

# Celebrating 150 Years!



**PLYMOUTH  
CHURCH  
FORT WAYNE  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

## Living Faithfully into the Future

**2020  
Annual Report**

# Plymouth Congregational Church of Fort Wayne

## United Church of Christ

***We welcome all who seek God's presence in their lives!***

We are ... **an Open and Affirming (ONA) congregation** (2001),  
proclaiming extravagant welcome, particularly to LGBTQ members, friends, and  
neighbors. We find strength in our diversity, and a way to understand the inclusiveness  
of God.

We are ... **a Just Peace congregation** (2008),  
centering our life in prayer, study, and worship. We seek the things that make for peace  
and justice within the whole human family. We are committed to defending and  
protecting the human rights of all people.

We are ... **a Global Mission congregation** (2012),  
as recognized by Global Ministries, a common witness of Wider Church Ministries,  
UCC, and Division of Overseas Ministries, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).  
We are committed to mission endeavors that are "intensely local, intentionally global."

We are ... **an Earthwise congregation** (2015),  
having vowed our resolve to be good stewards of creation. As a community we seek to  
reduce energy consumption, advance energy conservation practices, and embrace  
renewable energy sources. We urge prudent use of earth resources as a display of  
intergenerational solidarity – for our good, and the good of all future generations.

### ***The Plymouth Church Covenant***

(revised 2011)

We affirm our faith in the God  
whose mercy calls us into the church.

We are united in our quest to promote  
justice and peace for all who dwell on earth.

We are committed to the patient rule of Jesus Christ:  
we rejoice in the wisdom of his teaching,  
and the excellent way of his love.

With the guidance of the Holy Spirit,  
we covenant to support the local and global mission  
of the church with prayer,  
participation in worship,  
and generous financial support.



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## SENIOR PASTOR AND TEACHER

2020 will surely go down as the strangest, most challenging year in ministry, not just for myself, but probably for any pastor in living memory. The vast bulk of our life this year since mid-March has been done virtually rather than in person. Other than some online classes I have previously taught, nothing could prepare me for this complete upheaval in church life. There have been those whom I have seen in person: staff in the building, a volunteer here and there, outdoor worship and service opportunities, a member dropping something off or doing a socially distanced check in. But these number in the dozens rather than the typical hundreds. For many of you, the way you have seen me is through Zoom meetings, phone and email interactions, and virtually through online worship, though this latter format does not allow me to see you. This has not been easy.



Of course, I count myself fortunate in that much of my work could be done virtually, particularly worship preparation, staff administration, and internal church communication, compared to others who work in professions that require in-person proximity.

I know we have missed much together. There are funerals and memorial services that have been delayed or heavily modified in ways that continue to hurt many people. Our major preparations for our big Sesquicentennial event were delayed until next fall in 2021. I am privately lamenting that many “finals” for Rev. Phillips; her final program kickoff, final All Saints Sunday, final Thanksgiving, final Advent season has been one where Plymouth members have not been able to interact with her in person. After almost 20 years here, I am mindful that we need to find alternative ways that members can grieve the coming conclusion of that relationship this next June, when it may still not fully be possible to gather together as we did previously.

To review the modifications we made throughout the year, after consultation with Rev. Phillips, Conference staff, and our moderators in regard to COVID-19, we moved to halting all in-person programming in mid-March. Most staff were sent home, working as they could but paid the normal amount to begin. Church building usage slowed to a crawl so the early result was staff members in for a few hours per week to ensure that essential functions continued. Staff openings, independent of COVID-19, were left unfilled in the short term, such as the media specialist, which was replaced with a church volunteer until June, receptionist/office assistant, which remains open, and evening desk attendant, which remains open. These latter will be replaced once it is clear that building usage can return to regular activity. The deferral in replacing these positions this year is one primary source of our lowered expenses in 2020.

Additional positions opened up in August, such as our Financial Administrator, which was filled by a temporary employee, and has as of November been filled with a permanent replacement. Likewise, our Communications Specialist moved in December out of state, continued working virtually for the rest of the year, and will be replaced sometime early in 2021. Ironically, one of my goals in 2020 was stability in staffing, knowing that major changes are on the horizon with our Associate Pastor’s retirement. It was not to be, though our program and music department staff maintain strong continuity and vitality.

Several months into the pandemic, I started encouraging staff to begin returning to work in the building on a rotating schedule, easing us back into regular hours. This transition was completed at the beginning of July, when all staff were expected to be back to their regular schedules. This preceded our next shift, our switch to a live-stream service from a pre-recorded service, which began in mid-July. As COVID-19 numbers were stable at the time, we began offering limited in-person worship services for up to 20 pre-registered households a week using the same system that had been used for the music series. This began in mid-August and continued until case numbers began spiking again in mid-October. During that time, most members seemed content to watch from home and be cautious, as the total number of attendees, including staff, rarely broke 30 and never 40. Since that time, we have returned to a live-stream only and since Advent have moved to a pre-recorded service from the sanctuary, which has given us more flexibility in content to share, eased some of our technical challenges, and allowed participants to not wear masks as we are separate from each other in time and space during recording our sections. I expect this to continue well into 2021 until a vaccine is widely available.

Beyond COVID-19, a major event was at last year's Annual Business Meeting, with affirmations to purchase the 527 West Berry Street building that houses the Cedars HOPE program. The recruitment and formation of a Cedars HOPE Task Force to evaluate and make a recommendation on how this space should be used has been a major endeavor, especially in the latter half of the year when the task force began its work in earnest.

On our social justice front, we saw major progress in our work with Faith in Indiana, with the community organizing effort bearing significant fruit in multiple areas. Our work with Faith in Indiana helped secure a testing site for COVID-19 on the southeast side of town that had previously been ignored, helped ensure the reuniting of immigrant families that were facing deportation, and engagement with the Black Lives Matter movement in the spring and early summer, with city officials often tepid responses only possible through consistent pressure. In the fall, over a dozen members were part of phone canvassing activities to encourage low-propensity voters to vote in the 2020 election, eventually resulting in over 73,000 conversations statewide with people. Of all the groups and congregations in the state, Plymouth had the largest contingent in those gatherings. Other peace and justice plans, like preparing an interfaith dinner with Muslim siblings, will have to wait for a time when we can safely gather together.

As a joy, I officiated my first wedding (at Plymouth) in July and first baptism of twins ever. I've appreciated some of the new things we have been able to offer this year that I will expect to continue into the future, including our weekly Sunday afternoon joys and concerns check-in, which functions like a small-group ministry now, as well as offering worship services online when we are back to in-person worship together. I think we all are growing increasingly competent with Zoom and are able to help each other. We might find that some boards or committees may continue to use Zoom periodically for convenience.

I enjoyed the opportunity to lead a few Chapel Class series throughout the year, one being on Income and Wealth Inequality and the other being on Interfaith Relations. Teaching is one thing that gives me energy, and I appreciate the opportunity to continue to do that through these series for Plymouth members. I also taught a formal summer intensive in June as an adjunct through the Center for Process Studies called "Process and Theological Activism."

In addition to everything else that happened this year, 2020 was a reminder for all of us that racial justice still remains a far from realized reality in our world, even in Fort Wayne. Our commitment to speaking up against social sins like racism can be costly at times with the gospel call for equality and inclusion sometimes experienced as hatred of

dominant groups and powers. While tragic, it is a small price to pay to be able to name the good news of God's liberating love for all, especially those who have been and are still being mistreated. I joined the Conference's working group on expanding anti-racism training opportunities and reforming internal structures within our Conference and congregations that have a racist impact, despite individuals' intentions. While we have only had one meeting thus far, I look forward to that work continuing and finding ways to expand our anti-racist commitments and institutional alignment with the gospel imperative. Part of that is our partnerships in the broader community, and part of it will be a hard look at where we are falling short of our own professed ideals.

*Rev. Timothy wears a face shield during service, October*

I pray that when 2020, with all its challenges, is behind us, we do not seek simply to forget, but to learn from them that we can continue to grow into the people God is still calling us to be. I look forward to continuing that journey with you and others we meet along the way.

Peace,  
Rev. Dr. Timothy C. Murphy

## ASSOCIATE PASTOR

“Living Faithfully into the Future,” our 150th anniversary theme, became more pertinent and challenging as 2020 evolved by mid-March into the COVID-19 pandemic. For Plymouth Church, I believe we expressed “Living Faithfully” by canceling all in-person worship and programs in order to keep physical social distancing, and by a commitment to wearing face masks.



January to mid-March feels more distant than usual. Here are occurrences during those normal months:

- I attended the January 5 ordination of Rev. Nicole “Nikki” Shaw at Peace UCC, authorized by Northeast Association
- Film and Faith: Forty & Over met for *Welcome to Marwen* movie and discussion
- Deacons’ Worship Board held its annual planning retreat, in which I participated
- Hospital, Rehab, Nursing Home visits were made
- Kairos Visitors Team (Mary Bir, Allen Haynes, Linda Kerr, Jan Modesitt, and January Simpson) met for training, orientation, discussion which I facilitated
- Wednesday Night Live dinners were enjoyed together in the Folsom Room
- Staff met in retreat with Allie Brown leading us in the meaning of our test results from the Enneagram
- I participated in a staff security meeting; Safety Committee; and Sesquicentennial Task Force planning
- I met with a couple for pre-marriage conversation/planning for September wedding now postponed to 2021
- We celebrated the baptism of Isaac McCrory in worship
- Two memorial services: Dee Smith, January 10, sanctuary; Jeanette Lohse, March 7, chapel, family only
- Met with Nominating Committee in its initial meeting

On March 8, I conducted a Welcoming Group, and that Sunday became our last full sanctuary worship together. From there our life as a congregation was altered dramatically as we entered “stay at home and stay safe.” Here are the vital changes that occurred in order to carry on some of our programming:

Zoom and YouTube have become everyday nomenclature related to worship, study groups, and meetings. I am grateful to Rev. Timothy C. Murphy and volunteer Eric Miller for their patient coaching as I learned new digital skills. Flexibility and adaptability are personal and ministerial mental/emotional skills I have always possessed, but the technology challenged my left brain intensely! Nine months into this, as a community of faith, our identity in the digital world continues to be refined and enhanced.

An early special event we conducted virtually was to receive new members via video and phone!

At Rev. Murphy’s request, my first project, as we began physical/social distancing, was to work with Congregational Life Board in establishing a “Phone Tree.” I divided our member database into sections and gave each board member a list of names. They in turn subdivided their list and assigned names to other volunteers. It is our expectation that at some point in the first two months, each household received a phone call of care, concern, and connection on behalf of Plymouth Church. Calls have continued sporadically.

My greatest disappointment of this year is that Covenant Class was interrupted in a significant way. Eventually, I was able to meet via Zoom with the five students for purpose of check in and encouraging. Confirmation, of course, has been postponed from the original date of May 17 Sunday in worship. Depending on when the COVID-19 infection rate drops and a vaccine becomes available, we will know better how to plan a Confirmation for the students choosing to formalize their relationship to Plymouth. I am also grateful for the adults who had committed to serving as Mentors for these students.

My Thursday, 1:00 pm, study group adapted to meeting on Zoom and completed reading *Walking on Water* by Madeline L’Engle, and *NINE ESSENTIAL THINGS I’VE LEARNED ABOUT LIFE* by Rabbi Harold S. Kushner. For five weeks October-November. I held a Zoom life review group using as our resource the workbook, *Remembering*

*Your Story*, by Richard L. Morgan.

Every Sunday, I participate in Rev. Murphy's Joys and Concerns online support and prayer for attendees.

On July 1, Rev. Murphy and I baptized twins Adelaide and Catherine, daughters of Brittany Ramsey and Clayton Bennett. Only parents and grandparents were present in the sanctuary and all of us wore masks.

In summer months, I officiated outdoor graveside services for Charmaine Siekmann and George Irmscher; as well as a family and friends outdoor memorial service at Clear Lake for Robert Jensen.

I welcomed Christian Education Board and Congregational Life Board each for an outdoor meeting in my front yard. Even though evenings were still quite warm, I held two social gatherings of ten people each, also in my front yard, sitting three feet apart and wearing masks.

Heritage Sunday, September 20, which was also Plymouth's official 150th anniversary, our recognition of Heritage members did not video record due to technical difficulties. I want to acknowledge that two persons were present to be honored for long-term membership: Marty Kabisch for 50 years; Bob Pugh for 80 years!

We were able to offer an October 11 Advance Care Planning (ACP) workshop via webinar with staff from Parkview Regional Medical Center's ACP department.

In Advent, as we made our journey to Christmas, I contacted the parents of children and younger youth so they could choose an animal figurine that normally I would give them at Christmas Eve service. I distributed the animals in outdoor physically distancing home deliveries.

When Rev. Timothy C. Murphy arrived at Plymouth Church in August 2018, my self-introduction included that retirement was nearer, not farther, on the horizon. I am pleased that when I retire in June 2021, I will have enjoyed the privilege of sharing ministry with him for three years. And with you, dear Plymouth people, I am honored that my ministry with you will span twenty years and four months. This, then, is my final annual report to the congregation, prepared for the January 24, 2021 Annual Business Meeting.

When your new associate pastor is discovered and called, I trust you will offer that individual the same outpouring of open hearts and minds you so generously bestowed on me in February 2001.

I hold as finest value these two decades in ministry with you. Please know that every week when I survey our empty sanctuary, and picture where you would normally be sitting, I miss you terribly! Your Sunday morning energy and vibrance and the smiles and conversations are embedded in my soul's memory. In this pandemic season, which will eventually be controlled, I hold on to confidence in the scientists and public health experts who have the knowledge and skill to advise us on being safe and staying healthy.

Plymouth people ~ a continuity of congregational character is brightly evident ~ your vision and mission for leading at the edges of extravagant welcome, unconditional love, justice and peace, protecting and healing planet earth and its residents, supporting persons in need physically and spiritually.

In concluding, I share with you a quote from one of my favorite biblical scholars which we studied a few years ago.

Dr. John Dominic Crossan in his *The Challenge of Jesus* dvd/book paraphrases Jesus' teaching:  
"You have been waiting for a divine intervention. And God is waiting for a divine—human collaboration."

With joy and deep gratitude,  
Rev. Ruth E. Phillips



Rev. Ruth during worship, October

## LICENSED MINISTERS

### Submitted by David Grim, LM

In 2020, I completed two more semesters towards my Masters of Divinity at the Chicago Theological Seminary. Due to COVID-19, I decided to take an undetermined number of semesters off in order to better support my spouse in this difficult teaching time for her and our children. I have preached a number of times – both in person and online – at Plymouth Church over the course of the year. I had (until COVID-19) resumed my Children's Fellowship Time (CFT) work at Plymouth.

I have begun a new full-time position in my private ministry career as Minister of Social Enterprise at Bridge of Grace Compassion Ministries here in Fort Wayne. I hope to eventually replicate what I am growing there into a UCC styled ministry toward similar ends. This work has allowed me to involve a number of other Plymouth Church members in the housing ministry, furthering the Plymouth work of 'Just Peace' here in our own hometown.

This year I feel I am growing into my own unique sense of self in ministry. I am boldly tracking and employing my passions and skills in construction management, love of nature, and small group pastoral care. And, I am growing in keeping my family and marriage as very top priority, especially in these trying times. This COVID-19 season has been a double-edged sword – difficult and refining to say the least.

Over the next few years, my goals for myself and my ministry are:

1. Transfer to Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis to participate in their Urban Housing Ministry Training and complete my Masters of Divinity there, apply for Ordination directly thereafter, finding (or spearheading) work in a UCC church in Northeast Indiana.
2. Continue to grow in employment at Bridge of Grace Ministries in Fort Wayne.
3. Cultivate a small group pastoral care ministry similar in concept to a Medicine Wheel approach.
4. Innovate a woodland garden entrepreneurial model at a residential scale.
5. Lead small group faith retreats in nature settings a couple times a year.
6. Continue to integrate all of the above into a 3-2-1 work week. Approximately 3 days a week in parish and pastoral care ministries, 2 days a week in construction ministries, and 1 day a week in nature ministries. This way I can make gentle transitions in each area rather than overhauling them separately one at a time.

### Submitted by Allen Haynes, LM

One of the gifts of this pandemic year has been the opportunity to take this role of Licensed Minister into the everydayness of life. Not that I didn't do that previously, 2020 has presented many opportunities to put on my LM hat away from Plymouth Church - I have provided pastoral care to a work supervisor who lost a brother and nephew to COVID-19; engaged in on-going conversations with several individuals reflecting and reevaluating their priorities and beliefs in this time of slowed schedules and isolation; and in general, consciously tried to reflect the light and love of Jesus in this uncertain time in the community where I live. The following is a list of activities for 2020:

#### Kairos Care Team:

1/17/2020	Visited Kairos friend
1/25/2020	Kairos Team Meeting – Plymouth Church
2/25/2020	Visited Kairos friend
3/4/2020	Visited Kairos friend
Ongoing	FB messaging with Kairos friend
Spring 2020	Ongoing Cards to Kairos friend
6/29/2020	Porch visit with Kairos friend
8/17/2020	Porch visit with Kairos friend
11/9/2020	Porch visit with Kairos friend

Worship and Church Life:	4/19/2020 10/11/2020 10/11/2020 10/11/2020	Lector for morning worship Witnessing Steward for 2020 Stewardship Campaign Assisted with worship Participated in ACP Workshop for Plymouth Members
Association and Conference:	6/27/2020 July 2020	Indiana-Kentucky Conference – delegate IKC report for Annual Report
Advance Care Planning (ACP):	2/5/2020 4/22/2020 July 2020 8/5/2020 8/11/2020 8/20/2020 11/19/2020	ACP Job shadow – Parkview Health ACP Interview w/ Health Representative – via phone with Erica ACP Course work ACP Training – Parkview Health ACP Training – Parkview Health ACP Quarterly meeting ACP Quarterly meeting

As you may be aware, with the end of 2020, I will wrap up a career in conservation. I am not retiring from the working world, just from my position with the DeKalb Soil and Water Conservation District. Plans for 2021 include continuing to pursue options and opportunities to connect the important work of ACP to licensed ministry, to be present in the moment, and to weather this season of COVID-19 with all of you.

### **Submitted by January Simpson, LM**

Greetings! It is with thanksgiving that I offer this report on my activity as a licensed minister for Plymouth throughout 2020.

As it has been for so many people in so many realms of life, 2020 has been a year of disrupted activity for my service to Plymouth. The biweekly Bible studies I once facilitated at Cedars Hope are postponed indefinitely. Our monthly Tapping Into Faith gatherings at Mad Anthony Brewing are similarly postponed, having never successfully migrated to Zoom. I miss these – and so many other activities – sorely. However, it has been a year of new experiences and opportunities, for which I am grateful.

This year provided me various opportunities to provide pulpit supply which I really enjoyed. On February 16, I served at Peace UCC in Fort Wayne, preaching on I Corinthians 3:1-9. I also had the interesting experience of writing two different sermons on the same scripture. On March 15, I preached at First Congregational UCC in Angola on the woman at the well (it was the first “virtual” service of the pandemic for them, so it was an exciting Sunday of figuring things out together with others). Then, on August 9, I provided pulpit supply for Community UCC in Champaign, IL, via Zoom, and their “Unraveled” worship series had me preaching on the woman at the well again! It was a fun challenge to come up with two different messages from the same passage in such a relatively short time. At Plymouth, I served as worship assistant for communion service on October 18.

At the beginning of April, FCUCC in Angola contracted me for their weekly Scripture Stories – adult ed/Bible study. Some weeks I worked with Pastor Nikki Shaw, but other times was on my own, as she had other obligations at the scheduled time. These weekly Zoom meetings were such a gift as the pandemic dragged on! Sadly, I began a second job in October and was unable to accommodate Scripture Stories in my schedule any longer. It was a good experience to get to know and work with folks at one of our neighbor churches for a while; I miss them and am grateful for our time together.

During the summer, from July through August, I worked on and passed an online course covering UCC History & Polity, a requirement for my continued licensure through Plymouth. The course was led by the Rev. Dr. Toni Hawkins, the IKC Minister for Leadership Formation and Discernment. Being an absolute nerd, I found the course

fascinating, and came away from it with a better understanding of our denomination's history, of course, as well as a better sense of the denomination as a good fit for me.

In October of this year I marked two years of licensure, but was unable to meet with the Committee on Ministry for review. I offer thanks to the people of Plymouth for providing me these opportunities to deepen my relationship with and service to God, Plymouth Congregational Church, and our neighbors.

## **MODERATOR**

The year 2020 has been memorable, to say the least! The year began on a high note with the Annual Business Meeting in which we adopted a balanced budget. The congregation agreed to purchase the Cedar's Hope property. Board leadership training was carried out. Planning for our Sesquicentennial in September continued, and the annual MLK service provided its usual inspirational high. Little did we know what would be coming very soon with the rapid spread of COVID-19!

February: The Cedar's Hope property was acquired, and a Task Force was created to study and recommend possible options for its use. A request was received from Tom Blossom (a "child" of Plymouth) for financial support of the UCC's Sri Lanka project. The request was forwarded to the Benevolence Committee for consideration.

March: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 8th was our last Sunday for congregational in-person worship for the foreseeable future. Planning for our Sesquicentennial celebration was suspended as a result of the pandemic. It was decided the Sesquicentennial celebration would be cancelled for 2020. The celebration will be moved to September 2021.

April: Plymouth began "Zooming" for most of its church functions. While initially this seemed a strange way to "do" church, this online program allowed members to participate in church functions. I believe we have become much more comfortable with the process. Truthfully, how could we function without it or other systems like it during this time of the unpredictable? Perhaps Plymouth will consider these new online options in the future to become a part of a "new normal" when life becomes less chaotic? Could this become an additional "tool" in reaching out and communicating with members?

May: ALL church activities are carried out by Zoom meetings.

June: Rev. Ruth E. Phillips publicly announced her retirement, effective June 2021. A Search Task Force was created to identify her successor. Rev. Murphy, Ahnee Conner, and I worked with Rev. Chad Abbott and Rev. Monica Oulette to outline the scope and work of the Task Force.

July: This was a relatively "slow" month for church activities. However, a most important task was accomplished in the organizing of the Search Task Force and the selection of leadership for the group. The Task Force will be chaired by Beth Walker and Bill Vrabel. Many thanks to the members for stepping up to carry out the work of this most important effort.

August: Planning for the Stewardship Campaign began. Sunday the 23rd, we again returned to a limited in-person worship service format. Sunday the 30th, a commissioning of the Search Task Force occurred. The commission recognizes the process and the important work required in finding a successor for Rev. Ruth.

September: The witnessing stewards were recruited by the Stewardship Campaign Committee. Plymouth friends each shared their thoughts with the congregation about what Plymouth Church means to them and why Plymouth's presence in the Fort Wayne community and beyond is so important. Many thanks to those who contributed.

October: The Stewardship Campaign began its work. The Annual Election Meeting to elect Board members and church officers was held via the online Zoom format. The online meeting was well attended and a smooth meeting took place without any technology glitches. Many thanks to Rev. Timothy for his amazing capacity to facilitate this

online effort. CONGRATS, Plymouth folks for your willingness to try new things! Once again, the limited in-person worship services were halted to protect everyone as COVID-19 cases began to increase.

November: Another Zoom Executive Council meeting was held on the 3rd. Various use options considered by the Cedars Hope Task Force were shared and discussed. Yet to come in 2021 will be more sharing about uses for the property. A reminder to all: any final decision regarding the future use of the Cedars property will rest with the congregation. The Stewardship Campaign ended on the 8th with an option for a church drive-by drop-off of pledges. Pledges will continue to be welcomed and accepted.

December: The year ended without a Boar's Head celebration—another COVID-19 victim! While very disappointing, Rev. Timothy, Rev. Ruth and Maestro Nance provided very meaningful seasonal services.

As I reflect at these last two years as your Moderator, I feel a deep and lasting appreciation for the time and talents devoted to Plymouth and its mission, not only tremendous effort from professional staff, but also the many volunteers who serve on Boards, Task Forces, Committees, etc. Your commitment and caring are witness to how God works through the many in our church family who provide the “work” and leadership that makes Plymouth such an amazing example of giving outside of one’s self. It has been my privilege to witness this giving for the past two years.

Finally, some shout outs, first to Ahnee Conner, our new Moderator. Ahnee is a quick study in leadership. She will do a great job as our congregational leader. We will indeed be in good hands with her at the helm. Next, to Rev. Ruth: Many, many thanks for 20 years of meaningful service to Plymouth. Our best wishes go with you as you retire. Please know that you will be missed in so many ways. To Rev. Timothy, my heartfelt thanks for your leadership and support provided to me during my tenure as Moderator. Finally, to you the congregants of Plymouth: Thank you for granting me the honor of being your Moderator. It has been a fulfilling and meaningful role and one that I will value in the years to come.

Rick Schilb

## ASSOCIATE IN PASTORAL CARE

It was in 2007 that I was asked to become the new Associate in Pastoral Care who seeks to bring the peace of Christ and the love of our Plymouth people to our older members and friends. It has been a true gift to follow Judith Beineke who had served so faithfully in this role for many years. It is indeed a blessing for me to reconnect with many long-time members, reminiscing on days gone by and bringing the news of life at Plymouth today to them. Such a rich heritage of service they have given over the years.



Year 2020, however, has required a special way of connecting with each other. Due to COVID-19 we cannot visit people in their places of living. We can, however, call them on the phone, which I do very often. I also much appreciate the weekly bulletin. It so helps to get a lot of timely information for we are not living in ordinary times.

We continue to remember and pray for those in need. This year has also been a time of unexpected change in my family as death has entered twice. But you, Oh God, have been abundantly present in our lives. Hope is an integral part of pastoral care. Through phone calls, prayers, visits, cards, and notes, the Green family and the McCombs family have been recipient of much love and care. We are very grateful to the staff and members of Plymouth for your outreach.

Due to COVID-19 I have been unable to attend the various programs that have had a large attendance. My doctor says, “Stay home!” Some events, however, like the Conference on Ministry with the Aging, normally held every year at Towne House, were not held this year. I have, however, still been able to share this Holy ground with these wonderful folks through phone calls, cards, notes, and many prayers. Also, much to my surprise, I received in the mail a certificate recognizing and celebrating the anniversary of my Ordination which was held at Plymouth thirty years ago in 1990. Many thanks to the United Church of Christ and our Conference Minister Rev. Chad Abbott.

Today we now have an additional group of people known as the Kairos Visitation Team, thanks to the ministry of Rev. Ruth E. Phillips, Associate Pastor. These five folks are also involved in the visitation with longtime Plymouth people. What a gift we have in Mary Bir, Allen Haynes, Linda Kerr, Jan Modesitt, and January Simpson. The staff and the friends and members of Plymouth Church are a part of God's gifts.

I close with a poem that I have shared before as I think it speaks so well for these times.

### PARADOX

I've come to feel that life is paradox.  
Change is inherent: letting go and receiving are implied.  
I could dreamily and continually try to recapture the past  
or bitterly rehearse old conflicts, imprisoning myself in former scenes.  
But God calls me to respond to grace, to grow!  
In time and in Spirit I can release the past,  
and gratefully receive this new and stranger life,  
finding here a holy place to nurture the uncertainties,  
the possibilities, of gain from loss.  
Roberta Porter

With a grateful and hopeful heart,  
Carole Green

## YOUTH DIRECTOR



This program year has been an interesting one. This entire year has been an interesting one.

The Youth barely had time to gather following holiday break, before things "shut down" due to COVID-19.

The Annual Election Meeting was on Sunday January 26, 2020, and we were able to prepare, serve, and clean up an amazing lunch for the Congregation. Our Youth and Young Adults stepped up in full force and took charge of that event, which made me proud! That feels like a lifetime ago. The Youth were able to gather a couple of times, but come March 2020, all plans for winter activities, fundraisers, and events after were postponed. We would have had Plymouth Rocks and Plymouth Cabaret to help build our Youth budget for upcoming Youth events. Graduate Sunday was put on hold. The UCC National Youth Event for July 2020 was also postponed.

I realize the previous paragraph sounds really grim. And it feels grim to type it out. To have to go back and look at my calendar because it all seems so far away, like, did this all really happen? But I have some light to shed on the gloom of 2020.

Our Youth are awesome! They are resilient! They tackled finishing a school year after changing to remote learning. Our graduates celebrated with family and friends and masks, oh the masks, as best as they could, with the best attitudes possible. We joke that these days will be in history books later, and that their children will learn about this time in school. Everyone tried their best to make the most of the current times. Our high school graduates were: Riley Grim, Kennon Nicholson, and Kathleen Simunek.

Summer was another odd time. The weather was nice, but gatherings were not encouraged or advised due to the spread of the virus. The Youth were active on Zoom gatherings, even though Zoom was an all-day thing for school, and they were so over it, they made an effort to Zoom to keep in touch with their Youth pals.

Back to school time comes in August, and Youth Group kicks off in September, along with Sunday School. It was so strange not having this annual celebration. Once again, we all did the best we could. I would like to say Katie Watson, our Sunday School Director, is a pillar of inspiration! She kept things going, helped folks feel and stay connected and never wavered in planning for our young children and the Ministry of Plymouth Church. She helped me to stay motivated, and I tried to follow her lead. Thank you, Katie.

Our Youth are Zooming on Sundays at 12:30. We bring our lunch, catch up and find a game or some activity to keep us connected. It has not been as hard as I thought, as they want to be connected. I just have to keep trusting the process.

It has been a strange year, oh 2020, you have given us some challenges for sure. But once again, I am reminded how strong Plymouth Church is, how strong our congregation is, how strong our church family is. I am thankful, still. I am also ready for 2021, and I hope for positive things in the new year.

Blessings to you and yours,  
Kara K. Jaurigue

## SUNDAY SCHOOL DIRECTOR

What a year! Throughout these strange circumstances, Plymouth's children's ministries have continued to look for ways to support our children and families and encourage them to find ways to grow their faith together even when our community must stay apart.

When church gatherings first shut down in March, we worked to keep our old routines going. Packets with parts of the prepared curriculum were mailed out, and we met for Sunday School on Zoom at 9:00 am each Sunday. We also Zoomed on Wednesday afternoons so the kids could have some informal social time together.

Going into the summer, families saw many of their usual activities and travels get canceled. There was a need for fun, simple activities to make summer special. Camp Plymouth provided 8 weeks of activities, including written activities, videos, Zoom sessions, and mailed activity packets. Out of everything we tried, two methods were clear winners — videos of books read by Plymouth people and mailed packets of screen-free activities. (The videos had the added benefit of being just as much fun for our readers as for our kids!). Because these methods were so well received, they continued to be a main ingredient of our programming in the fall.

The 4th through 6th grade Our Whole Lives sexuality education class (OWL) was cut short after just two meetings in March. Thankfully, Michal Miller offered to host the class outside in her yard, and she and co-teacher Allie Brown were able to complete the course this summer with 8 students. The national leadership of the OWL program has recommended that the OWL curriculum should not be used in virtual settings, and we look forward to offering OWL for more ages once regular in-person programming can return.

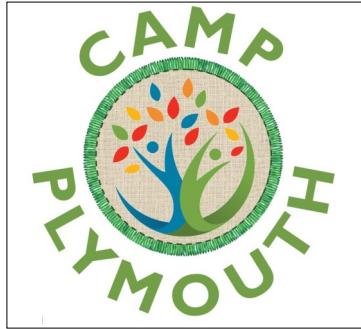


*Katie Watson hosting an outdoor activity*

This fall, with a better idea of how the virus would restrict us and what types of programming worked, I looked for a curriculum that would encourage families to engage in Faith Formation at home. We settled on a core set of stories from Godly Play. These quiet and meditative stories have a worship-like quality, so needed by families who have not worshiped together in our sanctuary for months. The story boxes we send home can be read simply, like a picture book, and include hands-on pieces that kids can play with as they retell the stories.

Along with the take-home stories, cautious outdoor gatherings let us support each other in community. As the COVID-19 numbers have worsened this fall, those gatherings have changed from outdoor worship at the park with over 40 people in September, to a self-directed hike families could participate in separately in December.

While it is an understatement to say this new way of doing Christian Education is a challenge, it has also brought its rewards. Sending out activity packets allows us to reach all of Plymouth's kids—not just those who make it to Sunday school. This fall we are sending children's packets to 30 preschool and elementary students and 25 middle and high school students. A third of the families participating in Camp Plymouth came from outside of our congregation, and several of those families continue to participate this fall. And keeping in touch with our Plymouth families has given me a chance to chat more with parents about how they nurture their children spiritually. Christian Education professionals have long promoted the home, not brief Sunday school classes, as the main place where children's faith is nurtured. This pandemic definitely gives us a chance to redirect our efforts into our homes!



New structures have given us a chance to involve a new set of Plymouth folks in our education ministry. Along with the teachers who started out in the classroom in the first few months, we've also had dozens of folks make instructional camp videos and story videos. Plymouth folks have donated art supplies that go into our mailed packets, and Plymouth folks have showed up to cheer on our kids at Zoom scavenger hunts and talent shows. Parents who might have enjoyed Sunday school time as a moment of rest and adult connection are now responsible for carrying out education at home, and I am thankful for the time they spend nurturing their children's faith. And this fall, I'd especially like to thank Janice Furtner, Dana Wichern, and Sam Lipscomb for designing the story cards and wooden figures that go into our take-home story boxes. Volunteering looks different in a pandemic—thank you to all those who have reached out, tried something new, and helped Plymouth keep connections with our children.

Finally, our kids deserve a huge shout out this year. This strange blip of a year looms large in their short lives. I am grateful for the ways our kids have reached out to each other this year and for the ways they have given new forms of church a chance. I miss our kids and families; and, like all of you, I am impatient for a time when we can meet together again. Until then, providing primarily remote programming is a way to keep connected with each other, to make space in our homes for exploring faith, and to keep our Plymouth folks safe at home.

Katie Watson

## CHILD CARE DIRECTOR

Child Care in Room 11 Nursery was provided from January until mid-March of 2020. We were enjoying the newly renovated and redesigned Room 11.

**Sunday Morning Nursery:** (ages 0-5 years) included reading, building with blocks, drawing pictures, singing songs, completing puzzles, and conversing at snack time. We averaged 7-10 children on each Sunday. \*We have had a new family with young children who had started attending.

The needs of the nursery and childcare during Sunday Service are reviewed each year to decide if Room 205 needs to be reinstated to accommodate preschoolers.

**Sunday Morning CFT:** (ages 6-12) Children's Fellowship Time was a great time of fellowship for children in this group. CFT had returned to meeting weekly under the supervision of Licensed Minister, David Grim and an alternating adult. During the sermon the children and the adult volunteers met in the Amistad Room and returned to the sanctuary during the offering. The children discuss their past week's happenings, or important activities that may be coming up, or other important things in their lives. The children also enjoyed playing board games and creating art and crafts. We averaged 6-15 children on Sunday mornings. Thank you to Christer Watson for creating a volunteer list for the "second adult" with the children and David.

**Wednesday Night Live:** (ages 1-10 years) We averaged about 8 children following Children's Choir. The children participated in "free choice play." Many children enjoyed drawing, reading, building, and creating forts and creating dramatic play.



Because of COVID-19 and the need to social distance, child care was not needed after Sunday morning services and all programs were shut down. Movie/game days for young adult group and Boar's Head did not occur.

Books were mailed to children as a way of staying connected over the summer and during our continuing shut down.

Plymouth Church holds a "Safe Church Policy", which means two adults are required to be present when working with children, so we are always looking for volunteers. Please contact Michelle Grim at [davidandmichellegrim@gmail.com](mailto:davidandmichellegrim@gmail.com) if this is an area in which you would like to discuss about volunteering.

Michelle Grim

## MEDIA SPECIALIST

My goal for 2020 was to ensure that we have the best recordings, broadcasts, and graphics to effectively deliver the content of Plymouth Congregational Church. My continued focus is to have consistent delivery of our content through multiple channels, as well as better interaction with the congregation.

Since I have come aboard, we have worked through various technical issues and identified several ways that our recording and delivery methods can be improved. I feel we are finally gaining our stride. Also by listening to the feedback from our viewers, we have made changes to our broadcasts that ensure that everyone is getting the most from our online content.

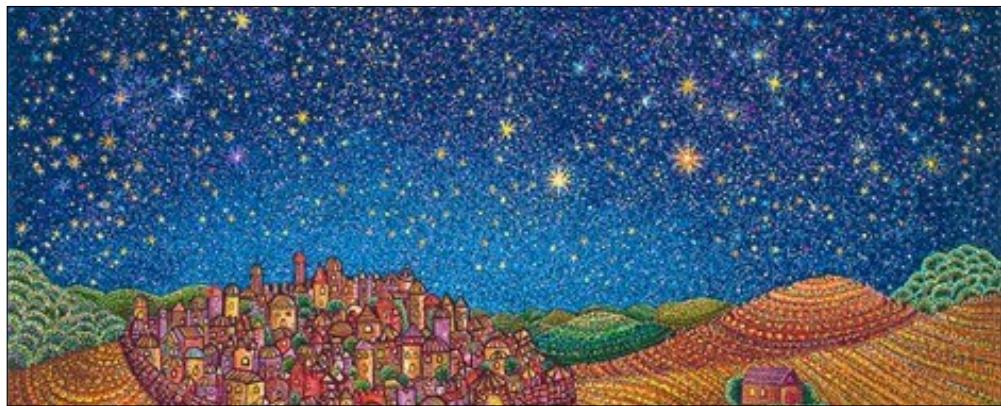
Our future plans include upgrading the quality of our broadcasts and making each digital service more interactive. We plan to do this by software and equipment upgrades. We will be making digital services as well as other digital miniseries available on YouTube, Facebook, Public Access, and on a dedicated page on the Plymouth website.

While we are working hard to deliver a quality program each week, we also have not forgotten that the message of Christ is the real focus of all our media offerings. Hopefully these messages are coming across crystal clear each week. I'd like to thank the staff for welcoming me aboard and patiently working with me. I'm excited to continue being your Media Specialist.

Nakia Brabham

## CLERK

"The Clerk shall collaborate with the Office Manager to make certain that there is a faithful record of membership rolls and the proceedings of the Church. These include admissions, baptisms, dismissals, and removals as well as appropriate Church correspondence...minutes of all Congregational meetings [and] minutes of meetings of the Executive Council and Boards and Committees..." (Bylaws, ARTICLE VI, Section 1.E.)



*Art by John August Swanson—Advent*

The following summary shows the membership figures for 2020.

<b>Total Members as of December 31, 2019</b>	<b>550</b>
<b>Additions</b>	
Letters of Transfers In	1
Affirmation of Faith	4
Confirmation	0
<b>Total Additions</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Removals</b>	
Deaths (members)	11
Deacons' Removal	0
Withdrawn by Request	2
Letters of Transfer Out	0
<b>Total Removals</b>	<b>13</b>

<b>Total Members as of December 31, 2020</b>	<b>542</b>
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<b>New Members</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>How Received</b>
Clara Bowling	03/22/20	Affirmation
Trevor Harkenrider	03/22/20	Affirmation
Bryce Longenberger	03/22/20	Affirmation
Erin Shaw	03/22/20	Transfer In
Patrick Vonderau	03/22/20	Affirmation

<b>Baptisms</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Officiant</b>
Isaac McCrory	02/09/20	Rev. Timothy C. Murphy
Son of Ashlee and Alex McCrory		
Adelaide Carolyn Ruth Bennett	07/01/20	Rev. Ruth E. Phillips
Catherine Loretta Rose Bennett	07/01/20	Rev. Ruth E. Phillips
Twin daughters of Brittany Ramsey and Clayton Bennett		

<b>Deaths</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>How Received</b>
Eulah Lindenberg	11/24/09*	Member
Jack Ade	04/03/18*	Member
Jeanette Lohse	01/28/20	Member
Virginia Nance	03/08/20	Member
Suzanne "Susie" Jontz	03/18/20	Member
George Irmscher	05/21/20	Member
Charmaine Siekmann	06/03/20	Member
Robert Jensen	07/03/20	Member
Isabelle Shockney	08/30/20	Member
Donna Riethmiller	08/31/20	Member
Shirley Laser	12/19/20	Member

*\*Retroactive*

Joan Lipscomb, Clerk; Tina Puitz, Assistant to the Clerk

## WORSHIP ATTENDANCE INFORMATION

Church attendance in 2020 came to a total of 1,146. Due to COVID-19, worship shifted from in-person to online only in mid-March. During the months of August, September, and October Plymouth hosted worship offered limited in-person attendance to worship. In-person attendance was halted again in mid-October as local cases of COVID-19 began to rise again.

MONTH (all services)	TOTAL	MONTH	TOTAL
January	455	July	N/A
February	330	August*	25
March	196	September*	99
April	N/A	October*	41
May	N/A	November	N/A
June	N/A	December	N/A

Because of social distancing requirements over the course of 2020, the only special worship service to be held in-person was Ash Wednesday with an attendance of 35. All other special worship services were held online.

The following charts provide a comparison of the 2020 and 2019 average Sunday worship attendance by month, with a final average for the 10:00 am service representing each year.

2020 Worship Averages	
Month	10:00 am
January	114
February	110
March*	98
April	N/A
May	N/A
June	N/A
July	N/A
August*	25
September*	25
October*	20
November	N/A
December	N/A
<b>Monthly</b>	<b>N/A</b>

2019 Worship Averages	
Month	10:00 am
January	150
February	172
March	186
April	230
May	178
June	167
July	145
August	160
September	165
October	172
November	198
December	181
<b>Monthly</b>	<b>175</b>

## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION BOARD

Opportunities in classes and special programs are the responsibility of this board, working in conjunction with individuals and committees. It is our intention to encourage and nurture the personal congregational spiritual formation and growth for all ages.

Children's education has been very creatively planned and carried out during this COVID-19 pandemic by Katie Watson, Sunday School Director. Please see her report.

Youth activities and projects have also seen big changes and adjustments due to the pandemic. Kara Jaurigue, Youth Director, with the Youth Advisory Committee has worked tirelessly to stay connected with our youth. Please see her report.

Covenant Class began with five participants this year, under leadership of Rev. Ruth E. Phillips. Rev. Ruth has faced the same challenges as others in finding new ways to mentor and guide these young people through learning and discerning as they explore and question over months of study.



*Sunday School Zoom*

Adult Chapel Classes were led by a variety of gifted teachers and facilitators, implementing Zoom classes by early April, so study and discussions could continue from home. We owe a debt of gratitude to all.

January: Rev. Timothy C. Murphy led a lively look at *Faith and Interaction with Music and Hymns*. Attendees were encouraged to share some of the music and of hymns they found meaningful over their lifetimes.

February/March: David Grim, Licensed Minister offered classes looking at the *Relevance of the Teachings of Ancient Mystics with Modern Christianity*. Classes studied Julian of Norwich, Hildegard of Bingen, Clare of Assisi and others whose utter devotion solely to understanding God, brought fresh challenges and insights about contemplative living for busy and sometimes harried Christ seekers.

February: Rev. Timothy C. Murphy returned to Chapel Class to lead three classes on *Wealth and Income Inequalities*, looking at differences between income and wealth; how scripture informs us about wealth inequality and finally looking at potential solutions for the inequalities which persist.

April: A series on Food Deserts in Fort Wayne had to be postponed due to COVID-19 but will be a topic for future classes.

May: January Simpson, Licensed Minister, brought "*Let's Talk about Faith.*" This was done through the lens of philosophers and theologians of the 1600s to today. The series examined the nature of faith and its role then and now, as human reasoning has advanced and ways of comprehending reality have changed. Classes examined selected writings of Soren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Martin Heidegger.

September/October: Rev. Dr. Michael Spath began a series on *Eastern Religions* with a 6-week study of *Lessons from India* titled, "*The Hindu Path.*" His background and experience in teaching world religions makes him such a gifted instructor. We plan to continue this series in 2021 with *Lessons from The Buddha* and eventually *Lessons from China* – Taoism and Confucianism.

October/November: Rev. Timothy C. Murphy returned to Chapel class to teach a series titled *Interfaith Relations*. These classes offered participants an opportunity to look at different schools of thought or approaches Christians use to define/describe our relationships with other religions: exclusivism, inclusivism, monistic pluralism, deep pluralism and pragmatic inclusivism. One can be sure these led to lively discussions and expressions of thought.

December: Our *Advent Study* was led by January Simpson utilizing scripture, music, poetry and other readings to expand the experience and deepen the meaning of preparing our hearts for the birth of our Savior, Jesus the Christ.

The table below lists our attendance totals for 2020.

Classes	Before COVID-19	During COVID-19
Chapel Class	12-16	6
Rev. Timothy's Bible Study	10-20	8
Rev. Ruth's Wednesday Study	5	N/A
Michael Spath's Class	24	27
Rev. Ruth's Thursday Study Group	5	6
Intergenerational	8-10	N/A

Respectfully Submitted,  
Linda Kerr

Board Members: Laura Filler, Robin Grimm, Suzanne Nell, Karen Nesius Roeger, Chris Randolph, Jeanie Rhoades  
Staff Consultant: Rev. Ruth E. Phillips

## Peace and Justice Committee

Continuing Projects:

- Supported Study Connection for Fairfield School with snacks and needed materials. There were 9 children and 9 tutors with 3 subs who were active until mid-March. In the Fall, we had 6 children and 6 tutors via Zoom.
- In February, invited Plymouth members to collect art/craft items for Fairfield School that included paper towels, pens, markers, glue sticks, paperclips, buttons, beads, sequins, stickers, pipe cleaners, tissue paper, cloth squares, ribbon, lace, paint, sanitizer wipes, Play-Doh, glitter, measuring tape, old cards, colored paper, and crayons. Collection of these items by Evangelism and Marketing Board.
- In October, teacher and staff appreciation gift basket presented to Fairfield School that included 130 snacks, 48 decorative pencils, 16 Starbucks gift cards, and 70 thank you cards to all staff.
- Presented the Amistad Award to Nikki Fultz via Zoom in March.
- Information and various articles written for the Bell and E-Bell - many about voting
- Attendance at quarterly meeting of Fort Wayne Area Planning Council on Homelessness



Snacks for Fairfield Teachers

New Projects:

- Hosted Effective Letter Writing event for the congregation to promote communication with those in office as well as the public
- Took part in Faith in Indiana's voter calling campaign during the months of September and October, and attended other events held throughout the year
- Initiated volunteers from the congregation to drive a young Muslim woman to her English classes 4 times per week

- Advocated for Poor People's Campaign Moral March on Washington on June 20 via bus trip. This was cancelled due to the pandemic, but took place virtually.
- Several members attended Friday Prayers at the Universal Education Center and met with Muslim members and the Imam to begin team building between Plymouth and other mosques. The hope was to hold an interfaith event in the Fall, which was postponed due to the pandemic.
- Recorded video for the Resource Faire highlighting the work of the PJ Committee
- Two PJ members active in Fort Wayne Human Library
- Supported the following through financial contributions:
  - Faith in Indiana
  - Hoosier Interfaith Power & Light
  - Darfur Women's Network
  - Bright Stars of Bethlehem
  - Pride

Submitted by Jan D. Evrard, Chair

Committee Members: Lucy Hess, Linda Hite, Betty Deans, Jane Meredith, Carol Patterson

Staff Consultant: Rev. Timothy C. Murphy

## CONGREGATIONAL LIFE BOARD

In this the year of COVID-19, Congregational Life has attempted to stay active and bring us together as a congregation.

January 19: Congregational Life assisted the Music Committee for refreshments following the Martin Luther King service. Coffee and cookies were served.

February 25: Shrove Tuesday was celebrated. The usual pancakes and sausages were served along with New Orleans Style Jazz music and, as always, a good time.

March 8: We served pinwheels and chips for a welcoming group luncheon. Seven people were served.

Starting the first of April, Congregational Life participated in a Phone Tree to keep us connected with one another during our COVID-19 shutdown.

Sunday, September 27: We sponsored Plymouth in the park at Conklin Pavilion in Shoaff Park. It was an opportunity to connect on a small scale for the sake of safety by having five one-hour sessions from noon till 5:00. It wasn't well attended but turned out to be a beautiful early fall day, and was enjoyed by those who participated.

AJ Calkins once again served Thanksgiving dinner through a sign up/carry out format in keeping safe during the pandemic. Congregational Life helped and served pies.

Starting in December, Congregational Life began hosting a hospitality hour via Zoom for anyone wanting to connect for gab.

2020 saw one new member to our board: Cathy Clifford Nicholson.



*Shrove Tuesday volunteers Monty Millage and Cindy Ottinger*

In January, The Caring Team hosted one reception for Dee Smith. Due to COVID-19, no more in- church receptions were held. Approximately sixty people are on the email list as volunteers chaired by Jan Gibson. A big thanks to all those who volunteer.

Once again, Congregational Life would like to thank everyone for their help and participation in all our events and look forward to a more COVID-19-free future.

Respectfully Submitted,

Monty Millage, Chair

Charlene Holly, Executive Council Representative; Cindy Ottinger, Recorder; Vicki Kruse, Recorder; Cathy Clifford; Nancy Kilduski; Bill Lambert

Staff Consultant: Rev. Ruth E. Phillips

## **Standish Colony Circle**

The Standish Group consists of members and friends of Plymouth Church who donate the proceeds from their projects to nonprofit agencies serving families. Even with the restrictions necessary because of COVID-19, the Pepper Jelly was made, sold, and delivered; and the prepaid orders for Christmas Wreaths and Garlands were filled during a scheduled pickup arrangement.

A new project, donating items on the Wish List for Crossroad Child & Family Services yielded a particularly generous array of needed items for the emotionally troubled children and youths served by this agency.

Barbara Bugg served ably as the Group Communicator.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Balthaser

## **Sesquicentennial Task Force**

In 2019, the Sesquicentennial Task Force was formed to plan, coordinate, and execute the yearlong celebration of Plymouth's 150th anniversary from September 20, 2019 to September 20, 2020. As reported in last year's Annual Report, we developed the mission statement of

“Celebrating 150 Years of Living Faithfully into the Future”

We decided to hold a Kickoff Luncheon, to have monthly Sesquicentennial Moments, to place weekly SesquiBits of church history in the bulletin and social media sites, and to have a final celebration in September 2020. In addition, the Mentors were compiling, organizing, cataloging, digitizing, and preserving the church's records and artifacts.

The pandemic caused the final celebration to be postponed to September 2021 and paused the archiving activities due to social distancing and safety. However, we were able to complete our other objectives by September 2020.

Thank you to Gordon Walter for supplying the SesquiBits, and to the church office staff for making sure they were printed in the bulletin and posted on social media sites each week. Thank you to the following people who provided Sesquicentennial Moments each month:

October 2019	How It All Began	David Craker
November 2019	The Evolution of Our Buildings	David Craker
December 2019	Boar's Head History	Jim Schmidt and Katherine Caldwell
January 2020	Global Mission Covenant	Rick Schilb
February 2020	Just Peace Covenant	Lucy Hess
March 2020	PCC and Women's Rights	Gale Cunningham
April 2020*	Earthwise Covenant	Sandy Molire

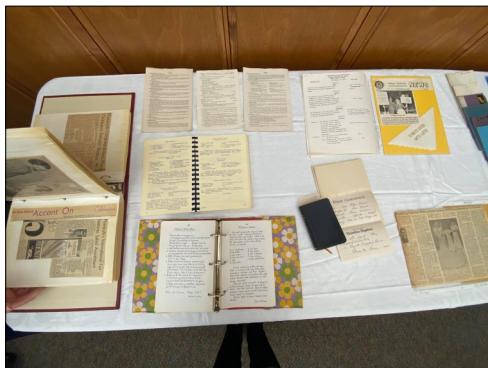
May 2020*	Open and Affirming Covenant	Kirby Volz
June 2020*	Wedding History at PCC	Sharon Conrad, Anne Hughes, Mariellen Beitman, and David Craker
July 2020*	PCC Religious Arts and Music	John Escosa
August 2020*	History of Christian Education	Ann Filler

\* presented virtually

The Task Force consists of 5 members (David Craker (chair), Katherine Caldwell, Kirby Volz, Mariellen Beitman and Stan Pflueger) and 4 Advisors/Mentors (the late Dee Smith, Barbara Bugg, Jim Schmidt, and Linda Balthaser) with assistance and oversight from Rev. Timothy C. Murphy, Rev. Ruth E. Phillips, Beth Walker and Rick Schilb.

In July 2020, the STF decided to temporarily disband, but we will be coming back together in March 2021 to plan the final celebration to be held during the third weekend of September 2021. Specific details will be announced this coming summer. After being locked down, quarantined and unable to meet for weekly worship, I am sure we will all be ready to celebrate Plymouth's Sesquicent-annual/150<sup>th</sup>/151<sup>st</sup> birthday together.

Respectfully Submitted,  
David Craker, Chair



*Photos from Gale Cunningham's PCC and Women's Rights Display*

## DEACONS' WORSHIP BOARD

Serving on this year's Deacons' Worship Board were David Bayle (recorder), Jan Gibson (Co-chair) David Grim, Kristen Miller, Carol Patterson, Carol Tyndall (Executive Council Representative), and Lucy Hess (Co-chair).

Resignations of David Bayle in March and David Grim in September, both due to personal reasons, resulted in Kristen Miller becoming the Recorder. Bryce Western accepted our invitation to complete David Bayle's term of office and the Executive Council approved. In January 2021, the Deacons' Worship Board will have a full membership. The leadership members will be Chairperson, Lucy Hess, Recorder Kristen Miller, and the Executive Council Representative Carol Tyndall.

According to our Bylaws, the Deacons Worship Board is primarily responsible for “providing the Congregation with opportunities for corporate worship, observation of sacraments,” and seven other related tasks. Ushers have been organized this year by Carol Tyndall. We thank her for her organization and service to all who volunteer as ushers particularly Roger Eversole and Monty Millage. The tapestries are faithfully changed by John Escosa, Joe Bir, and David Grim. John Escosa has been responsible for the sound system during worship along with Eric Miller. Our former Media Specialist Kibwe Cooper controlled the video equipment until he resigned for personal reasons in March. The current Media Specialist, Nakia Brabham began in August. During the spring and early summer, worship was provided digitally until July 19 when Plymouth was able to offer livestreaming of worship services and the summer music series.

Deacons assisted in every communion using individual cups which was served the first and third Sunday each month until mid-March. Due to COVID-19, all in person worship was suspended until August. In order to protect the members, the Deacons purchased prepackaged wafer and cup that could be used safely during the limited in-person worship. September 6 was the first time for the use of the prepackaged communion items. The Deacons used these for the rest of 2020 when in-person services were held. Other opportunities for worship such as Maundy Thursday and Good Friday were cancelled. Christmas Eve services were virtual.

The Safety Committee, made up of Tom and Vicki Braun, Sam Lipscomb, and Monty Millage, installed the first phase of safety equipment and items in the church. In the coming year, they will install the second phase of safety items. A report follows.

Our Director of Music, Robert Nance is choral director, organist, pianist, teacher, mentor, and more. We are grateful for his work with the Sanctuary Singers and his ability to continue music during COVID-19. As a Board, we appreciated Bob Nance's creativity to offer the summer and fall music series live streamed. The Music Ministry Report follows.

The Boar's Head and Yule Log Festival was cancelled this year due to COVID-19 precautions. The Boar's Head leadership team organized a virtual experience. The Boar's Head and Yule Log report follows.

Finally, the Deacons worked to finalize the Deacons' Worship Board Handbook that explains the many duties and procedures used to carry out the Deacons' tasks. The Handbook continues to be a work in progress.

It has been a challenge due to COVID-19 but mostly an honor and privilege for each Deacon to serve Plymouth Congregational Church this past year.

Respectively Submitted,

Lucy Hess, Co-Chair

Board Members: Jan Gibson (co-chair), Kristen Miller, Carol Patterson, Carol Tyndall, Bryce Western

Staff Consultant: Rev. Timothy C. Murphy

## Safety Committee

We received approval for part of our proposal for First Aid equipment in the 2020 Budget. We hope to be able to gain additional support in 2021 to complete the project.

In 2020, there were three first aid cabinets installed in the Nursery, main floor kitchen, and the third floor kitchen. Each of these locations also has a bleeding control kit, blood borne pathogen kit, rubber gloves, sanitary wipes and liquid dispenser. In addition, two automatic external defibrillators were installed: one in the Narthex and another in the Folsom Room. Each have a trauma bag with them.

The goal for 2021 is to install first aid cabinets in the Narthex and in the basement kitchen each with appropriate sub-equipment listed above. An additional automatic external defibrillator with trauma bag will be located in the basement kitchen. The 2021 installations are subject to budget approval.



*First aid cabinet*

To fully utilize this new equipment we arranged for Laura Rudolph to instruct a CPR and defibrillator class for 18 Church staff and Safety Committee members.

We will pursue seeking medical professionals in our congregation who are willing to volunteer their services when an emergency occurs when the church re-opens.

Another area addressed by the Safety Committee was the new Church Safety Policy proposed by our Rev. Timothy C. Murphy. This proposal is a comprehensive personal behavior and congregational safety document. The Committee studied it in detail and submitted several amendments for consideration by the Deacons' Board of which we are a subcommittee.

Current members of the Committee are Sam Lipscomb, Monty Millage, Patrick Vonderau, and myself. We will be looking to add new members in the new year.

Tom Braun, Safety Committee Chair

## **Boar's Head and Yule Log Festival Committee**

Because of COVID-19, our annual report is very short as the Festival Committee did not produce and present the 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Boar's Head and Yule Log Festival. It was with great sadness and disappointment that our decision was made to cancel this long-standing tradition for 2020; but it was the correct and appropriate response protecting our cast, crews, choirs, orchestra, and audience. This postponement was communicated to all Plymouth members and friends on our mailing list as well as past crews, choirs, cast, and patrons in a letter sent out in September. There were approximately 1,000 letters sent. We look forward to 2021, when we pray we can gather safely again in our Sanctuary, so mark your calendars for December 28, 29, and 30, 2021 for the return of the Festival.

In the Festival's place, Eric Miller used his artistic and technical talents to produce a YouTube video which was available on Plymouth's YouTube Channel on the traditional December dates in 2020. All who "YouTubed" in heard the music and saw some old photos and video of the Festival and a virtual "Oh, Come All Ye Faithful." The Committee sincerely thanks Bob Nance for the idea and Eric for his efforts to keep the Festival "alive" for us.

Finally, the costume crew has faithfully met to repair and replace several costumes for the 2021 Festival. They include Katherine Caldwell - Costume Coordinator and crew: Brandy Logan, Jim Clauser, Maggie Amstutz Fiedler, Janice Furtner, Sue Mau, Sue McCurdy, Bev McFadden, and Louise Misegades. We extend our deepest thanks for their efforts and dedication.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jim Schmidt, Boar's Head Festival Committee chairperson

## **Music Ministry**

I am privileged to present my 21st Annual Report on the activities of the Music Ministry at Plymouth Congregational Church. I, along with two music associates, members of the Music Committee, and volunteers have worked diligently to adapt and adjust our programming as a result of the pandemic. We have managed to maintain a reasonable connection to participants via social media, zoom meetings and rehearsals, limited seating events at worship and concerts, and more. We have helped to develop the church's live-stream capabilities so that worship and concerts can be conducted with a high degree of effectiveness. We have also reached out to help area artists maintain their artistry by accommodating their requests for use of the building when needed to record, present concerts, and other related endeavors.



### Highlights of 2020:

On January 19, Plymouth Music Series collaborated with Heartland Sings to present the annual community DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING COMMEMORATION. We asked all attendees to sign a pledge to practice peace in an effort to give them the opportunity to take action.

On February 16, Plymouth Music Series presented UNCLOUDED DAY, a faith-based gospel vocal group.

In March, the Pandemic hit...services went virtual, with video recordings and livestreams distributed via YouTube. Music Director Robert Nance begins a daily musical offering via social media.

In April, our Holy Week services were recorded and distributed via YouTube.

On May 3, the music ministry presented a live-stream concert to raise funds for COVID-19 relief.

In June, the regular church season ended with a recorded version of our annual Pentecost New Orleans Style Jazz Worship Service.

Due to the pandemic, we reconfigured the 2020 Summer Arts Festival to feature concerts with limited seating and broadcast via livestream. We presented several concerts: In July, BROADWAY LEGEND J. MARK McVEY in concert with Brad Kuhns, Tod Ramsey, Colleen Tan and Robert Nance; In August, THE GHOSTS OF PLYMOUTH'S PAST, an Organ recital featuring Robert Nance and narrator Janice Furtner; and in early September, TWO FRIENDS, TWO KEYBOARDS, TOO FUN, a piano duet concert featuring Robert Nance and Jonathan Young.

In late August, the Music Ministry kicked off a different season of Wednesday Night Live activities with outdoor children's choir, socially distanced handbell rehearsal, and Zoom meeting rehearsals with the Sanctuary Singers.



*July concert featuring J. Mark McVey*

In September, we kicked off the church year, but with little fanfare due to COVID-19. Our 150th Anniversary celebration was postponed until 2021. Services were livestreamed.

The music ministry announces a special Music Series which is focused on the employment of musicians in the community who have been furloughed due to the pandemic. In October, we featured a string orchestra made up of local, unemployed musicians and our own music director at the piano for a concert entitled, "BACHtoberfest." In November, THANKSGIVING BRASS, featuring a brass quintet and organ. And in December, a WINTER SOLSTICE concert featuring area wind players.

Special music for the holiday season was recorded and/or live-streamed in November and December. We welcomed Heartland Sings' Vocal Artists and Orchestra to record for television Handel's MESSIAH. Music Director Robert Nance began a series of Zoom concerts from the Sanctuary for congregations and friends of Plymouth to hear music of the season and to hear words of encouragement. The 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Boar's Head and Yule Log Festival Services was postponed until 2021 and, in lieu of the annual performance, a commemorative Boar's Head video was prepared and aired virtually the week after Christmas.

#### General Program Information:

The Plymouth Music Ministry has a wide range of opportunities for participants, though for the bulk of this year they have been shuttered due to the pandemic. Opportunities range from the Sanctuary Singers (choir for older youth and adults), Youth Music opportunities (high school and middle school), Children's Choirs (PreK-2, 3-5), Plymouth Bell Ensemble (older youth to adults), Thee Combo (contemporary piano, bass, percussion ensemble), and various individually tailored opportunities for talented members of the congregation to share their talent in worship. New last year were the Plymouth Wind Ensemble and the Plymouth String Ensemble. We hope these groups will return to more regular rehearsals and activities in the new year. Until then, we continue to invite (when it is safe to do so) various individuals and small ensembles to offer their talents via recorded video or live-stream for our virtual worship services and concerts.

The Music Ministry is a steward of some of the finest musical resources in the city including an extensive music library and excellent instruments.

The music library is quite a treasure trove of choral, handbell, keyboard, and orchestral selections. We continue to make improvements to the music library with ongoing maintenance, including retirement of titles, replacement of deteriorating or lost copies of titles, new storage boxes, and the acquisition of new music. This year, we began a multi-year project to cull through the music library, retiring old titles that are no longer viable and replacing music storage containers that were deteriorated.

Plymouth is blessed with some of the finest instruments in the city, which are openly available to qualified musicians and students when schedules permit. We have a custom-made Allen Digital Renaissance Concert Organ (largest of its type in the region), two concert-grade Steinway grand pianos, a Yamaha AvantGrand™ digital grand piano (not portable), a Yamaha P-250 digital keyboard (substantial yet portable), a 4-Octave set of Malmark Handbells and a 4-octave set of Choir Chimes, a substantial set of Orff Instruments, various percussion instruments, and sundry other instruments used for the musical education.

Overall, the quality of Plymouth's musical instruments and equipment ranges from good to outstanding, and we are blessed to be the stewards of such equipment for our use in worship, special services, and concerts.



All in all, it has been a very unusual year and one I will never forget. I have made it a priority to have music in the Sanctuary as often as possible and, thanks to all the talent at Plymouth Church, we have managed to maintain a reasonably effective ministry. I certainly look forward to the time when we can safely gather together to worship and sing. Until that time, I will continue to keep the music flowing from Plymouth Congregational Church.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Nance, Director of Music

Tim Cunningham and Phil Slane, Music Associates

Music Committee: Jan Younger, Chair; David Bayle, Mariellen Beitman, Anne Hughes, Jane Meredith, Eric Miller, and Virginia Zimmerman

## EVANGELISM AND MARKETING BOARD

The Evangelism and Marketing Board is happy to report that 2020 has been a wonderfully active year, all things considered. While events were all-but eliminated, we enjoyed the success of our new monthly supply drives and look forward to the continuing growth of Plymouth's presence in and engagement with our community.

In an effort to do our part as responsible stewards of Plymouth's resources, E&M decided to postpone the purchase of t-shirts, new banners, and rack cards until we are again having in-person gatherings that make them useful. We have three new banner designs prepared, as well as updated rack cards on the covenants, activities "beyond worship," and the little calling cards with our basic information for pew pockets and welcome gifts. We have also designed t-shirts that look pretty fantastic. Like everyone, we are looking forward to the time we can make use of such things!

Through E&M, Plymouth served as a financial sponsor of the Positive Resource Center's annual Dinner Dance. In exchange for sponsorship, Plymouth's name and logo were included on the event website and sponsor list, which cumulatively reach a great number of people. Along with the benefit of name recognition, such sponsorship keeps our relationship with the PRC strong and fruitful.

Regarding advertising, E&M continued with regular underwriting spots on WBOI/WBNI public radio and made good use of Plymouth's Facebook account, placing ads and boosting specific posts and events throughout the year. Interaction with these ads was strong, and we intend to continue with them for the foreseeable future. We are also working on creating some banner ads that can run online next year when, we hope, we can invite people to gather with us.

In February, we finalized the new Plymouth logo, designed by Meg Doyle, a graphic designer in Florida recommended to us by someone who had used her services on behalf of the UCC's Heartland Conference. Board members consulted with Rev. Ruth and Rev. Timothy as we narrowed down the 24 design options and requested small changes to our favorites. We also adopted an early logo concept as our "covenant graphic". The process of logo design and tweaking and eventual choice was longer than anticipated, but we are truly thrilled with the results, and we hope you are too. We think the logo is colorful, full of life and growth, and rich in symbolism. It pairs well with our sesquicentennial motto – Living Faithfully Into the Future. Also, both the logo and covenant graphic use UCC branding guidelines for colors and font, which ties us visually to the denomination.

Rev. Timothy stated in his March 2020 Bell article that the tree in our new logo highlights our environmental concerns and like a tree, "we ain't going anywhere." It also depicts two people in positions of celebration, a symbol of our community and commitment to positive actions and good news.



While all of our usual events were cancelled due to the pandemic and Tapping Into Faith failed to translate well into an online gathering after several attempts, E&M did have the pleasure of representing Plymouth at the PFW Pride Fair in October. It was the first such fair hosted by the LGBTQ+ Resource Center at PFW, and we will continue to participate if they continue to have the event. Many students – particularly freshmen new to Fort Wayne – were stunned and delighted to discover that a church exists that offers enthusiastic welcome and affirmation to LGBTQ+ folks. We had some good conversations and handed out plenty of pronoun pins, Be the Church magnets, and Plymouth pens.

Ending our report on a high note, E&M has been downright gob-smacked by the generosity of our fellow Plymouth folks during our new tradition of monthly supply drives. When it became clear that COVID-19 was going to keep us from being together and being active in the community in the ways we're used to, we decided to invite Plymouth to evangelize in a new way, and thus our drive-up, contactless supply drives were born. The results have been spectacular.

- June—Positive Resource Connection: We did not get an official count from them, but we delivered two very full carloads of personal hygiene supplies and canned foods.
- July—Camp Red Cedar: Over 400 craft supplies, toys, and games
- August—Fairfield Elementary: 87 boxes Kleenex, 54 packs paper towels, 23 bottles hand sanitizer, 16 boxes bleach wipes, 13 boxes 1-gallon zip bags, 42 pairs of socks, and 45 pencil boxes
- September—Just Neighbors: 49 bath towels, 21 wash cloths, 3 hand towels, 26 sheet sets, 18 blankets, and 5 pillows
- October—Fairfield Elementary: 260 pairs of socks, 180 pairs of underwear, 44 pairs of sweatpants, 41 pairs of gloves, 36 hats, 9 coats, 8 sweatshirts
- November—Wellspring: 139 cans veggies/fruit, 113 cans beans, 73 cans fish/meat, 46 packs pasta/rice, 37 cans soup, 28 boxes instant potato flakes, 30 bottles condiments, 10 baking mixes, 9 jars peanut butter, 9 dessert mixes, 2 boxes cereal, 25 pouches hot cocoa, 31 bottles dish soap, 12 clothing donations (including coats and boots), and assorted books and cards.
- December: Cedars Hope: 12 residents each received a \$25 gift card and a gift item thanks to 18 Plymouth "Santas."

We are grateful for everyone who has participated in these collections so far, and hope that we can keep this good news for the community, even when the pandemic is over. As we like to say, Plymouth is here for good.

January Simpson, Chair  
Board Members: Alan Chambers, Molly Jordan, Kyle Miller



*Some donations for PRC*



*July set-up crew*



*Camp Red Cedar donations*



*Fairfield donations*



*Inaugural PFW Pride*



*Just Neighbors donations*

## HUMAN RESOURCES BOARD

Staff changes occurring in 2020 include the resignations of Kenneth Althon, Financial Administrator, Kibwe Cooper, Media Specialist, Michael Braaten, part-time Custodian and Front Desk Attendant, Maressa Emile, Office Assistant/ Receptionist. New additions to the staff include Molly Miller, Financial Administrator and Nakia Brabham, Media Specialist.

Due to COVID-19 and limited activity in the church, the part-time Custodian/Front Desk Attendant and the Office Assistant/ Receptionist positions were not filled in 2020. The plan is to fill the vacancies when the church reopens for regular church services and activities in 2021.

The Human Resources Board worked within their 2020 budget.

### Additional Activities in 2020:

- Reviewed staff evaluations prepared by senior department administrators including the Senior Pastor and Associate Pastor.
- Revised and created Job Descriptions for staff as needed. Reviewed and revised the Financial Administrator job description in preparation for hiring a new person for this position.
- Assisted with transition procedures for staff as needed and/or requested.
- Engaged with supervising staff members in discussions regarding staff issues, concerns, and joys.
- Reviewed Plymouth's current insurance and pension plans.
- Reviewed and updated current Human Resources Policy.
- Prepared and submitted the Annual Human Resources Board Budget to the Executive Council.
- Monitored the monthly expenditures of the Human Resources Budget.
- Collaborated with other boards and committees regarding human resources-related issues as needed and/or requested.

Respectfully Submitted by John Hoffman, Chair  
Board Members: Tom Braun, Doug Powers, Margie Dougherty, Laura Ramsey, Jan Modesitt  
Staff Consultant: Rev. Timothy C. Murphy

## PROPERTY BOARD

Diana Bauer is Property Board chairperson with Gary Kerr serving as Executive Council representative and Steve Hollingsworth as recorder. Other members are Barb Duch, Jim Eitsert and Gayle Newton. While building usage was limited due to COVID-19, our maintenance staff instituted a deep cleaning regime for the entire building, established an equipment maintenance/repair regime, and was able to complete numerous smaller maintenance and repair projects. On behalf of the congregation, we thank our Maintenance Supervisor, John Holderle, and department employee, Josh Hileman, for all of their hard work and proactive efforts this year.

Property Board invested in lightning rods to protect the sanctuary, particularly older wooden structures in the bell tower and ceiling. Tri-State Lightning Protection Company, a locally owned business, installed the system, and it went operational as of October 2020. We considered this to be a prudent decision and good expenditure of major maintenance funds as the costs of the system was significantly less than any repairs or rebuild of the sanctuary that could occur because of a lightning strike. We also have a quote for placing additional lightning rods on the rest of the building. Thank you to Barb Duch for all of the research connected to this project.

During last year's extensive sewer project, various memorial plantings and trees had to be removed. Steve Hollingsworth contacted numerous congregational resources to gather information on many of the donations going back to 2009. Memorial Gifts Committee also provided valuable support for this project. Property Board members sent thank you cards to donors and donations that may have been removed were recognized and decommissioned during the All Saints Sunday worship. Steve Hollingsworth created the beautiful card sent to donors.



*Lightning rod installation*

The outdoor electronic sign installed in 2017 continued to be temperamental and often did not work. After installing new software, replacing control panels, and changing the location of various internal antenna, everything is now working great. The new software allows staff to work directly with the sign to change messages when necessary.

There were minor sewer line issues this year, such as a problem with the sewer line under the janitor's closet which also serves the bathroom in the hallway behind the sanctuary. It was discovered there was a separate sewer line (different from the main sewer line replaced last summer) for these two plumbing drainage connections. The drainage lines were repaired by a vendor and John Holderle. The new plumbing replaced old lead pipe and includes a new access site inside the building for possible future drainage clearance needs.

Rainwater sometimes pools on the Berry Street side of Plymouth by the flowerbeds near the entrance door by the office. Drainage tiles were installed that emptied into a French drain near the sidewalk. Unfortunately, this solution did not work well, and a tile drain was run out to the sidewalk. Property Board will continue to monitor this situation. In addition, the downspouts on the east side of the sanctuary (Fairfield side) previously emptied into the sewer line and during severe storms there is a potential for water runoff onto the sidewalk and street. This situation occurred once this past summer during a heavy rainstorm. Permanent solutions to these two issues remain under consideration and may involve John Holderle working with the City of Fort Wayne to explore solutions for rainwater collection by our gutter and downspout system. Drainage may ultimately need to be put under or through the sidewalks to the streets. We may need to work with the City Engineer's Office.

Rewiring was done on some of the basement lighting. Entering into the basement when the lights were off was considered dangerous. The project included redoing a few circuits on the controlling electrical boxes so that lighting could be controlled more effectively. In addition, a motion control light was installed in the basement hallway to

improve the safety and security of individuals exiting the elevator as well as the south stairwell.

Trash pickups were reduced to once weekly due to our recycling efforts and “green” consciousness. John Holderle took the initiative to look into our trash costs in an effort to reduce those costs. In addition, Property Board accepted a recommendation to cancel the Aramark contract for floor mat maintenance for additional savings. Maintenance staff will now clean the floor mats.

The Folsom Room was re-lamped with more efficient bulbs with better lighting. Outside lights in the steps leading to the sanctuary were also replaced.

As a “green” church we decided to no longer apply herbicides to kill weeds in the beds. Volunteers now manually weed the beds on a regular basis. Thank you for all who donate time to this worthwhile project.

The parking lot needed resurfacing this year. After obtaining quotes, which were considered too high, John Holderle purchased materials; and he and Josh Hileman performed the resurfacing work themselves.

Other projects include installing a railing at the corner of Berry Street and Fairfield, painting of the porte cochere posts, and the review of contract services by John Holderle.

Some of the solar panels on the roof of our administrative and education building do not correctly report back usage information. Property Board will work with our IT contractor to resolve this issue.

Plymouth now owns the former Cedars Hope property located next door to the Church. Cedars Hope continues to rent the property from Plymouth and to pay the utilities. We perform any necessary maintenance in and around the building. A task force was created to determine possible uses of the property moving forward and a summer walk-through of the building found it to be in good condition.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Bauer, Chair

Board Members: Gary Kerr (Executive Council Representative), Steve Hollingsworth (Recorder), Barb Duch, Jim Eitser, and Gayle Newton.

Staff Consultant: Rev. Ruth E. Phillips



*Repaired outdoor sign*

## **STEWARDSHIP AND FINANCE BOARD**

The Stewardship and Finance board began its 2020 term discussing the best method for Plymouth to use in funding the purchase of the Cedars Hope building. This acquisition was completed in February and S&F has since additionally approved funds for the Cedars Hope Task Force to use in their work as they determine how this new property can best be used in the future by Plymouth Church.

Starting in mid-March – the remainder of Stewardship and Finance’s year has zoomed by.

Our annual application for funding from the English, Bonter, Mitchell Foundation was submitted, and our grant was approved for the current year thanks to the help of attorney Dennis Sutton and his staff.

In September, with the departure of Kenneth Athon as Plymouth’s Financial Administrator, the Stewardship and Finance board was able to see only high-level finances but lacked the detailed financials which were typically part of our monthly finance review of Plymouth’s finances. These high-level views kept us confident that with the decreased expenses, Plymouth remained on solid financial ground. Although a temporary accountant, Donika Bonfadini was

hired to cover a few of the financial tasks and payroll, and even with additional help from Tina Puitz and Mackenzie Giganti – the board-by-board church financials were not able to be generated after Kenneth’s departure. With the recent hiring of our new Financial Administrator, Molly Miller, Stewardship and Finance expect the financials to again be back on track in 2021.

The planning for the stewardship campaign began in August and the Fall Stewardship Campaign – Encourage One Another; Inspire Generosity was launched successfully in the fall. The 2021 pledges are continuing to arrive – and despite the pandemic, social distancing, Zoom meetings and virtual services – our congregation and members continue to show their unwavering commitment to making certain Plymouth remains financially strong in 2021.

Submitted by Laura Coon, Acting Chair

Board Members: Anne Boyko, Katherine Caldwell, Tony Kell, Joann McDonald, Gail McKinnon and Rick Stoerker

Staff Consultants: Rev. Timothy C. Murphy, Kenneth Athon, Financial Administrator and Molly Miller, Financial Administrator



## Summary of Financial Information for the Year

	2020 Actual*	2020 Budget	2019 Actual
<b>Resources:</b>			
Contributions (pledges and gifts)	\$491,426.00	\$486,000.00	\$474,691.00
Other income (parking, rent, grants)	\$159,292.00	\$163,444.00	\$146,863.00
Endowment fund transfers	\$207,804.00	\$207,852.00	\$202,728.00
<b>Total Resources</b>	<b>\$858,522.00</b>	<b>\$857,296.00</b>	<b>\$824,282.00</b>
<b>Expenses:</b>			
Staff salaries and expenses	\$499,611.00	\$547,333.00	\$501,919.00
Office and other expenses	\$33,512.00	\$42,920.00	38,355.00
Building and grounds	\$108,651.00	\$118,400.00	116,151.00
Boards	\$23,747.00	\$50,158.00	35,660.00
Budget Outcome Task Force			
Benevolences	\$98,394.00	\$98,394.00	95,915.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$763,915.00</b>	<b>\$857,205.00</b>	<b>\$788,000.00</b>
<b>Net Surplus (Deficit)</b>	<b>\$94,607.00</b>	<b>\$91.00</b>	<b>\$26,282.00</b>
<b>Working assets (market value):</b>	As of Dec. 31		As of Dec. 31
Cash in checking	1,002,156.00		\$1,085,339.00
Endowment funds:			
Undesignated	\$7,953,275.00		\$7,406,941.00
Designated (a.k.a. Special)	\$1,071,166.00		\$1,006,070.00
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$10,026,597.00</b>		<b>\$9,498,350.00</b>

\* Subject To Change. Final statements were not available as of the print date of this Annual Report.

## Benevolence Committee

The Benevolence Committee, as a subsidiary of the Stewardship and Finance Board, is charged in the Bylaws to "Direct the distribution of benevolence funds, considering local, national, and international missions and other organizations." To this end, grant applications are distributed and reviewed early in the calendar year. A distribution schedule is maintained to match revenues with distributions to protect cash flow.

Volunteer opportunities collected as part of the grant application process are posted on the church's website.

The Emma Feigley account was active this year. A \$2,500 gift was given to the Imani Baptist Church. The Committee provided grants through the Fishes and Loaves mini grant program. The following \$100 grants were given:

- Vicki Kruse - to purchase skeins of embroidery floss for Palestinian women
- Kara Jaurigue and Youth Group - backpacks filled with gift items for kids in hospitals
- Jan Evrard - contributed toward the purchase of an insulated garage door for the community building of the Oxford Community Association
- Jean Vrabell - hygiene supplies for the FWCS Clothing Bank
- Kirby Volz - purchased tap dance shoes for SSHS for Theater/Dance Class
- Dick Conklin - purchased gardening tools for community garden at Extension Office
- Christine Week - donated the money to the IU Foundation/Myeloma Research Fund

The 3rd annual \$20,000 capacity grant was awarded to Miss Virginia's Food Bank for the purchase of a walk-in freezer.

Recognizing that our building is a valuable asset that is used extensively by the community and a variety of not-for-profit organizations, the Committee has, in previous years, tracked the number of groups who use our building and the value of that gift. Because the church has been closed for most of 2020 and the groups could not use the building, this report was not done for 2020.

Respectfully submitted,

Margie Dougherty, Recorder

Committee Members: Laura Rudolph, Co-Chair, Laura Ramsey, Co-Chair, Julie Creek, January Simpson, Jim Lasley, David Craker

Staff consultant: Rev. Timothy C. Murphy

In 2019, Plymouth Church became a 5 for 5 Church. This practice has continued into 2020. Being a 5 for 5 Church means that Plymouth participates in supporting the following: the UCC's Wider Mission and four Special Mission Offerings: One Great Hour of Sharing, Strengthen The Church, Neighbors In Need, and the Christmas Fund. These offerings are listed on the following page, along with the 2020 financial activities of Benevolence Committee.



Advent 2020

## SPECIAL OFFERINGS

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Amount Received and Disbursed</b>
OCWM	\$35,700.00
Crossroad Christmas Offering (Month of December 2020)	\$3,337.95
Mental Health America (Cedars Hope Program)	\$10.00
Strengthen the Church	\$490.00
Neighbors in Need	\$1045.00
One Great Hour of Sharing	\$1085.00
Christmas in July	\$470.00
Homebound Meals Thanksgiving Offering	\$450.00
<b>2020 Total Special Offering</b>	<b>\$42,587.95</b>

## MISCELLANEOUS BENEVOLENCE GIFTS

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Emma Feigley—Gift to Imani Baptist Church	2,500.00
Emma Feigley—Fishes and Loaves Mini Grants	700.00
Growing Hope Globally	10,291.27
Just Neighbors	In Kind
Plymouth Study Connection	In Kind
Fairfield Elementary	In Kind
Positive Resource Connection	In Kind
Camp Red Cedar	In Kind
Wellspring Shoppe	In Kind
Well Spring Food Pantry	In Kind
<b>2020 Total Miscellaneous Benevolence Gifts</b>	<b>13,491.27</b>



**2019 PLYMOUTH BENEVOLENCE GRANTS PROGRAM**  
**(Funded by a percentage of pledge income and a portion of the endowment distribution)**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Amount Granted</b>
OCWM-IN/KY Conference (UCC)	\$35,700.00
Open and Affirming (UCC)	\$5,100.00
CUE (UCC)	\$5,094.00
Amani Family Services	\$1,500.00
Blue Jacket, Inc	\$1,250.00
Carriage House	\$1,500.00
CASS Housing	\$1,500.00
Center for Nonviolence	\$1,000.00
Crossroad Child and Family Services	\$1,500.00
Easterseals Arc of NE Indiana, Inc	\$1,500.00
Growing Hope Globally	\$1,250.00
Habitat for Humanity of Greater Fort Wayne	\$1,250.00
Homebound Meals, Inc	\$9,200.00
Indiana Center for Middle East Peace	\$1,000.00
Matthew 25, Inc	\$1,250.00
Mental Health Association of Northeast Indiana	\$1,500.00
Miss Virginia's Food Pantry, Inner City Hope, Inc	\$20,000.00
Mustard Seed Furniture Bank of Fort Wayne, Inc	\$1,250.00
Neighborlink Fort Wayne	\$1,000.00
North East Indiana Positive Resource Center	\$1,500.00
Thirteen Step House, Inc	\$1,000.00
Turnstone Center for Children and Adults with Disabilities	\$1,300.00
Wellspring Interfaith Social Service, Inc	\$1,250.00
<b>2020 Benevolence Disbursements</b>	<b>\$98,394.00</b>

## Growing Hope Globally Task Force

Growing Hope Globally funded programs have reached two million people! We are celebrating this achievement and continuing the mission to help hungry people help themselves by providing the agriculture training they need as well as addressing the challenges related to farming practices, nutrition, hygiene, and more. Plymouth and our Benevolence grant are part of this mission goal. We teamed with our partner churches, Peace UCC and Pleasant Chapel; and we continue to support programs in Burkina Faso Gnagha and Honduras Macuelizo with the understanding that what they receive is passed on.



The 2020 contributions to Growing Hope Globally are as follows:

Plymouth: \$7,255.15  
Peace UCC: \$1,350  
Pleasant Chapel: \$8,816.12  
Grand total: \$17,421.27

Submitted by Growing Hope Globally

## Grants and Scholarships Committee

The Grants and Scholarships Committee is responsible for reviewing applications and making awards from designated funds that have been established for this purpose.

### Van Gorder Scholarship

**Initial Award: 2000; Cumulative Awards: 51; Cumulative Amount: \$82,685**  
Zoe Moore received a \$1,762 scholarship for Boston University  
Hannah Moore received a \$2,000 scholarship for Trine University

There were no awards during 2020 from the following funds:

Dr. Richard C. Hess Peace Studies Scholarship Fund  
Initial Award: 2008; Cumulative Awards: 17; Cumulative Amount: \$15,400

Marcia K. Hunt Memorial Fund  
Initial Award: 1970; Cumulative Awards: 108; Cumulative Amount: \$98,829.73

Richard Nelson Kent Memorial Fund  
Initial Award: 2005; Cumulative Awards: 18; Cumulative Amount: \$36,289.73

Ministerial and Christian Leadership Fund

R. Donald and Genevieve Sinish Memorial Fund  
Initial Award: 2002; Cumulative Awards: 34; Cumulative Amount: \$16,287.91

Steigerwald Arts Fund  
Initial Award: 2013; Cumulative Awards: 4; Cumulative Amount: \$4,800

Respectfully submitted,  
Linda Balthaser  
Committee Members: Dan Hamblin, Bob Pugh, Rev. Timothy C. Murphy, Barb Duch, David Grim, Anne Hughes

## Memorial Gifts Committee

The Memorial Gifts Committee is responsible for administering the funds designated as memorial and/or honor contributions.

Contributions to the Light Up the Boar's Head Capital Campaign in memory of Marge Cornwell were dedicated on All Saints Sunday, November 1, 2020.

The following memorial gifts were decommissioned on All Saints Sunday, November 1, 2020:

- Autumn Joy Sedum in memory of Barney Curby
- Autumn Joy Sedum in honor of Roeger and Nesius Roeger 10th anniversary
- Autumn Joy Sedum in memory of Tom Green
- Autumn Joy Sedum in honor of Walt and Joann Schmidt's 60th wedding anniversary
- Bridal Wreath Spirea Bush in memory of Frederic Harden and Kenneth Balthaser
- Cleveland Pear Tree in memory of Richard Hess
- Double Rose of Sharon Tree in memory of Kenneth Balthaser
- Double Rose of Sharon Tree in honor of Virginia Nance
- Dwarf Bunny Grass in honor of the Brackeen-Moore Family's Plymouth Family
- Dwarf Korean Lilac Bush in memory of Louis and Nora Peters
- Dwarf Korean Lilac Bush in memory of Moliere and Jolliff parents
- Dwarf Korean Lilac Bush in memory of John and Virginia Hookom
- Dwarf Korean Lilac Bush in memory of Lamar and Mary McKinnon
- Dwarf Korean Lilac Bush in memory of Bernie Beitman
- Dwarf Korean Lilac Bush in memory of Zwiep parents
- Green Velvet Boxwood in honor of Tom Watson, Jr.
- Happy Returns Daylily in memory of Ollie Kaiser
- October Glory Maple Tree in honor of the good people of Plymouth and for the privilege of serving them in memory
- Purple D'Oro Daylily in memory of Thomas L. Goss
- Rosey Returns Daylily (two) in memory of Tom Green
- Stella D'Oro Daylily in memory of Johnny and Willie Potts
- Vinca Minor in honor of Sidell 50th wedding anniversary
- Vinca Minor in honor of Madeline and Lucy Grave
- Vinca Minor in honor of Will Grave and Miriam McKinnon
- Vinca Minor (four) in honor of Sharon and Curt's 50th anniversary
- Winter Jewel Boxwood in memory of Susan M. Henning
- Winter Jewel Boxwood in memory of Orin A. Simpson
- Winter Jewel Boxwood in memory of Chet and Doris Schmidt
- Winter Jewel Boxwood in honor of Clare and Carole
- Winter Jewel Boxwood in honor of Sharon and Curt's 50th anniversary
- Winter Jewel Boxwood in memory of John Inches



Respectfully submitted,

Linda Balthaser

Committee Members: Katie Carboneau, Rev. Timothy C. Murphy, Barb Duch (completed term), Diane Lasley (completed term), Laura Rudolph, Joyce Augspurger

## **NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

The Nominating Committee met in person on March 12, 2020 to begin the strategic work of recruiting new members for Boards, Executive Council, and Officers of the church. Working diligently by Zoom for several months, the slate was completed by October 2020. The congregation voted to elect all nominees at the Annual Election Zoom Meeting on October 25, 2020. The committee would like to thank the members of Plymouth Church who have accepted a position for the next year.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Mark L. Glassley Chair

Committee members: Mark Glassley, Cher Jackson, Kathy Kolb, Jane Meredith, Michal Miller, Patricia Pendleton  
Staff Consultants: Rev. Timothy C. Murphy and Rev. Ruth E. Phillips

## **CONFERENCE DELEGATES**

Delegates: Mariah Western, Rick Schilb, Allen Haynes

The 57<sup>th</sup> IKC Annual Gathering was a virtual event due to COVID-19 over the weekend of June 26, 27, and 28. The theme this year was “Living God’s Economy.” Highlights of the conference as experienced by the delegates include the following:

- Educational Workshop: Legal Considerations, Copyrights, and the Implementation of Online Worship presented by Heather Kimmel. This very informative workshop shared the legal issues of when license and/or permission is needed to display or use various kinds of intellectual property such as songs/hymns, poems, all kinds of social media such as YouTube videos within worship services. Specifically, it shared how the rules are interpreted differently for the various forms of worship such as in-house service, a recorded service shared on the Internet, and a live-stream of a worship service. It is interesting and complex and so very easy to get it wrong. The bottom line: assume you need permission. The UCC website is a good resource for starting to research the questions regarding when you need permission and how you go about doing that.
- Educational Workshop: Spiritual formation through Online Church focused on how we stay connected, maintain community, and foster growth of the spirit within our congregations during this time when we are apart due to COVID-19. The presenter provided multiple examples for all ages for how this can be done. Several folks participating in the workshop shared what their congregations were doing. The workshop was a good resource for creative ideas.
- Business Meeting: Rev. Kent Gilbert served as Moderator for this year’s business meeting. Thanks to the effort of multiple people, the online Zoom meeting went amazingly well! Key items for this year’s delegates were voting on the following:
  - Resolution declaring the IKC as a WISE (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged) Conference—the objective of WISE is to encourage UCC congregations to become more welcoming of those living with mental health challenges, to expand church and community inclusion of those who are living with mental health challenges, to be supportive of all who are affected by mental health challenges, and to engage in ways to live out a commitment to be WISE about mental health. Resolution passed.
  - Resolution on Systemic Racism in the Indiana-Kentucky Conference – The resolution outlined steps the conference would take to address systemic racism including “that the Indiana-Kentucky Conference strongly urge that all IKC Associations adopt a requirement of anti-racism training for authorized ministers to hold and maintain standing.” Resolution passed.
  - Presentation of the 2019 Financial Report which included three motions for voting regarding the 2021-2022 budget. Report was accepted; motions passed.

The Annual Gathering for 2021 will be held where we were scheduled to be this year. The big news is that General Synod is scheduled to be in Indianapolis in 2023!

Submitted by Allen Haynes

## EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Moderator	Rick Schilb
Assistant Moderator	Ahnee Conner
Treasurer	Anne Boyko
Assistant Treasurer	Laura Coon
Clerk	Joan Lipscomb
Recorder	Sarah Sprunger
At-Large Members	Patty Pendleton Randy Roberts
Youth Member	Open
Advisors: Rev. Timothy C. Murphy, Rev. Ruth E. Phillips	
Board Representatives: Christian Education—Jeanie Rhoades; Congregational Life—Charlene Holly; Deacons' Worship—Carol Tyndall; Evangelism and Marketing—January Simpson; Human Resources—Tom Braun; Property—Gary Kerr; Stewardship and Finance—Rick Stoerker	

