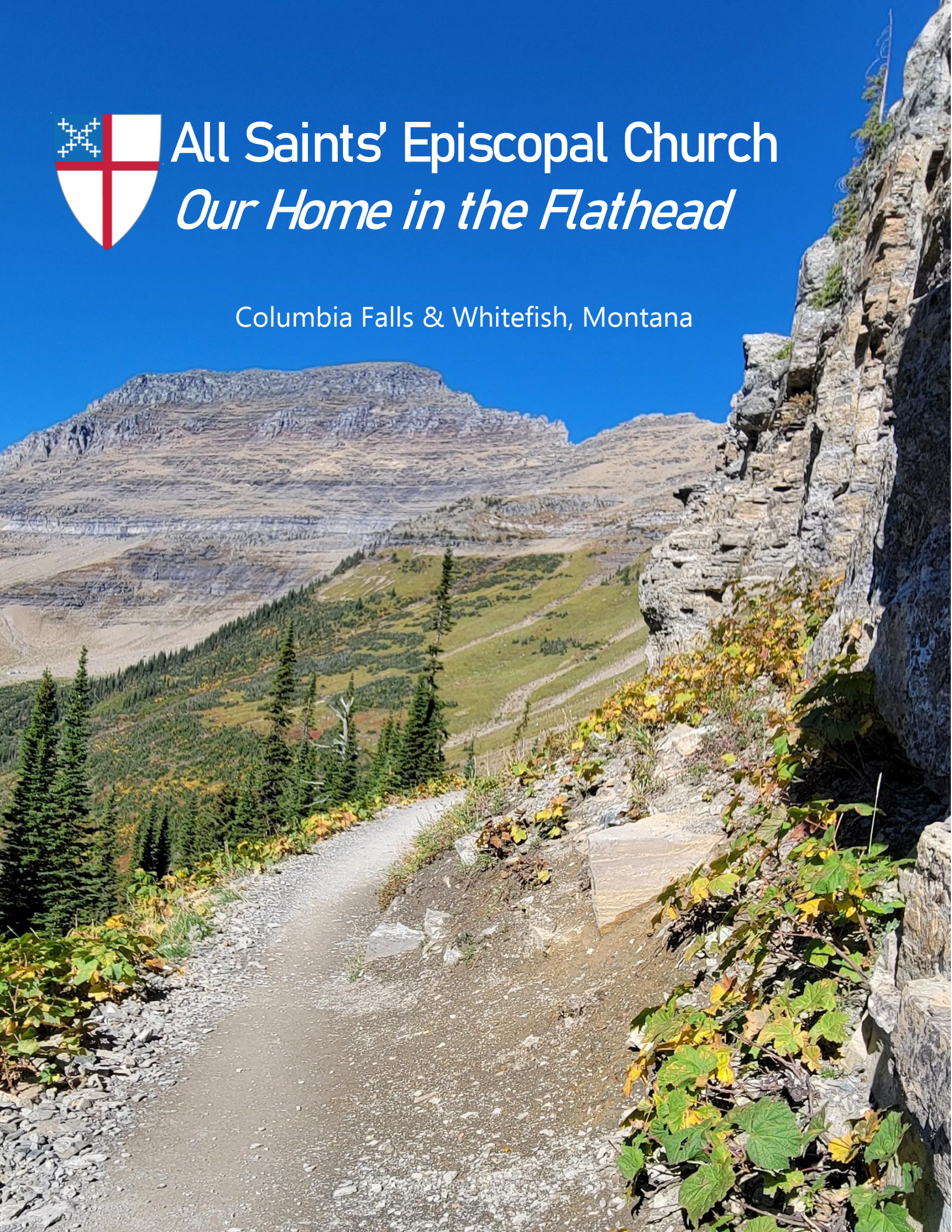




All Saints' Episcopal Church

Our Home in the Flathead

Columbia Falls & Whitefish, Montana



All Saints' Episcopal Church

Clergy

- Interim Pastor: The Reverend Jonathan B Coffey

Staff

- Parish Office Administrator: Shawn Sloan
- Nursery Attendant: Erin Wilson
- Christian Formation for Children & Youth: Searching
- Sexton, Steve Paugh

Vestry

- *Sam Baldridge, Senior Warden*
- *Kathleen Martin, Junior Warden*
- *Terry Richardson, Treasurer*
- *Suzanne DeVore, Clerk*
- *Austin Willis*
- *Amy Peterson*
- *Howie Wright*
- *Jess Hensley*
- *Lauren Rhodes*

Church Location

2048 Conn Road
Columbia Falls, MT
406-862-2863

Facebook: www.facebook.com/allsaintsmt

Website: www.allsaintsmt.org

Church email: allsaintsmt@gmail.com

Information About Us

From the [All Saints website](http://www.allsaintsmt.org), you can link to three documents prepared for the search

- *All Saints' Parish Profile*
- *All Saints' at Home in the Flathead*
- *Religion in the Flathead*

The Episcopal Diocese of Montana

Bishop

The Right Reverend Martha (Marty) Stebbins

Transition Minister

The Rev. Canon Stephen Day
transitions@diomontana.com
406-442-2230

Canon Scott Jourdonnais
tcto@diomontana
406-370-4843

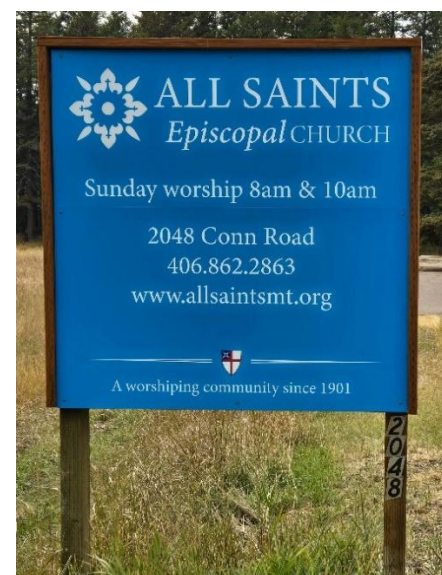
Diocesan Location

St. Peter's Episcopal Cathedral
511 Park Street
Helena, MT

Mailing Address

P. O. Box 2020
Helena, MT 59624
Phone: 406-580-1783
Website: www.diomontana.com
Email Transition Minister:
mtcto@diomontana.com

Figure 1: Signpost for All Saints



Located on Conn Road, halfway between Columbia Falls and Whitefish, MT off Montana Highway 40 across from the Clock Tower building

Our Church History

seven-fold to 7,500 people by 1990, it was a bold

Figure 2: Timeline of Two Parishes Becoming One move.

Our Story

Although the Episcopal Church officially came to Montana in 1867, almost forty years would pass before it arrived in Columbia Falls (1901) and Whitefish (1905) as missions.¹ Our 115-year history is rich; we are blessed to have people serving in leadership positions who were born, baptized, married, and retired in these missions. It was a vigorous start for such a small population. The 1910 census for both towns was 1,018 people. After 88 years, the two missions petitioned the diocese to be yoked and have parish status. The goal was to be able to hire a priest of their own rather than have Diocesan-appointed vicars. Although the population increased

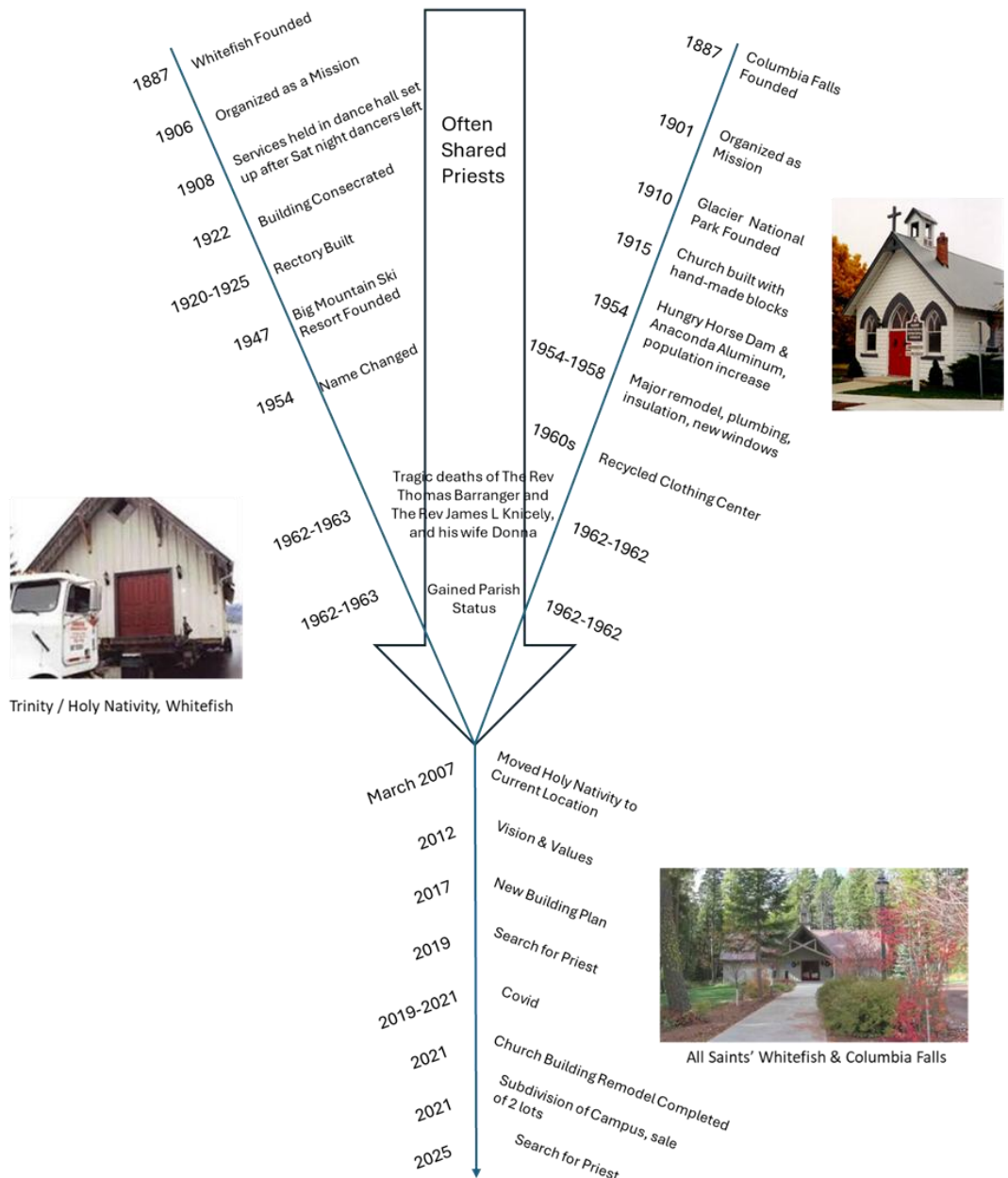


Figure 3: The Church's Carousel at Depot Park



Part of the finance scheme was to operate a carousel in Depot Park in the resort town of Whitefish. While the carousel never reached its promise, the congregations were able to support their priests and thrived under parish status.

In 2005, after struggling with two failing, landlocked buildings, the two parishes merged into one to become All Saints'. The church building in Columbia Falls and the rectory in Whitefish were sold and in 2007, the Whitefish church building went on walkabout and ended up on our current campus, which is exactly halfway between the old locations.

Figure 4: Moving Holy Nativity from to Conn Road



Since that time our average Sunday attendance has been steady, but our membership has grown. About half of our regular attendees have joined us in the past decade. Some of our oldest members attend services held during the week at The Springs retirement community in Whitefish. Others attend less frequently or view the service on the internet. Even those who have had to move away remain connected to us through the newsletter or seasonal attendance.

Early Years at St Matthew's, Columbia Falls

Figure 5: St Matthews' Columbia Falls



St. Matthew's Church might never have existed were it not for a colorful family that came to the area in the late 19th century. James A. Talbott came to Columbia Falls from Butte with the start of the town in the early 1890s. He was the town's banker and principal landowner. The Columbia Falls Episcopal congregation first met in the Talbott bank building and later at the Columbia Falls Odd Fellows Hall.

In the early 1900s Talbott donated a sum of money to start a building fund. The Bishop, William Frederick Faber, a close friend of the family, appointed Mrs. Talbott as the first president of the Episcopal Guild in Columbia Falls. He suggested the members of the congregation "take

some responsibility" and plans for a church building were completed on June 12th, 1915, by Frederick W. Ehrig, who was either a parishioner or the brother of a parishioner. The stained-glass window in the east end that was memorial to Mrs. Talbot, who died in 1909.

Mr. Talbott's son-in-law, Thomas Linden, imported a block-making machine and began building the church, using the memorial stained-glass window as a focal point. The blocks were made by local young men in a log shed under the direction of Jess LaMasters. After curing, the blocks were hauled by horse and wagon to the church site and the walls slowly began

to rise. The church was consecrated in 1929. A rectory was built on Talbott land near the Talbott home.

During those early years the basement of the church was used for Guild meetings and entertainment. Worship services met irregularly, with lay readers and priests coming from Whitefish or Kalispell.

The Hungry Horse Dam was built 1945-1953 and the Anaconda Aluminum plant opened in 1955, leading to rapid population growth in Columbia Falls. At St. Matthew's changes were also afoot. Between 1954 and 1959 there was new paint inside and out. New windows were installed, doors were fixed, and a sidewalk added. The building was insulated, and a new heating system installed. Inside there was new carpet and the kneelers were upholstered. The undercroft was rebuilt, this time with plumbing.

Early Years at Holy Trinity / Holy Nativity, Whitefish

The church in Whitefish, originally called Holy Trinity, met in several places. From 1905-1906, services were held at the Methodist Church. From 1908-1913 Skyles Dance Hall was used. The story is told that townspeople would dance until Sunday dawn from Saturday night and then a church committee would scurry in, clean up, and set up for services at one end of the dance hall. Services were sometimes held on the shores of the lake. In 1913, the Presbyterian church offered their building on Sunday afternoons. Women played a vital role in the forming the Church in Whitefish. In 1911, Bishop Brewer appointed Mrs. L.B. Saunders as acting president to form a women's guild which, in 1916, was organized as a chapter of The Daughters of the King. They were charged with Sunday school and raising money to build a church. The Sunday school commenced immediately; the church building was built in 1917 and consecrated in 1922. A rectory was built in 1920. One of the ladies remembered, "We had an inactive vestry, but a very active Guild in those early days." The women organized again in the mid-1950s to replace the old "pumper" organ with an electric one.

Between 1911 and 1959, besides raising money to build the church and fund the Sunday School, the women sponsored many programs for girls and young people. Among their groups included the Girl's Friendly Society, a Young People's Fellowship, St. Agnes Guild, and a Junior Daughters of the King.²

During the 1950s the name of the church was changed from Holy Trinity to Holy Nativity, but no one remembers why the name change came about.

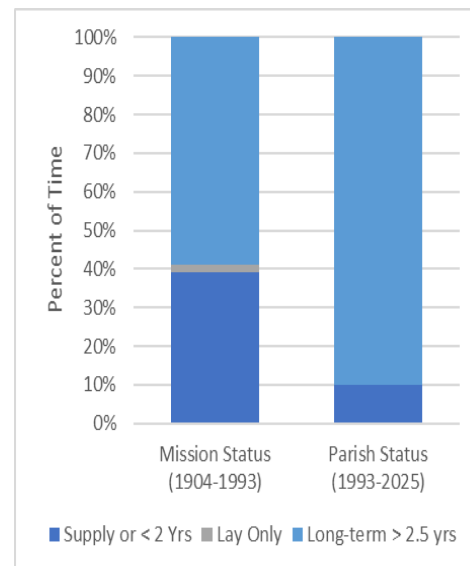
Figure 6: Christmas at Holy Nativity c 1960



Vicars & Priests

As is common with any small congregations, St. Matthew's and Holy Nativity struggled to have consistent ecclesial coverage.

Figure 7: Mission vs Parish Status Clerical Coverage



Bishops rarely came in the early years and infrequently named vicars. Coverage was better once the buildings were built, along with rectories, but often clergy sent were temporary or people who were transitioning from one type of position to another; sometimes "climbing the ladder" to larger churches.

Most of the time both St. Matthew's and Holy Nativity shared their fate with vicars and priests. There was also some back-and-forth flow of members. An imperfect review of the Parish Registries accounts for as many as 55 priests. In the first 88 years of life, there were at least 30 named vicars or interims and at least three periods of 6 or more months without clergy. Like any community, we thrived with longer-term priests, which happened occasionally during the Mission years and often during the Parish years (see Figure 8).³

Tragedy Strikes

The parish was devastated by the death of two priests in the fall of 1962 and winter of 1963. Father Thomas Barranger died in 1962 by suicide⁴ and Father James D. Knicely and his wife, Donna, were killed a few months later in 1963 in a winter car accident.⁵ Both the Barrangers and the Knicelys were loved.

Unusual for the time, Father Barranger's death was met with kindness. People recognized his troubles as true medical issues. Diocesan priests served as the palbearers in Father Barranger's funeral, which was held at Holy Nativity. In the years following his death, the priests in the area formed the *Lake Missoula Clericus*, which continues to this day providing strong support for the priests in the northwestern part of the state from Missoula to the Canadian border. The group meets monthly and not only provides support for the members, it recently offered policy to the Diocese. Additionally each year the Clericus develops a Lenten coupon book that is associated with giving in thankfulness for blessings.

Ginny Barranger, Father Barranger's wife, continued as a vital member of the congregation playing the organ, leading choirs and supporting the women until her death at age 87 in 2008.

Following the Knicelys' deaths, their children left to live with their maternal grandparents but the Nicely dog, Fritz, stayed. Fritz was adopted by the Beatty family that included our long-time Vestry secretary, Kathy Beatty Thomas. Kathy remembers Fritz sired a puppy so like himself that they eventually dropped the "Fritz, Junior" moniker and just had "two generations of Fritz."

Figure 8: Priests Over the Years

	Years	Tenure	Vicar or Priest in Charge*
Mission	1904-1914	10	H.E. Clowes, Henry Greene, Charles H. Lindley
	1914-1918	4	Ralph F. Blanning
	1919-1920	1	G.V. Bell
	1920-1925	5	Lee H Young
	1925-1926	1	George Nutt
	1926-1927	1	Philip Anshutz
	1927-1937	10	R. R. Price
	1938-1941	3	Arthur Ward
	1941-1942	1	Stanley Walsk
	1942-1948	6	George Masuda (Became Bishop)
	1948-1949	1	Uncertain attribution
	1949-1951	2	Arnold Moulton
	1951-1953	2	J. Reginald Butt
	1953-1955	2	Douglas Beauchamp
	1956-1956	1/2	Lay Leaders
	1956-1957	1 1/2	Paul Baker
	1956-1958	2	Duane V. Fifer
	1958-1959	1/2	No Services
	1959-1962	3	Thomas Barranger (d. 1962)
	1962-1963	1/4	James D. Knicely (d. 1963)
	1963-1963	1/4	Ellsworth Alexander St. John
	1963-1966	3	Ray Brown (Became Dean)
	1965-1967	1 1/2	Ellsworth Alexander St. John & Donald Mackay (Decon)
	1967-1975	8	Ernest Neckerman
	1975-1976	2	Michael Jenkins, Paul Taylor, Arnold Carlson
	1976-1978	2	Herbert Buckley
Parish	1978-1984	6	Richard Kirchhoffer
	1985-1986	1 1/2	Wendell Phillips
	1986-1992	2 1/2	Kathy Cooper
	1992-1993	1 1/4	6 Supply + Lay Leaders
	1993-1996	3	Gordon Temple
	1996-1998	2	Wallace Caldwell
	1998-1999	2	9 Supply + Lay Leaders
	1999-2001	1 1/4	Gordon Temple (Interim)
	2001-2004	3	Franklin Johnson
	2004-2019	15	Bradley Wirth
	2019-2020	1 1/2	5 Supply + Lay Leaders
	2020-2025	5	Charles Knuth
	2025	1	Jonathan B. Coffey

Building Long-term Relationships

Even though many of the vicars and priests tenures were short-term (less than 2 years), there were long-term relationships. For example, Herbert Buckley (1976-1978) returned to serve as a supply priest years later. Richard Kirchhoffer (1978-1984) and his wife continued with the church after his tenure. He was on the vestry in 1993 when the Church appealed to the Diocese for parish status. Kirchhoffer and his wife remained in Whitefish as active members of All Saints' until his death in 2011. In 1998-1999 the vestry realized they were facing an opening so rather than languish with uncertain coverage, they banded together and issued calls to all the priests and bishops they knew across the US. They were blessed with supply work from 9 priests and 2 bishops, several of whom had served before. One of the supply priest, Gordon Temple, who had served 1993-1996, agreed to serve as an interim from 1999-2001. Franklin Johnson was priest-in-charge 2001-2004 and continues his relationship with the Parish through friendships and supply work. In 2004 Bradley Wirth arrived as an interim but settled in to stay serving from 2004 to 2019. Father Wirth's tenure is the longest in the Parish's history. Following his retirement in 2019, Wirth continues in the All Saints's tradition of maintaining relationships through his Rector Emeritus status.

Gaining Independence

As the 20th century drew toward a close, the population grew in the northern Flathead region and Holy Nativity and St. Matthew's marched forward. The two churches together envisioned taking on parish status in order to be able to make predictable plans for growth and strengthening the community. In 1993 (pop ~ 7,500), the two congregations jointly petitioned the Diocese for independent yoked parish status with permission to call their own priest. It was a tumultuous time in the Diocese due to a crisis with the then Bishop's disclosure of an inappropriate sexual relationship prior to his arrival in Montana. Even amid the politics, Diocesan leaders praised Holy Nativity and St. Matthews for their "lack of rancor" and after a protracted investigation granted them parish status. Clearly, independence settled in well. The now officially yoked Parishes called Gordon Temple as priest. He served three years, then Wallace Caldwell for two years, then Temple again. Next,

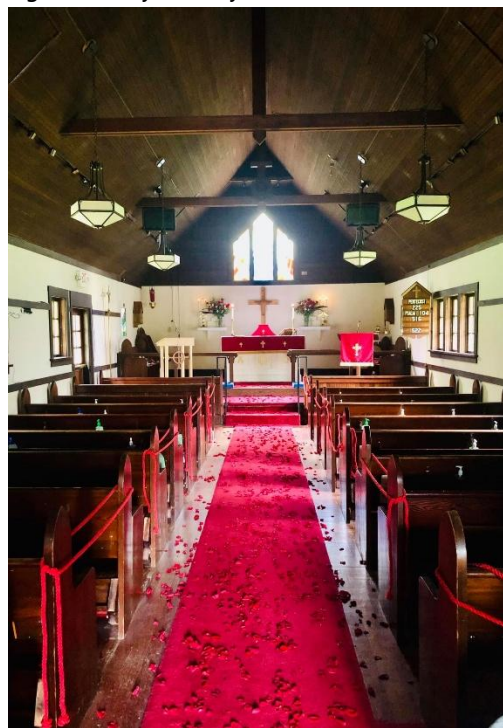
Franklin Johnson served three years. He was well known for his Bible Study classes and his wife, Sally, was popular with the children for her "Teddy Bear Tea Parties." After Father Wirth settled in, the two congregations merged into one parish.

The Move to Conn Road

In 2005 (pop ~9,100), frustrated by aging buildings that also were hemmed in by other buildings, the vestries (with Diocesan permission) decided to sell St. Matthew's building and the rectory at Holy Nativity. The Holy Nativity church building and Memorial (parish) Hall were slated for a move to a new location. In 2006, a 10-acre lot halfway between Whitefish and Columbia Falls and was purchased for \$400,000.

On March 11, 2007 Holy Nativity and Memorial Hall were moved to the Conn Road property. The move did not go easily. There were delays in getting well and septic approval. Undaunted, the

Figure 9: Holy Nativity Transformed to All Saints



community proceeded to pave the parking lot, landscape, install sidewalks and railings, and provide new lighting for the sanctuary. Eventually the well and septic approval were approved and the first service was held. In 2008 a 600-square foot addition was added to Memorial Hall to

support classroom space and an additional accessible bathroom. In 2007 the rectory at Holy Nativity sold for \$15,000 with the stipulation that the buyer remove the building and backfill the foundation. In 2008 St. Matthew's sold to the Boys and Girls Club of Columbia Falls, netting \$122,174. The remaining Whitefish property suffered doubly due to the 2007/08 real estate crash and the discovery that the property was polluted by decades of waste from the previous industrial owners. Both parishes shared the anxiety of the national economy, yet the Parish continued. After the remaining Whitefish church property was cleaned up and sold, the loan to buy the new lot was retired in 2015.

Expanding Our Space

In 2017 (pop. 13,585) a plan was developed expand the worship space to accommodate the two congregations and the new people who had joined. Funds needed for the expansion were easily raised in 2018 and construction was expected to start in 2019.

The plans provided two future additions plus office space to anticipate growth of the church and the projected population of 15,600 people the the two towns by 2030. Unforeseen factors, however, stymied the start of construction.

And, in July 2019, All Saints' longest serving rector, Bradley Wirth, celebrated his retirement.

Churches do not exist in a vacuum separated from forces in the world about them. For All Saints, this meant the building contractor had to compete for sub-contractors in a rapidly growing construction boom in Flathead County in 2019. Leaky faucets and toilets also created issues with getting septic approval of the expansions. Solving these problems meant the start of the sanctuary expansion had to be delayed until the summer of 2020. Moreover, higher costs meant the building fund could only cover the sanctuary expansion and not the creation of new

Figure 10: Remodeling the Sanctuary



office spaces. Without a rector, the vestry assumed the responsibilities of overseeing construction.

Even with these challenges, the expansion eventually moved forward.

Figure 11: Expanding the Sanctuary



Searching for a Rector

Rather than hire an interim, the vestry began the search process soon after the departure of the Reverend Wirth. This decision was aided by the fact that All Saints' was blessed with a number of retired priests who supplied Sunday services during the 2019-2020 search. Furthermore, the Diocese was sans Bishop at the start of the Search.

The selection of the 10th Bishop of the Diocese of Montana, the Right Reverend Marty Stebbins, meant the vestry had strong ecclesiastical guidance in the final months of the search. At the annual meeting in January 2020, the vestry announced the hire of the Reverend Charles Knuth as the new rector of All Saints', to begin his new ministry on April 1, 2020.

The COVID Era

The advent of Covid-19, the variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, created a gruesome version of an "April Fools" joke for the Reverend Knuth's introduction to the parish life of All Saints. Under the direction Bishop Stebbins, Episcopal churches throughout Montana ceased indoor worship services during most of 2020. Like the majority of his colleagues, the Reverend Knuth officiated and preached to an empty church, with the liturgy and sermon live-streamed to parishioners via Zoom and Facebook. Despite the Covid-19 interruptions to in-person gatherings, our long history of using technology stood us in good stead. The online worship attendance remained strong—average Sunday attendance showed minor decreases from

previous years. With the introduction of Covid-19 vaccines in December 2020, in-person worship gradually increased in 2021, beginning with an outdoor Easter liturgy in March 2021 (parishioners gathered in family groupings around a myriad of small fires and space heaters!).

Figure 12: Covid-Era Christmas Service



Worshippers stayed masked and the use of the common cup at Eucharist was discontinued for most of the year. Despite the Covid-19 obstacles, All Saints' parishioners increased their support to numerous organizations and people in need throughout the larger Flathead community.

Post-COVID Years

In 2022, while All Saints' continued to feel the inflationary impact of Covid-19 in terms of once again delaying construction of office space, average Sunday attendance increased over the previous year and liturgical practice returned to pre-Covid norms (enthusiastic greetings at The Peace, use of common cup, etc.). Forty chairs were added to the sanctuary, enabling up to 90 people to attend services at a time. Community outreach blossomed still more and All Saints' youth once more met with the youth of Christ Church in Kalispell on a regular basis.

In 2023, the vestry of All Saints' made a major decision to respond to the ongoing post-Covid-19 housing inflation in the Flathead. They decided to create a Rector Housing Fund to allow future rectors the ability to afford living space in the county. The 10-acre lot of the existing campus was partitioned into 3 separate lots: one 5-acre portion to retain the existing building footprint with room for office expansion in addition to the sanctuary and Memorial Hall and then 2 separate lots to be made available for sale. Sale proceeds would then endow the Rector Housing Fund.

Worship attendance increased again, often returning to the pre-Covid-19 levels on most Sundays. Parishioner outreach and participation in the broader community organizations continued apace.

Rector Housing Fund

The Rector Housing Fund received its first influx of money when one of the 2.5-acre lots sold in 2024. On the other hand, worship attendance dropped from the previous year as inflationary housing costs prompted several of the parishioners to seek opportunities in other states and countries. Despite this, once again the annual budget had a surplus (marking several years in a row with this blessing) and the vestry allocated the surplus to the Building Maintenance Fund. The vestry also created an Endowment and Investment Fund to augment future budgeting expenses.

Figure 13: Creating the Rector Housing Fund



In 2024, as in the previous 2 post-Covid-19 years, many visitors found their way to worshipping at All Saints' with some becoming quite regular in terms of making annual visits during the summer and fall months. The annual report

again chronicles important outreach activities where All Saints' parishioners play an outsized role in both financial and in-person support. For example, the children's summer day camp was a resounding success, reflecting a yearly commitment to the younger children of the Flathead community (not just children of parishioners). The Reverend Knuth again distributed thousands of dollars to people in need from the Rector's Discretionary Fund. The Canyon Community Dinners for the residents of Hungry Horse, Martin City, and Coram once more served over a thousand meals. Diapers, backpacks, and other products were donated and distributed through partner organizations. All Saints' contributed funds, meals, and supplies to other organizations and people in the larger community.

Our Home



Figure 14: Map of Northern Flathead County Area



Our Place in the World

As a parish, we have a strong sense of place. We live at the intersection of the wild and built environments. The Northern Flathead Valley is home to vibrant towns, rich forests, a verdant valley, breathtakingly beautiful lakes and streams ringed by mountains that are the stuff of other people's dreams. Each day we wake up and live and move and have our being in a place that is on most people's bucket list.

In God, we have a stewardship relationship this place, both recipients and creators of its abundance. For many of us, we are this place and this place is who we are. Its wildness defines and defends and nurtures us when we are here and when we travel out into the world. It is at the core of our spirituality. It is, as J.B. Jackson writes, "a permanent position in both the social and topographical sense," that gives us our identity.⁶ Many of us experience it as a *holy place* that takes our breath away and we hear God's whisper, "you are standing on holy ground." As a redeemed people, as Jesus' friends, unlike Moses who was instructed to come no closer,⁷ we have the right to approach and we are awed.

Image 1: Big Horn Sheep at the Arches in Glacier



Our Towns

Columbia Falls

[Columbia Falls](#) (2025 pop 5,438) is known as the Gateway to Glacier National Park. It is home to a thriving wood products industry as well as innovative manufacturing businesses. As their Chamber of Commerce says, "it is at the edge of the wilderness, where the sparkling Flathead River flows from Bad Rock Canyon and meanders along the edge of

Columbia Falls, where hometown hospitality and original small-town flare are the norm."

Whitefish

[Whitefish](#) (2025 pop 10,035) is located at the head of the Flathead Valley on the shores of Whitefish Lake abutting the world-class Whitefish Mountain Ski Resort. The Whitefish Chamber of Commerce says it full of the "friendliest Montana folks – and business owners – that you'll ever want to meet. Whether you're looking for a great place to raise a family, run a business, enjoy your retirement years or simply take a well-deserved vacation, look no further." The public schools in Whitefish are highly rated (NICHE)⁸

Over the past few years, Whitefish has occasionally found itself faced with the divisive politics of our time. As a community, we seek to rise above and choose to work together for good.

Other Towns in Our Area

To the east of Columbia Falls, along the highway to Glacier National Park, lie the towns of Hungry Horse (pop 518), Martin City (pop 500), Coram (pop 539) and West Glacier/Apgar (pop 227). North of Columbia Falls is the town of Polebridge, which has a summer population of over 200 and a winter population of less than 50. To the northwest of Whitefish are the towns of Olney (pop 413), Trego (pop 515), Striker (pop 29) and Fortine (pop 518).

More Than You Expect

While our population is not large, we enjoy many of the things that are associated with much larger areas. We may not have shopping malls but we have more than 50 restaurants between Columbia Falls and [Whitefish](#), many of which rate 4 stars or better.

We are known for outdoor recreation, but we also have arts and music and museums and architecture.

We enjoy the fact that our traffic jams occur when the Ski Mountain closes for the day or when Glacier National Park visitors are sated with beauty and head into our towns for dinner and a good night's sleep. Thousands of people find a place to lay their heads in one of the over 3,000 vacation properties, including hotels, condos, homes, cabins and B & B rentals.

Indigenous History

The area was originally inhabited by the Salish, Pend d'Oreille, and Kootenai tribes. These people historically occupied western Montana and Eastern Washington and Idaho until they were consolidated onto Indian Reservations. Their traditional patterns of movement across the vast territory pre-reservation

makes it difficult to parse out exactly who “lived” where, as the concepts of a stationary residence do not always blend well with traditional culture.

The original Flathead residents called the area *Kaniksu* and were the [Upper Pend d'Oreille](#), who are also known as the Upper Kalispel. They inhabited the Flathead, Clark Fork, and Pend Oreille rivers. Today, most Kalispel Indians reside in Washington state at the Q̓lispé s̓q̓lix̓w̓úlex̓w̓s (Kalispel Reservation). Their [tribal website](#) provides information about their culture and traditions. The Upper Kalispel, who clustered around what is now known as Flathead Lake, were typically enrolled at the Flathead Reservation, along with the Kootenai, many of whom claimed the Tobacco Valley area as their ancestral homeland.

The Flathead Reservation was created by the US government and is home to three peoples, the S̓éliš (Bitterroot Salish), Q̓lispé (Upper Pend d'Oreille), and the Ktunaxa (Kootenai). Their traditional spirituality is deeply rooted in the natural world and taught through oral tradition and ceremonies.

The lifeways of the indigenous people were disrupted by the arrival of missionaries and colonists in the mid-1800s. The Hellgate Treaty established the Flathead Indian Reservation in 1855.⁹ Colonists arrived in increasing numbers after the establishment of the Northern Pacific Railroad in the 1880s, concurrent with the establishment of Whitefish and Columbia Falls. The population grew rapidly and by 1890, numbered 3,000 white people.

The local lands were influenced by the 1887 Dawes Act¹⁰ which attempted to shift indigenous people's traditional cultural patterns from seasonal food gathering to settled farming. Increasing land pressure by the railroad, logging, and white settlers brought about the federal Flathead Allotment Act of 1904. The original Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes treaty land was split into individual allotments. Heads of households were initially assigned 160 acres, individual males were assigned 80. In 1908, the federal Flathead Irrigation Project required open land to be converted to agriculture. In 1910, land that was not claimed and converted to farming was deemed to be “surplus” and was opened to non-Indian settlement resulting in the loss of 60% of the original treaty lands.

Christianity came to Flathead Indians primarily by Jesuit and Quaker missionaries. The St Ignatius Mission was established in 1854 by Jesuit Pierre-Jean De Smet and built with the assistance of the local indigenous people. The current church structure was completed in 1891 and was the hub of Christianity on

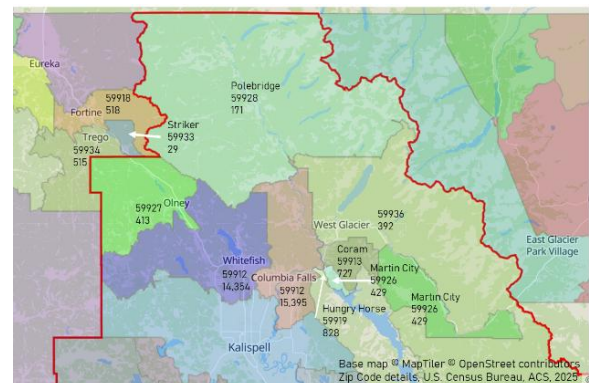
the Flathead Reservation. In 2011, 45 former students of the school filed a lawsuit against the Catholic Diocese of Helena and the Ursuline Sisters of the Western Province for abuses committed at the mission's school and other institutions over decades. The 2015 lawsuit was settled in favor of over 360 victims. A 2020 report from the Jesuits West Province identified 31 Jesuits who worked in Montana with “credible claims” of sexual abuse.¹¹

The [Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes](#) website provides extensive information about the Reservation and their priorities. The S̓éliš-Q̓lispé Sx̓w̓n̓q̓eʔels I S̓q̓lix̓w̓tsck̓w̓i / Salish-Kalispel Culture Committee works to preserve, protect and perpetuate the culture, language, and history of the areas tribal people.

Population Demographics

It is difficult to establish an exact population for the Area. Most towns are in Flathead County but some are located in different counties. Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey¹² we established a population of 33,771 people spread over approximately 2000 square miles of land and water. Both Columbia Falls and Whitefish zip codes contain approximately 15,000 people each. Many other zip codes in our parish have fewer than 500 people each.

Figure 15: Map of Population by Zip Code

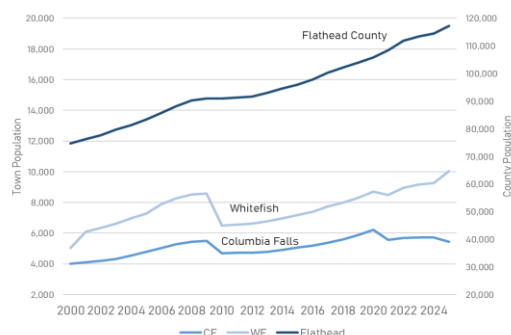


The Flathead Valley population is growing much faster than the State or Nation from 2020 to the present. Its 3 largest communities—Kalispell, Columbia Falls, and Whitefish—experienced tremendous growth during the past half-decade (24.8%, 10.22%, and 27.75%, respectively). Montana grew 4.6% (2020-2024 estimate), while the USA as a whole grew at 3.6% (2020-2025 estimate).

The average household size is just over 2 people (CF, 2.16; WF, 2.11); smaller than the national average (2.6).

County growth is relatively consistent but both growth in Columbia Falls and Whitefish have been up and down, with an overall upwards trend.

Figure 16: 21st Century Growth Patterns

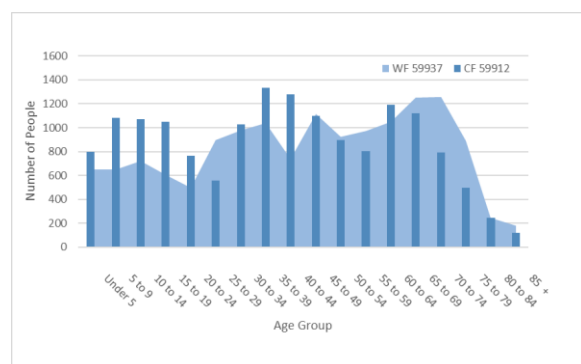


Age & Race

There are fewer persons under age 18 in Columbia Falls (24% based on 2023 estimates) or Whitefish (17% based on 2023 estimates) compared to Montana (22%) or nationally (22%). People over 65 are greater in number in Whitefish and Columbia Falls (18%), the state (19%). Across the County, people 65 and older have increased 76% since 2010 while people between 50 and 64 increased the least, just .5%.

The Columbia Falls area has more youth and the Whitefish area has more seniors. The chart below shows the actual difference in number of people by age group in the two zip code areas.

Figure 17: Population Differences by Age



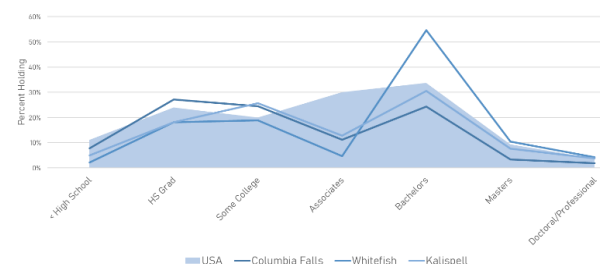
The area is not ethnically diverse, being 91.7% white, non-Hispanic. Over the last decade, the Hispanic/Latino group grew the most, increasing to 3.6% of the total population. People of two or more races are 3.2%. People who are Black, Asian, Native American, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander are each less than 1%.

Educational Attainment

Our area educational attainment exceeds the national average. Fewer people have low educational

attainment. Two thirds (69%) of Whitefish residents have at least a bachelor's degree.

Figure 18: Educational Attainment



Computers and Internet Access

Google named Whitefish the Digital Capital of Montana in 2013.¹³ Computer ownership and broadband subscriptions meet or exceed the national average in Whitefish (96.4%) and Columbia Falls (95.9%) homes with a computer present in 96.4% of homes compared 95% nationally with broadband subscriptions at 90.5% compared to 77% nationally.

Employment

The unemployment rates in the summer of 2025 are similar to the state (CF, 2.4%; WF 2.9%, MT 2.8%) but lower than national (4.3%). Labor-force participation is higher in both Columbia Falls (66.8%) and Whitefish (67.3%) than in Montana (62.9%) and the US (62.3%).

Household Income

Median household income is higher at the County (\$74,274)¹⁴ level than in Columbia Falls (\$65,313, 2023 est) or Whitefish (\$71,110, 2023 est) but per capita income is highest in Whitefish (\$52,425¹⁵ vs \$43,161¹⁶). Wages in Flathead County (\$1,148) are generally the same as national wages (\$1,196)¹⁷ but higher than in Montana as a whole (\$1,057).

Poverty

Poverty is at or below the national (11.1%) and state (11.7%) average in Whitefish (8.9%) but above in Columbia Falls (16.9%). The towns to the west and east of us have higher rates of poverty largely attributable to the number of older women living alone. Few people qualified for company pensions and most are living on widow social security or veteran's benefits. Even with higher rates of poverty, the rate of homeownership in these towns far exceeds the national average (75% compared to 65%).

Veterans

According to the Department of Veteran's Affairs,¹⁸ Montana ranks 5th highest in veteran share of adult civilian population, behind Alaska, Colorado, Virginia,

and Maine. Montana is home to about 80,000 to 90,000 military veterans. About 8.9% to 11.4% of Montana's adult population served in the U.S. Military.

There are both male and female veterans, although there are more men than women, about 7 male veterans to every 1 female veteran.

The number of veterans in Montana, and the Flathead County, is decreasing about 1.3% per year, a slower rate of decline than the United States at 1.8% decline.

The largest changes are due to the deaths of older service members.

Disabilities and Health Insurance

There are fewer people with disabilities (7.8% WF, 11% CF) than the state (14.8%) or nationally (13.4%). Both Columbia Falls (91.5%) and Whitefish (95.3%) have health insurance coverage at or above the national average. This may reflect number of veterans with VA coverage and the popularity of the area for retirement among active seniors who are eligible for Medicare.

Climate & Air Quality

We are a four seasons kind of place. We have hot sunny days, wet spring days, crisp fall days, and plenty of cold snow. Long summer days are balanced by long winter nights, many of which have outstanding moonlight for outdoor activities. Ongoing water quality monitoring since 1977 shows Flathead Lake is one of the cleanest waterbodies in the nation.¹⁹

Figure 19: Local and National Climate Comparison

	Columbia Falls, MT	Whitefish, MT	United States
Rainfall	18	18	38
Snowfall	57	73	28
Precipitation	127	120	106
Sunny	152	151	205
Avg. July High	81	81	86
Avg. Jan. Low	16	16	22
Air Quality (100 best)	78.6	85.7	58.4

Safety / Crime Rates

Both Columbia Falls (31.83) and Whitefish (24.57) have lower overall crime rates than Montana (32.82) and nationally (33.37). Violent crime is lower than the national rates, although property crimes exceed the national average (38.5 CF, 42.2 WF, 35.4 nationally),

perhaps due to the higher rate of prevalence of seasonally occupied holiday homes.

Cost of Living

The cost of living in the area is about 10% above the national average. A \$100,000 income is equivalent to \$94,000 nationally. Nonetheless, some find they spend less overall due to the abundant free and low-cost activities in our area. We are surrounded by some of the most spectacular federal lands in the Nation.

As the following figure shows, the value of living in the area compares well to other areas where there are similar recreational activities and to urban areas.

Figure 20: Value of \$100,000 Income by Location

Location	Relative Value of \$100,000 Income
Columbia Falls, MT	\$100,000
Whitefish, MT	\$100,000
Ashville, NC	\$93,296
Bozeman, MT	\$100,208
Denver, CO	\$101,948
Kansas City, MO	\$92,522
Los Angeles, CA	\$107,276
New York, NY	\$123,568
Portland, OR	\$103,912
San Francisco, CA	\$117,336
Seattle, WA	\$100,876

The main contributor to the increased cost of living is housing. Part of this is due to the presence of very expensive vacation homes and part to the fact we have more single-family homes than most areas.

Food at the grocery stores is about 7% higher than the national average although many people avail themselves of gardens, community sponsored agriculture, and the farmers market as well as subsistence hunting. Transportation and utilities are lower, and healthcare is at the national average.

Figure 21: Cost of Living Comparison

	CF/WF, MT	National
Overall Index	115.7	100
Food & Groceries	104.3	100
Health	100.9	100
Housing	157.8-210	100
Utilities	80.5	100
Transportation	74	100
Miscellaneous	106.2	100
Value \$50K Income CF/WF	\$50,000	\$47,000

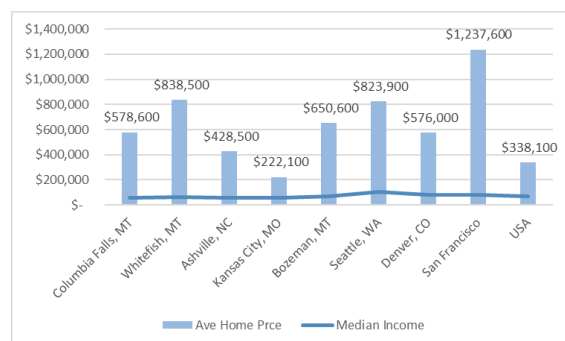
Housing Costs

Housing is higher than the national average but varies across community and by type of home (e.g. family vs. resort style). There is no sugar coating the housing issues. They affect everyone. On the plus side, housing is available. Another plus, there are many competitive local financing options that understand our market.

There is an increased interest in affordable housing, particularly in Whitefish where median housing costs are the highest. The rapid growth of the area along with the general affluence of a large sector of purchasers has pushed the market toward building more expensive houses. The city governments as well as concerned citizens are stepping up to address housing options. The All Saints' *Rector Housing Fund* is one such effort.

In August 2025, the median US home price was \$422,000. The median home price in Flathead County was \$684,000, \$825,000 in Columbia Falls \$1.4 million in Whitefish. These values are somewhat skewed by the presence of high-value vacation homes. Zillow lists "typical" home values at \$639,501, \$598,930 and \$857,321 respectively for Flathead County, Columbia Falls, and Whitefish.

Figure 22: Median Home Value and Income



Travel to the Area

While located 130 miles from the nearest Interstate (I-90, Missoula), the Northern Valley is easily assessable by air (Glacier National Park International airport) and by rail (Whitefish Depot served by Amtrak).

Travel by Automobile

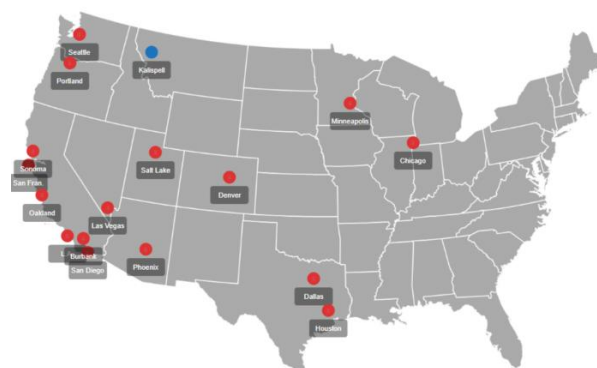
From the south or north, follow U.S. Highway 93. From the east and west, we are accessible by US Highway 2, known as the Hi-Line.

Glacier Park International Airport

GPI, with its mystifying airport code of FCA (Flathead County Airport),²⁰ is located five miles to the south of the Church, halfway between Columbia Falls and Whitefish. GPI is the third busiest airport in Montana. The airport's passenger volume has roughly doubled over the last decade and is Montana's second fastest growing airport in ridership. For the 2024 calendar year, FCA welcomed 1,008,987 total passengers. This was a 12.6% increase over 2023 and a 21.2% increase over 2022.²¹ July of 2025 showed another dramatic increase in enplanements.²² Recent airport building expansion increased the square footage from 75,000 to 200,000.²³ Runway renovations are also occurring.

The airport is serviced by Delta/Sky West, United Airlines, Alaska Airlines, American Airlines and Allegiant. Year-round direct flights travel to Seattle, Salt Lake City, Minneapolis/St Paul, Las Vegas and Denver. Seasonal flights go to Portland, San Francisco, Oakland, Los Angeles, Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas and Phoenix/Mesa.

Figure 23: Glacier International Airport Direct Flights²⁴



Whitefish Station Train Travel

The [Amtrak Empire Builder](#) passes through Whitefish twice per day en route between Chicago and Portland/Seattle.

The train station is worth a visit for its unique Tudor style. In 1990, Stumptown Historical Society purchased the Whitefish Depot for \$1 from BNSF Railway. The Historical Society maintains the building with rental income and fund raising.

Bus

The Greyhound Bus travels daily to Whitefish Depot. The bus depot is located at the Train Station.

By Vehicle From Canada

Travel from the northeast around the border of Glacier National Park into Columbia Falls (e.g. Del Bonita, Caroway or Coutts/Sweetgrass stations). Or from the West (British Columbia) through Roosville station, which is on Highway 93.

Recreational Activities

We are known for our recreational activities including Whitefish Ski Mountain, Whitefish Lake, and Glacier National Park. There are opportunities for horseback riding, rafting, winter snowmobiling, camping, hiking and not to mention world-class fishing.

Glacier National Park

With over 700 miles of trails, [Glacier National Park](#) is a hiker's paradise. Glacier is filled with pristine forests, alpine meadows, rugged mountains, and spectacular lakes. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built the famous Going-to-the-Sun Road which lets everyone experience breathtaking alpine views regardless of physical ability.

Figure 24: Gatekeepers on Glacier Park Trails



Big Sky Water Park

A short distance across the Flathead River from downtown Columbia Falls is the [Big Sky Water Park](#) with its numerous water slides, miniature golf, and other family-oriented activities.

Golf and Disk (Frisbee) Golf

There are 4 [Disk Golf courses](#) located in the area. These include [Whitefish Assembly of God](#) church (9 holes), [Lawrence Park](#) (Kalispell, 18 holes), [Buffalo Bob's Family Entertainment Center](#) (WF, 18 holes) and the championship, 27 hole course at [Smith Lake](#), home of the PDGA C-Tier Hellroaring Open.

If you prefer your golf with a ball rather than a disk, there are 13 courses open to public play and 2 private courses in [Northwest Montana](#). Ten of the courses are less than 20 miles from the Church. Meadow Lake Golf Resort (CF, 18-holes), Whitefish Lake Golf Course (WF, 36 holes), Northern Pines, (Kalispell, 18-holes), Buffalo Hills Golf Course (Kalispell, 27 holes) and Village Greens Golf Course (Kalispell, 18 holes) are the five closest to the Church.

Izaak Walton Inn/LOGE Glacier

Located on the southern border of Glacier National Park, historic Izaak Walton Inn was the recently remodeled into [LOGE Glacier](#). Located about 45 miles east of Columbia Falls in the small community of Essex on U.S. Highway 2. The inn is a stop on the Empire Builder train. It is well known for its quaint lodging and outdoor recreational activities. These include snowshoeing and X-Country skiing in winter along with biking, hiking and fishing in summer.

North Fork Road

Columbia Falls provides the starting point for exploring the North Fork Road with its access points to the western entrances to Glacier Park and a host of hiking and camping in the Flathead National Forest. It is also the road to Polebridge, a small self-contained community near the banks of the North Fork of the Flathead River. Polebridge is the home of the [Polebridge Mercantile and Bakery](#) an old-style historic general store. The road itself is a journey—it's 35 miles from Columbia Falls to Polebridge most of which is a gravel road. It's worth the trip for the scenic views and the access to both Flathead National Forest and Glacier Park National Park recreation.

River's Edge Park

One of the hidden gems in Columbia Falls is the [River's Edge Park](#), a 27-acre city park with 900 feet of

frontage on the Flathead River. It includes scenic trails, a community fishing pond, and a community garden.

Whitefish Mountain Resort

Winter Skiing

For much of the past decade, [Whitefish Mountain](#) was ranked in the top 10 of the best overall resorts in the West among Ski Magazine's annual reader rankings and was Ski Magazine's 2024 "Best Value Ski Resort in the West."²⁵ With an average annual snowfall of 300 inches and over 3,000 acres of terrain, there is plenty of space. A total of 14 lifts serve 105 trails with a vertical drop of 2,353 feet. The variety is staggering from Hellfire Run (3.3 miles long) to vast areas of bowl and tree skiing to its 4 terrain parks and a skier/boardcross course. There is something for everyone from beginner to expert and from tiny tots to elders. Children under 6 ski free. Juniors and Super Seniors (70+) receive discounts. There is a free S.N.O.W bus that runs between the Mountain and the town of Whitefish.

Summer at Whitefish Mountain Resort

"The Mountain" at Whitefish is as busy in the summer as it is in the Winter. The multi-age focus continues in its biking program which includes a special bike park for children ages 2-6. Mountain biking thrives and there is an alpine slide that children under 48" can ride for free. Other summer activities include tubing, Zip line tours, an Aerial Adventure Park (for youths and adults) and the Spider Monkey Mountain for youth 4-12. Hiking is also popular with many people taking advantage of the chairlift ride to the top.

Figure 25: Summer at Whitefish Mountain Resort



Glacier Nordic Club

[Glacier Nordic](#) ski club, located in Whitefish, is a vibrant community of skiers of all ages who take to the X-Country Ski Trails during the winters. The club

sponsors races and is responsible for grooming and maintaining trails on the Whitefish Golf Course (12 kilometers), Meadow Lake Golf Course (9 kilometers) in Columbia Falls, and the Big Mountain Trails (26 kilometers) in Whitefish. Trails are groomed for both skate and classic skiers as weather and conditions allow. The club also assists with grooming trails set by the Tally Lake Forest Service at the Round Meadows XC Ski Area. A membership pass or day pass is required for both the Whitefish Golf Course trails and those at Meadow Lake. Big Mountain trails and Round Meadow are free of charge, although donations are accepted. There are also groomed trails starting at the Haskill Basin trailhead that can connect to the Big Mountain trail system. Snowshoes are also allowed on most of the Glacier Nordic trails.

Figure 26: Nordic Skiing on Big Mountain Trails



Just north of Olney, Montana, the [Dog Creek Lodge and Nordic Center](#) maintains 27 kilometers of XC trails. Access is available for a nominal charge or available to lodge guests.

The [North Shore Nordic Club](#) is a federally recognized 501c3 nonprofit dedicated to providing quality groomed cross-country skiing in the lower Flathead Valley. NSNC maintains over 30 kilometers at two trail systems: Foothills Nordic Trails in Bigfork and Blacktail Nordic Trails above Lakeside in partnership with the Swan River Ranger District and the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. The club does not require a trail pass or fees to use their trails.

Mountain Biking& E-Biking

Flathead county enjoys a plethora of mountain biking trails throughout the entire region. One of the best sources of trail information and conditions is found at the [Flathead Area Mountain Biking](#) website. The interactive map on the website contains information about numerous trails in the county. Most of the

Some visitors travel to the area with their bikes. Many tourists to our area rely on renting ebikes for their local transportation. We are patient with bikes and cars sharing the roads, even the narrow winding ones.

Whitefish Lake is a naturally occurring lake and was named for its abundance of whitefish, (eṭłx̣w̱yú in Salish). It has a surface area of 5.2 square miles, 5.8 miles long and 1.4 miles wide. Sitting at an elevation of 2,999 feet above sea level, the lake has a maximum depth of 233 feet. The northern portions of the lake contain a few ranches, homes and public land while the southern end of the lake is populated by summer and year-round homes as well as public beaches and resorts. There are two State parks on the lake, [Whitefish Lake State Park](#) and [Les Mason State Park](#) which has a 585 ft sand and gravel lakeshore. There also is the popular [City Beach](#).

The Empire Builder passes through Columbia Falls and Whitefish with stops in Libby, MT to the West and East Glacier to the East. The station anchors the northern end of the town of Whitefish. Built in the Tudor Revival style, it opened 1927 and is now on the National Historic Register. Additionally, the Greyhound bus makes a once-daily stop at the Whitefish Station. The Empire Builder is a long-distance train that originates in Chicago, IL, and forks west of Whitefish in Spokane, WA, heading to Portland or Seattle. The trip to Seattle or Portland on

The [Whitefish Legacy Partners](#) and the City of Whitefish oversee 47 miles of natural surface trails with 15 trailheads. The trails range from the west of Whitefish eastwards to the Haskell Basin, which is the natural boundary between Whitefish and Columbia Falls. In addition to building and maintaining trails, WLP supports several youth programs, including kids summer programs and conservation activities.

The [dog park](#) in Whitefish is not just a dog park. It consistently is rated as one of the top dog parks in the United States. The 5 acre park has a fully accessible trail for people but the enclosed pond is for dogs only. There is wide open space, an agility park, a small/shy dog area and a dog-wash at the entrance.

Arts & Events

Events

[Winter Carnival](#) (Whitefish) This 60 years old winter festival is spread weekends of January and February.

[Cabin Fever Days](#) (Martin City) has been held in February for over 40 years.

[Family Forestry Expo](#) (Trumbull Creek Educational Forest) This weeklong event is held in the Haskell Basin, just up the road from the Church, half-way between Columbia Falls and Whitefish. It is celebrating its 30th year in 2019.

[Heritage Days](#) (Columbia Falls) is held each July to celebrate the town's history and heritage.

Farmers Markets ([Columbia Falls](#) Thursday evenings and [Whitefish](#) Tuesday evenings). See the Farm to Table section of this profile.

[Canyon Community Dinners](#) (Hungry Horse). These festive dinners are held one Thursday each month in the Hungry Horse School.

[Feast the Fish](#) (Whitefish) This festival takes place in May culminating in the famous "Battle of the Burger" competition.

[The Event at Rebecca Farm](#) (Kalispell). The annual equine show at Rebecca Farm includes competitions in dressage, cross-country and show jumping.

[Huckleberry Days Arts Festival](#) (Whitefish) takes place in August and features three days of art, all things huckleberry, music, food completions and other festivities.

[Octoberfest](#) (Whitefish). For two fall weekends feast on German foods, enjoy Bierstube food and music and cheer competitors on at log-sawing competitions.

Night of Lights Parade (Columbia Falls). This parade kicks off the Christmas festival season.

[Glacier Range Riders](#) This semi-pro baseball team competes in the Pioneer League. For the past few seasons, All Saints' members have enjoyed group outings to local games at the Glacier Bank Park that is about half-way between Whitefish and Kalispell.

Music, Theatre & Literature

Alpine Theater Project

The [Alpine Theater Project](#) was founded in 2004 by three Broadway veterans, Betsi Morrison (Broadway's *The Sound of Music*), Luke Walrath (Broadway's *42nd Street*), and David Ackroyd (Broadway's *Children of a Lesser God*). Frommer's Budget Travel Magazine, named ATP as one of the attractions that make

Whitefish, Montana "One of the Top 10 Coolest Small Towns in America.

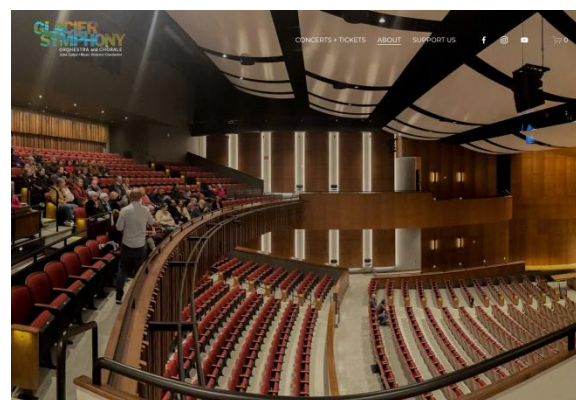
Whitefish Theater Company

[WTC](#) began in 1978, hired a full time artistic director in 1998 and opened I.A. O'Shaughnessy Center 1998. They mount 12 to 15 productions per year. It is a place for young and old to see a good play, listen to fine music, view local artwork, discuss a burning issue, or gather for a meeting

Glacier Symphony

Under the guidance of John Zoltek, Music Director and Conductor, the [Glacier Symphony Orchestra and Chorale](#) aims to provide a diverse range of excellent musical experiences in Northwest Montana that inspire, challenge, and educate musicians, audiences, and students. The 80 orchestra and 89 choral members make their home in the newly completed McClaren Hall at the Wachholz College Center on the campus of Flathead Valley Community College.

Figure 29: McClaren Hall



North Valley Music School

NVMS is a community-based, non-profit intergenerational music school formed in 1997. They teach over 700 students annually from babies through adults. They offer lessons in Piano, Violin, Cello, Bass, Electric Bass, Voice, Guitar, Electric Guitar, Mandolin, Banjo, Harp, Percussion, Trumpet, Saxophone, Oboe, Clarinet, and Flute. They opened a new building this year, adjacent to Smith Fields, expanding their ability to teach. Each year, they host the [Montana Music Event](#), an important fundraiser to raise revenue for our music education programs. Scholarships are available for all ages. School admits students of any race, color, nationality, sex, identity, ethnic origin, or religious affiliation.

Figure 30: North Valley Music School



[Festival Amadeus](#) (Whitefish). This annual music festival spans two weekends and the week between with live opera, chamber and orchestral music.

[Under the Big Sky Music Festival](#) (Whitefish) is a summer (July), outdoor music festival.

Figure 31: Under The Big Sky Music Festival



[Whitefish Community Library](#) (Whitefish) has all of the things you expect from a library like books and children's story hours and a lot that you don't expect. For example, library staff take tots on hikes on the Whitefish Trails to help them learn about the critters they might meet there.

Farm to Table

Farmers Markets

Both Columbia Falls and Whitefish have seasonal farmers markets that include food sales and other activities. The [Columbia Falls Farmers Market](#) is on Thursday evenings mid-May through September. The [Whitefish Farmers Market](#) is on Tuesday night. Both are free to attend and include food trucks, live music, crafts and Made in Montana vendors and activities.

Community Supported Agriculture

There are at least eight [CSAs](#) in the Upper Valley. Most have drop offs at the Whitefish and Columbia

Falls Farmers markets. You can also pick up shares at the farms or at other pickup locations including Kalispell and West Glacier. Most of the CSAs grow certified organic produce. Shares typically cost \$500 to \$600 per share for a 20-25 weeks season. Some include a winter share which is typically a large supply of root vegetables delivered in the fall. Some CSAs have arrangements for discounts on meat and eggs.

Dairy & Eggs

[Half-Moon Egg Farm](#) is located in Columbia Falls. Their eggs are available at farmers markets and in some area grocery stores. [Kalispell Creamery: From Moo to You](#), is well known throughout the Valley. Located just south of Whitefish, Headstrom Dairy sells their cows milk so they can take care of the cows. Formerly part of a dairy cooperative, when they were notified that it was too expensive to pick up their milk, the family decided to start a creamery. Every cow at Kalispell Creamery was born at Kalispell Creamery.

Meat and Fish

Local meat is available in several places in the Upper Valley. You can visit the actual farm and the butcher shop at [Farm to Market Pork & Beef](#) where they butcher weekly to order or you can purchase from their store. The Chopp Shoppe next to Alpine Market in Whitefish is a full-service local butcher shop. Columbia Falls is home to the [Montana Jerky Company](#) and the [Perfect Cuts Specialty Meat Shop](#). While the fish are imported from the coasts, just a hop and a skip from the Church is the [Flathead Fish and Seafood Company](#). In the lower Valley is the [Native Fish Keepers, Inc.](#), of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. The project provides healthy, fresh fish for consumption and reduces the load of non-native fish in the Flathead Lake, the Tribes are working to provide better habitat for native trout.

Education

Fathead Valley Community College

[FVCC](#) is located on the northern end of Kalispell, just 12 miles from the Church. It is a two-year college that awards the Associates degree and technical programs in over 50 fields. Bachelors degrees are possible through partnerships with Montana colleges. FVCC offers customized workforce training and enriching and affordable non-credit classes for all ages. The *Running Start* program for eligible area high school students helps them start on their college education while saving a significant amount of money on tuition. Area high-school students who graduate in the top

10% of their class can receive two semesters of free tuition. Students who have completed 30 credits (one year) and are in the top 10% at FVCC can also receive two semesters of tuition waivers. In the past 18 months FVCC raised over \$18M in support of the school and distributed over \$1M in financial aid to students each year.

Elementary and High Schools

There are a total of 16,473 students enrolled in public (14,493) and private (4,761 including 306 home schools) schools in Flathead county. There are public, Montessori, nature-based, Christian, Lutheran, and Catholic schools in the area.

Although the per capita expenditures per student are lower than the national average, the student/ personnel ratios are impressive.

Figure 32: School Expenditures & Staffing Ratios

	WF/CF, MT	National
Expend. per Student	\$13,617	\$15,905
Instr. Expend. per Student	\$6,491	\$7,999
Pupil/Teacher Ratio	14.83	16.23
Students per Librarian	429	4573
Students per Counselor	337	530

According to Niche, the schools are above average, earning ratings from a low of B- to a high of A. As with all schools, the ratings don't tell the tale. Schools in the Upper Valley afford opportunities that many schools don't. For example, the Whitefish School District is home to the [Center for Sustainability and Entrepreneurship](#), a net-zero facility, which provides educational experiences in energy, agriculture, forestry, natural resources and entrepreneurship.

Image 2: Center for Sustainability and Entrepreneurship



One unusual school for younger children (kindergarten through 4th grade) is [Skola](#) that combines traditional education with interactions and projects in nature. The campus is set in a forested environment in a rural area outside of Whitefish.

State, National, and Olympic Champions

Speech and Debate

From 2018 through 2024, Columbia Falls High came in either 1st for 2nd in the State Class A speech and debate tournaments. In 2025, Whitefish High claimed the honor.

Figure 33: Whitefish Speech and Debate Team 2025



Skiing & Snowboarding

Education continues outside of the classroom. The [Flathead Valley Ski Education Foundation](#) is a Valley-wide nonprofit dedicated to the promotion of athletic, academic and personal excellence through competitive skiing.

Figure 34: FVSEF Development Team Member

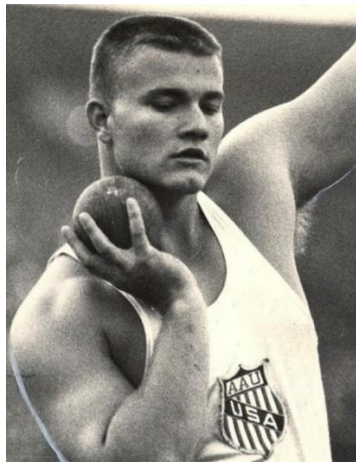


Whitefish has been home to three winter Olympians including Tommy Moe (US Men's Ski Team, 1994), Hillary Lindh (US Woman's Ski Team 1988, 1992 1996), and Maggie Voisin who was the youngest person ever to be on the US Ski team at age 15 (US Ski & Snowboard Teams, 2014 and 2018). Hillary Lindh is currently a coach with the FVSEF.

Summer Sports

All Saints' member Dallas Long (1940-2024) was our only local resident who competed in the summer Olympics in the shot put. He held multiple world records and won a bronze medal in the 1960 Olympics and gold in the 1964 Olympics.

Figure 35: Dallas Long, 1964 Olympic Gold Medalist



Other Team Sports

The area schools maintain many team sports and often bring home championships. Some sports, especially soccer, have both school and club teams.

Soccer

Soccer is popular in our area. The Whitefish High Boys team were Class A champions in 2018 through 2021, runners-up in 2022, Class A champions again in 2023, and runners-up in 2024. The Whitefish High girls soccer team were state semi-finalist and runners-up from 2018 through 2023, and Class A champions in 2024. [The Montana Flathead Rapids](#) was formed by a group of professional and college soccer players who wanted to keep playing. They have programs at the Smith Fields Complex in Whitefish and three locations in Columbia Falls. The Rapids coach over 1200 players and run programs for players aged 4 to 104.

Figure 36: Montana Flathead Rapids



Other non-school related team sports programs include recreational and semi-pro programs.

The [Whitefish Adult Hockey Association](#) sponsors 35 adult hockey leagues year round. The [Stumptown Ice Den](#) is open year-round and hosts adult and youth hockey, public skating and figure skating. They also sponsor a women's hockey tournament, [Queen of the Blades](#).

Figure 37: Queen of the Blades Tournament



Whitefish has been home to a baseball team since 1960. The [Glacier Twins](#) captured the Western Division Championship in 2018.

The [Wave Aquatic and Fitness Center](#), a non-profit, community based center, includes swimming activities for tots to seniors including competitive swimming.

Project Whitefish Kids

Project Whitefish Kids was originally organized to develop the 1.5M [Smith Fields Youth Sports Complex](#) in 2003. Since its inception, it has hosted both high school and club soccer, lacrosse, baseball and softball teams. The complex, maintained largely by volunteers, also serves as the only park serving over 450 families

in the south end of Whitefish. The 58 acre Smith field incorporates 8 soccer fields/lacrosse pitches, 5 baseball and 4 softball fields, a playground, 2 concession stands, restrooms, a maintenance facility and parking for 400 cars.

Figure 38: Smith Fields



Medical Care

The Flathead Valley is a destination medical location with two hospitals and over 400 physicians. People come to the area for care traveling from NW Montana, Canada and nationally. The medical spa industry attracts people who want to recover from procedures in our beautiful area. Below is information about just a few of our medical facilities.

Alpine Family Medicine (CF)

[Alpine Family Medicine](#) is a highly rated comprehensive family medicine clinic in Columbia Falls. They see regular and urgent care cases.

Glacier Medical Associates

(WF) [Glacier Medical Associates](#) maintains locations in Whitefish, Columbia Falls, and Evergreen (Kalispell) providing comprehensive primary and urgent healthcare for people of all ages. Other services include pediatric medicine, behavioral health, integrative wellness and chiropractic services. There is also an onsite laboratory, x-ray, ultrasound, urgent as well as a medical spa (at Whitefish location).

Logan Health

[Logan Health](#) is rated 9% higher than the national average of hospitals and is recognized for surgery excellence in spine and orthopedic surgery.²⁸ In 2025, Healthgrades gave the orthopedic department its

Outpatient Orthopedic Surgery Excellence Award. Some of their specialized programs include:

- A comprehensive cancer program, accredited by the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer
- A wide range of orthopedic services
- A Neuroscience and Spine Institute
- A gynecological surgery program including advanced laparoscopic and robotic procedures
- A comprehensive cardiovascular program including a cardiac catheterization lab, electrophysiology and heart surgery
- A Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)

Figure 39: Logan Health, Kalispell



Logan Health-Whitefish (LH-WF)

Logan Health-Whitefish (formerly named North Valley Hospital) is an award-winning medical facility in Whitefish. It has a strong commitment to the Planetree Model for health care, which is a person-centered approach that makes the human experience a priority for patients, family, and staff. This commitment is reflected in the numerous awards it has received.

- Healthgrades awarded North Valley their top patient experience award in 2019.²⁹
- In 2024, for the 2nd year in a row, the rebranded Logan Health - Whitefish received a 5-star overall rating from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). This is the highest rating and is based patient mortality rate, safety, readmissions, patient experience, and timely/effective care.³⁰
- It also received a 5-star rating in patient experience from Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and

Systems (HCAHPS). This reflects a CMS collaborative satisfaction survey.

Figure 40: Logan Health, Whitefish



- The Montana Hospital Association noted LH-WF's reduction in rates of blood culture contamination and gave it the Performance Improvement Network (PIN) Award in 2024..
- Several awards were received based on indicators from the Chartis Center for Rural Health. These include being named one of the top 20 critical access hospitals in 2022 by the National Rural Health Association; receiving one of the top 100 critical access hospitals (for the 4th consecutive year) by Chartis in 2023; and the Performance Leadership Award from Chartis in 2024.

As part of its focus on patient care, Logan Health-Whitefish has a da Vinci robotic surgical center and also offers a sliding-scale surgical discount program for those in need.

Veterinary Care

There are 10 licensed veterinarians in Columbia Falls and 11 in Whitefish who specialize in large or small animals. [Glacier Animal Hospital](#) (CF) provides routine small animal care as well as emergency care for people traveling in the area. [Whitefish Animal Hospital](#) is a large, AAHA accredited animal hospital. They offer integrative and alternative medicine services and are a referral center for animal orthopedic medicine. They support the WAG dog park with free toenail clipping on Wednesday and the Mooch Fund for adoptions. Their clinic is fully handicap accessible and they offer discounts for working service animals.

Senior Living

Northern Flathead Valley is home to multiple independent living, assisted living, memory care, and nursing homes. The largest of these is [The Springs](#) in Whitefish provides independent and assisted living

along with memory care. The [Montana State Veterans Home](#) is located in Columbia Falls. [Beehive Homes in Columbia Falls](#) (and in [Kalispell memory care](#)) provides small, home-like living facilities. Mountain Homes is a rent-assisted independent living apartment in Whitefish. Genesis Healthcare operates a nursing home level of care facility in Whitefish. Other facilities include Hidden Meadow Memory Care and Timber Creek Village Assisted living. [Shepherd's Hand](#) serves seniors across the Flathead Valley to provide companionship and assistance for our neighbors in need in order to preserve their independence & connection to community, while maintaining their dignity and quality of life.

Figure 41: The Springs, Whitefish



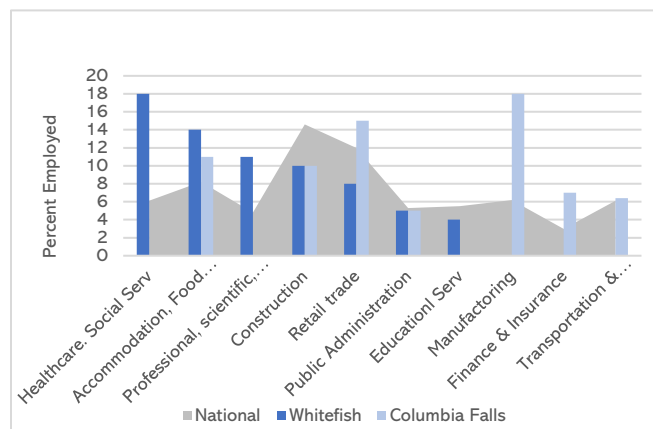
Employment Opportunities

Although known primarily for its recreational opportunities, which afford a variety of paid and volunteer positions, the Flathead Valley is also home to professional opportunities with some large and some small, but innovative businesses. Below is an incomplete list of some of our larger or more unique businesses. In general, Columbia Falls has more manufacturing and Whitefish has more Healthcare positions. On the front-line of tourism, Whitefish has more accommodation and food service positions while Columbia Falls has more retail trade.

Communications

[Nomad Communications Solutions](#) (CF) employees 400 people. It focuses on the development of mobile communications command centers for remote connectivity in difficult situations such as wildfires and tactical operations. [Bullit Communications](#) was founded over 30 years ago specializes in wireless and satellite communications including 911 services.

Figure 42: Types of Employment



Technology Design and Manufacturing

[Applied Materials](#) (Kalispell) manufactures semiconductor chips, flat panels, and is a global leader in materials engineering solutions. with a manufacturing facility that employs 800 people in Kalispell. [Synergetix, Inc.](#), located in the Flathead Valley, offers engineering and manufacturing services that use advanced 3D scanning and design software. [Fiber Reaper](#) is a Kalispell-based, family-owned business that manufactures adjustable fiber optic cable clamps that are sold across the United States.

Software and Data Development

[NXGEN](#), founded in 1999, is a developer of credit card payment at point of sale and [Elebase](#) is a geospatial back end software. Elebase customers include National Geographic, UNESCO and the National Park Service. [Wheelie](#), also based in Whitefish, is a creative agency and production company. Their customers include HBO, The North Face and Polartec.

[Water Street Company](#) is a Kalispell-based firm of insurance experts who use cloud-based software to aid property & casualty insurance companies. GL Solutions has headquartered in Kalispell since 2021. It focuses on developing regulatory software for government agencies. [Ten Point Data](#) leverages artificial intelligence to provide advanced decision-making tools to support other businesses. [Sókn Engineering](#) is a woman-owned business in the Flathead Valley that develops software used by commodity traders. [Glacier Tourbase](#) offers a variety guided tours throughout the Flathead Valley, including Glacier National Park.

ISP and Technology Support

[Granite Technology Solutions](#) has an office in Kalispell and offers managed IT services, business phone systems, software, and cabling to businesses throughout the Flathead Valley. [First Call](#), founded in 1998, is based in Missoula with offices in Kalispell. They focus on IT & cybersecurity throughout Montana. [Endpoint Technology Partners](#) is a Whitefish-based IT system provider for small and medium-sized businesses. [MtnMAX \(Montana Digital\)](#) is a Kalispell-based internet provider for businesses & residents throughout the Flathead. It offers both fiber optic and wireless service.

Cybersecurity

[Adversis](#) is a Kalispell-based cybersecurity consulting firm that tests business security and provides security solutions in manufacturing, healthcare, financial services, and start up businesses. [Glacier Cybersecurity](#) not only consults with businesses about their cybersecurity needs and solutions, it also conducts accredited training in cybersecurity.

Co-working Spaces

The Valley has multiple co-working spaces as there are a lot of telecommuters in the area. Many people set up at [Basecamp](#) in Whitefish, including our former rector. In CF, [Uptown Hearth](#) offers space above a bakery and coffee shop.

Figure 43: Basecamp Coworking Space, Whitefish



Education

The largest employer educators is the [Kalispell Pubic School District](#) (500-1000 employees). [Whitefish School District](#) employs 200-500 people and [Columbia Falls School District](#) employs 200-500 people. [Flathead Valley Community College](#) employs 262 people.

Financial & Professional Services

[Stack Financial Management](#) is a federally Registered Investment Advisor (RIA) in 35 states, with a Whitefish office. They manage \$1.9 billion and advise 851 clients. [Glacier Bank](#) is a publicly traded regional bank headquartered in Kalispell, with offices in Columbia Falls and Whitefish. [Torrent Technologies](#) also headquartered in Kalispell, is a leader in flood insurance. Its annual revenue is \$26.6 million. [Mann Mortgage](#) is a multistate mortgage lending company headquartered in Kalispell. [Parkside Credit Union](#) has eight locations serving 30,353 members in NW Montana. [Two Bear Capital](#) focuses on early-stage investments in areas like [biotechnology](#), [AI](#), and [cybersecurity](#). It manages a portfolio of \$310 million and is headquartered in Whitefish.

Human Resources

[LC Staffing](#) is a state-wide company with a Kalispell office. It hires approximately 3000 people annually for its clients, matching individuals with jobs in over 80 career areas. It has received [ClearlyRated's Best of Staffing Awards](#) including *10 Year Diamond Awards* and was recognized by [Forbes as one of the Best Professional Recruiting Firms](#) in 2020.

Healthcare Employment

[Logan Health](#), with its two hospitals in Kalispell and Whitefish, employs over 4500 people. A 2016 study suggests over 6300 people in Flathead County work in healthcare and related fields.³¹ Healthcare accounts for the largest percentage of employees in the county.

Manufacturing and Repair

[Converting Equipment International](#) of Columbia Falls designs and builds high speed equipment for a variety of industries that use labels. [Acutech Metalworks](#) (Columbia Falls) designs and fabricates complex metal complex structures for clients nationwide. In addition to local construction projects, they provide parts for RibbonLift systems used to precisely position cameras, lights and audio equipment at NBA, NHL and major league baseball games. [Rocky Mountain Aircraft Services](#), based in Kalispell, this FAA-certified repair shop specializes in aircraft avionics installation, maintenance, and repair.

Wood Products

[RBM Lumber, Inc.](#), a family-owned business in Columbia Falls, produces stock and custom wood products including flooring and live edge wood. [Weyerhaeuser](#) operates an MDF facility in Columbia Falls with 200 employees in CF and 500 overall in the Flathead region. [SmartLam NA](#) (CF) is an important supplier of Cross Laminated Timbers, one of the largest in the United States. [F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber](#), also based in Columbia Falls, is Montana's oldest family-owned private timber company. Unless otherwise posted, their lands are open to a variety of public recreation. The company, in conjunction with the [Family Forestry Expo](#) also sponsors an education event each year in May.

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Endnotes

¹ Many details here were found from the working notes of Leif Peterson's 2009 draft manuscript "A History of Holy Nativity & St. Matthew's Churches and How They Became All Saints' Episcopal Church." We are grateful for his details and the contribution they made.

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