



The Bell

PLYMOUTH CHURCH
FORT WAYNE + UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
PLYMOUTHFW.ORG

From the Senior Pastor

Advent marks the beginning of the church year. A new cycle begins in our liturgical life as we anticipate the coming birth of Christ into our world again. This is an Advent that will be different than any we have experienced before in living memory. As we have had to adjust church life substantially since March, those changes will continue and will affect our observance of Advent as well.

Rev. Ruth and I spoke back in October about a theme for such an Advent as this. We wanted something that did not sound oblivious to the many challenges our society is currently facing. Still, Advent is a time to anticipate the good news breaking forth in our world. Hope is important. We decided on a theme that holds together the recognition of our current circumstances as well as looking forward to that coming celebration. And so, this year's theme is "A Weary World Rejoices."

Each Advent we highlight the weekly themes of hope, peace, joy, and love. This begins on Sunday, November 29, continuing through Sunday, December 20. Our first special service for the season is our Luminous Night Service on Wednesday, December 2 at 7:00 pm. We are planning for this to be a livestream only service with no in-person attendance. I think this year's service in particular will be especially meaningful. See Rev. Ruth's article for details.

Then, on Christmas Eve, we have made several major modifications. Being able to sing Christmas carols together is something that most of us love to do, so we have tried to incorporate this as much as possible. Given the almost certain inability to safely offer indoor services then, here is the current plan:

- Communion and Carols service at 4:00 pm, which will be a live online service through Zoom. This service is designed especially for families and children. A link will be sent out in advance the week before.
- Weather permitting, those who so desire will gather at the church parking lot at 5:30 pm for a chance to sing some Christmas carols together.
- Candlelight and Carols will be a pre-recorded service made available at 8:00 pm that evening.

While this may not fit our ideal of how Advent should be, neither was a manger the ideal crib for the infant Jesus. Nevertheless, the Holy Family made it work; so shall we!

Peace,
Rev. Dr. Timothy C. Murphy, Senior Pastor



**During November, we pray
for Matthew 25 and
Northeast Indiana Positive
Resource Connection.**

Worship and Plymouth

Livestream services begin at 10:00 am every Sunday on our [YouTube Channel](#). A link to our YouTube Channel will be posted on our Facebook page and included in the Weekly Bulletin every Sunday morning.

Plymouth Church is not currently offering in-person attendance for Sunday worship due to the recent rise in local COVID-19 cases. Limited in-person attendance will resume once the local infection rate decreases to a level that meets our safety guidelines. Announcements about limited in-person attendance will be made via eBlast.

Plymouth also has a private Facebook group available to members called [Plymouth Generations](#). Join this Facebook group to communicate easily with other Plymouth people! You must already have a Facebook account to join this group.

Plymouth Church sends out the Weekly Bulletin to keep you up-to-date on things like online gatherings, ways to help others while social distancing, and other news. The Weekly Bulletin is sent out on Sundays at 8:30 am. If you are not receiving these messages, please check your spam folder. If you still are not receiving them, please contact Mackenzie at mmg@plymouthfw.org.

From the Associate Pastor

Luminous Night Service of Lament and Promise
Wednesday, December 2 at 7:00 pm, Plymouth YouTube Channel
God is a luminous presence especially in the darkest moments of our lives.

Dear Friends,

2020 is a year immersed and marinated in lament, worry, grief, anxiety, depression and despair for many. Our individual and cultural psyches have been overwhelmed with distress and stress. This Advent many of us need, more than previous years, an occasion that gives open permission to lament and complain, to express anger and frustration, to feel and share our grief and weariness. Since 2001 Luminous Night Service always has been offered with that in mind. This 20th year is no different. In fact it is even more evocative as we are mired in astronomical COVID-19 deaths, systemic racism, political dysfunction and cultural discord as we have never before experienced.



Let us be honest with each other. In “normal” years, for many adults, youth, and children, the Christmas season intensifies feelings of hurt, sadness, loneliness because of: emotional and mental illness, grief over the death of a loved one, physical illness or chronic pain, broken, estranged relationships, job loss, financial insecurity, painful memories of the past, doubt over ones direction in life, fear of violence, or deep anxiety.

Why is it then called a “Service of Lament *and Promise*”? We turn to Isaiah 9:2

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness - on them light has shined.”

While it is appropriate to wail against all that is wrong and worrisome, we are also a people who do not wallow. We look to the Light; we rely on the faithfulness of our God who offers us “strength for today, bright hope for tomorrow” as it says in the hymn “Great Is Your Faithfulness.” The Christmas hymn “O Holy Night” carries the phrase “a thrill of hope” immediately before the line “a weary world rejoices” which is our 2020 Advent theme. Human lament is always juxtaposed with affirmations of God’s promise “never to abandon nor forsake us.”

For this 20th service you will see three physical symbols. The first and newest will be a Lisa’s Legacy candle as the Candle of Comfort. Ann Filler, mother to Lisa Filler who died five years ago, created Lisa’s Legacy “compassionate conversations” bags in memory of Lisa to support other grieving people. The second symbol is the Diversity Blanket for the manger, created in 2008, pieced from fabric swatches contributed by Plymouth people. It is a visual reminder of the variety, diversity, and beauty of Plymouth’s and the world’s people for whom Jesus was born. The wood Manger itself, hand crafted by Judy Crooks at my request, was made for the 2005 Luminous Night Service.

If you are planning to join us for this pre-recorded service, you are invited to place one or more candles near you so you can light them at the given time in the service. This year be especially kind and gentle with yourself and those around you.

May God’s peace surround you,

Rev. Ruth E. Phillips, Associate Pastor

2021 Pledge Reminder

While our Stewardship Season has concluded, we are still accepting and encouraging households to submit their pledge form if you have not already done so. Please mail it to the office at:

Plymouth Congregational Church, Attn: 2021 Pledge
501 West Berry Street
Fort Wayne, IN, 46802

You are able to give using your credit card online, as some have already done, but for documenting purposes, it is very helpful for a form to be submitted to the office. Your pledge helps shape the annual budget for 2021, which our boards are actively working on. Thank you!



Thanksgiving Special Offering

On Sunday, November 22, the Benevolence Committee invites you to participate in a special offering to celebrate Thanksgiving. This year's beneficiary will be Homebound Meals, Inc. of Fort Wayne. When Homebound Meals started in 1971, they delivered only four meals each day.



Now, volunteers for Homebound Meals travel along 20 different routes every weekday, delivering freshly prepared and medically tailored meals throughout Fort Wayne to individuals who are not able to prepare their own food.

While many folks are able to pay the \$5.20/meal Homebound Meals must charge to cover expenses, many others cannot. For those who require it, financial assistance is offered as available. This is where our special offering comes in! Through your generosity, we can help extend the service of Homebound Meals to those who need it most.

Thanksgiving is a time to celebrate the abundant blessings we enjoy. What better way to celebrate abundance than by giving abundantly? What better way to celebrate your blessings than to be a blessing to others?

We hope that you will give as generously as you are able. Checks may be mailed to the church – please be sure to include “Thanksgiving Special Collection” on the memo line. You may also give online [here](#). Again, please be sure to note that your donation is for the Thanksgiving Special Collection in the space provided.

Thanksgiving Food Drive

The E&M Board invites you to participate in our Thanksgiving Food Drive for Wellspring's food pantry, on Saturday, November 21, from 9:00 am - 11:00 am. Please note! Due to colder temperatures, we will be inside the church, using the office hallway on Berry to stay warm. Pull up outside the church side door on Berry, and we will come out to collect your donations.

Commonly most-requested items are: dish soap, instant mashed potatoes, pork & beans, condiments, canned/shelf-stable proteins, and canned tomatoes. Of course, all shelf-stable food items are happily accepted!

Our October clothing drive for Fairfield Elementary was a great success, thanks to your generosity. 260 pairs of socks, 180 pairs of underwear, 44 pairs of sweats, 36 hats, 41 pairs of gloves, 9 coats, and various warm clothes and accessories were delivered. Thank you!

Plymouth Office

If you have a need to visit the office, we'd love to see you. Remember to schedule an appointment at least 24 hours in advance. No one is at the front desk, so please arrive on time so a staff member is available to greet you and unlock the door. Please wait at the Berry Street entrance and be prepared to sanitize, sign-in, and wear a mask. Please contact Tina Puitz at timp@plymouthfw.org or Mackenzie Giganti at mmg@plymouthfw.org to make an appointment.



Advent Study

January Simpson, Licensed Minister, brings her fresh insights and joyful countenance to this year's Advent Study beginning Sunday, November 29 at 9:00 am. She will use readings, poems, music and other media, paired with treasured gospel scriptures. Guides or handouts will be available online. Watch for the Zoom link in Plymouth's Weekly Bulletin.

Advent Reading

Plymouth's own Bill Deans has written an Advent reader titled, *Fear Not...But Hold On Tight*. This thoughtful and thought-provoking book explores the birth and infancy of Christ through the reflections and memories of 24 different people of Bethlehem. The range of perspectives and experiences sheds new light on Christ's birth, inviting you to immerse yourself in the complexity of this sacred story.

The book would make a wonderful Advent gift, or an addition to your own library, and is only \$15.00, with all profits going to the Peace Studies Scholarship at Plymouth. Contact Bill Deans at justplainbill3@frontier.com to purchase.

Plymouth Donations

If you feel the call to donate to Plymouth during this time of uncertainty, please consider using our online method by using your smart phone's barcode scanner. This QR Code/Scanner tag will take you to the Plymouth donation page, or you can click [here](#). To scan this QR code, open the camera on your device and hover over the QR code. Once your camera focuses on the code, an option to follow the link will appear. Your gift helps advance the local and global outreach of Plymouth benevolence.



Concert & Conversation

Troubadour for Justice: Garth Hewitt

December 6, 2:00 pm
Click [here](#) to join via Zoom

The Indiana Center for Middle East Peace hosts balladeer, human rights activist, and Anglican priest, Garth Hewitt, for a Zoom Concert & Conversation, Sunday, December 6, 2:00 pm, to commemorate the 72nd anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

ICMEP is particularly honored to be offering this Concert to Plymouth Church, in recognition of its 2020 Benevolence Grant which will be used to sponsor this program.

Garth is an Honorary Canon of St. George's Anglican Cathedral in East Jerusalem, and founder of Amos Trust, a British human rights organization with partners in Palestine, South Africa, Nicaragua, Burundi, India, and Tanzania. He was instrumental in the development of the Greenbelt Festival in the UK into a celebration of the arts, faith, and justice.

A friend and protégé of Sir Cliff Richard, he has sung throughout the world, in St. Paul's Cathedral and in a Bolivia maximum security prison, at the Grand Ole Opry and at the foot of the apartheid wall in Bethlehem. Garth has recorded more than 40 albums, highlighting the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, the plight of Dalits in India, and for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. His latest albums are *My Name Is Palestine* and *Songs of the Fifth Gospel*.

In 1988, he was named International Artist of the Year at the Gospel Music Association's Dove Awards in Nashville.



Indiana Center for
Middle East Peace

Plymouth People In Our Prayers

Dawn Apang, Archer Family, Coral and Wayne Bauer, Mariellen Beitman, Charlie Belch, Carleen Carteaux, Natasha Chemey, Dick Conklin, Kris Conner, David Cornwell, Wendy Crispell, Brad Crowder, Jan Gibson, Robin Grimm, Joan Hartwig, Barbara Hill, Kris Jensen, Nancy Jordan, Gail Keuneke, Ginny Laudadio, Brian Laurenz, Carol Lewark, Joan Lipscomb, Sheldon Lockwood, Janet McCoy, Mary McCoy family, Jim Nelson, Bonnie Pennock, Mariah, Anna, Jackson and Quentin Pierle, Mike Popp, Noel Resor, Anne Rowland, Patrizia Saladini-Stark, Jacqueline Sanders, Rick Schilb, Barbara Senn, John Shannon, Maureen Shea, Travis Sheets, Johanna Smith, Carol Tyndall, Gordon Walter, Virginia Zimmerman

Sympathy is extended to Jan Evrard and family on the unexpected and sudden death of her sister, Jill Roe, November 13.

\$SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES\$ FOR TUITION AND FEES\$ FOR ACADEMIC CREDIT

The Grants and Scholarships Committee has the pleasant responsibility of awarding scholarship grants for tuition and fees for academic credit from the earnings generated by several endowed funds.

Completed applications with all supporting materials must be received in the church office by the respective due dates. Incomplete applications are ineligible for consideration.

By February 15:

The **Richard Nelson Kent Memorial Fund** provides educational grants for tuition and fees for academic credit for members of the United Church of Christ in the Northeast [Indiana] Association and other qualified applicants who are at least 16 years of age and entering into or continuing ecological studies, conservation biology, or other environmentally related studies.

The **R. Donald and Genevieve M. Sinish Fund** provides awards for tuition and fees for academic credit for 16-to-24-year-old members of Plymouth Church.

The **Van Gorder Scholarship** is awarded annually for tuition and fees for post-secondary education leading to a degree, certificate, or license for a graduating senior who is a member of Plymouth Church.

By April 15:

The **Richard C. Hess Peace Studies Scholarship** will award a \$1,000 tuition and fees scholarship for a college student majoring in peace studies or a related program.

To request application packets for any of these funds or to receive additional information, call the church office at 260-423-9424 or you may submit your request online [here](#) in the Contact Us box on the Plymouth website. Please provide your name, phone number, and email address so one of the members of the Grants and Scholarships Committee can respond to your request.



Upcoming Concerts

Join us for Plymouth Music Series events livestreamed on our [YouTube Channel!](#) For the foreseeable future, all Music Series events will be held online without a limited in-person audience. We hope you will continue to support Plymouth Music Series by joining us online! Click the links below to learn about each event.

December 16, 2020 at 7:30 pm
[A Winter SOULtice | Music for Harp & Winds](#)

January 18, 2021 at 4:00 pm
[GOOD TROUBLE | A Civil Rights Celebration](#)

February 14, 2021 at 4:00 pm
[LOVE SONGS | In Celebration of Valentine's Day](#)

March 21, 2021 at 4:00 pm
[A CELEBRATION OF SPRING | Appalachian Spring by Aaron Copland](#)

IKC Guidelines

The Indiana Kentucky Conference has provided some guidance for UCC congregations' responses to the rising coronavirus cases.

These include:

- Continue virtual worship and ministry only
- Suspend all indoor gatherings of any size until our county is scored blue/green or yellow
- Limit 10 people for any indoor in-person gatherings
- Suspend 1:1 visitations with pastors until Allen County is out of red or orange range

Whenever two or more do gather, they will:

- Wear a face mask and stay at least 6 feet apart
- Not attend if feeling ill, are waiting on COVID-19 test results, or have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days



Music Ministry News

Plymouth folk can rejoice that the ministry of music continues to provide meaningful opportunities for faith enrichment to the congregation, engaging musicians in the church and from the community in creative ways.

Just last week, the music ministry presented a recorded anthem by the Plymouth Bell Ensemble and the Sanctuary Singers for Plymouth's stewardship dedication service. The choir prepared their anthem in weekly zoom rehearsal meetings, and the bell choir met weekly in the Folsom Room for rehearsals. Then on November 4, we met at the church to record our music, which can be found on YouTube. When meeting at the church, we work hard to maintain the utmost safety for everyone, including social distancing, wearing masks, running the air handlers to insure there is plenty of fresh air and using a fogger to sanitize the air with safe, hospital grade disinfectant. Rest assured; we are being diligent about everyone's safety!

In the days ahead, we will continue our weekly rehearsals. We are planning a special Christmas pageant, anthems for Advent/Christmas, caroling for the congregation and more. The music Series will present several more concerts via our YouTube channel. You just might see a new series of musical offerings for the holidays performed by yours truly!

Stay tuned for more details and whenever possible, take time to tune into the musical offerings presented by Plymouth Music Ministry. This is provided to you as an opportunity to find enrichment, encouragement, and hope during these trying times.

Blessings,

Robert Nance, Director of Music



Children's Choir Moves to Weekly At-Home Activities

As we move into the winter months, the Plymouth Children's Choir will be changing things up a little. In lieu of being able to meet outside as the seasons change, we've decided to start up a series of weekly activities to help provide some home entertainment throughout the winter season. In an effort to help families disconnect from the digital overload that we're all experiencing these days, we'll be trying to plan activities that don't involve electronic devices as much as possible. Activities will range from crafting projects to games that can be played with the entire family, and all with a musical theme!

If you'd like to participate, just send an email to our Associate Director of Music, Phil Slane, at philip.m.slane@gmail.com. Pickup for physical supplies for weekly activities will happen every Wednesday by the covered entrance off the Folsom Room from 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm.



Thank You From Fairfield



I wanted to share our experience with you. It took several hours to sort and put away all of the wonderful donations. I had a kindergarten boy who needed clothing. It was so easy to simply organize a week's worth of clothing (including socks, underwear, and even a coat). He was so sweet and happy with his new "sweats"!

During the two days of Parent-Teacher Conferences, we set out the treats you donated. Our principal, Mr. Tijerina, had a "wheel" that he spun with Teacher's names. Each half-hour he would spin the wheel and it would stop on the name of the winner of a Starbucks gift card. He would send an email with the winner's name. It was fun to hear the comments as teachers came to the office to collect their prize. It was a great way to break up a 12-hour day.

Thank you for your care and thoughtfulness. Especially now, it is great to have support of our teachers and staff.

Jennifer Hayes
Case Manager
Fairfield Elementary School

Thank you to Roger Eversole

The staff of Plymouth Church would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Roger Eversole for his assistance with the 2021 Stewardship Mailing. Volunteers like Roger help our limited staff work more efficiently. Plymouth thanks you!

thank you!

Sunday School

This year in Sunday school we are using a program that mixes storytelling with Montessori-inspired props. Hearing our Bible stories in simple, repetitive ways brings our kids into a worshipful experience of the story. And using physical props in the telling gives our hands on learners another way to take in the story.

Plymouth Church has used this "Godly Play" storytelling method before—but always with props in the classroom. As we meet separately this year, each household needs a set of storytelling materials to use on their own. Thankfully, at Plymouth we have a number of artists up to the task!

Before we started, our families needed a place to keep their Sunday school materials. Several members of the Knit and Kbitz group made us bags for our supplies. Linda Balthaser donated fabric, and Anne Hughes, Laura Rudolph, Riet Zwiep and Julie Davidson made bags.

We started off this fall with the story of Creation, told through seven cards made by Janice Furtner. She painted her papers with rich textures, and cut them into symbols of each day's creation.

Our second story in October gave the kids a chance to create their own calendar of the seasons of the church year. They went home with the materials to create a circle of felt squares representing the Sundays in each season. As the year continues, we'll learn how to fit each of our other stories into their spaces on the calendar.

Now, with Advent approaching, we have story cards from Dana Wichern to help us understand this time of waiting. Dana's computer artwork incorporates Advent symbols, like paths, candles, and stars, with reminders of the Christmas story.

Finally, Sam Lipscomb, with the help of Steve Hollingsworth and Charlene Holly, created a set of wooden figures to help us tell many of our stories. Each figure was made from a different type of wood, all native to Indiana. Three of the figures went out in the Advent boxes—wooden carvings of Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus. More of these wooden figures will be appearing in future boxes



This is a year where we are all searching for new ways to make connections. I know that our artists had our children in mind as they made these materials. And I hope that when the kids hold these physical pieces of the stories they will know that they are loved by our community, even when we are apart.

We're starting to line up artists for our second semester boxes now. These materials will help us tell the stories of the Parable of the Good Shepherd, the life of Jesus as we lead into Easter, and the experiences of the early church as we lead into Pentecost. If you would be interested in helping create some of our materials, we would love to have your artistry!

Katie Watson, Sunday School Director



December Birthdays



1	Jim Schmidt	12	Dave Craker	20	Jude Price
1	Zoey Spath Pinedo	13	Doris Grandos	21	Terrence Bowen
3	Jennifer Ferguson	13	Ann Sponhauer	21	Ahnee Conner
3	Toby Watson	14	Linda Hambrick	22	Cheryl Rinehart
4	Ray Lehman	15	Alan Chambers	22	Connie McAfee
7	Keyes McGregor	16	Rhonda Eitsert	24	Elena Dupen
7	Veronica Beifus	16	Paul Lewark	25	Carol Lehman
7	Bill Hambrick	16	Ryleigh Minchski	25	Michelle Bradley
8	Mary Gilliom	17	Virginia Zimmerman	25	Carol Tyndall
8	Bruce Keuneke	17	Judy Dahl	25	Michelle Starnes
8	Shirley Slater	17	Johanna Smith	26	Steve Lauterberg
8	Donna Rowe	18	Jared Chasey	26	Leeandia Justice
9	Bonnie Bortnichak	18	Lois Steere	27	Joe Bir
9	Jennifer Atienzo-Fisher	19	Marena Lewark	28	Steven Vorderman
10	Laura McCoy	20	Jan Gibson	28	Kathy Hartsch
11	Melissa Shaw	20	Riet Zwiep	29	Sharon Conrad
11	Riley Grim	20	Simon Price	31	Juliette Coffeen
11	Jan Evrard				

Goodbye from Mackenzie



It is with a heavy heart that I announce I will be leaving Plymouth and Fort Wayne for Dallas, Texas on December 4. I will continue to work with Plymouth remotely until the position of Communications Specialist can be filled by someone in the Fort Wayne area.

I would like to thank Plymouth and its members for the opportunities I have been given and the relationships I have built during my time here. From sharing a love of cats with Tina and Rev. Ruth, to discussing a mutual disdain for the final season of Game of Thrones with Rev. Timothy—Plymouth quickly began to feel like home and my coworkers became more like family than colleagues. I am proud to have been employed where my passions were part of my work—such as supporting the LGBTQ+ community, being more environmentally conscious, and advocating for justice.

I am sad to say goodbye, but I am more thankful for the time I have spent here. Now, if anyone knows how to line dance, please shoot me an email—I need to figure out how to fit in with the other cowgirls.

Contact Us

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Whoever You Are, Wherever You Are on Life's Journey, You Are Welcome Here!