



FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

BOZEMAN

Sesquicentennial

1872 - 2022

A Season of Celebration

**A 25-Year History of
First Presbyterian Church -
Bozeman
1997 through 2022**



June 2024

Prepared by the 150th Anniversary Committee:
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Preface

One of the goals of First Presbyterian – Bozeman’s 150th Anniversary Committee was to produce a 25-year history of the church, from 1997 through 2022, to complement previous church histories. The 125th Anniversary history booklet is available in the church records, as are two Centennial History albums (from 1972), along with earlier histories. This history is organized in a thematic approach. It begins with the arrival of husband-and-wife Co-Pastors, the Revs. Dan Krebill and Jody McDevitt, who remained in the pulpit for almost the entire quarter century and ends with the process to call a new pastor or pastors for our church. In between, a lot happened in the life of First Presbyterian Church – Bozeman.



The Dan Krebill and Jody McDevitt Era: Arrival Marked Change

Dan and Jody were installed February 9, 1997, early in the 125th Anniversary year (Bozeman Daily Chronicle, February 10, 1997). They retired nearly 25-years later, August 31, 2021. Jody and Dan’s arrival alone was a significant change in the history of the church. As Jody said in her August 29, 2021, sermon:

“Thank you for all the ways you have shown me the grace which Paul sees in the Corinthian congregation. 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 required at that time. You knew the Krebill name, but you didn’t know what came with the McDevitt name. That was a bold step, at the time, to call a married couple with different last names to serve this traditional church. Yes, there were times when it was clear that people were still adjusting to the idea. But let the record show that 25-years ago, this church wasn’t afraid to try something new. Thank you for that grace.”

Jody and Dan’s presence will be found throughout this 1997 to 2022 history, simply because their roles as “Teaching Elders,” “Co-Pastors,” “Ministers,” “Church Spokespersons,” or “Spiritual Leaders” (as formal titles) put them at the forefront of practically all that went on in the church during the 25 years. In addition, their presence in Bozeman as people in the church and community for a quarter century, be it as “Friends,” “Parents,” “Children” or “Neighbors,” plays a part in this history. Each was initially hired as a half-time pastor. As more responsibilities were added, they were both increased to three-quarters time mid-way through their tenures. As member Dan Holland calculated, between the two of them, Dan and Jody preached some 1,100 times during their 24½ years. Their closing sermons in the summer of 2021 provided valuable insights and perspectives on their time here, and they are quoted liberally throughout.

Stay or Go? The Answer Occupied 15- Years of Church History



In order of priority, after the tenure of Jody and Dan, is the early 2000's decision of the church to either stay in its current location or move to a new location. This “Stay-Go” question, the resulting decisions to stay, to remodel and update the church facility and then to purchase the 24 South Willson Avenue property across Babcock Street, form a theme that occupied center stage for nearly 15-years of the church history.

Serious discussions regarding the question of remaining downtown or moving to the edge of town began in October 2001 with the creation of the STAYGO Committee. It led the congregation through a thoughtful process of considering the pros and cons of staying on the corner of Willson and Babcock or moving to a new location. One possible location was property on South 3rd Avenue which had been acquired by the church in a trade for another property donated by a member for church purposes. However, the South 3rd site was only one option for a new location if the congregation decided to move. The process to decide if moving was in the best interest of the church concluded nine-months later, in June 2002, with a secret ballot of all 451-church members. Two-hundred forty-five surveys were returned and 94% of the responding members supported staying (2002 Annual Report, page 31; Assessment of the STAYGO survey, June 2002; Judy Patterson, Personal Communication, March 28, 2024).

With the decision to stay set, then came the question of what to do with the aging infrastructure of the Willson and Babcock property. More than a minor facelift was needed to remake the church into a welcoming place. The Sanctuary was beautiful, but the Christian Education Wing and downstairs areas needed significant renovation and upgrades. As Dan Krebill said in a June 18, 2005, *Bozeman Daily Chronicle* article:

“The only room in the entire building that didn't look tired and worn out was the sanctuary.”

A Project Management Team (PMT) was formed shortly after the decision to stay was made. It set out to determine what the congregation wanted in a renovated church

and what it would cost in time and money to achieve those desires and bring the structure up to modern standards. The PMT's core membership included: Lloyd Mandeville (chair), Shirley Sedivy, Judy Patterson, Chuck Beck, Mark Daugherty, John Hodges, Rev. Dan Krebill and Bob Utzinger, along with the assistance of Ed Sedivy, Tony Wastcoat, Carole Sisson and Ric Tieman. Their work started with the Christian Education Wing, but as time and further analysis occurred, the work expanded to include the Fellowship Hall, Chapel (now the library) and kitchen. The PMT Task Force analyses and engineering estimates were the basis of a \$1-million dollar "Bloom Where We're Planted" capital campaign initiated in 2004. As Dan Krebill put it in his June 21, 2021, sermon:

"Some of you will remember that it was 17-years ago that we took the step of faith to undertake a \$1M capital campaign for the renovation and modernization of our historic church building. It was an ambitious goal, but one that we knew was within reach with hard work and tenacity."

The campaign was successful and allowed the church to put together the construction documents and start the process of obtaining the loans necessary to get the work going. As noted later under "Mission: Reaching Out Beyond the Bozeman Community," \$100,000, or 10% of the capital campaign funds were used for a mission project in Vanuatu, for Westminster Spires and for Rockhaven. In 2005, the church decided to sell the South 3rd property and apply the proceeds to the renovation of the building. This same year the church approved a budget of \$1,445,319 for the renovations.

The "Holy Mess" (as it was called by church members) began in April 2005 with the emptying of the Christian Education Wing to make way for tearing everything out to the studs. Chuck Beck spearheaded the work with the invaluable assistance of Fritz Dickensheets. A delay until June in getting the building permits slowed the work a bit, but the Christian Education Wing was completed in December with a ribbon cutting on Christmas Day, 2005. A feature article in the June 18, 2005, *Bozeman Daily Chronicle* included a picture of Matthew Patterson at work in the shell of the Christian Education wing. One of the more unusual crews that helped with the work was the Montana State University Men's Basketball Team. Arranged by church members who support MSU athletics, the team dug out the pit for the elevator in the education wing.

The displacement of all church activities from the Education building during the renovation meant that for many months the church nursery and children's Sunday school took place in temporary quarters in the Fellowship Hall. To provide a way that the children and youth could participate in the renovation of their church, they were enlisted in the creation of an art installation for the renewed space. Local fused glass artist Richard Parrish invited the church's young people, aged five to eighteen, to his studio. He had prepared colored glass scraps for handling by little fingers, briefly firing them in his kiln, and then smoothing the sharp edges. He provided each child or youth with a clear square of glass on which they were free to assemble the colored

pieces in whatever arrangement they desired. Some created pictures while others chose abstract designs. Mr. Parrish then fused the glass art in his kiln and assembled the patchwork squares into panels designed for the south-facing windows in the newly named Room 204. These "Children of Light" panels continue to add color to the many meetings which take place in this room, reminding all of God's light shining through.

Next up was "Holy Mess II," taking on the basement of the church below the Sanctuary which included the kitchen, library (old chapel) and Fellowship Hall. The wooden floor of the old chapel (now library) was taken out and dirt dug out to allow for a new sewer line to be laid and a concrete floor to be put down. All the outgoing dirt and incoming gravel was hauled via wheel barrel up and down the elevator. A new sound system, fire suppression system and air conditioning system were installed in the Sanctuary as part of this phase. The old church structure had "knob and tube" wiring which needed to be replaced to bring the electrical system up to code. The electrical panel was upgraded from 200-amps to 1100-amps to handle the heating, ventilation, air conditioning (HVAC) and other systems being upgraded. A low voltage light switch system was also installed. Renovation of these parts of the church took much of 2006. The total project budget was up to \$1,789,000. Also in 2006, the sale of the South 3rd property finally occurred on August 3rd. The sale was delayed by litigation against the Gallatin County Commissioners because the plat map for the property labeled it as for "church use only." The property could not be sold until the County Commissioners went through the process of revising the plat map, removing the stipulation. The good news about the nearly two-year delay in the sale of the property is that it increased in value by about \$200,000 (a common theme in Bozeman over the years). The church netted about \$800,000 from the sale.

The work was completed in the fall and celebrated on November 5, 2006, with an "Event to Remember" which also highlighted the 135th anniversary of the church. Using the theme, "Commemorate the Past, Celebrate the Present and Contemplate the Future," the event featured local musicians. The message was "The Theology of Fishing." The "Theology" was written by member Jane Klockman and presented by Michael Sexson, Professor of English at Montana State. It was written as if Pastor John Norman Maclean were speaking from the pulpit in 2006, reflecting on the history of the church and using the writings of his son Norman Maclean to weave fishing and religion together.

Holy Mess II wasn't the end of the renovation work. In 2013, a facelift of the Sanctuary occurred with new carpets, renewed pews, new pew cushions, new choir chairs and a new location for the Warfield Cross. Dan Krebill, Chuck Poremba and Donna Beck coordinated this work. It was dedicated December 13, 2013.

The decision to stay and then to renovate left parking as an unresolved issue. A key advantage to moving out of downtown Bozeman was to provide better parking for church services and other events. Work on that question began in early 2007 with active exploration of property around the area.

A partial answer to this question came in 2013 with the acquisition of the 24 South Willson Property, across Babcock Street from the church. In 2012, the property became available. The church studied the feasibility of acquisition of the Fearn Family Property, as it was known, (Diana Fearn and other members of the Fearn family were church members) which consisted of an office building and adjacent parking. February 3, 2013, was the kickoff of the \$350,000 capital campaign which concluded in March. The property was acquired in April, and a team was formulated to manage the 24 South Willson property.

In 2015, the church received an offer to buy the property. The purchaser's offer included dedicating a parking lot for the church's use. A committee of Dan Krebill, Chuck Poremba, Mike McCormick, Lloyd Mandeville and Donna Beck worked on the question. Although the Session was initially in favor, and a significant amount of work was put into the possible sale, with further discussion a decision was made in 2017 not to sell. Also in 2017, the congregation concurred with a plan to renegotiate the mortgage to provide an additional \$50,000 to improve the building, re-pave the parking lot and change the boundary so that a portion of the parking lot exclusively used by the church could fall under the church's tax-free status.

Income from the rental of the offices is used to pay the expenses of operating the 24 South Willson building, pay the mortgage and pay back the church funds borrowed for the initial purchase. Especially since 2020 and the pandemic, income from 24 South Willson has helped finance everyday church operations and made up some of the reduction in pledged income that began to occur that year.

Another piece in solving the church parking puzzle was reaching an agreement with a business across Babcock Street from the church to allow parking in their lot on Sunday mornings.

**Rockhaven:
Transformation Along the
Gallatin River**



Rockhaven Camp along the Gallatin River south of Bozeman has been a part of the church for 97 years. On October 18, 1925, 10-acres of Rutledge’s Sheep Rock Ranch were donated by A.T. and Celia Rutledge (after a one-dollar bill was passed from buyer to seller) to First Presbyterian Church. The parcel of land straddled the Gallatin River. The next summer, the church began offering worship, picnic suppers and inspirational meeting opportunities using some of the ranch buildings. Construction of the chapel began in 1927 and was finished in 1928, with the dedication on July 28th (Paul Krebill, *The Bridge at Rockhaven Dedication* program, September 28, 2003).

Today we see a vibrant facility with full camps during the summer and a variety of uses in the spring and fall. An alternative source of revenue is provided by a partnership with a company offering ziplining on the church property. Innovative leadership and committed board members intend to guide us to a continuing and bright future for the camp. The future of Rockhaven has not always been so certain. As Jody McDevitt noted in her July 25, 2021, sermon:

“Twenty-four-years ago, when we arrived here to serve as co-pastors, we heard about the mixed feelings of the congregation toward its little camp on the Gallatin. Some loved it dearly; some thought of it as a bottomless money pit which should be sold to the highest bidder. Obviously, those who loved it prevailed. Those who loved Rockhaven saw it as a source of spiritual nourishment, a gift to share with others, a place where people could be rooted and grounded in the knowledge and love of God. With a great deal of faith and courage, this congregation has stepped out to grow the ministry at Rockhaven into an exceptional gift to our larger community.”

Perhaps as a prelude to the stay-go decision for the main church building in Bozeman, a group of dedicated members looked at how Rockhaven could become a success story for all to be proud of. In a formal way, those discussions began in 2001 with the return to a stand-alone committee instead of the camp falling under the general buildings

and grounds committee of the Session. That committee began brainstorming the future of Rockhaven (2001 Annual Report).

The committee made the recommendation, approved by the Session, to commit to the long-term future of the camp and renovate the Rockhaven facilities with that in mind. Efforts in 2002 and 2003 laid the groundwork for the future of Rockhaven.

In 2022, former Co-Pastor Jody McDevitt wrote to the 150th Anniversary Committee about this important chapter in Rockhaven's history:

“The idea of holding Vacation Bible School at Rockhaven dates to the days when Ora Lemon was the church's Christian Education Director in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In her later years, she loved to share stories of taking kids on a bus up the canyon to learn about God at Rockhaven.

When the youth group returned from its exciting 2001 mission trip to Brighton, England, they knew that their 2002 mission would be a “local” adventure. They understood how the rotation worked – local, in-state, national then international. “Local” seemed anticlimactic after adventures in London, but as it turned out, the week that unfolded had the greatest long-term impact of all the mission trips they ever undertook.

We planned a “Rockhaven Vacation Bible Day Camp” because the youth were adamant that “school” should not be in the title. They would be the leaders, and they would have the fun of staying overnight at camp for the week. Their parents and other church adults volunteered to support cooks, kitchen workers and even a bus driver (Ed Kleingartner). The cost for children attending would be FREE. We wanted to reach out to children in the community who had limited or no experience in the great outdoors, so we made flyers for distribution at the food bank, low-income apartments and anywhere else we could think of.

We purchased a VBS curriculum called “Bug Safari,” held training sessions, divided up the responsibilities and publicized the opportunity. We had a “staff” of 13 youth ready to go, a good ratio for our plan of 36 campers. But one-week before the camp was to begin, we had a grand total of 9 children registered. Almost all were our “church kids.” Should we cancel?

Well, 2002 was also the first year First Presbyterian Church joined the Downtown Ecumenical VBS which took place the week prior to the planned “VBDC.” So, we used that audience to distribute more of our flyers. Maybe we would find some kids with nothing planned for the following week.

God was SOOO good to us. On the Sunday evening before the camp's Monday start, we had 36 campers signed up, the exact number we wanted. We finished making the color-coded t-shirts, laminated name tags and made mixed-age group assignments. The June rains were finally forecast to quit. On Monday morning, the fun began!

Across the country that summer, there were thousands of indoor "Bug Safari" VBSs happening. But we had the real thing. After the first day of using up all suitable containers from the kitchen, the kids began arriving on the bus with their own jars to take tent caterpillars' home. If they weren't interested in caterpillars, they collected snails. Midweek, the salmon flies began hatching – everywhere! The creek swarmed with future civil engineers creating dams and diversions and discovering what dwelled there. It was the best Bug Safari ever.

No one (except God) could have planned all the smiles and laughter of that week. The chapel, pews pushed against the walls, rocked with singing and stomping. The youth leaders, who ranged from 12-17 years old, taught their assigned lessons with variable skill. The kids, ages 6-11, adored their youthful leaders. The parents and other adults just stood back and watched the magic of kids playing together at Rockhaven.

On Friday afternoon as the bus loaded up for its final trip back to Bozeman, two of the youth, Dusty DeBoer and Willie Montgomery, unwittingly began what eventually grew into the Rockhaven Summer Camp ministry. They were saying goodbye to each camper with hugs and high fives and "See you next year!" I quietly said to them, "You know, you just made a promise to those kids. Are you going to keep your promise and do this again next summer?" They looked a bit surprised, but they accepted the challenge. "As long as we also get to have our in-state mission trip," they answered. It was quite a beginning. Rockhaven Summer Camp is their legacy."

For most of its life as a camp, access to church property on the east side of the Gallatin River was via a foot bridge. High waters had washed out the foot bridges many times, and the Rockhaven Committee explored alternatives to provide better access. In 1995, a team of senior civil engineering students from Montana State University overseen by Professor John Schlegelmilch, a member of the church, came up with a creative design to span the river constructing the new bridge from one-side only (heavy equipment access was not possible to the east side of the river). The plans sat dormant for five years until a \$50,000 donation brought the new footbridge within reach. An additional \$10,000 was needed to complete the work, and bridge planks were "sold" to make up the difference (a plaque at Rockhaven commemorates those who bought planks). With the construction supervision talents of Chuck Beck, the engineering, surveying and hydraulics talents of Lyle Biekert, George McClure and

Ted Williams, and the concrete work by Scott Parsons (all church members), 2003 went down as “the year of the bridge.” The Rockhaven Committee, led by Randy Larimer, contributed countless other volunteer hours to the work in August and September. Greg Poncelet and Montana Crane set the 155-foot-long steel suspension bridge in place on August 22, 2003. The dedication occurred on September 28, 2003 (Paul Krebill, *The Bridge at Rockhaven Dedication* program, September 28, 2003). An October 6, 2003, *Bozeman Daily Chronicle* article, “Rockhaven – New Bridge Across River,” documents the event.

That same year, seminary student Ryan Mandeville was hired with the “charge to get Rockhaven Camp going.” (Lloyd Mandeville, personal communication, April 24, 2023). Ryan had grown up in First Pres Bozeman, and his two- summers as camp director (2003 and 2004) helped establish Rockhaven as a fully programmed Christian Summer Camp. For the summer of 2005, Scott Makoutz led the program. In 2006, Scott Thrasher joined the staff at Rockhaven as the first permanent (albeit part-time) camp director and took the reins of the camping ministry. With Scott’s hiring, a new and significant commitment was made to Rockhaven’s future.

Physical improvements to provide more active recreation opportunities came in succeeding years. In 2008, a climbing tower was built by Chuck Beck. In 2010, a partnership with Montana Whitewater led to the installation of a zip-line course (owned and operated by Montana Whitewater). The high ropes course (belonging to Rockhaven) was completed in 2011.

Also in 2011, the camp director position became full time which was an important staffing move to solidify the camp’s future. It also afforded better opportunities for facility use in the off season by community and university groups thus providing another source of revenue. In 2013, the entrance road to the camp off U.S. Highway 191 was realigned to remove it from U. S. Forest Service property (which abuts the north side of the camp).

As part of the move to make Rockhaven a self-sustaining enterprise, a formal Rockhaven Operational Board of Directors was established in 2014. It replaced the Rockhaven Committee under the Session. The Operational Board is still linked to the Session since Elders serve on the Board and the Session approves the overall budget for Rockhaven. However, operational decisions and planning are now made by the board and camp director rather than the Session.

Through all these years in which the ministry at Rockhaven was expanding, the congregation continued to cherish its Rockhaven traditions. A Father’s Day Pig Roast traditionally kicked off the summer. Some years there was a genuine roasted pig. Even when the weather was cold and rainy, a crowd gathered for fellowship before worshiping in the chapel. The Sunday evening “potluck and Vespers” tradition drew a loyal number through July and August, culminating in an end-of-summer ice cream social on the Sunday before Labor Day.

“Christmas at Rockhaven” also became a tradition. On a Saturday in mid-December, despite cold, snow and descending darkness, the chapel would fill with worshipers singing Christmas carols and listening to the story of the birth of Christ. Dan Holland shared original stories with a Christmas message. The worship time was usually followed by a chili supper.

A “sunrise service” on Easter Sunday also became a tradition. At 6:30 am, Dan Holland shared more stories. This time he had a resurrection theme accompanied by hymns, scripture and prayers. There was always light in the sky when the service began, but because Sheep Rock looms east of Rockhaven, it was still possible to watch for the sun to crest the mountain.

Many other fellowship activities occurred at Rockhaven over the years. The Session, Presbyterian Women, youth and Presby Cats all held numerous day-long or overnight retreats there. On summer Sunday afternoons, recreational activities were frequently organized for the congregation including an annual hike to the top of Sheep Rock. Many recall the baptism of a confirmation class graduate in the river. It was held at the end of August at the fishing access immediately north of the camp. The concept of a “thin place,” where the distance between heaven and earth collapses and God feels especially close, has frequently been used to describe Rockhaven. Church members have held weddings and family gatherings there for this reason. During the pandemic, Rockhaven provided a memorable place for infant baptism services.

To celebrate the 90th year of Rockhaven, a grand party was planned in 2015. Campers and their families were invited to join the congregation and friends of Rockhaven in afternoon activities, musical entertainment, a worship service and barbecue. A large tent was situated in the area between the dining hall and dormitory for afternoon entertainment and worship. The Rev. Ryan Mandeville, the camp’s first director and now a Presbyterian minister in Skagway, Alaska, was invited to preach. Boy Scout Troop 679 cooked and served hamburgers and hot dogs. It was a stunning success, with more than 200 people attending.

Scott Thrasher began taking a pioneering look at how to think of camp and coined the term “UnCamp” to characterize what he had in mind. Rather than the traditional church camp of structured activities almost all the time, Scott began to emphasize unstructured activities. That is, give the campers an idea, a place, perhaps some supplies (depending on activity) and leave it to their imaginations. Camp counselors are still there to help, answer questions, give advice and pay attention. Most important, they are not there to instruct or tell.

That approach seems to have paid off. An important milestone was reached in 2016 when all camper spots were filled before the start of the summer season. That success continued in the summer, and use of the camp continued to grow in the offseason until 2020. The pandemic shut down many camps across the country, but not Rockhaven. With an emphasis on day use and outdoor activities combined with fewer participants, social distancing and masking, especially indoors, Rockhaven functioned that summer.

Rockhaven will be celebrating its 100th birthday in 2025, and the Operations Board has recognized its infrastructure needs tender loving care. Towards that end, significant gifts have been received to provide funding for upgrades. They have included a new water treatment system (2015), a tree-fort play structure (2017) and a new roof on the dormitory (2020). Renovation of the bathroom/shower building was planned for summer 2023.

The Operations Board also began holding an annual fall fundraiser to supplement its operating budget in 2019. This lively event, centered on a baked goods auction, has been well received by attendees and nets about \$10,000 each year. In addition, the Operations Board has spent considerable time developing a long-range facility plan for both sides of the river; however, these plans have been put on hold due to the vast amounts of funding required.

As we came out of the pandemic, the Rockhaven Operational Board was exploring ways to expand the summer camping season and expand off-season use. These physical and monetary considerations are important, but the spirit of Rockhaven is perhaps best captured by Jody McDevitt her July 25, 2021, sermon:

“When I hear the prayer of Ephesians and the hope of the apostle that his people would have "the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, and to be filled with the fullness of God," I see children playing under the shadow of Sheep Rock, exploring the flowing waters of the creek and discovering themselves in a nurturing Christian community. I see elders enjoying the peacefulness of a beloved place where God has been revealed to them for many years. I see a community learning to value God's creation and our part in it. I see people being rooted and grounded in love.”

Rockhaven Addendum: This document concludes at the end of 2022, but the stories and events do not stop. As a sad addition to this history, while this document was being written, our friend, colleague and Rockhaven Camp Director Scott Thrasher, passed away in the summer of 2023.

Endowment Fund: Money for the Future



One of the enduring legacies of the 125th Anniversary Celebration of First Presbyterian Church was the creation of an Endowment Fund for the church in 1997. With an initial goal of \$125,000 (commemorating the quasiquicentennial of the church), the Endowment Fund continues to provide an important place where members and friends can support the church in the long term. The church created an Endowment Board to oversee the investments. A General Endowment Fund was established, and every year ten-percent of the income generated is reinvested in the principal, and 30-percent of the annual income is allocated to each of the following three-spendable accounts: Rockhaven Support, Mission and Benevolence and Special Church Support.

These funds have been used to support a wide range of church and community activities over the years. They include such things as youth painting and furnishing their room in the education wing in 2006, refurbishing church handbells in 2018, Mission and benevolence operating support in 2018, Rockhaven support in 2018 and a Seminary Scholarship in 2019. In 2021, Endowment Funds were used to match and to help inspire individual member donations for our church to support the creation of the Housing First Village (described in more detail later in this history under “Community Partnerships.”)

The Endowment Board has established ways to encourage donating that include Friends of the Endowment – Legacy Giving Society. Members of the Friends of the Endowment express their faith in Christ and commitment to helping ensure our church continues its vital mission and witness to Christ in the Bozeman community. Friends of the Endowment have named our church’s Endowment in their wills, in planned gifts, by giving cash, personally, or from their business (Montana Endowment tax credit) or in memory of deceased friends or loved ones. Cash gifts, bequests, or planned gifts of \$500 or more to FPC’s Endowment entitle entry into our church’s “Friends of the Endowment”. They are honored with a legacy lapel pin and necklace, signifying commitment to ensure FPC’s Christian ministry shines brightly in the Gallatin Valley, now and in the future.

An offshoot of the original endowment funds was the establishment of the Deacons Endowment Fund in 2004 which was created to provide a means for members to donate specifically for support of the Deacons. At the end of each calendar year, four-percent of the value of the fund is dispersed to the Deacons Benevolence Fund. With a substantial bequest to the Deacons Endowment Fund from the estate of longtime member Pat Donahoo, the fund was renamed in his honor.

Over the 25 years the Endowment Funds have grown with donations to the funds by church members and by families and friends. Additionally, they have grown by generally rising stock and bond markets. The Funds remain 100% invested in the New Covenant Balanced Growth Fund which is 60% invested in stocks and 40% in bonds. Over the past 10 years, the fund has seen a 6.6% annualized return which considers both up-market years (for example 2013, 2019 and 2021) and down-market periods (2018 and especially in 2022). Despite the recent downturn of the stock and bond markets, to put the accomplishments of the endowment board and funds in a larger perspective, in the past 25 years, First Presbyterian Church has gone from zero-dollars to \$459,608 in its endowment funds. Many thanks to the foresight of those in 1997!

At the end of 2022, Kris Hall chaired the Endowment Board. She was joined by Endowment Trustees, Doug Babcock, Terry Schaplow, Frank Schurz, Jane Spencer, Jeff Davis (ex officio), Ric Tieman (Treasurer, ex officio) and Interim Pastor Ashley Birk (ex officio).

The FPC Board of Trustees wishes to thank those who faithfully served as Endowment Trustees and ex officio advisors since inception in 1997: Ted Williams (visionary & secretary), Jim Babcock (chair), Ed Sedivy, (attorney drafting documents to establish the endowment), Laura Smith (ex-officio, treasurer), Dick Klockman, Kris Hall (secretary & chair), Rhoda McCormick, Gillian Erlandson (secretary), Marj Williams, Lynda Sedivy White, Chuck Poremba (chair), Jenny Beard, Ric Tieman, Mark Williams, Cinclair May, Kelly Meredith, Sheryl Hallin (ex officio, Treasurer), Pastor Dan Krebill (ex officio) and Jim Mitchell.

Mission:
**Reaching Out Beyond
the Bozeman Community**



During the past 25 years, outreach beyond the Bozeman community has continued in the form of several mission trips by youth, adults, Presby Cats and sometimes by combinations of all three. Through information in annual reports, recollections of members and the help of Jody McDevitt and Dan Krebill, the following paragraphs highlight many of the mission trips and individuals involved over the past 25 years. The 150th Anniversary Committee apologizes if we overlooked a particular trip.

In August 1997, FPC's first ever "out-of-country" youth mission trip was to Tecate, Baja California, México. The next year, David Bratsky was a Presbyterian Church USA (PC(USA)) Young Adult Volunteer in Brighton, England for nine-months.

In 2000, our youth travelled to Minneapolis (along with youth from First Presbyterian Church Billings), where they participated in a range of urban ministries. The concept of a four-year cycle of youth mission trips (local, in-state, out-of-state and international) was adopted at this time. In 2001, a youth mission trip went to Brighton, England, with ten youth and five adults participating. We established a sister church relationship with the Gloucester Place Baptist Church as a follow-up to the mission trip.

As described in the Rockhaven portion of this history, the 2002 mission "trip" began the Rockhaven summer camp ministry. The youth doubled their service in 2003 by both leading another camp at Rockhaven and traveling to Lame Deer to work for the Boys and Girls Club on the Northern Cheyenne reservation. Connections made there led to a subsequent trip by adults and college students to Lame Deer, as well as several years in which Lame Deer children and youth came to Rockhaven Camp.

The youth mission trip tradition, on the four-year cycle, continued for many years. In 2004, Chicago was the destination. There the youth learned about and participated in urban ministries, went to museums and swam in Lake Michigan. Two-thousand five was a big year with a destination in the Yucatan peninsula of México. Several college students and Northern Cheyenne youth joined the group staying in a Mayan village, helping with construction of a boarding school for Mayan youth and playing

with village children in an afternoon VBS. That week concluded with experiencing the gift of God's creation at the beach.

Rockhaven benefitted from the youth's contributions in 2006 when they built the outdoor chapel on the east side of the river and did other maintenance work. Having graduated from college, Maren Haynes began serving as a PC(USA) Young Adult Volunteer in Tucson, Arizona. This laid the groundwork for a 2007 youth mission trip to the U.S.-México border. This meant flipping two-years of the rotation, In 2008, a new generation of youth went to Lame Deer to lead a VBS and work on other projects.

The youth undertook a mission trip to Skagway, Alaska, in 2009. This is where Ryan Mandeville was pastor at the First Presbyterian Church. Fifteen youth and seven adult advisors helped with Vacation Bible School and painted the exterior of First Presbyterian Church, Skagway.

In 2010, the youth stayed close to home and did painting and repairs at Rockhaven working alongside members of the Chestnut Hills Presbyterian Church from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The combined group led Vacation Bible School and helped the church with yard projects. The next year, the youth (along with youth from the Manhattan Presbyterian Church) were in Wolf Point (at the United Dakota Presbyterian Church), leading Vacation Bible School and helping the church with yard projects.

In 2012, the youth traveled to Los Angeles to join Sierra Service Project. They helped people with home improvements such as ramps, decks and learned about urban issues. At home, the youth worked with ROC Wheels to build three-custom wheelchairs for three children in Cameroon identified by the McMakin family.

With the formation of the Presby Cats (see discussion later) in the fall of 2012, an opportunity to collaborate with the youth was identified. The youth agreed to move their mission week to spring break, and a joint youth-Presby Cats trip to Belize was organized in 2013. Working with a local ministry, the group built two-simple homes for two-families.

Operation Christmas Child is a ministry of the organization Samaritan's Purse. It provides shoe boxes filled with clothes and toys and personal hygiene products to children overseas. The church's participation was originally organized by the Rev. Edith Tieman. Donna Beck took over leadership until 2009. She passed the reins to Joy Ames who has continued to coordinate it. Various annual reports mention the ministry. In 1997, Operation Christmas Child filled 117 shoe boxes. In 2012, 292 shoe boxes were delivered to a regional staging location before going overseas. In 2014, more than 300 boxes were filled, and in 2015, 385 boxes were sent overseas and 410 were organized in 2016.

The church has had an ongoing relationship with the Intermountain Children's Home in Helena (now known as Intermountain). Some of the local groups which have benefitted from the church's support have been the Compassionate Friends support

group for bereaved parents, Home to Stay workshops and Project Homeless Connect, all here in Bozeman.

The church also supported mission work far from home. Bruce and Lora Whearty of Billings connected us to Vanuatu when they served as PC(USA) mission co-workers there for several years in the early 2000s. Other PC(USA) mission co-workers who expanded the church's understanding of God's work in the world included Bob and Bobbi Snyder (Zimbabwe), the Rev. Doug and Elaine Baker (Northern Ireland) and the Rev. John McCall (Taiwan). The Rev. Paul Neshangwe of Zimbabwe became a special friend of the church when he visited us as part of the denomination's International Peacemaker program.

In 2015, the first adult mission trip to the Fort Peck Reservation in northeast Montana occurred. Patrick and Sudi Pipe and their children (who are from Poplar, Montana, on the reservation) became members of First Presbyterian while Patrick worked on a degree at Montana State University. Building on the relationships developed with church members, adults went to Fort Peck in May 2015 and worked with Patrick and Sudi and other people in the community at the Makaicu (Riverside) Presbyterian Church. Makaicu is part of the Dakota Presbytery which is a presbytery separate and apart from the Yellowstone and Glacier Presbyteries in Montana. The Dakota Presbytery extends from eastern Montana through North and South Dakota into western Minnesota and is composed of Native American churches.

The primary project that first year was cleaning up and documenting the cemetery adjacent to Makaicu. Each identifiable grave was documented and photographed, and a map was developed showing the location of each grave. Digital and paper copies of the results were provided to the elders at the church. Thirteen volunteers documented 380 graves. This was the first of five-consecutive annual trips to Fort Peck.

In 2016, 15 Presby Cats and two adults went to the Corrymeela Community in Northern Ireland on a spring break mission trip. This was the same ministry, devoted to reconciliation in Northern Ireland and beyond, in which Dan and Jody had spent their sabbatical in 2008.

Also in 2016, eleven adults returned to Fort Peck and replaced the three-large wooden crosses that sit in front of the Minisdah church in Chelsea. Clearly visible to motorists on U.S. Highway 2 and visible to passengers on Amtrak's *Empire Builder*, the crosses are a statement of Christ's work in the Fort Peck community.

In 2017, the adults returned to Fort Peck and began what turned into a three-year project, documenting the cemetery at Red Eagle Memorial Church at Fort Kipp. The Red Eagle cemetery had almost four times more graves than Makaicu.

In 2018, there were three mission trips: a Presby Cats mission trip to Miami, a youth mission trip to the Spokane Indian Reservation and an adult mission trip to Fort Peck (continuing the work at Red Eagle). The youth mission trip was with the Sierra Service Project and included eight youth and three adults from our church who joined 60 other youth and adults to build stairs, ramps, sheds and decks for tribal members.

In 2017 and 2018, First Presbyterian joined other Bozeman interfaith communities to support “Operation Soft Landing,” providing support for international refugees in Missoula.

In 2019, the youth mission trip went to San Diego in partnership with Sierra Service Project. The Presby Cats went to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, over spring break. Ten participants worked with Presbyterian Disaster Relief to rehabilitate a home. The adults returned to Fort Peck in May and completed the work at Red Eagle cemetery. They were able to present draft results to the church elders.

All these mission trips came to an abrupt halt in 2020 with the onset of the Covid pandemic. For example, the Presby Cats were planning to go to Cuba during spring break 2020. That trip was cancelled just a few days before departure. In addition, our friend and key local contact for the Fort Peck trips, Patrick Pipe, passed away in 2020. However, in the spirit of Sierra Service Project, the youth created “Montana Service Project” based at the home of Dan and Deana Berg. They built garden boxes for Love INC and church members. Later that summer, they volunteered for Love INC, helping local community members.

As Covid subsided mission trips slowly resumed. The youth with help from church member and parent Julie Small organized a trip to the Crow Reservation in 2021. They also participated in a Sierra Service Project to work in California in Redwood National and State Parks during the summer of 2022. Both were great successes at a time when the youth so needed these opportunities.

A different kind of mission work is supporting the work of others sometimes far from our church. As Dan Krebill noted in his June 27, 2021, sermon:

“When you look around our church facility today, you can see that the capital campaign was a success. The modernization was accomplished to God’s glory and ministry and mission has continued to emanate from the corner of South Willson and West Babcock. What is not seen are two of the projects that were funded with the 10% tithe campaign (some 17-years ago).

One of those projects was the building of dual-purpose buildings in the South Pacific Island nation of Vanuatu. The dual purpose of these buildings on remote islands was to provide a place for weekly worship and to also serve as storm shelters when fierce cyclone storms hit the islands threatening the lives of its inhabitants. All these years later after the building of these shelters, it is unknown how many human lives have been saved, but surely there are those who would have perished had it not been for the safety and refuge these buildings provided. Thanks be to God for our connection to these churches through our generosity and financial support.

Closer to home, another project that was funded by the mission component of our capital campaign was the building of an up-to-code water source for our presbytery's church camp, Westminster Spires, south of Red Lodge. The open-air water source that had been in use for years at the camp had been deemed unsafe by health authorities and the future of the camp was in peril without a new water source. Thanks to the generosity of those who supported our capital campaign, Westminster Spires has been able to continue to operate safely providing a wonderful opportunity for children, youth, families and individuals to encounter God's love in a place of sacred beauty."

**Community Partnerships:
Together is Stronger**



Over the past 25 years, Bozeman has had two sides. One is a vibrant upscale community with a strong growing university. It also has a strong construction industry and a strong growing high-tech industry. It is surrounded by open space and agriculture with easy access to a host of outdoor recreation opportunities. On the other side, is a community with a significant poverty and homeless problem. This is exacerbated by the strong economy that is a draw for people looking for work who then find it challenging to find an affordable place to live. In the 1997 U.S. Census, the poverty level in Gallatin County was an estimated 12%. In 2009 (during the recession) it was approximately 13.4% or about 11,600 individuals. In 2021, the poverty level was approximately 8.8% or about 10,500 people. The county population has more than doubled in the 25 years, from some 60,000 in 1997 to 122,000 in 2021.

The church has long recognized the often-hidden needs of the community. The list of partnerships between First Presbyterian Church and community groups over the past 25 years is lengthy, reflecting both the interest of our members and the issues in the area. We support Family Promise, Love INC, the Human Resources Development Council (HRDC) and its subsidiaries, Fork and Spoon, the Food Bank, Warming Center, Crop Walk, the Boy Scouts, Bozeman, Monforton and Gallatin Gateway school districts among others. Some of these partnerships have lasted for many years while others have been shorter term. The Fellowship Hall has a quilt

which highlights the different community organizations the church or individual members support in the Gallatin Valley.

The church has been the sponsor and host of Boy Scout Troop 679 in Bozeman since 1959. A plaque inside the Babcock Street door of the church lists the 99 boys who have achieved the rank of Eagle Scout. What isn't obvious are the projects the scouts have accomplished for the church over the years both in Bozeman and at Rockhaven. For example, at Rockhaven, the sign board (currently in front of the dining hall) and the newer benches in the outdoor chapel on the south side of the river were Eagle Scout projects.

The Deacons have supported a variety of community organizations over the years throughout the valley. In 2003, support for the school nursing program at Monforton School began. It was sparked by the recognition of church member Sally Broughton who was teaching at Monforton. The school had no nursing program, and at that time, a significant percentage of the student body was on the reduced cost for school lunch program (an indicator of poverty within the district). These same students, often with working parents, did not have easy access to routine medical care. Sally and church member Bob Mathis began a program of support for a part-time school nursing program at the school with funding through the Board of Deacons. In 2005, a similar program was started at Gallatin Gateway School with support for a part-time school nurse provided through the Deacons.

The Deacons have also supported several other community organizations through annual projects, annual gifts or one-time funding. The warm clothing project provides coats, hats, mittens and boots to students at Monforton, Gallatin Gateway and the Bozeman schools. The church helps people who need assistance with gas and/or food, telephone or occasionally lodging support with funds provided by the Deacons. In terms of community assistance, the Deacons have provided funds to HRDC for the Warming Center and Fork and Spoon among others. "One-time funding" has been provided to a wide variety of groups. It has helped the following: Rockhaven Scholarships, the Rocky Mountain Medical Ministries (medical mission in México), Bozeman School District's Homeless Students Program, Bozeman Police Child Safety and Drug Prevention Program, Gallatin County Sheriff's Department Chaplain and Liberty Place (which helps those with traumatic brain injuries). Additionally, they have provided funds to Presby Cat's Mission Trips, the Food Bank, HRDC's Blueprint Homeless Youth Home, the overflow Warming Center at Christ the King Lutheran Church, Blackfeet Nation Winter Storm Relief and assistance to church staff members.

A big year in terms of community support was 2003. The Deacons supported three, three-week summer camps at Monforton School in reading and language arts, and choosing positive alternatives to high-risk behavior. Also in 2003, the Volunteerism Mission Grand Slam occurred, and 48 volunteers participated in at least three of the following: the Intermountain Children's Home, Boys and Girls Club in Lame Deer, Food Bank Donation, Rockhaven Bible Camp, Ecumenical Vacation Bible School,

Westminster Spires Church Camp, Singing along with Reach, Inc. clients at Rockhaven and/or a Habitat for Humanity Build in Belgrade.

In 2006, First Presbyterian Church joined the ecumenical Vacation Bible School (VBS), a partnership between Bozeman United Methodist Church, First Baptist Church, St. James Episcopal Church, Grand Avenue Christian Church and First Presbyterian. Children from these congregations as well as others from the community came together and the administrative and teaching workload was shared by many. Ecumenical VBS has remained in place through 2022 (with some modifications in 2020 for the Covid year).

In 2006, a Community Education Ministry was underway. It was a partnership to provide recurring classes for Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Equivalency Diploma (GED) and English for Speakers of other languages (ESOL) in our church.

Finally in 2006, First Presbyterian became a Family Promise Church partner one-year after the creation of the local organization. As Co-Pastors Dan Krebill and Jody McDevitt noted in the 2007 Annual Report:

“After months of careful consideration, and the stepping forward of several members offering leadership, our church has become a partner congregation in the Family Promise program. We are energized by the impressive number of people from our congregation who have stepped forward to offer enthusiastic energy towards this important mission project of sharing God’s love.”

Family Promise was established to provide homeless families with temporary places to reside, meals and case management to help families regain their independence. First Presbyterian Church took turns with other churches to provide temporary housing for families and feed them while they were staying at the church. 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. For First Presbyterian, that meant we typically hosted families for four to five-weeks each year. Betsy Crabs was the first coordinator of our church’s hosting team. She volunteered for this service for many years. In 2014, church members Judy Arkwright, Nancy Rote, Judy Harrison and Sue Westphal all helped coordinate the roster of members of our church who stayed overnight when it was our weeks to host families. They also provided meals. Dan and Sandy Archer provided help moving Family Promise-related materials in and out of the rooms when it was our week to host families. First Presbyterian was assisted in 2011 and 2012 by members of the Mt. Ellis Seventh Day Adventist Church and then by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, Belgrade Ward. They provided meals and people to stay overnight in our church during First Presbyterian’s “weeks.” In 2015, we hosted 15 families over five-weeks.

A different way of supporting Family Promise was the Cardboard Box City at Bogert Park Pavilion in the fall. Youth (and adult chaperones) from the church constructed

a cardboard box to sleep in for a night and solicited monetary support from the less-hardy church members. First Presbyterian Church always provided a delegation to this event and often won prizes such as oldest participant (Celia Wood, at 79-years old), youngest participant (Delia, Jolene, and Arden Turner, each at about age 3), most creative cardboard “house” (Wilson McMakin, multiple times) and most money raised (First Presbyterian, many times).

The in-church model of family hosting continued until the onset of the pandemic in March 2020. St. James Episcopal Church stepped forward and offered their Rectory as a static shelter for Family Promise families. First Presbyterian and other churches continued to provide meals and provided financial support to St. James to help them offset their additional costs.

As Family Promise’s programs have continued to expand to address the growing need for housing for families in the Gallatin Valley, First Presbyterian Church support continues, primarily by providing meals coordinated by Judy Harrison.

First Presbyterian’s work as a partner church with Love In The Name Of Christ (Love INC) dates to 1996, a year after the inception of that organization in the Gallatin Valley. Church members have served on the Board and helped in the office with intake and referrals, the Personal Clothes Closet, the annual “Plant the Seed” dinner and have collected personal care items for those seeking assistance. The latter, an important part of providing help, has helped keep Love INC in front of members’ minds. The annual so called “toilet paper” talk by Bill Anderson has been a fun way to remind us all that the prosaic needs of people are also important and should not be overlooked. And it is important to remember that food stamps or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs cannot be used for personal care products (for example, diapers), making the Love INC effort that much more important.

Hunger is not a new phenomenon in Bozeman, and one of the community support efforts to help address food insecurity that dates to 1987 is the Crop Walk each October. As our church celebrated its 150th anniversary, the crop walk was enjoying its 35th year in Bozeman. Church member Judy Mathre has coordinated the churches of the community, including our own, for this walk since its inception (with the assistance of member Joanne Jennings). Similarly, the church has supported the Food Bank for many years by asking members to bring non-perishable food to the church on the first Sunday of the month as well as on occasions such as ecumenical Thanksgiving services and Souper Bowl of Caring Sundays. Although Covid brought an end to this effort, church members have continued to support the Food Bank through donations of food, money and time.

The Deacons have done their part in two ways when it comes to helping those in need of food assistance. Emergency vouchers and food gift cards have been made available to people who come to the church office asking for help. The church also networks with other churches, especially our neighboring downtown churches, to ensure that individuals are not simply going from church to church “shopping” for help.

A second way the Deacons have helped address hunger during the holiday periods is through food baskets at Thanksgiving and at Easter. For years, the Deacons organized church members to put together and deliver boxes of food for those in need in our community. Using lists provided by the school districts (Bozeman, Monforton and Gallatin Gateway) and other community organizations, the Deacons typically were able to help around 60 families twice a year. The onset of Covid forced the Deacons to change from boxes of food to gift cards during these holidays, and the use of cards continued as we came out of the pandemic.

HRDC's "Fork and Spoon" restaurant has also been supported by the church. When the concept of a "pay as you can" restaurant first got underway in 2012 (the "Community Café"), the church stepped up by providing volunteers once a month to help serve, bus tables and wash dishes. That support continued through fall of 2016. Since then, individual church members have continued to help, and the Deacons have provided monetary support.

Another project to help homeless people in the valley is the creation of the Housing First Village. This idea was originally brought to the Human Resources Development Council by Connie Campbell-Pearson, a Deacon at St. James Episcopal Church in 2016. As the idea was taking shape, the First Presbyterian Church Deacons supported the concept with small grants. When a site was chosen and actual construction began, the church stepped up in a big way. Dan Krebill recounted the story in his June 27, 2021, sermon:

"But there is more to this idea of giving as a way of remembering. It has to do with having skin in the game. When we give of our financial resources to the church or a cause, we have a vested interest in it. If we care to the point of supporting with dollars, our commitment is not only demonstrated, but also strengthened.

A wonderful demonstration of that has taken place in our congregation this summer. On Friday noon of this last week, several folks from our congregation attended an event in which a group of churches and congregations from the Gallatin Valley Interfaith Association stepped up and offered financial support to the project underway to address the ongoing issue of homelessness in our community.

If you've been around the last couple of months, you know that there are 19 tiny homes being built this summer by our local HRDC (Human Resource Development Council) that when completed will provide a safe place to live for some of the most vulnerable members of the homeless community. The housing first concept behind this project is that by providing safe shelter for people first, it will allow them to then address some of the other challenges they're facing such as mental and physical illness, unemployment and substance abuse.

A goal to raise \$60,000 to underwrite the construction of one of the 19 tiny homes was presented to the congregations of our community. When all the donations were tallied up, the Gallatin Valley Interfaith Association presented a check to HRDC on Friday for over \$139,000. This accomplishment was made by people of faith who wanted to put their money where their mouth is in this critical matter of addressing homelessness in our community. And with skin in the game so to speak, those who have supported this housing first village will continue to follow with keen interest the progress that is made through this project.

While there was great enthusiasm on Friday for the success of the funding of this goal to support the tiny homes project, what wasn't said publicly is that of the \$139,000 presented to HRDC, half of it (over \$64,000) came from folks in our congregation. Clearly, we have been blessed with financial resources and we have been moved to respond with generosity and enthusiasm in putting our faith into action through this wonderful project."



In the Midst of a Social Issue: Changing Understandings of Sexuality and Gender

In its most recent 25 years of history, First Presbyterian Church lived through changing cultural understandings around sexuality and gender and the controversies experienced in the larger church. The context is essential to understanding the local history.

Starting in the 1970s, the northern stream of the Presbyterian church began debating questions concerning homosexuality. Following reunification in 1983, the question of eligibility for ordination became the most controversial question in the denomination until its resolution in 2011. In the language of the day, could “self-affirmed, practicing homosexuals” be eligible for ordination as ministers, elders and/or deacons?

The term “ordination standards” became shorthand for the differing viewpoints in the PC(USA), and at times the debate seemed to consume all the denomination’s energy. Over the years, at the General Assembly level, amendments to the Book of Order

were proposed and sometimes adopted by an assembly. But because amendments require approval by a majority of the presbyteries, and presbyteries are made up of minister members and elder commissioners from all their member churches, the debate became localized. By the early 2000s, First Presbyterian Church could see that it was time to discuss this difficult issue openly, to “bring it out of the closet.”

Co-Pastor Jody McDevitt began the discussion with a six-week study of “What does the Bible say about homosexuality?” A large group of adults gathered in the Fellowship Hall to learn together. All agreed to respectful, open-minded, compassionate listening to the Bible and to one another. There were no votes taken, and no one was asked to state their opinion on the questions being debated in the PC(USA) and other “mainline” churches.

The debate rose and fell with each year’s General Assembly. Proposed amendments and required presbytery votes on these amendments caused the heat to rise in the presbytery and at the General Assembly level. But First Presbyterian Church maintained its peace and unity. However, within a few years, enough new people were in the congregation and the reality of cultural change was so evident that a second-iteration of the earlier study was offered, again receiving strong participation. In 2010, the General Assembly approved an amendment to the Book of Order removing language that had been inserted in 1996 with the intention of barring LGBT persons from ordination. By 2011, a majority of presbyteries, including Yellowstone Presbytery, had approved this change. Forty-years of debate were over, and LGBTQIA+ persons were no longer categorically excluded from leadership in the PC(USA).

The question of same-sex marriages was still to be answered. During the years that the denomination was debating ordination standards, some were also advocating for permission to hold same-sex marriages. But the ordination question took precedence. With the change in ordination standards, many congregations departed from the denomination. As a result, this second-debate was resolved relatively quickly. As in the ordination controversy, discussion at the General Assembly in 2014 led to the approval of a proposed amendment to the Book of Order, this time allowing same-sex marriage in the church. The General Assembly also voted to allow ministers and sessions to use their own discernment where such ceremonies were allowed by law.

With an approaching presbytery-level vote regarding the proposed Book of Order amendment, First Presbyterian Church once again needed to study a difficult question involving sexuality, culture, tradition and church practice. In October 2014, “Christian Marriage and Same-Sex Marriage” was the topic of a six-week adult study led by the co-pastors. Numerous resources were used, and Co-General Presbyter George Goodrich led one of the sessions. The pressure increased when in November 2014, a federal district court ruled that the state of Montana’s ban on same-sex marriage was unconstitutional, opening the legal door to this new possibility.

By March 2015, a majority of PC(USA) presbyteries had approved the change in church law, making the amendment now part of the Book of Order. Now individual

church sessions would need to make some decisions. Could church facilities be used for a same-sex marriage ceremony? Would the session support its ministers' choices regarding the marriages at which they would officiate?

First Presbyterian's Session took three-months for its own study prior to deciding. They solicited input from the congregation through listening groups. In May 2015, by secret ballot, the Session voted unanimously to permit same-sex marriage ceremonies in the church, and to support teaching elders (ministers) in following their own consciences in deciding whom they would marry.

On June 20, 2015, Co-Pastors Jody McDevitt and Dan Krebill officiated at the marriage of church members Jay Pontius and Bruce Backman in the Sanctuary of First Presbyterian Church. Six-days later, the Supreme Court of the United States, in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, made the right of same sex couples to a marriage license the law in all 50 states.

Jody McDevitt, in her July 25, 2021, sermon, looked back at the changing understandings of sexuality and gender and how the church handled the questions these generated:

“But it is not just these last stress-filled months [a reference to the Covid-19 pandemic] which reveal the grounding in love present here. As I reflect on the time Dan and I have been in ministry with you, 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, so 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 #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.”

**Shrinking:
The Number of
PC(USA) Churches
in Gallatin County**



One of the outcomes of the PC(USA)'s sexuality debates was a decision by two of the five Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) affiliated churches in Gallatin County to leave the denomination. Dan Krebill summed up this part of the past 25 years in his sermon on August 1, 2021:

“When we arrived in Bozeman in 1997, our congregation was one of four-Acknowledgements congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in Gallatin County. In addition to this church, there were congregations in Springhill, Manhattan and West Yellowstone. No county in Montana had as many PC(USA) congregations in it. And as if that wasn't enough, the Presbytery of Yellowstone undertook a new church development in Big Sky as well. So, for the time that (the Big Sky) congregation was active, there were five of us in our county. It was really a rather dramatic testimony to the unity of the Presbyterian Church in Gallatin County.

I wish that I could say that unity has prevailed and that all five congregations are connected to one another today. The truth though is that today there are just two of those five congregations still part of our denomination, our congregation and the Manhattan congregation. When we move from Gallatin County this fall to Yellowstone County, we will leave a very different church scene than when we arrived.

Now I don't claim to have the full story or explanation as to what happened to the unity of the Presbyterian Church in Gallatin County. Nor do I want to take the time here to try to fully analyze just what happened to lead from there to now. But I can tell you that the new church development in Big Sky was not able to sustain itself and ended up closing after a couple of years. The congregation in Springhill chose to leave our denomination because of its disagreement over the denomination's move to the full inclusion of all people regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity. And the same thing happened in

the West Yellowstone congregation a few years after that, when it also decided to leave our denomination.”



Shrinking: First Presbyterian Bozeman Membership Declines

Over the past 25 years our membership has fallen by slightly more than half, from 516 in 1997 to 227 in 2022. The following table is from information provided in annual reports from 1997 through 2022, and these are the number of church members reported to the Presbytery of Yellowstone each year, which is our official report on membership.

Membership and Budget (Income)

Year	Members	Budget (Income)
1997	516 (beginning of year)	\$263K
1998	481 (end of year)	\$266K
1999	479	\$279K
2000	456	\$280K
2001	458	\$302K
2002	422	\$306K
2003	422	\$321K
2004	426	\$324K
2005	424	\$342K
2006	426	\$429K
2007	398	\$434K
2008	387	\$487K
2009	368	\$444K
2010	329	\$398K
2011	307	\$420K
2012	294	\$478K
2013	305	\$516K
2014	300	\$478K

2015	270	\$530K
2016	263	\$512K
2017	262	\$530K
2018	245	\$551K
2019	239	\$435K*
2020	227	\$446K
2021	227	\$438K
2022	227	\$459K

*Rockhaven removed from general church budget
(about \$102K in income in 2019; \$154K in 2022)

The sexuality questions may have played a role in some individual’s and family’s decisions to go elsewhere, but the membership numbers at the times of the denominational decisions do not show an exodus. Those years immediately after the PC(USA) decisions and the subsequent church decisions follow the same overall trend in membership since 1997.

We do not know all the reasons for the shrinkage and this history will not speculate. It is worthy, however, to acknowledge national trends. In the book, *Joining God, Remaking Church, Changing the World*, by Alan J. Roxburgh, 2015 Morehouse Publishing, the author notes the change in attendance of Protestant churches over the decades. He says:

“If you were born between 1925 and 1945, there is a 60% chance you are in church today.

If you were born between 1946 and 1964, there is a 40% chance you are in church today.

If you were born between 1965 and 1983, there is a 20% chance you are in church today.

If you were born after 1984, there is a 10% chance you are in church today.”

Mr. Roxburgh notes that the same decline in membership is true for mainline as well as conservative Protestant churches, with the latter seeing their decline occurring more recently (page 6).



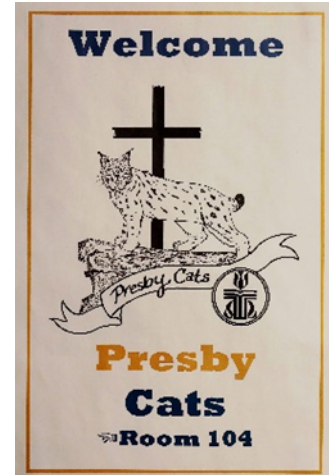
Dollars and Cents: Membership and Money are Not Necessarily Connected

One of the immediate striking items in the above table is the apparent inverse relationship between membership and income over the past 25 years. Our membership shrank by some 55%, yet our income essentially doubled (as of 2018 and 2019).

One of the key budget drivers for a church or any similar organization is personnel costs. A high percentage of the church's budget goes to salaries and benefits of the pastors and staff. In 2018, the Session recognized that the pastors' salaries had not kept up with their Presbyterian counterparts in the Synod of the Rocky Mountains (a synod is a collection of presbyteries in a geographic region; similarly, a presbytery is a collection of churches. First Presbyterian Church of Bozeman is part of the Presbytery of Yellowstone and the Synod of the Rocky Mountains). The Session moved to bring pastors' compensation up to the level provided pastors with the same level of experience in the Synod of the Rocky Mountains. This effort was also taking a nod to the future and recognizing that our long-time pastors would not be in the pulpit forever, and fiscal reality meant that attracting a new pastor would require a step-up in salary.

Beginning in 2020, with a combination of the pandemic and several members passing away or leaving the church, pledged income began to fall off. Income from 24 South Willson has become an important contributor to the fiscal health of the church, especially in the past four-years. In 2019 and 2020, \$12,500 was used from 24 South Willson for church operations. The same occurred in 2021 and 2022 with \$25,000 and \$70,000 being used respectively.

Presby Cats: Connecting with College Students



The connection between Montana State University and the church seems like it would be an easy one to make. Students are coming from all over the United States and the world, and some of them would be looking for a Presbyterian Church. Yet changes in the culture called for experimentation and adaptation to find new models for campus ministry over these 25 years.

In 1997, Presbyterian campus ministry at MSU was a Yellowstone Presbytery ministry led by the Rev. Dick McNeely and based at an ecumenically owned building adjacent to campus, the Christus Collegium. In 1998, staff changes in both the Presbyterian and United Methodist campus ministries brought an opportunity for a new model. The United Methodist, and Presbyterian Church Campus ministry (UMPCM) at MSU was formed and the Rev. Don Derryberry was hired as a shared campus minister. The group met at Christus Collegium on Wednesday evenings. He was succeeded by the Rev. Joel Biggers, another United Methodist minister. This partnership lasted a decade. The 2008 annual report noted, “With the departure of campus pastor Joel Biggers in late 2007, a formerly cooperative venture with the Methodist Church to serve the students at MSU ended. A new venture was initiated, the Presbyterian Mission at Montana State University (PMMSU).”

However, the presbytery was moving away from campus ministry, and First Presbyterian Church was moving toward taking more responsibility for this challenging but important ministry. The presbytery decided to withdraw from its responsibility toward the Christus Collegium, freeing up a small amount of money which First Presbyterian Church then channeled toward “peer ministers.” These students were asked to initiate Christian ministry at the church. Church member Jerry Crabs volunteered his leadership to this effort.

A parish-based campus ministry was the vision, but successful implementation did not happen until late summer 2012 when MSU student Emily Keegan approached Dan Krebill with an idea. She suggested that students would be more likely to attend a Bible study at the church which followed the worship service rather than preceded it on Sunday mornings. She was willing to lead the Bible study. Dan saw the

possibility of involving church members in this ministry by asking for home-cooked meals for hungry students. The Presby Cats ministry was born with many willing cooks eager to show their support for the students.

Several MSU students committed to this new ministry making worship, lunch and Bible study part of their weekly routine. Dan provided organizational energy and the new vision grew. A key element was added as the Presby Cats looked to the plans of the youth for a mission trip to Belize. Could they also go on a mission trip? Youth elder Valerie McMakin suggested a joint mission trip. The youth would move to spring break to accommodate the college students. In March 2013, this collaborative effort created a bond among the Presby Cats and generated enthusiasm for coming years. The experiment had taken hold.

In 2014, the Presby Cats participated in a spring break mission trip to Ghost Ranch, New Mexico. In November, as the 2014 Annual Report notes, “The energy these collegians bring to our church’s ministry was in full view when the Presby Cats led Sunday morning worship in November, sharing their Christian faith and witness.” Their spring break mission trip in 2015 was to the Palmer Home for Children in Columbus, Mississippi, a destination suggested by church member Kay May.

More mission trips followed. The group traveled to Northern Ireland in 2016 to learn about and participate in the ministry of reconciliation. There, they followed a program organized by the Corrymeela Community, based in Ballycastle. This trip was enabled by Dan and Jody’s long interest in Corrymeela’s ministry, including their sabbatical in 2008. In 2017, the Presby Cats went by train to Chicago to learn and serve in urban ministry. Due to a death in Dan and Jody’s family, John Patterson stepped up to lead this trip. The experience was hosted by DOOR Ministries which likewise hosted the group in 2018 in Miami.

In addition to weekly Bible study and annual mission trips, the Presby Cats became a strong fellowship group. Each year, student leaders were chosen to plan retreats at Rockhaven, organize activities, lead the Bible studies and coordinate the group’s social media. These students received scholarships for their efforts.

In 2020, an intended mission trip to Cuba over spring break was cancelled at the last minute as the Covid pandemic shutdowns occurred.

Before and after these mission trips, the Presby Cats would report to the church on Sunday mornings about their planned trips and results. They were a part of our regular worship on Sunday, and the congregation celebrated their journeys, both in faith and in school. Many brought musical talents which were shared, and they all brought an enjoyable level of energy to our services.

Participating in Presby Cats, going on mission trips and standing up in front of a congregation to tell them about your work seems like a good start for a future pastor. Indeed, Kori Robbins did just that. She went from being a Montana State student and Presby Cat to working as a PC(USA) Mission Agency Young Adult Volunteer in

New York City in 2018 and 2019. Kori then attended the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, and after graduation, she was installed as the pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Mineral Ridge, Ohio, in September 2022.

With the Covid pandemic shutdown in March 2020, the Presby Cats ministry moved to the online Zoom platform for its weekly Sunday gatherings. “Grab and Go” lunches were provided on the MSU campus for the students each Sunday after the Zoom gathering. This model continued into the 2020 and 2021 academic year, with a core group of students committed to the weekly virtual gatherings.

Co-Pastor Dan Krebill had been the coordinator of the Presby Cats. With his retirement in August 2021, the Rev. JP Carlson, a Presbyterian Minister, was hired. He continued the pastoral role in supporting the resumption of weekly in-person Sunday gatherings which continued until May 2022. This model never caught on again after the pandemic, so a new approach was considered. The outcome of those discussions was a partnership in August 2022, with the former Lutheran Campus Ministry and with the Methodist Church. “LCM” or “Living Christ’s Mission” was formed to serve students from these Protestant churches, with the Rev. JP Carlson leading.

Interfaith Opportunities: Reaching Across Religious Divides



One of the legacies of the work of Co-Pastors Jody McDevitt and Dan Krebill was to find ways for different faiths to work together for the betterment of our community.

The Gallatin County Ministerial Association faced a crossroads in the early years of the 21st century. Would it expand to include the non-Christian faiths increasingly visible in the community? Following a “yes” vote of members of the ministerial association, the Gallatin Valley Interfaith Association (GVIA) was formed. Co-Pastor Jody McDevitt represented First Presbyterian Church in this new organization and served as the GVIA Moderator for five years. She was a founding member, and until her retirement, one of four-regular participants in the monthly (September through May) Interfaith Forum.

The Interfaith Association is open to all faith groups, and at the time of this writing includes 23 religious' organizations in southwestern Montana. These include: First Baptist Church, Baha'i Bozeman Community, Bozeman Dharma Center, Holy Rosary Catholic Parish, Resurrection University Catholic Parish, First Church of Christ, Scientist & Reading Room, St. Mark's Episcopal, Gethsemane Episcopal, St. James Episcopal Church, All Saints Big Sky, Islamic Center of Bozeman, Congregation Beth Shalom, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Christ the King Lutheran, Hope Lutheran Church, Bozeman United Methodist Church, First Presbyterian Church, Heartland Friends Meeting, Bozeman Dances of Universal Peace, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Bozeman, Pilgrim Congregational United Church of Christ Bozeman, Spiritual Health at Bozeman Health Deaconess Hospital and the Yellowstone Theological Institute.

The vision of the Association is to bring together people of all faith traditions in the valley to nurture a stronger community through efforts of compassion, peace, respect, justice and love. The mission is to build collegial support for people representing different faith traditions; to provide leadership to address wider social and spiritual issues within the communities of the Gallatin Valley and to establish a forum to share in the life of each other's traditions.

One outcome of this cooperation was the first ever Jewish-Christian pulpit exchange in Bozeman, January 2012. Jody gave the sermon at a Friday evening service at Temple Beth Shalom, and Rabbi Ed Stafman gave the sermon at both of First Presbyterian's Sunday morning services. Also in 2012, the Mt. Ellis Academy Youth Choir and church choir led worship in June and December.

Another example of cooperation was in 2015 when the new mosque for the Islamic Center of Bozeman was nearly finished. Members of the organizations that make up the Interfaith Association were invited to an open house at the facility.

As noted under "Community Partnerships," there was cooperation between First Presbyterian, the Mt. Ellis Seventh Day Adventist Church and The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, Belgrade Ward. Their work together to support Family Promise was an excellent example of such a partnership.

Dan Krebill, in his sermon of August 22, 2021, interpreted the end of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. He preached on "The Armor of God," with words that apply to their interfaith efforts as well as other issues facing the church:

"What is being encouraged here is to stand up and be counted as the people of God. If it means that we as God's people stand in contrast to the majority around us, so be it. If it means to speak in contrast or even opposition to the prevailing worldly wisdom, so be it. If it means that we act in ways that draw attention to ourselves among those with whom we live and work, so be it. In essence, living Christian lives can be a high stakes enterprise at times."

In Harmony: The Musical Church



Music and First Presbyterian Church have been synonymous almost from the beginning of the church in 1872. One of the charter members of the church, Emma Willson (Mrs. Lester S. Willson), was well known for her singing voice. A February 1910 newspaper article notes, “Mrs. Willson’s beautiful and well-trained voice has been so long one of Bozeman’s chief musical assets, that we are prone to forget what a great treasure is ours.” The article was about a concert for the benefit of the new Presbyterian Church building. This coincided with the dedication of the present building, the original pipe organ and stained glass, as well as the pews and chancel furnishings.

The original pipe organ was the first one in the city. It was donated by the Macedonian Society of the church and dedicated to Emma Willson. One of her children, Fred Willson (better known in Bozeman as an architect), also played the organ and was one of her accompanists in that February 1910 concert. Fred Willson did apply his architectural talents to the church, and among other projects, designed the new addition on the east side (the Christian Education Wing) in 1955.

The original pipe organ was rebuilt and enlarged in 1985 to become the beautiful instrument you see today. It contains a total of 1,791 pipes, with 25 speaking voices among 31 ranks. One of the interesting side notes about the refurbished organ is that it arrived six-inches too tall for the space available. Chuck and Donna Beck and Bill and Suzie Ogle spent a night lowering the platform the organ was to sit on to make room for the new pipes.

At the beginning of this 25-year historical period, the church’s organists were Joanna Ellison and Janelle Dixon. Much to the delight of all, Joanna continues to play the organ on occasion. Bonnie Eichenberger served as church organist for one-year. Alison Todd began serving as organist in 2000, and her ministry in the church since that date has provided both continuity and growth in the church’s music ministry. At her invitation, Jay Pontius-Backman and Matthew O’Sullivan were added to the rotation of those who led worship on the organ.

Another centerpiece of music in our church is the grand piano which was donated by Ev and Mary Lensink, long-time members of this church and our community.

As you walk towards the church from the west on Babcock and look up at our tower, you may notice the speakers there and wonder, “are the church bell’s amplified?” Those speakers are a reminder of the carillon that was installed in the church in 1949. This 25 bell, cast-in-bronze system, was played with an electric keyboard located next to the church organ. The carillon was played for many years during church and at the noon hour. As time passed, they fell into disrepair, and broadcasting church bells across the city became less common.

Speaking of bells, our own “First Bells” got their start in 1998 with five octaves of handbells and two octaves of hand chimes. They were purchased through donations and more handbells were added the next year. Adult handbell choir and children’s hand chime choir both performed during the year. Several First Bells members also play with the Bells of the Bridgers. First Bells was directed by music directors Dianne Schoenfeld and Jennifer Johnson before Pat Dickensheets, who served as First Bells director from 2004 through 2014. Kathy Braun took over, followed by Russell Milburn, Matthew O’Sullivan and then Sara Boom as our 25-year history ended.

The Worship Choir has had a number of fine directors in this 25-year period. Lowell Hickman, Dianne Schoenfeld, Jennifer Johnson and Laurie Jo Howard each brought their unique talents and spiritual gifts to this beloved ministry. Russell Milburn became the choir director in 2012, and he still provides faithful service to the church’s music ministry. When Russell was on a leave of absence, Kathy Braun and Jay Pontius-Backman ably filled in as choir directors.

Although the “Community Messiah Sing” had occurred in the past, in 2002 it became an annual event and was organized by Kathy Braun. This popular community music event grew to include outstanding soloists and the Second String Orchestra, taking place every December through 2019. In 2020, when public singing events were halted due to Covid, the 2019 Messiah recording was remastered and interviews with musicians were added by Montana PBS for a public podcast.

In 2003, a second worship service was added to the Sunday morning schedule. This service began at 8:30 am. It was designed to be more casual and contemporary, as opposed to the traditional service at 10:30 am. Music set the tone for the service. Roxanne Fauque played the piano and Alan Fauque played the saxophone each week until the Fauques moved from the community in 2014. After an interim period in which various other musical styles were tried, Holly Aloise became the 8:30 service musician, leading from the piano. This service was discontinued in 2020 due to the pandemic.

In the realm of community partnerships, the church hosts the Intermountain Opera for their practices. Similarly, Baroque Music Montana hosts workshops in the church and offers a public concert. Musica Lingua, which offers language instruction in Spanish, German, and French to preschoolers, was started by Gigi Swenson. Other

musicians such as Jennifer Frye, Emily Thrasher and Alison Todd have offered lessons and used the church for performances by their students.

In 1997, “We Gather Together” began on Wednesday evenings for all those participating in musical activities at the church. It included adult choir, children’s choir and youth choir. The evening started with a meal followed by practice for the choirs. Up until 1999, the Bozeman School District had a policy to not allow school activities on Wednesday nights to encourage church and family activities. That policy changed which made “We Gather Together” more challenging for some who had youth involved in school programs. The annual reports note the evening evolved into “Feed Your Soul” (2009 Annual Report). As mentioned elsewhere, a later evolution of the Wednesday night fellowship became “Courageous Conversations.”

With Kathy Braun’s leadership, the “Mainly Music” series of concerts got underway in 2014, with an initial concert on September 14th. Musicians were Dr. Kenneth Varner, organist; Pan Tana (a new steel drum band in Bozeman); Melody Lindsay, harp; Lorna Nelson and Natalie Wilkinson, oboe; and Alison Todd, piano. The second concert was Community Organists, with a little help from their friends and special guest Rhapsody, an a cappella singing group from MSU. The third event featured four members of the Bozeman Symphony Orchestra playing a Suite for Cello and Jazz Piano. The Mainly Music series continued to bring a wide variety of local musical talent to our sanctuary for the public to enjoy several times each year. Again, Covid brought an end to these events for a couple of years. As part of our 150th Anniversary “Season of Celebration,” we held a “From Bach to Boogie” music concert in November 2022, continuing the spirit of the “Musical Church.”

Congregational and Spiritual Care: Serving Our Members



In their 2004 Annual Report, Pastors Jody and Dan comment on the routine activities of the church:

“Most of the time, the work of the church is mundane. On a daily basis, the church cares for those in need, visits the sick and lonely, shares the joys of living with its community and offers its prayers. Each week, the

Lord is worshipped, classes are taught, groups meet for fellowship and workers carry out their tasks. We trust that we will meet the heavenly in the earthly routines, that Christ's love will be shared, and our spiritual selves will grow towards God. But most of our time, our ministry is earth-bound." (Jody McDevitt and Dan Krebill, Co-Pastors 2004 Annual Report).

(To paraphrase Dan and Jody's next thoughts in the 2004 annual report), many years combine mundane ministry and heavenly inspirational moments in the life of First Presbyterian Church of Bozeman. Initiatives which have been talked about for years become a reality and are truly amazing to all of us who have hoped and prayed for their arrival. Both the mundane and the inspirational use the spiritual gifts of countless members of the congregation. Both involve a lot of hard work. Both are visionary, looking towards the future. And neither the mundane nor the inspirational is ever truly completed, both demand ongoing faith.

Most of this 25-year history is thematically organized. And the emphasis of this section is certainly an important, almost expected theme of any church: Serving the Members. In reviewing the annual reports and pulling together other information, we tried to identify many of the activities which have occurred since 1997; however, this is not intended to be a detailed recitation of all events. The reader should get a sense of the types of activities church members have undertaken over the past 25 years. Some have come and gone, while others have spanned the entire duration. We apologize if a particular event, contribution or individual is overlooked.

Late 1996 and 1997 saw several firsts for the church. In November 1996, a men's fellowship group started and lasted for several years. A new form of this men's Bible study ministry emerged in 2016, which continues strong today, meeting 50 weeks each year.

As noted earlier, 1997 was the first ever "out-of-country" youth mission trip to Tecate, Baja California, México in August. Similarly, in 1997, the First Presbyterian Church Youth Choir was organized. It included 30 children participating on Palm Sunday, in the fall and Christmas Eve. In addition, a midweek adult study group led by the Rev. Paul Krebill began meeting in 1997. This group was later led by the Rev. Larry Vandecreek. The contributions of these retired ministers were greatly appreciated. A new PresbySingles group formed in 1998 and met four to six-times per month.

Little People's Academy, a local daycare provider, had been using the church for day care during the week (the outside playground was a fenced area on the lawn of the Willson Avenue side of the building). The Academy was started by church parents to "give each other support" (Suzanne Bratsky, personal communication). Their lease was renewed in 1997, and they continued to use the church until the renovations began in 2004.

Sarah Johnson (now Eilers), who was Youth Director, resigned in 1997 and was not replaced due to financial restrictions. To make up for this, the next year, Jody McDevitt's term of call was amended to include her as Youth Director for the church.

The role of youth in the church is mentioned in many places in this history. One of the ways the church connected with older youth was a provision in the bylaws to allow a person under 25 to serve a one-year term as an Elder (a member of session). A number of youth have served in this capacity, adding their voices to church leadership.

Enrollment in children's and youth Sunday school varied over the years, leading to variations in the configuration of Sunday school classes. Taking 2014 as an example, growth in the number of children attending Sunday school in the spring in the Pre-K-5 age group led the Kids and Families Committee to consistently divide the group into two classes, beginning in September. Also in 2014, the youth ministry painted the Youth room with rainbow stripes, went on a sledding party, hiked to Lava Lake, overnights at Rockhaven and climbed at Spire Center. Service projects included cooking dinner for Family Promise guests and staying overnight at Bogert Park for the cardboard Box City to raise funds for Family Promise.

The Rev. Edith Tieman was a long-time member of the church who responded to a call to ministry after raising her children. She completed her undergraduate degree at MSU and then attended Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, graduating in 1991. She was ordained and served the Church of the Big Hole for two-years before becoming First Presbyterian Church's Director of Christian Education. When the Rev. Chuck Wilming retired in 1995, she stepped up to be interim Co-pastor with the Rev. Paul Krebill (Dan's father and a retired Presbyterian Minister). When Dan Krebill and Jody McDevitt came to Bozeman to be the installed Co-pastors, Edith returned to her position as Director of Christian Education. She was assisted by Karen Rogers who organized the church library.

Edith resigned as Director of Christian Education in 2000. This resulted in the paring down of education and family ministry staffing until Kathy Braun was hired as Educational Ministry Coordinator. Kathy served in this role for more than ten-years, followed briefly by June Dennin.

Betty Knutson served as the volunteer librarian in the 2010's. She organized a committee of Eileen Casey, June Dennin and Paul Krebill, who worked together in the library to implement a new cataloging system. They worked to promote the library which had been moved into an expanded space during the church renovations.

Larry Growney joined the church staff as Sexton in 2000, replacing Duff Gray. The Sexton position at First Presbyterian is far more than just worrying about the physical plant. It involves taking care of custodial and landscaping needs and setting up and taking down for events. Larry has also been our go-to audio person during church services. He makes sure the microphones are working and (before Covid) made a recording of the services to be delivered to members who could not get to church

easily. When Covid hit and we pivoted to on-line services, Larry helped make sure our connections with Zoom, Boxcast and Facebook Live were on-line and recorded. As an aside, Larry also plays the flute during Sunday morning services and other musical events.

The secretary or office manager is an important position in the church. They serve as the day-to-day face or voice of the church to those walking in the door needing assistance. In addition, they help those calling and help congregants needing general information. Most pastors would say that the church secretary is an integral part of an effective ministry (and some might admit the secretary sometimes knows more than they do). One of the first decisions Dan and Jody made was the hiring of a new church secretary in early 1997, upon the retirement of long-time secretary Julie Wagner. Evelyn Halpin became the church secretary serving the church faithfully until 2008. She was followed by June Dennin for a year. Linda Best was the First Presbyterian Church secretary from 2009 until she retired with Dan and Jody in 2021. From late 2021 through mid-2022, JoAnn Sandoval succeeded Linda. Debra Jackson took over in late 2022.

A behind the scenes person who is also critical to the smooth functioning of a church, or any other non-profit organization, is the treasurer. The treasurer pays the bills and tracks the budget to help the pastors, elders and deacons know where they stand with the financial side of their programs. Sheryl Hallin served as treasurer beginning in the early 1990s until December 31, 2020. She was succeeded by Ric Tieman, who stepped in as a volunteer for 2021 and 2022.

Another behind the scenes person in the church structure is the Clerk of the Session. That person assists the minister (who serves as moderator of the session) with the agenda and minutes from session meetings. As we entered this 25-year period, Ted Williams was Clerk of the Session. He was followed by Judy Patterson in 2000 and then Donna Beck in 2009.

As noted earlier under “The Musical Church,” an 8:15 am worship was added on a trial basis in 2000. The intent was to offer an alternative, contemporary service. This allowed people to come to an early church which would not interfere with other activities on Sunday. This trial was successful. In 2003, a second early service was formally added, beginning at 8:30 am. This change and the earlier designation of Jody as youth director coincided with transition of the co-pastors to three-quarters time each.

Vespers services at Rockhaven were held in the summer on Sunday evenings throughout this historical period. A potluck supper preceding the casual evening service in the chapel gave the congregation and friends an opportunity to enjoy Rockhaven weekly from mid-June through August.

The Spiritual Gifts Ministry started in the spring of 2001 and continued until the onset of the pandemic in 2020. The purpose of the program was to involve members

of our congregation in the meaningful use of their Spiritual Gifts and talents in church and community ministries.

John Patterson and Christine (Chris) Deboer learned of a Tebunah Ministries course, “Discovering God’s Vision for Your Life: You and Your Spiritual Gifts,” at a conference they attended in 2000. They proposed that the course be taught at First Presbyterian, and Jane Hodges offered to organize and coordinate a Spiritual Gifts Ministry. She worked with all church officers to document current and proposed volunteer positions and provided them with “Tips for Leading Volunteers” and “Help Request” forms. She developed over 150 job descriptions, plus procedures for most. She also developed a Ministry Activities Questionnaire to be given to course graduates. She began writing regular Spiritual Gifts articles including “classified ads,” listing available positions for the PresbEnews.

Once the program was fully organized, classes began, during which participants discovered which spiritual gifts they possessed. John Patterson was the principal teacher and was assisted over the years by Chris DeBoer, Scott and Mary Thompson, Stuart Cunningham, Penny Wastcoat, Sandy Archer, Maggee Harrison, Dawn and Terry Kriegh, Joyce Armour and Edith Tieman.

Following each course, Jane Hodges worked with participants matching their gifts with positions in the church or community to which they felt called (or helping them start new ministries). They were then launched in their new role(s), mentored as needed and switched to new positions as desired. Others helped with administration: George McClure (contacting those who had not taken the course), Mark Daugherty (conducting surveys to determine the effectiveness of the program) and Jane Klockman (helping with classified ads). A follow-on course, “SG2: The Next Step,” was written by John Hodges in 2002. It was taught three times by Mary Bolhuis, to 46 people, including all members of Session. As late as fall of 2019 (just prior to the pandemic), new members were still being offered assistance in finding their “niche” at FPC.

Over the years, 193 First Presbyterian members completed the Spiritual Gifts course at least once, with many more attending parts of the course. In addition, 48 guests from other churches completed the course. They came from Grand Avenue Christian, Resurrection Parish, Seventh Day Adventist and Quaker churches. Twenty-nine came from St. James Episcopal and were so enthusiastic that they subsequently started teaching their own program. Participants also came from out of town: Miles City, Big Timber, St. Mary’s in Livingston and First Presbyterian in Billings. People with no church affiliation also attended. We also had inquiries about the course, and how to set up and run a similar ministry from other churches in Bozeman, elsewhere in Montana, Seattle and additional states.

Prayer Chains were initiated by Joyce Armour in 1995 and then taken over by Donna Mandeville in 1998, Glenn and Ruth Welch in 2004, Helen Craig and Fran Bradley in 2011 and John Hodges in 2015. The chains have been active in the church throughout the 25 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 2002, five-chains involved 23 people which was typical through 2015. In recent years as membership has declined, the number of chains has shrunk to four, with 20 people included.

Dan and Jody were on sabbatical for four-months in the Autumn of 2008. They applied for and received a grant from the Lilly Foundation to serve and learn as part of the Corrymeela Community in Northern Ireland. While Dan and Jody were on sabbatical in 2008, Linda Loving served as supply minister.

Linda wrote to the 150th Anniversary committee about her experiences at First Presbyterian during that time:

"Greetings and Congratulations to beloved friends at First Pres Bozeman!! How gracious of you to include me in your 150th celebrations and sorry not to be in your midst but am surely there in Spirit!

Serving as your Sabbatical Supply Pastor was one of my favorite chapters in my entire ministry, as together we explored issues of congregational hospitality and faithfulness. Your hospitality towards me was a great joy in that time – opening your homes to me time and again; making sure my home sidewalk was shoveled and that I had places to celebrate holidays with extra turkey and loaned ornaments and a cheeseburger delivered between services on Christmas Eve. Personal field trips (including one to the ER, thankfully turned out to be heartburn) and shared ministry led to a quick bonding and a fruitful time together, mainly because of who you are as disciples and your love of First Pres. I was so honored to witness your faithfulness. I'm grateful to you, Dan and Jody for that opportunity. Thank you for every minute of it.

I came wanting to test if I had any "cowgirl" in me. Well, the Jarrett's helped on that one by taking me for a riding lesson. I was thrilled until I learned that I had to first clean the hooves and saddle the horse. Then at the end of my ride, I fell out of that very saddle trying to get off the horse. As I lay in the sawdust, I remembered I had to get back to the church for adult ed class and arrived smelling for sure like a cowgirl. At the end of the class, I had to ask if someone would stay and pull off my cowgirl boots before I went home (where I probably would have had to sleep with them on!!) I decided this made me cowgirl material, so bought a red Jeep at your local dealer for my drive back to the Midwest.

You also welcomed the wisdom of medieval mystic Dame Julian. In nearly 100 performances, you were one of the most thoughtful, well prepared, helpful sponsors I ever had. Truly. And the McCormicks knew for sure my post-performance reward had to be a cheeseburger at Ted's! So, I leave you with Julian's wisdom. As you look to another 150 years,

know that church and culture are in the midst of great turbulence: ‘All shall be well and all will be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.’ Keep loving the Lord and one another and know of my love and prayers for you.

Linda ‘Cowgirl’ Loving"

In 2012, “First Friday” was initiated and led by Chuck and Sally Broughton. Members and friends gathered on the first Friday of the month from autumn through spring to have a spaghetti dinner, watch a movie and eat popcorn and then to discuss the film from a Christian perspective. Typically, 25 people participated, and the annual reports note an occasional humorous generation gap. Sometimes the Presby Cats would join the group, and depending on the age of the movie, they would not know the leading actors (for example, Bing Crosby when *White Christmas* was shown). First Fridays continued until Covid.

A year later in 2013, the first annual Advent Service started which included a public tree lighting on the Willson Avenue side of the church. Extremely cold weather the next year kept the tree lighting portion short.

Merry Munchers have been another way church members have gathered. Usually in someone’s home, six to ten-people come together for a potluck supper and fellowship several evenings a year. In 2014, Merry Munchers had 61 participants in the February to May period and 40 participants from October to December. A few years later, the 2017 annual report mentions Merry Munchers met eight times with 55 participants.

In 2018, Wednesday evening Courageous Conversations were initiated, where over a meal followed by a presentation and discussion, members learned about issues in our community. Refugees, homelessness, missing persons and drug and alcohol addiction were just some of the topics discussed.

One of the fun Sundays each year is the “Blessing of the Animals” which occurs on the Sunday after Christmas. This was initiated in 2011, a year when Christmas fell on a Sunday, where the image of animals welcoming the baby Jesus into their “home” was recalled. It was so well received that it became the tradition on the Sunday immediately after Christmas. Members are encouraged to bring their animals to church to be blessed. Being Bozeman, dogs predominate, but each year some cats are brought to the service. Occasionally, there are rabbits, birds, lizards and pictures of horses. Dan Holland always brings one of his goats. Stuffed animals are blessed as well.

The role of the Deacons in Congregational Care cannot be overstated. Many members know them primarily from the coffee and cookie fellowship they provide after church. That is only a minor part of what the Deacons have done for the people of the church during the past 25 years. They provided visitation to those who could not get out easily, including writing letters, sending emails and stopping by. They put on receptions, especially for funerals, and occasionally for weddings. They provided

caring meals for families in times of need and provided transportation to church and to medical visits and other matters for those who could not drive. They have also provided sympathy and get-well cards to members. They've been in charge of the kitchen, taking care of it on behalf of the whole church. Some of their activities have varied over the past 25 years. Deacons prepared the Communion Service until 2002 when communion responsibilities went to Session's Worship, Music and Arts committee. Deacons provided flowers for the sanctuary before this shifted to individual members. They organized a self-help team of people to do low-cost projects in the church. Over the years, other responsibilities have shifted to the Deacons. For example, the 2003 annual report notes crisis meals and transportation ministry being done by Session's Evangelism and Congregational Involvement Committee, but this is now a Deacons job.

One of the ministries which emerged from the Spiritual Gifts Program was Hospital Visitation. Chuck Broughton organized a team of visitors who were then trained by the hospital's chaplain. Chuck led this ministry, supplementing the co-pastors' hospital visitation until Covid. Those visited were usually members, but if any patient indicated an interest in having a Presbyterian Church connection, the hospital visitation team would include them in their rounds. Just before Covid hit, the hospital visitation program was in its 20th year.

Fran Babcock initiated a ministry of sending birthday cards to church members. For many years, Marjorie David continued this ministry. Birthdays are also recognized in the weekly PresbEnews.

Presbyterian Women (PW) is an association of women within the church providing fellowship in their gatherings to nurture their faith through Bible study and prayer. They work for justice and peace and to build a caring community of women who strengthen the church and support the worldwide mission of PC(USA).

Presbyterian Women support many local and global mission projects. Yearly, they do the Birthday offering after church (sometimes with cake for everyone) to celebrate another year of serving Christ. PW does the Thanks offering in the fall, giving saved loose change or the coins put in a jar whenever members have been blessed. PW supports the "One Great Hour of Sharing" which goes to Church World United and is a gift of our least coin in our wallet each meeting. Honorary Memberships are given for women within the church who are an example of being a servant of Christ. PW provide World Mission support which goes to help fund missionaries around the world.

All proceeds from these endeavors have gone to support mission outreach. PW have offered scholarships for travel to the Churchwide Gatherings. They have supported the Deacon's Fund, the Medical Benevolence fund and the Intermountain Home with financial contributions. They have made and delivered many quilts for the residents of the home. PW have made baby layettes for Haiti, supported Love INC, Family Promise, Haven, the Bozeman High School homeless project, HRDC and the

Presbyterian Disaster Fund for Ukraine. PW have knitted baby hats for Bozeman Hospital and the Deacons coat project, shawls for the Deacon's outreach, made African dresses for the girls in Africa, hand-knitted bandages, hosted SERVE craft sales to benefit mission and had a jewelry sale to support women who have been trafficked.

Presbyterian Women have hosted missionaries to hear of their work and had informational programs on trafficking and abuse in the Bozeman area. PW supported Laura and Bruce LaRue in their mission to Vanuatu and held a dinner to hear of their work when they returned to Billings.

In past years PW provided Lenten lunches, with soup and bread, and learned about how others are serving the church and community. PW have done wedding receptions, prepared and served many meals for Presbytery, hosted many Presbyterian Women's Presbytery gatherings, attended the synod gatherings and hosted a synod retreat at Rockhaven. Presbyterian Women come together for a Churchwide Gathering every three-years. Women attend from all over the U.S. and the world, coming together for worship, education, community-building, fun and renewal. In 2015, the gathering was held in Minneapolis.

In 1999, Circles A, B and C met in members' homes and a new MSU group was meeting once a month on campus. Early on Jody McDevitt led a study for the different study leaders for each circle. This was discontinued when the number of circles dropped. In 2015, PW had three-groups: Circle A met at members' homes on the third-Wednesday morning of the month September through May; Campus Circle met Monday evenings during the school year at members' homes; and Lydia Circle met September through May in the church on Wednesday afternoons. By 2018, there were two circles, Circle A and the Campus Circle.

Presbyterian Women have studied the Bible faithfully each month over the years through the Horizon Bible study and for few years a separate Bible study that the Rev. Carol Shellenberger prepared and delivered. The Circle members pray for each other and support each other through the ups and downs of life. Even when members move across the country, they can belong to Circle through distance technology.



Introspection:
**What is First Presbyterian –
Bozeman’s Purpose and Mission?**

Records indicate that since 1997 the church has had at least three-formal looks at its mission and purpose, both internally to its members and externally to the community. The first of these began in 1998 and consisted of the development of the “Long Range Plan 1999 - 2002” and an implementation effort under the acronym WE GO, which stood for Worship, Education, Growth and Outreach.

The Long-Range Plan adopted the following Vision for the Church:

“God’s Will: Nothing More, Nothing Less, Nothing Else”

and this Mission statement:

“With the gratitude for God’s good gifts, First Presbyterian Church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, seeks to bring people to know Jesus Christ and His love for all. Following Christ’s example, we worship, teach and strengthen our love for God and one another, within our Christian family of all ages and the community. The Church strives to serve all that seek spiritual and personal growth and provide mutual witness through community and world outreach and meaningful mission programs.”

Ten church goals were also adopted:

1. Increase involvement of church members
2. Improve First Presbyterian Church finances
3. Improve our educational ministries
4. Promote church membership and growth
5. Improve church facilities
6. Enhance worship services
7. Optimize church staffing
8. Define and improve mission and outreach
9. Strengthen committee organization
10. Initiate church revitalization actions

A three-year, long-range implementation plan began in January 2000. Nine-Session committees and the Deacons established 54 objectives and 108 tasks designed to support 10 major church goals. As of December 2000, 26 of 60 objectives had been accomplished, as were 64 of 120 tasks (during the year, some goals and tasks were added and others modified or dropped). As part of the implementation, Dr. H. Stanley Wood, Director, Center for New Church Development at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, led a “Church Revitalization” all-day workshop on a Saturday in September. Dr. Wood also led the Sunday School class and preached on that weekend. Preceding the workshop was a June and July survey conducted by Percept Information Services Company. Between 155 and 200 members responded to the three questions: “What do you like most about First Presbyterian?”; “What do you like least about First Presbyterian?”; “If you could change one thing at First Presbyterian, what would it be?” Church files contain the responses.

The 2003, Annual Report summarizes the results of the three-year effort, both in quantitative and qualitative terms for the following metrics: worship attendance, education attendance, FPC membership, spiritual gifts, pledge giving, Christmas shoe boxes, holiday food baskets and Deacon’s benevolence.

The next introspection occurred in and around the time Dan and Jody were on sabbatical in 2008. The congregation agreed to do the same; that is, take a sabbatical. Session called that year the “Journey of Renewal” and they created a Journey of Renewal Workgroup. The Workgroup presented their final report to the Session on March 15, 2009. It summarized a variety of activities initiated and focused on renewal over the year. The Journey of Renewal Process concluded with the adoption of four themes for the next few years of the congregation’s life: learning love, sharing faith, serving people and celebrating God. The Session reorganized to reflect new priorities: Hospitality, Kids and Families and Spiritual Growth.

During the process, Pastor Linda Loving, as part of her time in the church, was given the task of furthering “hospitality skills” of the congregation. To that end, a “Hospitality with Enthusiasm” workshop (one-day) was led by church member Pat Griffin. She worked for Dale Carnegie Training of Montana and northwest Wyoming; 40 people attended.

Also, Dr. Stan Wood returned to preach and present a day-long workshop on renewal. Jerry Crabs led a series of adult Sunday School sessions focused on renewal. Members were queried through a survey of their opinions about the church and the findings were provided in a report and a town-hall style meeting.

A few years after the “Journey of Renewal,” the 2013 annual report mentions “Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations” as a focus for the members: “The Lens of Radical Hospitality, Passionate Worship, Intentional Faith Development, Risk-taking Mission and Service and Extravagant Generosity.” The next year, in 2014, the Session appointed an Ombuds person to actively seek feedback from the congregation about worship services and other concerns.

In 2017 and 2018, the Session undertook the “Year of Call,” trying to discern what and 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. Since 1999, the Church’s vision was “God’s Will: Nothing More, Nothing Less, Nothing Else.” 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. It was the theme Session used as it reorganized itself and implemented actions in 2019 and early 2020.

New Deacons and Elders who have never been ordained go through pre-ordination training. In their May 2021 training packet, the approved Mission Statement is stated as:

“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.”



BC and AC: The Covid Pandemic

In late 2019 and early 2020, reports of a new virus originating in the People’s Republic of China seemed far away and not a significant worry to many people in the United States. Previous infectious diseases had appeared in China and for the most part had been able to be controlled without significant changes to our lifestyles. Little did we know that much of our discussions about the church as time went by would be couched with the qualifiers, “Before Covid” or “BC” and “After Covid” or “AC.”

As Covid levels in the community reached a consistently low level in mid-2022, it was easy to forget that 133 Gallatin County residents died from the disease (part of the more than 1 million Americans who had perished); 1,518 were hospitalized and 41,089 residents were known to be infected and recovered from Covid-19 (all figures

as of February 6, 2023, Gallatin County Health Department). The Gallatin County community experienced a peak infection spread in January 2022, followed by a precipitous drop and a generally low level after that. As 2022 progressed and more community members were vaccinated, boosted and/or infected, the case numbers, hospitalizations and death rates began to drop.

The Pandemic Response Team (PRT) was established by Session in February 2020 near the beginning of the Covid-19 Pandemic. It continued to meet weekly over two-years through February 2022. The PRT was enacted as a rapid response team for Covid-related decisions. It established policies and procedures, identified critical technology needs and identified items that needed to be brought to the attention of church staff, the Session and/or the Deacons. Collectively, the PRT, staff and Session administered the operations and management of the church as we transitioned through the retirement of Pastors Jody McDevitt and Dan Krebill on August 31, 2021. At the same time, Office Administrator Linda Best retired. Treasurer Sheryl Hallin had retired in December 2020.

March 13, 2020, was the day on which a national emergency was declared; local health authorities advised that COVID-19 was present in Gallatin County, and CDC guidelines called for not gathering in groups of 10 or more. On March 15th, we transitioned to entirely remote worship. It was rough! But the congregation was willing to learn, the staff was able to adapt and over the next several months, technological upgrades helped facilitate a meaningful worship experience. Little did we know that this practice would continue for the remainder of the year and into 2021. The Presby Cats spring break mission trip to Cuba was cancelled, as was the co-pastors' planned trip to Israel.

Following statewide restrictions, the staff transitioned to working entirely remotely through April. Easter worship, like all other services, was entirely remote with our first Virtual Choir. The PRT, meeting twice each week, monitored the situations of congregation members, instituted a telephone web and kept tabs on larger community needs. It began thinking about longer-term possibilities including summer ministries. Federal and State CARES Act loans (later converted to grants) were applied for and received. Congregation members began sewing face masks for the community. By the end of the month, the governor had announced plans for gradual reopening, and PRT was discussing how and when we would make this happen in the church.

In May, PC(USA) guidelines helped us institute online communion. The team began focusing on plans and protocols for reopening based on emerging documents developed by a variety of national entities. It was clear that worship would need to be a hybrid of online and in-person. With American Camping Association and CDC documents, extensive plans for safe operations for Rockhaven Summer Camps were developed.

A congregational survey in June received 104 responses of which 80% responded “yes” to the question, “Are you in a vulnerable category?” Survey responses showed a strong

affirmation for what the church had been able to do so far, with a few voices expressing frustration with church leadership. The PRT developed “gracious boundaries” for reopening worship, planned for July 5th. Rockhaven Summer Camps, serving children and youth and staffed by people in less vulnerable categories, opened with a reduced schedule. It operated with a reduced capacity and enhanced health and safety procedures. The Youth Mission Trip (planned for Arizona) became a local Mission Week based at the Bergs’ home.

Plans for July reopening to in-person worship were stymied by: 1) difficulty identifying persons in non-vulnerable categories who would be available to serve the important redefined role of ushers, and 2) the rise in Covid case numbers in Gallatin County. At Rockhaven a very small number of COVID-19 cases, spread over several different weeks of camp, led to two cautious single-day closures and one-cancelled week. Children and families were very grateful for the outdoor experiences camp provided. PRT discussed outdoor worship possibilities. It settled on establishing guidelines for “mini-gatherings” hosted by church members to include outdoors at homes, at parks or at Rockhaven on Sunday afternoons. We enlisted Sally Broughton to recruit church members to host these mini-gatherings which were well-received.

August was a time for reimagining church ministries as it became clear that “normal” was not going to happen anytime soon. PC(USA) issued guidelines for ordination and baptism during the pandemic enabling planning for these rituals. Presby Cats resumed in mid-August in a Zoom format for meetings following MSU’s revised semester schedule. Scott Thrasher drew up plans for “UnCamp Play Days” at Rockhaven in the fall. PRT investigated several possibilities for using our building as an alternative space for children’s education and care. Additional equipment was purchased to improve worship.

In September, many church activities resumed in remote format. The Gallatin City-County Health Department began publishing a weekly summary of public health statistics. This enabled PRT to propose public health criteria for opening to in-person worship. Additional internal criteria included sufficient available ushers, the use of a reservation system with a maximum of 50 people and accommodation for church staff health and safety. Session endorsed these criteria, and a target date of October 4th was set for reopening to in-person worship.

To the disappointment of all, late September-October saw a resurgence in the virus in Gallatin County and across Montana. A new building use policy was adopted setting parameters for groups to use various spaces in the church building. Several events/activities were planned only to be switched to online due to illness, quarantines and mounting concerns of health workers statewide about overwhelming the capacity of health care systems. PRT publicized the opportunity for individuals to access the sanctuary for prayer. PRT also investigated options for improving air flow in the sanctuary and other spaces in the building. A “Halloween Parade” of children in costumes shown a week later in worship included 30 children.

In November, County health metrics were at their highest (worst) in 2020. The congregation adapted. An All-Saints Sunday slide show in worship remembered those who had died in the previous year. For many, there had been no public service. A team calling themselves the “Kitchen Elves” devised a plan to prepare and deliver Thanksgiving meals to those who might be the most isolated due to the pandemic. The meals were prepared following safety protocols. They were individually plated and wrapped, frozen overnight and delivered by a crew of drivers on the day before Thanksgiving. Plans for Advent and Christmas were developing. The Session affirmed the priorities of the PRT: public health, the protection of the vulnerable, respect for those who work in the health care system and care of the church staff.

In December, observing Advent and Christmas in the midst of a pandemic called for innovation, and the congregation responded. PRT established protocols for Baroque Music Montana to record a concert in the sanctuary for public release online. The *Messiah* recording from 2019 was remastered and interviews with musicians were added by Montana PBS for a public podcast. Children and their families created a virtual Christmas pageant for Christmas Eve, and children, youth and adults contributed to virtual choir presentations. The Kitchen Elves coordinated a contact-free Cookie Exchange. And the last Sunday of the year featured an online Blessing of the Animals service.

As we moved into 2021, our Covid-19 related policies were frequently updated as CDC and Health Department guidelines were a bit of a moving target. More was being learned about the disease and its transmission and vaccinations became available by spring, but then the Delta and Omicron variants emerged. Decisions were made throughout the year as to whether we could safely provide in-person worship. Sizes of groups permitted, distancing, masking, singing, how to safely serve communion, ordain elders and deacons and reopen the nursery and Children’s Sunday School were explored.

The PRT arranged a Vaccine Information Education Event which was held by Zoom on Sunday, February 7th. There were panelist presentations and interactions as well as questions from those attending. The presenters were Dr. Carrie Jenner, Washington State pediatrician, Dr. Timothy Morgenthaler, Mayo Clinic pulmonologist and Cindi Spinelli, MPH, BSN, RN, the Communicable Disease Program Manager for the Gallatin City-County Health Department.

We hoped to re-open to in-person worship on Easter Sunday, April 4th, utilizing a reservation system and protocols called “Gracious Boundaries,” but Session voted shortly before Easter not to have in-person worship. Yet, we were able to celebrate Easter on the east side of the river at Rockhaven on a perfect, 70-degree day with 70 people attending. Folks brought flowers to decorate a cross during the service and a post-service Easter egg hunt was held for the kids.

The church did return to in-person worship in May 2021. At first it was with a reservation system limiting those attending to 25, with that number gradually becoming unlimited and reservations no longer needed by June 2021. In total we were

on-line only for 60 Sundays. In August 2021, Session voted to advance the church's mission while "living with the virus." The church would remain open for in-person worship while the PRT continued monitoring community health and communicated to the congregation when concerns were heightened. The Deacons resumed their "coffee hour" following worship services, initially outside in the spring and summer and then inside in the fall.

Our church bell and vocal choirs led our congregation in worship throughout the pandemic. FPC's First Bells implemented six-foot individual spacing, in addition to mask-wearing. It was the only bell choir in Bozeman that continued to praise God and lead worship throughout the pandemic. Before vaccines were available and transmission was high, the vocal choir adopted safety modifications including individual singers recording tracks which Russell combined into anthems. In the fall the vocal choir resumed practicing and leading worship in person, with all singers wearing masks.

Outdoor services were approved and held at Rockhaven on April 4th (Easter) and May 2nd. It then moved to twice per month during the summer with a "bring-your-own picnic" following the summer services.

Following CDC Covid-19 guidelines, the 2021 Rockhaven Summer Camps and Youth Mission Trip to the Crow Reservation were great successes. This was at a time when the youth so needed these opportunities.

Hybrid meetings (in-person and remote) became our new norm for worship. Small groups, Session, Deacons, the Men's Bible Study and PW Circles also had hybrid meetings. Additional technology was acquired and installed as needed. Laptops, TV monitors and cameras were set up in Room 204 and the library to facilitate hybrid meetings. Use of this technology continued after the pandemic subsided, allowing people to attend meetings or church even on the stormiest of winter days.

As we entered 2022, sound Covid-19 protocols were in place for the church. Lower Covid-19 cases and hospitalizations were being experienced in the county and our Interim Pastor, the Rev. Ashley Birk, was in place as head of staff. The PRT recommended and the Session voted to deactivate the Pandemic Response Team in February.

Special thanks go to John Patterson who represented the PRT nearly every Sunday of the year, beginning in March 2020, providing a PRT Report during worship. He educated us all with trustworthy information and his calm demeanor.

Pandemic Team Members were: Suzanne Bratsky (Retired Lab Tech/Education), Larry Growney (Staff Rep./Facilities), Kris Hall (Moderator/Leadership/ Personnel), Debby Haynes (Congregation Rep./University Liaison), John Patterson (Physician, PRT Secretary), John Sacklin (Deacons Chair), Scott Thrasher (Rockhaven Camp), Alison Todd (Worship) and Ric Tieman (Technology). Past members/Alternates: Pastor Jody McDevitt (Moderator and note taker from the beginning through August

2021), Pastor Dan Krebill, Nancy Bast, Chuck Poremba, Laura Larsson, Craig Miller and Rachel Turner.

**Sesquicentennial:
Celebrating First Presbyterian – Bozeman
at 150 years**



The pandemic brought early planning for the church’s 150th birthday to a halt. When the anniversary committee was reconstituted in early 2022, we were only a few months away from our June birthday. Because of the short time frame and unknowns regarding Covid, the committee decided to host a series of events during 2022, turning the year into a “Season of Celebration.”

Our season’s “kick-off” was Sunday, June 5, 2022, the nearest Sunday to the church’s June 2nd birthday. The 9:30 am service emphasized the church’s Sesquicentennial. Immediately after the service, we served birthday cake, coffee, tea and juice to all in attendance. We had planned a brunch as part of the “kick-off” event, but a sudden spike in Covid caused us to back off on providing a meal.

June 12th was a “Bells of the Bridgers” concert at 3:00 pm in our Sanctuary (many of First Presbyterian’s “First Bells” play with the “Bells of the Bridgers”). They filled our Sanctuary with wonderful music.

We had an “Afternoon of Tea, Coffee and Treats” on Saturday, July 30th at 2:00 pm. The program included an informative and entertaining presentation by Sandra Oldendorf from the Gallatin Historical Society. She shared “Stories from the Early Presbyterians in Montana Territory and the Gallatin Valley.” We also honored people who have been members of our congregation for 50 or more years along with those members who were 85-years or older. Plus, we opened two-time capsules created during our 125th Anniversary that were intended to be opened on our 150th.

On Sunday, August 14th, we had a special Vespers service at Rockhaven. Scott Thrasher talked about the mission of Rockhaven and its importance to the children of our community.

On Friday, September 23rd, we enjoyed pizza, salad and ice cream bars before watching “A River Runs Through It,” the movie based on Norman Maclean’s book

about his family and growing up in Montana. Norman's father, the Rev. John Norman Maclean, was the pastor at First Presbyterian Church – Bozeman from 1897 (our 25th Anniversary) to 1902. We talked about the items and scenes from our church and the Gallatin River near Rockhaven that were in the movie.

Sunday, October 23rd, the pastor, staff and their spouses were hosted at an "Appreciation and Harvest Brunch." We honored those who have and continue to support us as a congregation and who are a vital part of the community.

November 20th was the "Fall Concert." Twenty-six-musicians shared their talents and celebrated the musical legacy of this church with our Bozeman community.

Throughout the year the committee asked church members and friends for their memories about the church, especially (but not exclusively) of the past 25 years. Those submissions helped in the creation of this history. The past 25-years' worth of annual reports were reviewed as were church files. Many members contributed their reviews and ideas. All helped with this history, but the committee takes responsibility for errors of co-mission or omission in this document.



**Interim Pastor Ashley Birk:
Looking Forward in the Midst of Transitions**

History books, by their nature, are an opportunity to look back and document and reflect on both the successes and struggles over a period of time. That is true of this history; however, we end it on a forward-looking note. With the retirement of Co-Pastors Dan and Jody in August 2021, the First Presbyterian Church Session created an Interim Pastor Nominating Committee. In accordance with presbytery policies, it oversees the process of searching for and recommending an interim pastor to the session. The interim pastor nominating process is guided and advised by the presbytery. An interim pastor is not called and installed by the congregation; rather, that person is elected by the session.

After the Interim Pastor Nominating Committee is formed, the members put together a Ministry Information Form that provides general information about the congregation and then answers specific questions about the skills and abilities of a

desired interim pastor. The presbytery reviews and approves the Ministry Information Form before it is forwarded to the Church Leadership Connection of PC(USA).

Pastors interested in an interim position fill out a Personal Information Form which describes their qualifications and interests. Personal Information Forms are also submitted to the Church Leadership Connection which matches the needs of a congregation with the abilities of potential interim pastors. The result is a list of possible candidates for the church's Interim Pastor Nominating Committee to consider.

After reviewing the list, winnowing down the number of candidates, doing reviews and interviews with the top candidates, a recommendation is made to session to vote on the proposed interim pastor. In the case of First Presbyterian – Bozeman, the interim pastor process formally began in July 2021 and concluded in January 2022 with Interim Pastor Ashley Birk arriving at the church.

The interim pastor serves during the period between the departure of a permanent minister (or ministers) and the installation of a new permanent minister. The interim pastor leads the congregation and provides direction to the session and church regarding the process to select a new called minister. This can be a lengthy process: eighteen-months to two-years-plus is not unusual.

The process to call a new, permanent pastor began in fall 2022. A Mission Study Team was created whose purpose was to describe the current church and its congregation. The Mission Study Team answered the questions: "Who are we?" "Who is God calling us to be?" and "Where is God calling us to go?" Mission Studies are not required when a church is calling a new pastor; however, the process is highly recommended by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in a situation like First Presbyterian – Bozeman. Our church's previous pastors had been here almost 25 years, and the church was coming out of the turmoil of the Covid pandemic. It was a good moment to spend some time answering the above questions to help understand what attributes we would be looking for in a new, called pastor. The Mission Study results would be used to inform a Pastor Nominating Committee which was expected to be formed in the fall of 2023.

Beginning in the fall of 2022, to help facilitate the Session's thinking on these questions during the Mission Study Team process, Interim Pastor Ashley Birk led the Session in using Alan Roxburgh's book, *Joining God, Remaking Church, Changing the World*. Roxburgh encourages church leaders and congregations to seek the Spirit's movement and join in God's ongoing work in our local community through repeatedly engaging in five-communal practices: Listening, Discerning, Testing and Experimenting, Reflecting and Deciding. Similarly, the adult bible study class in fall 2022 was led by Seminary Intern Karolee Larson. They used Mary Foster Parmer's book, *Invite Welcome Connect*, to look at how our church is seen by others and how we interact with the community around our church.

These introspective and forward-looking processes were underway at the conclusion of 2022 and this 25-year history. No matter what the specific outcomes of these processes, Jody McDevitt, in her July 25, 2021, sermon described our direction:

“The church’s calling, now and into the future, is to represent to the world, something no other human organization can provide, the imagination of God. To let God’s power be at work in us, to ‘accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine’ (Ephesians 3:20). And in doing so, to glorify God and enjoy God eternally, to all generations, forever and ever.”

Acknowledgements: It Takes a Village



Writing a history like this is not a one-person task. John Sacklin prepared the draft text and supplied most of the images (the image of Interim Pastor Ashley Birk is courtesy of Ashley Birk). Kris Hall wrote the Covid-19 section for the 2022 Annual Report and it was adapted for this history. She also provided important information for the Endowment section. Jane and John Hodges' write-up of the Spiritual Gifts Program and Prayer Chains were adapted for this history. Charlie Mandeville filled in the gaps on Presbyterian Women.

Former pastors Jody McDevitt and Dan Krebill provided significant input and re-writes, especially of the section on Changing Understandings of Sex and Gender, and they provided more history and behind-the-scenes details than what appears in annual reports or other written sources. They also provided many helpful additions, answered questions and caught typos. Thank you!

Joann Robbins did the important copy edit of this history.

The members of the 150th Anniversary Committee provided reviews, edits and additions. Thank you, committee members: Suzanne Bratsky Co-chair, Lloyd Mandeville Co-chair, Donna Beck, Rachel Minter, Marcia Jarrett, Sally and Chuck Broughton, Mary Hektner and John Sacklin and Interim Pastor Ashley Birk (ex-officio). In addition, Chuck Beck, Dan Holland, Ric Tieman, Judy Patterson, John Patterson, Charlie Mandeville, Kris Hall, John Hodges, Jane Hodges, Bill Anderson and Linda Best also provided invaluable reviews and edits.

