

Plymouth

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT | EXCELLENCE IN WORSHIP | EDUCATION | PROGRESSIVE THEOLOGY | OPENNESS & INCLUSIVITY



2019-2020 Annual Meeting

Tuesday, May 12, 2020 | 7 p.m.

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Church Council

Moderator: Sally Pederson

While we value our traditions and rituals, the need to innovate became abundantly clear in March as the COVID-19 pandemic ushered in virtual ways of being the church. As our physical church closed its doors to social gatherings, our talented and dedicated staff opened new and creative ways to congregate, worship, and continue to grow in love of God and neighbor. More about that later.

But let me begin with the work of the Church Council this past year:

Due to staff turnover we began our program year in June with openings for the position of *Director of Operations & Finance*, *Director of Child & Families Ministries*, and *Minister of Community Engagement*.

In **June**, following a staffing assessment to align the congregation needs with the reality of our annual income, the Council approved a new alignment of staff and search committees began the process of recruiting candidates for 1) *Director of Operations & Finance* and 2) *Director of Child & Families Ministries*.

In **August** and **September** the Council took action to begin a strategic planning process, appointing a seven-member Steering Committee and engaging Sarai Rice as a consultant. The Council also approved the Bylaws subcommittee's proposed "scope of work" and the subcommittee began in earnest to develop recommendations to be submitted for consideration and adoption at a future meeting of the congregation.

In **September** the Council approved a \$200,000 grant proposal from the Trustees to the Plymouth Foundation to cover the remaining cost of the \$1.1 million Rollins Tower renovation. The work is complete and the long-term health and safety of this key historic feature is secure.

In **November** the position of *Director of Operations & Finance* was filled with the hiring of Emily Tripp, and she most definitely "hit the ground running" by developing a draft church budget in her first week on the job.

In **January**, the Board of Stewardship shared the results of the stewardship campaign. Stewardship had set a goal of 49 new household pledges, and asked all households to consider a 5% increase to reach a target of \$2.2 million. Though the fiscal target was not met, 68 new pledges exceeded the goal. The number of households which increased pledges was up by 15% over 2019. Yet, overall, total pledged income remained flat. The Board of Trustees presented, and the Council approved, a 2020 budget of \$2,159,000. The Trustees' analysis of Plymouth's financial health shows a very strong reserve fund, but the reality is that recent giving has not kept up with inflation and has required the church to reduce the permanent ministerial staff from four to three. (There are two rotating TiM associate ministers.) The need to increase annual giving is critical to the future vitality of the church and requires attention.

The Council extended a call to Rushing Kimball as Associate Minister for the 2020-2022 Transition in Ministry program. He will begin serving in June.

January and **February** saw a much-needed upgrade of the church technology get underway. The Council approved a \$58,000 grant proposal to the Plymouth Foundation for a new cloud-based church management software program and a complete redesign of the website. These platforms will provide better website communication for the public and better data management for our staff and members. We will be learning how to make the most of these tools in the months ahead. The social distancing brought on by the pandemic has made us all keenly aware of the need for high-quality, effective technology to function in our daily lives.

In **March**, as the pandemic spread through the U.S. we moved to online worship and meetings. The Council held its first Zoom meeting and after conducting ordinary business, adjourned and reconvened as the Nominating & Election Committee to review board nominations for presentation and election at the Annual Meeting, May 12.

A **Special Meeting** of the Congregation was called on April 28 for the purpose of amending the bylaws to allow for electronic meetings and voting. Members stopped by the church to cast their ballot: 145 yes, 1 no.

At the regular **April** Council meeting we discussed and then voted to approve a \$50,000 grant for solar panels proposed by the Plymouth House and Space Committee and the Creation Care & Justice Committee. The proposal will be submitted to the Plymouth Foundation as a strategic grant with the endorsement of the Council.

Significant issues for the future of Plymouth Church:

The position of Director of Child and Family Ministries has remained unfilled for a full year. Three separate search efforts ended unsuccessfully. A temporary part-time consultant will help to meet the key objectives in this area, while a search for a full-time director continues. We recognize that a strong, vibrant children's program is critical to the vitality of Plymouth Church.

In order to help us come together for the common good in a time of heightened polarization and partisanship, we began a conversation in October with the aid of Dr. Allen Hilton, entitled "*Friendship in a Purple Church.*" Dr. Hilton preached on two weekends and facilitated a Saturday morning workshop that was well-attended. Plymouth members responded positively to this initiative and would welcome additional efforts to encourage constructive conversation and respect for differences within our church community.

Some important work has been underway at Plymouth that will continue into the coming months. Last fall the Council appointed a **Strategic Planning Committee** to guide and direct the development of a 3-5 year shared vision for the life of Plymouth Church. To set the stage for our thinking, the Rev. Sarai Rice, spoke to our congregation at the Saturday and Sunday Worship Services, Jan. 25 and 26 and the Fellowship Forum to ground us in the reality of demographic and other data affecting religious affiliation trends. The Planning Committee held *Congregational Triad Conversations* in February and early March engaging almost 300 members in deep reflection to help determine what is next for our church. Online engagement was also solicited. The Planning Committee is reviewing, digesting and synthesizing all of this valuable input and will be sharing a report and recommendations to the congregation later this year. I am excited to see what God is calling us to do and what's next for Plymouth Church.

Change and Opportunity

Of course, the Covid-19 Pandemic has had a profound impact on everything in our lives. The entire staff at Plymouth has responded with enormous energy and creativity, adapting to the restrictions on social gatherings with innovative worship and prayer services on YouTube and Facebook. The program staff have developed interactive programming to serve a range of audiences including bible study, children and youth and special interest groups. Recognizing that not everyone is an active internet user, but still a vital member of our community, we have been challenged to remain in robust contact. Reimagining important religious rituals, like baptisms, confirmation, weddings, and funerals present unique challenges in this time. Yet, I am optimistic that this crisis will inspire us and bring us together in new ways. I have worked closely with Moderator-elect David Johnson through this past program year and have every confidence in his lay leadership as I hand the Council gavel into his capable hands.

In her Easter sunrise service message, Rev. Lindsey Braun shared a quote from author Arundhati Roy that conjures powerful imagery of the pandemic as a portal.

Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew.

This one is no different.

It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.

*We can choose to walk through it,
dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred,
our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas,
our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us.*

*Or we can walk through lightly,
with little luggage, ready to imagine another world.*

Please join in our in our imagining as we grow in love of God and neighbor.

Senior Minister

Matt Mardis-LeCroy

I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ

-Philippians 1:6

I was not especially close to my father's father. He was, among other things, a little too religious for my taste. But he inscribed these words on a high school graduation card and they have stuck with me. As I think about the program year past, I feel very much in the middle of something. God has begun a good work among the people of Plymouth Church. Now is a good time to give thanks for a good beginning and look forward to its future completion.

But before we can do that, we must first acknowledge what a strange and defunct season we are in. The middle of March, in response to the spread of COVID-19, we had to close our building, suspend in-person worship and move much of our life into online spaces. Our 2020 Annual Meeting will be conducted online, and we do not yet know when we will be able to see each other face-to-face. In a very short span of time, we entered an entirely new world.

For me, this strange season has brought on a whole host of emotions: I feel grief for the lives lost, fear in the face of an unknown future and anxiety about how I will manage my many commitments (I am, among other things, currently teaching 4th grade and kindergarten at my dining room table).

But I also feel a great deal of gratitude and no small amount of pride. I am so very proud of the staff and the people of Plymouth Church. The staff team has embraced the challenge of doing worship, sharing prayers and fostering connection in on-line spaces. Our leaders have stepped up, bringing a creative and can-do approach to internet-based board and committee work. And, strange to say, this season has made many of us more aware of our connection to one another and more deeply grateful for this congregation that weaves our lives together.

God has begun a new work among us.

God has become a new work in terms of strategic planning. Never have I seen a group of people work as diligently and as faithfully as Plymouth's Strategic Planning Steering Committee and their consultant, the Rev. Sarai Rice. Meeting almost every week this fall and through February, they have dug into the work of understanding the life of the church. And then they designed and facilitated a process by which the congregation came together to do some dreaming about our future.

It will take more than COVID-19 to stop the work of strategic planning. Soon you will be invited to share feedback about this unprecedented season in the life of the church. And when it is safe to gather together, that steering committee will prayerfully take up all of your feedback and come back to us ready to share their sense of what God calls us to do in the months and years ahead. A good thing has begun among us and God will see it through.

A good thing began almost a century ago, when the people of Plymouth Church broke ground for a new building at the intersection of 42nd and Ingersoll. Ever since that day, our building has been both our greatest asset and our most reliable source of problems. But today the building is better than it has ever been. Thanks to your generous support, we have completed and paid for necessary renovations to Plymouth's historic Rollins Tower. And in the time of our building being closed, the staff has tackled a whole host of projects to repair, renovate and beautify our space. When we open the building again, you will like what you see. A good thing has begun among us and God will see it through.

A good thing began this fall when Allen Hilton spent some time with us. As part of a sermon series on the spiritual practice of friendship, Allen led some important conversation about friendships that span the partisan divide. In spite of increasing (and increasingly ugly) partisan polarization in our culture, Plymouth remains a place where people form deep and meaningful connections across our political differences. It is a peculiar gift for a church to

have, and a gift I believe we are called to lean into in these days. A good thing has begun among us and God will see it through.

A good thing began in our new anti-racism work. This year's 1619 Project was a phenomenal success and a sign of the impact we can have. For a period of weeks, Plymouth ministers and community leaders led as many as 150 people in conversation about the role of slavery in American history and the lingering poison of racism. What a gift it was to host that conversation! My thanks to lay leaders and staff who worked so hard to make it happen. A good thing has begun among us and God will see it through.

I believe a good thing has begun in the finances of Plymouth Church. Just look at what we have accomplished together in the last several years: a (once staggering) debt retired, a sanctuary renovated, a Transition into Ministry program fully funded and repairs to the Rollins Tower completed. The back of my napkin says that's about \$6 million in about six years, above and beyond pledges to support our annual operating budget. Meanwhile, thanks to careful stewardship of our resources, the congregation has abundant cash reserves and the Plymouth Church Foundation is positioned to do enormous good for the church.

Just one piece of the puzzle has not yet fallen into place, and that is giving to support the annual operating budget of the church. But when I consider all that we have accomplished already, I am confident that we can grow our giving to supply our needs. A good thing has begun among us and God will see it through.

I have the privilege of working with the very best staff team anywhere. We continue to benefit from Sarah Ennis' coaching (paid for by a grant from the Plymouth Foundation) – finding better ways to work together, learning to collaborate ever more effectively.

When I wrote last year's annual report, I knew that I would be spending my summer with search committees to fill key positions in the year ahead. On that front we have one success story and one story that is not over yet. Emily Tripp joined our team in November as Plymouth's new Director of Operations and Finance. With each passing day I am more and more impressed with her. Emily is incredibly gifted, she resonates with our values and she is a joy to work with.

Unfortunately, we have yet to fill the vacant Director of Child and Family Ministries position. The search continues and most days I still believe the right person is out there. But we have good news here as well because, in the meantime, we are incredibly fortunate to have Georgia Sheriff working on an interim basis to strengthen Child and Family ministries and lay a foundation for our future. A good thing has begun among us and God will see it through.

At the end of 2019, we celebrated Paula Wilkerson's retirement after many years of service as an Administrative Assistant at Plymouth. It was a bitter sweet celebration. In January, we welcomed Kathy Sohn to take up the administrative responsibilities and she has begun some very good work among us.

To work with the lay leaders of Plymouth Church is to experience a true embarrassment of riches. And I am mindful that no one who said "yes" knew that they were agreeing to lead in the thick of a world-historical crisis. I am so grateful for Sally Pederson's depth of wisdom and even deeper love for this congregation. She and David Johnson have helped to steer the ship through uncharted and sometimes choppy waters.

I always hesitate to single out other lay leaders for special mention, but it must be said that Franklin Codel, as chair of the Board of Trustees, went many miles above and beyond what might be reasonably expected. He essentially served as Interim Director of Finance for five months and then assisted Emily in assembling the 2020 budget while she was still unpacking her office. Right now he is helping us navigate a new and very confusing landscape. For his leadership in a year like no other, I am very grateful.

In so many ways, this Annual Meeting finds Plymouth Church in the middle. God has begun a good work among us. And God will see it through.

Thanks be to God!

Minister of Care and Welcome

LeAnn Stubbs

In my quarter-century pastoral career, this is the first annual report that I have written in the midst of a world-wide pandemic. I hope and pray that it will be the last.

I find myself thinking about those other people who have lived during other pandemics, other plagues, in our world's history. (An interesting "summer read" you may want to check out is *Year of Wonders*, by Geraldine Brooks.) I wonder, did they feel, as I do, that it is hard to remember life before the disease began to emerge and grow and change everything? If I try, I can remember bits and pieces of the past year:

May and June 2019. The end of the program year and the season of Board and Committee potlucks was upon us. The Board of Membership's potluck was hosted for the third and final year at Keith Uhl's home. It was a festive time, and the idea of selling quality Plymouth SWAG was quietly born.

July and August 2019. This is always the season of weddings and vacations and planning. Lots of planning. After welcoming Pastor Mary Kate as our new TiM, she and I got busy planning for the launch of programming offerings that would fall under the brand of "Living WOW" (living well, older well). Highlights of this season for me: monthly visits with our members living in Sr. facilities; seeing the sanctuary filled with quilts for our first "quilt blessing"; and hanging out with our members at the Plymouth Booth at Ingersoll Live.

September and October 2019. And everything begins! This was the year we focused on "Friendship" in Bible Studies, Book Studies and Preaching. The center piece of this focus was two visits by Allen Hilton who does work around "A House United: how the church can save the world." Living WOW, PWAG, Nine 2 Dine, Plymouth Note Writers, were all successfully launched. Highlight of the season for me: the Two-day Stephen Ministry Retreat in Newton. Our topic was, "getting to Brave by getting to know ourselves." We laughed, we cried, we worked and played.

November and December 2019. This is the season when programming is rolling along in high gear AND we add the holiday season on top of it all. My highlight during this

season is always The Longest Night Worship Service. We gather together to reflect upon the turning of the world. The daylight is short, the dark nights long. Beautiful music, powerful reflections, meaningful activities. I love this yearly worship offering.

January and February 2020. These are months of celebration. New Members join! The Board of Membership's quality swag project has been approved, clothing designed and ordered! The Plymouth Women's nut sale was a success! Stephen Ministers are doing excellent work! Seasonal "connections" guides are in peoples' hands! A Small Group called "Grey Matters" has emerged from the Living WOW offerings! People are getting excited about a Boundary Waters Retreat! Visiting, calling, caring is happening! What could possibly go wrong?!?

I want to thank each and every person on the Board of Membership, the Board of Plymouth Women, our Stephen Ministers, the Young Adult group and the AMENS, the Bridge players and the Faithful Readers, the quilters and shawl knitters, our note writers and flower delivery team and Memory Café crew, the entire Plymouth Staff, and those with whom I work most closely: Karen Jeske, Sarah Masengarb, and Pr. Mary Kate. THANK YOU! We had a great 10 months!

And then, the virus came.

March 2020 to the present moment. A season of responding. Of Adapting. Of learning new things. Of distance, but not isolation, as we continue to connect in very real and powerful and meaningful ways. I do not know how long this season will last. My comfort is knowing that we will continue to do this together.

And so, I say THANK YOU to every single member of this congregation. Thank you for calling each other and caring for each other. Thank you for praying. Thank you for staying connected to Plymouth over the phone and e-mail, on Facebook and YouTube and Zoom. And thank you for sending me pictures of your dogs, and your kids, and the meals you have made, and getting a quarantine haircut in the back yard!

You are ever and always in my prayers.

As we live in God's love, I wish you peace.

LeAnn

Connections Coordinator

Karen Jeske

Last year I wrote that building a culture of connection at Plymouth Church takes “patience and an understanding that culture changes slowly.” Of course, events, like pandemics, can initiate changes to a culture that no one saw coming. As I write this report in late April 2020, three years into my tenure as your Connections Coordinator, I’m maybe less sure than I have been about what the specifics of our “culture of connection” might look like in the months ahead, but I also feel great hope in the love for this community that so many of us share.

As the program year began in September of 2019, several new connection efforts got underway. The most visible was the reintroduction of Wednesday night dinners at Plymouth. We contracted with Carmen Keith who created simple, family-friendly, mix-and-match menus that we could make available for \$5 per person with an upper limit of \$20 for families. We started these in late September and continued up until Thanksgiving. In the end, we were not approaching the number of diners we needed to break even financially. Regular fellowship over meals is something I believe builds community and it also felt good to serve our busy families on Wednesday nights, so I was sorry this approach did not work. I would love to try a different approach in the future, and your ideas about how to do so are very welcome.

An ongoing effort of the past few years has been to improve the way new members are introduced to the vast array of activities at Plymouth. Last year we started a special email newsletter, Discover Plymouth 2.0, that new members receive for their first 18 months after joining. This year, we added a Discover Plymouth Passport, an invitation, customized for each joining class, to sample a variety of upcoming Plymouth events. When a new member completes their passport, they can bring it to Plymouth Grounds for a free cup of coffee.

Another ongoing effort has been better and earlier coordination of all of the different program offerings at Plymouth in order to improve the presentation of these opportunities to our members. This year we have created a program guide for each liturgical season. I also continued my work with the Plymouth Young Adults and we have a new monthly series for 2020 called Monthly MOJO, meeting on the third Thursdays of each month, including over Zoom now that we can’t meet face to face.

Of course the connection life at Plymouth Church changed dramatically when we closed the church in mid-March. It meant that we were unable to have our Maundy Thursday dinner this year. It’s also required all of your church staff to stretch their creativity and their technical skills in order to find ways to connect across distance. I have been hosting a Facebook Live event every Tuesday at 11 a.m. called Center and Connect that brings interested members together for a moment of centering followed by conversation to help process how we are all feeling during this time. In more recent weeks, I’ve shifted to the discussion of spiritual practices for anxious times. I have also been spearheading and managing the Facebook groups on the Plymouth Facebook page.

In the months ahead, while the exact platforms and formats are uncertain, I am looking forward to mastering the new church database that will go into effect this summer. It replaces a badly outdated system and it should allow us to do much easier targeting of programs and connection opportunities to interested members. I am also looking forward to launching a program to help Plymouth members discern their particular spiritual gifts and then help to match people’s gifts with opportunities to grow and serve.

Minister of Discipleship

Lindsey Braun

When playing out of position, the strength of your team makes all the difference. (At least, that's what I'm assuming, as I try to apply a sports metaphor to ministry!) For the last 16 months, I have been playing out of position as Plymouth seeks a new Director of Child and Family Ministries. And the fact that you haven't seen me fall flat on my face during this time (at least not too often) is due to the extraordinary team of staff and lay leaders who have stepped up on behalf of our kids. Their lives are testimonies to their belief: we belong to each other because we belong to God.

As I think back over the last year, before COVID began, that extraordinary team begins to cohere in my mind like a great cloud of witnesses. These are people who live their faith in love. For each and every one of them I am grateful.

- **Mindy Borgstadt** took on the work of leading Vacation Bible School – simply a huge undertaking.
- **Lindsey Pruett-Hornbaker** authored the second year of our two-year in-house church school curriculum, filled with vital Bible stories, mindfulness meditations, wondering questions, and fun.
- **Jon Merkle** chaired the Board of Christian Education, which also meant helping to ensure volunteer quotas and safety whenever church school was in session.
- **Lindsey Pruett-Hornbaker, Stephanie Butler, Sarah Zigtema, Madison Reininga, Kelsey Bentzinger, Dustin Schaufbuch, Katelyn Karlzen, Rebecca Masucci, Courtney Rife, Melissa Johnson, and Brian Leckrone** all said YES to being church school teachers for the whole year!
- **The Board of Christian Education** volunteered whenever and wherever needed.
- **Parents** did, too – showing up to support classrooms and VBS and special worship services.

- **Jessica & Jack Schroeder, Jen Jensen, and Shannon Goude-lock** helped by facilitating some of our classes for families.
- **Nikira Hernandez-Evans** coordinated an OWL training at Plymouth in October so we could train up more facilitators right here at home.
- **Shayla McCormally** and **Bobbie Backer** taught our K-2 OWL class to 30 kids during the church school hour from January-March. This was a first to offer OWL at this time and it worked well for families.
- **LeAnn Stubbs** partnered with me on our Christmas Eve service for families with children that turned into a joyful Christmas glow-stick rave!
- **Matt Mardis-LeCroy** made sure our children and families got pizza and ashes at the start of Lent.
- **Confirmation Guides** did their work of guiding and supporting our middle schoolers with humor and grace.
- **Marissa Hernandez-Evans**, Plymouth's Education Assistant, SUPPORTED. IT. ALL. Would that we all had a Marissa. Seriously, if you ever have the chance to hire a Marissa—kind, helpful, organized, thoughtful, good at documenting procedures, calm under pressure, a clear communicator and asker of good questions—do it. When Marissa and Nikira leave as Nikira pursues her next call, we will miss them both greatly!

Along with gratitude, there are a few other learnings from this year+ playing out of position that I'd like to share. Strong ministries for children and families don't just happen. They are not a given. They take an extraordinary amount of teamwork, staffing, and support.

Educators (trained educators) are absolutely invaluable. (I know this isn't a revelation to anyone who has been home schooling their kids for the past eight weeks.) I'm a pastor who happens to like kids. But when it comes to helping volunteers figure out innovative tactics for classroom

management, I just don't have the juice. Over the last year, I relied heavily on connections both inside and outside Plymouth (thanks **Dee Buchanan**) to help think about and manage issues that were simply outside my training and expertise.

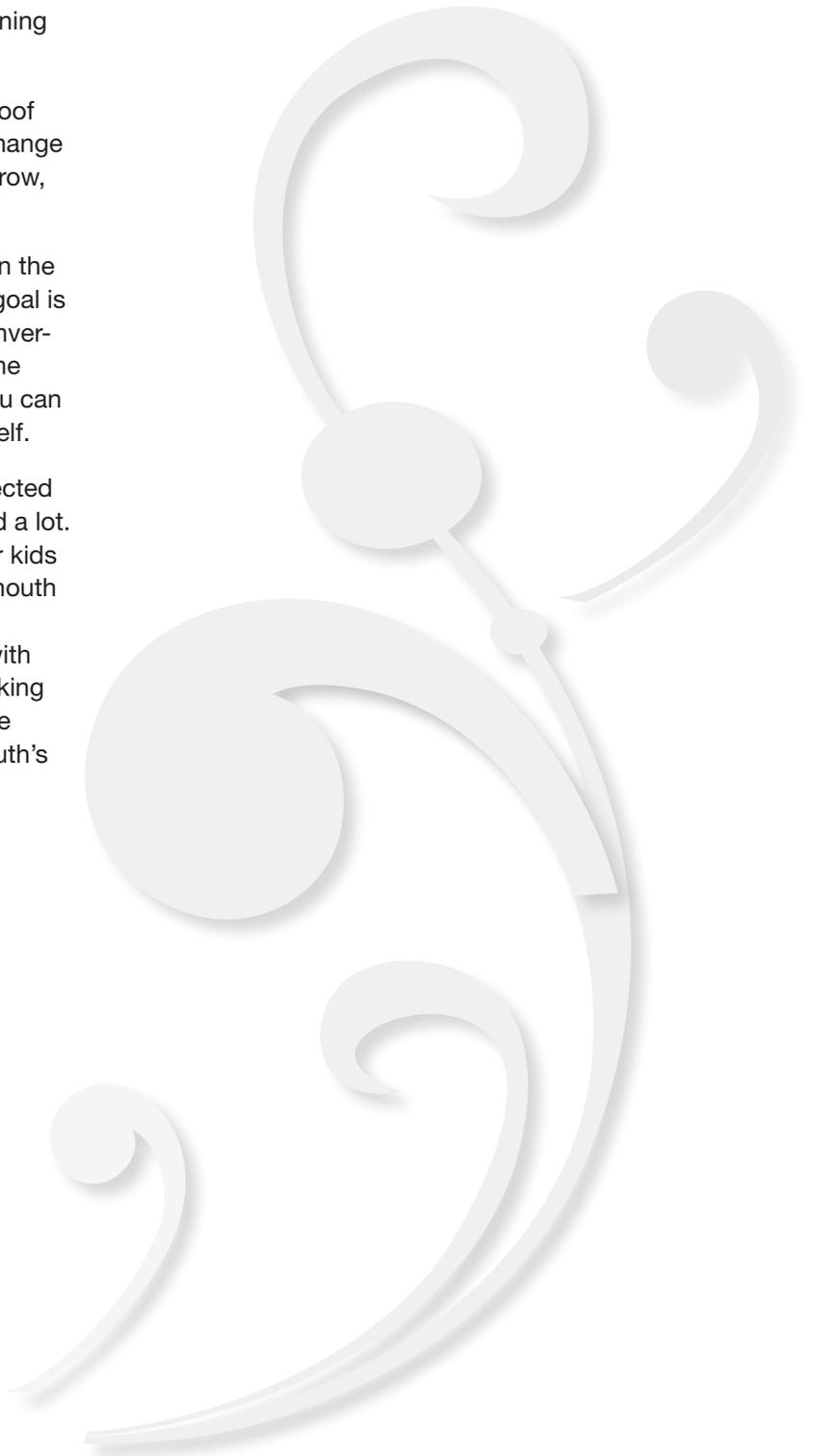
People are adaptable. These last eight weeks are proof positive of that. But the months before were, too. Change comes and we find ways to live into it. To learn, to grow, and even to flourish.

People want to be asked. It's not always fun to be on the volunteer recruitment committee. Especially if your goal is a warm body to fill a hole. But having coffee and conversation with people who love God and love kids for the purpose of learning about them and their gifts so you can help them put them to good use? That is a gift in itself.

It has been a strange year, and not at all what I expected when I wrote last year's annual report. I have learned a lot. I am grateful for all who shared their gifts to help our kids and families know they are loved and valued at Plymouth and by God. I'm grateful to **Georgia Sherriff** who is sharing her gifts by stepping into a consulting role with Child and Family Ministries. And I look forward to taking some time over the summer to transition into the role Council approved in May 2019, working with Plymouth's ministries of community engagement.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Lindsey Braun



Transition into Ministry Associate Minister

Mary Kate Buchanan

This year has been a year of firsts. First time stepping foot in Iowa, Minnesota, and Missouri. First time being referred to as “Reverend.” First time presiding over communion and a funeral. First time adopting a dog. First time preaching as an ordained minister. First time going to the Iowa State Fair (and Minnesota State Fair!). First time preaching to a virtual congregation. First time writing an annual report! There’s a lot more firsts in there, but I named some of the big ones!

While in many ways this past year has felt like a blur with all the firsts and newness, there have been some defining moments during my first year of ministry at Plymouth Church. First, Wednesday Night Bible Study. The creation of a Wednesday night full of church activities for all ages was an absolute success! However, the lack of parking spaces was an unexpected challenge. Bible study grew from a vibrant conversation between three of us to, at times, a rowdy crowd of more than 20 with babies, guests, and plenty of cookies and cake. One of my favorite things about this group has been the success in building connections between different Plymouth groups as well. We partnered with the Plymouth Young Adults for a few weeks and have had multiple opportunities to combine Bible studies and potlucks with Trinity Las Americas church as well. Wednesday Night Bible Study has been a place for everyone — those who have never attended a Bible study before, those who work during the morning Bible study offering, those who had never been to Plymouth before, and those who are old hats at exploring scripture. I look forward to continuing Wednesday Night Bible Study amidst some of the new endeavors of my second year of TiM ministry at Plymouth.

While Bible study has been a time to spread my pastoral wings and fly on my own, partnering with LeAnn Stubbs to begin growing a thriving older adults ministry at Plymouth

Church has been a true blessing in collaboration. Our creation of Living WOW, a moniker for all older adult activities and opportunities, has been steadily growing over the Fall and into the the new year. Grey Matters on Thursday afternoons has been a place for play, learning, exploration, creativity, and building meaningful relationships with one another. While this season of COVID-19 has thrown a wrench in our Living WOW program planning, it has provided us with new fodder for creative outreach, caring for, and building relationships, all while making plans for retreats, panels, and more opportunities for fellowship upon our glorious return to Plymouth.

While preaching, teaching, Bible study, and Living WOW have been a large part of my last (first!) year at our church, most of my work has been focused on getting to know the heart of Plymouth church: YOU. It has been my goal to seek opportunities to teach, preach, learn, serve, and play with Plymouth people of all ages — the littles, youth, young adults, families, and older adults. Teaching the church school classes about Communion helped the youngest Plymouth members get to see me up close and recognize me during coffee hour and even induct me into a secret club (shhh!). I have been able to join Susan Waller on Wednesday afternoons facilitating a small Bible study during Conversations and Connections with the youth, as well as join them at youth dinner for important conversations about college necessities and who the best looking pop celebrity is (Harry Styles is a point of contention). Completing OWL (Our Whole Lives) training in October allowed me to co-facilitate senior OWL with Shana Johnson in early March. While the Matins Tour has been cancelled for this year, I have been grateful to be a part of the group prayerfully brainstorming what this Summer might hold for our youth.

Thank you, people of Plymouth Church, for being the people to celebrate and encourage my year of firsts. I am SO looking forward to a second year of growing in love of God and neighbor with you all.

Director of Communications

Cindy Eaton-Eklund

The Plymouth brand is one of the most important things that the Communications Department monitors, nurtures and continually evolves to maintain a consistent look and message both inside and outside our church walls.

I've been fortunate to work with some very talented Communications Assistants during my tenure at Plymouth, and that continues to be true. Lisa Acheson resigned in 2019 and we wished her well as she accepted a full-time position, and I am thrilled that we were able to hire Elsie Wunn as our current part-time Communications Assistant.

Elsie and I continue to support Plymouth's staff, boards and committees by producing effective and consistently branded worship materials, newsletters, brochures, advertising, social media, and much more to tell the story of Plymouth Church, its programs and its people. Plymouth's ever-expanding ministries challenge us to expand our creativity and time management to help communicate the intricacies of these events to wider audiences. In addition, we have been blessed that Plymouth member Marla Lamb-Wilson volunteered to print all the weekend worship bulletins every week. Thank you Marla!

Thank you to our wonderful team of volunteers who help us record what happens at Plymouth. Photographers Warren Taylor, Alex Cooney, Marla Lamb-Wilson and everybody who shares photos of everyday activities; to our bulletin collators; and to the youth who help keep the sanctuary supplies filled.

Another milestone during the current program year was made possible with the help of a Plymouth Foundation Grant. Chris Goodson and I transitioned the video recording and podcast editing elements of our worship services to the capable hands of Alex Cooney. Check out Chris' report for details!

One of my goals for 2019-2020 was to reduce the church's printed communication tools and increase its digital communications to better meet the needs of congregants of all ages. As part of that, I hoped to concentrate much more heavily on social media. Little did any of us know that a world-wide pandemic would unexpectedly catapult that plan

into everything I had envisioned and MUCH more...all organically! Thank you to all the members of our program staff who in some instances had crash courses in social media and jumped in to create a daily presence on the Plymouth Facebook page. Talk about making lemonade out of lemons! I felt like a cheerleader in the beginning as they all worked out the hiccups, and now I cheer from the sidelines as they all work like a polished social media team. Our challenge for next year will be to see how our world evolves and how we can maintain elements of our current social media offerings as we develop a long-term plan.

Our current website was created more than six years ago... an eternity in the lifespan of a website. Last year boards participated in discussions with representatives from the Board of Christian Social Action about that website. And in March 2020, with info gathered there and a lot of staff input, I created a request for proposal for the design and development of a more streamlined website. We are currently working with a company in Minnesota that is creating a new site from the ground up that is built on current website technology. The new site will primarily serve to welcome potential visitors and encourage them to visit our church. While it also will address top-level information used by church members, like news and a robust calendar of events, a new smart phone app connected to our soon-to-be-implemented TouchPoint church management software is being designed to provide the more in-depth information boards and committees had on their wish list. Together, the website and the app should work hand-in-hand to provide the communication tools that each audience seeks in an easy-to-find format. Look for both to launch in the spring and summer.

For the past several years we have expanded our presence in the Plymouth neighborhood by sponsoring and participating in Ingersoll Live every August. In 2019 the Board of Membership joined in planning and implementing Plymouth's booth at this fun event and lifted it over the top. I am very excited about the opportunities that are ahead of us next year with their creative and enthusiastic input.

Director of Music and Fine Arts

Christopher D. Goodson

As Director of Music and Fine Arts, I work with the Board of Music and Fine Arts and oversee the entire Music and Fine Arts department. We are charged to develop, organize, promote, and evaluate a comprehensive program of music and arts to provide an integral contribution to the overall mission of the Church; provide music and art for the worship services of the church; and foster spiritual growth and enrichment of the Plymouth membership through music and the arts.

We have an amazing team of dedicated, professional music staff who make the activities of this department possible, including:

- **Carl Gravander** | Organist
- **Diane Hayes** | Administrative Assistant to Music and Fine Arts
- **Lydia Schettler** | Music Makers Class (Pre-K)
- **Francine Griffith** | Kinderchoir (Kindergarten)
- **Linda McFarlane** | Cherub Choir (1st Grade)
- **Carol Stratemeyer** | Accompanist, Kinder Choir & Cherub Choir
- **Jade Fox** | Hallelujah! Choir (2nd Grade) & Soul Singers (Youth 7th-8th Grade)
- **Mary Daily Lange** | Accompanist, Hallelujah! Choir & Treble Choir
- **Kelli Stoa** | Treble Choir (3rd-4th Grade)
- **Brianne Magel** | Chorister Choir (5th-6th Grade)
- **Elaine Wedeking** | Accompanist, Chorister Choir & Soul Singers
- **Susan Waller**, Director of Youth Ministry | Matins Choir (Youth 9th-12th Grade)
- **Jenn Hawkins** | Plymouth Bells (Adults)
- **Bloyce Johnson** | Children's Handchimes (4th-6th grade)
- **Hailey Gutowski** | Soprano Choral Scholar, Chancel Choir
- **Sarah Rosales** | Soprano Choral Scholar, Chancel Choir

- **Lori Fenton** | Alto Section Leader, Chancel Choir
- **Ed Griffith** | Tenor Section Leader, Chancel Choir
- **Diego Valdez** | Tenor Section, Chancel Choir
- **Clay Hulsey** | Bass Section Leader, Chancel Choir
- **Mary Beth Mardis-LeCroy** | Saturday Night Band Director
- **Seth Hedquist** | Vespers Musician, Saturday Night Band Assistant

Plymouth is blessed to have a hard-working, well-trained, professional music staff team.

Year in Review

The 2019-2020 Program Year has been a busy and productive one for the Music and Fine Arts department. We began the summer by addressing some long-standing projects. The highlights are listed below.

- **August 28-29** | Chancel Choir and Matins Choir rehearsals resumed
- **September 4** | K-8 Choir kickoff at Plymouth. The kick-off included choir registration, orientation, a fellowship meal, and dissemination of the 2018-2019 Children's Choir singing schedule.
- **November**
 - 11/30 | BMFA decorates Plymouth for Christmas
- **December**
 - 12/8 | Plymouth Soul Supper and Christmas Carol-Sing
 - 12/11 | Children's Choir Advent Celebration
 - 12/13 | Plymouth Church Goes Caroling
 - 12/14 | Lessons and Carols, 5:30 p.m.
 - 12/15 | Lessons and Carols, 9 & 11 a.m.
 - 12/15 | Chancel Choir Christmas party
 - 12/24 | Christmas Eve Services, 5, 7, 9, 11 p.m.

- **January 2020**

1/8-9 | All music ensembles resumed rehearsals

- **March/April/May**

End-of-year programming saw a significant change that the Coronavirus pandemic, COVID-19, cause closures and suspension of all regular in-person church activities.

- Here at Plymouth, we take it as part of our mission to support the tremendous music and fine arts in our community, and it is our joy to open our church for concerts and events given by these groups.

Concerts/Events:

(A&P – Presented by Arts@Plymouth)

October 18 | (A@P) Jazz in the Fight for Civil Rights with Dr. Damani Phillips

October 27 | Des Moines Vocal Arts Ensemble

November 3 | Des Moines Gamer Symphony

November 5 | Ames Quartet

November 22-24 | (A@P) The Thanksgiving Play

December 7 | (A@P) Handel’s MESSIAH presented by the Chancel Choir and orchestra

December 14-15 | (A@P) Lessons and Carols

December 19 | Plymouth Lunch & Learn – featuring Carols with Carl & Chris

December 20-21 | Des Moines Gay Men’s Chorus Holiday Concerts

December 21 | TubaChristmas

February 9 | (A@P) Luther College Nordic Choir

February 16 | Des Moines Metro Opera Recital

March 8 | Matins Variety Show

Events in March, April, and May were cancelled, We produced virtual content, including special music for Easter and virtual organ recitals while support online worship needs.

- Plymouth serves as a rehearsal home for the Des Moines Gay Men’s Chorus, the Des Moines Choral Society, and the Des Moines Vocal Arts Ensemble (hosting began Fall 2019).
- **Media Foundation Grant** | In April 2019, Jennifer Hines, Cindy Eaton-Eklund, and I collaborated on a grant request to fund a video production team for the Sanctuary services with the goal of increasing our exposure online and in the community. This grant was awarded and we look forward to incubating this important program.

Fall 2019 saw significant work toward building an infrastructure for this project and it began to bear fruit at the beginning of 2020. It has been significant in our abilities to connect virtually during the social distancing of the coronavirus pandemic.

- **New Projects Foundation Grant** | In November 2019, we received funding through a grant to support new initiatives in the Music and Fine Arts department, including resources for our new Music Makers Class, which focuses on 3-to-4-year-olds. Additionally, we purchased new instruments and have funding to purchase music for our new instrumental ensemble.

The events listed here represent only a few of the activities of the Music and Fine Arts at Plymouth Church.

Director of Operations and Finance

Emily Tripp

Having started with Plymouth in November 2019, I am still a newer member of the program staff. As Director of Operations & Finance, my primary responsibilities are overseeing Finance, Facilities, and Marketing and Communications. My team includes:

Emily Tripp – Director of Operations & Finance
Nancy Bassett – Accountant
Cindy Eaton-Eklund – Director of Communications
Elsie Wunn – Communications Assistant
Kathy Sohn – Administrative Assistant
Dan Olson – Facilities Manager
Blasina Valenzuela – Evening Custodian
Roberto Sanchez – Custodian
Dan Mowry – Custodian
Mike Perry – Part-time Custodian

Paula Wilkerson retired at the end of December 2019 after serving as our Administrative Assistant for 22 years. I want to take this opportunity to again thank Paula for her many years of faithful service.

The Director of Operations and Finance job was open for nearly six months prior to my arrival. From the start, I was impressed by how well the financial aspects of the Church operated in the absence of a Director. The ability to operate in the interim period speaks well of the controls and procedures in place, the hard work and dedication of Nancy, our Accountant, and appropriate fiscal oversight by Trustees. With assurance that proper controls and monitoring are in place, we can now build and improve upon what is already in place. In 2020 two primary areas of my focus are improving cash flow management practices and replacing our outdated church management database system, Shelby.

During the challenging times we are facing with a global pandemic and social distancing, I am incredibly proud of and thankful for my hard-working team as we continue to adapt and find new ways to get our jobs done. Our work continues.

Finances

The 2019 Budget was prepared with income and expense assumptions which included a reserve usage of approximately (\$86,000), resulting in the formation of a Long-Range Planning Task Force and expense control measures recommended by the LRPTF and approved by Church Council.

Where did we end 2019? The 2019 Budget assumption for operating expenses was \$2.3M compared to actual operating expenses of \$2.1M. Rather than the budgeted reserve usage of (\$86,000), Plymouth had a reserve surplus of approximately \$116,000. The results were driven primarily by lower operating expenses as a result of a reduction in personnel costs for three open positions for most of the year.

Shortly upon my arrival in November, I began my work on the 2020 fiscal budget. It was important to me going into the process to understand 2019 results and incorporate the formal policy related Operating Reserves approved by Trustees and a key metric for monitoring fiscal responsibility. The 2020 Budget approved by Trustees and adopted by Church Council included operating expenses of \$2.159M and a reserve usage assumption of (\$58,248). As we weather the current economic environment and operate through the global pandemic, I will work with Trustees to evaluate changes to our economic forecast and measure against our operating reserves metric.

Facilities

The tower project is finished up. We are looking forward to having a ribbon-cutting ceremony in the courtyard at a future time when we can celebrate together in person.

When a construction permit was pulled to do the tower renovation, it triggered a review by the city for plumbing compliance. The City of Des Moines determined we needed to remove FOG (Fats, Oils and Greases) using a 1,000-gallon grease interceptor system. Additionally, the

City required FOG-producing devices in the Greenwood Kitchen be removed, including the garbage disposal and dishwasher. Removing those devices prompted a facelift for the Greenwood Kitchen. This is just one of the projects we've been working on while the church remains closed to the public.

We continue to work with OPN Architects after our tower project. The knowledge they gained during the tower project has led them to be able to address other areas where faulty workmanship and design is allowing water to infiltrate our building's envelope.

2019 marked the year we fulfilled our obligation with the City to add fire sprinklers in three one-year phases to the entire building, excluding the sanctuary. This is an important safety and preservation Facilities move.

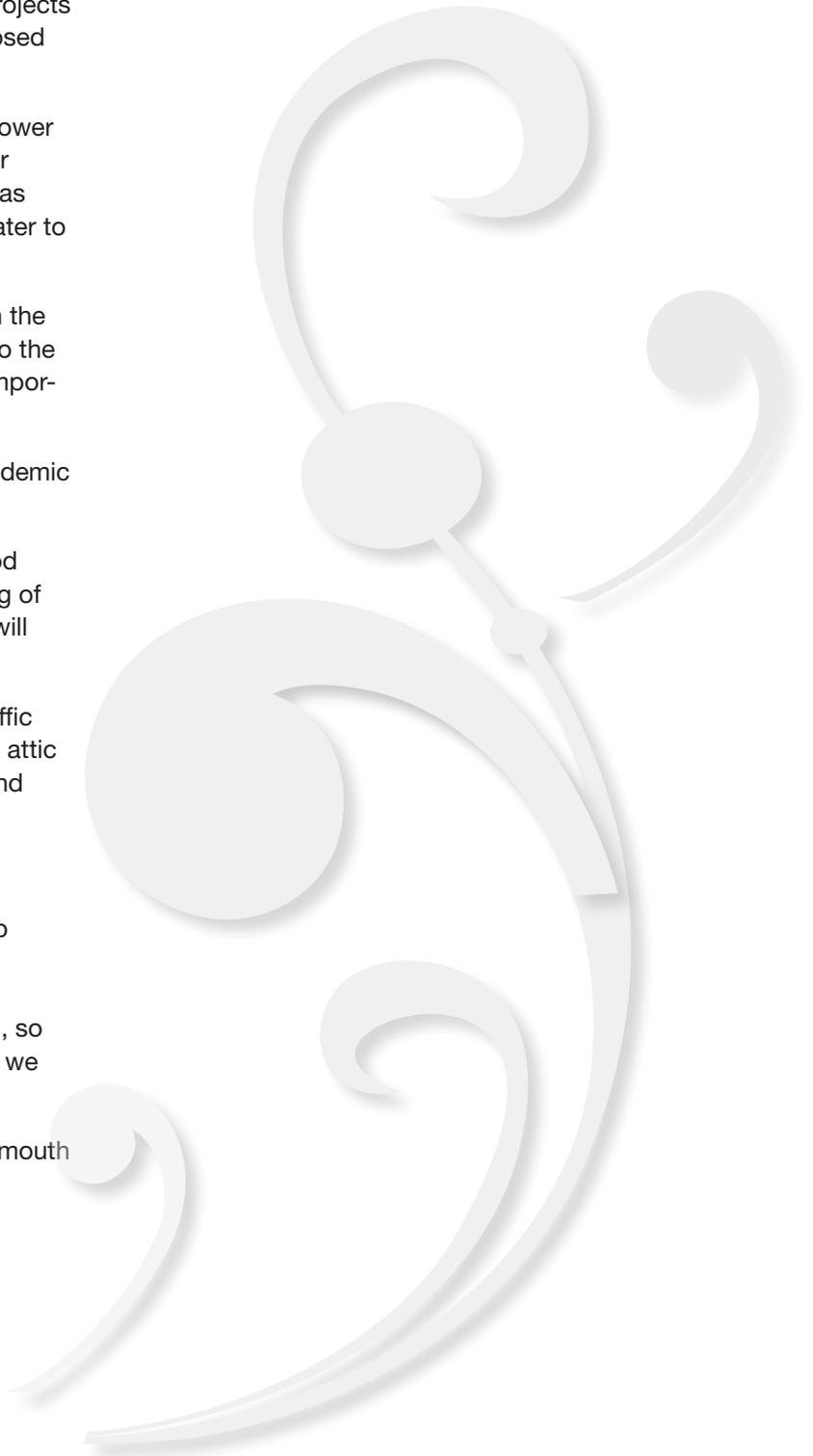
The maintenance staff has been busy during the pandemic shutdown.

To address the issue of water leaks in the Greenwood Room and elsewhere, we performed thermal imaging of our roofs to pinpoint leaks and make repairs which will add years to our roofs.

Additionally, we've changed carpet in many high-traffic areas, and by doing so, we have used up our carpet attic stock, saving money, using up existing resources, and freeing up valuable storage space.

I am happy to report that the building has been deep cleaned, and is sanitized daily. Windows are being washed that haven't been washed for decades. The interior walls of the building were in need of painting, so we've used this time to get as much of that done as we can.

Expect to notice big changes when the doors to Plymouth Church reopen to welcome you home!



Director of Youth Ministry & Matins Choir

Susan Waller

This school year started off as every other school year does with the annual Youth Nabbing, filled with an afternoon of games and small groups, introducing new freshmen to current Plymouth high school youth. Following that we officially kicked off the new year with our Parent Youth Orientation and Dinner. Parents and youth packed Waveland Hall, learning about the youth ministry program, ways to plug in and various ways to volunteer.

Matins Choir...is in its 64th season at Plymouth Church. This past June, the Matins traveled to Hudson, Ohio for Matins Tour. Our home base was First Congregational Church of Hudson where past TiM minister Jeanette Brodersen is an Associate Minister and also church home of current TiM minister Mary Kate Buchanan. The Matins were invited to sing at Mary Kate's ordination while they were there! We had 62 youth participating, eight trained parent chaperones and two program staff members on this trip. Before leaving for tour, Matins led the entire worship service on Sunday morning, June 2 at 9 a.m., and then turned around with Home Concert that evening at 7 p.m. in the Sanctuary!

Along with once weekly Wednesday rehearsals and providing worship leadership at the 9 a.m. Sunday worship service every Sunday morning, the Matins also participated in the annual Leaf Rake last fall and sold 750 pizzas this January to fundraise for the Matins Tour 2020, which was to be June 7-13 in Colorado. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, the decision was made to cancel our tour this year. We will, however, try to hold a Home Concert sometime mid-to-late summer.

In March, we celebrated these talented youth at the annual Matins Variety show which was themed Matins Tube, celebrating the advent of YouTube in 2005. Proceeds were given to Iowa Safe Schools which provides safe, supportive, and nurturing learning environments and communities for LGBTQ and allied youth through education, outreach, advocacy, and direct services.

NEW this year: In an effort to bring consistency to the busy schedules of our parents and youth, we tried a new monthly Sunday schedule to capitalize on the times our constituency is at church. So we scheduled Service & Outreach, as well as Education & Faith Formation activities on the specific Sundays listed below after 9 a.m. worship from 10:15-11:30 a.m.

- 1st Sunday of the month: Senior Small Group
- 2nd Sunday of the month: YEC (Youth Executive Committee)- adult
YLT (Youth Leadership Team)- youth
- 3rd Sunday of the month: Small Group Sunday
- 4th Sunday of the month: 4th Sunday Serve

Service/Outreach: Some of the 4th Sunday Serve opportunities included clearing, cleaning and organizing the Youth Room closet, Flower Delivery Team to home-bound residents in older living communities, decorating cookies and taking them to Kavanaugh House and adopting, shopping and wrapping Christmas gifts for 24 adults living in three group homes in the Mosaic program in Des Moines.

Fellowship: We continue to feed on average 55 youth each Wednesday evening in the Youth Room, with meals provided from parent volunteers. This time is essential to youth fellowship in that youth are able to hang out, socialize and blow off some steam. They continue to enjoy free time together as well as organized events such as Youth Nabbing in August, Lock-In in January, Variety Show in March and all of our fundraising opportunities throughout the year. The senior class continued their tradition of attending Senior Small Group, which was a monthly gathering from September through January that I facilitated. They met to discuss the challenges, struggles, joys and concerns they had during this final year of high school. On Wednesdays, a group of youth meets for an hour prior to dinner in a program called Conversations & Connections. During this time, youth share in a small-group atmosphere their highs/lowes and we rotate activities based on current social topics, biblical questions and thought-provoking question games.

Education & Spiritual Formation: Youth gathered the 3rd Sunday of each month this fall, after 9 a.m. worship in the youth room for Small Group Sundays. As a large group, we introduced the topic of the week, which this fall was based on our worship focus of Friendship. Then youth broke into small groups that were led by adult volunteers. In their small groups, youth tackled questions, discussed the topic or had hands-on activities around the topic. They came back together for a final gathering.

In February, more than 60 seniors and their parents participated in the annual Senior Experience held over three consecutive Sundays and culminating with the Senior Blessing at the 9 a.m. worship service. The youth were blessed by their parents, congregation and given a shawl, knitted by the Shawl Knitting Ministry at Plymouth.

Youth Ministry in the time of Coronavirus...

Following Spring Break and forced quarantine, instead of seeing each other on Wednesdays and Sundays during worship, youth ministry has forged ahead online. For the last seven weeks, seniors have continued to meet weekly as the Senior Small Group, working through the grief of the unfinished senior year and all of the rituals that accompany that journey. Conversations & Connections switched to an online weekly meeting and a new group, HS Note Writers, has met every other week to write notes and letters to members of our older Plymouth community. This has been fruitful in developing intergenerational relationships and also great story telling and learning. Susan is also visiting our youth in Mobile Youth Ministry drive-bys, to check in with each youth during the quarantine (at a safe distance).

Board of Benevolences

Chair: Irene Hardisty

Vice Chair: Alex Moon

Staff Liaison: Nikira Hernandez-Evans

Mission:

It is the duty of this board to: supervise, promote, and interpret the benevolences activities of this church; promote representation of the Church members in decision-making bodies of the denominational and ecumenical agencies to which funds are given; and advise the Board of Trustees in the most effective use of benevolences resources by presenting a budget at the time designated by the Board of Trustees.

Benevolence: The disposition to do good; good will kindness; charitableness; the love, of mankind, accompanied with a desire to promote their happiness.

Major Events/Achievements in 2019-2020 Program Year:

1. To provide assistance to the homeless, alleviate food insecurity, and reduce economic injustice, Church members volunteered over 2,800 hours.
2. Special Offering Church cash gifts in the amount of \$49,359 were gifted to 13 metro-area initiatives working to advance social and economic justice.
3. Established collaboration across committees working on food insecurity issues. This collaboration facilitated Food Pantry and Food Buddies to jointly solicit donations.
4. Held Congregant Engagement Fair where Board of Benevolences committees encouraged Plymouth members to participate on a committee and/or volunteer opportunities.
5. Promoted Bread for the World by holding postcard signing to remind Federal legislators of the harm to children who experience food insufficiency.
6. The Plymouth Career Closet for Women's December Winter Coat Drive received 111 coats, exceeding its goal.

BOB committee activity highlights and additional achievements were:

Homeless Assistance

Central Iowa Shelter and Services (CISS) meals were provided twice a month by Church boards, committees, and lay groups. The Furniture Pickup team has continued its work of delivering donated furniture to non-profit organizations, which helps to re-house the homeless and refugees. Through the work of Family Promise, homeless families were provided a place to stay and food to eat for four weeks throughout the year.

Food Insecurity

Food Buddies, a partnership with Hubbell Elementary School, collected food, cash donations and received grants from the Thanksgiving Offering and Plymouth Foundation to provide weekend meals for 40 children experiencing food insecurity. Through the Food Pantry initiative, food and cash donations, totaling over \$12,000 (CY 2019), were collected and delivered to the Des Moines Religious Council (DMARC) for its network of food pantries.

Charitable Giving

The Plymouth Career Closet for Women collected, prepared clothing for store display, and held the store hours, for lower-income women to "shop" for two work outfits at no cost. Success was marked by the smiles, women standing a little taller, and thank you's. One customer gave homemade lavender bath salts "to the Dearest Ladies of the Career Closet" and donated \$50.

The UCC relationship committee engaged Church staff and members to keep them informed about the wider Church opportunities and objectives. In that One Great Hour of Sharing occurred concurrently with the COVID-19 epidemic, Church members were encourage to provide cash gifts to local non-profit organizations working on the front-line, providing services to those in need.

Special Offering (Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter) Gifts are targeted to initiatives that align with Plymouth Church's Just Peace mission. Ten percent of the SO gifts support the Pastors' Discretionary Fund. Donated funds totaled \$49,359 and were distributed to 13 initiatives.

2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Irene Hardisty *	Chuck Briem	Alex Moon
Marla Lamb-Wilson	Cathy Jury	Jim Osborn
Annabelle Marsh	Shawna Lode	Gene Bryant
Ted Kempf	Robin Maharry*	Susan Pohl

* filling vacated terms

Board of Christian Education

Chair: Jon Merkle **Vice Chair:** John McCormally **Staff Liaison:** Lindsey Braun

Mission:

It shall be the duty of this board to: recruit, train and place the volunteer Christian Education staff; establish Christian Education curriculum and procure necessary material and equipment; establish and execute programs of activities for various groups of young people and adults; and have general supervision of those auxiliary education programs which serve the community and are sponsored by the Church.

Major Events/Achievements in 2019–2020 Program Year:

- Vacation Bible School was held for the third year with 86 children in attendance. The program had 51 volunteers to assist over the five evenings of VBS. Simple meals were provided again this year, so that families could have an easier time feeding their children prior to the activities. The primary expenses were covered with registrations, free-will offering, and a grant.
- The writing of the two-year Church School curriculum has been completed, and will be cycled from year to year so that resources are not required to create new curriculum every year. This will also allow Church School teachers the ability to “master” the curriculum as they build on their experiences with the curriculum from past years.

- The board continued to function without a Director of Child and Family Ministries. We want to thank Rev. Lindsey Braun for guiding us through this interim with her outstanding leadership and support.
- The board created and distributed an online survey of our programming to better measure how well we are serving the needs of families with children.
- The board trained teachers and facilitated classes in the Our Whole Lives program (OWL). Classes were held on Sunday mornings for K-2nd graders. Parents and caregivers held their own casual meetings during this time to discuss how to talk to their children about what they were learning in the program. Thirty children participated in the OWL classes held over a series of eight weeks.
- Classroom hallways were monitored on Sunday mornings by members of the board who were there to assist teachers and students as needed.
- Board members provided candles to new parents during worship services at monthly baptisms.
- Three Classes for Families were offered in the fall for families with Kindergarteners, families with infants and toddlers, and families with Third Graders in the My Bible Classes.
- The Board fulfilled its normal duties of serving two meals at the Central Iowa Shelter & Services building. The board was unable to fulfil its fellowship hour cookie duties due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Board Members

2019–2020	2020–2021	2021–2022
Reilly Cady	Pam Hyde	Amy Garza
Gayle Johnson	Rebecca Masucci	Jerrid Kruse
Jon Merkle, Chair	John McCormally	Priscilla Ruhe
Ruth Staplin		Erin Davison-Rippey
Dick Guenther		

Board of Christian Stewardship

Chair: Pam Duffy **Vice Chair:** Linda Wilker **Staff Liaison:** Emily Tripp/Matt Mardis-LeCroy

Mission:

To assist all members and friends of Plymouth Church in understanding the principles of Christian stewardship; encourage all members and friends of the congregation in their growing commitment to the practices of Christian stewardship; develop an ongoing program to receive statements of intention (pledges) to provide financial support for the ministry and mission of the Church; review the manner in which persons fulfill their stated intentions, responding where deemed appropriate; and maintain a channel of communication with other boards and committees to assure an effective stewardship emphasis.

Major Events/Achievements in 2019–2020 Program Year:

The 2019-2020 program year began with the creation of a Ministry Action Plan. Goal setting for the 2020 stewardship campaign focused on the theme of gratitude for our abundance, “Sharing Our Abundance.” Messaging was created about the important work of the Church in the community and for Plymouth members. No further efforts were included for the 2018 Rollins Tower Restoration fund-raising campaign, which did not meet its goal in 2019. It was determined that a capital building fund could not be established, as anticipated, for future years. The balance on the repairs of the Rollins Tower were subsidized by the Plymouth Foundation.

The Board launched the 2020 campaign one month later than the typical schedule on Pie Weekend, November 16, 2019, and concluded during Advent, December 15, 2019. Promotional activities included soliciting early commitments from all Plymouth boards, a robocall by the Senior Minister, direct-mail invitations to Pie Weekend to pick up pledge cards and packets, direct mail of Pledge Packets to each household, and meaningful church member testimonials

during weekend services.

The 2020 fundraising goal of \$2.1M in combined pledges and other income from 613 households was essentially level with 2019 giving for budget purposes. Non-financial goals of the campaign were increasing the pledge amounts of previous givers by 5%, increasing the percent of new member pledges, and increasing the number of pledging households. A personal note was mailed to each pledging household. The Board made follow-up phone calls to previously pledging households in January 2020.

Many thanks go to Cindy Eaton-Eklund, Director of Communications; Matt Mardis-LeCroy, Sr. Minister; and Emily Tripp, Director of Operations & Finance for their invaluable work and collaboration for a successful campaign.

2020 Stewardship Campaign Results

As shown in the table, the initial campaign results, reported after January follow-up phone calls, showed increased pledges from 266 households (+94 over 2019), and 68 new pledges (+11 over 2019).

Campaign Summary: Non-financial Goals

Pledge Units	2019		2020 Goal*		Change
	#	%	#	%	
No Change	299	49%	202*	33%	-16%
New Pledges	54	9%	68	11%	+2%
Increased Pledges	172	28%	266	43%	+15%
Decreased Pledges	88	14%	77	13%	-1%
Total Pledge Units	613	100%	613*	100%	

* 01/28/2020 estimates including ACH and electronic payments, i.e. pledges and other giving.

Campaign Summary: Financial Goals

As of May 6, 2020, total pledges for 2020 are \$1,624,126 (-\$113,763 compared to 2019 Annual Report), and 539 total Pledge Units (-68 compared to 2019 Annual Report), not including ACH and electronic payments. Unfortunately, the increased pledges do not cover the loss from decreased pledges or loss of total pledging units for 2020 due to death, loss of membership, or other circumstances.

Financial Peace University

A high note of the year was the six-session Financial Peace University (FPU) class from January 5 to March 1, 2020. Taught again by long-term FPU instructor and Stewardship Board Member Jennifer Gelner, 10 participants and their significant other or family member, attended and provided excellent feedback on the positive impact of the class on their lives. Once again, thank you to Jennifer Gelner for another successful class, truly a member benefit of belonging to Plymouth.

Future Action Steps: The Board of Christian Stewardship plans to collaborate with the Board of Trustees, The Plymouth Foundation, and staff to provide educational offerings about giving, coordinate various opportunities for non-pledge giving, including non-financial gifts, and to cultivate relationships with Plymouth members, regardless of age or stage of life, to thank them for their stewardship and giving.

Board Members

2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Beth Stelle Jones	Mitch Clausen	Linda Wilker
Jennifer Gelner	Carol Stratemeyer	Diane Graham
Pam Duffy	Mike Baldwin	Jeff Marks
Courtney Rife*	Courtney Rife*	Steve Sypal

*Appointed by Church Council to fill vacancies created by Board resignations.

Board of Christian Social Action

Chair: Jon Reinders **Vice Chair:** Elizabeth Talbert **Staff Liaison:** Nikira Hernandez-Evans

Mission:

The Board of Christian Social Action will grow in love of God and neighbor by

1. Identifying action areas that link our faith and contemporary social issues
2. Stimulating dialogue about these issues
3. Inviting action in response to those issues.

The Board of Christian Social Action supports relationship building through volunteer opportunities that increase the visibility, probability, and power of social justice in the local, national, and worldwide context. We believe that the work our committees, task forces, and board has the potential to create powerful, meaningful, and lasting social change in Des Moines and beyond.

Major Events/Achievements in 2019–2020 Program Year:

- The Board of Christian Social Action continued to support the work of various committees involved in calls to Christian Social action
- BCSA worked through the growing pains of the “new normal” under COVID, transitioning itself and its various committees to virtual meetings via Zoom
- Passed a motion and wrote a letter from the committee to encourage Plymouth Board of Benevolences to use all of the Easter Offering for local coronavirus relief efforts
- In the process of creating an ongoing, online list of local programs and organizations involved in coronavirus relief, to make it easier for Plymouth members to engage in Christian Social Action even while social distancing.
- Supported the creation of the Plymouth Justice and Peace Action Network (P-JPAN)
- Supported and funded the new and very active Welcoming Migrants Committee
- The BCSA-supported Anti-Racism committee accomplished several things this year
 - o Held the event “Jazz in the Fight for Civil Rights” with Demani Phillips of University of Iowa on October 18, 2019
 - o The Black Lives Matter banner was displayed several times throughout the year, including at the Pride Parade,
 - o Actively engaged the congregation and greater community in the 1619 project
- The Human Trafficking Committee hosted “Life in the Shadows of Human Trafficking” awareness program on January 23, 2020
- The Cuba Delegation went on its second trip in November 2019 to participate in service and fellowship with Ebenezer Baptist Church in Havana
- Endorsed and supported the plan to install solar panels on Plymouth Church as part of the Creation, Care, and Justice committee; the plan was passed on to a Plymouth Foundation grant application by the Church Council in April, 2020.
- The Peace Committee co-sponsored a remembrance of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; created a call-to-action to end gun violence in Iowa; participated in an Iowa Justice for Neighbors immigration clinic
- The Transition from Prison committee became better-supported by BCSA with the appointment of a dedicated BCSA liaison to the committee
- Renew welcomed 37 new students in fall 2019

Board Members

2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Esther Burgett	Anthony Leon	Stephanie Pickens
Jon Reinders	Charlotte Wilson	Janet Rosenbury
Linda Dorsey	Elizabeth Talbert	Lynn Hicks
Lois Kriebs	Joy Wilhelm	Jonathan Preisser
	John Mathes	Judy Downs

Board of Deacons

Senior Deacon: Jodi Gruening

Junior Deacon: Sid Ramsey

Staff Liaison: Matt Mardis-LeCroy

Mission:

Assist the ministers in ministering to the spiritual interests of the Church and community.

Major Events/Achievements in 2019–2020 Program Year:

- A major achievement for the Board of Deacons was having 8 of 10 members of our First Year Class recruited by the beginning of the church year. All Deacons have successfully served at all Saturday and Sunday worship services throughout the year.
- The Deacon Ministry Action Plan (MAP) was reviewed and refreshed.
- Throughout the end of February, Deacons shared care and concern by serving some 18 funerals.
- Deacons served at all Vespers services and several concerts.
- A Plymouth Foundation grant for new hearing devices was written, submitted and approved.
- Deacons brought pumpkins, gourds, and grasses for festive Thanksgiving decoration of the altar and pulpit. Deacons dressed in pilgrim costumes, served as the town crier and used special long-handled boxes for offering during this traditional service.
- The Deacon’s Annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper was another successful one, raising \$4,348.79 for the Pastor’s Discretionary Fund.
- Deacons served one shelter meal and due to the required cancellation of the scheduled May 27, 2020 meal we collected \$910 – enough to cover three shelter meals.
- Deacons prepared and served Communion throughout the year.
- March 10, 2020 was the last in-person Deacon Board meeting, during which much proactive discussion was had to keep everyone safe during service, communion and offering – due to what we knew at the time about COVID-19. No one could have predicted the Sunday before would have been this Deacon Board’s very last in-person service. Consequently, Holy Week was an online experience.
- As the new church year begins, Sid Ramsey will become Senior Deacon; Julie Carroll will move into the role of Junior Deacon, and Bryan Fiala will serve as Secretary. They will be a tremendous leadership team!

Deacons

2019 – 2020	2020 – 2021	2021 – 2022
Noah Beacom	John Barnhizer	Julie Carroll
Mike Bray	Tim Blutt	Leigh Ebbesmeyer
Jerry Collins	Denise Gerdis	Bryan Fiala
Dean Gillaspey	Galen Howsare	Bill Kusy
Jodi Gruening	Doug Jeske	Joe Mekemson
Lori Jansen	Jane Keairns	Linda Railsback
Greg Kline	Anna Osborn	Nancy Strickler
Sandee Lyons	Rachael Pruett	Chad Waller
Molly Sullivan	Sid Ramsey	Nancy Williamson
Debbie Synhort	Linda Sullivan	

Plymouth Foundation Board

Chair: Mary Ann Beard **Vice Chair:** Joseph Sorenson **Staff Liaison:** Matt Mardis-LeCroy/Emily Tripp

Mission:

The Plymouth Congregational Church Foundation was formed in 1979 for the purpose of soliciting and accepting “contributions, gifts, funds, devises and bequests of personal or real property which along with the income therefrom, shall be held, administered, and expended exclusively for the use and direct benefit of Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ and the futherance of its purposes.”

Major Events/Achievements in 2019–2020 Program Year:

Finances—The Finance and Investment Committee of the Foundation, with the guidance of professional investment advisors, manages the Foundation assets and ensures adherence to the Foundation’s investment policies, as approved by the Board. Each year the Foundation spends a portion of its income on grants to the church for significant ministries, projects or programs. The remaining income is invested to secure the present and future strength, and to foster growth of the Foundation’s resources.

As of December 31, 2019 the Foundation Endowment total was \$9,408,536 which included \$1,714,996 in restricted assets for Transition into Ministry (TiM). The Foundation is also the beneficiary of deferred gifts of life insurance policies, gift annuities and charitable remainder unitrusts totaling \$31,403.

Plymouth members may make gifts to the Foundation, during their lifetime and at the time of their death. We are grateful for large and small gifts throughout the year, totaling \$100,000. Additionally, \$11,165 in memorial gifts was received.

Each April, the board establishes the funding pools for the following grant program year in accordance with the Foundation’s Grant Policy. This year the board doubled the amount of money available for competitive grants.

Grant Funding Pool	Grant Program Year 2020-2021	Grant Program Year 2019-2020	Grant Program Year 2018-2019
Strategic	\$459,281	\$289,374	\$517,443
Competitive	\$150,000	\$75,000	\$75,000

Grants—

Strategic grants require the approval of church council and are available anytime throughout the year subject to funds availability. A total of \$258,441 in strategic grants was approved:

Grant Program Year	Grant Description	Grant Amount	Date
2019-2020	Tower Restoration	\$200,000	October 2019
2020-2021	Church Hardware & Software	\$58,441	March 2020
Total Strategic Grants		\$258,441	

Competitive grants are awarded twice a year, in April and October. The following grants totaling \$123,393 were awarded in October 2019 and April 2020: (F=Fall; S=Spring)

Grant Program Year	Grant Description	Grant Amount	Board/Committee
2019-2020 (F)	Anti-Racism/Art Gallery	\$5,000	Bd of Christian Social Action
2019-2020 (F)	Anti-Racism/Training	\$8,000	Bd of Christian Social Action
2019-2020 (F)	Instruments and Equipment	\$4,550	Music & Fine Arts
2019-2020 (F)	Plymouth Nursery School	\$900	Bd of Christian Education
2019-2020 (F)	Human Trafficking	\$3,300	Bd of Christian Social Action
2020-2021 (S)	PA System	\$5,000	Anti-racism committee (BCSA)
2020-2021 (S)	Stage extensions for sanctuary	\$2,300	Music & Fine Arts
2020-2021 (S)	Piano (phase 2)	\$60,000	Music & Fine Arts
2020-2021 (S)	Hearing aid replacement-Sanctuary	\$5,000	Board of Deacons
2020-2021 (S)	Summer Vespers musicians	\$1,200	Board of Spiritual Growth
2020-2021 (S)	Quilting Supplies	\$394	
2020-2021 (S)	Stained glass angels	\$5,500	Stephen Ministers
2020-2021 (S)	Vacation Bible School	\$7,500	Bd of Christian Education
2020-2021 (S)	Financial Peace for new members	\$2,250	Bd of Stewardship
2020-2021 (S)	Coffee & Conv. Plymouth Grounds Baristas	\$1,000	
2020-2021 (S)	Executive Leadership Program for Sr. Min.	\$11,499	Trustees
Total Competitive Grants		\$123,393	

Board Members

2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Open	Greg Kenyon	Mickey Carlson
Mary Ann Beard	Sid Ramsey	Robert Burnett
Joe Sorenson	Hallie Still-Caris	Libby Jacobs

Board of Membership

Chair: Terri Sterk **Vice Chair:** Fritz Craiger **Staff Liaison:** LeAnn Stubbs

Mission:

The Board of Membership will grow in love of God and neighbor by facilitating, initiating and supporting opportunities to help members and church attendees deepen relationships with one another and with Plymouth Church.

Major Events/Achievements in 2019–2020 Program Year:

The Board of Membership is comprised of 12 members, including a Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary. The role of Treasurer was added this program year.

Andy Fales resigned from the Board in August. We welcomed Maggie Tillman to join the Board to fill the remaining two years of the unexpired term.

For the coming year, we are adding 2-4 adjunct members to serve a one-year term. At the end of the year, the Board will assess if the positions are needed to fulfill permanent positions on the Board.

Welcome: Each Saturday and Sunday, a representative of the Board of Membership is at the Welcome Center before, between, and after the service. The Welcome Center has become a valuable place of connection for visitors and members alike. Visitors stopping at the desk receive a Plymouth insulated mug to welcome them to Plymouth Church.

- **Discover Plymouth Classes:** Three Discover Plymouth classes are held each year in September, January and June. Board members join prospective members at their small group tables to facilitate conversation and share their own “what brought you to Plymouth” stories. Prior to each class, Board members phone potential members and invite them to attend and after the class, send follow-up notes to those who attended. During the program year, 57 new members joined Plymouth with the next Class scheduled June 7, 2020. Other Board representatives participate on the panel to provide an overview and respond to questions about their Board.

- **New Member Potluck:** The annual New Member Potluck was held in February. This is an opportunity for the Board to provide hospitality and check in with our new members as well as an opportunity for families and individuals to connect with others who joined in the same year. Despite the snowy day, all attending enjoyed the food and fellowship.

Communications:

- In 2020, Plymouth’s Director of Communications, Cindy Eaton-Eklund, began working with the Board of Membership to better coordinate engagement and recruitment efforts of the church, and to spread the word about Plymouth. The Board provided assistance at community and church-sponsored special events, including Ingersoll Live and the Capital City Pride Parade.
- **Ingersoll Live:**
 - o All Church Boards were invited to staff the booth. Additional Board of Membership coverage was encouraged.
 - o Set up and teardown – Board members assisted with set up and tear down of the Plymouth Booth.
 - o Chalkboards were installed in the Plymouth Booth which asked patrons to respond to thought-provoking questions. Board members assisted in purchasing supplies, painting the plywood chalkboards, and coordinated the installation of the chalkboards.
- **Plymouth Swag sales initiative:**
 - o The Board passed a motion in September to include \$10,000 in our proposed 2020 budget to purchase Plymouth swag to be resold. The Board selected five items to offer for purchase in the initial kickoff of Plymouth SWAG: short-sleeve t-shirt, long-sleeve t-shirt, quarter-zip sweatshirt, reusable bag and hot/cold travel mug. An empty office has been set up to house the inventory. The launch of sales was set to begin in April with a “pop-up” store open before and after services, but was delayed given the closure of the church due to COVID-19. A treasurer role was added to the Board to oversee the sales and inventory.

Member Engagement and Connection:

- The Board of Membership works closely with the Connections Coordinator, Karen Jeske.
- Facilitated a Focus Survey to Plymouth members, and reported the survey results to Plymouth Boards.
- Connections published a program guide for each liturgical season of the church year.
- Plymouth's Wednesday evenings included the return of the Wednesday night dinners. The dinners were not well-attended, so were discontinued for the remainder of the year.
- Adult Wednesday Night Bible Study was offered, 7-8 p.m.
- A New Member Passport was created to provide an invitation to new members to complete 10 items as a way to assimilate into the church.
- Young Adult programming was offered and is now a self-sustaining group.

Membership Reporting:

- Implementation is in progress and staff training has begun for the new membership software, TouchPoint. The goal is to have the new system in place in late Spring 2020. It has many features that will prove beneficial to the Board of Membership.
- Working closely with the Director of Operations and Finance, a significant project this year has been clean up of the current membership database to prepare for the software conversion. Approximately 1,800 letters were mailed to inactive members who have not attended a service or contributed to the church in two years. The purpose of the letter is to assess their interest in remaining as active members. The letters resulted in approximately 1,670 members being removed from church roles. They can be added back to active status by request at any time. After the data clean-up, Plymouth records currently list 2,513 members.

- After the TouchPoint membership software is implemented, the Board will initiate a process for following up with members who are absent from worship. Tracking missed attendance has not been a routine, but will be easier to manage after the new membership software is available. A query will kick off the analysis by looking at members with at least a six-month absence.

Shelter Meal and Cookie Ministry: The Board served a meal at the Homeless Shelter in February and provided cookies for fellowship time in December.

Board of Music and Fine Arts

Chair: Judy Diedrichs **Vice Chair:** Wendy Bellus **Staff Liaison:** Christopher Goodson

Mission:

To develop, organize, promote and evaluate a comprehensive program of music and arts to provide an integral contribution to the overall mission of the Church; provide music and art for the worship services of this church; and foster spiritual growth and enrichment of the Plymouth membership through music and the arts.

Major Events/Achievements in 2019–2020 Program Year:

ORGAN RESTORATION

In December 2019, Plymouth Church signed a contract with Casavant Freres, LTD. to complete a \$40,000.00 renovation project on our pipe organ. The project is focused rebuilding an unfunctional winding system, which will restore sound to many ranks of pipes that are currently not available to play.

This project is an important part of regular and ongoing maintenance to keep Plymouth Church's treasured Casavant pipe organ, valued at \$2M+, in good working order. When fully functional, Plymouth's pipe organ is the largest in the state of Iowa.

Work commenced in January with a completion timetable of late summer 2020. Coronavirus closures have delayed the work; as of May 2020, we the project is approximately 25% complete.

NEW PARAMENTS/BANNERS

The Chancel Arts Committee is a devoted group. Some members have been part of this committee for 17 years! This year new Christmas banners were created for Waveland Hall.

VIDEO SUPPORT TEAM

Created last year but put to full use this year. Recordings made of each Sunday service with separate video clips of each musical performance, hymn and sermon so they can be easily accessed and shared.

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

In Fall 2019, we launched an exciting new music opportunity: Plymouth Instrumental Ensemble. The Instrumental Ensemble was very well received and participated in worship four times during 2019-2020, with 8-18 musicians. We hope to continue this ensemble in 2020-2021 and continue its growth and participation in worship.

RECONFIGURATION OF CHILDREN'S CHOIRS

At the end of the Children's Choir season in April, Meg

Smith retired after 31 years leading the Hallelujah! Choir (2nd grade). Meg was hired by Carol Stewart in 1988 to work with Sharon Parker-Lenihan in co-teaching the 2-3rd grade choir. Over the years, Meg stayed with the 2nd graders and taught approximately 1,000 children!

With Meg's retirement, it was a natural time to evaluate the structure of the Children's Choir program and consider adjustments to make us stronger for the future. After discernment, we committed to four main interventions.

With a focus on the upper elementary program, grades 3-6:

1. The Glory and Descant Choirs (4th, 5th, 6th grade), which were traditionally separated based on gender, were integrated into a newly named "Chorister Choir" for boys and girls, grades 5-6.
2. The Treble Choir (3rd grade) grew to include boys and girls in grades 3 and 4.

With a focus on the lower elementary program:

3. Jade Fox became the new Hallelujah! Choir director (2nd grade).
4. We were excited to add programming for younger, Pre-K, students in a new "Music Makers Class" for the Pre-K child accompanied by an adult caregiver.

The two structures are compared below:

2018-2019 STRUCTURE

- Kinder Choir (K) | Francine Griffith
- Cherub Choir (1) | Linda McFarlane
- Hallelujah! Choir (2) | Meg Smith (retiring)
- Treble Choir (3) | Kelli Stoa
- Descant Choir (4, 5, 6 boys) | Jade Fox
- Glory Choir (4, 5, 6 girls) | Bri Magel
- Handchime Choir (4-6) | Bloyce Johnson
- Soul Singers (7-8) | Jade Fox

2019-2020 STRUCTURE

- Music Makers Class (Pre-K) | Lydia Schettler
- Kinder Choir (K) | Francine Griffith
- Cherub Choir (1) | Linda McFarlane
- Hallelujah! Choir (2) | Jade Fox
- Treble Choir (3-4) | Kelli Stoa
- Chorister Choir (5-6) | Brianne Magel
- Handchime Choir (4-6) | Bloyce Johnson
- Soul Singers (7-8) | Jade Fox

PRE-K—8 SCHEDULE

In addition to the programming restructure, we adjusted the Wednesday rehearsal schedule. In listening to parents during 2017-2019 at Plymouth, we heard one thing consistently: “It’s difficult to get to church by 5 p.m.”

The new schedule is below:

Typical Wednesday Schedule

5:15-5:50 | Youngest Children’s Choir Rehearsals:

KinderChoir (K) Rehearsal (Room 302)

Cherub Choir (1st) (Room 301)

5:15-6 | Children’s Choir Rehearsals:

Music Makers Class (Pre-K) Rehearsal (Room 303)

Hallelujah! Choir (2nd) (Room 304)

Treble Choir (3rd & 4th) (Rehearsal Hall)

Chorister Choir (5th & 6th) (Recital Hall)

6-6:45/7 | Handchime Choir (4th, 5th, 6th) (Room 306)

6:10-6:50 | Soul Singers Rehearsal (Recital Hall)

MUSIC MAKERS

The new Music Makers class was a tremendous addition to children’s music programming at Plymouth. The new class allows us to reach younger children and families to offer quality, engaging music education experiences for child and caregivers even as we lay the groundwork for later participation in Children’s Choir.

YOUTH HANDBELL ENSEMBLE

Beginning in Fall 2020, we will launch another new ensemble, the Youth Handbell Ensemble will serve students in grades 8-12 with an outlet to continue participating in worship through ringing. This new ensemble is an important addition to developing a more complete, graded program of instruction and opportunities for our students.

NEW INSTRUMENTS TO ENHANCE PERFORMANCES

A Foundation grant provided funds to purchase additional instruments to be used for Music Makers classes and Children’s Choir performances.

ARTS@PLYMOUTH

This series of events is enjoyed not only by Plymouth members but draws attendees from the greater Des

Moines metro. They provide another form of spiritual outreach. This past year more than 3,000 people attended these events at Plymouth.

JAZZ IN THE FIGHT FOR CIVIL RIGHTS (120)

A presentation by Dr. Damani Phillips from the University of Iowa invited us to view the contribution of jazz to the Civil Rights movement. This program was presented in collaboration with the Anti-Racism Committee.

THE THANKSGIVING PLAY by Larissa FastHorse

This play challenged the myths surrounding Thanksgiving and helped spark a dialogue around race and equity.

HANDEL’S MESSIAH CONCERT (425)

A beautiful way to celebrate the Christmas season. The Chancel Choir was enhanced with Plymouth members and community members who were invited to participate in this special performance.

HOSTED CONCERTS/EVENTS

Des Moines Gamer Symphony (425), Ames Piano Quartet, Des Moines Gay Men’s Chorus (800), Tuba Christmas (700), Luther College Nordic Choir (425), Des Moines Metro Opera: Zachary James on Broadway (275)

PROVIDING A REHEARSAL HOME

Des Moines Gay Men’s Chorus
Des Moines Choral Society
Des Moines Vocal Arts Ensemble

PROVIDING GALLERY EXHIBIT SPACE

Each year the Gallery Committee provides space for artists working in a variety of media. These programs foster a spiritual connection through the visual arts. Highlights from this past year include:

- Calligraphic artist Dr. Denira Valjevcic. This was a collaboration with the Center for Spiritual Growth.
- Drawings and Paintings by Joe Heaps Nelson, son of Dave and Jean Nelson
- Watercolors by Deb Garner
- A series of portraits by Ladale Lloyd an artist from Florida. This show was a collaboration with the Anti-Racism Committee.

Board Members

2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Kirk Johnson, Recorder	Judy Diedrichs, Chair	Lori Fenton
Eugenia Kutsch-Stanton	Bret-Wayne Dillon-Hansen	Laura Morrissey
Judy Campbell	Wendy Bellus, Vice-Chair	Ann Ungs
Jo Oldson	Lorenzo Sandoval (filling vacancy)	Chloe Fontinini (filling vacancy)

Board of Spiritual Growth

Chair: Linda Knodle **Vice Chair:** Eliza Ovrom **Staff Liaison:** Matt Mardis-LeCroy

Mission:

The Board of Spiritual Growth serves Plymouth's core values of progressive theology and education by creating opportunities for seekers and committed Christians to go deeper in the life of the spirit. The Board seeks to help persons grow in understanding their spiritual nature, including the relations with each other and their relationship with God. The Board develops and implements spiritual growth programming, including educational classes, retreats, small groups, renewal offerings, devotional resources, and a Center for Spiritual Growth space within Plymouth Church.

Major Events/Achievements in 2019-2020 Program Year:

The Board of Spiritual Growth began the program year with a board meeting held in the Greenwood Room, Plymouth Church. The meeting included a welcome to new members as well as a review of activities that had continued through the summer.

- **Summer Vespers 2019.** Three summer vespers worship opportunities were provided on July 11, 18 and 25 at 5:30 p.m. The vespers were lay led with Seth Hedquist providing musical leadership. The Summer Vespers were made possible with a grant from the Plymouth Foundation. A grant request has been made to the Plymouth Church Foundation for funds to continue the summer vespers in 2020.

- **Inspiration Lounge Library.** Work continued in setting up the reconfigured church library with leadership provided by Plymouth Church members Lorna Truck and Kay Riley. Following an open house in the fall, the library officially opened for use.
- **Thanksgiving Eve Vesper Service of Gratitude.** The board sponsored this new vesper service on Wednesday, November 27, 2019, at 6 p.m. Officiating were the Reverend Doctor Matthew J. Mardis-LeCroy and the Reverend Mary Beth Mardis-LeCroy. The service of prayer and gratitude was very well attended and is scheduled for November 2020
- **Class presented by Beth Stelle Jones and Rocky Morton.** The board approved a class, Disciple-Fast Track, Exploring the New Testament, to be led by Beth and Rocky. The class explored the New Testament leading to Lent and consisted of 12-week, 90-minute classes.

As with most boards and program activities, the Board of Spiritual Growth was stopped in its mission with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Other than managing several board activities online, there have been no board meetings since the suspension of activities at the church in March 2020. Board leadership is looking forward to planning for the coming program year and receiving new members on the board.

Board Members

2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Amy Anderson	Emily Maharry	Amy Myers
John Childers	Mary Nelson	Kay Riley
Linda Knodle	Eliza Ovrom	

Board of Trustees

Chair: Franklin Codel **Vice Chair:** Matt Harvey **Staff Liaison:** Emily Tripp/Matt Mardis-LeCroy

Mission:

It shall be the duty of this board to: have charge of the property of the Church and manage its financial, business and contractual affairs; establish compensation for all employees, based on the recommendation of the Personnel Committee, prepare and submit to the Church Council, for approval or amendment, a budget of the estimated revenues and expenses of the Church; provide for an annual audit of the Church's financial records, elect the treasurer of the Church as provided in Article VII, Section 5; supervise matters pertaining to insurance; designate the depository for Church funds; and act on fundraising requests as provided in Article VIII Section 1(i).

Major Events/Achievements in 2019–2020 Program Year:

1. Trustees amended the policy related to receiving undesignated bequests to allow for full receipt of bequests consistent with donor intent. Trustees also developed and approved a policy for managing the operating reserves of Plymouth Church. The new policy defines a floor and ceiling for the reserves as a

percentage of annual operating expenses, as well as practices related to managing the reserves over an 18-24 month time horizon.

2. The 2020 operating budget was developed and approved. The 2020 operating budget utilizes \$58,000 of reserves (from an overall budget of \$2.15M) and assumed a full staff as well as cost-of-living increases for all employees.
3. Trustees further deepened the relationship with the Board of Christian Stewardship and identified areas of opportunity to develop pledge and non-pledge income. Opportunities for broader financial education of the congregation were identified and a program is being developed by the Director of Operations and Finance.
4. A deep dive of the Tower financial picture was completed. A grant request to the Plymouth Foundation for \$200,000 was written, and approved. The Foundation funds will serve to fill the remaining financial gap in the Tower project.

Board Members

2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Lorn Matthews	Franklin Codel	Aaron Barker	Darrel Mullens
Heidi Foster	John Harri	Matt Harvey	Katherine Murphy
Ben Stone	Lorna Truck	Jan Franck	Tony Stoik

Plymouth Nursery School

Jan VanWyk, Director

Since 1954, Plymouth Nursery School has been providing a quality early education preschool experience for 2-5 year old children in the Des Moines area. If you do the math with that introductory line, you will realize that PNS is 65 this year! Our mission continues to be providing a safe and nurturing environment that promotes learning through play and creative expression as well as encouraging parental involvement.

Plymouth Nursery School utilizes the center-based approach of The Creative Curriculum and the Iowa Early Learning Standards. We continued to refine our expanded class offerings that were introduced last year. Within the PNS program, 129 children enjoyed a variety of activities centered on creative themes planned by our teachers. Our learning centers give opportunity for social and emotional growth, the development of play skills, and the introduction of pre-academic and cognitive skills in age appropriate ways. Highlights of this school year included presentations by naturalists from Polk County Conservation, an educator from Blank Park Zoo, and field trips to the pumpkin patch and apple orchard. Our fall "Giving Tree" service project collected supplies and cash for The Ronald McDonald House. Lunch Bunch offered our half-day Pre-K children the opportunity to "practice" eating lunch at school in

anticipation of Kindergarten. Our Family Fun Night had over 200 folks being entertained by the Hanson Family.

Our "PNS Reads!" reading challenge/fundraiser collected over \$4,000 for large equipment purchases and future scholarships. The above list of highlights is much shorter than usual as our school year ended abruptly in March due to COVID-19. The calendar is full of field trips and events that couldn't happen. There were no caterpillars to watch and no eggs hatching into chicks. But our wonderful teaching staff rose to the occasion and created meaningful remote experiences for their classes and valuable support for families through email, videos, packets sent by mail, phone calls and more. And we are in the process of redesigning summer camp into a remote experience that will include a kit of supporting materials.

Plymouth Nursery School was pleased to assist eight children with scholarships toward tuition this year.

As we complete our 65th year and remember our founding in 1954, we are so grateful for a strong, supportive partnership with Plymouth Church. We are unsure of what year 66 will look like but we are committed to continuing our mission to provide an excellent preschool experience for our families!

Plymouth Women

Chair: Bonnie Sunderland

Staff Liaison: LeAnn Stubbs

Major Events/Achievements in 2019-2020 Program Year:

Our monthly Lunch and Learn series continued to draw women and men to a variety of programs and presenters. We got better acquainted with our TIM ministers, Nikira Hernandez-Evans and Mary Kate Buchanan; listened to representatives from the ACLU, Goodwill Industries and our own Project 1619 group; our December Christmas music program had an attendance of 70+; we broke attendance records with our January presentation by Plymouth members Jo Oldson and Sally Petersen (103 lunch reservations plus a dozen more who dropped in to listen and ask questions). Delicious meals included a salad buffet provided by the Plymouth Women Board, as well as catered lunches by Becky Smith and Sue Hoss. Our April and May lunches are cancelled due to COVID-19.

Our annual nut sale was very successful, with all proceeds going into our Scholarship Fund. We awarded one scholarship in April, as applications were scant due to C-19.

The Plymouth Quilters grew in membership and contributions to several organizations. PWAG groups continued their adventure/service/spiritual outings. Faithful Readers met monthly for interesting book discussions, the Bridge group met weekly for cards and fellowship, and the Moms of the Metro members formed strong connections.

Our VP of Membership reached out to new members with information about Plymouth, an invitation to a Lunch and Learn, and personal welcome letters. Our monthly newsletter was emailed to members who've requested it.

Perhaps more important than anything else we do, Plymouth Women continued to provide care and comfort to many as we baked for and served at funeral receptions.

For the most part, our activities are currently on hold due to restrictions associated with COVID-19. Our board will continue to meet via Zoom and we look forward to change and growth as circumstances unfold.

Board Members

2019-2020

Sally Finder

Marcia Gilmer

Sunny Liston

Ellen Mathes

Lisa Merkle

Mary Nelson

Caroline Peterson

Meg Smith

Bonnie Sunderland

Annette Weeber

Stephen Ministry

Leaders: : Deb Brookhart, Bev Burns, Kathy Dewald, Mary Gillaspey, Mary Pearson

Staff Liaison: LeAnn Stubbs

Mission:

Stephen Ministry will grow in love of God and neighbor by training dedicated, caring people from Plymouth's family in the knowledge and skills that enable them to become a caring presence within our congregation and the wider community.

Major Events/Achievements in 2019-2020 Program Year:

Stephen Ministry provides individualized caring that takes place between a Stephen Minister and his/her assigned Care Receiver in the form of frequent one-on-one meetings. The Care Receiver is provided with this opportunity to share concerns and issues in a confidential relationship. During the past year, Stephen Ministers have served 22 Care Receivers for varying lengths of time.

Stephen Ministry also reaches out to members of the Plymouth community who have lost a loved one. A series of four pamphlets dealing with the grief process are sent over the course of 11 months after the loss. During this past year 187 pamphlets were sent to 47 individuals. We also reached out to 31 of our members with a special invitation to attend The Longest Night service in December.

During the year, we often blessed and delivered prayer shawls to those in the congregation who were suffering from illness or loss. At Christmastime, we delivered 33 hand-made stained-glass angels to members who had experienced losing a loved one.

In September of 2019, we held a 24-hour retreat at the Christian Conference Center in Newton. We concentrated on the theme of vulnerability, holding discussion groups and digging deep within ourselves to understand our own sense of being vulnerable.

The retreat began our continuing education for the program year which centered on reading *The Art of Dying Well* by Katie Butler and facilitating discussions suggested by the book's content and led by our members. Speakers were scheduled but some have been delayed by the necessity of social distancing. We leaned to Zoom in April and it was great to see everyone's faces again.

We were fully engaged in the Longest Night Service as we took part in reading scripture; offering readings, and manning the stations for Communion, Prayer, Letting Go,

Anointing for Courage and Candle Lighting for Hope and Remembrance.

We held a summer picnic to which spouses and significant others were invited so that we could show our gratitude for their support for us and for our ministry. Before the holidays, we held a potluck and a candle ceremony sharing stories related to the candle we had brought. We each took home another Stephen Minister's candle and pledged to pray for that person throughout the coming year.

We continue to support our library in the Burling Room and we encourage members of the congregation to borrow the books. In a display rack there are pamphlets that address difficult issues commonly experienced. We hope to place another display rack elsewhere in the building.

On the Saturday before Easter, we held a prayer vigil for nine hours with each Stephen Minister signing up for 30 minutes of prayer and meditation in their home. As each began their vigil, they reached out to the rest of group by email so that we felt as if we were holding hands in a prayer circle.

As the program year ends, we will finish our continuing education modules and plan for next year which we hope will include a new class of Stephen Ministry recruits.

Committee Members

2019-2020

Clara Alarcon

Deb Brookhart

Mark Doherty

Jan Hannasch

Carol Orness

Sarah Ramsey

Nancy Williamson

Bobbie Backer*

Bev Burns

Robin Fortney

Brian Leckrone

Mary Pearson

Susan Raye

Kathy Book

Kathy Dewald

Mary Gillaspey

Anna Osborn

Caroline Peterson

Jolene Thompson

Transition into Ministry

Chair: Shelly Soorholtz

Staff Liaisons: Karen Jeske, Matt Mardis-LeCroy

Mission:

The Transition into Ministry (TiM) Program is a nationwide program funded by grants from the Lilly Endowment to provide recent seminary graduates the opportunity for supervised on-the-job learning as full-time staff of an active teaching church. The intention of the Lilly Endowment grant is to nurture a new generation of talented pastors and give them an opportunity to develop their leadership capacities and skills within the setting of healthy and dynamic congregations.

The TiM Committee offers guidance, nurture, and oversight for the implementation and evaluation of the TiM program. Members serve as the search committee in the recruitment process for TiM Associate Ministers at Plymouth. They also work with the Iowa Conference to develop covenantal relationships with outlying/rural congregations to secure and nurture TiM Iowa pastors in those churches and form a teaching/learning cohort with the Plymouth Associate Ministers. The TiM Committee provides oversight in the development of evaluation measures for the program, in communicating these measures to the TiM ministers and TiM Iowa congregations/pastors, and in reporting the progress of the TiM program to the Church Council and the Lilly Endowment.

The TiM Committee and staff liaisons are charged with visioning and writing the grant proposals to the Lilly Endowment and developing a viable sustainability strategy for the TiM Program throughout and beyond Lilly Endowment funding.

Major Events/Achievements in 2019–2020 Program Year:

During the past year the TiM Committee has made some important changes to our recruiting, application and interviewing process. As a result, we are pleased with the changes which have simplified and streamlined our process. A few examples of the changes include the following:

1. Developing competencies for our TiM Associates to benchmark areas for learning
2. Recruiting prospective students via informational webinars
3. Simplifying the application process
4. Using technology to interview candidates via a web-based application
5. Standardizing our interview questions and group discussion topics

This year we held web-based interviews with four candidates. Two were from Candler Theological Seminary – Emory University (Atlanta) and one each from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary (Chicago) and Vanderbilt Divinity School (Nashville). From that group, we invited two candidates to Des Moines during the first two weeks of February.

The Transition into Ministry Committee selected Rushing Kimball as our next associate minister for 2020-2022. His call was approved by the church council in February 2020. He will be joining Mary Kate Buchanan who will begin her second year in the program and Nikira Hernandez-Evans who is actively in the search-and-call process.

Karen Jeske our TiM Coordinator has worked well in her new position. She has been pro-active in developing ideas for the program and implementing changes for positive improvements. She also has been a good support for the TiM associates. We are very appreciative of her work and look forward to her sharing her many gifts with the ministers and committee members.

Committee Members

Term ending 2020	2017-2021	2018-2022	2019-2023
Sam Howells	Caroline Bettis (vice chair)	Amy Anderson	Mark Busch
Priscilla Ruhe	Neil Fagan	Nathan Blake	Kay Riley
Shelly Soorholtz (chair)	Matthew Harvey	Catherine Knepper	Doug Rumble

John Harri (Trustee)

2018-2020 Consolidated Balance Sheet

(\$000s)

	31-Dec 2018	31-Dec 2019*	31-March 2020**
ASSETS			
Cash and Cash Equivalents			
Cash	1,682	1,073	1,190
Marketable Securities	152	162	160
Total Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 1,834	\$ 1,235	\$ 1,350
Other Assets			
Deferred Gifts	12	6	-
Total Current Assets	\$ 12	\$ 6	\$ -
Land, Building, Furniture & Fixtures			
Land	816	816	816
Buildings	11,880	12,880	12,880
Furniture and Fixtures	224	224	224
Accumulated Depreciation	(4,289)	(4,588)	(4,640)
Total Land, Bldgs, Furniture & Fixtures	8,631	9,332	9,280
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 10,477	\$ 10,573	\$ 10,630
CURRENT LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS			
Total Current Liabilities			
Prepaid Pledges	215	166	-
Refundable Advances	49	-	-
Total Current Liabilities	264	166	-
Total Liabilities	264	166	-
Net Assets	10,213	10,407	10,630
TOTALS	\$ 10,477	\$ 10,573	\$ 10,630

*Draft Audited

**Unaudited

Note: Consolidated Balance Sheet includes these separate funds: General, Designated, Capital, Memorials and Bequests, Fine Arts Series, TiM Iowa Grant, Women's Fellowship, Pastor's Discretionary Fund

2018–2020 Income and Expense Comparison

Budget Approved by Church Council, January 2020 (\$000s)

Line Description	2018 (Audited)	2019 (Draft Audit)*	2020 Budget	YTD as of 3.31.20**
INCOME				
General Pledge Income	1,771	1,796	1,750	523
Non-Pledge Gifts	320	231	285	86
Plate Offering	27	27	27	5
All Other Income	52	141	39	3
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 2,170	\$ 2,195	\$ 2,101	\$ 617
EXPENSE				
Personnel Expense				
Staff Salaries	1,139	1,042	1,097	257
Benefits	227	199	209	52
Other Personnel Expenses	103	89	106	32
Total Personnel Expense	\$ 1,469	\$ 1,330	\$ 1,412	\$ 341
Christian Education	12	17	11	1
Membership	2	4	5	-
Music & Fine Arts	25	26	28	14
Benevolence	134	134	135	24
Christian Social Action	27	22	23	3
Other Boards/Comm	24	20	10	3
Admin & Operations	136	115	120	37
Building & Operations	384	400	400	73
Ctr for Spiritual Growth	1	-	2	-
Miscellaneous	12	11	13	3
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$ 2,226	\$ 2,079	\$ 2,159	\$ 499
INCOME OVER/UNDER	\$ (56)	\$ 116	\$ (58)	\$ 118

*Draft Audited

**Unaudited

Complete detail is available by contacting the Church office.

Weekend Worship Attendance

MONTH	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
MAY	3,606	3,645	2,626	2,971	3,258	3,081	3,936	3,066	3,127	2,802
JUNE	1,911	2,145	2,114	2,827	2,701	2,009	2,190	2,531	1,867	2,427
JULY	1,649	2,188	2,465	2,112	1,914	1,881	2,144	1,917	1,835	1,485
AUGUST	2,445	1,957	2,003	2,147	1,977	2,192	2,213	2,002	1,751	1,791
SEPTEMBER	2,981	2,962	3,916	4,117	3,722	3,007	3,384	3,189	2,701	2,515
OCTOBER	4,150	4,206	3,686	3,763	4,070	3,617	3,435	3,606	3,538	3,229
NOVEMBER	3,571	3,326	3,720	4,008	4,664	4,015	3,995	3,496	3,524	3,651
DECEMBER	2,745	3,444	4,454	3,794	3,654	3,643	3,112	3,310	3,648	3,438
JANUARY	4,418	3,835	3,190	3,176	3,267	4,071	3,879	3,462	2,982	3,170
FEBRUARY	3,567	3,432	3,752	3,661	3,061	3,579	3,894	3,319	2,417	2,305
MARCH	3,053	3,135	4,440	3,852	3,980	4,004	3,365	3,104	2,965	777
APRIL	4,579	5,287	3,540	4,602	4,100	3,428	4,470	3,973	3,293	—
CALENDAR YEAR TOTAL	38,675	39,562	39,906	41,030	40,368	38,527	39,957	36,975	33,648	27,590

Notes



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