

Telling the story of Bloom and PPC

Twin Cities Presbytery Meeting, May 2019

As a part of this regional meeting, congregations were invited to share stories of new life and joy in ministry right now. I will be sharing the following about PPC and Bloom!

We are so grateful to be journeying together in this way! — Jeff Foels

We had a recycling dumpster full of cardboard at Plymouth Presbyterian Church at the end of last week. It was full of cardboard because Thursday was new furniture day, and it was new furniture for the preschool rooms of Bloom Early Learning, our community partner who will be sharing our space.

Bloom Early Learning began almost twenty years ago, first as a mission of Messiah Methodist Church in Plymouth, and then spun off as its own non-profit learning center, still housed at Messiah. From its beginning, Bloom has dedicated half of its enrollment to low-income children through community-funded scholarship programs. At the same time, Bloom Early Learning is committed to high quality childcare, achieving accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and is 4-star Parent Aware rated; it has also been named the best preschool and childcare in Plymouth by the local newspaper. Their mission is to break the cycle of poverty through nurturing care and an exceptional early learning program. Their vision recently was to expand to a second location, to double the impact they're able to have on the community.

Enter Plymouth Presbyterian Church. Throughout the past two years, we have began partnering with Bloom. Conversations built upon each other, and Bloom embarked on a capital campaign of a half million dollars to provide for renovations, furnishings, a new environmental playground, and operating expenses while they build up to capacity. The congregational development grant from the Presbytery has also helped as we have installed a new sign and renovated our kitchen to better support these efforts. Congregation members

and I have joined their board, and our Bloom welcome team has made quilts so that every child who comes to Bloom will have their own blanket here.

Within a story structure, we are still perhaps in the rising action. Bloom will be opening its location at Plymouth Presbyterian in June, with directors and teachers already hired. Life at the church building will look different soon, in ways we may not yet anticipate.

And so back to that dumpster full of cardboard, and all the new furniture. Our renovated classrooms are filled now with new furniture, and will soon be filling up with children and teachers. The halls that had been quiet were filled with construction, and soon will be filled with laughter and music and play. For church members, the money that had been going to pay for a mortgage, hanging over the congregation's head, is now going to not only support their church, but to support this mission in our community. And we have been remembering in prayer the children and parents who will soon be part of our lives.

I was thinking we should be saving some of that cardboard — it would make for such fun projects in the years ahead. Imagination and vision turns a box like that into a spaceship or a bear den or a treehouse. Imagination and vision turns the box of the church building into a way of living our mission, caring for the least of these, as we are all called to do.