It’s Time to Register for Fall Program Year Activities!

CHILDREN (BIRTH-6TH)

Children’s educational programming engages infants through sixth graders and their families through Childcare, Church School, Vacation Bible School, Classes for Families, Our Whole Lives (OWL), and Children’s Choirs.

MIDDLE SCHOOL (7TH-8TH)

Confirmation engages youth during the formative and transformative stage of middle school. It does this through supportive small groups, learning, service, and fellowship. Seventh and eighth grade classes for families bookend this program. Soul Singers is the middle school choir that offers opportunities for music and worship leadership.

HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH (9TH-12TH)

Plymouth offers a unique ministry program for high school-age youth. The core of the program is rooted in the 64-year-old tradition of the Matins Choir. This is a unique and special choir that draws from 11 different high schools, sings every Sunday, and takes an annual tour to spread the word of God and the love of Christ throughout the U.S. All of this in a group in which half of the members don’t consider themselves singers. The Youth Ministry program also encompasses programming in the areas of Faith Formation and Education, Service, and Outreach and Fellowship.

LET’S SING!

New members join musical ensembles at Plymouth throughout the year – all ensembles accept new members – but late summer, the beginning of the program year, is an especially great time to join! At Plymouth, we offer a wide slate of choirs and this year, as you read in last month’s Contact, we have restructured some of our children’s choirs, modified their rehearsal time, and are expanding our opportunities to include Music Makers, a class specifically for pre-K children and their parents!

(continued on page 11)
“So, Matt, how is your summer going?”
I know it is just small talk. I know I am supposed to say something about the summer camps my kids are attending and the travel we have planned. (Birmingham. In July. Because, I guess, it isn’t hot enough in Iowa).

But be careful when you ask me this question. I may forget the rules of small talk and launch into something more sizable. (“Big talk”?) I have got a lot on my mind right now. It is all very exciting, but it is kind of all over the place: staffing, software, strategic planning and…friendship.

The staff of Plymouth Church is in a season of transition. Mary Kate Buchanan, our new TiM Associate Minister, has already arrived and begun making her mark on this place. But right now we are in search to fill two other positions: Director of Operations and Finance and Director of Child and Family Ministries. This means that I have to go to a lot of meetings right now…but I don’t mind. Selling this church to prospective team members is one of my very favorite things to do. And I always enjoy being reminded by new people what a privilege it is to work at Plymouth Church.

By the time fall rolls around, with these positions filled, it will be like having a whole new team in place. That is why I am so grateful that the Plymouth Church Foundation has generously funded the work of Sarah Ennis (of SparkPoint) in consulting with and coaching our team. We have been learning how to collaborate more effectively — and it shows! As we incorporate new team members with new gifts, I am sure Sarah will help us welcome them into the work.

Do you know what else I am thinking about this summer? Software! The software that we currently use to track membership and finances will not be supported much longer. And that is OK because the one we use right now is…pretty terrible. (Note my studious avoidance of the actual name of said software). We do not have the ability to track people’s engagement with worship and other programs of the church. And that hampers any attempt to grow or change. You cannot evaluate what you cannot measure.

So a group of the staff is working right now to research the different software packages available and present the new Director of Operations and Finance with some informed options. This will, of course, cost money – both startup costs and on-going maintenance. But we need tools that will work if we will become the church God knows we can be.

Speaking of becoming the church God knows we can be: we also continue to move forward with developing a new strategic plan. Nothing has been approved or funded yet so I can’t name names. But the Long Range Planning Task Force and I have identified the consultant we want to work with (she’s good!). In August, I will ask Church Council to approve our proposed consultant and the Plymouth Church Foundation to fund the work. From there, a steering committee (appointed by Church Council and intended to be broadly representative of the church) will work with our consultant to design a broad-based, highly participatory process to claim a fresh vision and set clear goals and priorities for the next 3-5 years. As a congregational Christian, I believe God’s best work gets done when we have a process for all of us to dream together. I think God is about to show us something!

And, finally…friendship. The topic of friendship is taking up a lot of space in my head right now. I hope you have noticed how, over the past several summers, we have departed from the lectionary to do more topical sermon series. A few months back, the staff was brainstorming about a possible summer series on the subject of friendship. But the more we talked and the more we dreamed, the more we realized that the subject was too big and too exciting to confine to five summer Sundays.

(continued on page 3)
Ingersoll LIVE is a great opportunity to share the great things going on at Plymouth with our neighbors, and invite them to church! We’ll staff a Plymouth Church tent from 4-11 p.m. The Board of Membership will be there to greet visitors, and will set up giant chalkboards for an interactive activity. If your board or committee would like to join us at the booth, you can hand out literature and talk to people about your group’s particular ministry. If you’d like to help, contact Cindy Eaton-Eklund at ceaton@plymouthchurch.com no later than Wednesday, Aug. 14.

So here is the plan: All this fall, from the second weekend in September right through Thanksgiving, our worship will explore Friendship as a Spiritual Practice. In preaching and worship, we will examine topics like:

- What does it mean to be friends with Jesus?
- How do you make friends in adulthood?
- How do you handle conflict in friendships?
- What does it mean to be “friends” in the Facebook era?
- How can church help people form and strengthen friendships across the dividing lines of partisan politics?

And I hope you will join me for conversation about it all this fall. On Wednesdays, I will be teaching a Bible study at 9:30 in the morning and hosting a discussion group over lunch (12:15-12:45) in Waveland Hall. (If evening is easier for you, we have a plan for that. Stay tuned!). I have a whole long list of resources – books, articles, food for thought. My hope is that we can have a wide-ranging conversation about the practice of friendship.

So: I am trying. I am trying to stick to the small talk script, to keep it light and casual. But there are so many big things on my mind!

Enjoy your summer…and get ready for the fall at Plymouth Church. It is going to be extraordinary.

See you in church!
CURRENT HAPPENINGS

CALLING ALL READERS!
The Anti-Racism Committee is looking for people who would be interested in reading some of the titles in the current bibliography. A brief description of the books listed on the last page numbered 63 through 76 is currently needed. These mini-reviews will help others explore Plymouth’s Anti-Racism Library by offering a few comments on the book and other recommendations. If your summer reading list has a few openings, it’s time to investigate the many options in the ARC Anti-Racism Bibliography! Copies of the bibliography are available in the literature racks throughout the church. For more information, contact Arthur Neis (veral01@att.net).

SUMMER CHOIR
Summer Choir offers a unique opportunity for anyone to show up on Sunday morning, rehearse, and sing in the choir. This is everyone’s opportunity to participate. If you are a sixth grader, a centenarian, or somewhere in between, join us to learn an easy anthem and then lead worship. Sing any Sunday you like. No robes…no commitment…no experience necessary. Just show up!

Dates: August 4 & 18 | Women’s Ensemble
August 11 & 25 | Men’s Ensemble
(Sing in 11 a.m. Worship Service)
Rehearsal: 10:10-10:50 a.m. in the Sanctuary

CONFIRMATION GUIDES NEEDED
The Confirmation Program is in need of a few more curious and caring adults to serve as guides for 2019-2020. Guides accompany a small group (5-8) of 7th & 8th graders through their two-year confirmation journey.

Commitment includes regular Wednesday theme nights, service projects, and fellowship nights from October through April, as well as a retreat weekend at the end of the second year. For more information please contact Lindsey Braun at lbraun@plymouthchurch.com.

OPENING FOR DIRECTOR OF CHILD & FAMILY MINISTRIES
Plymouth Church seeks a full-time Director of Child and Family Ministries. We are looking for someone with the creativity and commitment to help us build upon our vibrant tradition of engaging children in the life of our church. Working closely with the Senior Minister, lay leaders and church staff, the Director of Child and Family Ministries will direct the faith formation programming for children, including weekly church school, Vacation Bible School, and other family activities. Strong organizational skills and a proven ability to oversee effective programs for children are a must, as well as a bachelor’s degree and five years of related professional experience. Position includes competitive salary and full benefits. A criminal background check is required. Applicants should submit a cover letter and resume to pwilkerson@plymouthchurch.com.

SUMMER BIBLE STUDY
All summer long, join Matt Mardis-LeCroy at Plymouth at 9:30 a.m. on Wednesdays for Bible study! Each week we dig into the text that will shape worship for the upcoming weekend. As we talk and listen to each other, we develop deeper insights that make worship more meaningful. Whether you are a tenured biblical scholar or a novice, all are welcome!

MEMORY CAFE
Memory Cafe happens 10-11 a.m. on the second Friday of the month in the Coffee Shop. If you or someone you love is living with memory loss, come join us for coffee and a social hour. Contact Dian Meek at 515.720.4256, BettyDickFosburgh@gmail.com.

CHURCH OFFICE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
We’re recruiting additional volunteers to help staff the church office. You’ll spend a half of a day, once a week or twice a month, Monday through Friday, answering the telephone and greeting people. No experience other than providing a friendly first-point-of-contact for people calling or visiting the office is needed. If you’re interested in learning more, contact Betty, 515.720.4256, BettyDickFosburgh@gmail.com.

UPCOMING AMOS EVENT
Sunday, Sept. 22: Save the Date for AMOS’ Housing Summit to be held at First Unitarian in Des Moines from 3-5 p.m.

ENROLLING SOON!!
2019 – 2020 PLYMOUTH WOMEN ADVENTURE GROUPS
Plymouth Women Adventure Groups (PWAG) are for women of all ages, life stages and interests seeking safe, liberating adventures to enhance their mind, body or spirit. Online registration will be available Sept. 1 through Sept. 23, or pick up a form in the church office.

Kick-off Event for ENROLLED participants: Tuesday, Oct. 1 at 7 p.m. in Waveland Hall. Childcare will be provided if you need to bring little ones.

Questions? Contact Erin Osier at 515.868.6067 or erin.osier@gmail.com.
CURRENT HAPPENINGS

HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI OBSERVANCE

Choosing a Future of Peace is the theme of the annual Hiroshima and Nagasaki Obsvance at the Japanese Bell on the Capitol Grounds, Friday, Aug. 9 at 7 p.m. The speaker is Maureen McCue from Iowa Physicians for Social Responsibility. A statement from the Mayor of Hiroshima will be read. The service will end with the laying of flowers as we ring the bell. Parking is available in the lot by the Iowa Supreme Court Building. Please bring a lawn chair for your comfort. Plymouth Peace Committee is a co-sponsor of this event.

FAITHFUL READERS

Faithful Readers have lined up books for the whole summer!

**Aug. 22:** Master Butchers Singing Club by Louise Erdrich

We meet in the Inspiration Lounge, and new voices are always welcome, so do join us! For more information, call Jean Nelson at 515.255.5019.

ARC LIBRARY CONTINUES TO GROW!

With more than 110 volumes to choose from, the Anti-Racism Committee (ARC) book collection in the Inspiration Lounge Library is quickly becoming the place to go to explore the work of anti-racism in our world. Thank you to the many members and friends of the library for their generosity. Donations of books and other resources can be left in the Inspiration Lounge of the Center for Spiritual Growth, on the table to the west side under the window. Thank you.

JOIN US FOR A POTLUCK & BIBLE STUDY WITH TRINITY LAS AMERICAS CHURCH

Members of Plymouth’s Welcome Migrants Committee and Cuba Partnership Team traveled to Trinity Las Americas Church on Wednesday, June 12 for a joint potluck/Bible study. The delicious meal included everything from potato salad to burritos wrapped in bacon(!). A bilingual Bible study followed. This was just the first of what we hope will be regular events in which we grow in love of God and neighbor. The next joint potluck/Bible study will take place at 6:45 p.m., Wednesday, Aug. 14 at Trinity Las Americas Church, 1548 8th Street, Des Moines. Please bring the potluck dish of your choice. Table service will be provided. We have been invited! All are welcome! Please contact Mark Doherty at Markus0485@aol.com if you would like to join in!

CHURCH SCHOOL LEADERS NEEDED

Our church school children are in search of leaders...people to guide them through Scripture, self-discovery and fellowship. If you are looking for a way to serve our church and enjoy being around children, this could be a great fit for you. The lesson plans are easy to follow and all supplies are gathered for you. We are seeking volunteers in our elementary-level classrooms. Church school meets Sunday mornings, September through May, with spring break and holidays off. Teachers are assisted by parent helpers. If you would like more information, please contact Lindsey Braun at lbraun@plymouthchurch.com.

HELP US SUPPORT IMMIGRATION

DSM SURJ (Showing Up for Racial Justice) and Plymouth’s Welcoming Migrants Committee invite you to a three-part film series to explore immigration in the United States. This is an opportunity to deepen your understanding of immigration through film and discussion. Help us change the narrative about immigrants in the U.S.

Our goal is to raise $1,000 at each film screening for the immigrant community in Iowa! The organizations receiving the funds are: Iowa Sanctuary Movement, American Friends Service Committee, and Justice for Our Neighbors. Help us reach this goal and support immigrants in Iowa — mark your calendar for these upcoming dates. Free childcare available on site. Films begin at 7 p.m. at Plymouth Church.

Suggested donation $10 at door (cash or check)

**Aug. 9:** Harvest of Empire, Fundraiser for American Friends Service Committee

**Sept. 13:** America First | The Legacy of an Immigration Raid, Fundraiser for Justice for Our Neighbors
**CALENDAR**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUGUST</th>
<th>SUNDAY</th>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
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| 4      | Childcare, 8:45 a.m.  
Worship 9 & 11 a.m.: Nikira Hernandez-Evans  
After Worship Fellowship, 10 a.m. & Noon  
Fellowship Forum, 10:10 a.m.  
Youth Bible Study, 10:15 a.m.  
Flower Delivery Team, Noon  
JFON Training, 12:15 p.m. | Quilting, 10 a.m.  
Yoga, 5:15 p.m.  
Board of Benevolences, 5:30 p.m.  
Choral Society Board Meeting, 5:30 p.m.  
Anti Racism Committee Meeting, 5:30 p.m.  
COCI Centering Prayer, 5:45 p.m.  
RENEW Leadership Meeting, 6:15 p.m.  
Eagle Pursuit Scout Meeting, 7 p.m. | AMENS, 6:45 a.m.  
Prayer Group, 7:30 a.m.  
Tower OAC Meeting, 11 a.m.  
Career Closet Meeting, 5 p.m.  
Shawl Knitting Ministry, 5 p.m.  
Board of Christian Education, 5:30 p.m.  
AFSC Immigration Training, 6:00 p.m.  
Line Dancing, 6:30 p.m.  
Stephen Ministers Meeting, 6:30 p.m. |
| 11     | Childcare, 8:45 a.m.  
Worship, 9 & 11 a.m.: Matt Mardis-Lecroy  
After Worship Fellowship, 10 a.m. & Noon  
Fellowship Forum, 10:10 a.m.  
Youth Bible Study, 10:15 a.m.  
Flower Delivery Team, Noon  
JFON Training, 12:15 p.m. | LifeWorks Meeting, 9 a.m., Waveland 3 & 4  
Quilting, 10 a.m.  
Plymouth Women Board Meeting, 4 p.m.  
Arts & Memorials Meeting, 5 p.m.  
Greenwood Park LLC Meeting, 5 p.m.  
Yoga, 5:15 p.m.  
COCI Centering Prayer, 5:45 p.m.  
Board of Christian Social Action, 6 p.m. | AMENS, 6:45 a.m.  
Shawl Knitting Ministry, 5 p.m.  
Mental Health & Disability Task Force, 5:30 p.m.  
Peace Committee, 5:30 p.m.  
AMOS Core Meeting, 6 p.m.  
Board of Membership, 6:30 p.m.  
Line Dancing, 6:30 p.m.  
Board of Deacons, 7 p.m. |
| 18     | Childcare, 8:45 a.m.  
Worship, 9 & 11 a.m.: Lindsey Braun  
After Worship Fellowship, 10 a.m. & Noon  
Fellowship Forum, 10:10 a.m.  
Flower Delivery Team, Noon  
Cuba Partnership Team, 12:15 p.m.  
Willits LGBTQ Committee, 12:30 p.m. | Quilting, 10 a.m.  
Yoga, 5:15 p.m.  
Welcoming Migrants Committee Meeting, 5:30 p.m.  
Scouts, 7 p.m. | AMENS, 6:45 a.m.  
House and Space Committee Meeting, 10 a.m.  
Tower OAC Meeting, 11 a.m.  
Shawl Knitting Ministry, 5 p.m.  
Board of Spiritual Growth, 5:30 p.m.  
Line Dancing, 6:30 p.m.  
Stephen Ministers Meeting, 6:30 p.m.  
Trustees Meeting, 7 p.m. |
| 25     | Childcare, 8:45 a.m.  
Worship, 9 & 11 a.m.: Matt Mardis-Lecroy  
After Worship Fellowship, 10 a.m. & Noon  
Fellowship Forum, 10:10 a.m.  
Flower Delivery Team, Noon  
Family Promise Training, 12:15 p.m.  
Youth Nabling, 4 p.m. | Quilting 10 a.m.  
Yoga, 5:15 a.m. | AMENS, 6:45 a.m.  
Shawl Knitting Ministry, 5 p.m.  
Church Council, 7 p.m. |
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<tr>
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<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>THURSDAY</th>
<th>FRIDAY</th>
<th>SATURDAY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td>Adult Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.</td>
<td>WISE Meeting, 7 a.m.</td>
<td>Memory Cafe, 10 a.m.</td>
<td>Worship: 5:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>TIM Meeting, Noon</td>
<td>Men's Lunch Group, 11:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Changing the Immigration Narrative, 6 p.m.</td>
<td>Matt Mardis-Lecroy</td>
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<td>Bridge, 12:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Board of Spiritual Growth, 5:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Childcare, 5:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Career Closet Sorting, 4 p.m.</td>
<td>Human Trafficking Task Force, 6 p.m.</td>
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<td>Cuba Partnership Team, 5:30 p.m.</td>
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<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td>Adult Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.</td>
<td>WISE Meeting, 7 a.m.</td>
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<td>Worship: 5:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>SURF Meeting, 10:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Discipleship Team Meeting, 10:30 a.m.</td>
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<td>Lindsey Braun</td>
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<td>Trustees Finance Meeting, 12:15 p.m.</td>
<td>Personnel Committee Meeting, 4:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Childcare, 5:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Bridge, 12:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Career Closet Sorting, 4 p.m.</td>
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<td>Coyote Run Farm Pick Up, 4:45 p.m.</td>
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<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td>Adult Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.</td>
<td>WISE Meeting, 7 a.m.</td>
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<td>Worship: 5:30 p.m.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bridge, 12:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Faithful Readers, 7 p.m.</td>
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<td>Matt Mardis-Lecroy</td>
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<td>Career Closet Sorting, 4 p.m.</td>
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<td><strong>28</strong></td>
<td>Adult Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.</td>
<td>WISE Meeting, 7 a.m.</td>
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<td>Worship: 5:30 p.m.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bridge, 12:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Mary Kate Buchanan</td>
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<td>Career Closet Sorting, 4 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td>Adult Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.</td>
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As worship opened the 32nd General Synod of the United Church of Christ, leaders of the Ho Chunk Nation granted permission for our church’s biennial national gathering to meet on their traditional lands. Then they blessed us for our work.

A combination business meeting and family reunion, leaders from across the country met in Milwaukee for five days in June to worship, attend workshops, engage in acts of service, lift voices in advocacy, make decisions in our business meetings, and share in celebration.

This year, Plymouth’s presence and representation at General Synod was exceptionally robust. Members Aaron Barker, Jared Walter, and Tony Dillon-Hansen attended as voting delegates of the Iowa Conference. Dave Nelson attended as a member of the national United Church Board and Jean Nelson attended as a visitor. Plymouth ministers Rev. Nikira Hernandez-Evans and Rev. Lindsey Braun attended as visitors. And Plymouth member Rev. Brigit Stevens attended in her role as Executive Conference Minister of the Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota Conferences.

What follows is a window into their work on behalf of Plymouth and the wider church in their own words and pictures.

LINDSEY shared, “This was my fourth General Synod, and the first time that my responsibilities were simply to connect with folks in the wider church. I saw and bring greetings from six (!) former TiM ministers (David Telfort, Corinne Freedman Ellis, Kit Novotny, Cameron Barr, Anthony Livolsi, and Aaron James). Participating in a protest of ICE was an extraordinarily moving act of mobile prayer. More than 600 people gathered to pray with our feet, to protest the ways families are being separated and the conditions in which people are being held at our southern border, to hear stories of families affected by these policies (particularly the family of a student pastor from Racine, WI who was deported), and to commit to showing up for each other in love. I was also moved by stories of innovation and doing church differently at an after-hours storytelling event populated by church planters and revitalizers. The Spirit is at work in the church and there is much to learn from and be inspired by when we gather together.”

AARON BARKER was particularly moved by worship: “The worship services as a part of this event were a veritable mosaic of the cultures and peoples who make up the UCC, from the Ho Chunk land dedication to inaugurate the event to scripture readings in Samoan and Tamil to the resounding voices of the Trinity United Church of Christ Sanctuary Choir. The musicians and artists brought the concepts of social justice and inclusion to life through dancing, poetry, and graphic art. It was truly inspiring to see so many diverse backgrounds and media woven into a seamless call for unity and worship of God.”
DAVE NELSON reflected: “I have served as a member of the denomination’s Board of Directors for four years and have two years left in my term. As a board member, I was a voting delegate to Synod 32 and a member of the Synod Business Committee. I was a liaison from the Board of Directors to one of the committees which reviewed two resolutions and recommended them to the synod body in plenary session. One of my committee’s resolutions reestablishes the UCC’s relationship with the Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Puerto Rico which had drifted away from the UCC about 15 years ago and recently asked to renew our affiliation with them. At this meeting I was particularly struck with the passion of many Synod participants in supporting immigrants and LGBTQ people and in advocating for climate change awareness and activism.”

TONY DILLON-HANSEN shared: “In Milwaukee, I was able to reconnect with colleagues from many parts of the UCC along with fellow students and faculty from Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS), and that was a true joy. I was surprised and immensely encouraged by the mobilization to protest the government separation of families around our country and the inhumane treatment of immigrants (especially of children) on the southern border in concentration camps. Jesus calls us to help all of God’s children through radical love and welcome. This threat to our neighbor is a threat to us and compels our hearts and our action to help. I pray we protect families and the many asylum seekers at our southern border. Our church is a proverbial big tent, and we challenge each other to listen to each other – even when we disagree. Being present at the table is powerful because conversations can foster trust, recognition, community and forgiveness. This is perhaps one reason why Jesus shared communion (forgiveness of sins) with a betrayer and a denier and then invited a criminal to paradise. Thus, the fact that we are able to have that conversation within our church is perhaps the great blessing to behold.”

JARED WALTER reflected: “As a voting delegate for the Iowa Conference at the General Synod meeting in Milwaukee, my primary work assignment was the review of Synod Resolution 12. We heard the testimony of a UCC Pastor from Arizona, who has a church member self-identified as “non-binary”. This member was interested in attending the Synod as a delegate, but after reviewing the organization’s bylaws on the UCC website, felt unwelcome because of the gender-binary pronouns used in the bylaw language. Our committee carefully reviewed and amended the resolution, recommending the inclusion of non-binary language as pertains to gender in the UCC’s bylaws. With around 700 delegates voting, our (continued on page 11)
12 million, 88 thousand, 800 minutes
How do you measure 23 years?

In stories, house meetings, in one-on-one coffees, in research, in action, in working together, joining our voices for the common good.

I know this about AMOS:
It didn’t begin with a bang. (maybe a whimper?)
I remember – I was there 23 years ago, folks came to look the thing over.
We were anxious to bring change and many were disappointed that we didn’t jump right in and attack burning issues.
The leader said first to learn your names, your pain, your gifts – your fears.
Some said “what kind of cockeyed outfit is this?” and left muttering, “we came to get things done.”

BUT
How can you work together unless you know each other?
The one-on-one relational meeting was born.
No big bang.
We were conceived in silence, birthed if you will.
Not a big show.
But we learned to care about each other.
To know each other’s joys and sorrows.

Methodists hob-nobbed with Unitarians Bethal AME and Saint Paul and Plymouth Catholics and Trinity.
We found common ground.
It took a while.

A quiet time.

The Register didn’t know our name.
City Hall was a bit frightened of us.
BUT
being silent doesn’t mean nothing is happening –
How silently how silently the gift of life is given.
We had something called house meetings – friends and neighbors sat around and spoke of deep longings of the human heart.
Out of all of that, first birthed in silence, we began hearing a whisper –
To hear a whisper you have to cup the ear.
Things were happening.
Others were joining.

The word was out.
Ames and Norwalk and Ankeny.
Have you heard?
We had to change our name
No longer “Metropolitan,” now Mid-Iowa” …
At some point we couldn’t keep the lid on.
AMOS was shouted from the rooftops.
A new disciplined movement birthing.
All kinds, black and white and brown together.
Public schools and racial profiling.
Tireless work of Sheena Thomas.
Mental health – Teresa Bomhoff –
Don’t get me started on naming heroes—we would be here all night.

Worked with the city council to raise the 1-cent sales tax and our agenda for spending the money somehow became their agenda.
Mental health, light for Evelyn Davis Park, libraries open in the evening.

How do we measure 23 years?

Try this:
We are building the largest park in America!
Thought up by a bunch of kids in a house meeting one summer night.
It only took 15 years!
We don’t give up and we don’t go away.
AMOS is in for the long term.

Organizers come and go,
they plant the seed, stand back and watch it grow.

I am supposed to launch the fundraising event –
It is simple – 23 years, 23 thousand dollars, any amount with a 3 in it.

13 ... 23 ... 30 ... Could be 300 dollars.
By having money that we raise, we are beholden to no one or group –
How do you measure 23 years?
What was conceived in silence, heard as a whisper
now it is shouted from the roof top!
And we have only just begun …

Thank you, Liz!
Thank you, Paul!
Thank you, Tom!
WORSHIP

Reflections from the 32nd General Synod

(resumed from page 9)

resolution passed with near unanimous consent. The resolution now moves on to the national UCC board of directors for final review and implementation.”

While this resolution passed easily, Walter reflected on another that created rigorous debate and opportunities for reflection on what it means to be Open and Affirming (ONA): “We know that only 30 percent of UCC congregations have declared an ONA status to the national UCC board. While more churches are declaring ONA status every year—there is now an increased awareness, and sense of urgency to ask/learn if our covenant congregations would be willing to consider engaging with an ONA discernment process. I feel strong conviction and raw emotions, knowing that “I was that kid” (and in many ways, still am) who was so deeply quiet, closeted, and traumatized by a misguided theology and dogma that haunts me to this day. Often, our beloved national Pastor Traci Blackman presents the question to our national political leaders “how are the children?”

What about asking the question “how are the children?” right in our own communities, families, and relationships?

If you’d like, I’d be open to sharing more about the General Synod, and further conversations. I would like to thank the conference ministers and associates who had selected me for this life-changing and eye-opening experience!”

Vacation Bible School was out of this world!

Thanks to the help of so many Plymouth members and friends, VBS Voyagers collected and generated elements of faith, boldness, kindness, thankfulness and hope – successfully completing their VBS mission. We want to say a huge thank you to all the many, many volunteers it takes to put together a program like this for more than 85 kids. From decorating, planning, set up, meal prep, meal clean up, teaching, singing, dancing, and tear down – and everything in between – we couldn’t do it without you! And a special shout out to members of the Board of Christian Education who especially stepped up in the kitchen to make sure everyone got fed. No matter who you are or how you helped: Thank you!

Fall Program Year Activities

(resumed from page 1)

**TYPICAL WEDNESDAY EVENING SCHEDULE FOR CHOIR**

- 5:15-5:50 | Youngest Children’s Choir Rehearsals:
  - KinderChoir (K) (Room 302)
  - Cherub Choir (1st) (Room 301)
- 5:15-6:00 | Children’s Choir Rehearsals & Music Makers Class:
  - Music Makers Class (Pre-K) (Room 303)
  - Hallelujah! Choir (2nd) (Room 304)
  - Treble Choir (3rd & 4th) (Rehearsal Hall)
  - Chorister Choir (5th & 6th) (Recital Hall)
- 6:00-6:45 | Handchime Choir (4th, 5th, 6th) (Room 306)
- 6:10-6:50 | Soul Singers Rehearsal (Recital Hall)
- 6:00-6:55 | Youth Dinner (Youth Room and 3rd floor classrooms)
- 7:00-8:00 | Matins Choir Rehearsal

**WEDNESDAY NIGHT DINNERS ARE BACK**

August is Back to School Month! As you begin to plan out new schedules and routines for school and church activities, it may be helpful to know that Plymouth will have dinners available on Wednesday evenings from 5:45 until 6:45 p.m.

We are busy working out all of the details, but there will be healthy options that meet the needs of most diners, including those who prefer vegetarian or gluten-free options. The dinners will be available for a suggested donation of $5 per person with a $20 maximum suggestion for families. We likely will not be able to accept credit cards to start with, so please plan on checks or cash and watch church publications for more information in the coming weeks.