



The Bell

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

From the Senior Pastor

Progressive Christianity

Many of you may have heard the term “progressive Christianity” used here at Plymouth. What is it? What is it about? How is it distinct from other, more familiar, forms such as evangelical or charismatic Christianity?

Starting on Sunday, September 11 and continuing through October 9, Rev. Sara and I will be offering a six-week series on progressive Christianity, which can serve as either an introduction or a refresher. Whether you are a new Christian, new to Plymouth, or have been here a while but want to learn more, this series is for you! This Chapel Class series will have a livestream option for those who want to learn but are unable to be there in person.



There is no one form of progressive Christianity, but a variety of groups, thinkers, churches, and theologies that are part of a broader constellation of instincts. Some have narrower interpretations of what counts, and others go with a big tent approach. We’ll talk about all that and more.

Understanding progressive Christianity has been part of my ministry for many years. Once, during an interview for a church position I applied for, I was asked to compare and contrast liberal Christianity and progressive Christianity. They didn’t like my initial answer, but apparently it all worked out, because they eventually called me to serve there! We won’t be so stringent in our approach, but we will discuss a variety of topics and questions people may have.

This will include orthopraxy vs orthodoxy, how we interpret the Bible, inclusivity and a preferential option for the poor, ways of understanding God including pantheism and panentheism, how we approach other religions from an interfaith perspective, and non-dualism, among other topics.

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Worship at Plymouth

Plymouth Church is currently offering an in-person worship service every **Sunday at 10:00 am**. At this time, masks are optional but highly encouraged. Before worship, 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 will resume at **9:00 am on September 11**.

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 Digital Bulletin. Each livestream is uploaded to the Sermon Archive page on [our website](#) on **Monday mornings**.

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I'm excited for this series. As you may recall, I was the Executive Director of Progressive Christians Uniting while in Los Angeles, and I think it's important to recognize that we are part of a much broader movement. While any progressive congregation is often experienced as something utterly unique, they are not alone. This series will help make some of those connections and get us thinking more deeply about our faith convictions. We look forward to seeing you there!

Peace,

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

From the Associate Pastor Crisis Contemplation



In times of crises, the idea of contemplation can seem like a luxury that smacks of privilege and power. Who has time to sit in silent contemplation when the world is on fire around us? Indeed, Western European rituals of contemplation can seem esoteric and sterile, and hardly useful, when injustices are being heaped upon the marginalized and we find ourselves fighting for our lives during the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and white supremacy.

Or perhaps our definition of what makes for 'contemplation' simply needs to be expanded. Perhaps there are forms of contemplation that can help us not only survive the various traumas and crises that we face in our world, but also help us to mend what has been broken.

This is the argument that Rev. Dr. Barbara Holmes makes in her book, *Crisis Contemplation: Healing the Wounded Village*. Focusing her argument through the lens of BIPOC peoples and experiences, Holmes takes a deep dive into the contemplative practices of non-white, non-western European communities to expand our vocabulary around what constitutes spiritual practice. Published in 2021, *Crisis Contemplation* is a deeply relevant salve to the anxiety so many of us feel amid multiple global crises, and masterfully bridges the illusory gap between social action and contemplative spirituality.

This fall, you are invited to engage in study around this book as part of our Wednesday Night Live activities. We will begin our study on **Wednesday, September 21** and continue for six weeks. We will meet in the Amistad room after Wednesday Night Live dinner from **6:45 pm to 7:30 pm**. Part of our time together will include engaging in some of the spiritual practices that Holmes includes in the book, so be prepared to bring your contemplative sensibilities to the table!

Crisis Contemplation: Healing the Wounded Village can be purchased on Amazon or directly through the publisher at [Crisis Contemplation: Healing the Wounded Village – CAC Bookstore](#). If assistance with the cost of the book is needed, please speak with Rev. Sara Ofner-Seals to have the church purchase a copy for you. Please consider joining us this fall!

“At the center of every crisis is an inner space so deep, so beckoning, so suddenly and daringly vast, that it feels like a universe, feels like God. When the unthinkable happens, and does not relent, we fall through our hubris towards an inner flow, an abiding and rebirthing darkness that feels like home.”

– Rev. Dr. Barbara Holmes

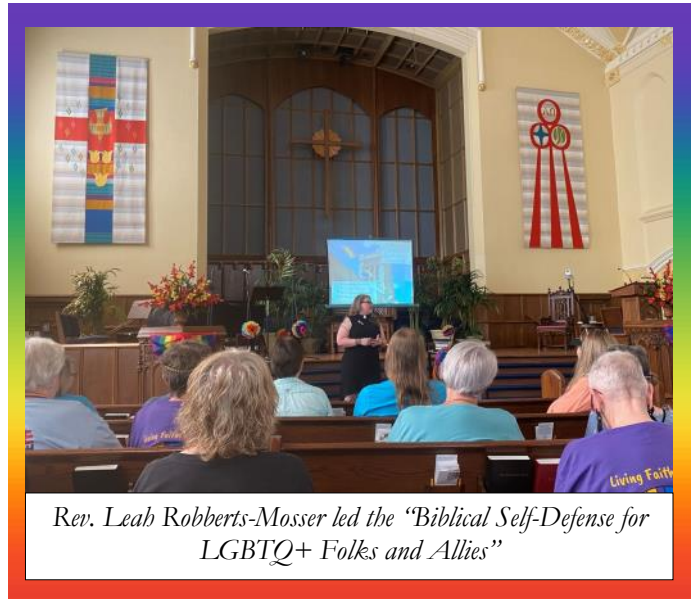
Pride at Plymouth Was Good News

Every year, the UCC observes the last weekend in June as Open and Affirming weekend. The Evangelism and Marketing (E&M) Board decided that this was the year to go all-in on celebrating, and organized what we intend to make an annual celebration of Pride at Plymouth. If we may say so, it was an absolutely fabulous day!

Attendance was abundant. Lots of folks from here in Fort Wayne attended, but so did a surprising number of our neighbors from other counties, and a few folks from out of state. The workshop on biblical self-defense had over 60 attendees – at 11:00 am on a Saturday! The Folsom Room was buzzing with laughter and chatting and good vibes all day long, and there was always an audience for the musicians in the sanctuary.

Our performers were all incredible! We were lucky to get such a good mix of styles from truly talented artists. Wolf Young, Gabriel Kanka, and Jen Fisher let their gifts shine, and filled the sanctuary with awesome rhythm and great music. The final performance was the drag show, with over 100 folks in the audience, and it was utterly joyful. Drag queens Ellie Delight, Tilda Whirl, and Diamonique, and drag king Blake Daniels, treated the audience to a dynamite show that had toddlers, retirees, and every age in between clapping and whooping.

Ellie opened with the gospel track, “I Am His Child,” which made for a surprisingly moving drag performance in a church, and the whole show was great to the very end. Blake Daniels even did a cartwheel uphill in the center aisle! After the show, the performer dropped by our booth at FW Pride to say hello and introduce her wife. When the cartwheel was mentioned, she laughed and said she’d never done one in a show before but just decided to go for it! Hallelujah!



Rev. Leah Roberts-Mosser led the “Biblical Self-Defense for LGBTQ+ Folks and Allies”



Wolf Lupke, one of three musicians at Plymouth Pride, performed using taiko drums, as seen above.

Board members all received positive feedback from those who attended – both throughout the day and after the fact. Many of the younger attendees mentioned it was their first Pride event ever – their parents were willing to let them attend since it was at a church – and they loved it. We also had several people come up to our booth at FW Pride, a whole month later, and show us their “beloved” pins that they picked up when attending our event and to tell us how much fun they had, and how grateful they are to know there’s a church that embraces them as they are.

The E&M Board owes huge thanks to our Plymouth volunteers who helped decorate and work the event. Special shout out to Kara Jaurigue, emcee for the musicians, and Maggie Clifton, who recruited the drag performers and was emcee during the drag show. None of it would have been possible without the work of John Escosa on sound in the sanctuary.

While this little article is already getting to some length, I want to leave you with two anecdotes from that wonderful day as they illustrate why events like this matter.

First, I shared a pew during the drag show with a couple of folks who had been helping out with the preview tours being offered of the Pride Center next door. Like everyone, they were having a great time, and at one point, in between performers, one leaned over to me and said, “You know, historically I’ve had a pretty low opinion of churches, for all the reasons you would think. But I’ll tell you what, a couple more experiences like this, and I might have to rethink some things.”

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The Folsom Room was full of resource booths from groups such as Positive Resource Connection, PFLAG, and Fort Wayne Human Library.

Then, when the day was over, and the resource folks were packing up, one of them stopped and offered his thanks for our event. I told him it was our pleasure – we take being Open and Affirming seriously. He said, “Yeah, but you know that there are plenty of churches that say, ‘everyone is welcome,’ but they don’t mean it. The church I went to as a kid said anyone could attend, but I never felt safe or comfortable being who I was there. I knew I wasn’t welcome. I stopped going as soon as my parents couldn’t make me go anymore. I couldn’t ever imagine being comfortable or happy in a church. But today was a really beautiful day – it was such a good day. Thank you for doing this.”

These two people experienced church as a true sanctuary, perhaps for the first time in their lives. They went into a church building, against every defense mechanism they have, and had the breath-takingly joyful experience of seeing themselves, and their queer culture, affirmed and celebrated in a context where they’d only ever experienced shame and pain. It’s not likely that either of them will suddenly decide to start attending church (although who knows) but if they know people who are interested, they’ll know of a church to suggest that is welcoming and safe. And, more

importantly than that, for at least two people (and probably many more), Pride at Plymouth offered good news that they never expected to receive, and probably told themselves they didn’t need. Yes, queer child of God, you are beloved. You are beloved of God exactly as you are, and your identity is celebrated and affirmed in the kin-dom.

Thanks be to God, indeed.

January Simpson
Evangelism and Marketing Board Chair



Performer Jen Fisher



Plymouth Pride Welcome Booth



Performer Gabriel Kanka

Credit and special thanks to Kara Jaurigue, Monty Millage, Cher Jackson, Erica Warren, Leah Robberts-Mosser, and Karen Goss-Hamilton for the various pictures of Plymouth Pride used in this publication.



Making a Difference in a Child's Life

This fall, Plymouth is celebrating the 10th year of a successful Study Connection with eleven children, grades K-5, who attend Fairfield Elementary School. Study Connection (SC) typically begins in early October after the teachers, students and parents sign agreements, the bus schedule is made and pick up after SC is arranged. Tutors and subs meet at church a week before the start for an orientation to discuss planning for the school year.

Each session, the children bounce off the bus and happily meet with their tutors for a little over an hour in the Folsom Room. Each child has a SC folder with homework or other tasks the teacher would like the child to do or practice. Once the children have eaten their snacks, the homework begins. Usually there is time near the end for a group game or story with one or two others or alone with the tutor. Materials in the tutor bags are provided by Study Connection. Other support materials are available for everyone to use, some provided by SC and others are stored at the church. We are fortunate to have a storage area with books and educational games to use adding extra variety to each session. Tutors take turns setting out the healthy snacks that are donated by the Peace and Justice Committee.

Tutors and children have fun getting to know each other. The main job of the tutor is to establish a relationship with the child to encourage and support learning. We are not substitute teachers; we are the child's advocate, cheerleader, and an adult friend. Often, the children will teach the tutors ways to do homework so everyone can learn together. There is email contact weekly with SC and with the child's teacher. When semester breaks occur, the children are sad they won't see their tutors for two weeks. Birthdays are special and we make sure each child has a celebration BD time with a song and a book as a gift from their tutor. In addition, we have at least two parties each season, one at Christmas and one at the end of the year. Between 3:00 pm and 4:15 pm on Wednesday afternoons, the Folsom Room is alive with youthful voices and energy.

If you would like to be a tutor or a substitute, please let Lucy Hess know lrh22@frontier.com or call 484-4430. To apply, go to the FWCS Study Connection website [here](#). Click the "Volunteering" tab to access the application form. This link is also featured in the Plymouth LinkTree, found at the bottom of the weekly digital bulletin. All volunteers must have a background check which is done by the FWCS. Everyone is welcome to be a special friend to an elementary age child. Providing support and encouragement is the main task for each tutor and sub. Being a tutor is a great way to make a difference in a child's life.

Lucy Hess
Study Connection Volunteer

Family Game Night

Congregational Life (CL) Board is introducing a new event that we hope will become a monthly or more frequent event. Our first family game night will be **Friday, September 9 from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm.**

CL Board will supply decaf coffee, water, some starter games like standard playing cards, a Chinese checker board, Sorry, Jenga, dice for Yahtzee and other dice games, tables set up for puzzles and brain teasers, and a space for toddlers to come and play on their own when not joining in the table games.

Please bring:

- Your favorite family game to share and be ready to host that game to teach others how to play.
- Snacks to share.
- Your friends and family are most welcome!

We want to offer childcare to children 2 and under so that families can enjoy playing. We are asking for members and/or families to become able to offer childcare under our security umbrella guidelines so that all can enjoy the evening on a rotating basis.

Prepare to have a fun evening of games and fellowship!



What Is Centering Prayer?

Since the earliest days of the Christian church, individual seekers have turned to solitude, silence, and meditation as ways to foster a deeper connection with God. One particular method of Christian meditation that has been preserved throughout the centuries is known as Centering Prayer. Practitioners of Centering Prayer often refer to it as “consenting to the presence and action of God within.” Like many other forms of meditation, Centering Prayer consists of sitting in silence and quieting the mind. Spiritual teacher Cynthia Bourgeault describes the practice as “leaning to withdraw attention from our thoughts—those incessant creations of our busy minds—in order to rest in a gentle, open attentiveness to divine reality itself.”

For those of us who live active lives, or even activist lives, it is important to take time to quiet our anxious minds and to reconnect with the Divine source “in which we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). Without this connection, we can easily become rudderless and disconnected-- as Bourgeault puts it, “swimming in a sea of mercy and still experiencing ourselves as stranded on shore.” We can grow cynical in our advocacy for peace and justice and start to burn out. It is crucial for those of us on the spiritual path to engage in practices that remind us of our deep connection with the Divine, so that we might continue to engage in the prophetic work of healing and mending the world from a place of peace and joy.

If you would like to experience this ancient practice of prayer for yourself, consider joining Plymouth’s Centering Prayer group on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at 5:30 pm. We meet in the chapel and sit for 20 minutes of silent prayer, after which we share in a time of reflection, conversation, and fellowship. We’d love to see you there!



Do You Know About the Emma Feigley Mission Fund?

Over the past few years, the Emma Feigley Fund seems to have become less well-known among our congregation, so the Benevolence Committee would like to reintroduce you to this wonderful resource.

In an expression of her spirit of generosity, longtime Plymouth member, Emma Feigley, left money to the church to establish a trust that could be used to further the mission efforts of Plymouth. Her hope was that these resources would fund local or global efforts to help those in need – with a focus on education and/or justice. The Emma Feigley Trust was established in 1999 and has been used since then to fund a wide range of outreach projects, from providing child safety seats for local families to the Uganda Housing Project.

Perhaps you know of a local school in need of resources, or an initiative working for racial justice, environmental justice, or economic justice. If you can say specifically what funds would be used for and provide a report when the project is completed, you can fill out an application for a grant!

Things to Know

- Plymouth members are especially encouraged to apply for project funding, but membership is not required to apply for a grant.
- In general, available funds are determined by the earnings of the trust from year to year, so it is likely that, particularly for large-scale projects, only partial funding will be possible through one of these grants.
- There is no particular “season” or deadline for applications, but the Benevolence Committee meets once a month. Thus, it could take up to a month for your application to be reviewed, and, if approved, a couple more weeks for payment to be made – plan accordingly. Funding decisions will be based on the merit of the proposed project and the likelihood of direct impact on providing for those in need.
- Applications are available by request at pfwbenevolence@gmail.com. Applications can be submitted through email or printed and turned in to the reception office.

The Benevolence Committee shares Emma Feigley’s hope that this fund can be put to good use, manifest Plymouth’s commitment to our four covenants, and help those who need it most.

ICMEP: The Plymouth Connection

From Indiana Center for Middle East Peace's very beginning in 2005, Plymouth Church has been more than a host venue for our programs. Even though ICMEP is an independent 501c3 organization, Plymouth's pastors, Council, staff, and congregation have been very supportive of our work; we at ICMEP think of Plymouth as our closest partner.

Did you know that the ICMEP board has a significant Plymouth presence – Patty Pendleton was one of ICMEP's founders and serves as Secretary; Terry Dougherty is Chair; Ahnee Conner is Treasurer; and Linda Kerr and Pam Etheridge are very active board members; and January Simpson is our webmaster.

About 20 congregational members have traveled with Michael Spath to Palestine and Israel in his 15 solidarity tours; John Gardner went twice, and Rev. Timothy and Candace Murphy went this summer with three other members.

In ICMEP's 17-year history, Plymouth has been the host venue for more than 200 of our programs, concerts, exhibits, conferences, and meetings. And ICMEP has been the recipient of Plymouth's generosity through its Benevolence grants. Eleven years ago, Michael was invited to be one of the founding members of the national United Church of Christ Palestine-Israel Network (UCC-PIN) and continues today working closely with its leadership planning programs and moderating national webinars. And Plymouth Church has played an important role, too; it was one of the original 12 national congregational co-sponsors of the 2017 resolution – passed overwhelmingly – “A Call for the UCC to Advocate for the Rights of Children Living Under Israeli Military Occupation.” In addition, at its 2021 General Synod, the UCC passed a first-of-its-kind US church resolution, again, overwhelmingly – with Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and Israeli human rights groups B'Tselem and Yesh Din – calling Israel's oppression of Palestinians “apartheid.”

ICMEP is grateful for its long-standing support from Plymouth Church and the United Church of Christ and we look forward to many more years working together.



ICMEP Newsletter

If you'd like to receive our newsletter and information about our programs, let us know: pametheridge@gmail.com

Upcoming ICMEP Events

- **Sunday, September 18** – UK Singer/Songwriter Garth Hewitt in Concert, “For the Children of Bethlehem”
- **Thursday, October 13** – From Jerusalem, Jewish anthropologist and founder of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, Jeff Halper, “It's Time to Get Political: The One Democratic State Campaign”
- **Saturday, October 29** – 12th Annual ICMEP Gala*
- **Thursday, November 10** – Michael Spath, “Competing Visions of America and the Role Israel Plays”

* Our 12th annual ICMEP Gala, **Saturday, October 29**, this year features Anglican priest Rev. Edwin Arrison from Capetown, South Africa, a friend and colleague of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Development Director of the Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation; his presentation is: “My Life with ‘Arch,’ Kairos South Africa, and Kairos Palestine.” Archbishop Tutu (referred to fondly by his friends as “Arch”) died this past December; he was an ardent critic of Israeli apartheid (he had seen it up close in South Africa) and a staunch supporter of the Palestinian struggle for freedom. ICMEP honors his courage by inviting one of his close friends and partners in the struggle to speak and remember his legacy as an advocate for justice.

You can find details about each event at the ICMEP website:
indianacmep.org

Standish Colony Circle

Standish Circle attracts Plymouth members and friends who are involved with one or more of its three fundraising projects. Proceeds from the projects are donated to nonprofit agencies serving families. New volunteers (men and women) are always welcome.

The projects are:

- **Christmas Wreaths** require prepaid orders in September from church members and friends. Wreaths from the St. Joe Tree Farm in Fort Wayne are delivered to the church for pickup on **Sunday, November 20 and Sunday, November 27**. Order forms will appear in upcoming church communications and are due **September 18**. The coordinator is Ann Filler at chocolateraspberry4017@yahoo.com
- **Sweet Pepper Jelly** project will bring volunteers together in the church kitchen in shifts on **Tuesday, September 20 and Thursday, September 22** this year to make the yummy sweet pepper jelly. Jars of the jelly can be pre-ordered if desired. To learn more about this project contact coordinator Joyce Augspurger at jema7749@comcast.net
- **Knit and Kibitz** volunteers prepare and donate a variety of handmade items for sale at the church following the worship service on designated Sundays before the holidays. To add your name to the email list for this project, contact Barbara Bugg at bbuggconsultants@frontier.com

2021 Standish Colony Proceeds

Although the 2021 sales activities were foreshortened by the COVID-19 pandemic, the proceeds totaled:

- Christmas Wreaths: \$469.20
- Sweet Pepper Jelly: \$230
- Knit and Kibitz \$946
- **Total: \$1,645.20**

Children's Ministry Updates

Sunday School:

Sunday school returns at **9:00 am on September 11, 2022!** We are pleased to continue our Godly Play classroom for preschoolers through 5th graders. Each week we share a story together, and then have time for students to work with the story through play, art, and discussion. Our Youth Class is for students in grades 6-12. We meet in Room 203 to discuss a variety of biblical and current topics. This fall we will be focusing on the topic of mental health.

Teachers Needed:

Would you like to share in faith discussions with our youth? Would you like to join in playful storytelling with our kids? Teachers are needed for all of our classes throughout the coming year! Contact Katie Watson for more information about serving in our Sunday school.

Our Whole Lives:

Our Whole Lives (OWL) is the comprehensive sexuality and faith curriculum put out by the UCC and our UU partners. Registration is now open for this year's 5th and 6th grade OWL class. Our required parent meeting will be after worship on **September 18**, and the class will run from **11:30 am to 12:30 pm September 25 to November 13**. Please contact Katie Watson with any questions about this OWL class or to register your student.

If you know interested youth in grades 1-2 or 8-9, these OWL classes will be offered during the spring semester. Keep an eye out later this winter for exact times and registration information.

Bible Presentations:

Each year Plymouth gives story bibles to incoming kindergarteners, and NRSV bibles to our 2nd graders. If your child would like to receive a bible on Kickoff Sunday, please contact Katie Watson.

Contact Katie Watson:

If you have a question about any of these updates or anything related to Children's Ministry at Plymouth Church, please contact Katie Watson, Sunday School Director, at kjwatson4@gmail.com.

Want to Write for the Bell?

The Bell has taken on a new format and we are hoping YOU will help us! If you have a passion, "side-hustle," or personal mission that aligns with Plymouth's values and covenants and are interested in writing a 500-700 word article about this topic for the next issue of the Bell, please contact our Communications Specialist Elizabeth Pruitt at edp@plymouthfw.org or (260) 423-9424 for more information.

In your message, please state your name, article topic, and as much information as possible about what your article would entail. Please note articles may be edited for length and clarity.

Stay Connected with Plymouth Church

In addition to our public Facebook page, Plymouth 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.

Financial Report

July 2022

	Month Actual	Month Budget	Month Variance	YTD Actual	YTD Budget	YTD Variance
Total Income	\$ 49,964	\$ 62,550	\$ (12,586)	\$ 486,070	\$ 492,460	\$ (6,390)
Total Expenses	\$ 95,615	\$ 79,896	\$ 15,719	\$ 485,079	\$ 469,991	\$ 15,088
Net Income (Loss)	\$ (45,651)	\$ (17,346)	\$ (28,305)	\$ 991	\$ 22,469	\$ (21,478)

Contact Us

Senior Pastor and Teacher

Rev. Dr. Timothy C. Murphy
tcm@plymouthfw.org

Youth Director

Kara Jaurigue
kkjaurigue@gmail.com

Communications Specialist

Elizabeth Pruitt
edp@plymouthfw.org

Associate Pastor

Rev. Sara Ofner-Seals
smo@plymouthfw.org

Sunday School Director

Katie Watson
kjwatson4@gmail.com

Receptionist

Jake Slone
jss@plymouthfw.org

Associate in Pastoral Care

January Simpson
jls@plymouthfw.org

Child Care Director

Michelle Grim
davidandmichellegrim@gmail.com

Building Maintenance Manager

John Hoelderle
jmh@plymouthfw.org

Music Director

Maestro Robert Nance
robert@maestronance.com

Office Manager

Tina Puitz
tmp@plymouthfw.org

Media Specialist

Nakia Brabham
nakia.brabham@yahoo.com

Financial Administration

Steve Cook
financial@plymouthfw.org

501 W. Berry Street, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 46802

plymouthfw.org | Phone: (260) 423-9424 | Fax: (260) 423-9426 | fb.com/plymouthfw

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