

FIRST  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH

BOZEMAN



**Mission Study for First Presbyterian Church**  
**Bozeman, Montana**  
**November 2023**







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## Preface

In March 2020, the world was struck by COVID. First Presbyterian Church of Bozeman was caught in the turmoil. We suspended in-person services and other activities for 60 weeks. In August 2021, our beloved co-pastors of 25 years retired. After the disruptions caused by the COVID pandemic and the departure of our longtime pastors, we began more than ever to sense that things have substantively changed in our lives and in our world. We also struggled to “keep the ship moving” with the retirement of our long-time Office Manager and our long-time Treasurer in addition to our co-pastors.

By the end of January 2022, we had successfully filled vacant staff positions and our interim pastor had arrived. The congregation and its lay leaders, with the help of our interim pastor, embarked upon a period of introspection, study, prayer, and discernment through the Presbyterian Church USA’s suggested Mission Study Process. A key belief is our growing conviction that we are on a journey to join in what God is already doing ahead of us in our neighborhoods and communities.

Our Mission Study began during the Session year beginning July 2022. The Session, guided by Alan Roxburgh’s book, *Joining God, Remaking Church, Changing the World: The New Shape of the Church in Our Time*, came to understand that a changed world needs a changed church, and that the Holy Spirit is already at work and ahead of us. We are called to discern where God is already at work and to join in God’s ongoing work. To do that, our leadership began five essential practices outlined in Roxburgh’s book: listening, discerning, testing and experimenting, reflecting, and deciding. We began to practice listening to one another, to our wider community, and to God.

In the Fall of 2022 our Adult Sunday School Class, led by our seminary intern, focused on becoming a more inviting, welcoming, and relational church. Class activities helped us consider how our church is or may be seen by others and how we do or do not interact with our community. The class included neighborhood prayer walks to observe and listen to the people and places near our church and to help us think and pray about ways we could be more present and involved in our community. Later, in the spring of 2023, our adult Sunday School class invited representatives from local community organizations and local mission partners to worship and to Adult Sunday School class discussions to help us better listen to and understand our neighbors, particularly our neighbors in need.

As our session and members of the wider congregation began to listen more intentionally, our Session appointed a Mission Study Team to continue the work of listening and discerning. In January 2023, the Team was tasked to help our leadership address three key questions:

*Who are we?      Who are our neighbors?      Who is God calling us to be and where might God be calling us to go?*

A key component of the Mission Study Team’s work occurred in March 2023, when the Mission Study Team retained the church consulting firm Holy Cow! Consulting to conduct a church-wide survey to identify what church members consider to be our present outlook and identity and our congregants hopes for the future. That same month, the Mission Study Team organized and facilitated small group discussions. The results of the survey and discussions are summarized at the end of this report. The Mission Study process has helped our leadership to identify some promising answers to the three key questions. The answers to these questions are intended to help guide the Session in planning for the future and to understand what attributes we should be looking for in our next called pastor.

The following is the Mission Study Team’s report.





## Who Are We?

First Presbyterian Church of Bozeman is the oldest Presbyterian church in Montana, having just celebrated its 150th anniversary. It is an established church, but the congregation is progressive, open, and affirming. The congregation is unusually theologically diverse and tolerant.

The church has a tradition of excellence in preaching and music. We are committed to Christian education across the lifespan. We want to nurture our members while reaching out to the community, especially those who are in need.

## Where Have We Been?

### *Land Acknowledgement*

First Presbyterian Church is located in downtown Bozeman, Montana. The Church was established on the hunting grounds of American Indians, including the Blackfeet, the Eastern Shoshone, the Salish, the Pend d'Oreille, the Kootenai, the Gros Ventre, the Chippewa, the Cree, the Cayuse, the Coeur d'Alene, the Nez Perce, and the Crow. First Presbyterian members are aware of the history of struggles to claim the land once used by Native peoples and seek to reach out to tribal groups, especially through mission partnership projects. We have worked in partnership with two tribal communities to help with projects that the communities identified as important, and we hope to create more partnerships with tribal communities in the future.

### *The Modern Era*

The Church's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee prepared a history of the church from 1997 to 2022 to complement previous church histories.<sup>1</sup> The following is a summary our most recent quarter century.

### **Reverends Dan Krebill and Jody McDevitt.**

Reverends Dan Krebill and Jody McDevitt were called as co-senior pastors in 1997. They retired in 2021. In 2022, Rev Ashley Birk began service as interim minister.

As Rev McDevitt observed in a farewell sermon,

When I think about the fact that 25 years ago, this church extended a call to not one, but two pastors, one of whom was a woman, I am wowed by the courage and vision that must have been required at that time. . . . That was a bold step, at the time, to call a married couple with different last names to serve this traditional church. . . .

But let the record show that 25 years ago, this church wasn't afraid to try something new. Thank you for that grace.

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<sup>1</sup> "A 25-Year History of First Presbyterian Church - Bozeman 1997 - 2022" Prepared by the First Presbyterian Church Bozeman 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee, Bratsky et al (Draft).

*Timeline: A snapshot of some of the significant events in the life of First Presbyterian*

Year	Event
1872	First Presbyterian Church organized
1880	First church building opened
1884	Rev Robert M Stevenson installed as first regular minister
1897	Rev John Maclean (father of Norman Maclean, author of <i>A River Runs Through It</i> ) installed
1910	Current church building dedicated
1925	Rockhaven camp site donated to church
1947	Fellowship group formed for Montana State students
1948	Full time staff added for Montana State campus ministry
1954	Office and church school addition built
1956	Rev Paul Krebill joins staff for Montana State campus ministry
1962	Board of Deacons re-established
1972	Centennial
1989	Church building added to National Register of Historic Places
1997	Revs Dan Krebill and Jody McDevitt installed as co-pastors Endowment funds established during 125 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary
2001	Spiritual Gifts program established ( <i>see "Our Programs – Spiritual Gifts Ministry"</i> )
2002	STAYGO: Congregation votes overwhelmingly to stay in the downtown building
2003	Mission Trip cycle established ( <i>see "Our Programs – Christian Education"</i> )
2004	Major capital fundraising campaign for major renovation
2005	"Holy Mess": Major renovation of church building
2012	PresbyCats program for MSU students organized ( <i>see "Our Outreach"</i> )
2015	Session votes to permit same-sex marriage in the sanctuary and by our teaching elders
2020	Current Vision Statement adopted ( <i>see "Our Mission"</i> ) Pandemic Response Team established In-person worship and other activities suspended for 60 weeks
2021	Current Mission Statement adopted Revs Krebill and McDevitt retire
2022	Rev Ashley Birk begins service as interim pastor Pandemic Response Team dissolved PresbyCats merge with LCM campus ministry 150 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrated

**STAYGO and Renovation.**

In 2002, after extensive study and debate, the congregation voted overwhelmingly to remain in the 1910 building at Willson and Babcock, rather than move to a larger parcel on the outskirts of Bozeman that was donated by a member for a new church location. The decision was based on a desire to continue to serve the needs of central Bozeman and to continue to worship in the beautiful, historic downtown building.

The decision led to an extensive renovation – the “Holy Mess” – that included gutting and rebuilding the Christian Education wing, renovating and modernizing the fellowship hall, kitchen and chapel (converted to the library), and installation of modern fire suppression, air conditioning and sound systems. The budget of



approximately \$1.8 million was paid from a major capital fundraising campaign and the sale of the donated property.

The main sanctuary, which was in relatively good condition, was renovated in 2013, the costs paid with another capital campaign.

### **Same-Sex Marriage.**

In 2015, after intensive study, consultation, and debate, the Session of the church voted to permit use of the sanctuary for same-sex couples to be married and to permit Teaching Elders to perform same-sex marriages.

As pastor Jody McDevitt reflected in her valedictory sermon,

I am still in awe of the way we navigated together the challenging path through our society's changing understandings of human sexuality and gender identity.

This is a traditional body of believers, a community which values stability and honors the wisdom of tradition. In that sense, this is a conservative church. Yet it is also a community which pays attention to what's going on in the world and in the lives of individuals and families-in that sense, it is a progressive church.

Wrestling with scripture and new understandings of how humans are made – which is, in our understanding, in the image of God – this church was able to grow beyond tradition to quietly embrace a new way: the full welcome and inclusion of those precious and beloved children of God who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or whatever letter of the alphabet is left to be claimed!

And that was not because we all agreed about, or understood, human sexuality as it is experienced and expressed in today's world. No, those decisions for full inclusion were made because we acknowledged love as our number-1-calling, our top priority, more important than standing on right belief. When I think about that process, I am so proud to have walked that road with you, learning and living God's love together.

The question of same-sex marriage may have played a role in some individual's and family's decisions to go elsewhere, but the membership numbers circa 2014 to 2016 do not show an exodus. Those years immediately after the PC(USA) decision and the subsequent church decision follow the same overall trend in membership since 1997.

### **COVID.**

In February 2020, the Session established a Pandemic Response Team (PRT) to enable rapid response for COVID-related decisions. The PRT met weekly to monitor the course of the pandemic, establish policies, and make recommendations – including the suspension of in-person worship in favor of online participation. When the pandemic arrived in Gallatin County in March 2020, we shifted to on-line only worship within a week via Zoom. Sixty weeks later, with widespread vaccination and lower hospitalizations, the PRT recommended and the Session approved the resumption of in-sanctuary worship in 2021. We now have hybrid worship, accessible online, “live”, or recorded. The PRT disbanded in early 2022.

## Our Congregation

### *Our Mission*

First Presbyterian Church's current Mission Statement was adopted in 2021:

First Presbyterian Church, in gratitude for God's gifts and empowered by the Holy Spirit, seeks

- to help people know the good news of Jesus Christ and His love for all;
- to worship God with warmth and beauty, dignity and joy;
- to nourish personal faith and our love for one another through study, prayer and fellowship; and
- to be a vibrant witness to our community and the world through outreach and mission.

The Vision Statement and graphic image approved in 2020 is:





*Our Demographics***Membership and Budgets through the Years.**

Like many mainline congregations, our membership has declined over the last 25 years. The budget nevertheless increased, until 2020 when it began to decline with decreasing high-pledge households. As a result, operating expenses have drawn on income from a commercial rental property, from the endowment, and from contingency funds.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Members (end of year)</b>	<b>Budget (thousands)</b>
1997	500	\$263
1998	481	\$266
1999	479	\$279
2000	456	\$280
2001	458	\$302
2002	422	\$306
2003	422	\$321
2004	426	\$324
2005	424	\$342
2006	426	\$429
2007	398	\$434
2008	387	\$487
2009	368	\$444
2010	329	\$398
2011	307	\$420
2012	294	\$478
2013	305	\$516
2014	300	\$478
2015	270	\$530
2016	263	\$512
2017	262	\$530
2018	245	\$551
2019	239	\$435 <sup>2</sup>
2020	227	\$446
2021	227	\$438
2022	223	\$459
2023	c. 200	\$431

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<sup>2</sup> The Rockhaven church camp was removed from general church budget in 2019, with an approximate \$125,000 to \$155,000 effect on the budget.

The current in-person attendance at the worship service averages 111 congregants, including those attending online. The attendance is somewhat less than before the COVID pandemic.

The percentage of members under 55 has been relatively stable, while the membership over 55 has aged:

Age	2005	2010	2015	2021
<b>25 and under</b>	6%	8%	7%	9%
<b>26 to 40</b>	14%	11%	12%	15%
<b>41 to 55</b>	13%	12%	10%	10%
<b>56 to 70</b>	20%	18%	17%	10%
<b>Over 70</b>	46%	52%	53%	55%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

The congregation reflects the demographics of Bozeman, about 4.6% of the congregation identify as Hispanic or Latino, 0.5% identify as Black, 1% identify as Asian, and 1.5% identify as Native American. As Bozeman grows and continues to diversify, we might expect the congregation to diversify as well.

We are an open and affirming congregation. Our Session has approved same-sex marriages in the sanctuary and by our ministers. Although we do not maintain statistics, we have LGBTQIA+ members, attendees, and leaders.

***Our Physical Facilities***

**The Church Building.**

Our church building was dedicated in 1910. It is on the National Register of Historic Places, which describes it thus:

The Bozeman First Presbyterian Church is an excellent example of the early 20th century Gothic Revival style .... It is also an excellent example of standardized, early 20th century Presbyterian church design.

The completed church was dedicated on February 20, 1910, and featured an impressive auditorium with exposed hammer beams ... In 1910, the Macedonian Society of the church donated a pipe organ to the church, which was the first in the city.

The church remains today one of the city's major architectural landmarks.

The church basement includes a large fellowship hall with a commercial kitchen able to serve large gatherings and a library. A 1954 addition to the east end of the original building houses offices and meeting and Sunday School rooms. The Yellowstone Presbytery, Boy Scouts, and other organizations also use these rooms.

**24 South Willson.**

One of the key issues in the Stay-Go decision (*described under “The Modern Era” above*) was parking – more limited in downtown than it would be at a suburban location. The church acquired from a member a



parking lot and office building across Babcock Street at 24 South Willson. The office building generates rental income for the church, and the parking lot provides much needed parking for Sunday worship and other church activities. A local business also permits Sunday morning parking.

### **Rockhaven Camp.**

First Presbyterian owns and operates, through an Operational Board, Rockhaven, a Camp and Retreat Center, a “real jewel” on 10 acres of land along the beautiful Gallatin River in Gallatin Canyon, ½ hour south of Bozeman. The land was donated to the church in 1925 for \$1. A chapel was built in 1927 and facilities now additionally include a dining hall, dormitory, newly remodeled bathhouse, other outbuildings, a bridge across the Gallatin River, high ropes and low ropes courses, a climbing tower, and a tree fort. Montana Whitewater leases some of the land for a zipline, which provides income for the camp and the opportunity to use its facilities.

Rockhaven operations are described under “*Outreach*”.

### ***Our Staff***

Our staff is currently led by Interim Pastor Ashley Birk.

Our Office/Building/Camp/Nursery Staff:

- Office Administrator/Financial Assistant (Part time)
- Sexton/Technology Expert (Full time)
- Treasurer/liaison to professional bookkeeping service (Volunteer)
- Rockhaven Camp Director (Full time)
- Nursery Director (Part time)
- Nursery Assistant (Part time, currently vacant)

Our Music Staff:

- Worship Music Director (Part time)
- Principal Organist/Associate Director of Music (Part time)
- First Bells (Bell Choir) Director (Part time)
- Worship Music/Technology Associate (Part time)
- Associate Organist (Part time, volunteer)

Volunteers from the congregation lead children and youth Sunday Schools. The pastor and lay leaders lead adult Sunday School. We also invite community leaders to adult Sunday School to educate us on community needs and services.

The Office Administrator publishes the weekly PresbEnews, with the assistance of two volunteers for layout and editing. Our Associate Director of Music maintains the church’s website: [www.fpcbozeman.org](http://www.fpcbozeman.org)

***Our Leadership and Governance***

**Session.**

There are 12 Elders on the Session. The pastor serves as a moderator and an option exists to add one youth Elder each year. Every year a class of four Elders is elected by the congregation; each class serving a term of three years.

In 2017 and 2018, the Session undertook the Year of Call, trying to discern where God is leading us individually and as a congregation. An outcome of the Year of Call was the development of a new vision statement for the church. As the Year of Call process wrapped up mid-way through 2018, the Session proposed “Living and Learning God’s Love, Together” as the church’s vision statement, and it was the theme Session used to reorganize itself and implement actions in 2019 and early 2020.

Standing Committees and Sub-Committees resulting from the Year of Call:

Learning God’s Love, Together	Living God’s Love, Together	Supporting God’s Love, Together
<p><b>Kids &amp; Families</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nursery</li> <li>• Children’s Sunday School</li> <li>• Youth Ministry                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth mission trips</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Spiritual Growth</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult Education</li> <li>• Adult mission trips</li> <li>• LCM Campus ministries                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College mission trips</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Worship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ushers/Greeters</li> <li>• Communion</li> <li>• Planning and tech support</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mission &amp; Outreach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local mission                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Love INC</li> <li>○ Family Promise</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Global mission</li> <li>• Special offerings                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congregation Care/Pastoral outreach</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Hospitality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fellowship meals</li> <li>• Congregational events                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicity/promotion</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Rockhaven</b></p>	<p><b>Finance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing and monitoring budget</li> </ul> <p><b>Financial Stewardship</b></p> <p><b>Facilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buildings and grounds</li> <li>• 24 S. Willson upkeep</li> </ul> <p><b>Leadership/Personnel</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff supervision and compensation</li> <li>• Pastor support</li> </ul> <p><b>Nominating Committee</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elder/Deacon Training</li> </ul> <p><b>Governance/Planning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Meeting</li> <li>• Presbytery Representation</li> <li>• Session Retreat</li> </ul>

**Deacons.**

We currently have 19 members on the Board of Deacons, which includes six couples sharing a Deacon position. Every year a number of Deacons are elected by the congregation.



The work of the Deacons is both internal – that is, helping church members – and external – helping those in the community with assistance. The internal work is primarily hands-on, providing caring meals, transportation, sympathy cards, and visitation, managing the kitchen, serving coffee and cookies after church, and hosting receptions for members’ celebrations, including weddings and funerals. The external work is primarily providing funds to individuals and organizations serving the less fortunate in our area.

**Our Finances**

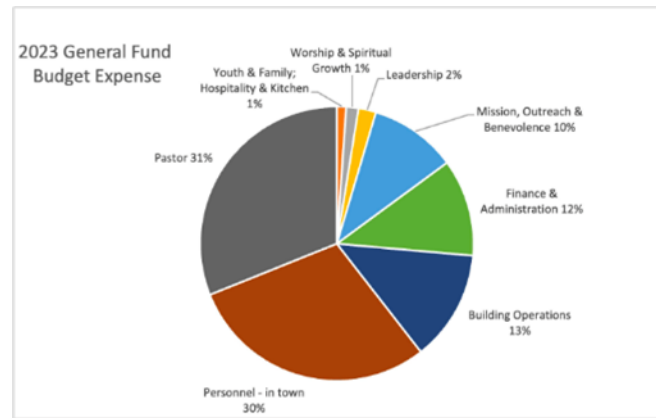
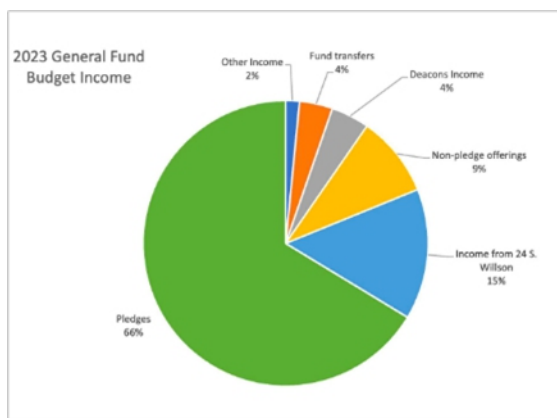
Church finances for the 2023 fiscal year were carefully analyzed by Session due to post-COVID decreases in church attendance. For 2023, income was projected to be \$354,611 (pledges from 84 households totaled \$284,181, Deacon pledges totaled \$18,556, and the balance is made up of unpledged and rental income). Expenses were projected to be \$430,570, with the shortfall being made up from Rockhaven Endowment Support (\$5,000), Endowment Mission Support (\$9,000), Contingency (\$2,412), and 24 South Willson rents (\$64,547).

The Session-approved budget allowed for a 5% increase in salaries for our Interim Pastor and staff (less than the Presbytery recommendation) and covers PC(USA) required benefit increases, primarily for our Interim Pastor. Some of the sources of money to make up the shortfall cannot be tapped continuously, and 24 South Willson income first must be used to make loan payments, pay operating costs, and fund repairs to that facility before it can support everyday church operations.

The Rockhaven budget is separate from the church budget. The Rockhaven Board is striving to have the camp be as self-funded as possible. For 2023, the budget is \$180,445. Income is from camp fees (\$57,000), zip-line contract (\$40,000), facility rental (\$40,000), direct fundraising (\$10,800), and reserves (\$32,645).

The Finance Committee intends to embark on a longer look at income and expense projections to get a better understanding of the kinds of hard decisions that may be necessary in the not-too-distant future. Such an analysis can help ensure the mission of First Presbyterian Church in Bozeman keeps going strong as we begin our next 150 years. The assets of First Presbyterian are substantial. With good stewardship, we can ensure that the church can continue with its mission for years to come.

The following graphs summarize the 2023 budget:



## *Our Programs*

### **Christian Education.**

Throughout the years, consistent educational ministries have been a part of First Presbyterian. The Sunday School has a separate class for the early elementary, middle school, and high school children and youth (although recently, the middle school and high school have been joined as one class). The little ones are cared for in a nursery with a childcare provider who has work experience and training in child development. Each summer, downtown churches join forces to offer a vacation Bible school.

Each year a group of youth have focused on mission activities. A number of years ago a four year cycle was instituted to provide a variety of experiences:

Year 1	Local Mission
Year 2	In-State Mission
Year 3	National Mission
Year 4	International Mission

Young people who began their mission trips as first year high schoolers would have two years of local and state mission projects, one year of a project at the national level, and then an international mission trip (the most popular of all, of course!). These mission trips have changed lives and shaped the world views of the participants and their adult leaders.

COVID broke this cycle. However, our youth have led in resuming mission trips, including one to the Crow Reservation in 2021 and a Sierra Service Project in northern California in 2022.

The church has a sexual misconduct policy established through Yellowstone Presbytery and adopted by Session. All Sunday School teachers and nursery attendants are trained to understand and enact the requirements of this policy.

The adult Sunday School has continued throughout the years. A variety of topics have been addressed. The adult Sunday School meets for an hour after the worship service during the academic year. Other opportunities for adult fellowship and Bible study are offered through the weekly Men's Morning Bible Study group and through monthly meetings of two Presbyterian Women Circles. Additionally, devotional books are provided to the congregation during Advent and Lent. Potlucks, catered meals, and volunteer-prepared dinners are offered throughout the year to set aside time for fellowship and education.

The church remodeling has resulted in excellent meeting spaces for the Sunday School and the youth group. When the meeting rooms were remodeled, the young people worked with a fused glass artists here in Bozeman to make glass tiles that were then assembled to create a glass mural for the windows in one main meeting room. The basement meeting rooms are divided by moveable room dividers. A youth room was painted and decorated by the members of one of the youth groups.



### **Spiritual Gifts Ministry.**

In 2001, the church established a Spiritual Gifts Ministry with the purpose of involving members in the meaningful use of their gifts and talents in ministry. A Stephen Ministry course called “Discovering God’s Vision for Your Life: You and Your Spiritual Gifts.” was used. By 2006, Spiritual Gifts had included students from other churches: 29 from St. James Episcopal, and also Grand Avenue Christian, Resurrection Parish, Seventh Day Adventist, and Quaker churches in Bozeman as well as people from churches in Miles City, Big Timber, St. Mary’s in Livingston, and First Presbyterian Church-Billings. Through 2014, 424 members had participated in church and community positions based on their spiritual gifts.

### **Prayer Chains.**

Prayer Chains have been active in the church for many years and are an important way to connect members of the church in need of prayerful support with other members willing to help them. In recent years, we have had four chains with 20 people included.

### ***Our Outreach***

The members of First Presbyterian Church Bozeman have a heart for service as the hands and feet of Christ in our community.

**As a congregation,** we serve through:

- Our church’s Rockhaven Camp and Retreat Center, providing summer day and/or overnight camping experiences for local youth and facilities for groups.
- Deacon-organized holiday certificates for those in need, clothing for school children, a school nursing program at an area elementary school, supporting local groups, and responding to emergency need requests.
- Family Promise, which helps empower homeless families with children to achieve self-sufficiency.
- Love INC (Love in the Name of Christ) as one of 53 partner churches in the Gallatin Valley serving our neighbors in need through our church volunteers.
- Montana State University LCM (Living Christ’s Mission) Campus Ministry.
- Interfaith outreach
- Adult and Youth Mission Trips, locally, in-state, in country and internationally.
- Downtown vacation bible school, Boy Scout Troop 679, Homeless Tiny House Sponsor, Gallatin Food Bank, Crop Walk, Operation Christmas Child, Special Offerings and providing church meeting space for community groups.

**As individuals,** we also serve through numerous non-profits including the hospital, in classrooms, coaching youth baseball and swim clubs, and speech and debate teams. We help with Hospice, the Cancer Center, Special Olympics, the Animal Shelter, Warriors in Quiet Waters, the Intermountain Opera Board, the Symphony, Bridger Ski Foundation, the Food Bank, Lions Club and Rotary, P.E.O., at the Museum of the Rockies, Yellowstone Presbytery, and many more.

### **Campus Ministries.**

In 2012, Rev Dan Krebill started a ministry of Presbyterian students at Montana State. The group, eventually called PresbyCats, grew in size and in action over the years with mission trips each spring break. Rev Dan Krebill and Rev Jody McDevitt retired in 2021 and a new model of campus ministry was required.

In 2021, the Church retained Rev J.P Carlson (the campus minister for LCM, the Montana State Lutheran Campus Ministry) to also lead the PresbyCats. In 2022, the Session voted to merge PresbyCats with LCM. This new group, led by Rev Carlson, is still called LCM, but with the new meanings of Loved. Called. Moved. and Living Christ's Mission Together. The local ELCA Lutheran churches (Hope and Christ the King) and the Bozeman United Methodist Church also support LCM, but LCM is open to all students. The students meet weekly to explore faith and engage in service and social activities. The students run the Mobile Soup Kitchen on Saturdays and in March 2023, the group went on a mission trip to Guatemala.

First Presbyterian supports LCM financially and through meals and desserts, fund raising activities and events, and worship participation.

Please see <https://www.lcmbobcats.org/>

### **Rockhaven.**

For the past 15 plus years, eight weeks of summer day and overnight camping experiences for about 250 youth from the Bozeman area were led by full-time Camp Director, Scott Thrasher, along with eight summer counselors and a camp cook. Sadly, Scott passed away in July 2023, so the remainder of the summer camps were cancelled. In fall 2023, First Presbyterian hired Chandler Joiner as the new camp director, and she and the Rockhaven Operations Board are looking forward to building on the long success of Rockhaven Camp.

Congregational potlucks and vespers are held two to four times per month during the summer and there are "Christmas at Rockhaven" and Easter Sunrise services. The camp is also used by other FPC church groups and our church-sponsored Boy Scout Troop as well as rental groups from other churches, Montana State University, school and youth groups, and homeschool families during the shoulder seasons.

At a time when our and our children's lives are often so structured, Rockhaven provides an "Uncamp" experience – a place to play, to laugh, to pray, to disconnect, so that we might reconnect with our spirit, each other, nature, and God.

Please see <https://www.Rockhavencamp.org/>

### **Ecumenical Efforts and Community Partnerships.**

The Church and its members and staff are active in ecumenical and other outreach, such as Love INC, Family Promise, and the Gallatin Valley Interfaith Association.

#### ***Love INC.***

First Presbyterian's work as a partner church of Love In The Name Of Christ (Love INC) Gallatin County dates to 1996, a year after the inception of that organization in the Gallatin Valley. Gallatin County Love INC is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and offers services free of charge including trauma

recovery classes, life skills classes, home repairs, car repairs, high-quality clothing, personal care products, furniture, linens, and companionship. In 2021-2022, we joined 52 other Christian organizations to provide over 18,300 volunteer hours to meet over 26,700 needs of struggling people and families in Gallatin County.

In 2022, 16 First Presbyterian Church members volunteered over 600 hours at Love INC. Among other help, the church specifically supports the personal care products care pantry and conducts an annual toilet paper drive.

Please see <https://www.loveincgc.org/>

### ***Family Promise.***

In 2006, First Presbyterian became a Family Promise Church partner, one year after the creation of the local organization. Family Promise, a registered 501(c)(3) organization, provides homeless families in Gallatin County with temporary places to reside, meals, and case management to help families regain their independence. The original model for Family Promise was that families would stay in one church for a week-long period, and then move to another church the next week, and so on. Until the onset of the pandemic in March, 2020, FPC typically hosted Family Promise families for four to five weeks each year. The in-church model ended with COVID and a new Family Resource and Childcare Center was completed in 2022. In addition to financial support, FPC support continues with volunteers and meals. In 2021-2022 Family Promise provided over 19,000 nights of emergency shelter and 16 families were welcomed into transitional housing. 193 families – 501 total individuals – were served (a 164% increase in total individuals served from the preceding year) and volunteers provided total of 2449 hours of volunteer service.

First Presbyterian Church currently has 18 volunteers who have prepared and hosted 18 meals in the last year and a half for families in the emergency shelter. We also provided groceries (and cleaning products as needed) so that the families could also independently prepare meals.

Please see <https://www.familypromisegv.org/>

### ***Gallatin Valley Interfaith Association.***

Co-pastors Jody McDevitt and Dan Krebill were deeply committed to working with the whole spectrum of faiths. Rev McDevitt was a founding member of the Gallatin Valley Interfaith Association of 23 religious organizations, including Lutheran, Episcopal, Baptist, Methodist, Unitarian, Congregational, Latter-Day Saints, Friends, Roman Catholic, Buddhist, Muslim and Jewish. One of the signature events was the first Jewish-Christian pulpit exchange between the church and Congregation Beth Shalom.

The Gallatin Valley Interfaith Association is still active, and First Presbyterian continues to engage in ecumenical and interfaith efforts, particularly with other downtown Christian churches.







## Who Are Our Neighbors?

### **Bozeman as a Growth Community**

Historically, the broad valley of the forks of the Missouri was traditional hunting and fishing ground for Shoshone, Nez Perce, Blackfeet, Pend d'Oreille and Salish. Excellent passes made the valley a natural trading ground for these and other, more remote, tribes. Later, Apsalooke (Crow), pushed west by White and Lakota expansion, came to dominate the area around what is now Bozeman. Eventually American Indian tribes were forced into reservations as the White farmers, ranchers, miners, and trappers began to settle upon the traditional hunting lands.

In 1863, John Bozeman created a trail through Lakota and Cheyenne territory of Wyoming and Eastern Montana and through Crow territory at Bozeman Pass to serve gold mining camps in Western Montana. Drives from Texas soon brought cattle, and in 1866 merchants founded Bozeman at the western exit of the pass to support ranching and farming. For a century, the Bozeman economy enjoyed boom and suffered bust with agricultural cycles. In 1883, the Northern Pacific Railway reached Bozeman, establishing the city as a rail center.

Agriculture, including farming and ranching, remains an important part of the area's economy and contributes to the natural beauty of the rural landscapes. Other activities, such as Montana State University, tourism, services, and manufacturing have surpassed agriculture in the area economy.

The city continues to flourish. *Sunset* Magazine rates Bozeman one of the best places to live in the West – The “Best place to reboot your life”.

### ***Montana State University***

Montana State University is the economic, social, and cultural center of Bozeman. MSU has expanded well beyond its original agricultural mission to a first-tier research university across science, engineering, business, social science, education, and the arts. It is the largest university in the state, with over 16,000 students and over 1,300 faculty.

The University's Museum of the Rockies is one of the nation's premier natural history museums, with extensive permanent exhibits on dinosaurs, geology, and Montana history.

The University – together with the recreation opportunities – has attracted a substantial technology industry, concentrated on lasers, optical equipment, biotech, and software.

### ***Recreation, Culture, Transportation, Health Care, Schools***

Bozeman is in the center of millions of acres of wilderness and thousands of miles of blue-ribbon fishing. It is one of the gateways to Yellowstone National Park. Recreation – skiing, fishing, hiking, camping, whitewater kayaking, mountain and rock climbing, horseback riding – is a major industry. *Outside* magazine selected Bozeman as the best place to live for skiing. The movie, *A River Runs Through It*, based on the novel by Norman Maclean (son of John Maclean, one of First Presbyterian's early ministers), was filmed in the area and on nearby rivers.

Bozeman is a cultural center, with regionally significant orchestra, opera, ballet, theater and galleries and exceptional music and arts programs in the public schools and at the University. The church sanctuary is often used for music performances open to the public and the church classrooms, fellowship hall, and library are available for music rehearsals.

Other points of interest about Bozeman include:

- Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport is a major transportation hub for Yellowstone National Park, Big Sky and Bridger Bowl ski areas, fishing and other recreation, high tech and other businesses, and the city, with nonstop flights to major cities;
- Bozeman Health, Deaconess Hospital, and Billings Clinic Bozeman make Bozeman a major regional medical center;
- Bozeman's schools are nationally recognized for their excellence.

### Community Demographics

Bozeman (and Gallatin County, its statistical area) is one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the United States.

Census	Bozeman City		Gallatin County	
	Population	Growth	Population	Growth
1970	18,670	39.70%	32,505	24.80%
1980	21,645	15.90%	42,865	31.90%
1990	22,660	4.70%	50,463	17.70%
2000	27,509	21.40%	67,831	34.40%
2010	37,280	35.50%	89,513	32.00%
2020	53,293	43.00%	118,960	32.90%

Bozeman's median age is 27.2 years – significantly younger than that of Montana (40.2 years) and United States (38.8 years), weighted toward university – and working-age adults.

A large rental market serves the university. As a result of population growth, the rate of new construction is almost four times the national average and the value of owned homes is almost twice the national median.

Bozeman (like Montana generally) is less diverse than the nation as a whole. However, as rapidly as the population is growing, it is diversifying even faster. Diversity has more than doubled since 2010 and more than tripled since 2000.

Almost everyone over 25 years (98%) in Bozeman is a high school graduate (compared to 88% nationally). The percentage of residents with a bachelor's degree is almost twice that of the state or nation.

The economy is robust: Employment (at 72%) is substantially higher than the state or nation (63%). The unemployment rate (2.4%) is about half that of the nation (4.1%). The projected job growth rate of 66.4%, is almost twice that the national 34%. Household income for the city (\$67,000) is comparable to the

national median (\$69,000). The county is significantly higher (\$76,000), with the lower city figure likely reflecting the lower income of university students in the city.

Bozeman, like many rapidly growing places, is expensive. The overall cost of living is about 25% higher than the national average. Population growth has also increased the difficulty of finding affordable housing, although the rate of new construction may ease the problem.

The Human Resources Development Council (HRDC), which operates a shelter and is dedicated to helping those in need, worked with approximately 150 households in 2022 – an increase of approximately 50% over the course of the pandemic. First Presbyterian is active with HRDC, and we participated in the creation of a tiny home village by funding the construction of one tiny home for a homeless individual. Almost 15% of Bozeman City residents are below the federal poverty line, compared to 12% for the state and nation. Again, this may reflect the lower income of university students, as the county poverty rate (9%) is well below that of the state and nation. Many more people are in the “in-between” state—earning too much for public assistance but not enough to really afford to live here.

The Appendix contains more detailed demographic and economic information for Bozeman and Gallatin County.

### **Our Downtown Neighbors**

First Presbyterian is a block from the center of downtown Bozeman.

Downtown Bozeman is a vibrant commercial, artistic, and cultural center of century-old buildings. Every storefront is filled with a restaurant (from burgers and pizzas to fine dining); a fly fishing outfitter; a cross-country or downhill ski shop; an outdoor, athletic, bridal or western wear shop; a bookstore; a running or bicycle shop; a jewelry store; a theater; a bank; a real estate office; or an art gallery – among other thriving businesses. A number of non-profit organizations, particularly those dedicated to the environment, make their home downtown.

The church is surrounded on the other sides by residential neighborhoods, mostly built during various booms between 1890 and 1930. It is an eclectic collection of mostly modest single-family homes and houses converted to apartments, with a few grander homes and apartment buildings. The area is scattered with parks.

The church shares its block with subsidized apartments for low-income residents, is across the street from HRDC (described above) and is a few blocks from the Salvation Army.

The downtown Bozeman churches primarily represent mainline denominations: Catholic, Episcopal, Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran, and Disciples of Christ. The Protestant churches (other than the Missouri Synod Lutheran church) tend to be relatively liberal and open theologically, and combine for ecumenical outreach programs such as those described under “Outreach”. Not surprisingly, the other downtown mainline Protestant churches are also seeing declining membership.

Several evangelical and non-denominational organizations also hold services in downtown theaters and auditoria.





## Who Is God Calling Us To Be and Where Might God Be Calling Us To Go?

In Spring 2023, the First Presbyterian Session authorized hiring a research firm, Holy Cow!, to conduct a church-wide survey to identify what church members consider to be our present outlook and identity, and the future hopes of the congregants.

The survey found that we see ourselves as a fairly progressive, intellectually open, reflective, and settled congregation. We value structure and ritual. We are diverse in our theology, but we have learned to get along, despite these differences. We value hospitality, inclusiveness, and spiritual practice. However, we can overcommit and burn out as volunteers. We prepare our members to deal with harshness in cultural and political realities in ministry.

The top four priorities identified by congregation members are to:

1. Attract families with children and youth;
2. Develop a strategy for reaching new people and incorporating them into our congregation;
3. Create more opportunities for people to form meaningful relationships;
4. And develop ministries that work toward healing those broken by life circumstances.

The survey asked about congregational energy and member satisfaction and found that we have slightly lower satisfaction and energy compared to the median congregations surveyed by Holy Cow!. However, the Holy Cow! consultant thought that the church could move to being a high energy and high satisfaction congregation with relatively few improvements in church programming.

The activities of the church that drive our members' levels of satisfaction are that our church provide high quality education that is appropriate to every age and stage of life and that our church do a good job supporting persons in ministry by reminding them that they are making a difference. We want to provide opportunities for members to engage in active ministry within the church and the world and we want people in the congregation to be involved with our ministries. We are willing to adapt our worship to the needs and circumstances of the people we want to reach in our local community.

The survey indicates that we are eager to develop a congregation that will exhibit high levels of energy and we want to accomplish this by encouraging involvement. We want to help members discern their gifts and then use their gifts through working in various ministries within the church and through outreach to the community and the world.

In addition to the Holy Cow! survey, the Mission Study Team organized small group discussions around four questions:

1. What about First Presbyterian Church do you want to retain going forward?
2. Are there any new things we as a church want to do in the future?
3. Is there anything we are doing now that we should not be doing?
4. What are you, personally, willing to do in the future?

According to the responses from the small group participants, all of the current activities of First Presbyterian Church are worthy of retention. We especially want to:

- keep our music and expand the music to include other styles;
- keep our warm and friendly attitude within the members as they work with other congregation members and as the members do outreach into the community;
- continue with our authentic and classically Presbyterian style of worship in our beautiful sanctuary as a downtown church;
- continue the open invitation to communion;
- keep Rockhaven available to the community and expand programming there throughout the year;
- continue to offer mission trips to all ages of church members;
- fully support the LCM Campus Ministry as it grows in importance as outreach into the campus community;
- and, continue the small group ministries such as the Men's Bible Study and Presbyterian Women's Circles.

In the future, the participants stated that they want to:

- be more inviting to new families and younger people;
- integrate younger and older people into the various groups and church functions;
- include and encourage young people to be active in the worship service;
- expand the arts programming in worship through expanding musical styles, using artistic images, and encouraging creativity in worship experiences;
- increase advertising that our church is an open, progressive, and accepting church;
- reinstate the Spiritual Gifts program to help members discern how they can use their gifts to do God's work;
- increase sustainability, using Rockhaven as a site for that work;
- and, importantly, welcome and embrace change.

Members were asked if we want to give anything up that we are currently doing and no suggestions came forth. We want to keep the ministries we currently are involved in and also do much more.

Regarding the last question about what would be something that each person, personally, would like to do, some thoughtful responses included supporting change, being more flexible about how ministries should be offered, be more involved, create transformational leadership, and to volunteer more so that the work of the church has a large number of participants.

When the information from the Holy Cow! survey and the small group discussions were applied to the question of how this information shapes the pastor search, it appears that First Presbyterian members would like a pastor who can:

- be a bridgebuilder who can navigate the diverse theological perspectives of the members, while remaining Presbyterian in worship and governance;
- communicate to all stakeholders that we are a theologically diverse, progressive, open, and inclusive church;
- reach out to people to invite them to be a part of the ministries of the church and involve the congregants in small groups to increase the feelings of community;
- seek cooperation with other church congregations to enhance ecumenical and interfaith cooperation.

The congregation is willing to follow leadership by being flexible, embracing change, and understanding the need to widen the ideas of being a church to a changing society.

### **Where We Hope to Go**

The Holy Cow! survey results and small group discussions show our congregation wants First Presbyterian to be an intergenerational, theologically and culturally diverse community that learns and lives God's love together, and to demonstrate our faith by our actions.

In a time when "traditional" church life is changing, we want to listen to God's call for our congregation and be open to change, if necessary, adapting our worship to the needs and circumstances of the people we want to reach in our local community.

We want to intentionally invite *all* people, including the poor, marginalized, and the "unseen" to be a part of our community and share in the joy of God's love.

We want to help each other discern our personal gifts and provide training and opportunities for members to engage in active ministry within the church and to the world. We want to create a spirit that makes people want to get as involved as possible.

We want to be more intentionally intergenerational in our Christian education, better utilize our church facilities, including our Rockhaven Camp and Retreat Center, for community needs, and join with other churches and community organizations to better address those needs.

We want to support each other, continuing and creating new opportunities (such as small groups) for meaningful relationships.

### **Concerns and Hopes for the Future**

Church members and leaders have concerns and hopes for the future. The following table shows a list of concerns and how church members hope to address each concern.

<b>Concern</b>	<b>Hope</b>
We are an aging congregation with a declining membership.	We hope to attract new, younger members and families through meaningful programming, especially in mission/outreach and Christian education.
We will be replacing two co-pastors on the basis of 1.5 ministers with a single minister. Do we have the budget to maintain the activities the congregation loves?	We hope, with the assistance of the minister, to determine realistic priorities.  We hope to build on interfaith relationships to multiply our capabilities.
Rockhaven recently lost its director to death.	We have found a new, energetic, visionary camp director.
We will need to re-imagine, set priorities and establish clear directions for the Rockhaven facility and programming.	With a new camp director, we hope we can take a new look at how to best use the Rockhaven facility and how to provide programming to church families and the surrounding community.
We want to update the worship format while keeping traditional Presbyterian forms of worship.	We hope to adjust the worship format to meet the cultural demands of a variety of ages while still keeping our Presbyterian traditions.
A need exists for small groups to create a sense of belongingness for church members.	We hope to form a variety of small groups focused on mission/outreach and Christian education, in addition to having fun together.
A major renovation of the church occurred in 2004. Almost 20 years have passed, and system updates are starting to be needed.	We hope to continue to maintain and improve all our church facilities.
The 24 South Willson property was acquired with the intent to remove the offices and provide more parking for the church. However, the office rents provide significant income to the church (16% in 2023.) Can we afford to lose this revenue?	We hope to continue to use the 24 South Willson property for parking, and perhaps redesign it for more parking and office space to support downtown ministries and provide additional revenue.
We are concerned about the cost of living in Bozeman and the ability of the church to continue to raise the money for housing and salary for a pastor.	We will prayerfully seek to maintain and increase the annual pledges from the congregation and to provide wise stewardship of the church assets. We will encourage members to contribute to the endowment funds.
We are concerned that we must raise the finances to accomplish our hopes and dreams.	Again, we hope to expand the awareness of the church’s endowment funds to attract more giving. We also hope to continue to have individuals and families commit to tithing to support the ministries of the church.
The church building is underutilized during the weekdays.	We hope to find compatible activities that help community needs.



## What's Next?

The Session's and the Mission Study Team's listening and discernment have led to testing and experimenting.

We are seeking to revive or re-envision activities that were suspended or altered during COVID, but that nevertheless are important to us. We are also imagining and trying new or different ways of being the church in our community. Many of our experiments have focused on ways we can further build community internally (reflecting our church member's desire to create more opportunities for people to form meaningful relationships), as well as reach out to and serve our wider community (reflecting our church's and members' outreach, growth, and service-related priorities).

As examples of new or revived activities, we

- opened the Church with music and warming for the downtown Bozeman Christmas Stroll
- hosted a dinner for Special Olympics athletes and coaches during the State Games
- hosted a “tailgate party” with our neighbors in the subsidized apartments next door
- hold food and sundries drives for Food Bank, Love INC and Family Promise
- supported the LCM Campus Mission trip
- revived Book Club and “Merry Munchers” dinners at members' homes
- started hiking/strolling events and revived skiers' lunch meet-ups at Bridger Bowl

As our leadership continues to listen, discern, and experiment, we intend to continue to ask ourselves:

*Where is God's Holy Spirit at work?*

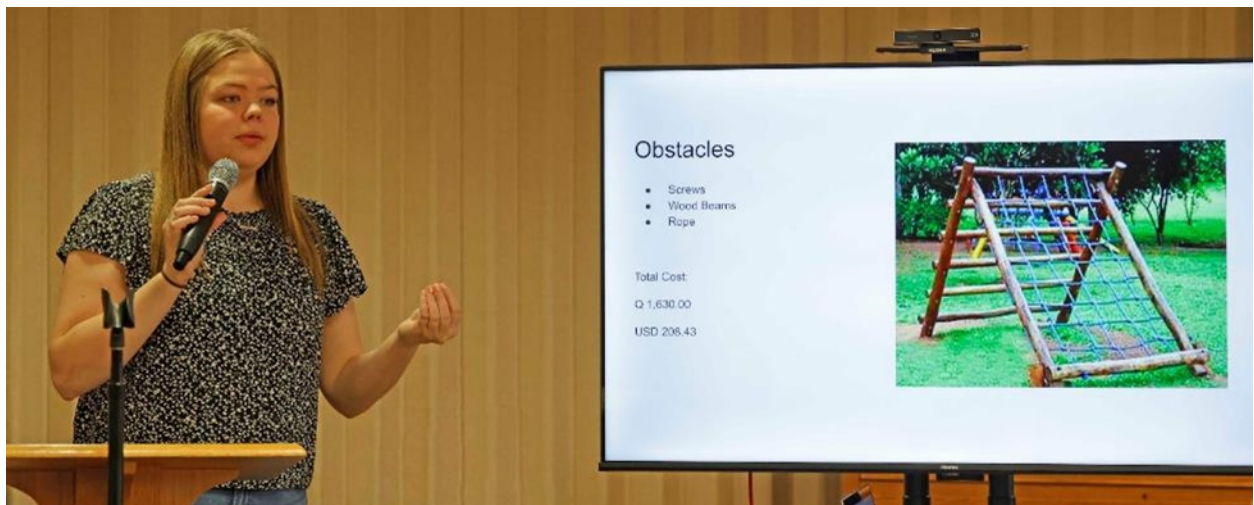
*How might we join in God's ongoing work in our community?*

*Are we being a church in and to and for our neighborhood?*

*What new ways of being church might God be calling us to?*

As a church in mid-process, this is an opportune time for our next called and installed pastor to help guide our journey. Discerning and deciding upon our vision and mission is not a “one-and-done” process that somehow sets our direction forever. Now and in the future, we seek to keep listening, discerning, testing and experimenting, reflecting, and deciding.

Above all, we at First Presbyterian want to listen for God's word and willingly follow God. To do this, the congregation will continue to seek discernment through prayer, worship, small group fellowship, Christian education, and mission partnerships.



### Appendix: Demographics and Economy of Our Area

The following data comes from the United States Census Bureau, [QuickFacts, Gallatin County, Montana: Bozeman city, Montana; Montana; United States](#) which summarizes data from 2017 – 2021.

First Presbyterian Church's demographic environment, and Bozeman's census statistical area, is Gallatin County.

#### Age

Bozeman is significantly younger than Montana and the United States (38.8 years), concentrated in university- and working-age adults.

Age and Sex	Bozeman	County	Montana	US
Median age (years)	27.2	33.4	40.2	38.8
under 5 years	3.60%	4.80%	5.30%	5.70%
under 18 years	14.10%	19.30%	21.30%	22.20%
18 to 64	75.60%	67.40%	59.10%	61.00%
65 years and over	10.30%	13.30%	19.60%	16.80%

#### Race and Origin

Bozeman (like Montana generally) is less diverse than the country as a whole, although Bozeman is diversifying even more rapidly than it is growing.

Race and Origin	Bozeman	County	Montana	US
White alone	90.20%	94.50%	88.70%	75.80%
Black or African American alone	0.70%	0.50%	0.60%	13.60%
American Indian and AK Native alone	1.00%	1.00%	6.60%	1.30%
Asian alone	1.90%	1.70%	1.00%	6.10%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander alone	0.00%	0.10%	0.10%	0.30%
Two or More Races	5.10%	2.10%	3.00%	2.90%
Hispanic or Latino	4.60%	4.50%	4.30%	18.90%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	88.20%	90.60%	85.50%	59.30%
Foreign born	4.00%	3.40%	2.20%	13.60%
Language other than English spoken at home	4.60%	4.00%	4.00%	21.70%

Persons per household in Bozeman City is lower than the median due to large numbers of college students in smaller households.

Families and Living Arrangements	Bozeman	County	Montana	US
Persons per household	2.26	2.42	2.41	2.60
Living in same house 1 year ago	69.50%	79.70%	84.90%	86.60%

**Education**

Bozeman has a significantly more educated population than the state or country:

Education	Bozeman	County	Montana	US
Persons age 25 years+ ...				
• High school graduate or higher	98.30%	97.40%	94.40%	88.90%
• Bachelor's degree or higher	63.80%	52.20%	33.70%	33.70%

**Economy**

The health of the local economy is reflected in significantly higher employment than the state and country as a whole:

Employment	Bozeman	County	Montana	US
In civilian labor force,				
• all age 16 years+	71.50%	71.10%	62.90%	63.10%
• female age 16 years+	70.30%	66.80%	59.40%	58.70%

While household income is in line with the state and country, the poverty rate in Bozeman City is higher, while the county is lower, than the state and nation.

Income and Poverty	Bozeman	County	Montana	US
Median household income	\$67,354	\$76,208	\$60,560	\$69,021
Per capita income	\$39,939	\$42,219	\$34,423	\$37,638
In poverty	14.90%	8.80%	11.90%	11.60%

**Housing**

Gallatin County has the fastest growing economy in Montana and, since 2021, housing costs have surged, making the Census data for housing available in the Quickfacts cited above, out-of-date. It is beyond the capacity of the Mission Study Team to accurately capture those figures due to the volatility of the market. Anything we report today would be soon outdated.

Please see the Gallatin Association of Realtor’s “2023 Gallatin Valley Housing Report, Tracking the Performance of Montana’s Most Vibrant Housing Market”

[www. http://www.gallatinrealtors.com/2022-gallatin-valley-housing-report/](http://www.gallatinrealtors.com/2022-gallatin-valley-housing-report/)

and

<https://bozemanrealestate.group/real-estate/market-report/bozeman>

For rental information please see <https://www.zillow.com/gallatin-county-mt/rentals>



### Economic Activity

The following graph from the Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of Montana outlines the key economic drivers for Gallatin County in 2021.

<https://www.bber.umt.edu/pubs/seminars/2023/Gallatin.pdf>

