

The Bell

PLYMOUTH CHURCH

FORT WAYNE + UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST PLYMOUTHFW.ORG

From the Senior Pastor

Active Waiting

During high school, I was an exceptionally mediocre athlete. I rarely stood out from my teammates, but nevertheless I enjoyed participating. One sport I did was track: the 200-meter, 400-meter, relay, and occasionally the one mile.

Regardless of the race, it always begins with a starting position. Hands on the ground, feet in the starting block. Getting ready to propel yourself forward to running speed. It is a form of waiting. But it is a very particular form, what we might call "active waiting."



This so happens to be the theme for this year's Advent season.

When we hear the word waiting, we might associate it with passivity, of doing nothing before something arrives or an event occurs. But waiting in the biblical sense is much more active and preparatory. It involves getting ready, keeping awake, and anticipating something new.

It's about preparing ourselves for the revelation, the incarnation, of God's activity in the world once again. While these divine disclosures are not restricted to this season, this is the season where we intentionally focus on readying ourselves for them. It helps us practice year round the expectation of incarnation being made manifest in our midst.

That is far from a position of acquiescence or complacency. It is something we actively do. Like the runner on the track, preparing for the moment to take off, we are encouraged to actively wait for the moment to arrive.

So, followers of Jesus, as we anticipate the arrival of Christ in our midst:

On your marks... get set... advent!

Peace,

Rev. Dr. Timothy C. Murphy



Living Faithfully Into the Future

In This Issue

- From the Associate Pastor
- Louise Folsom Library Book Review
- Plymouth's Afghan Refugee Task Force
- Peace Studies Scholarship Recipient Update
- Building Relationships—Oxford Community Association
- What Are Memorial Gifts?
- Planned Giving Workshop Recap
- ICMEP Gala Recap
- And more!

Worship at Plymouth

Plymouth Church is currently offering an in-person worship service every **Sunday** at 10:00 am with our chapel class education hour at 9:00 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 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.

From the Associate Pastor



As we approach the end of 2022, perhaps not all of us are quite ready to leap into the holiday spirit. Some of us have lost family members and friends and will have an empty chair at the holiday table this year. Some of us have received difficult diagnoses, and are grieving the loss of normalcy, knowing life may never be the same as it once was. Some of us may feel the pain of communal grief, as we watch the effects of climate change grow more and more severe, or as we take stock of the full impact of two years of living through a global pandemic. Truly, there is much to grieve.

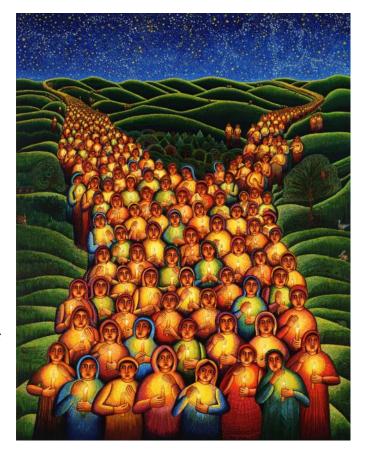
But how do we grieve when all around us, the holiday season demands that we be full of joy and excitement? How do we grieve in a culture that denies death, and is uncomfortable with suffering? And where do we find hope and promise in the midst of our grief?

This December, all are invited to a space where we can grieve together all that we have lost and all that we need to lament this year. Our annual Luminous Night service will be held on **Wednesday, December 7 at 7:00 pm** in the sanctuary, following Wednesday Night Live dinner. By observing this time together, we remind ourselves that we are not alone, and that together, we can walk through the valley of the shadow of grief and come out on the other side not only alive but transformed. Through our communal practices of lament, we are knitted together and made stronger. We are connected by our communal sorrow to the very heart of God, who also grieves over the suffering of Their children. As the hymnist Tom Troeger has written, "God weeps with those who weep and mourn, God's tears flow down with ours."

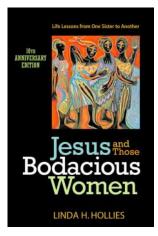
Author Barbara Holmes writes that "we hold our grief in our bodies... but communal rituals, dance and song, storytelling and sacred remembrance illuminate the grief-stricken inner spaces so that we can heal." Join us for our Luminous Night service so that together, we may find healing for our grieving bodies, and tap into the mystical hope of God that is available to all of us, in every moment. This is not the kind of hope that demands that we be happy because everything will be okay. This is the kind of hope that ensures us that while the love of God protects us from nothing, it sustains us through everything. As the apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the early Roman Church, "there is nothing, neither life nor death... nor things present nor things to come... that can separate us from the love of God in Christ."

Please join your fellow siblings in Christ on Wednesday, December 7, for a service of lament and promise. Join us as we weep with those who weep and mourn with those who mourn, finding comfort in one another. Join us as our tears become our prayers, especially when we are too grief-stricken to speak out loud that which we have lost. Join us, so that together, we may tap into the heart of divine love, and find there the strength and hope we need for the days ahead.

Rev. Sara Ofner-Seals



"There are many things that can only be seen through eyes that have cried."
-Archbishop Oscar Romero



Louise Folsom Library Book Review

Plymouth is full of many hidden gems. We are fortunate to have an outstanding collection in the Louise Folsom Library. Lucy Hess reviewed one of many wonderful reads from our collection, titled Jesus and Those Bodacious Women: Life Lessons from one Sister to Another by Linda H. Hollies

The title of this little, pocket size book was intriguing. Hollies defines bodacious as, unthinkable, unique, noteworthy. The author uses several women in the Bible to demonstrate how women have learned to stand up for themselves and build self-esteem. There are fifteen helpful chapters devoted to living through life's challenges. The author is Black so she has specific illustrations of challenges for Black women. Hollies states many or most of the women in the Bible would be considered non-white.

The challenges discussed in the book vary from doing the right thing to bad decisions and trouble with men and partners. Most women can relate to many or most of the illustrations. The main thrust of the book is to develop selfesteem, so you share your unique gifts with the world and those around you. Hollies provides helpful questions and exercises at the end of each chapter for self-improvement and discussion. In the last chapter Hollies shares an interesting insight about the women at the tomb. "God rolled the stone away not to let Jesus out but to let the women in."

Plymouth's Afghan Refugee Task Force

Last October, several dozen folks gathered to learn about volunteer opportunities to assist the influx of Afghan refugees who had begun arriving in Fort Wayne following their emergency evacuation from their homeland in August, and their subsequent processing at various military bases in the United States. Rev. Sara Ofner-Seals and Terry Dougherty, who served in the Peace Corps in Afghanistan, talked to Catholic Charities, the organization tapped by the federal government to handle the refugees' resettlement in our area, and reported to the gathering that those wishing to work with Catholic Charities would need to fill out several documents including a background check and a tuberculosis test in order to be approved.



Items collected during the October 2021 Supply Drive for Afghan refugees.

Volunteer opportunities through Catholic Charities included sorting donations — including items from Plymouth's October Supply Drive hosted by the Evangelism and Marketing Board —, setting up homes and apartments with bedding and household goods, driving refugees to their medical and social service agency appointments, and teaching English to adults and children. Outside of the purview of Catholic

Charities, the newly arrived refugees would need help gathering together to meet other migrants and long-time residents in social settings. Terry Dougherty stressed that forming bonds of friendship would be very important to helping them feel welcome in their new community, and suggested that Plymouth reach out to the mosques in town and consider hosting social gatherings, such as dinners featuring Afghan cuisine.

A task force was formed to discuss details of how Plymouth and its individuals could become involved. The late fall spike in COVID-19 cases and the Christmas holidays slowed down the process considerably, until early spring when Catholic Charities streamlined the volunteer process, and also procured a former assisted living facility in which to house newly arrived refugees until more permanent housing could be found. Steve and Becky Hollingsworth developed a weekly rotation of Plymouth members to clean, sort donations, and teach English.

Catholic Charities is limited to a 90-day time frame, by which time refugees are expected to have at least one working family member, have permanent housing and have met with a family doctor. The short time frame and large number of families made accomplishing those goals difficult, and there wasn't time for other types of integration.

There are a few other organizations in town that have come about to serve immigrants after their first 90 days, such as International House, a non-profit and nondenominational Christian group which provides help wherever and however it is needed, but particularly with English, life skills, citizenship, homework help, and social gathering and entrepreneurial opportunities, especially for international women.



Peace Studies Scholarship Recipient Update

"Greetings, Plymouth Church. My name is Sanelisiwe Ncube, from Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. I have received the Richard C. Hess Peace Studies Scholarship for the second time this year. This fall I will continue my studies toward a Master of Arts in Theology and Peace Studies on campus at the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Theological Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana. The two classes I am taking while working are going well and keeping me busy. I intend to return to Zimbabwe to teach and to work with churches in my home area, where so many people are hurt and have questions because of the genocide happening there. There are so many theological dilemmas in Zimbabwe that leave people in confusion. It is clear that intolerance, fundamentalism and religiously motivated conflicts have not been overcome in Zimbabwe."



Peace and conflict resolution studies will help Sanelisiwe to organize and support the reconciliation and peace projects at home. Ms. Ncube's professor describes her as, "self-motivated and a hard working student." He further states that, "she has excellent skills in counseling. Her studies in conflict management will greatly enhance her ability to make a difference in Zimbabwe." Another mentor states that Sanelisiwe is a "rare and gifted woman, who will use her training to influence change in Zimbabwe."

The Peace and Justice Committee is proud of Ms. Ncube and all of the other fifteen recipients who were educated in Indiana Universities offering Peace Studies. Three of the recent recipients were from African countries. Education opens doors here and across the world for peace and justice.

Continued from page 3...

Amani Family Services, another group which seeks to serve our international community in more serious matters, is a private non-profit which provides crime victim care, legal aid and court advocacy, child abuse help, emotional and mental health counseling, substance use support, and cultural networking with other agencies.

A third organization, Bridge of Grace, sponsored by Many Nations Church, is a part of Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, and has an ambitious slate of initiatives: early childhood education, after-school programs and summer camps for grades 1-8, home ownership, their MVP Landscaping company, renovation of blighted homes and creation of neighborhood parks and a community garden, cooking classes and financial literacy classes.

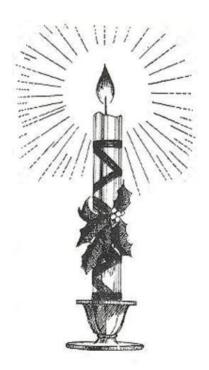
Serving as an important link between our newly arrived Afghan immigrants and the existing international community, the Indiana Center on Middle East Peace, founded by Plymouth's Michael Spath, has sponsored several events with the goal of bringing people together and fostering intercultural understanding. Beginning with ICMEP Board Chair Terry Dougherty's presentation "All Things Afghanistan" last January, the group marked the arrival of spring with a traditional Nowroz New Year Celebration at Shoaff Park. Terry and one of the Catholic Charities Interpreters, Nasreen, then coordinated an Eid picnic in May celebrating the end of Ramadan.

After about six weeks of the custodial rotation at the Cabrini Center, the number of refugees tapered off, with no new families coming in and existing ones moving to other housing. Several Plymouth volunteers longed for more and deeper ways to connect and have impact. After a meeting with the facility's manager and one of the Catholic Charities case workers, two teams of four people each were introduced to two young Afghan families, to help them adjust to life in America. The teams have been meeting regularly with their families, working on both written and spoken English, traveling to appointments, taking care of administrative tasks and household improvements, and in the process becoming good friends.

Some other specific experiences include helping one family get their landlord to make repairs, doing yard work, moving to a newly renovated home, installing a backyard fence with Bridge of Grace, connecting a family with International House, getting a driver's license, applying for a newborn's social security number, numerous trips for medical appointments, a field trip to the Fort Wayne Zoo, and of course, many, many English language tutoring sessions. The work continues, and is broadening to include help with permanent visa applications.

In keeping Plymouth's covenants of intensely local mission and the evangelism of love and concern for all of God's people, the Afghan Refugee Task Force participants have learned and are still learning so much, and have all been tremendously blessed through this opportunity to help others and to have a personal connection to these beautiful families.

Alan Chambers Afghan Refugee Task Force Member



Boar's Head and Yule Log Festival Returns!

Oh come, all ye faithful, the 46th Annual Boar's Head and Yule Log Festival will take place Thursday, December 29 and Friday, December 30 with services at 5:30 pm and 8:00 pm each day.

Interested in tickets? Become a Festival Patron, and with your donation you will receive 6 tickets for the service of your choice. How do I become a Patron? Call our Boar's Head Ticket Line and leave a message. Someone from our Ticket Team will return your call within 24-28 hours.

The BH Ticket Line number is (260) 442-1926.

The ticket box office will be open on Thursday, December 15 from 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm.

Are you interested in being involved with the Cast, Crew or Choir? Please contact Kara Jaurigue at kkjaurigue@gmail.com. We are always looking for people to add to the Boars Head family. Oh Come, All Ye Faithful, we look forward to seeing you in December!

Building Relationships—Oxford Community Association

We may not realize it, but we are connected to the people, places, and things around us, but often fail to build relationships with them. As this pertains to people, this failure may come from a place of fear and misunderstanding, or simply because we don't know where to start.

Several years ago, I was involved in Faith in Indiana, and it was at one of our events that I made a comment that drew the attention of Diane Rogers. Now, I didn't know Diane at the time, but I knew that whatever I said connected with her, and she wanted to talk more. I had no idea that our first conversation would result in taking on the role of secretary/treasurer of Oxford Community Association a few months later.

Being an older white woman who did not live in or even near the Oxford neighborhood, I had to look closely at how my involvement would be received. There was definitely a need for a secretary/treasurer as no one else was stepping up, and I was willing to do it. However, I understood that I had to be willing to listen and learn about the history of the neighborhood association, as well as get to know the residents. I could not come in with the attitude that I knew what was best, but had to ask how I could be of service.

I learned that the Oxford community is a diverse group of folks who are proud to call their southeast neighborhood home. Many have grown up there, attended nearby schools, bought homes and retired in the community. I learned that the Oxford Community Association was established in 1972 by property owners to promote safety, cleanliness and beautification to the area, and to support local businesses. They are also the only neighborhood association in Fort Wayne to own their own building. This is a great asset but the building is in need of



renovation, which has been an ongoing challenge for the association. However, there are many challenges living in any marginalized community, and it is easy to be an ally when I am able to go home to my neighborhood with less challenges and suffering. So how do I make sense of this?

Father Richard Rohr describes solidarity with those who suffer in this way. "We must not separate ourselves from the suffering of the world. When we are close to those in pain their need evokes love in us. Very few of us make the choice to just decide to be loving, but someone has to ask it of us. We have to place ourselves in situations with people who are not like us, outside our systems of success and security, so we can read life from another perspective. The needs we witness will pull us toward love, toward generosity and compassion."

Thank you, Diane Rogers, for asking me to be a part of Oxford Community Association.

Jan Evrard

What Are Memorial Gifts?

If you attended church services on October 30 (either in-person or online), you know that a part of that service was the dedication of the most recent memorial gifts. This dedication service takes place annually on All Saints Sunday. Each annual cycle concludes with the date of the dedication, and the new "year" begins the next day. The newest memorials were two-fold: books for the Louise Folsom Library and a contribution to the "Light up the Boar's Head" campaign.

So what is a memorial gift? You have seen in some newspaper obituaries a statement to the effect of "in lieu of flowers, please make a donation to...," or "preferred memorials to..." followed by the name of an institution or cause. If Plymouth Church is the beneficiary named to receive the funds, those funds are considered a memorial gift. In some cases, a still-living person may also be honored with a monetary gift to the church. By far the most gifts, though, are given in memory of a departed loved one.



The Memorial Gifts Committee coordinated the renovation and dedication of the Amistad Room.



The stained glass windows on the stairwell are an example of a Memorial Gift.

How are gifts like these handled? The Memorial Gifts Committee meets bi-monthly to administer the funds designated as memorial and/or honor contributions. All members of this Committee are Plymouth members. Current members are: Laura Rudolph (Chair), Katie Carboneau (Recording Secretary), Linda Balthaser (Financial Secretary), Joyce Augspurger, Roger Eversole, and Jim Schmidt. Rev. Timothy Murphy serves as the clergy member on the Committee.

When monies are given, the family has the right to indicate a specific purpose for which the money is to be used, which is a designated gift. Some examples might be Boar's Head costumes, children's ministry, music ministry, Congregational Life activities, Christian education, works of art, audio/visual equipment, books for the library, etc. Most gifts are designated.

If the family does not choose to specify the purpose, the funds are considered to be uncommitted funds and can be used for projects at the discretion of the Memorial Gifts Committee. Some examples of uses are helping finance upgrades to the sanctuary technology equipment, upgrading lighting and/or sound equipment within the building, audio/visual equipment, and books for the library. Such decisions are made in consultation with the family.

All funds must be utilized following the approved policies and procedures of the Committee, which specifically state that: "Memorial Gift funds may be used to purchase items that will enhance the effectiveness of the Congregation in carrying out the mission of Plymouth Church. Items purchased with Memorial Gift Funds will remain on the Plymouth Church premises for their primary utilization. Items purchased with Memorial Gift Funds will have an expected period of use of at least five years. Memorial Gift Funds may be used as a match with funds from other Plymouth Church accounts and/or from external sources. Memorial Gift Funds may not be used to purchase supplies and/or other consumables."

A listing of memorial and honor gifts is found in the Memorial Gifts books found in the display cabinet in the Narthex. These books are updated annually and are available for inspection by members and friends of the congregation.

Brochures providing additional information are found in the Narthex and in the Folsom Room.



The Memorial Gifts books can be found in the Narthex.



Planned Giving Workshop Recap

On Sunday, September 25, the Stewardship and Finance Board held a Planned Giving workshop with the intent to:

- Stress why it is important for everyone young or old, single or married, to have or to update their estate plan
- Highlight "the Power of a Planned Gift" to our church

Attorney and church member Kristin Steckbeck kicked off the workshop by outlining the basics of estate planning. She noted that first individuals need to have completed basic documents: power of attorney; advance directive, and a will or trust arrangement. Her focus then moved to the common types of assets that are part of an estate plan and how each can affect the estate plan. She concluded her portion of the program by talking about the basics of planned charitable giving including information on who are the team of professionals who should be involved in planning a charitable gift. And, finally, what the advantages of planned gifts are to the donor and to the recipient not-for-profit organizations.

The workshop then shifted to how planned gifts can be made to Plymouth Church. Laura Ramsey, who has served the church in a variety of leadership capacities over the years, strongly suggested any gifts to the church be cash or assets that can be easily liquidated. Gifts can be made as memorial gifts, gifts to support the annual operations and mission of the church or gifts to the church's endowment that help assure the future of the church. Any individual wishing to make a planned gift to the church is invited to talk with a member of the pastoral staff, the church treasurer or a member of the Stewardship and Finance Board.

The "Power of Planned Gifts" to Plymouth Church in recent years were identified by Linda Balthaser. She provided a wonderful overview of how gifts enhance the effectiveness of our congregation's ability to carry out the mission of our church. Examples of memorial gifts have enriched the music program, improved the nursery facilities and programs, and provided needed sanctuary and building technology equipment. Numerous very generous gifts have also generated earnings for mission grants and scholarships offered by the church.

Hopefully, this summary is of service to those of you who were unable to attend the workshop. Our thanks to the very informative presenters, to Jean Vrabel who developed the workshop promotion materials, and to Dick Conklin who provided overall leadership for this project.

Plymouth Music Series: A Look at Our 2023 Programs

Sunday, January 15, 2023 — 4:00 pm WE ARE THE DREAM

Commemorating the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in word and song. RSVP on Facebook here.

Sunday, February 12, 2023 — 4:00 pm DAVID BOBAY, BARITONE

RSVP on Facebook here.

Sunday, March 5, 2023 — 4:00 pm ALEXANDER KLEPACH & ROBERT NANCE, PIANO DUO

RSVP on Facebook here.

Sunday, April 16, 2023 — 4:00 p.m. LISA GERSTENKORN, CONTRALTO

RSVP on Facebook here.

Tuesday, April 25, 2023 — 7:00 pm TEXAS BOYS CHOIR

Dr. Todd Prickett, artistic director. RSVP on Facebook here.

Friday - Sunday, May 5-7, 2023 WHAT IS TRUTH? AN EXPLORATION IN STUDY, STORY & SONG

Featuring Rev. Traci Blackmon, Associate GM and VP, Justice and Local Church Ministries UCC, Valerie Tutson, storyteller; Robert Nance, keyboardist; various musical artists. More detailed information coming Spring 2023!

Sunday, May 28, 2023 — 4:00 pm NEW ORLEANS JAZZ PENTECOST CELEBRATION

Join us in celebration in the parking lot on Berry and Fairfield for a New Orleans Jazz-style Worship Service! RSVP on Facebook here.



ICMEP Gala Recap

Indiana Center for Middle East Peace hosted its 13th annual Gala on October 29, 2022. Given the death of Nobel laureate, Archbishop Desmond Tutu on December 26 last year, it was important to invite one of his closest friends and associates. ICMEP flew in from Capetown, South Africa, Rev. Edwin Arrison, one of the officers of the Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation. He shared personal stories of his time with "Arch," one of two priests Arch asked to care for him and his wife during COVID, his own personal stories of activism and arrests as one of the leaders of the antiapartheid movement, and advocacy for the people of Palestine. Both Michael Spath's interview with Edwin, as well as Edwin's Gala presentation can be viewed on the Indiana Center for Middle East Peace YouTube Channel, linked here.

From November 14-22, Michael will be in Jerusalem and Bethlehem for the 13th anniversary of the seminal Kairos Palestine document, as well as meetings of the Global Kairos for Justice Coalition, of which ICMEP is a member.



Rev. Edwin Arrison speaking at the ICMEP Gala.

Coming Programs

ICMEP's 9th annual Commemoration of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights features Fort Wayne leaders, including Ewelina Connolly, Amani Family Services, Jeff Markley, Positive Resource Connection, and others sharing "Why I Do What I Do." Also included will be readings and excerpts from the UN's Universal Declaration. **Thursday, December 8, 6:30 pm,** Plymouth Church. Free, open to the public.

ICMEP's Advent program features Michael's Zoom interview with Dr. Mazin Qumsiyeh, Founding Director of the Palestine Museum of Natural History and Institute for Biodiversity Research in Bethlehem. Mazin is a good friend of ICMEP, the author of Popular Resistance in Palestine: A History of Hope and Empowerment. **Wednesday, December 14, 1:00 pm.** Check the ICMEP website (indianacmep.org) for the Zoom link.

January 2023 is the 100th anniversary of Kahlil Gibran's beloved The Prophet. Join Michael as he discusses the spiritual classic, connecting larger themes from Gibran's life and work, and asks what its message means for us today. **Thursday, January 12, 6:30 pm**, Plymouth Congregational Church. Free, open to the public.



Upcoming Holiday Services

Interfaith Thanksgiving Service Tuesday, November 22 at 7:00 pm at Congregation Achduth Vesholom. Join us to share an interfaith celebration of Thanksgiving around this year's theme: "From Mourning to Dancing."

Thanksgiving Day Service and Meal Thursday, November 24 at 11:30 am. A service in the Chapel followed by a traditional Thanksgiving dinner.

Advent Services November 27, December 4, 11, and 18 at 10:00 am.

Las Posadas Sunday, December 4 at 4:30 pm. A Mexican Christian tradition. All ages are encouraged to attend.

Luminous Night Service Wednesday, December 7 at 7:00 pm. A Service of Lament and Promise.

Christmas Eve Services
Saturday, December 24 at 4:00 pm and
10:00 pm. Services of anticipation and
celebration. The 4:00 pm service includes
communion and candlelight, and the 10:00
pm service includes carols and candlelight.

Want to Write for the Bell?

If you are interested in writing a 500-700 word article for the next issue of the Bell that relates to Plymouth's mission and covenants, please contact our Communications Specialist Elizabeth Pruitt at edp@plymouthfw.org or (260) 423-9424.

In your email, please provide a summary of your article.

Stay Connected with Plymouth Church

In addition to our public Facebook page, Plymouth has a private Facebook group available to members called <u>Plymouth Generations</u>. 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

October 2022

	Month	Month	Month	YTD	YTD	YTD
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Actual	Budget	Variance
Total Income	\$ 66,549	\$ 74,771	\$ (8,222)	\$ 661,149	\$ 691,253	\$ (36,104)
Total Expenses	\$ 83,053	\$ 83,868	\$ (815)	\$ 703,025	\$ 691,593	\$ 11,432
Net Income (Loss)	\$ (16,504)	\$ (9,097)	\$ (7,407)	\$ (41,876)	\$ 5,660	\$ (47,536)

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