

## Chancel Choir Sings at North Central American Choral Director's Association District Convention

Plymouth's Chancel Choir was honored to be the only church choir selected to sing a solo concert at The American Choral Director's Association convention in Minneapolis on March 6. ACDA is a nonprofit music-education organization whose central purpose is to promote excellence in choral music through performance, composition, publication, research, and teaching, and to elevate choral music's position in American society.

Our choir members earned the right to attend after auditioning at the State and Division levels. They sang at Central Lutheran Church in downtown Minneapolis, followed by the Convention's *Music in Worship* event featuring the National Lutheran Choir.



### *Reflections from Sharon Parker-Lenihan, Director of Adult Music and Fine Arts*

It's always the same speech. In the moments just prior to singing a major work or concert I seldom say anything new or clever. Rehearsals vary depending on the music and each performance is unique but "the speech" is always the same.

And what is that same ol' same ol'? I encourage each singer to sing what they have rehearsed, do their best without trying to be perfect (mistakes don't matter at this point), sing from their heart, and dance with me out there.

Chancel Choir did all that on March 6 in Minneapolis, and it was splendid. When asked what my favorite part of the concert was, I answered without hesitation: "Your faces!" Each singer was fully engaged and sang with the kind of abandon that is inspired and supported by depth of service and breadth of relationship.



That's also what happens each Sunday. We take our call as worship leaders seriously, evident in the level of musicianship attained each week. But even more important is our call to sing in faith, hope and love, and a willingness to step out of self into Spirit.

You would have been very proud of your Chancel Choir in Minneapolis, and its great performance would have been the least of it.

**“We agree to differ. We resolve to love. We unite to serve.”**

# Come to think of it....



## David Ruhe, *Senior Minister*

We talk a lot about the central purpose of the church being to increase the love of God and neighbor. That's as clear a statement as I've ever heard, and for now I'm sticking with it.

But Easter gives us a slightly different way of talking about the purpose of the church. You could make the case that the church is called to be a source and center of subversion in the world.

That may sound sinister, but it's absolutely not. By a "center of subversion" I mean that the church should keep offering up little (or maybe not so little) signposts of hope in a world desperately in need of hope. Rather than accepting inequities and injustices in the name of "reality," the church bears witness to a different sort of reality, in which the idea of the abundance of God's good creation leads us to be intentional about sharing the things necessary for human life to thrive. Being subversive, among other things, means trying to see to it that everybody has a genuine chance to succeed, and everybody is afforded the basic human dignity that is their God-given right. Whenever the church participates in this kind of subversion, the church is saying that the world as it is, is not the world as it has to be. Being subversive means making a difference that points to hope.

That sort of activity usually begins with coming to a full awareness of something that is very wrong. Before we can change things we have to face them squarely; and that can be a painful—but all important—first step.

This Sunday, April 11, there will be a panel between services in the Greenwood Room on the topic of **JUVENILE JUSTICE**. There we will learn some alarming statistics and hear some disturbing stories. The program will be entitled *The Cradle to Prison Pipeline*, because it will focus on how some groups in our society are incarcerated at a rate all out of proportion to their presence in the population. Did you realize that Iowa has the dubious distinction of incarcerating more African Americans, per capita, than any other state in the union? Iowa!

Maybe we think we know why. But as concern for juvenile justice surfaced through AMOS house meetings last fall an AMOS research team has begun to study this issue. The reasons are remarkably complex. Incarceration patterns and rates are closely related to suspensions and dropouts of minority students in the Des Moines Public Schools; and *those* numbers and rates have complex origins, as well.

Senior Judge Joe Smith, who has more than 10 years' experience working with juveniles, and Kittie Weston-Knauer, who has served as a teacher, vice-principal and principal in the Des Moines Public Schools, will participate, along with Plymouth member Jeff Grimes, who serves on the AMOS Criminal Justice Team.

Subversive hope comes from a good first look.

See you in church,

*David Ruhe*

## Easter Organ Recital

Sunday, April 11, 2010

3:00 p.m.

Plymouth Sanctuary

### "Variations on Easter"

Music based on Easter hymns including *Symphonie romane* by Charles-Marie Widor

**Carl Gravander, Organist**

## Have a knack with children? Looking for extra income?

Plymouth Church has openings for part-time childcare providers.

Earn extra money on Sunday mornings caring for children during church. We also frequently need childcare assistance during church meetings and activities scheduled after school or on weekends. All functions would be held at the church.

Our goal is to provide a loving, caring, happy and learning environment for all of our Plymouth children.



For more information or if you are interested in applying, please call Holly Amundson-Pietsch at 991.8810.

# Your church home

## Double House Tour

Greenwood Park LLC, on behalf of the Plymouth Foundation, is seeking parties interested in preserving the home through a lease arrangement. Interested parties are invited to tour the Double House at 4018 Ingersoll Avenue on Saturday, April 10 from 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. or Sunday, April 11 between the first and second service or after the second service until 1:00 p.m. Non-binding letters of interest are due by Monday, April 26 by COB to Jennifer Hines, Director of Administration. Members of the 4018 Committee will be present to answer questions during the open house. Individuals wishing to tour the house will be required to sign a liability waiver before access to the property will be granted.

Questions: Contact Jennifer Hines at 255.3149 or [jhines@plymouthchurch.com](mailto:jhines@plymouthchurch.com).

## Discover Plymouth Church!

Are you new to Plymouth? Interested in membership? Or do you just want to learn more about Plymouth Church? Join us for Discover Plymouth on Sundays April 18 and 25, from 1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m. in Waveland Hall. Come learn more about the congregation, meet some of the staff and get acquainted with other newcomers in a relaxed and casual atmosphere. Free childcare will be provided and all are welcome. To sign up, or if you have more questions, contact Matt Mardis-LeCroy 255.3149, ext. 28



## Welcome Plymouth's New Director of Communications

Communications at Plymouth is growing, thanks to the addition of Cindy Eaton Eklund as a part-time member of the Program Staff. Cindy joined Plymouth as

Director of Communications on March 1.

Her mission is to consult with staff members, ministers, and boards to enhance their work with internal and external audiences, and coordinate all communications that convey the church's overall messages. With more than 30 years experience in copywriting, graphic design and managing creative teams, Cindy is well positioned to devise and implement a communication strategy that is consistent, cutting-edge and creative.

You may contact Cindy at 255.3149, ext. 15 or [ceaton@plymouthchurch.com](mailto:ceaton@plymouthchurch.com).

## Shhhh! Esther Merkel Just Turned 87 and It's a Surprise



Well, at least it was on Sunday, March 28 when the popular Sunday-morning childcare provider's many friends at Plymouth caught her off-guard with a birthday cake and celebration.

For at least 12 years, if not more, "Grandma Esther" has comforted, rocked, read to, played with and loved many of your small children while you attended church services. Plymouth has been very fortunate to have a sitter as dependable, faithful and incredibly punctual as Esther. But most of all, Esther has always been very attentive and loving to the children entrusted to her care here at Plymouth.

Thank you "Grandma Esther" on behalf of all the children who have benefited from your warm and tender care, and from the parents who were comforted knowing their children were with someone as trustworthy and loving as you. May you enjoy many more birthdays.



# Your church home

## Plymouth Youth Choirs Take Psalms Personally

By Susan Waller, Director of Youth and Children's Music

**Psalms: the songs and prayers of ancient Israel; songs of the heart; a mirror of the emotions, expression of feelings; experienced within a collective community; the stories of our heritage and faith journey.**



What a better way to deepen our faith experience and journey than to immerse ourselves in the Psalms? That is exactly what our Plymouth youth have done over the past six weeks. Beginning in early February during Wednesday evening rehearsals, the Matins learned about the basic knowledge, structure, purpose and overall meaning of the Psalms. Surprised to find that they already sing many great psalms (*God Is Our Refuge, The Lord Is My Shepherd, Thy Word, How Majestic Is Your Name...* to name a few), we delved deeper into how the Psalms are already embodied and incorporated into our worship experience.

To take it a step further, a smaller group of youth (18 on average each week!) participated in an in-depth Lenten study focused on the Psalms. We began each week sharing our highs/lows, where we struggled and celebrated in our personal journeys and ended the study by writing our prayers on colored sticky notes, placing them on the prayer wall that covers one wall in the youth room.

- *One week we contemplated the scenario....what if... the physical structure of Plymouth had been razed, you are exiled to a foreign land and you are cut off from your native surroundings?*  
How would you keep your faith traditions alive? What are the traditions that make us a community? And what songs are our Psalms?
- *Each youth was asked to bring a song from their iPod that they felt was their personal "psalm". They were then asked to play it and tell us what that song meant to them and why they chose it.*
- *We listened to five different versions of Psalm 23 (reggae, rap, chant, jazz and a children's comedian) then rewrote Psalm 23 in our own words. This exercise yielded 14 different interpretations. All powerful—all original. What*

we found out? The Psalms are as relevant now to our faith journey and lives as they once were to the ancient Israelites.

Maureen Lyons (9th grade) shares with readers her experience in this study and a set of three psalms she wrote during this time. *"The Psalm study reinforced my feelings of attachment to the church. I think the first day was the most helpful, the day where we discussed what we would do if the church were destroyed or we were disbanded far from it. It really made me think, would I continue to sing the Matins song and the hymns? Would I continue to play the games and tell the stories I had learned. It gave me a lot of insight into myself that I otherwise would not have had."*

### Songs of Life

#### *First Song*

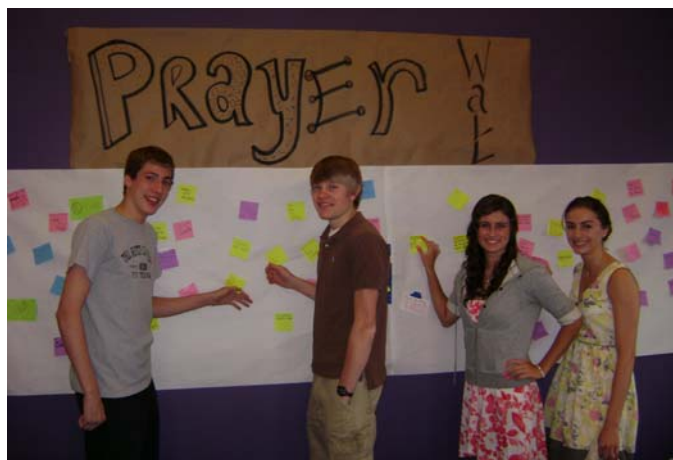
We sing our victory to the highest heavens  
We march through fear and dark alike  
Do not judge our stirring hearts  
for we have found heaven's light

#### *Second Song*

Hearts that bloom beneath the sight  
Dying black, blooming to purest white

#### *Third Song*

Breath unlocking from the chest  
as the binds of slavery drop away  
the voice of freedom ringing out  
the heart, unchained to fly away  
But even now the world it seems  
so dark and cold a place  
and yet when love and light are lost  
you shall see God's face



# The Center for Spiritual Growth

## Plymouth Book Discussion Group

The Plymouth Book Discussion Group has scheduled discussions of the below-listed books in the Harmony Conference Room of the Center for Spiritual Growth, **Sundays at 10:10 a.m.:**

- April 11 *Dewey: The Small-Town Library Cat Who Touched the World* by Vicki Myron with Bret Witter.
- May 2 *The Memory Keeper's Daughter* by Kim Edwards
- June 6 *A History of Tractors in Ukrainian* by Marina Lewycka
- July 11 *Driftless* by David Rhodes
- August 1 *House of Daughters: A Novel* by Sarah-Kate Lynch

Please join us for discussion.

## Zen Buddhism and Meditation

**Mondays, April 19–May 24**

**6:30-8:00 p.m. in the Burling Room**

**Presenter: Vicki Goldsmith**

**Fee: \$45.00**

The class will be an introduction to Zen meditation and a brief survey of Buddhism. We will practice meditation in class, look at readings from Tricycle and various books, work in discussion groups, and talk about Buddhist practices in America.

*Vicki Goldsmith was born in Ohio and received two degrees from Bowling Green State University. She has taught English in six secondary schools and six universities. Her experience includes teaching Native American students, maximum security prisoners, and students in an Army Post and Air Force base. She taught American Literature in universities in Taipei, Taiwan and in Warsaw, Poland. In 1995 she received a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to study Greek religion and mythology. She was Iowa Teacher of the Year in 2005 and a finalist for National Teacher of the Year. Until her retirement in 2006, she taught at Roosevelt High School in Des Moines.*

## Adult Education Opportunities

For a complete listing of ongoing educational opportunities go to [www.plymouthchurch.com](http://www.plymouthchurch.com)

# Plymouth Women

## Interesting Books, Interesting Women

**Women's Fellowship Faithful Readers** meet the fourth Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the Inspiration Lounge for a lively discussion of an interesting book. Our schedule includes:

- April 22 *Pocketful of Names* by Joe Coomer
- May 27 *Hole in the Gospel* by Richard Stearns

We're looking at our world through new lenses, and we welcome newcomers! Let's get together! For more information, call Jean Nelson 255.5019.

## Plymouth Women's Luncheon

Join us Thursday, April 15, at 12:15 p.m. in Waveland Hall for lunch and a presentation by former Iowa Lt. Governor and Plymouth member Joy Corning. Call .255.3149 by 10:00 a.m. Tuesday, April 13, to make a reservation. The cost is \$7.50 and is due at the luncheon.

For more information, contact Alice Wisner, 221.9327, or go to [www.plymouthchurch.com](http://www.plymouthchurch.com), Plymouth Women Fellowship and Study Groups, Women's Luncheon Group for more details.

## Girl's Night Out, April 15

Join Plymouth Women at **GIRLS NIGHT: THE MUSICAL** on Thursday, April 15, at the Temple for Performing Arts. **GIRLS NIGHT** is a touching and hilarious 'tell-it-like-it-is' look at the lives of a group of female friends. The show starts at 7:30 p.m. which allows plenty of time for dinner ahead of time for those who are interested. A limited number of tickets are available for \$31.30 each. To reserve your tickets contact Deb Ledesma at 991.6210 or [dledesma@juno.com](mailto:dledesma@juno.com).

## Moms & Moppets

Moms and Moppets provides an opportunity for mothers of young children to gather on a regular basis for fellowship, education and support, while at the same time offering a separate peer social group for their children. Questions to Molly Hagkull, 279.0398, [m.hagkull@mchsi.com](mailto:m.hagkull@mchsi.com) or Emily Bissel, [emilybsn@gmail.com](mailto:emilybsn@gmail.com).

The **support group** meets the third Thursday of each month, 9:15 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. in the Youth Room at Plymouth Church, September through May. Non-church members welcome.

**April 15: Simple ways to live green,** Plymouth Green Team.

**May 20: End-of-the-year brunch.** Potluck brunch and celebration slideshow.

# Plymouth Youth News

## Garage Sale 2010

### Thank You to Plymouth Congregation

On behalf of Plymouth Youth, a big thank-you to our congregation. Because of you:

- Thousands of items (housewares, sporting goods, jewelry, toys, electronics, linens, books, furniture, and holiday decorations) were donated
- Heaps of clothes and oodles of shoes were contributed
- Hours and hours of time were worked to help unpack, sort, organize, fold, and price these countless items, as well as volunteering to help cashier on the days of the sale
- *And last, but certainly not least, because of you, we were able to raise a new record of approximately \$14,000!!!*

This fundraiser, which benefits youth trips, takes a lot of work and many hours to organize and execute. Special acknowledgement goes to this year's chair, Irene Hardisty, whose experience and perseverance were amazing. Additionally, the following committee members need to be recognized. This entire group went above and beyond to provide communication, create signage and pricing, coordinate pick-up and deliver items (30 trips as far away as Adel), plan for volunteers, and work with agencies to help plan for post-sale transfer of items. These parents of Plymouth Youth include: Kathleen Beebout, Brenda Dunbar, Tracy Edwards, Doyle Karr, Joni Lore, Sandee Lyons, Todd O'Brien, Jim Spooner, and Adele VerSteeg.

Also, a big "shout-out" to our Plymouth building maintenance staff. Dan Olson and his crew went above and beyond to help us set-up for and clean-up after this year's sale. We could not have accomplished this without their assistance.





**Out of this World  
Variety Show  
Sunday, April 25  
7:00 p.m.  
Plymouth Sanctuary  
8:00 p.m.  
Dessert Buffet and Art  
Show**

**Waveland Hall**

Tickets \$5.00 per person,  
or \$20.00 family  
Tickets may be purchased Sundays  
beginning April 11



## The Confirmation Stepping Stone. For 8<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents.

Two weeks: **Wednesday, April 14 and  
Wednesday, April 21.**  
7:00-8:30 p.m. in Waveland Hall.

Come and remember what it means to be confirmed and learn about what comes after Confirmation.

Questions? Contact Angie Witmer,  
Minister to Young Adults and Youth:  
[awitmer@plymouthchurch.com](mailto:awitmer@plymouthchurch.com) or  
255.3149

# Calendar

## Saturday, April 10, 2010

8:30 AM Green Team Meeting  
 5:30 PM AA  
 Worship (Casual)  
 7:00 PM GLBT & Friends  
 Game Night

## Sunday, April 11, 2010

7:45 AM Plymouth Bells Warm Up  
 8:00 AM Matins & Soul Singers  
 Warm Up with Bells  
 8:15 AM Matins Warm Up  
 8:30 AM Infant - 2 years old Childcare  
 Cherub, Descant, Glory,  
 Hallelujah!, KinderChoir,  
 Treble Choirs Warm Up  
 Hand Chime Choir Warm Up  
 9:00 AM Worship/Singing Church  
 9:15 AM 2 year olds - 6th Grade  
 Church School  
 10:00 AM After Worship Fellowship  
 Matins Leadership Meeting  
 10:10 AM Fellowship Forum -  
 Criminal Justice  
 Igniting Your Divine Spark  
 Plymouth Book Discussion  
 Group  
 10:15 AM Chancel Choir Warm Up  
 10:30 AM Cherub, Descant, Glory,  
 Hallelujah!, KinderChoir,  
 Treble Choirs Warm Up  
 11:00 AM 2 Year Olds – Kindergarten  
 Childcare  
 11:00 AM Worship/Singing Church  
 12:00 PM After Worship Fellowship  
 1:00 PM AA  
 3:00 PM Carl Gravander's Recital  
 6:00 PM HAT Casserole Building  
 6:30 PM HAT Meeting  
 7:00 PM LADOS

## Monday, April 12, 2010

7:00 AM Tai Chi  
 8:00 AM Group Spiritual Direction  
 5:15 PM Yoga  
 5:45 PM Centering Prayer  
 6:00 PM Girl Scout Troop 661  
 7:00 PM Boy Scouts #50  
 Peace Committee

## Tuesday, April 13, 2010

6:45 AM AMENS  
 12:00 PM Al-anon  
 5:00 PM Shawl Knitting Ministry  
 6:30 PM Spiritual Journey  
 7:00 PM Board of Deacons  
 Board of Membership  
 Boy Scouts #50 Parents Mtg

## Wednesday, April 14, 2010

7:00 AM ROC  
 9:30 AM Adult Bible Study  
 11:00 AM Saturday Worship Planning  
 Team Meeting  
 12:15 PM Trustees Finance Meeting  
 12:30 PM Tai Chi Class  
 4:00 PM Stephen Minister Leadership  
 Team  
 5:00 PM Choir Guild  
 Choir Guild Childcare  
 Greenwood Park LLC  
 6:00 PM AA  
 Flute Ensemble Rehearsal  
 Hand Chime Choir Rehearsal  
 Matins Dinner  
 Re-membering Soul  
 Soul Singers Rehearsal  
 Youth Activities  
 7:00 PM Matins Rehearsal  
 Plymouth Bells Rehearsal  
 8th GradeStepping Stone

## Thursday, April 15, 2010

7:00 AM WISE  
 9:15 AM Moms & Moppets Meeting  
 Childcare  
 Moms & Moppets  
 12:15 PM Plymouth Women Luncheon  
 and Meeting  
 7:00 PM Chancel Choir Rehearsal  
 7:30 PM AA - WOD

## Friday, April 16, 2010

9:00 AM Bulletin Collators  
 6:00 PM Confirmation Class 8th  
 Graders Leave for Retreat  
 7:00 PM Movie Night

## Saturday, April 17, 2010

9:00 AM Plymouth Bells Bell Festival  
 5:30 PM AA  
 Worship (Casual)  
 6:00 PM Babysitting Exchange

## Sunday, April 18, 2010

7:30 AM Plymouth Bells Warm Up  
 8:15 AM Matins Warm Up  
 8:30 AM Infant- 2 years old Childcare  
 9:00 AM Worship/Baptisms  
 9:15 AM 2 year olds - 6th Grade  
 Church School  
 10:00 AM After Worship Fellowship  
 10:10 AM Fellowship Forum  
 The Assault on the Judiciary  
 Igniting Your Divine Spark  
 10:15 AM Chancel Choir Warm Up  
 11:00 AM 2 Year Olds – Kindergarten  
 Childcare  
 Worship/Baptisms  
 12:00 PM Chancel Choir Retreat

## Sunday, April 18, 2010, cont

12:00 PM After Worship Fellowship  
 12:30 PM Confirmation Class Return  
 from Retreat  
 1:00 PM AA  
 Discover Plymouth Class  
 5:00 PM Peace Potluck  
 7:00 PM Confirmation Class Retreat

## Monday, April 19, 2010

7:00 AM Tai Chi  
 5:15 PM Yoga  
 5:30 PM Plymouth Women Board  
 Meeting  
 5:45 PM Centering Prayer  
 6:00 PM Girl Scout Troop 661  
 6:30 PM Buddhism Class  
 7:00 PM Boy Scouts #50  
 Flick Nite

## Tuesday, April 20, 2010

6:45 AM AMENS  
 12:00 PM Al-anon  
 5:00 PM Shawl Knitting Ministry  
 7:00 PM Stephen Ministers  
 Trustees

## Wednesday, April 21, 2010

7:00 AM ROC  
 8:30 AM CONTACT Crew  
 9:30 AM Adult Bible Study  
 11:00 AM Saturday Worship Planning  
 Team Meeting  
 12:30 PM Tai Chi Class  
 6:00 PM AA  
 6:00 PM Flute Ensemble Rehearsal  
 Matins Dinner  
 Re-membering Soul  
 7:00 PM Matins Dress Rehearsal  
 Plymouth Bells Rehearsal  
 Stepping Stones 8th Grade

## Thursday, April 22, 2010

7:00 AM WISE  
 5:30 PM Committee on Ministry Mtg  
 7:00 PM Chancel Choir  
 7:00 PM Plymouth Women  
 Faithful Readers  
 7:30 PM AA - WOD

## Friday, April 23, 2010

9:00 AM Bulletin Collators  
 7:00 PM Movie Night

# Community Outreach

## Donate Dollars, Build Hope: 2010 Multi-Faith Build



For the second year in a row, Plymouth Church is joining with other faith communities in the Des Moines area to participate in a **Greater Des Moines Habitat for Humanity Multi-Faith Build**. Plymouth Church has been deeply involved with and committed to partnering with Habitat in the past, and we hope to continue the relationship with the upcoming Multi-Faith Build beginning in May and continuing through mid-July. **We invite you to participate in Plymouth's partnership in the 2010 Multi-Faith Build.**

Greater Des Moines Habitat for Humanity's mission is to partner with God and members of the community to build simple, decent housing for low-income families. This happens through the "sweat equity" of partner families—who undergo hundreds of hours of home ownership training before one wall of their house is raised—and with the **critical partnership and financial support** of faith communities like Plymouth Church, as well as corporations and local organizations. The collective work of so many people builds not just homes but hope for partner families. Lives and neighborhoods are transformed.

Did you know?\*

- Since its founding in 1986, Greater Des Moines Habitat for Humanity has built and rehabilitated over 100 homes in 18 of Des Moines' 50 neighborhoods.
- In 2009 alone, the Des Moines community partnered with Greater Des Moines Habitat for Habitat to complete a record 22 homes.
- Families with decent, stable housing have increased educational and job prospects.
- Good housing in communities attracts economic investment and development, and contributes to thriving school systems and community organizations, including churches.

**You can join in Plymouth's partnership with the 2010 Multi-Faith Build by generously offering your financial support. Contributions can be mailed to Plymouth Church or placed in the offering plates. Please make out checks to Plymouth Church with "Habitat Multi-Faith Build" in the memo line. Thank you.**

We become the living Body of Christ in seeking to love God and neighbor by putting our faith in action. We hope you'll join in this effort to strengthen the lives of our Des Moines neighbors by supporting the 2010 Multi-Faith Build. (Watch future editions of the *Contact* for more opportunities to support the Build by picking up a hammer or providing lunch for workers!)

Questions? Contact Jeanette Brodersen at [jbrodersen@plymouthchurch.com](mailto:jbrodersen@plymouthchurch.com) or Stephanie Haskins at [shaskins@plymouthchurch.com](mailto:shaskins@plymouthchurch.com) or call them at 255-3149.

\*Statistics provided by Greater Des Moines Habitat for Humanity and [www.habitat.org](http://www.habitat.org).

## Food Pantry Weekend is April 17 and 18.

Let's "shower" those who are hungry this April with as many food items as we can "rain" down on them!! How about cans of juice, one-meal cans like ravioli or spaghetti, boxes of cereal, powdered milk, or pancake mixes that require only "water" to make. Naturally, all food items are welcome at the DMARC Emergency Food Pantry. Be sure to check the expiration dates of the items you so generously donate. If you want to give cash, make your check out to Plymouth Church and put "Food Pantry" on the memo line. A big thank you from the Board of Benevolences.

## Earth Day Program April 25:

### Do You Know What You're Eating.....Are You Sure?!

Lynn Fallon wears several employment hats, but they are all within the Iowa local food system. She is the Midwest Region Farm-to-School Network Coordinator, a grassroots organizer for mandatory funding of the Farm-to-School program at the national level, the Membership Campaign Coordinator for the Iowa Food Cooperative and the Fruit, Vegetable and Specialty Crop Business Facilitator for the six counties in central Iowa.



During this Earth Day program, Lynn will share information about several exciting initiatives happening in Iowa, including the Farm-to-School program, which works to put healthier, local food into our kids' school lunches and to revitalize our rural economies by supporting local farmers. She will give us a quick update on what has been happening at the national level, including Michelle Obama's new program, Let's Move. And she will provide an update about the many ways local food is being revisited as a viable alternative right here in Iowa.

Please join us on Sunday, April 25, at 10:10 a.m. in the Greenwood Room.

## Supreme Court Judge Mark Cady to speak at Plymouth.

**Save the date of May 7, 2010...** so that you will be free to attend the **2010 Willits Educational Series** program.

A coffee and dessert evening event will be held on Friday, May 7, 2010 at 7:00 p.m. in Waveland Hall with Iowa Supreme Court Judge Mark Cady speaking on the *Varnum v. Brien* decision recognizing marriage equality in Iowa. Judge Cady will discuss the brief outlines of the governmental process and separation of powers, as well as how his thoughts and processes led him to writing the opinion for the court. A brief question-and-answer period will follow.

# Community Outreach

## Assault on the Courts: A Forum

Sunday, April 18, 10:00 – 11:00 a.m., Plymouth Church, Greenwood Room.

The Plymouth Church Board of Christian Social Action presents a free forum for information and discussion featuring former Iowa Supreme Court Justice Robert G. Allbee and Civil Liberties Union of Iowa Executive Director Ben Stone.

Critics of court decisions complain of “rogue” judges, acting without authority and legislating from the bench. Some call for unseating judges in an upcoming retention election and call for the political election of judges, a system abandoned almost 50 years ago. Join our panel as they discuss these issues in light of:

- Iowa’s merit selection and retention of judges system,
- the ability of Iowa judges to be fair and even handed, and
- the proper role of the judiciary as one of the three separate and independent branches of government.

## Supporting Juvenile Justice

AMOS (A Mid-Iowa Organizing Strategy) is involved with two events intended to expand awareness of the need for action to improve the juvenile justice system in our legal system and schools.

- Juvenile Justice-For Some Life is the Cradle to Prison Pipeline. Greenwood Room, Sunday April 11, 10:10-10:50 a.m. Minority youth are arrested, suspended and expelled from school at a disproportionate rate compared to non-minority youth. Judge Joe Smith will share his view from the bench, Kittie Weston-Knauer her perspective as a former principal and Jeff Grimes, his view as co-chair of the AMOS criminal justice team.
- Justice for All. Monday April 19, 7:00 p.m. at First Christian Church, 25<sup>th</sup> and University. AMOS is hosting a public action to reverse the trend of minority youth contact in our juvenile justice system and create justice for all kids in our schools and courts. Mark your calendar. For additional information about AMOS contact Jeff Grimes, [jgrimes\\_bp5@earthlink.net](mailto:jgrimes_bp5@earthlink.net) or 255.5670.

## Thanks to Plymouth for Generous Response

Thanks to the generosity of Plymouth members, almost \$34,000 has been raised in 2010 for global emergency relief and development. \$15,322 was raised during the special offering for One Great Hour of Sharing on February 24-25. These monies will be used in the church’s wider mission, both in responding to disasters in the headlines, as in Chile, and to respond to the needs of the world’s poor and refugee populations that sometimes go unnoticed by the media. Also raised from the congregation was \$18,424 to be sent specifically for relief in Haiti. The Board of Benevolences thanks you for your support of this important ministry.

## Lighten up Your Closet for Spring

As you begin to move your spring and summer clothes to the front of your closet, look for items that you might donate to the Plymouth Women’s Career Closet.

Plymouth women are collecting all sizes of in-style, spring and summer women’s career clothes for our joint project with the Young Women’s Resource Center (YWRC). The YWRC provides us with an area where we’ve set up shop so that central Iowa women, who are interviewing for jobs or need clothing for work, can be waited on in a boutique-style atmosphere.

All clothing is free, and each customer can leave with three or four complete outfits. Our Career Closet is the only place in the Des Moines area right now where any woman can come for career clothes and be treated to a quality shopping experience, wardrobe advice and high-quality career clothes.

Please place your donations of clean, gently worn women’s clothing, shoes, jewelry and handbags in the container just inside the doors to the Plymouth pre-school, off the alley. Put jewelry and accessories in zip-lock bags and shoes in individual boxes or bags.

For more information or to volunteer to clerk at the Closet, contact Georgia Sheriff, 270.6203, or [sheriffga@aol.com](mailto:sheriffga@aol.com).

# The Arts @ Plymouth

*SAVE THE DATE!!!!*

*Children’s Creative Arts Week*

*July 26<sup>th</sup>–30<sup>th</sup>*

*9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.*

*For students who have completed Kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Cost will be \$60 per person with a family max of \$150.*

## In the Gallery:

Photography by Judith Eastburn  
March 27—May 7, 2010

For information on purchase, contact  
Nancy Slotterback at 255.3149 or  
[nslotterback@plymouthchurch.com](mailto:nslotterback@plymouthchurch.com)

# Sermon

By David Ruhe • Easter Sunday, April 4, 2010  
“Your Turn” Based on John 20:1-18

I think I understand at least a little bit what Mary Magdalene was going through. I count it one of the privileges of my life that I was able to be present when my best friend died in 2005. Bob had struggled with cancer for some years, and as things deteriorated my wife Priscilla and I went to Cincinnati to be with Bob and his family. It was a difficult and desperate time there in the hospital. Bob’s wife Debbie is a nurse, and Priscilla is a Family Practice physician. They knew what was happening as events unfolded, and were able to be marvelously helpful. In one of the very last things he said, Bob called them “angels of mercy.” I, on the other hand, was pretty much useless.

As the end approached, Bob was surrounded by his father, his wife and his children, while Priscilla and I maintained a respectful distance. Debbie turned to me and said, “David, come over here and say something.” I walked over to the bed and I said, “Good night, sweet prince.” It’s a line from Hamlet, and I knew Bob would know the rest of it: “and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.” Then I said, quoting from Romans, “whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.”<sup>1</sup> And then from one of Jesus’ stories, “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your master.”<sup>2</sup> And he died.

At first the room filled with sounds of grieving. But then, over the course of several minutes, things began to subside. And finally I knew what to do. As the nurses were cleaning up the body I called the funeral home. I sat alone with Bob to wait for them to arrive. I stayed with him as they transferred him onto the gurney, and rode down the elevator with them as they took him out to the hearse. It meant the world to me to be able to honor my dear friend in that simple way. It was all I could do, and I got the chance to do it.

But Mary Magdalene was not so blessed. Helpless and hopeless, she had stayed near Jesus as he was crucified. She kept vigil near the foot of the cross. She watched and



David Ruhe

wept as he died. She watched as Joseph of Arimathea took away the body and Nicodemus came with spices to prepare Jesus for burial. She saw the garden tomb where they laid Jesus as sundown and the Sabbath approached. Then at the earliest opportunity, even before daybreak on Sunday morning, she

returned to the tomb simply to be alone with Jesus. It was all she could do, all she had left. But even this was denied her.

The stone had been rolled away. She ran to tell Peter and “the other disciple,” whom tradition identifies as John. They came and stayed just long enough to verify that the tomb was empty. They left. Mary stayed alone at the tomb—weeping, utterly lost, with nowhere to go. Jesus was her home.

I’m not sure exactly what we expect from the Bible, but it probably isn’t this. We’d like a neat and tidy happy ending, but that’s not what we get. Instead we get an extended series of stories in which Easter dawns on different people at different times. John sets the whole thing up in the very first chapter of his gospel when he says of Jesus, “He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.”<sup>3</sup>

There’s the drama: when it comes to looking at Jesus and seeing God, some people will get it and some people won’t. Some people will sort of get it for a while, but then not quite. But people who do get it have their lives changed.

One after another in this gospel, prospective believers encounter Jesus:

- Nicodemus hears Jesus tell him that he must be born again, but he doesn’t understand. Nicodemus is

thinking obstetrics; Jesus is talking theology.<sup>4</sup>

- A Samaritan woman meets Jesus near a well and is astonished at the things Jesus knows about her, such as the fact that she has had five husbands and a roommate. She says to her neighbors, “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done!” (With all those husbands there couldn’t have been time for much else.) But she doesn’t really understand what she’s experiencing. As her story ends she asks, “He cannot be the Messiah, can he?”<sup>5</sup>
- A man who has been born blind receives his sight from Jesus who asks him, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” The man responds, “And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.” Jesus responds, “You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.” At last he says, “Lord, I believe.” It’s never easy.<sup>6</sup>
- And then there is Lazarus, whom Jesus raises from the dead, calling him forth from the tomb, by crying, “Lazarus, come out!” And he does... and then he never says a word!<sup>7</sup>

People see but they don’t, understand and then they don’t, sort of believe and then they don’t; and John’s Easter story is a fitting culmination.

To begin with, there’s that silly, boys-will-be-boys footrace to the tomb. John gets there first and he looks in but doesn’t go in. What’s that? Peter arrives and goes in and kind of takes inventory; he notices where the various wrappings are. Then John finally does go in and sees and *believes*... so he gets there first, twice. But neither one of them yet understands what he has experienced in a greater sense, in terms of scripture. They haven’t fully grasped the meaning. Then they leave.

But Mary won’t leave. She can’t. Imagine the exhaustion, the frustration, the anguish and grief! And everybody she sees asks her why she is weeping! First it’s the angels she sees as she bends over to look into the tomb: the head angel and the foot angel: “Woman, why are you weeping?” She’s

still focused on the body of Jesus: “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

Without receiving a response, she turns around. She sees Jesus, but she doesn’t really see Jesus, she sees a gardener, who asks her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Fifty percent on the grammar here: the “whom” is impressive, but the dangling participle in “looking for” is not so great. “Whom do you seek?” would be better. Mary responds to this semi-grammatical man she assumes to be a gardener, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.”

Then everything changes when he speaks her name: “Mary!” And her anguish dissolves into hope. This may be the most moving single word in scripture as the one who is Love calls Mary by name. It’s an exquisite reminder that God doesn’t just love all of us, God loves each of us.

That’s more or less the end of today’s lesson; emotionally at least it’s the denouement. But John is just getting started with Easter.

There will be a series of wonderful post-resurrection appearances as Easter keeps dawning on more and more people in different ways. The risen Christ visits the disciples in the upper room, where they had shared a last supper together. But Thomas isn’t there, so Christ returns again a week later. The disciples then leave Jerusalem and go back to Galilee, trying to go back to their boats and their nets almost as though nothing had happened, like soldiers returning to their farms after a war. But the risen Christ finds them there and there is a miraculous catch of fish and a seaside breakfast in which Peter in particular is forgiven and restored to a new life in which he will at last serve Christ with courage and faithfulness.

The story keeps going, it keeps happening, not as an isolated incident but as a series of encounters as Easter comes to different people in different times and places. And now it’s your turn.

We know this story; in one way or another it’s why we’re all here this morning, even if we tell ourselves we’re here to keep peace in the family or fulfill a school assignment or to observe a holiday or to hear the wonderful music. We hear this news that love conquers death, and we watch it dawn in the lives of the various

characters, and we marvel at how slow they are to catch on; but we also admit that, for a lot of us, it’s a gradual process and sort of two steps forward and one step back.

Some people come to trust in the truth of Easter through the accounts of others or through some sort of external evidence or even through attempts at logical proof. More power to you if you’re impressed by the Shroud of Turin or the infallibility of ancient witnesses; and goodness knows there will be lots of sermons preached today to pound away at why you *have* to believe. But we all know you don’t have to.

The real issue for most of us really isn’t so much do we have to believe in resurrection just the way the Bible tells it, because the Bible actually tells it lots of different ways; and the characters in the Bible, eyewitnesses even, get there by lots of different routes, if they get there at all.

Most of us ultimately decide that Easter is true because we have an experience of the living Christ: not a bad Bible movie figure in robe and sandals, but a presence that we come to think of as the presence of Christ. Often this happens in the wake of a devastating experience. For me it was in the aftermath of my divorce that I first realized that I was forgiven, even though I could not yet forgive myself; loved, although I felt unlovable; already living a new life, when all I could see around me was the shambles of the old. That warmth and presence and peace was the warmth and presence and peace of Christ in my life; it was Easter in my life. And once you’ve seen Easter anywhere, you begin to see it nearly everywhere.

Easter happens over and over and over again, sometimes when faith itself crumbles as old ways of thinking about God don’t work any more and newer, more grown up ones take their place. We’re not just born again, Nicodemus: we’re born again and again and again and again. That’s because Easter isn’t just the story that happened, it’s the truth that is, and the truth that makes all the difference: to John, and Peter, and Mary Magdalene, and you and me.

Because Christ is risen. He is risen, indeed! Amen

<sup>1</sup>Romans 14:8b.

<sup>2</sup>This comes from the parable of the talents, Matthew 25:14-30 and Luke 19:12-27. “Servant” is from the RSV translation.

<sup>3</sup>John 1:10-12.

<sup>4</sup>John 3:1-21.

<sup>5</sup>John 4:1-30.

<sup>6</sup>John 9:1-41.

<sup>7</sup>John 11:1-38, 12:1-11.

## BOOK OF LIFE

### BIRTH:

**Samuel Edward James,**  
3/29/10, son of Jen and Larry  
James.

### DEATH:

**Opal Miller,** 4/1/10. Our love  
and prayers her daughter, Kathy  
Eaton, and all her family.

### CONDOLENCES TO:

**Orlando Winters,** whose  
mother, Diana Cox, died recently.  
**John Gudehus,** whose mother,  
Laveta Gudehus, died 3/28/10.

# Plymouth

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

4126 Ingersoll Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50312-2713

Phone: 255.3149 --- FAX: 255.8667  
Voice Mail: 255.7950  
Home Page:  
<http://www.plymouthchurch.com> ---  
General E-mail goes to:  
[plymouth@plymouthchurch.com](mailto:plymouth@plymouthchurch.com)

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# Plymouth

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

## Program Staff

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Jeanette Brodersen..... Associate Minister  
Cindy Eaton Eklund ..... Director of Communications  
Faith Ferré ..... Minister of Discipleship  
Barbara Godwin ..... Director of Child and Family Ministries  
Carl Gravander ..... Organist  
Stephanie Haskins ..... Associate Minister  
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Sharon Parker-Lenihan..... Director of Adult Music and Fine Arts  
Frank Thomas..... Coordinator of TiM  
Jan Van Wyk..... Director of Plymouth Nursery School  
Susan Waller ..... Director of Youth & Children's Music  
Angie Witmer..... Minister of Young Adults and Youth

## Support Groups

**AA:** Monday nights, 7:30 p.m. at Plymouth Place, Dave Creighton, 240.6667  
**AL-ANON:** Church Office, 255.3149  
**GLBT:** (Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgendered) Ron Sallade, 249.5627 or [www.plymouthglbt.com](http://www.plymouthglbt.com)  
**LADOS:** (Life After Death of Spouse) DMARC, 277.6969

Plymouth offers the Stephen Ministry Program for one-to-one Christian care. Contact Faith Ferré at 255.3149 ext. 16 or Bev Burns at 224.9571.

# Worship

**Sunday Worship**  
9:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.  
Sanctuary

4/11/10  
**David Ruhe**  
Acts 5:27-32

4/18/10  
**Matt Mardis-LeCroy**  
Acts 9:1-20

**Saturday Worship**  
5:30 p.m.  
Waveland Hall

4/10/10  
**Jeanette Brodersen**  
Acts 5:27-32

4/17/10  
**Stephanie Haskins**  
Acts 9:1-20

## The Contact

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**Radio Worship**  
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