



# The Bell

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

## From the Senior Pastor Church as Thermostat, Not Thermometer

When I was serving as the Executive Director of Progressive Christians Uniting, I remember one of our board members, the Rev. John Cager, then the pastor of Second AME Church of Los Angeles, saying that the church needs to be a thermostat, rather than a thermometer, to its culture. This really stuck with me.

What's the difference between a thermostat and a thermometer? We've all had our temperatures taken, especially recently with COVID-19. A thermometer simply tells you what the temperature is of someone or a room. It matches whatever environment it is placed in.

By contrast, a thermostat sets the temperature of a space. It is often cold in my office during the wintertime, so I am grateful that I have a functional thermostat that doesn't just tell me it's cold but helps warm my office up!

What does this contrast have to do with church?

A church as thermometer simply matches its surrounding culture. I've seen many online articles that critique the church and say that the way it needs to evolve is to be more in line with its surrounding culture. There are certainly areas where this is a wise move. Recognizing science in matters of public health, for instance, is place where a thermometer approach feels fully appropriate.

There are other areas where church should mimic its culture. For example, following the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church made it clear that worship should be done in the language of the community in which it finds itself. If the community is Spanish-speaking, worship should be in Spanish. If it's French-speaking, services should be in French. People should be able to understand what is happening in worship, and a key part of that is using relevant languages. All of this is excellent, which most of us simply take for granted nowadays.

*Continued on page 2*



## Worship at Plymouth

Plymouth Church is currently offering an in-person worship service every **Sunday at 10:00 am**. Masks are required at this time. From **8:30 am to 9:45 am**, we offer a time of fellowship, with coffee provided, in the Folsom Room. Our chapel class education hour meets from **9:00 am to 10:00 am**.

Our services are also livestreamed every **Sunday at 10:00 am**. These will be available on our [YouTube Channel](#). A link to our YouTube Channel will be posted on our [Facebook page](#) every **Sunday morning at 8:00 am** and included in the Weekly Bulletin. Each livestream is uploaded to the Sermon Archive page on [our website](#) on **Monday mornings**.

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 now sent out on **Saturdays at 7:00 pm**. If you are not receiving these messages, please check your spam folder first. If you still are not receiving them, please contact our Communications Specialist Elizabeth at [edp@plymouthfw.org](mailto:edp@plymouthfw.org).

*Continued from page 1.*

There are other appropriate ways to reflect our culture, such as occasionally using pop cultural references that people are broadly familiar with.

However, there are issues for which being a thermometer church has drawbacks. For instance, our dominant culture is largely losing the ability to concentrate for extended periods of time. The source of this change is unclear: whether it's social media saturation, plastic and heavy metal pollution in our drinking water, a combination of many factors, or something else entirely, it is clearly a reality. A thermostat solution would be to simply accept that reality and try and keep everything we do full of stimulation in order to keep people's attention. Things like silent centering prayer do not match that cultural ethos. Does that mean that centering prayer should be abandoned as not in tune with the cultural zeitgeist? I don't think so.

While needing to be sensitive of where people are, that does not mean that we need to stay there. That might mean helping people grow their concentration where possible, maybe not starting with 20 minutes of silent prayer for someone brand new to the practice, but starting with just 5 minutes, which may still feel like an eternity to someone not exposed to that much silence! But that's not an argument to avoid it, only to recognize the need to understand where people are at.

Finally, there are times where being a thermometer church demonstrates a rejection of the gospel. Probably the most egregious example of this is the conflation of loyalty to Jesus and loyalty to the United States.

Sometimes this can be in somewhat subtle, like demands for an American flag in the sanctuary (Praise Jesus that this was resolved years ago at Plymouth!). Other times it can be more overt, such as the bumper sticker, t-shirt, or billboard of the following image I occasionally see, which completely conflates the work of Jesus and the role of the United States in the world as a redemptive force for good:



The extreme of this would be things like the Patriot Church, which openly follows an idolatrous worship of the US. It is a thermometer church to the extreme.

But as Rev. Cager reminded me years ago, we need to be a thermostat to our culture. Setting the temperature of where it needs to go, pointing out: too cold, or too hot. Part of our role is showing our society where it is erring and offering an alternative trajectory.

That is not to say that a thermostat church will automatically or even inevitably be followed. But the activity of following Jesus, what I like to call "churching," can and should be a model that points our broader society in a better direction: towards an end to injustice and oppression, towards a love for our planet and our need to care for it, towards the inclusion and affirmation of those on the margins, and towards lives of nonviolence and service to others.

Do those values reflect our dominant culture? Not necessarily. Does that mean we should abandon them and mimic whatever seems to be the most popular? Not if we believe that Jesus' way is true, even if it isn't always popular, that it is life-giving, even if it feels sometimes at odds with our dominant world.

Let us be a thermostat, an invitation to abundant life to our broader society, and in so doing be witnesses to good news.

Peace,

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

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. Cager's use of this phrase was likely inspired by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," which to my knowledge this image first appears.

## From the Associate Pastor



While I was in my pastoral search, one of the many things that attracted me to Plymouth Church was its four covenants. I was particularly intrigued by the Earthwise Covenant, as that was a designation within the UCC that I was not familiar with. I soon learned that being an Earthwise church meant not only that Plymouth had taken many steps to be more environmentally friendly, such as putting up solar panels and moving away from disposal paper and plastic products, but that the church had also taken bold steps to fight climate change, such as when it divested its financial investments from fossil fuel companies.

All of these steps have been good, but I'm excited to report that we are not resting on our laurels. We are moving forward with several new projects this spring that will help us lean into our Earthwise identity more deeply and effectively.

One of the biggest projects for 2022 is that we have established an environmental action team. This group was first formed as a result of a congregational survey about how people wanted to engage with various social issues. Environmental and climate change issues generated the most interest on that survey, and so we formed the group and began brainstorming how we might take action on issues of climate change here at Plymouth, in our local community, and even at the state level. The results of our brainstorming led us to three main areas of focus for 2022. First, we are continuing our relationship with Hoosier Interfaith Power and Light (HIPL) and will participate in their advocacy campaigns whenever possible. In early January, a number of action team members attended a virtual advocacy training hosted by HIPL and then contacted legislators the following week to advocate for keeping residential solar power affordable and accessible in the state of Indiana. We look forward to participating in more action campaigns throughout the year.

Second, we are working with staff from the Little River Wetlands Project on a project called 'Seed to Marsh' which will help cultivate native plants and ecological health in our local wetlands. This will be an ongoing and intergenerational project during the spring of 2022. See a related article on this project elsewhere in the Bell for more information!

Finally, members of the environmental action team are engaged in a series of one-on-one conversations about climate change with family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and other members of Plymouth Church. Many grassroots activists agree that the best path to social change is by building relationships and creating organized networks of people who can be brought together for social action. These one-on-one conversations are our way of doing some preliminary grassroots organizing on the topic of climate change, and we are excited to see what comes out of our conversations. If you are interested in participating in one of these conversations with an action team member, please reach out and let me know!

Living into our identity as an Earthwise congregation has never been more urgent. We are in the midst of a worldwide climate crisis, and we need to cultivate resources for seeking social change, as well as cultivate within ourselves a spirituality that recognizes and embraces the divine in all of creation. I hope all Plymouth members can find a way to engage with this important covenant this spring and beyond!

Peace,

Rev. Sara Ofner-Seals  
Associate Pastor



### **Plymouth Church's Earthwise Covenant:**

We are ... an Earthwise congregation (2015), striving to be good stewards of God's creation.

## John Pavlovitz at Plymouth Church

It's hard to say how people, quotes, books, music, and news articles deposit themselves onto our social media pages. Many go by unnoticed, but some seem to grab us at a deeper level and demand our attention. So it was with pastor, writer, blogger John Pavlovitz.



John's blog, "[Stuff That Needs To Be Said.](http://johnpavlovitz.com)" (johnpavlovitz.com) continues to feed and challenge his readers including some in our Plymouth family with the pressing concerns of our world today. His constant urging is to love more, draw wider circles of inclusion, and build bigger tables, not walls. Conversations within the Christian Education Board around reinvigorating and reenergizing Christ followers post-pandemic (yes, we were over-hopeful), led to an accepted invitation for John Pavlovitz to come to Plymouth for two days of teaching, listening, sharing, and preaching March 19 and 20.

We are also inviting other congregations in Fort Wayne and around the state. First Presbyterian Church, Fort Wayne is partnering with us and will host a Saturday morning, 9:30 am to 11:30 am workshop, "Building A Bigger Table", at their church. John will be speaking at Plymouth at 6:30 pm Saturday evening, and again Sunday morning during our worship.

Pavlovitz has authored several books, including, *A Bigger Table. Hope and Other Superpowers: A Life-Affirming, Love-Defending, Butt-Kicking, World, Saving Manifesto* and *Stuff That Needs to Be Said: Essential Words on Life, Death, Faith, Politics, Love, and Giving a Damn*. His latest work is, *If God is Love, Don't Be a Jerk: Finding a Faith That Makes Us Better Humans*.

Shane Claiborne, author, activist, and cofounder of Red-Letter Christians (a guest of Indiana Center for Middle East Peace here at Plymouth three years ago), writes in the forward of John's latest book,

"John Pavlovitz is an artisan of words. He's a poet and a provocateur. Like the prophet Jeremiah, he's got a fire 'shut up in his bones' than has to come out. That fire is love. But the love he writes about is not the sentimental love of storybooks and fairy tales and greeting cards. It is the harsh and dreadful love that Dostoyevsky spoke of-the love that got the prophets killed, the love that led the freedom fighters to jail and the martyrs to be burned at the stake. The love John writes about is the love that keeps us up at night because there are folks still out on the streets while we have an extra room in our homes. It is the love that cuts with the precision of a surgeon's scalpel, because before we can get better, we have to cut out the cancer that made us sick."

The workshop is \$15, and all other events are free to attend, but registration is required for the Saturday events. Eventbrite registration is available at the links below. COVID-19 restrictions at the time of these events will determine a safe number of attendees permitted, so don't wait to register!

## John Pavlovitz Schedule of Events

### "Building a Bigger Table" Workshop with John Pavlovitz

Saturday, March 19 | 9:30 am - 11:30 am  
First Presbyterian Church  
300 W. Wayne St., Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
Tickets: \$15 | Register [here](#)

### An Evening with John Pavlovitz

Saturday, March 19 | 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm  
Plymouth Church  
501 W Berry St., Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
Free | Register [here](#)

### Sunday Worship Service with Guest Preacher John Pavlovitz

Sunday, March 20 | 10:00 am  
Plymouth Church  
501 W Berry St., Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
Free | No registration needed

### Payment Information for Workshop:

**Online Payment:** Participants are encouraged to make their payments via the "Contribute" page of the Plymouth Church website (linked [here](#)) to avoid Eventbrite fees. Click the "Donate" button and find "John Pavlovitz Workshop."

**Cash/Check:** Please write checks out to Plymouth Congregational Church and write "Pavlovitz Workshop" on the memo line. Please indicate your cash/check is for the Pavlovitz Workshop. Payment can be sent prior to the event or can be given at the door.

If you have any questions regarding the event, please call the church office at (260) 423-9424 or email Elizabeth Pruitt, Plymouth's Communications Specialist, at [edp@plymouthfw.org](mailto:edp@plymouthfw.org).

To learn more and stay updated, follow:

[Plymouth Church's Facebook](#)  
[fb.com/plymouthchurchfw](https://fb.com/plymouthchurchfw)

[John Pavlovitz's Facebook](#)  
[fb.com/johnpavlovitzofficial](https://fb.com/johnpavlovitzofficial)

## Embracing Evangelism – the Word and the Work

In 2017, when I was asked to join the Evangelism & Marketing Board, my initial response was a sort of internal panic – a fight or flight response, really. My first coherent thought was, “There is no way I’m going to go out and try to convert people,” which, of course, was a silly thing to worry about in the context of our Plymouth home. But I imagine for a lot of us here at Plymouth, and for many other progressive Christians, the word “evangelism” causes a mental or emotional flinch, an almost instinctive backing away. And it’s a shame.

Certainly, there is cause for such a reaction. Too many people bear the scars of abuse or bigotry and hatred wielded as “righteous” weapons of faith by folks practicing a conservative evangelical form of Christianity. Others have been ambushed too many times by evangelists trying to browbeat people into being saved by Jesus to take evangelism seriously as good and valid Christian work. And still others reject evangelism based on experiences with those who embrace the label of evangelist but do a lot more talking about Jesus than following in the way of Jesus. All of this makes it easy to ignore the word once we decide we have no desire to be associated with a particular tradition we have experienced as hypocritical and/or harmful.

But the heart of evangelism is action – “to bring a good message.” We know that the good message in question is along the lines of Jesus’ mission statement at the start of his ministry, taken from Isaiah: “...to bring good news to the poor...to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” And we know that, in addition to teaching and preaching, Jesus acted in a way that healed, liberated, and nourished people of every walk of life and from a variety of religious and cultural traditions. Jesus didn’t simply speak the message, but made it manifest in tangible ways. And it was good.

Isn’t this the work that we must embrace as followers of Christ, not just individually, but together as a church?



*Collections for the October Supply Drive for Afghan refugee families by the E&M board.*

This is the question that the Evangelism & Marketing Board has been considering with real intention in the past few years, and we find ourselves leaning into the evangelism portion of our role and hoping to bring our whole Plymouth family along. Our monthly supply drives and the community pantry have been the most obvious change in our approach to our work. Your contributions have helped feed and clothe people, get kids supplied for school, keep our partner school clean and safe during two years of plague, and so much more. You are helping Plymouth manifest the good news in the community – you’re evangelists! This year we want to improve accessibility for participation in Plymouth’s evangelism – and get this beloved body of Christ more active outside our own walls – so we are working to organize service and volunteer activities in the community that will be free for participants. While we have some ideas of our own to get started on, we welcome suggestions for service projects you’d be interested in (email us at [plymoutheandm@gmail.com](mailto:plymoutheandm@gmail.com)).

Finally, we want to remind everyone that Tapping Into Faith is a really good time, and gets even more fun with more people. It’s free, with appetizers provided, and open to anyone who is able and willing to join us. We share stories from our lives, ask questions and stumble towards potential and partial answers, and provide a safe space to talk about faith (and doubt) with no judgment. Feel free to bring friends with you, no matter their tradition. The only purpose is community – not upholding particular doctrines or interpretations, just extending our “you and your questions are welcome here” beyond Sunday morning announcements. Join us in the party room at Mad Anthony Brewing on the last Monday of every month at 7:30 pm.

Let’s reclaim the word evangelism and dig into the work and joy of it together.

Peace,

January Simpson  
Evangelism and Marketing Board Chair

# Growing Hope Globally: Feeding the Hungry

In the Spring of 2004, Rev. Ruth E. Phillips and John Whitebread returned from a conference all excited! They had just heard Norm Braksick share stories and details about a mission project called Food Resource Bank. They cornered my husband, Doug, and asked if he would be interested in bringing this idea to Plymouth. Norm was scheduled to present here during an upcoming Sunday.

When we walked into church that day, Doug commented “I know that man... he called on me at Central Soya.” At the same time, after we had taken communion, Norm whispered to John Gardner, “Is that Doug Cunningham?” What followed was a reunion of old business friends.

Pairing a “city church” with a “country” church, all as part of growing a crop to feed the hungry: Norm’s enthusiasm and passion was contagious! By the end of that Sunday, Plymouth had over \$2000 in pledges! The first one was made by Norm himself!

What followed was a connection between Salem Church in Magley, IN and Plymouth. They had farmers who would donate the land, plant, and harvest the corn. Our job was to raise money to help cover the expenses. The profit would then go to a mission project decided upon by both churches. The mission was to help provide life sustaining food security in developing countries.

During the Fall and Winter, we visited back and forth and by Spring we were ready to go! With several Plymouth members on board, we invaded Kent Girod’s workshop: a large sign was created to be placed on the designated land, and we were up and running. The first crop was planted (2005) and plans were made for our first harvest celebration! Doug made several roads trips that growing season to check on the crop and visit with the farmers.

Over the past 18 years, it has been amazing to watch our mission villages go from the women walking often two miles to carry water to the introduction of rain barrels. It was inspiring to see a greater variety of crops grown as different farming techniques, soil preparation, community seed banks, and nutrition training were introduced, to just name a few of the changes!

Chickens and goats were offered and with it the ability not only to provide food but also to “pass on the gift.” It was an expectation of all who accepted the help. This is one thing in particular that I found most rewarding! We have now reached over one million people, with still many to go!

Things have changed: the name is now Growing Hope Globally, and our partner churches are now Peace and Pleasant Chapel, but what hasn’t changed is the need to feed the hungry! Feeding the hungry has no expiration date! It keeps me connected! How about you?

Gale Cunningham



*The first Growing Hope Globally sign in 2005.*

## Why I Chose Plymouth: Wayne Peterson-Stephan



Hello everyone! I'm Wayne Peterson-Stephan and I recently joined the wonderful Plymouth Church family. I have had a long journey to get to the United Church of Christ and Plymouth church. As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, finding a church family can be a challenge in rural northeast Indiana. Before coming to Plymouth, I was a member of the United Methodist Church, first in Huntington and then in Auburn, as a youth director for the church.

There is a lot that I love about the United Methodist church, but my struggle has constantly been joining faith communities that are affirming, but still have a glass ceiling for members of the LGBTQ+ community. This was my experience in the United Methodist churches that I came from. While the individual churches were very affirming and inclusive, the denominational rules prevented me from seeking ordination

within the denomination. It was very hard to exist in a faith community where I can take communion, be baptized, serve in worship, and even be on staff, but not be ordained.

So, I began to explore other denominations and churches. That was when I came across the United Church of Christ. As I explored more about the denomination, I was delighted to find the UCC's strong stances on inclusion and social justice. A denomination that for years has been drawing the circle wider, including women and minorities as people who are fully able to serve in all areas of the church, including ordained ministry.

Then began my search for a place that would be my church home, which is when I came across Plymouth. I had heard of Plymouth because of its reputation for inclusion within the community, and after viewing the website and reading the four covenants, I knew I had to check it out. I began by watching online and was very connected to a church who seemed to have a clear and unapologetic identity. The four covenants were repeated each Sunday and the sermons were bold and matched the identity of the church. I could tell immediately that this church had a purpose and direction and that it was truly a united body of Christ.

I then began to attend in-person services and there was an immediate warmth and welcome that I experienced from multiple members of the church and the pastors. Between the welcoming community and the church's strong identity, I felt like I had found my spiritual home. This was a place that I knew would be safe and empowering. A place where I could give myself completely, to serve the Kingdom of God well, and likewise be challenged to grow and thrive spiritually. I also loved the diversity that I experienced, from orientations, to ages, to races, to capabilities. Everyone exists together, without having to hide or feel diminished.

So, I would like to extend a sincere thank you to everyone, for your warm welcome and for embodying the love of God toward me, my family and this community!

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## New Books in the Library

The Library Committee is excited to announce that there are a variety of new books in the Louise Folsom Memorial Library, as well as a number of books coming soon! After a group of volunteers surveyed our current inventory and discovered that there were very few books written by authors of color, Rev. Timothy and Rev. Sara curated a list of books by Black authors that they believed would be good additions to our collection.

Some of the new books include classics such as *Why We Can't Wait*, by Martin Luther King Jr. and *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, by Maya Angelou, as well as newer titles like *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, by James Cone and *Caste*, by Elizabeth Wilkerson.

Many of these new books are on display in the Folsom room, ready to be checked out. This work will continue as we seek to add other authors of color to our collection. As the year progresses, be sure to take a look, and happy reading!

## Plymouth Music Series Resumes Concerts in 2022

The uptick in COVID-19 cases in our region made it difficult to plan concerts last fall. Thankfully, things seem to be improving and, therefore, we are happy to announce that we are again presenting concerts for both in-person and livestream audiences.

**We need your help.** We are asking you to donate generously to help us continue presenting opportunities for cultural enrichment during these difficult times. Your generosity last season made it possible for us to produce some wonderful programs that are still available to audiences via YouTube. These lasting experiences are enriching audiences even today!

**The Arts Matter.** As you know, the pandemic has impacted one of the most precious resources in our country: our musicians. Over 75% are either underemployed or unemployed, and that reality is quite evident here in northeast Indiana. Many of the instrumental and vocal musicians in our community have been struggling for work. Please know that our priority is to create programs that provide opportunities for local musicians to earn a living and enrich us with their talent.

As you are adding these dates to your calendar, be sure to send us a note of encouragement and, if you are able, a donation!

Keep an eye on the Plymouth social medias for any further updates and announcements about Plymouth Music Series concerts!

Many thanks,

Maestro Robert Nance  
Director of Music

## Plymouth Music Series Upcoming Spring Concerts

**March 6, 2022 - 4:00 pm**

### **PETER AND THE WOLF at the ORGAN**

Robert Nance, Organist: Janice Furtner, Narrator

*This program features Prokofiev's famous "Peter and the Wolf" transcribed for the organ and performed by Robert Nance at the Allen Renaissance Digital Concert Organ and Janice Furtner narrating. This program takes place in the sanctuary and is designed for children of all ages!*

**April 3, 2022 - 4:00 pm**

### **JOSIAH LUND, PIANO**

*On the outstanding Steinway grand piano in the sanctuary of Plymouth Church, pianist Josiah Lund will perform a dynamic recital of music by Handel, Beethoven, Bartok and Rachmaninoff.*

**June 5, 2022 - 4:00 pm**

### **NEW ORLEANS JAZZ PENTECOST CELEBRATION**

*Plymouth has hosted a New Orleans styled Worship Service on Pentecost for nearly two decades. This year, we move the celebration outside to the parking lot on the corner of Berry and Fairfield Avenues. Join us for this festive musical celebration!*

### **Past Concert:**

### **WE ARE THE DREAM**

Commemorating the Life & Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

*This program is now available for viewing on our YouTube channel, [www.youtube.com/plymouthchurchfw](http://www.youtube.com/plymouthchurchfw).*



### **Concert Information**

- All concerts are free and open to the public in-person and via livestream on YouTube when possible. [www.youtube.com/plymouthchurchfw](http://www.youtube.com/plymouthchurchfw).
- Outdoor concerts are in-person only and will not have a livestream option.
- View the Plymouth Music Series webpage for updates and more information: [www.plymouthfw.org/plymouth-music-series](http://www.plymouthfw.org/plymouth-music-series)
- Donations are appreciated via [www.plymouthfw.org/donate](http://www.plymouthfw.org/donate) and select "Music Series"
- Watch for information on the summer season featuring the musical **Cotton Patch Gospel** and a **Carole King Tribute!**





## WE ARE THE EARTH

### Environmental Justice: A Moral Imperative (Global, National, Local)

*An Earth Day 2022 Conference sponsored by Indiana Center for Middle East Peace*

Indiana Center for Middle East Peace is hosting an Earth Day 2022 conference, entitled WE ARE THE EARTH - Environmental Justice: A Moral Imperative (Global, National, Local) on Saturday, April 23, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm at Plymouth Congregational Church.

Individual registrations are \$20 per person; you can become a Partner for \$150. Being a Partner includes: (1) conference registration; (2) program mention; (3) reception with our keynote speakers; and (4) a copy of Rev. Liz Theoharis's book, *We Cry Justice: Reading the Bible with the Poor People's Campaign*.

#### Keynote Speakers:

**Malik Kenyatta Yakini**, Co-founder and Executive Director of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN) and a long-time partner of the Sustainable Food Systems Initiative (SFSI). DBCFSN operates a seven-acre urban farm and spearheads the Detroit People's Food Co-op, a cooperative grocery store in Detroit's North End. He is also co-founder of the National Black Food and Justice Alliance.

**Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis**, Co-Chair of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival with Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II and the Director of the Kairos Center for Religions, Rights, and Social Justice at Union Theological Seminary, New York City. Accolades include: 30th Annual Freedom Award by the National Civil Rights Museum (2021); one of 15 Faith Leaders to Watch by the Center for American Progress (2020); one of 11 Women Shaping the Church by Sojourners (2019).

#### WE ARE THE EARTH - Environmental Justice: A Moral Imperative (Global, National, Local)

Saturday, April 23 | 9:00 am - 4:00 pm  
Plymouth Congregational Church  
501 W Berry St. Fort Wayne, IN 46802

**Individual Registration:** \$20

**Become a Partner:** \$150

Light lunch provided | Masks required

Questions? Contact Linda Kerr at [linda.kerr72@gmail.com](mailto:linda.kerr72@gmail.com) or (260) 341-2796

[indianacmep.org](http://indianacmep.org) | [fb.com/IndianaCMEP](https://fb.com/IndianaCMEP)

In addition to the keynote speakers, there will be three workshop times, with six organizations from which to choose: Hoosier Interfaith Power and Light, Poor People's Campaign – NE Indiana Chapter, Little River Wetlands Project, Sierra Club, Midwest Building Decarbonization Coalition, and Ephraim Smiley's Renaissance Pointe Urban Farm.

Light vegetarian soup lunch and displays from local environmental justice groups. Come for all day or part of the day – keynote speakers, workshops, displays, and lunch included. Masks are required.

**TO REGISTER:** (1) Check our ICMEP Website ([indianacmep.org](http://indianacmep.org)); (2) Send a check to: ICMEP, PO Box 12005, Fort Wayne, IN, 46862; or for information, contact Linda Kerr ([linda.kerr72@gmail.com](mailto:linda.kerr72@gmail.com), 260-341-2796)

#### About Indiana Center for Middle East Peace (ICMEP)

ICMEP is an independent non-sectarian center dedicated to educating for peace, justice, and inter-cultural understanding locally and globally. Our ultimate goal is a more educated citizenry regarding the significant issues in the critical regions of the world, especially the Middle East, that impact the entire globe. (Source: [icmep.org](http://icmep.org))



## Seed to Marsh Project

The Environmental Action Team, in cooperation with Little River Wetlands Project (LRWP), invites Plymouth Church people of all ages to help promote a healthier, greener environment.

On Sunday, February 20, we kick off a multi-part series called the Seed-to-Marsh project. We'll learn about wetland restoration and the importance of using native plants. After a light lunch provided by Congregational Life, we'll make a MESS sorting and stratifying seeds for future planting. The program will take place in the Folsom room starting at 11:15 am.

On Sunday, March 20, we'll meet at the barn in Eagle Marsh to see first-hand how restoring wetlands and planting native plants create a wonderful environment for a variety of animals. (If the weather cooperates, we may hear chorus frogs and see migrating ducks.) We'll plant seeds in flats and bring some back to the church to nurture.

In subsequent sessions we'll see changing seasons on the marsh and follow through with the Seed-to-Marsh project by planting our seedlings at the marsh itself!

Questions? Contact Jan Gibson at [gibsontjg@frontier.com](mailto:gibsontjg@frontier.com)

## An Update on *The Bell*

*The Bell* has been a long-standing publication of Plymouth Church, keeping members informed on the activities that go on both in and out of church. The publication has seen many formatting changes, most recently moving from a physical mailing to a digital format, but the content of *The Bell* has remained mostly consistent. In 2022, that's about to change.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Plymouth switched to a digital weekly bulletin that is emailed to over 400 members and attendees. The digital weekly bulletin has continued into 2022 and has reduced the cost of paper and ink substantially, which is not only good for the church's budget, but great for the environment!

When the digital weekly bulletin began, the office staff began to realize *The Bell* had become a reiteration of the contents in the bulletin. The idea of changing the contents of *The Bell* so it could be its own unique publication began to be discussed. This issue is the first transitional *Bell* newsletter.

*The Bell* will now be more article-based than announcement-based and be released quarterly as opposed to six times a year. This is a way to discover how Plymouth members and boards are making an impact within the church and community in accordance with our mission and covenants. Articles like the ones you've seen in this issue of *The Bell* will be featured quarterly, while some information you've become accustomed to seeing will be reserved for the weekly digital bulletin.

Information that will no longer be included in *The Bell*:

- Birthdays
- Sympathies & Births
- In Our Prayers
- Event Announcements without an accompanying article

This does not mean this information is gone forever. Birthdays, sympathy/birth notes, the prayer list, and event announcements will remain in the digital bulletin. The bulletin is added to the Bulletin Archive page of the Plymouth website every Monday, which can be found at [www.plymouthfw.org/bulletin](http://www.plymouthfw.org/bulletin).

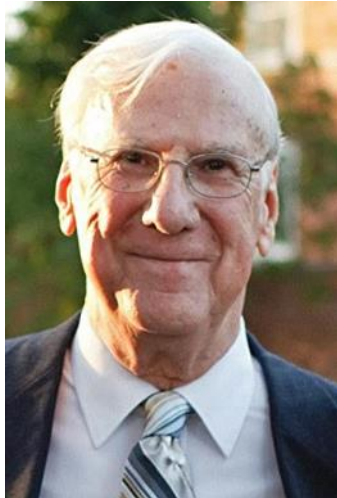
If you have a passion you'd like to share in *The Bell* that furthers Plymouth's mission and/or covenants, or you are having trouble receiving the digital bulletin via email, please email Elizabeth Pruitt, Communications Specialist, at [edp@plymouthfw.org](mailto:edp@plymouthfw.org).





# PLYMOUTH CHURCH

## FORT WAYNE + UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



### Sympathy Note

The Rev. Dr. Thomas (Tom) Dicken, who served as senior minister at Plymouth from 1989 to 1997, died in February 2021. His celebration of life was held in Versailles, Kentucky, where he and his wife Nancy had lived since his retirement from Plymouth.



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