

The Bell

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FORT WAYNE + UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Peace, Iran, & Me



Rev. Dr. Timothy Murphy

I want to tell you about why I am part of the Disciples Peace Fellowship. Some of you may know about this ministry, but I suspect that it will be new to most of you.

One of the most influential experiences I had as a young adult considering ministry was when I served as a summer Peace Intern through the Disciples Peace Fellowship program. Over the course of the summer of 2004, I went to six different church camps across the United States and Canada. I met with youth of all ages and led workshops on peace and justice issues along with serving as a camp counselor at those camps.

Every Peace Intern has a focus, and I remember my two areas of chosen focus were on income inequality and the War in Iraq, which was then in its second year. That experience solidified my identity of being called into ministries of social justice, which has been an important component to my career ever since.

Years later, in 2019, I was invited to consider becoming a member of the Executive Committee, which along with its Mission Director, leads the efforts of Disciples Peace Fellowship (DPF). In addition to the church camp Peace Interns each summer, we run programs at the Disciples of Christ General Assembly, including workshops, make rapid response statements concerning pertinent areas of violence and peacemaking in our world, and encourage faith-based conscientious objectors, among other activities.

I've been on that leadership team for the last seven years, and for the past four years, I have also been its co-chair. As most of you are well aware, I stay plenty busy with my regular ministerial obligations here at Plymouth, but I take the time to be present for DPF's work and contribute to it, because I believe in its mission. As I've said many times, peace is not a tangential issue to being a Christian, but in my mind, its very heart, in conjunction with loving our enemies.

As I write this in mid-May, the current status of the Iran War is a quasi-ceasefire. There is limited active shooting, though a dual blockage remains, which is itself a textbook act of war. Our Administration is currently caught in a bind of its own making: it can't simply leave things where they stand with the blockage, but there is no immediate way to achieve its objectives outside of negotiations. However, they do not appear to have the strategic upper hand, leaving them at a disadvantage in negotiations that seem to consist of ultimatums, threats, and assertions that 'everything will be fine; trust us.'

DPF condemned the initial attack on Iran in June of 2025 as well as the renewed assault at the end of February of this year. The impasse over the Strait of Hormuz was entirely predictable and our government sits in a quandary of their own making. Even if it cannot influence the ongoing military belligerence of our Administration, it seeks to witness to a world of peace filled with justice.

All the while, DPF is saying goodbye to its current Mission Director, the Rev. Brian Frederich-Gray, who joined just before my arrival, and who departs at the end of May. In his stead, we have welcomed the Rev. Sarah Zuniga (they/she) as our next Mission Director. Rev. Zuniga is also a former Peace Intern, has served on the Executive Committee, and was formerly my co-chair. And guess what? You get to meet them in the near future!

Rev. Zuniga is currently scheduled to guest preach at Plymouth on Sunday, July 5. I expect they will share about the importance of peacemaking as a central part of the gospel for followers of Jesus. In a time when people people want to prioritize supremacy and dominance over peace and equality, we need to hear the good news of God's love for all people, including those we are taught to hate. I'm looking forward to it!

Peace,

Rev. Dr. Timothy C. Murphy
Senior Pastor and Teacher



Preaching at Plymouth Church, Sunday, July 5, 2026

Care for the Least of These: The Joint Advocacy Summit for Palestine

Rev. Sara Ofner-Seals



On Monday, May 4, at about 11 pm, I boarded an overnight train from Waterloo, IN, to Washington D.C. I was traveling to D.C. for a Christian advocacy summit organized by Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP). Christians from many denominations gathered in D.C. for this summit, and I was there to help represent the United Church of Christ Movement for Palestinian Solidarity (UCC MPS).



Over the course of two and a half days, we packed in a lot of learning and advocacy. We heard from Palestinian poets, pastors, and activists. We were briefed on some of the pressing issues that we would be speaking about to our members of Congress. Then, on the last day of the summit, the approximately 300 of us who had gathered split up into delegations by state to talk to our legislators.

Our lobbying efforts focused on three things: 1) the restoration of funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA); 2) building support for the Block the Bombs act in the House of Representatives; and 3) the re-opening of the humanitarian corridor from Gaza to the East Jerusalem hospital network.

As you might imagine, the first two asks were a hard sell with our Indiana legislators. One aid interrupted me as I talked about UNRWA funding to remind me that UNRWA was tied to Hamas (a dubious claim, at best). Another told me straight up that my representative (Marlin Stutzman) was an ardent supporter of Israel and would never get behind any kind of limitation on military aid to Israel. None of this was surprising. So, our small delegation focused on the third ask—reopening the humanitarian corridor to the East Jerusalem hospital network.

One would think this would be a no-brainer. According to the World Health Organization, 94% of hospitals in Gaza have been destroyed or seriously damaged. Currently there are tens of thousands of people in Gaza, including over 4,000 children, who are in dire need of medical care that they cannot access. Some of those children are amputees who desperately need follow-up care to ensure their continued recovery. Some are infants with birth defects caused by poor nutrition and starvation of the mother while they were in utero. Some of that number are elderly Palestinians with serious health issues such as cancer or heart disease. The bottom line is, the genocide in Gaza will only continue and people will continue to die, not from falling bombs (although that is still happening) but from the lack of access to basic medical care.

To open a humanitarian corridor from Gaza to East Jerusalem would be one of the quickest and easiest ways to ensure that children and other vulnerable populations in Gaza receive the care they need. As followers of Jesus, we are called to work for healing. This effort would not only go a long way towards the healing of the bodies of Palestinians from Gaza, but it could also begin to bring healing to the spirits of a people who are wholly discouraged and without much hope. As a nation that is fully complicit in this genocide, it is perhaps the very least we can do to leverage our relationship with Israel to reopen this corridor.

I continue to pray that our world leaders would wake up to the tremendous suffering taking place in Gaza. Much of that suffering could be relieved if only the powerful governments of the world would take action. I pray for an awakening, a revival of humanity in the halls of Congress and in the halls of power everywhere. Until then, I will continue to speak out, for as Jesus said, "whatsoever you did to the least of these, you did to me." I pray that my efforts will be enough so that when I stand before God one day, I can say that I did what I could.



Left: Participants from the Joint Advocacy Summit hold a vigil outside the Cannon House Office Building in Washington D.C.

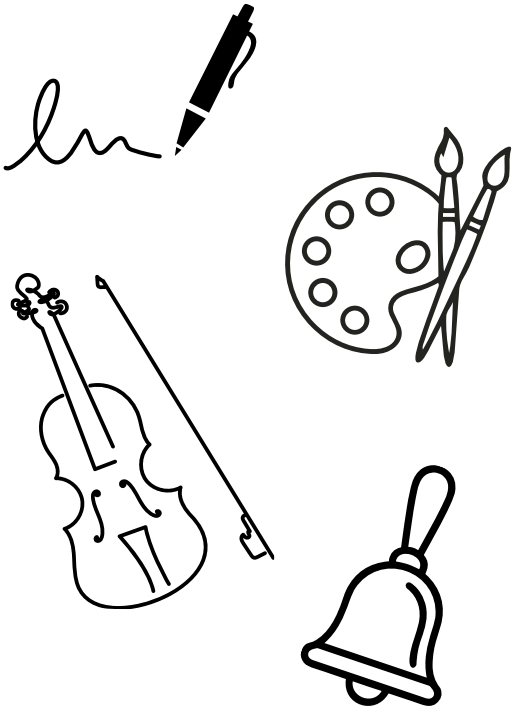




Maestro Robert Nance

This summer, Plymouth is presenting a week-long intergenerational faith and creativity experience of food, fellowship, fun and creative expression.

Featuring creative focus areas in Vocal, Instrumental, Handbells, Drama, Poetry & Storytelling, Movement, and Art, this experience is designed to activate your creativity -- your unique connection to the divine, to humanity and all creation. Over the week of June 22, from 5:30-8:00 pm, you'll engage your imagination and build connections in a relaxed, welcoming environment. All ages are welcome and registration is free.



Whether you're young or young at heart, there's something here to touch your soul and ignite your creative spirit.

Don't miss out on this unique opportunity to celebrate our creative selves and grow together! Register to join **here**, or at plymouthfw.org/faith-and-creativity-week.









Plymouth Music Series 2026-2027

The **Plymouth Music Series** has just completed a full season, enriching the lives of many with live music in person and via livestream. Thanks are due to our donors without whom these concerts would not be possible. We are proud to announce the upcoming season in which we have some excellent opportunities for our congregation and the community at large to be inspired by local and national artists. Mark your calendars for these concerts and watch for your annual flier in the mail later this month!



Thursday, July 23, 2026 - 8:00 pm
A COLE PORTER CELEBRATION
Featuring orchestra and soloists
Maestro Robert Nance, conducting

Wednesday, August 12, 2026 - 7:00 pm
REGGIE BERG, PIANIST

Wednesday, August 19, 2026 - 7:00 pm
BARRETT SEALS, OBOE
SARA OFNER-SEALS, SOPRANO

Saturday, October 3, 2026 – 7:30 pm
The Grammy Award winning NEW YORK VOICES in concert

Sunday, December 13, 2026 - 4:00 pm
FELIZ NAVIDAD: CONCIERTO NAVIDEÑA

Sunday, January 17, 2027 - 4:00 pm
WE ARE THE DREAM | Commemorating the Life and Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Friday & Saturday, March 19 & 20, 2027 - 7:00 pm
Sunday, March 21, 2027 - 2:00 p.m.
GODSPELL | Stephen Schwartz

Sunday, April 25, 2027 - 2:00 pm
PLYMOUTH BELL ENSEMBLE

Wednesday, May 5, 2027 - 7:00 pm
FIESTA DE CINCO DE MAYO

Our Whole Lives

Katie Watson



Mark your calendars! Plymouth will be offering four OWL classes in the coming school year. All groups will meet on Wednesday evenings; keep an eye out next fall for exact dates and times:

Fall 2026:	Spring 2027
Grades 5-6	Grades 1-2
Grades 9-10	Grades 7-8

Our Whole Lives is the comprehensive sexuality education program developed by the UCC and UU. OWL classes are free, and open to Plymouth people and members of the wider community. Please pass this information along if you know families looking for these sort of classes! If you have questions, or if you'd like to be notified when more information is available, contact Katie Watson at kjwatson4@gmail.com.



Service Blitz





The Sunday School wrapped up the school year with our Annual Service Blitz. During our class hour we sampled six service projects – including planting native flowers from Eagle Marsh, drawing on grocery bags for Community Harvest, and decorating fabric squares that our Plymouth quilters will sew into blankets for Palestinian children.

Confirmands & Graduates

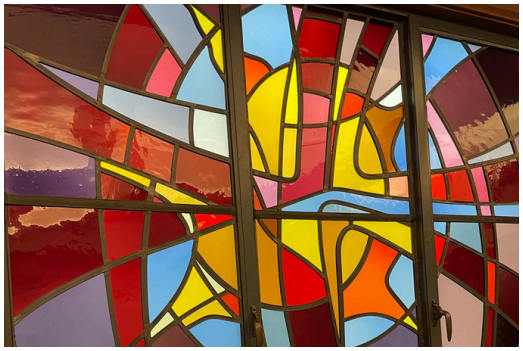
Kara Jaurigue

On Sunday, May 17 we celebrated our Confirmands and our Graduates! Congratulations to our Confirmation Class, and newest Plymouth Church members, **Andrea Grim, Evan Miller and Adrian Steele.** Our High School Graduates off to do big things are **Adella Barrone, Andrew Jaurigue, Owen Roney and Lily Van Amerongen.** We also have a couple of College Graduates to celebrate. **Jordan Dollarhite** graduated from Ball State with her Bachelor's Degree in Special Education and **Pete Roeger** graduated with a Communications major in Public Relations from the University of Indianapolis!

So a **BIG LOUD SHOUT OUT** to all of our awesome Youth and Young Adults.
Plymouth Church is proud of you! Way to go 🎓 ✝️!

Coming up this summer

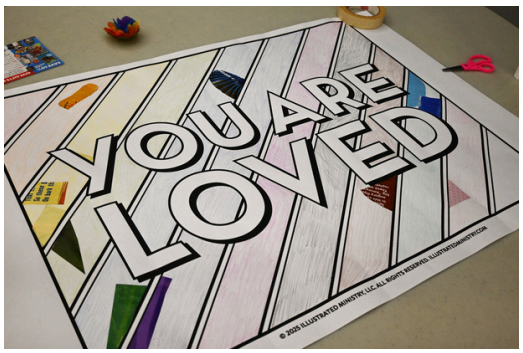












Financial Report

April 2026

	Month Actual	Month Budget	Month Variance		YTD Actual	YTD Budget	YTD Variance
Total Income	$94,087	$84,170	$9,917		$326,972	$302,656	$24,316
Total Expenses	$90,005	$97,508	($7,503)		$291,109	$307,546	($16,437)
Rounding		($1)	($1)		($1)	($1)	
Net Income (Loss)	$4,082	($13,339)	$17,421		$35,862	($4,891)	$40,753

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