



# The Bell

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

## From the Senior Pastor



### Plymouth and COVID-19

As I write this, it has been exactly two months since Plymouth leadership made the determination to cancel all in-person worship and programming for the foreseeable future, replacing it with digital worship services, online small group and board/committee meetings, and phone communication. I wanted to update you on where we are regarding plans moving forward.

### Financial Situation

Plymouth's finances remain stable. Pledge income is steady and expenses are slightly down (for example, our water bill is next to nothing right now). I want to thank everyone who's been able to continue their pledges, some of whom have even accelerated their giving when able. Donations are still being received and processed at the church office and can be either mailed or sent online. Special offerings continue so be sure to watch for them in e-blasts and in the digital service reminders. Unlike many churches, we have a substantial financial cushion to help us weather this pandemic, so we decided not to apply for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans. These were good conversations with the Stewardship and Finance and Human Resources Boards, and I feel we made the right decision. (Note: See Rev. Ruth's article for more information on internal financial support available for church members.)

### Slow, Cautious Transition

While Indiana, and other parts of the country, is moving swiftly back to reopening large sections of society, I believe it is prudent that we remain cautious. While infections in Indiana and Allen County seem to have stabilized somewhat, we have not yet seen a consistent decline in the infection numbers. Our regional hospitals are not currently overwhelmed or at capacity, but universal testing is not yet available and contact tracing is only in its fledgling stages. Given that these criteria have not been met, Plymouth is moving incrementally in its reopening process. This was the consensus in the Executive Council's meeting earlier this month. The first thing that will be changing is that staff will begin returning to work in the building on a more regular basis, however in limited and staggered hours and with additional safety and cleaning measures being in place. Before now, staff have been working almost exclusively from home. Yet the building will remain closed to the public and programming for now.

*Continued on page 2*

## Staying Connected While Physically Apart

Our online services are posted to our [Facebook page](#) every Sunday morning. These same videos are available on the website's [Sermon Archive page](#) and the [Plymouth YouTube Channel](#). If you are unsure as to how to access our Sermon Archive, [click here](#) for a video walkthrough.

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 continues to send out more eBlasts to keep you up-to-date on things like online gatherings, ways to help others while social distancing, and other news. eBlasts are sent on Tuesdays at 4:00 pm and Sundays at 9:00 am. If you are not receiving these eBlasts, please check your spam folder. If you still are not receiving them, please contact Mackenzie at [mmg@plymouthfw.org](mailto:mmg@plymouthfw.org).

## Fact Check

Information spreads fast and far on the internet - but are you seeing information from reputable sources? For details regarding COVID-19, try checking websites like [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov), [who.int](https://www.who.int), and your local health and human service organization websites!



## Plymouth People In Our Prayers

Archer Family, Mariellen Beitman, Janis Bohnstedt, Trevor Burns, Casey Cade, Carleen Carteaux, Natasha Chemey, Wayne Clouse, Kris Conner, David Cornwell, Brad Crowder, Jan Gibson, Quinn Hacker, Joan Hartwig, Susan Jarvis, Bob Jensen, Nancy Jordan, Ginny Laudadio, Brian Laurenz, Joan Lipscomb, Sheldon Lockwood, Bill Morgan, Karen O'Neal, Carol Patterson, Bonnie Pennock, Mike Popp, Noel Resor, Donna Riethmiller, Anne Rowland, Patrizia Saladini-Stark, Jacqueline Sanders, Barbara Senn, John Shannon, Isabelle Shockney, Charmaine Siekmann, Johanna Smith, Gordon Walter, Chris Week, Amanda Wray

**Sympathy** is extended to Charles Van Camp and family on the death of his mother, Norma Van Camp, March 30, Bluffton.

**Sympathy** is extended to Allen Haynes and his brother, Larry Haynes, on the death of Larry's wife, Crystal Humble, April 23, Wellman, IA.

**Sympathy** is extended to A.J. Calkins and family on the death of his uncle, John Gordon, April 25, Kalamazoo, MI.

**Sympathy** is extended to Mariah and Bryce Western and family on the death of her grandfather, Tom Fortenbery, May 8.

**Sympathy** is extended to Jon Allmandinger and family on the death of his mother, Coleen S. (Wagner) Allmandinger, May 14, Berne.

**For the month of May we pray for:**  
**Mental Health America**  
**Cedars HOPE**  
**Carriage House**  
**whose work is supported in part through Plymouth Benevolence**

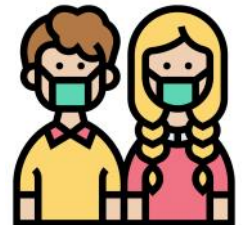
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The next step will be the slow reopening of small groups that want to meet in person while maintaining social distance and being in groups of less than 10. At the conclusion of a recent Bible study group, I asked the group whether they wanted to consider meeting in person again or staying online only for now. The universal consensus was to continue with our online format. So while small groups will soon be allowed to meet in person again, including boards and committees, if they feel more comfortable continuing online, we are encouraging that. The Young Adult Advisory Committee has planned a hike and environmental and faith discussion with distancing sometime in June, and a Pride sign making with distancing in July, but by and large I imagine most groups will be online only for a while.

### **Worship: the Elephant in the Room**

But what about worship? That has been the big topic in the news regarding COVID-19 and congregations. After consulting with Rev. Ruth, our two moderators, and the Indiana-Kentucky Conference minister, we've determined that we will continue our digital worship format at least through the end of June. While the conference originally only recommended online worship through May, they recently extended those recommendations through June. The conference's Annual Gathering, which was to be held this year in New Albany, IN at the end of June, has already shifted into being an online event. We feel that there is no rush to return to in person services right now, especially given the restrictions that will need to be in place in order to reduce risk. We believe we will have a better grasp on what the summer holds as we (lamentably) see the results of other congregations reopening and returning to normal too soon.

Even when we do return together at some point, it will most likely look very different: no food or fellowship time, no conversational congregating before or after worship, no singing, everyone wearing a face mask, social distancing and spacing in the sanctuary, a cap on how many can attend at any given time, plus additional precautionary measures to ensure people's safety. So for now, we will continue our online only services even as we work on tech issues for eventually live-streaming capabilities for whenever live services may resume for those unable or uncomfortable returning to a physical worship space. As things change and new decisions are made, we will be sure to communicate them with you so you know what the plan is.



Until then: stay safe, pray for each other, remain cautious, and continue to practice the way of Jesus in all ways whenever we can and wherever we are, near or far apart.

Peace,

Rev. Dr. Timothy C. Murphy

### **A Note of Gratitude From Barbara Duch**

I am totally in awe of all the thoughts, prayers, messages, contacts, and generosity that I have received from Plymouth members and friends since my accident just prior to Thanksgiving. It has been five months, and thoughts and prayers continue as I slowly continue to improve. I truly feel the love of God among all of you, and I am so very thankful.

## From the Associate Pastor

Friends,

Covenant Class met Sunday, May 17, for the sixth and final session via Zoom. The five youth who have participated have experienced many changes due to COVID-19, shutdown of schools, church, extracurricular activities, and personal gatherings with friends. Confirmation in worship was originally set for May 17. Since we couldn't be together in worship, this year's class will be confirmed whenever it is determined to be safe for our entire congregation to be present. Students often have grandparents who make special visits to worship, and we would want them to feel and be safe on that particular Sunday of celebration. The other aspect of Covenant Class being postponed is each student presenting her/his/their Statement of Faith. That unique opportunity in worship will be rescheduled as well.



Emergency Assistance is available for church members who may be struggling financially during this time due to loss or reduction of income. Out of the generosity of many who have given extra contributions for emergency need, the church is able to provide one-time assistance for rent, utilities, or groceries, on a "first-come first-serve" basis. If you are in need or know of someone who is, please contact either Rev. Murphy or myself. Assistance is confidential. Documentation is required with an invoice, statement, or bill for the amount due that is being requested.

Phone Tree callers have been active. Reports back to me are that most or all of Plymouth people are coping and being active. Especially to you who are parents - working from home and assisting your children with online learning – KUDOS!

Strength for today, Hope for tomorrow,

Rev. Ruth E. Phillips

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## Bread for the World

Bread for the World needs your help to support funding for children and mothers across the world and here in the US for summer food programs. There is a bill: S1918 "the Hunger Free Summer for Kids Act" being presented to Congress for approval.

In other years people would have gone to Washington to demonstrate and advocate for this support. This year we need folks to contact with letters, emails and/or phone our legislators about the need for nutrition programs for children and mothers, particularly summer programs.

If you want to assist this effort, please contact Lucy Hess at [lrh22@frontier.com](mailto:lrh22@frontier.com) or 484-4430 for sample letters and more detailed information about the project. The goal is to have over 400 contacts with the legislators from our area by May 26. These contacts can be done right from your home and only require that you make 3 contacts, one to each of our legislators. Please help.



**breadfortheworld**  
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

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## Sunday School



We're taking a break from Sunday morning and Wednesday afternoon Zoom gatherings this summer. Enjoy your break, and be ready to join us again when Summer Camp starts on June 8!

Registration is now open for Summer Camp! Our virtual camp runs from June 8 - July 31, and families are welcome to attend any days or weeks that work in their schedule. This program is open to Plymouth families, and to any families you know who could make use of this service. To sign up, e-mail Katie Watson at [kjwatson4@gmail.com](mailto:kjwatson4@gmail.com).

## Strengthen the Church UCC Offering

Annually, usually on Pentecost Sunday, the United Church of Christ receives a special offering called Strengthen the Church. The Strengthen the Church offering supports the growth of new congregations and the energizing of local ministries. Your generous support of this offering will help the UCC fulfill its commitment of creating a more just world and the continued building of a community that offers an extravagant welcome to all who seek the peace of Christ. Additionally, this offering supports the “God is Still-speaking” ministries. In the Spring of the year, our thoughts turn to the planting of seeds and the anticipation of new growth. Contributions to the Strengthen the Church offering will help plant the seeds of new congregations as well as the expansion and reinvigorating of existing congregations. The Benevolence Committee thanks you in advance for your generous support.

## Make Your Voice Heard

The primary is important because this is where voters select the candidates for office who will be on the ballot in November. In order to help voters facilitate information about the candidates, the League of Women Voters is sponsoring [VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org). This site has questions and answers from the candidates concerning issues facing our community. At the site, [VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org), click on *See What's on your Ballot*. Enter your local address with zip code (information is not stored). Voters can compare the positions of all candidates that responded. The voter will be able to do a side by side comparison of the responses of two candidates for the same office. Make sure your voice is heard. Vote—and then vote again in November.



## From the Music Director

In late February, it was becoming increasingly apparent that the world was facing a major pandemic, the scope of which even today is not yet clear. What seems abundantly clear is we will be in lock down mode for much of 2020 and into 2021. How we choose to deal with this crisis will define our humanity for decades. Thoughtful and strong leadership will enable us to navigate the circumstances surrounding this pandemic and help us transition into what amounts to be a decidedly new and different “normal.”



As a performing artist, the Director of Music at Plymouth Church, and the chief executive of Heartland Sings where operating and sustaining employment for our artists has been significantly challenged, I have put a strong emphasis on creative output and proactive planning for the future. My first priority has been to provide digital musical experiences that enrich the spirits of everyone in our community and beyond. I have been extremely grateful to Plymouth Congregational Church and Heartland Sings for their support as I, and my colleagues, continue to do our work. I'm also proud of my colleagues who are showing great resilience and creativity, churning out programming in new and different ways. Despite the challenges, we are together delivering on the mission we are called to support and creating new programming along the way.

When it was clear that we would be shutting down businesses in our state, I personally committed to performing a daily musical offering as long as the State of Emergency was in place. What I imagined might be a 2 - 3 week lockdown lasted for 52 days! As I write these thoughts, we are in the third week of the gradual reopening of Indiana and my daily posts have evolved into weekly reflections. These musical offerings have offered me an exceptional opportunity to cope with the crisis, allowing my artistry to feed my spirit, while at the same time providing the thoughtful, strong, and supportive leadership to my colleagues, staff, patrons, family and friends.

While the future may be uncertain, I am certain of two things: 1) the arts are ESSENTIAL to our community's emotional, spiritual and physical well-being—we need our creative outlets and experiences; and 2) we may just come out of this crisis with an intense appreciation for our shared humanity and the precious moments gifted to us each day to use wisely and appreciated to the fullest!

Maestro Robert Nance

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## Plymouth Donations

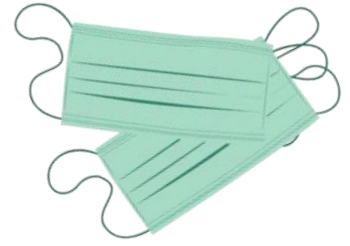
If you feel the call to donate to Plymouth during this time of uncertainty, please consider using our online method by using your smart phone's barcode scanner. This QR Code/Scanner tag will take you to the Plymouth donation page, or you can click [here](#).

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. You can also download a QR scanner app! Use this secure and confidential link to support Plymouth Church's ministry and mission! Your gift helps advance the local and global outreach of Plymouth benevolence.



## Jan Evrard—Reflections From Home

COVID-19, shelter in place, self-quarantine, stay-at-home order, social distancing, personal protective equipment (PPE), Zoom meetings. These are now terms that we are familiar with and use everyday. How quickly things seem to change, but in reality we may simply be unaware of what is going on in the background as we live our busy lives. I think this applies to the Coronavirus as well as to climate change. There are very smart people who have been studying both for some time, but we often don't hear or pay attention to their warnings until we are directly affected.



We know that this virus, as well as climate change, affects marginalized and people of color more than others, which should give us reason to pause and make necessary changes. But with so many people sick, dying, out of work, financially drained - the focus must now be on staying safe and preventing more deaths. However, let's pray that we don't forget what has always needed to change and is simply more evident now, once the crisis is stabilized.



So on a lighter note, how have things changed for me personally? Well, as a retired person, I don't have a 9-5 job, but in normal times, I teach about 12 yoga classes per week. Having to be in so many places during the day, I may hang out at Starbucks downtown to drink my nitro cold brew coffee (with sweet cream) and work on other projects until the next class. Of course there are no classes now, but I have been holding yoga practices via Zoom, and attending other meetings the same way. I have had more time to slow down, study, take walks, check on family and friends, and even learned how to brew my own cold brew coffee! The many issues in our world still overwhelm me, but I have more time to pause rather than quickly react. Still watching way too much CNN, however!

We had our first virtual Peace & Justice Committee meeting in April and it was great seeing all the faces. We discussed the projects that have been placed on hold such as Study Connection, inter-faith Muslim event, Poor People's Campaign Assembly to DC, to name a few. But we also talked about how we are coping because of the wonderful virtual services Plymouth is providing, Bob Nance's music each day, Katie's work with the kids, and Plymouth Generations. We have had many virtual meetings for Faith in Indiana, Human Library, and others, proving that it is possible to keep working on social justice issues.



I don't want to fail to mention that so much has changed for all of us young and old, whether it be school closings, voting procedures, and cancellation or rescheduling of social events. It is painful and hard to accept, but accept it we must. Even more reasons why Plymouth's virtual worship services, calls, Facebook interaction, and this *Bell* is more important than ever. I am thankful to have such talented staff and volunteers at Plymouth to do this work.

So time to end this long rant by mentioning something that I think about quite a bit. For the last 3 years, I have prayed daily for the leaders in our country to make just and peaceful decisions before our democracy is gone forever; that doing the right thing is more important than staying in power. I really hoped that God would step in to stop the madness. So do I think that God caused this virus to shut down the world to achieve this and remind us that we are not in control? Of course not (well, maybe that control part). I don't believe that God causes the death of people or wants harm to come to any of us. He knows we are perfectly capable of doing it ourselves.

Possibly God expects us to learn acceptance and surrender in order to make the necessary changes to live in a better world for all people. Below is a quote from Bill Wilson, one of the founders of AA, who gave me this perspective several years ago. It has really helped me and I hope it can hold some meaning for you as well.



"I don't think happiness or unhappiness is the point. How do we meet the problems we face? In my view, we of this world are pupils in a great school of life. It is intended that we try to grow, and that we try to help our fellow travelers to grow in the kind of love that makes no demands. In short, we try to move toward the image and likeness of God as we understand Him. When pain comes, we are expected to learn from it willingly, and help others to learn. When happiness comes, we accept it as a gift, and thank God for it."



# May Birthdays



1	Judy Crooks	14	Roy Gilliom	23	Dick Conklin
1	John Escosa III	15	Martha Dively	23	Stan Fahl
2	Helen Mowan	15	Mariah Grim	23	Wayne Gerard
3	Sophia Boyko	15	Rod Kuhn	23	Amelia Longardner-Graff
3	Helen Hill	16	Kaden Hartman-Crowell	23	Diana Wilkening
5	Daniel Boyko	17	Tod Ramsey	24	Bryce Longenberger
5	Linda Kerr	17	Mike Thomas	26	Charlie Coffeen
6	Nada O'Neal	20	Kara Jaurigue	26	Libby Fortunato
7	Robin Grimm	21	Laura Coon	26	Jim Sidell
8	Susan Bresson	21	Jordan Dollarhite	27	Brynn Anglin
8	Corrie Silcox	21	Greg Gibson	27	Sue Godsell
10	Erin Harney-Siples	21	Makaylee Hartman-Crowell	27	Jim Nelson
10	Steve Hollingsworth	21	Judy Madden	29	Andrea Moll
10	Kelly Keuneke	21	Patty Meriwether	30	Janis Mitchell
11	Barb Hill	21	Michal Miller	30	Jon Mitchell
12	Karen Hill	21	Dana Wichern	31	Judson Chasey
12	Jay Shumaker	22	Gary Kerr	31	David Lewellyn
13	Beth Balasia	22	Carrol Stumpf	31	Cathy Nicholson
13	Nadia Patton				

## Financial Report

April 2020

	Month	Month	Month	YTD	YTD	YTD
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Actual	Budget	Variance
<b>Total Income</b>	\$ 81,505	\$ 71,149	\$ 10,356	\$ 266,419	\$ 264,648	\$ 1,771
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$ 80,243	\$ 83,186	\$ (2,943)	\$ 265,034	\$ 264,778	\$ 256
<b>Net Income (Loss)</b>	\$ 1,262	\$ (12,037)	\$ 13,299	\$ 1,385	\$ (130)	\$ 1,515

## Contact Us

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