

PLYMOUTH



CHURCH

October 30, 2018

Dear Friends:

It's October at Plymouth and as I crunched through the leaves in the Beecher Garden the other evening, someone had a fire burning and it occurred to me that it must have smelled like this to our church ancestors frequently--organic decaying leaves, crisp air, wood smoke--the smell of expectation and warmth. The golden hour light flooded the Garden and I could just see a cat prowling around the fourth floor of the church house, peering in, looking for something...just like the rest of us.

I was asked recently what happened to the monthly Council President's letters we used to receive years ago. I don't know....probably succumbed to too much work, too many meetings, a too full inbox, just no time. But it's a tradition I can resurrect. So here you go. I'll try to keep it up. Tradition and communication are important now, as much as ever.

We have engaged Community Counseling Services, a professional fundraising firm, to conduct a feasibility and planning study to help us consider, plan and execute future fundraising. This process has begun with in person interviews. Focus groups will begin shortly and questionnaires will be circulated. When it is your turn to participate, please answer so that we can create an accurate picture of our shared goals for Plymouth.

John Scibilia announced his departure and we congratulate John and his wife Jill on the next stage as they move to Sleepy Hollow. A team of members has been formed to find a replacement and meetings are being held to insure a smooth transition and handover of the many, many hats that he has worn for five years. Celebrations and thanks are planned. We are grateful for the time he spent with us, his love for Plymouth and the legacy reflected in every nook and cranny that he leaves behind.

And life at Plymouth continues. We celebrated John and Mary Lou Wells and their over 40 years of service to God at Plymouth Church. We said goodbye to our beloved Pete Valentine. And yet, we welcomed a glowing group of new members this month along with their beautiful children. We baptized Klara Briske, in her charming fluffy pink slippers, and Rory O'Donnell, in his festive bow tie. Pete would have loved that!

We are reading and learning and welcoming others. The racial justice ministry has just completed a three part series on racism, launched by a discussion of Debby Irving's book *Waking up White* and ending with learning on systemic racism. The women's book club is reading Rebecca Traister's *Good and Mad*, about women's anger in the latest political climate. In the proudest Plymouth tradition, we engage with the issues captivating the nation, and candid and broad views are shared in a safe place to learn and understand.

PLYMOUTH CHURCH

We continue to get the word out about the importance of our history and its relevance for today. The History Ministry welcomed nearly 150 visitors for tours as part of the Open House New York weekend, in addition to the usual school groups and adult tours. The Underground Thrift is packing in the donations and the visitors, especially with the closing of some local vintage stores. The School is bustling. Last weekend there was an open house and tours for potential new students and there was a parent potluck open house just starting as I left last week.

We are adjusting the heating zones in the gym and adding a heat unit curtain to make it warmer in there for the school children and others. This will also save energy and—get this—pay for itself in 10 years! A sexual harassment policy was put in place in accordance with New York law.

Alan Kraus has graciously agreed to chair this year's Stewardship appeal. More will come later on this annual appeal, but for now, remember that your annual giving is the lifeblood of all that is Plymouth and we need your pledges and commitments each year to nurture our beloved community.

And there is music. We are treated to familiar hymns and soaring new anthems. I love the choral processions we have seen lately. They remind me to be grateful for the glorious voices leading us in praise each Sunday. We heard children's voices on children's Sunday, and a moving Jacque Jones hymn. And more is coming. The Brooklyn Youth Chorus will be here in November. Rehearsals for Christmas have begun.

Speaking of tradition, as many will recall, we now host Yankee Fair every other year and in the alternate years, the Membership Committee hosts the Harvest Dinner, which is a nod to the old tradition where we used to have Yankee Fair all day and then the Yankee Dinner and Gala the same Saturday night (hard to believe now!!). I'll say it again--we miss our working kitchen--but on November 10, a brave group is going to try to prepare the Yankee feast using the ovens only. There will be a fire in the fireplace during cocktails and I will make the hot artichoke dip we have served for years. We will sing "We Gather Together" and eat roast and root vegetables. We will sing show tunes around the piano. For dessert, inspired by Mrs. Beecher's recipe, we will share homemade apple desserts. I will be brave and try to make fritters. You should be brave and come to this event, invite a stranger and meet someone new at this most Plymouth of evenings.

Thank you for the blessings of October. See you in November.

With love,



Caroline Koster

President, Plymouth Church Council