

## Introducing the Helena Church Planting Project

Rocky Mountain  
Presbytery,  
Presbyterian Church  
in America.

Please contact the  
Bostroms at:

[HeartforHelena@aol.com](mailto:HeartforHelena@aol.com),

919-414-9461 and visit  
the web site at:

[www.HeartforHelena.org](http://www.HeartforHelena.org)



## Loving the Gospel and Helena Through Planting Healthy Churches

### Loving the gospel

*"The gospel is the power of God to every one who believes"* (Romans 1:16). God, through the gospel, at great cost to Himself, transforms rebels and orphans into children of God who can believe this good news and can be at home with Him. On the cross Jesus truly bore the cost of sin and gladly gives His right standing with God to those who now believe and those who will believe.

We who believe this remarkable news are astonished that such a holy God can so deeply love sinners like us. What can we do but worship?! *Because of this gospel we can live with God and love Him – not be indifferent to Him, rebel against Him or simply perform for Him* (Eugene Peterson – another Montanan!). Because of this gospel, we begin to partner with God. We find others who have experienced the grace of God in Jesus. And we join together in covenant communities – churches.

But, God's family is not yet complete. We want others to worship our remarkable God with us. Jesus takes the good seed of His gospel and sows it. Jesus teaches us there are various kinds of soil (people) into whose lives this seed is

sown. For some, the difficulties of this world as well as its temporary successes join with our own brokenness and real evil to frustrate long term growing relationships with God and others.

Still, Jesus gives us hope. There is *prepared* "soil" – people who do receive the word of God and produce "fruit." These people actually love God and neighbor in substantial ways.



There must be a lot of "prepared" soil because Jesus, the Church Planter, has told us: *"The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest"* (Lk. 10:2).

## Loving Helena

Folks from Helena are proud of her. *"Helena - the greatest little city on earth – political center of the state - Queen City of the Rockies."* One long term transplant said: *"Helena will charm you ... the land around it envelopes you ... the folks are warm and wonderful. Cliques are few and pretentiousness just isn't tolerated. In short, folks is just plain folks."* Midway between Glacier National Park and Yellowstone, Helena has developed its own culture that enjoys neighborliness and the arts. Helenans love this place.



Outside of town you see hills that are like a *"tawny ocean stopped in time, a vast landscape of grass"* (Schaap). Helena is ringed with mountains – not the majestic fourteeners of Colorado – but mountains nonetheless – *"giving the eye a place to rest on the horizon"* (Ivan Doig). Looking over the city is Mt. Helena – one of the largest city parks in the nation. Here you can see. Here it is hard to miss a sunset. Look at

the night sky – sapphire darkening to black with a Milky Way of diamonds. You can see why Helenans love this place.

Love of this place is tested. It gets cold (it can be -40). Some find escape through drugs and alcohol. Divorce is high. So is suicide in Montana. Wages are low. Grown children often relocate to find a living wage. Like other independent Westerners, Helenans can prefer the church of the "outdoors" or the church of the "individual." Even Helena has a dark side.

Among the cities of Montana, Helena is rated second only to Bozeman in economic vitality. Helena has enjoyed consistent growth (17%) for more than a decade. It is not unusual for retirees to come home to Helena. And Helena is the state capital. Nearly 30% of these civic minded Helenans are employed by the government.



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## Planting Healthy Churches

Some people came to the West ready to worship. *In the mud houses, they sang songs to God. They looked at the horizon and saw in the foreground a step or two. The middle ground was where possibility lay, and then, way off, beyond the horizon was eternity...a world where a hidden God is at work* (Zoba).

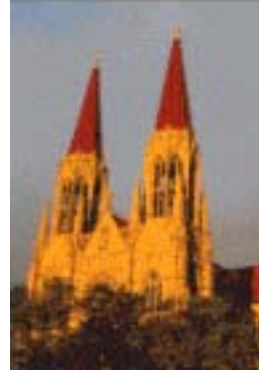
A hidden God is at work in Helena too. In the late 1800's people came to Helena to look for gold. Although gold miners put Helena on the map, gold does not sustain life. Eventually, the gold played out – like other pursuits in life lose their luster. Only love of God and neighbor

remains – and such sustainable love comes through Jesus and His gospel.

When the retirees come home and when the Spirit of God begins to stir faith in children, youth, and adults, what kinds of churches are available in Helena?

***In 2000, only 10% of Helenans were members of an evangelical church.*** Mormonism is growing in the West and Helena. Roman Catholic churches dominate in Helena. Nearly 30% of Helenans are Roman Catholic. Roman Catholic Carroll College is Helena's premier

school. Some Catholics here are called “evangelical Catholics.” But, others have significant questions about Catholicism. Long lines formed at movie theaters in Helena when the Da Vinci Code was shown. Here is the exquisite Roman Catholic Cathedral, St. Helena.



Most significantly, in 2000 nearly 50% of Helenans had no church affiliation at all. What about those on church rolls who have given up on the church? We want to focus on connecting with those who are disconnected from God or their neighbor or the church. God is at work. We believe He loves Helena too.

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## God is at work in bringing the Bostroms to Helena to plant churches

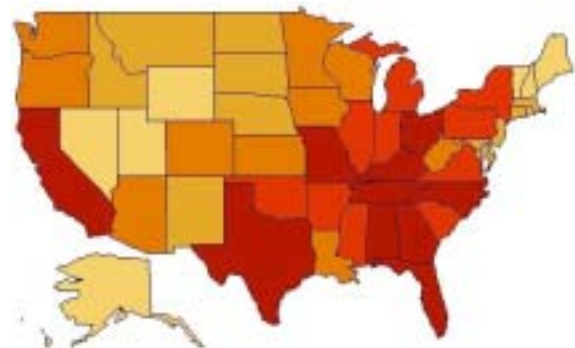
Steve Bostrom, born and raised in Colorado, returned home to Colorado Springs after Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California. He met Virginia Pettit who came to teach in Colorado Springs after Covenant College. They were married in Colorado Springs at Village 7 Presbyterian Church in 1976.



After studying at Denver Seminary and Covenant Seminary, Steve has served three churches – as associate pastor, church planter/pastor and the past 18 years as senior pastor at Peace PCA in Cary, NC. These years have yielded the fruit of a greater love for the gospel, the Church and for those who are not yet part of God’s family.

A 2001 trip West rekindled Steve and Virginia’s love for the West and its people. In 2003, Virginia attended the Rocky Mountain School of Photography in Missoula, Montana. She came home much more aware of the need for healthy churches in the West.

The distribution of evangelical churches (the darker areas) in the American Religious Data Archive (ARDA) map below shows how rich the Southeast is and how needy (the lighter areas) the West is. God used this map to break Steve and Virginia’s hearts and prepare them to locate



Steve's 2005 sabbatical in Helena. The *two* other PCA churches in Montana asked Steve to investigate the possibility of planting a church in Helena. The sabbatical confirmed the Bostrom's love of the people and the place and gave them a better understanding the need in Helena. They know the impact the gospel has had on their lives, their children and whole communities. They ask God that the gospel will impact Helena. George Santayana wrote: "*The freest spirit must have some birth place, some locus standi from which to view the world and some innate passion by which to judge it.*" The

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Bostroms believe that place and passion are found in Jesus and through His gospel. They want Helenans to know that freedom.

Steve and Virginia are parents of eight. The four youngest: Micah, Noah, Jesse and Isaac will accompany them to Helena. Not pictured below are: Jared (Rebekah's husband; Jackson's father), Jordan (7/1/06 wedding to Claire Hargrove) their daughter, Rachel (married to Nathan Pierce) and son, Zachary. These young adults plan to continue their Southern sojourn.

## Will you be the Bostroms' partner - seeking to love the gospel and Helena through the planting of healthy churches?

April 27, 28, 2006, Rocky Mountain Presbytery met in Colorado Springs. In the same sanctuary where, in 1958, Steve first heard the gospel and where, in 1967, God called him to the ministry; Steve was examined and received as an evangelist by the Rocky Mountain Presbytery. Amazing. People have been praying.



## Prayer Partners

Jesus taught us that without prayer God's kingdom does not come. Since January, over 400 people have joined the Helena Project update/prayer team.

Will you join their prayer/update team? If you desire to join, please contact the Bostroms at [Heartforhelena@aol.com](mailto:Heartforhelena@aol.com). They will e-mail you regular updates. They want you to have a front row seat for what God is doing.

## Financial Partners

Rocky Mountain Presbytery also approved the 5.5 year Helena church plant budget of \$900,000. Also amazing.

## Over \$400,000 Has Been Pledged

By 8/25 over \$428,000 has been pledged or given. What an example of Matthew 6:8: *Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.* Most of that giving comes from a variety individuals and churches (much from the PCA church in Billings and Peace). One couple has pledged \$10,000 each December for 5 years.

## Anticipated Income from Helenans

Rocky Mountain Presbytery currently supports seven mission churches and two young Reformed University Fellowship (RUF) groups. They do not have additional funds for Helena. However, presbytery anticipates \$300,000 income from people in Helena over the next 5.5 years as the church begins to grow.

### **The Remaining >\$200,000 – How?**

The Bostroms cannot go without you sending them. What about the remaining \$200,000? Here are some possibilities:

- Fundraisers advise asking for several large gifts. Are you willing and able to give in that way? What questions do you have? Call us (919-414-9461) or e-mail us ([Heartforhelena@aol.com](mailto:Heartforhelena@aol.com)).
- ◆ The \$200,000 could also be given by many people. For example, this goal could be met over the next 5.5 years:
  - If 30 people give \$100/month;
  - If 60 people give \$50/month;
  - If 120 people give \$25/month (we are praying there are *many* of these).

**What is God Prompting You to Do? What Should You Give?** God knows. Please ask Him what you should give or if you should give. You and He know it will take faith. The advancement of His kingdom always does.



Some rarely think about the West and the needs for the gospel there. But, the compassion of Christ extends there too.

**Are there others you know who see a need in the West – people who would support the Helena Project? Please contact them.** One Alabama PCA church recognizes the need for investment in the West and gives \$115,000 each year toward church planting there. Will you ask others to help us make God's invisible kingdom more visible in the West?

**Taking Action:** If God has prompted you to support the Bostroms and the Helena Project,

*please immediately contact Mission to North America, PCA by calling (678) 825-1200 or using your computer to access <http://www.pca-mna.org>. If you want to make a recurring credit card donation, electronic funds transfer, or pledge, please contact Ms. Michael Hutcheson at (678) 825-1223 or [mhutcheson@pcanet.org](mailto:mhutcheson@pcanet.org). You can also write: Mission To North America 1700 North Brown Road, Suite 101, Attn: Church Planting, Lawrenceville, GA 30043-8143. Also enclosed is a stamped pledge card.*

Although church plants in the Southeast usually take three years until the church can be self-sufficient, those out West usually take at least five years. So, *the budget is for this project is calculated at five and one-half years.* If you can make a pledge for that period of time, thank you. If not, thank you for giving as God leads and enables you. Your gifts to the Helena Project are *tax deductible.*

We thank God that we expect a final offer on our house the last week of August! Although technically we could move once our house sells, we have been advised that we should be 100% funded before we move. Since I will be speaking at a men's retreat in Colorado later in September, we may plan a house hunting trip to Helena.

Simply put this means: **If significant funding comes in for the Helena Project *these next weeks*, we will have the freedom to make an offer on a home in Helena during our house hunting trip.** Would you please pray that God would be pleased to work in this way?

God may have us wait. If so, would you please pray for our patience?

If you have been considering our support (\$10 a month, \$25 a month, \$50 a month, \$100 a month or whatever – for the next 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5.5 years) and would like to make your pledge now, *please contact MNA soon.*

**Thank you for your partnership in the gospel!**