

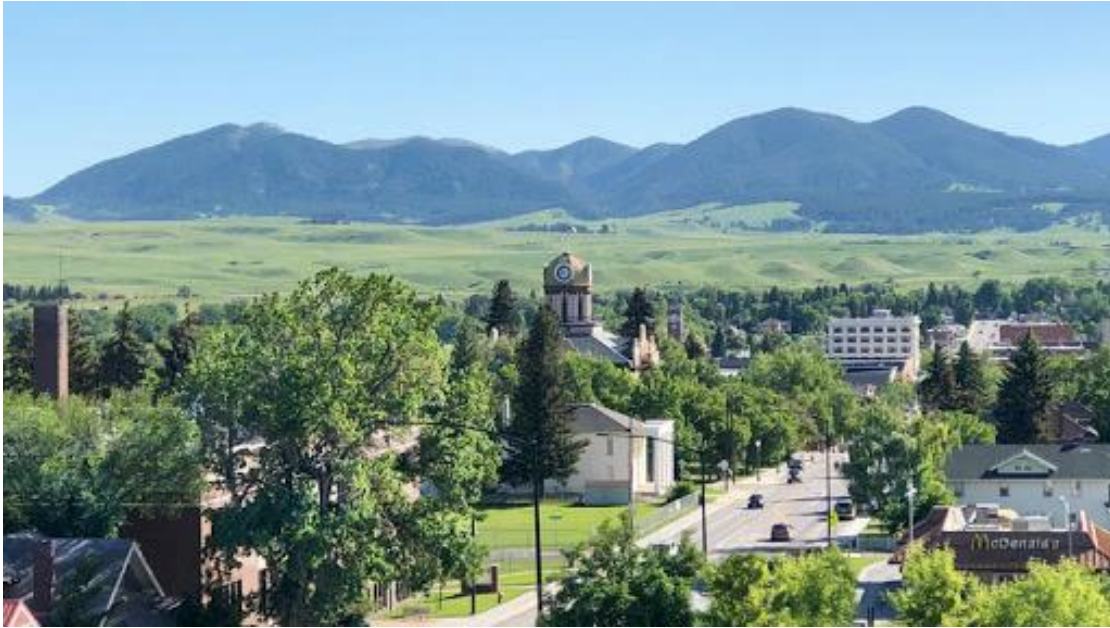
First Presbyterian Church Lewistown, Montana

Mission Study 2020



***“Moving toward God, forward in faith
and outward as disciples of Jesus Christ.”***

Introduction



View of Lewistown from the top of Main Street hill

Lewistown is a beautiful community located where the mountains and plains meet in the middle of Montana, and First Presbyterian Church PC(USA) is a faith-based church community in the heart of Lewistown.

This Mission Study tells a little about our community, our church, our history and our hopes.

First Presbyterian Church of Lewistown is ready to move forward in a careful process to call a pastor. We have been well served by a pastor of 25 years and an interim pastor since February 2018.

We seek someone who will lead us into deeper and sustained service to the Lord, someone for whom Central Montana is the right place to be and for whom our congregation is the right group of people to serve and grow.

We thank God for bringing us to this time and place with the challenges and opportunities before us. We have faith that He will successfully lead us through this process.

Vision Statement

Moving toward God, forward in faith and outward as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Mission Statement

We prayerfully commit to:

- Worship: Worshiping together is the heart of congregational life; we invite people from all walks to life to join us in worship. Being sensitive to cultural changes leads us to “think outside the pews.”
- Spiritual Growth: We seek spiritual growth in our faith walk through fellowship, prayer, Bible study, sharing and creating a culture of discipleship.
- Education: We are committed to providing opportunities for children and adults to learn about the Christian faith with guided Bible study and fellowship.
- Family: Families are changing; we work to support and strengthen families of church participants and families in our community.
- Community: We seek to provide for our community’s physical, emotional, spiritual and social needs, looking for ways to include them in our fellowship.
- Mission: We reach out in faith and love in our homes, community, workplace and world to encourage and prepare new disciples to continue our mission.
- Ministry: We support our Pastor and his or her efforts to provide inspiring and interactive worship that educates, renews and restores our relationship with Jesus Christ; from the pulpit and in the classroom.
- Church home: We invest in the maintenance and enhancement of our church home so that all those seeking Him can come to His house to learn, worship, grow in faith, and share fellowship.



Noisy Offering Donation



Treats for Teachers



Non-Profit Fair

Who We Are

First Presbyterian Church of Lewistown has a current active membership of 101 with an average weekly attendance of 60. We have a strong core of senior church members with some middle-aged and younger members.

Members of the congregation continue to provide a strong foundation through regular attendance at worship, serving as elders and deacons, and working for the church as volunteers in youth ministry, music and fellowship activities. Our music ministry is dedicated to serving both our church and community and seeks to complement our worship services and themes.

Our members are a theologically, economically and politically diverse group. Many have been members for a lifetime or many decades while others have joined more recently.

Like many mainline churches, our congregation is aging and one of our opportunities is the potential to reach out to and bring in new folks. We want to engage more people in the activities of the church and in the volunteer "workload."

One of our strengths is the flexibility and openness to change demonstrated by our congregation. We have completely remodeled our church sanctuary. We have shifted from the worship style of a long-time pastor to those of our interim. We have embraced changing music, which has incorporated more contemporary, praise group-based music to supplement the classic hymns so many people love. We have held contemporary and informal worship services in the past and are discussing doing so again. We want to be poised and flexible to meet the needs of a changing membership.

Another positive is our relationship with other churches. Lewistown has a strong faith community, and our churches have friendly and cooperative relationships and work together on shared ministries. Our congregation embraces those relationships.

We are known for our open door, welcoming those people who other faith communities may not be so inclined to include. This has allowed us to serve and include a unique population and that, in turn, has deepened our worship and faith.

We were reminded of another strength during the six months between the retirement of our longtime pastor and the arrival of our interim pastor, when members of our congregation stepped up to provide worship and leadership. We came to appreciate the strong and deep faith of so many of our members, their amazing array of talents, their desire to go deeper in faith, and the leadership and witness skills they brought to those six months.

We believe these strengths of our congregation will be tremendous assets as we work with a new pastor to move our church forward.

Finally, our congregation has continually stepped up financially, not just for ongoing operations but for numerous special projects to maintain and improve our church building.

To summarize: we are modest-sized congregation which reflects the people of Central Montana - ranchers and professionals, blue-collar working families and retirees, hard-working people of various backgrounds and life paths who share our love of God with each other and others in our community. We are aware that we can do more and do it better. We care deeply for one another and for our church as a whole. We strive to respect, support and love one another as Jesus has called us to do.



"Pack the Pew" gathering



Church school kids

Moving toward God, forward in faith
and outward as disciples of Jesus Christ



Praise Team Singers



"Pack the Pew" Food Servers

How We Worship



Front of the Sanctuary

We offer one worship service each Sunday at 10:30 a.m. Our service includes Scripture, communal prayer, children's message, a mix of older hymns and newer praise songs and, of course, a sermon or message. Our praise team/choir leads our music, and we occasionally invite members of the congregation and community to perform special music.

We have the ability to project Scripture, our worship bulletin, lyrics and sermon-supporting slides and videos. We have hearing-enhancement devices for those who need them. The effective use of technology to enhance worship services and extend our reach into our membership and community is an area in which we hope to grow and improve.

Elders and deacons assist with communion on the first Sunday of the month. Greeters and ushers welcome members and nonmembers alike each Sunday. We have both members and other clergy in the community who provide pulpit fill when our pastor is gone from the church.

Parents are invited to keep their children with them during the Sunday service or take advantage of our staffed child care. We offer, through volunteers from our congregation, Sunday school for children after the children's message.

Throughout the year, we hold shared worship services with other congregations. For example: an Ash Wednesday service and a Good Friday service. (Our pastor meets regularly with clergy groups representing both mainline and evangelical congregations in our community.)

We hold special and well-attended services Easter and on Christmas Eve.

We strive to create a friendly and welcoming atmosphere, and following services we typically host a "coffee hour," during which members and nonmembers alike can share food and fellowship.

Things We Do



Christmas Cantata Choir

We believe it tells you something about who we are when you know some of the missional activities in which we take part. We connect with our community in these ways:

- Adult Bible studies, daytime and evening, for members and nonmembers alike.
- Host Harmony Bells, a bell choir which practices in our church and plays in churches around the community.
- Host Koinonia, an annual ecumenical weekend spiritual retreat.
- Host and facilitate small groups of men and women, typically of people with shared interests and stages of life or focused on a specific topic or Bible study.
- Host and operate a Wednesday after-school program open to all families in the community.
- Host free community Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners.
- Host meetings for a variety of substance abuse and mental health groups.
- Host the annual Central Montana Christmas Cantata featuring 70 or more performers from more than a dozen area churches, which performs three shows before full-house crowds in our church.
- Support Love in the Name of Christ (LOVE, Inc.), an ecumenical service meeting a variety of needs of Central Montanans.
- Work with other churches to offer Vacation Bible School and youth groups.
- Conduct a 24-hour Ash Wednesday prayer vigil.
- Host an ongoing Prayer Chain to support prayer needs in our community.
- Numerous outreach efforts to individuals and families by our Deacons.
- Visits to shut-ins and homebound people.
- Sponsor Scouting troops which meet in our church.
- Support our local food bank through collections the first Sunday of the month.

How We Operate

Our church has a full-time pastor and four part-time staff: secretary, custodian, treasurer and Sunday childcare provider. Our current music leaders are volunteers, though we budget for a part-time paid music director.

We have eight members on the Session with seven standing committees, each chaired by a Session member but including lay members of the congregation:

- Worship.
- Personnel.
- Financial and Stewardship.
- Buildings and Grounds.
- Mission and Outreach
- Children's and Adult Education.
- Fellowship.

We have eight Deacon board members who have an active outreach ministry as well as leading coffee hours, hosting funeral receptions and other activities.

Our annual operating budget for 2020 is \$171,684, which is very similar to previous annual budgets. We have consistently finished recent years in the black or very close to it. This doesn't include the many and sometimes substantial special projects for which we have raised funds.

We do not ask for annual tithe pledges, but we do regularly report to the congregation how our church is doing financially. We believe in operating openly and making our financial information available to any member who requests it.

We are one of about 23 churches who are members of the Yellowstone Presbytery, and we maintain a close connection with its co-presbyters and occasionally host meetings of the Presbytery at our church. We expect our pastor to be active in Presbytery affairs and currently have elders involved on Presbytery committees. We encourage and support that involvement.

For more information on our church and the Presbytery:

<http://www.1stpreslewistown.org/>

<http://yellowstonepcusa.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/FirstPresbyterianChurchLewistown/>

Where We Have Been - Our Building and Our History



Construction of new church 1912



One of Our Stained Glass Windows



Cornerstone View



Courtyard View

Our congregation is blessed with a beautiful and historic home. We know that it's the people who worship that make a church, not a building. Yet the story of our building is intertwined with the story of our people and our community.

Our building, nurtured by our people through generations, has been significant to the community and congregation. Marriages and funerals, Christmas cantatas and musical performances, meetings and prayer vigils, spiritual retreats and community dinners, worship and church services - all have been and continue to be hosted in this marvelous facility.

The building is beautiful, featuring incredible stained glass, a classic and, powerful organ, and a sanctuary which draws your eyes up to heaven. We love sharing it with our community!

Our congregation was founded in 1890, about the time Lewistown was established. The names of the charter members reflect the founding families of the town, and the new congregation grew through three temporary homes in its early years.

In 1912, the cornerstone of the current church building was laid, a piece of sandstone quarried nearby and shaped by skilled Croatian stonemasons whose work can be found today in many buildings around town.

The founders invested in impressive stained glass windows from Belgium which - combined with its sandstone - gives the building a unique and spiritual feel.

Through the early 1900s, there were ongoing improvements and renovations which reflected evolving worship and congregational needs. No matter the economic and social challenges faced by the community, local Presbyterians found a way to make needed changes and updates to the church building.

In 1965, an education and administrative wing was dedicated, and renovations of various parts of the building continued through the past 55 years. In recent years, major efforts were made to remodel the sanctuary, install an elevator for handicapped access, renovate and protect for the next 100 years the stained glass windows, and remodel rooms in the education wing.

Currently a major remodel of the fellowship kitchen area is underway with plans to extend the work into the fellowship area.

Our beautiful, historic building gives us much joy, but it presents an ongoing financial and maintenance challenge. The amazing thing is how - while funding the operational cost of the church - our congregation has raised additional funds and often donated needed labor for renovation and improvement projects. That generosity continues to this day.

We are really proud of our church building, however it is the people who make it a church. Our congregation continues to work to serve our community, our church family and our Lord for another century.

Our Community



Annual Chokecherry Festival

Located in the center of Montana, Lewistown is a great place to live, work, worship and raise a family.

It sits in a beautiful valley where the rolling plains meet the mountains. A blue-ribbon trout stream runs through town, and some of the best family-owned cattle and farming operations in Montana surround it in the scenic Judith Basin.

Five mountain ranges surround the community, from which grand 100-mile vistas stretch out below. Easy access to public lands and plentiful rivers, lakes and streams ensure world-class hunting, year-round fishing and ample opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling and more.

Lewistown proper has about 6,000 residents, the surrounding area holds 11,000 people, and the community serves a market area of more than 15,000. Our population has held steady for decades, though we have seen growth in recent years.

A drive of two to three hours takes you to larger cities - Billings, Great Falls and Bozeman - and four to six hours takes you to Glacier or Yellowstone national parks.

Agriculture forms the core of our area economy. This is followed by a strong presence of local, state and national government offices; retail and financial services; tourism opportunities and meeting sites; construction companies; education; health care and professionals. A number of innovative, small manufacturing businesses have brought further diversification to the local economy.

One of the top 100 critical-access hospitals in America, Central Montana Medical Center offers top-notch medical care to area residents as well as being our largest employer.

Lewistown's public schools are among the best in the state. Our students consistently perform above state and national levels on standardized achievement tests, and students involved in academic competitions regularly outperform their peers in science, math and vocational events. We also have a higher education/job training center which offers growing post-secondary options for area residents.

School athletic programs are complemented by a variety of community sports such as soccer, baseball, ice hockey and club volleyball. We have recently updated and modernized our Olympic-sized swimming pool with water slides and child play area open in the summers and an outdoor ice-skating rink in the winter.

Lewistown features an extensive rails-to-trail walking and biking system which is enjoyed year-round by residents and visitors alike. The city is completing a downtown pavilion and marketplace public area this summer.

Surveys conducted as part of this Mission Study consistently came back with "quality of life," "clean air and water" and "proximity to nature" as assets valued by community members. Lewistown is a great place to raise a family, and we hear this repeatedly from our "older kids" who have grown up and moved away, only to return to raise their own children here.

Another community asset cited by congregation and non-congregation members alike in preparing this study is summarized by one comment: "The people, definitely the people. Kind, caring, giving people."

A drive around Lewistown finds countless community improvements - large and small - supported by fund-raising and the generous giving of our people. That community spirit and the quality of life it has created is one reason why we are seeing a number of young people returning with their families because they want their children to grow up in Lewistown and Central Montana.

We are proud to share why we choose to live here and invite you to learn more about living, working and playing in Lewistown at these websites:

<http://enjoylewistown.com/>

<https://hiddenmt.com/>

<http://lewistownchamber.com/>

<https://www.cmmc.health/>

<https://www.lewistown.k12.mt.us/>



Fishing on Spring Creek

What Our People Say About Where We Are and Where We Need to Go

We held a number of listening sessions with members of our congregation. These were hosted in homes as well as the church, by invitation to insure opinions from diverse congregants and by open invitation so that everyone had the opportunity for input.

In each session, we followed this format:

- 1) In thinking about the assets (positives) and liabilities (negatives) of First Presbyterian Church, what do you consider to be our assets and liabilities?
- 2) What do you consider to be the most pressing issues facing our church and what would be the best way to address them?
- 3) As we think about First Presbyterian for the next five to ten years, what are the qualities you feel are important for our next pastor to have?

We heard many different things in response to the questions we posed to our members. Here are some of the consistent themes in our meetings:

Our assets

Our people.
Our gorgeous sanctuary and historic building.
Open, welcoming church.
Sense of belonging.
Generosity of congregation and support for financial needs of the church.
Bible-centered, non-partisan theology.
Relationship with other pastors and churches.
Music, singing.
Outreach to and connection with the community.
We are debt-free and have a foundation account with PC(USA).

Our liabilities

The needed and expensive projects and maintenance of our building.
The lack of youth and young families (our future).
Too comfortable with where we are.

Challenges

Aging congregation, dwindling group of workers.
Needed downstairs remodeling/updates.
Need to attract younger people with programs and activities for them.
Need to broaden the base of volunteer workers in our church.

What we can do to address them

Better communication on financial, remodeling and other needs of the church.
Engage members and attendees in a deeper, more meaningful ways.
Doing things well.
Better and updated website, including testimonials.
More available childcare.
More and better promotion/publicity.
Music (the challenge of meeting the musical needs of everyone).
A better, longer-term planning process to identify and meet needs of the church.

Looking ahead five to ten years, needed qualities for our next pastor

Organized, vibrant Bible-teaching.
Structured, organized sermons.
Ability to connect with young families and young people.
Ability to nicely push and lead us.
Willingness to be active in the community and interact outside the church.

In summary

We heard many things. Some which were repeated are included above. We suspect our assets and liabilities, our challenges and hopes are no different than many churches today.

Two things were repeated over and over by members in our listening sessions:

- 1) Most felt a sense of belonging in our church. Those who didn't sometimes faulted themselves, not other congregants. We feel this is a real strength for us.
- 2) The other was a sense of "don't change anything too much." Many people like their worship and congregational experience at First Presbyterian Church, and they are hesitant to see dramatic change. However, this also is a strength. Our congregation - through numerous remodeling's, the change to an interim pastor and different worship format, and hearing from both members and outside pastors as pulpit fill - has shown a surprising ability to accept and embrace change.

Final thoughts



Snowy Mountains Outside of Lewistown

We feel blessed to live in Central Montana and to be part of the First Presbyterian Church faith community. We are blessed to have a building as beautiful as ours.

We have a strong foundation upon which to build and look forward to embracing the challenges we face.

We have an amazing group of people, people with a wide variety of experiences and talents, united by our faith and our desire to grow and deepen it.

Now we seek the right person to lead and work alongside us as we move forward as a faith community in service to each other, our community and our Lord. If you feel you are that person, if you feel Central Montana is a place where you can live and grow, we look forward to visiting with you.