trees and our yards, and the dark days of January are upon us, remember that just like that Christmas eve at Sunrise 40+ years ago the only light we need is that of the Christ Child. That light given to us on a dark winter's night so long ago is still with us to bring hope, joy and the promise of new beginnings.

With memories of a special Christmas Eve and Hope for the New Year, Tana

CHURCH CLEANING CHANGES AND SCHEDULE:

As part of the Session's efforts to be budget-conscious, the Session has voted to discontinue our current cleaning services at the end of 2023. This will leave it up to volunteers to keep the building clean throughout the year. Scott Shull has offered to manage the volunteer schedule and to help show and train people on church cleaning. We hope to get NINE individuals/families who are willing to help clean on a schedule throughout the year. This would be one cleaning week every other month, the equivalent of 6 times per year.

We also hope to have 1-2 individuals/households who are willing to fill in as substitutes when necessary.

Sign Up As Individuals/Households as letters A, B, C, D, etc. and then your cleaning dates are on the corresponding calendar.

2024 Cleaning Schedule	
January: Weeks beginning	
January 7	A
January 14	B
January 21	C
January 28	D
February: Weeks beginning	
February 4	E
February 11	F
February 18	G
February 25	H

March: Weeks beginning	
March 3	A
March 10	B
March 17	C
March 24	D
April: Weeks beginning	
*March 31	I
April 7	E
April 14	F
April 21	G
April 28	H

A	Shull
B	Chigbrow
C	Lambert
D	Hoseck
E	Sivak
F	Clarks & Harps
G	Forsyths & T Harp
H	McCullough

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Reminder: When donating cans to the can shed, please remember to tie the bags they are donated in. Thank you for being committed to the aluminum can recycling project! We collect \$10-20 of cans per month and this money goes to provide shipping for our pill bottle reuse endeavors.



FISH Food Bank



	Nov 2023	Year to Date 2023
Families (non-Single)	66	532
Singles	54	517
Adults	153	1,466
Children	79	616
Meals	3,480	31,230
Pounds of Food	8,403	69,602

Food Suggestions for January:

- Beef Stew
- Chili
- Tuna
- Canned Spaghetti & Ravioli
- Cereal
- Any Type of Pasta

Fish Updates:

- FISH Collection days will be moved to the 3rd Sunday of the month.
- Our next week to volunteer will be January 8th - 12th.
- If you would like to volunteer contact Maribeth Doan at 406-452-2727.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

On behalf of FISH, thank you for your kind and generous support. Your love and concern make this worthwhile organization possible. You have been generous to Fish in the following ways: contributing to the Town Pump challenge; volunteering at FISH when your week is scheduled; donating food; supporting FISH with financial gifts; helping and attending the Loaves & Fishes dinner and praying for our continued success.

FISH was blessed this year with the Town Pump Challenge raising \$28,193.39. As you can see, the support from the community and the 12 FISH partners was outstanding.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of FISH, thank you again for all your support and your partnership in the FISH program during 2023. May God bless you in 2024.

FISH Board of Directors

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January Reading List ->

1	Psalm 80:1-7
2	Micah 4:1-5
3	Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
4	Micah 5:1-5
5	Psalm 27
6	Malachi 2:10-3:1
7	Habakkuk 2:1-5
8	Philippians 3:7-11
9	Matthew 21:28-32
10	1 Kings 18:1-18
11	Ephesians 6:10-17
12	Mark 9:9-13
13	Malachi 3:16-4:6
14	2 Samuel 6:1-11
15	Hebrews 1:1-4
16	Hebrews 1:5-14
17	Psalm 89:1-4
18	John 7:40-52
19	2 Peter 3:8-13
20	Proverbs 9:1-12
21	Proverbs 1:1-7
22	James 3:13-18
23	Jame 4:1-10
24	Psalm 110
25	Proverbs 22:1-9
26	Romans 4:1-12
27	Acts 22:2-16
28	Psalm 69:1-5, 30-36
29	John 1:29-34
30	Acts 13:16-25
31	Judges 2:16-23

This month's reading list comprises selected verses from the Daily Revised Common Lectionary, Year B, for December and January.

Incoming and Outgoing Elders and Deacons - Transition time has arrived! Here are some important things to know:

The term begins at the first meeting of the new year - January 7 following worship for Deacons and January 23rd at 5:30 p.m. for Elders. Outgoing elders and deacons continue to serve up until the January meetings. Outgoing folks do not need to attend the January meetings unless they have specific information to pass on. **Elder Planning and Training Retreat Jan 20 9am-1pm**

Committee Restructured Format Begins in January

From time to time, it is good to evaluate how our committees are functioning. Over the past year, we have noticed that we have a lot of cross-over between some of our committees in terms of both projects and member participants.

In order to improve, the Session has made the following changes to our committee structure. These changes will go into place in January.

We need you!

If you feel called to serve in any of these committee areas, please let someone from the session know, or contact the church office.

Committee merges:

Mission and Outreach with Faith & Life;

Memorial with Finance and Stewardship;

Social Media with Admin/ Personnel.

Buildings and Grounds, Christian Education, Nominating, and Worship will continue to stand alone.

Attend a meeting to check it out! Meeting schedules are found in the monthly calendars and online.

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January Calendar of Events		
Jan 1		Office Closed
Jan 4	10:00 am	Women’s Bible Study
Jan 7	9:30 am	Worship
	10:45 am	Fellowship, Children’s Sunday School
	11:00 am	Deacons’ Meeting
Jan 8		FISH Volunteer Week Begins (Jan 8 th -12 th)
	6:00 pm	Faith & Life + Mission Meeting
Jan 14	9:30 am	Worship, Communion
	10:45 am	Fellowship, Children’s Sunday School
Jan 15		Office Closed
	6:00 pm	Financial + Stewardship + Memorials Meeting
Jan 16		Annual Committee Reports Due to Office
Jan 18	10:00 am	Women’s Bible Study
Jan 20	9:00 am	Elder Planning and Training Retreat (9am-1pm)
Jan 21	9:30 am	Worship, FISH Collection
	10:45 am	Fellowship, Children’s Sunday School
Jan 22		Annual Financial Reports Due to Office
		Newsletter Deadline
Jan 23	5: 30 pm	Session Meeting
Jan 28	9:30 am	Worship, Congregational Meeting (Immediately after worship)
	10:45 am	Fellowship, Children’s Sunday School
Jan 31		Newsletter Assembly

Deacons on call for January: Sandy Lambert & Maribeth Doan

Annual committee reports are due to the office by **January 16th**; **Financial reports** are due by **January 22**.

Please send them by email to the office, a word document is preferred. If you need assistance, please call the office. Thank you!

2024 Per Capita is \$63.50.
We pay per capita on each member, with monies split between the Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly.

Don’t forget, you can see all future events, and any changes to the calendar on our website at <https://www.sunrisegreatfalls.net/calendar>

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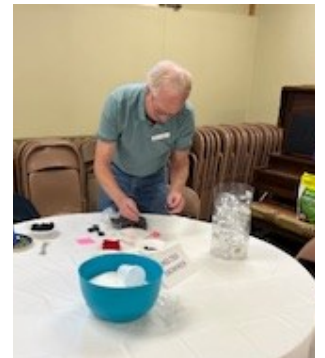
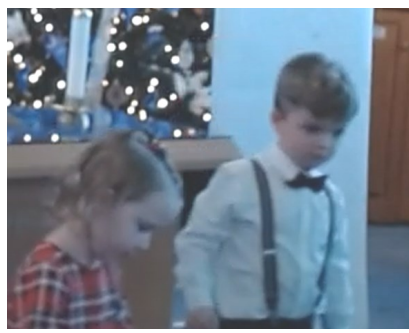
Fellowship Time Gets a Remodel:

Starting in January, we will have a once-a-month shuffling of seating. Many folks love fellowship time for the opportunity it gives to catch up with friends and acquaintances. However, it can also be isolating for new people and folks who don't usually attend fellowship.

In order to inspire some mingling, we will once a month have place-card signs on the table. Each month will have a different theme and folks are encouraged to sit based upon the place-card signs.

This doesn't mean that folks can't still mingle or move from table to table. But it will be a fun way for us to get to better know others within the congregation. And thanks as always to those who provide fellowship treats and hosting!

What We've Been Up to This Past Month - Kids Program and Kids Craft Event!



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Check back next month for new committee lists and assignments -

- Admin & Personnel: Lianna Gaskins, Scott Shull
- Buildings & Grounds: Travis Harp, Lee Hickey
- Christian Education: Erica Rusinski
- Faith and Life: Eric Chigbrow, Lee Hickey
- Mission & Memorials: Norman Anderson, Scott Shull
- Nominating: Scott Shull, Eric Chigbrow, Millie Sivak
- Outreach & Social Media: Lee Hickey
- Stewardship: Eric Chigbrow, Lianna Gaskins, Scott Shull
- Worship: Norman Anderson, Travis Harp
- Clerk of Session: Millie Sivak

Board of Deacons:

- Chair: Ember Woods
- Secretary/Treasurer: Janette Forsyth
- Beth Hoseck, Dixy Paronto, Ruth Hickey, Bill McCullough, Sandy Lambert, Marilyn Andrews, Pam Chigbrow



«City», «State» «Zip»

«Address»

«First Names» «Last Name»

Sunrise Presbyterian Church
 PO Box 6568
 Great Falls, MT 59406