



THE GRAPEVINE

First Presbyterian Church of Sandpoint, Idaho
December 2025

FROM THE PASTOR

Just be you this Christmas!

When Mary was doing her chores and being herself, she was first Mary. A woman from a family not in any great position of power as the world leaders were concerned but she mattered. She mattered to her family, to her tribe, to her God, and she mattered to herself. Before the Angel Gabriel came with news, news she was not expecting in all the glory an angel arrives in on such honored missions, she was just Mary. Before she had to tell her parents or tell Joseph the good news that the community would receive initially as good gossip and bad news for their families, she was just Mary. Before her belly grew and her ankles swelled and before they had to travel for a traitorous king nobody wanted but a select few bidding for power, she was just Mary. Before she held her baby seeing as any proud parent does another face of God's glorious creation and love, she was just Mary.

This Christmas season you are first you, just you and that is good enough. When the days come, just be you. When the good moments come, celebrate your feelings and reside in them. When the bad moments come as they are as guaranteed as greedy men wanting to be kings, again

be you. Feel your feelings and sit with them until you decide you are ready for the next experience. Just be you and that is more than enough for God. Just be you this Advent, come as you are to wherever your roads take you, and be you.

God has prepared this day for you, the real complex, and beautiful child of God you are.

“And Mary said: ‘My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.’” – Luke 1:46-48

Merry Christmas,

Rev. Catherine Lyle



ADVENT BOOK STUDY

We would like to invite you and your friends to our special Advent Season & Christmas Worship this year as we explore “What child IS this?” Please enjoy this promotional video and share with your friends as we invite them to worship. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xiC9pYm-dAg>

Our Advent Book study that coincides with our Christmas worship services is “The First Advent in Palestine: Reversals, Resistance, and the Ongoing Complexity of Hope” written by Kelley Nikondeha. When we picture the first Advent, we see Mary and Joseph huddled by a manger. We picture Gabriel, magi, and shepherds tending their flocks. A shining star against a midnight sky. But this harmonized version has lifted the Advent story out of its context--those who experienced the first Advent had to travel through great darkness to reach the hope that shining star announced. Trusted scholar and community organizer Kelley Nikondeha takes us back, to where the landscape of Palestine is once again the geographic, socioeconomic, and political backdrop for the Advent story.

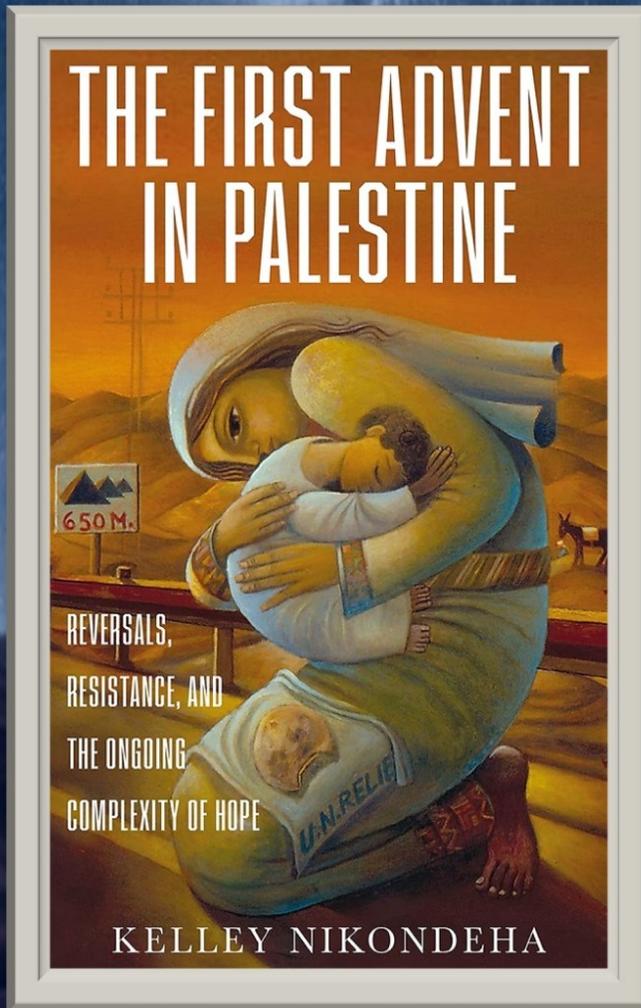
Reading the Advent narratives of Luke and Matthew anew, in their original context, changes so much about how we see the true story of resistance, abusive rulers and systems of oppression, and God coming to earth. In Luke, Rome and Caesar loom, and young Mary's strength and resolve shine brightly as we begin to truly understand what it meant for her to live in the tumultuous Galilee region. In Matthew, through Joseph's point of view, we see the brutality of Herod's rule and how the complexities of empire weighed heavily on the Holy Family. We bear witness to the economic hardship of Nazareth, Bethlehem, and the many villages in between--concerns about daily bread, crushing debt, land loss, and dispossession that ring a familiar echo to our modern ears. Throughout her explorations, Nikondeha features the stories of modern-day Palestinians, centering their voices to help us meet an Advent recognizable for today. This thought-provoking examination invites us into a season of discovery, one that is realistic and honest, and that still wonders at the goodness of God's grace.

Please feel free to join us for our Monday night book study zoom discussions or on Sunday morning worship as our pastor pulls from Nikondeha's awesome book as we explore in worship, "What Child Is This?" If you would like to watch an interview with the author and Marcia McFee who designed our worship series this year please check out this very good interview on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6HcXXCk8gs>

FROM THE PASTOR

You Are Invited to our Online Zoom Christmas Book Study Monday Nights at 7pm



Join us for our online Zoom Book Study as we read through "The First Advent in Palestine: Reversal, Resistance, and the Ongoing Complexity of Hope" by Kelley Nikondeha.

Monday Nights at 7pm starting on December 1st. We hope folks are able to read 2 chapters each week and have our last online zoom class on December 29th.

You can rent the book or purchase on your own. Or contact Reverend Catherine Lyle about purchasing a book for \$20 through the Methodist Church and/or receive a free loaner.

Zoom Meeting ID

<https://greater-nw.zoom.us/j/98524696426>



Sponsored by Sandpoint United Methodist Church in Sandpoint

SESSION NOTES

We anticipated a short session meeting in November with the two Judys (Labrie and McComish) out of town. While we didn't worry about the lack of a quorum, each Judy chairs an important committee that supports our church's mission and outreach which normally requires important session discussions. Judy McComish leads the Ezra 3 Project committee which hosted a very successful community meeting recently. Judy Labrie juggles many balls in her duties of coordinating the schedules our regular church activities along with the numerous groups who use our facilities. (See their reports elsewhere in The Grapevine.)

However, in their absence, Session filled the time discussing the process of calling a pastor which will begin in early 2026. The first step will involve forming a pastor nominating committee. As Presbyterians, we do everything in an orderly fashion which implies a methodical, and sometimes a slow, process. You will hear more about it in coming weeks.

Now, let's take a quick glance at the normal agenda items for the November meeting.

Paula Vincent, Finance Elder, forecasts a moderate budget surplus as we approach the end our fiscal year. While expenses have exceeded the budgeted amount, so have revenues. The increased revenues result from your generous giving, cashing-in a Certificate of Deposit interest and a COVID-19 grant payment. (See Paula's financial report for more details about closing out fiscal year 2025 and preparing for 2026.)

Our church by-laws specify that an elder can serve two continuous three-year terms on session and then must sit-out at least one year. Paula falls into that category. As such, we need to find someone to serve in the all-important Finance Elder position.

Kirsten Thompson, Worship and Music Elder, presented plans for Advent and Christmas services and activities. (See her report to schedule your participation in these events.)

Mary Sturgis, Building and Grounds Elder, pointed out normal fall activities of leaf disposal and preparing our facilities for winter. Our new custodian regularly offers to assist in maintenance activities that pop up on a frequent basis. His help is much appreciated.

Sue Helander facilitated a meeting with members of FPC, United Methodist and Holy Spirit Episcopal Churches to partner for a "Gather Together – Church Food Drive." **Session approved** participating and hosting a potluck on Saturday, January 10, 2026, to celebrate this campaign that benefits the Bonner County Food Bank.

On a sad note, we lamented the recent deaths of three members: Geri Stockman, Marilyn Robertson and Dave Pietz. We share with their families and friends in mourning while we celebrate their faithful service to our church and the community.

We follow Christ's light, for we are a congregation of people,
Loving, living and learning the joy of faith.

Peace and all good,
Bill Love, Clerk of Session

WORSHIP AND MUSIC

The season of Advent brings many opportunities to celebrate. During advent, the church decorations will begin with the Advent wreath being placed in the sanctuary before November 30, the first Sunday in Advent. The next decorations including the tree, evergreen boughs, and twinkling lights will appear by December 7. Please keep an eye out for announcements from the church office about how you can help with the decorations.

The choir will be singing December 14 and 28, as well as Christmas Eve, when our service will be at 5:30 p.m. Please enjoy the music, and if you feel a call to sing some more, speak with Dana Stockman or any choir member about coming to join us as we sing.

Finally, our faithful cadre of ushers, worship assistants, and live streamers show up Sunday after Sunday to lead with worship. It is a wonderful way to serve the congregation and requires little other than showing up on time with a friendly smile. If you aren't currently on the schedule, and would like to be added, please contact the church office, or Kirsten Thompson at thompsonkj2019@gmail.com or 503-816-6384, and we'll make sure you're on the schedule.

Happy Holidays!



FINANCE & STEWARDSHIP

Finance Notes:

As we enter December, it is with great appreciation that we announce that the financial gifts received by the First Presbyterian Church (FPC) of Sandpoint are on track to meet the revised 2025 budget.

FPC Budgeted Income and expense through ten months: \$ 100,000 or 83% of budget

Actual Income through October: \$ 118,678 or 99% of budget

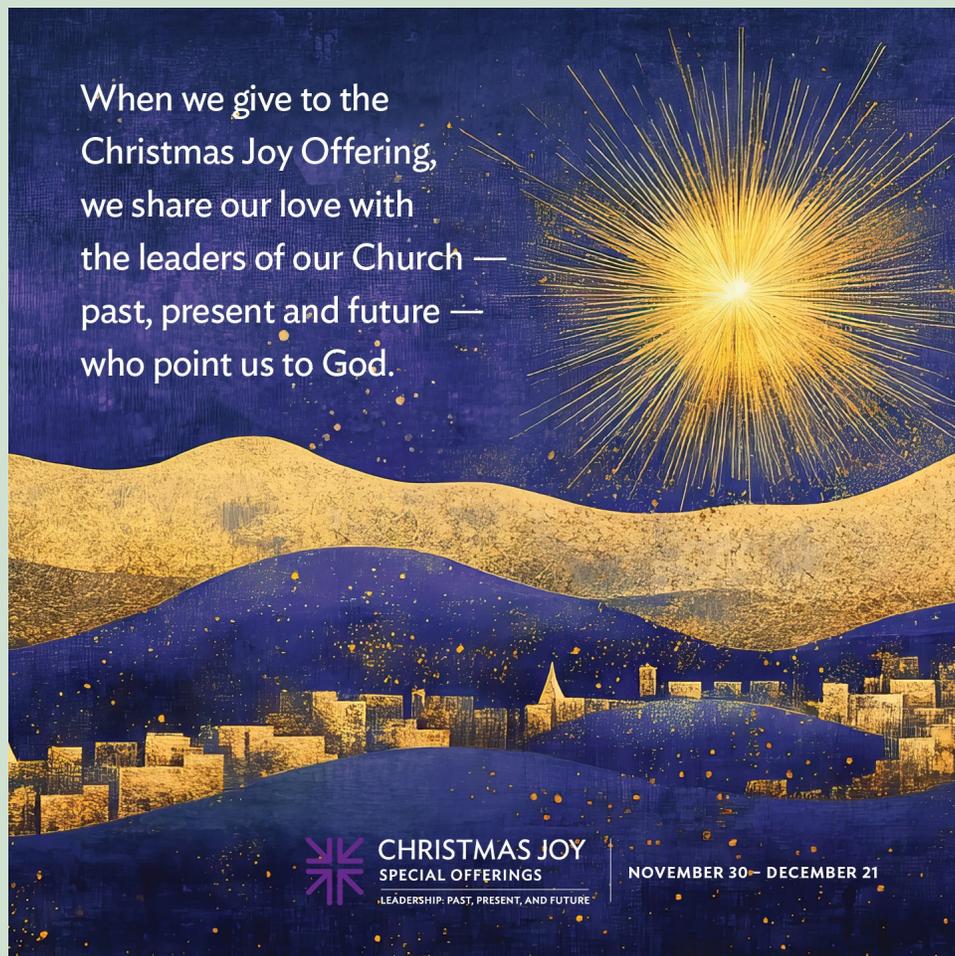
Actual Expense through October: \$ 108,254 or 90% of budget

Stewardship Notes:

The fall Stewardship drive is underway; thank you for your consideration of completing the attached pledge form as this is very helpful in finalizing the budget for 2026. Session will review the projected budget at the conclusion of the pledge drive; the projected 2026 budget is unchanged at \$120,000.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula Vincent, Finance Elder



PERSONNEL

We are fortunate to have a talented group of individuals working on our behalf at First Presbyterian Church of Sandpoint (FPC) and hope you will join us in stuffing their stockings during this holiday season. Beginning December 7th, Christmas stockings will be available in Fellowship Hall on Sunday morning or in the office on Monday and Wednesday mornings. We hope you will help us say thank you by dropping a note in these stockings, bringing a gift such as holiday cookies, sending an appreciation email, etc. We appreciate Pastor Catherine sharing this idea with Session!

Our FPC staff include:

Susie Haskins, Finance Secretary
Reverend Catherine Lyle, Interim Pastor
Mo Martin, Custodian
Natalie Miller, Treasurer and Bookkeeper
Dana Stockman, Office Administrator and Choir Director
Anne Welle, Pianist

Progress on improving staff working conditions as suggested during the fall personnel review process is continuing. Items addressed so far include the following:

1. A laptop computer and large-screen monitor were purchased to replace the desktop computer used by the office administrator, Dana Stockman. Many thanks (again) to Dana's sister, Lynne, and brother-in-law, David, in helping Dana with this shift from one machine to the other. Dana is re-creating the items that did not transfer well into new files on the laptop.
2. A subscription to QuickBooks on-line was purchased for the FPC treasurer/accountant and the file transfer from the old software to the new software is complete.
3. New office chairs were purchased for the office administrator and pastor.
4. Mary Sturgis secured a quote for the rain gutter at the back door and installation is complete.
5. FPC modified the terms of the interim pastor contract to provide partial reimbursement of monthly cell phone expenses.

Respectfully submitted,

Millie Rinker, Paula Vincent, Dyno Wahl
Personnel Committee

FOOD DRIVE, NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

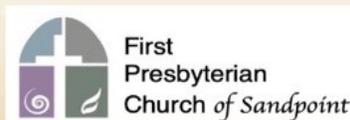
WE GATHER TOGETHER
CHURCH FOOD DRIVE

HELP AND GIVE

NOV 2 - DEC 30, 2025

Goal: donate 5,000 lbs food to the
Bonner Community Food Bank

First Presbyterian Church
Holy Spirit Episcopal Church
United Methodist Church



EARTH CARE

“Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle” – These are the environmentally friendly words we strive to live by, trying to live lighter on the land by reducing consumption, reusing (including buying used items) things, and finally when we must find the most responsible way to dispose of waste items by recycling.

There are lots of things that can be recycled. One of the first things to consider is recycling food waste by composting food waste. Coffee grounds, vegetable peelings, leftover foods (except meat, fat, and bones) can all be composted very simply in a garden compost pile or bin. There are many fancy products one can buy to help with composting, but a simple covered bucket or pail with a backyard bin that is set up to be turned occasionally can work just fine. If you have questions about composting at home, a good resource is easy to find on the internet, or at the library. The US Environmental Protection Agency has a webpage filled with resources to answer your questions, and is a good place to start. <https://www.epa.gov/recycle/composting-home>

Bonner County residents can recycle a number of household items at the local transfer stations. In addition to non-recyclable household garbage, transfer stations can accept aluminum cans, cardboard, newspaper, magazines, metal items, wood scraps, and tires. Hazardous waste materials are accepted monthly at various sites throughout the county. The county has recently changed some of their protocols and increased their fees. They do not accept waste generated outside of Bonner County. Please see the website for more details: <https://www.bonnercountyd.gov/departments/SolidWaste>

Staples store in Ponderay offers a number of recycling services in their store. Much of it is free, some items are fee based. See their website for more details: <https://www.staples.com/stores/recycling#rec> Staples also will shred paper and recycle the shredded debris for ~\$1.50 per pound.

Plastic bags can be recycled at Safeway in Sandpoint, and Walmart in Ponderay. Ideally, we use as few of these as possible by bringing our own reuseable bags when we shop, but there are always a few to take back and recycle when we run errands.

Glass bottles and jars (clean and without lids) can be dropped off at the glass recycling locations in Coeur d'Alene across from 3650 N Ramsey Rd., Coeur d'Alene.

Old prescription medications can be safely disposed of at pharmacies including Sandpoint Super Drug, Safeway, and Walmart. The Sandpoint Police Department is also listed as an option for medication for safe disposal. For larger recycling tasks, Pacific Steel in Ponderay is a good resource. Tin cans can be recycled conveniently and without a fee. Larger metal recycling materials are weighed and purchased by Pacific Steel. Here's a list of recyclables from their website: aluminum food and beverage cans, aluminum scrap, copper, insulated copper, brass, stainless steel, radiators, lead, batteries, scrap iron, tin, car bodies, cardboard, electronics, catalytic converters, and some plastics (contact your local branch before you go to confirm if they accept plastics and what types).

At this time there are very few options for recycling plastic containers, and those that I could find are limited to recycling within the community boundaries. As was explained to me, these programs are limited by the market values of the recycled materials.

The best advice remains, **reduce, reuse, and recycle!** The best option to reducing waste is limit creating it.

Kirsten Thompson, thompsonkj2019@gmail.com, 503-816-6384

IN MEMORY

Marilyn Ann Robertson, 87, passed away on Monday, November 10, 2025 at Kootenai Health in Coeur d'Alene, ID, after a months-long battle with cancer. She remained positive throughout, and still enjoyed family time, nature (Birds!), church, and friends.

Memorial services were held at 2:00 pm on Saturday, November 15th, at the First Presbyterian Church in Sandpoint with the Rev Catherine Lyle officiating.

Marilyn was born in Lewiston, ID, on October 19, 1938, and was adopted 2½ years later by Maurice and Gladys Ogilvie of Wallace, Idaho where she grew up. She had a wonderful childhood with a loving family, life-long school friends, and trips with Uncle Bud and Grandma Ross. She roller skated to school and camped with the Bluebirds group. Mom felt Grandma Ross' example of gentleness, kindness, and happiness greatly influenced her life.

She attended Wallace High School, Whitworth Nursing School with clinicals at Deaconess, and obtained her Bachelor's Degree after marriage at Walla Walla College.

She met our Dad on a blind date arranged by his brother on his university Christmas break in 1958. They had many dates in Spokane every other weekend. They married in 1960 in Wallace. Tamara was born in 1963 in Walla Walla, WA, Mark followed in late 1964 in Billings, MT. The little family moved several times for career changes, settling in Boise, Idaho in 1968 with Alan working for the State Department of Water Resource, and Marilyn part time for St. Luke's Hospital, where she worked over 25 years.

She was active in her Boise church, the League of Women Voters, and even the Ada County Planning commission always with an eye toward peace and preservation of nature. Marilyn always had a pet, starting with her first puppy at age four and her most recent cat, Mitzi is still sitting by the fire.

After retiring from her career as a registered nurse, Marilyn moved to Sandpoint along with her husband Alan. And from the very beginning, they dove headfirst into community life. She was honored as a Sandpoint Woman of Wisdom in 2019. Marilyn's contributions have been many, but her deepest roots may lie in her work with the First Presbyterian Church. Over the years, she has served as elder, deacon, and a key leader in the Presbyterian women's group. But perhaps her most lasting impact is helping the church achieve the designation of an Earth Care Congregation—an honor that no other church in Idaho holds. Through Marilyn's tireless work in education, outreach, worship, and environmental stewardship, this recognition became a reality. She felt it's not just about certification—it's about living values that care for creation and community alike.

Her service continues well beyond church walls. Marilyn gave her time and her heart to Habitat for Humanity, not just organizing home dedications, but becoming a mentor and lifeline for families long after they moved in. She walked beside them, offering accountability, encouragement, and real support—ensuring their stability and success.

She also served as a volunteer for CASA—Court Appointed Special Advocates, where she completed 40 hours of intensive training to advocate for children removed from unsafe homes. Marilyn became a voice for the voiceless, standing with children during their most vulnerable moments and ensuring that their best interests came first.

IN MEMORY

Her involvement with CIRCLES, now Bonner Homeless Transitions, is another example of her love in action. Marilyn didn't just show up—she planned, cooked, served, and most importantly, listened. She formed lasting relationships with those she served, always offering hope and practical help with kindness.

The list goes on. Marilyn has supported the Bonner County Historical Museum, volunteered with Challenged Riders—a program combining horseback riding and physical therapy for children with disabilities—and was an active member of the Monday Hikers.

And then, of course, there is the birder in her—one of her most joyful passions. According to those who knew her, Marilyn could identify 230 out of 235 Idaho bird species by sight or by song. She knew when the Tundra Swans are passing through the Pack River Delta, when the Grebes are nesting in Denton Slough, and just about everything in between. Her connection to the natural world reflects the same deep attentiveness and appreciation that she brought to people. She had weekly trips this spring to count bobolinks with her friend Sally.

She supported many organizations, and felt especially in alliance with The Carter Center, attending national events several times.

And in the midst of all this, Marilyn found time to write a book—her memoir, *Memories and Mysteries*, published in 2014. The book chronicles her journey of genealogical discovery, her search for identity, and her reflections on life as both an adopted child and a mother, wife, and community member. She grew close to her birth-mother's memory through this research. She spoke of Amy often.

Marilyn loved sports from the days of Mark's track team to the Seahawks win on Sunday. The Seahawks and Gonzaga Bulldogs always had her on their side.

Alan passed away in 2017, but she kept the family traditions and positive feelings going. Marilyn leaves behind her son, Mark; daughter, Tamara; grandchildren Megan, Andy, Nicole and Shawn (Erika) as well as three special great-grandchildren and many, many friends. She created many special memories for all of us right up to the end.

We would like to thank Dr. Paul White and Ashley Manning, PA-C, the lovely Sandpoint nurses and staff for their kind care. Memorial donations may be made to Sandpoint Area Senior Center, Better Together Animal Alliance, or your local food bank.



There will be a Celebration of Life service for **Dave Pietz** on Saturday, December 6th, at 10:30a.m. with a catered light lunch following in Fellowship Hall.



- 12/6 **Dave Pietz memorial service, 10:30 a.m.**
- 12/10 **Bonner County Human Rights Task Force meeting, 4:00-8:00 p.m.**
- 12/12 **Suzuki Strings Concert, 5:00 p.m.**
- 12/15 **Festival at Sandpoint Youth Orchestra concert, 6:00 p.m.**
- 12/17 **Session meeting, 1:30 p.m. Fireside room**
- 12/24 **Christmas Eve Candlelight service, 5:30 p.m.**
- 12/29 **January/February Grapevine articles due, 9:00 a.m.**



I don't have anyone on the list!

Did we miss your birthday or get the date wrong?

Email the office and let us know!

office@fpcsandpoint.org

REGULAR MONTHLY EVENTS



Sunday

- 11:00 a.m. Worship, In-Person and Livestream (<https://www.youtube.com/@firstpresbyteriansandpoint>)
- 7:00 p.m. AA meeting

Monday-Saturday

- 7:00 a.m. AA meeting

Monday

- 9:00 a.m. TOPS meeting (Take Off Pounds Sensibly)
- 6:00 p.m. Al-Anon meeting

Tuesday

- 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Book Study and Contemplative Prayer Group
- 7:00 p.m. AA meeting

Wednesday

- 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Rainbow Soup Kitchen community meal
- 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. Church choir practice
- 7:00 p.m. AA meeting

Thursday

- 12:00 p.m. Al-Anon meeting
- 7:00 p.m. AA meeting



First Presbyterian Church

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208-263-2047

office@fpcsandpoint.org

www.fpcsandpoint.org

Ministers

Members and Friends

Pastor Catherine Lyle

Pastor cell phone: 509-570-3938

Office hours

Monday 9:00-12:00

Wednesday 9:00-12:00