Stewardship 2020: Sharing our Abundance

We invite you to pledge and feel the joy of giving

What are the ingredients of a successful stewardship campaign? Truth is, like a pie, every one is different! Are you thinking plain pumpkin? Pecan with a dollop of whipping cream? Or something in between?

As Plymouth Church sits on the brink of a new decade and the opportunity to evaluate where God is taking us in the near future, our 2020 stewardship campaign — which provides the budget to operate our entire church and its ministries during the coming year — calls for a few different ingredients than stewardship campaigns of the past.

Plymouth Church enters 2020 in great financial condition! We have no mortgage debt (that was retired in 2015). The Rollins Tower has been repaired and we remain debt-free thanks to your financial gifts, a final cost that came in under budget, and resources from the Plymouth Church Foundation.

In addition, the goal for our 2020 operating budget isn’t just pie in the sky. Church leaders have thought strategically and worked carefully to craft a 2020 budget that controls expenses and funds the things that matter most. We’ve set realistic expectations and asked our boards and staff to look at a goal that’s realistic. The result is a stewardship campaign goal of $2.2 million.

That amount allows us to continue to experience excellent worship, foster learning and spiritual growth for all ages, and reach beyond the walls of our church in ministries of care and seeking justice. Thanks to a whole lot of hard work, we are poised on the brink of an exciting new chapter for this church. Now the rest of us get to do our part.

If you believe in the work God is doing here at Plymouth Church—if you believe in this call to share life and mission together—we need your pledge. And your pledge is the most important ingredient in our pie!

If you have pledged in the past, we need you to increase your pledge so that we can continue to move into the future that God is preparing. If we can increase the amount that existing pledgers already give (think of it as a heaping cup of flour this year, instead of a level cup), and if we can increase the number of people who pledge (even it’s the equivalent of a tablespoon or two), then we can continue to move into the future that God is preparing.

Our strategic planning in 2020 will give us a more definitive picture of what that future might be, but with your pledges, we will be ready with the ingredients to ensure it’s a fulfilling year ahead. Please share your intentions with us by completing and submitting a pledge card no later than Dec. 31, 2019.

When we give generously, with an abundance mentality, what we give away will multiply.

— Henri J. M. Nouwe
Bread for the Journey

It is the end of an era at Plymouth Church. On December 31, Paula Wilkerson will retire as an Administrative Assistant. And I know I speak for a whole lot of people when I tell you that I am having a hard time imagining Plymouth without her.

For over 20 years, Paula has made Plymouth a better church. As the keeper of the calendar, she has helped to schedule and track the many activities going on in our building. As the recruiter, trainer and manager of weekday office volunteers, she has coaxed others in communicating helpfulness and hospitality. As the Annual Meeting and board nominations wrangler, she has kept a complicated process moving smoothly and helped new leaders to claim their gifts. As the point of first contact for people planning a baptism, or a wedding, or a funeral she has been a living embodiment of God’s love and care for so many.

But the thing I will miss most about Paula is her deep commitment to the church – by which I do not so much mean Plymouth Church as THE church. All the time that I have known her, she has been a very active lay leader in another congregation. She gets the whole “growing in love of God and neighbor” thing. She owns our mission and allows it to inform all that she does for us.

I am so grateful.

On Sunday, Dec. 22, we will celebrate Paula during our Sunday morning worship services. It is an opportunity to express gratitude for someone who has done more than most people know. I hope you will join us.

If you do, be sure to stick around for the music. Nothing beats church music in Advent.

This is a season about remembering what God has promised: a highway in the wilderness, swords beat into ploughshares, everyone sitting under their own vine and fig tree and no one making them afraid. This is a season about remembering what God has promised: a highway in the wilderness, swords beat into ploughshares, everyone sitting under their own vine and fig tree and no one making them afraid.

Advent seems especially apt for this moment in the life of Plymouth. In so many ways, we are still waiting for the good things that have not happened yet. Our Strategic Planning Steering Committee is working hard (even in December!) to plan a process whereby all of us can come together and do some dreaming about the future of this church. I know that God will surprise us with new possibilities.

But we aren’t there yet. We won’t be there for a little while yet. And so, in this meantime, this in-between time…we wait.

But at least we are waiting together. And we have some pretty good music to pass the time.

In worship this December, we will turn our attention to what we are calling the Advent Mixtape. Because the music is so good in Advent – not just in church (that’s a given), but in Scripture as well. The opening chapters of Luke’s Gospel are like nothing so much as a musical. They depict mostly mundane events. But at key moments, without much warning, the characters will suddenly burst into song. And, like any good musical, the songs disclose the true meaning of all these events. Mary’s song tells us that the birth of her baby will mean a great reversal of the hierarchies that define our word. Zechariah’s song anticipates God’s compassionate veneration of a suffering people. The angel’s song proclaims peace on earth and goodwill toward all.

Our worship will invite us to tune in to the songs that tell the truth about who we are and what all of this means. I hope you won’t miss a minute!

Grace and Peace,

Longest Night Worship Service

Join us on Monday, Dec. 16 at 6 p.m. in Waveland Hall for the Longest Night Worship Service!

Church is intentional about upholding the members and friends of our community in whatever season of life they may find themselves. While the holiday season is usually portrayed as one entire month of feasting and festivities, for most people, that is simply not reality.

This year, Dec. 21 is the winter solstice. It is the longest night of the year. As we feel the darkness growing deeper around us, many of us sense the need to go deeper within ourselves. In the midst of decorated everywhere and holiday music everywhere, we long for a time of quiet and reflection. Just a moment of quiet to breathe and reflect.

Additionally, we are carrying burdens, sometimes seen, often unseen. Many are dealing with unemployment, under-employment, grief, separation, divorce, marital and family stress, loneliness, illness, chronic pain, and the list goes on. We simply need the space and time to acknowledge our sadness and concerns; and we need to know that we are not alone.

Come and join us for candle-lighting, healing prayers, quiet, scripture, heartfelt reflections and music that acknowledge that God’s Presence is for you and that God’s Word comes to shine light into your life and our world.

Everyone, regardless of Church affiliation (or lack of it) is welcome.

Christmas Eve at Plymouth

On Christmas Eve, join us for worship at 5, 7, 9, or 11 p.m. for candles and carols.

5 p.m. | Family Christmas Eve in the Sanctuary, including a child-friendly service.
7 p.m. | Waveland Hall will host a casual service with music by the Saturday Night Band.
9 p.m. | Members of the Plymouth Bells will present an extended Prelude and the Chancel Choir will lead worship. Service will include carols by candlelight, choral anthems, and reflections by Matt Mardis-LeCroy.
11 p.m. | Organist, Carl Gravander, will provide an extended prelude of seasonal music and the Matins Choir will lead worship. Service will include carols by candlelight, choral anthems, and reflections by Matt Mardis-LeCroy.
ANNUAL NUT SALE: IT’S THAT TIME OF YEAR!

The 2019 Plymouth Women’s Nut Sale will be held after Saturday and Sunday services, ending Sunday, Dec. 8. We will have all of your favorite varieties of fresh, delicious nuts available (some covered in chocolate!) for $12 a pound. All proceeds go to the Plymouth Women’s Scholarship Fund. We thank you for your support of this worthy cause!

ADULT BASKETBALL

Put the kids to bed and relieve some inner stress. Join us Thursdays at 8 p.m. in the gym for friendly basketball competition. For more information, email: stoa.dan@gmail.com.

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 Friday, Dec. 13. Contact Diane Meek at 515.255.7220 for more information.

PLYMOUTH GROUNDS

Have you visited the Plymouth Grounds Coffee Shop lately? This shop provides training to students with intellectual disabilities during the fall and spring semesters. Shop is open Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to noon, and Wednesdays from 4-6:30 p.m. We hope you come visit us for coffee/tea and cookies!

FAMILY PROMISE VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Did you know that Plymouth regularly hosts families experiencing homelessness, right here in our building? Would you like to roll up your sleeves and make a difference? On Sunday, Dec. 8, at 12 p.m. (location TBD) for a Family Promise Volunteer Training. Get equipped to be part of this vital ministry! For more information, contact Matt Mardis-LeCroy at: mmardis-lecroy@plymouthchurch.com.

LIVING WOW!

Join us in Greenwood from 2-4 p.m. on Dec. 5 for Advent card-making and on Dec. 12 for a festive movie. We look forward to startling back up in Jan. with more opportunities for fellowship, fun, and service after the holiday season.

NEW STEPHEN MINISTRY CLASS JAN. 2020

Are you being called to the service and joy of being a Stephen Minister? Don’t pass up this opportunity to go deeper into relationship with yourself, your family and friends, and your church community. You will learn about listening, understanding feelings, relating firmly but gently while maintaining personal boundaries with yourself and others. A new class will be starting in January. Pray for God’s guidance and reach out to LeAnn Stubbs 515.255.3149 or Deb Brookhart 515.321.0344 for more information.

JOIN THE 1619 PROJECT STUDY GROUP

The 1619 Project, a publication of The New York Times Magazine, marks the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first enslaved Africans to Jamestown, Virginia. The series highlights the contributions of black Americans and the many ways the legacy of slavery continues to shape society in the United States. The study project includes essays, photos, stories, and poems that challenge readers to examine their understanding of U.S. history by considering 1619 as the start of this nation’s story. Using both visual and written pieces from historians, journalists, playwrights, poets, authors, and artists, the publication offers the opportunity to assess and understand the full story of slavery.

The Anti-Racism Committee invites you to join a six-week session to discuss the essays and creative works of the 1619 Project. The facilitated sessions will meet Wednesdays, Jan. 22 to Feb. 19, 7-8:30 p.m. and Feb. 26, 6-7:30 p.m. Cost for materials is $10. Please RSVP by Monday, Jan. 6. You may register by email to Sheena Thomas, sheenathomas96@gmail.com and by sending your check for $10 made out to Plymouth Church with “1619 Project” in the memo line.

FINANCIAL PEACE UNIVERSITY

Sundays, January 5-March 1 | 6-8 p.m. | Greenwood Room

Fee: $100 per household to cover the cost of materials and access to e-resources. Materials will be distributed the first night of class.

Class size is limited to 10 participants.

Reflections from our Delegation to Cuba

Ten members of the Cuba Partnership Team at Plymouth Church returned Nov. 13 from a nine-day experience in Cuba that left them enlightened, inspired, and grateful.

The 10 included Jan Campbell, Emily Chafa, Shane Chafa, Sue Davis, Irene Hardisty, Rev. Nikira Hernandez-Evans, Diane Myers, Karen Rasmussen, Virginia Traxler, and Peggy Ward. They were hosted in Havana by the people of Plymouth’s sister church, Ebenezer Baptist, and in the city of Matanzas by the First Baptist Church there.

“We learned so much about Cuba’s history and the history of its Protestant churches,” Emily Chafa writes in a preliminary report. “We learned and witnessed the ways the Ebenezer Church staff revised traditional church liturgy to fit Cuban culture. We observed this church serving its members and its neighborhood. We heard, many times, from various perspectives, how the U.S. blockade harms Cubans in their everyday lives. We witnessed them coping with shortages of basic items we take for granted.”

They also experienced the national ballet, beautiful music, public art and art galleries, the famous Varadero Beach, good fresh food and lots of café, Cuban coffee, “and perhaps a few other authentic Cuban beverages,” Chafa reports.

Members of the Plymouth delegation plan to share their experiences in a program after the 11 a.m. service on a Sunday in January.

Mary Maris leads a special event at Ebenezer Baptist Church and its adjacent Martin Luther King Center.

Stoahanel delivery the greeting to the people of Ebenezer Baptist Church and its adjacent Martin Luther King Center.

Emily Chafa in a solo during a service at Ebenezer Church.

Virginia Traxler delivers a greeting to the people of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Plymouth’s sister church in Havana. At the left is Ebenezer co-pastor Rev. Amos Lopez Rubio.

Emily Chafa in a solo during a service at Ebenezer Church.

Plymouth members at the Cuban National Ballet.
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Strategic Planning Update

When did you last sign up for something and you had no idea what you were in for?

For most of us, I think that we immediately jump to a time where things went really badly. Let me tell you about my recent experience where it went, and is going, really well.

I got an email and then a call from Beth Stelle Jones asking if I was interested in serving on the steering committee for Plymouth’s strategic plan. She said that she didn’t really know what the time commitment or intensity level was going to be, so I just kinda figured it would be a once-a-month thing for an hour or so where we sit around and talk about how good we are at this or not so great at that, and that’s it.

Based on my intro, you know that’s not how it went. Now on our seventh weekly meeting, every moment has been both thrilling and more than a little intimidating. We have had candid conversations about Plymouth’s recent history and wrestled with how a large, progressive congregation like ours fits in, and maybe even shifts, the cultural tides that are sweeping through our country.

All of this is just to develop our own understanding before the next step. That next step is talking to you.

In a few months, our committee will be holding listening sessions where we hear what Plymouth means to you, our strengths and our weaknesses, our things to look forward to and what scares us about the future, among other topics. Hopefully it will not only help us all better understand how we see ourselves and our church, but also how we want to be. That’s a tall order, but if there’s anything I’ve learned about our congregation since first setting foot in these halls three years ago, I know we’re up for it.

Things are gonna get exciting.

2020 Flower Calendar

Plymouth relies on donations from the congregation for the beautiful floral arrangements that adorn the altar each week. Altar flowers are a special opportunity to celebrate a marriage, anniversary, the birth of a child, or remembrance of a loved one for all of the Parrish to share.

Arrangements need to be delivered to the church on Sunday morning by 8 a.m. They may park in front of Ingersoll and enter through the main doors and put the flowers in the sanctuary on the communion table.

Plymouth Quilters

Thank you, Plymouth, for providing a place for this delightful group of people to gather, laugh, and play with fabric!

We are under the auspices of Plymouth Women. As of November, we have 17 people and one dog involved in making quilts. Meeting time is 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Mondays in room 318 at the church. We need a 5:30-7 p.m. session for six weeks in the summer on Tuesdays. One person came once, so there is minimal call for a second session for those not available during the day.

Several quilters take materials home to work on while, for example, babysitting.

Equipment is 10 functional sewing machines, two walls of stacked fabric, two boxes of yarn (to tie the quilts), notions, two rolls of batting, two ironing boards, and two irons. Des Moines Sewing Machine Company tuned up all the machines. Financing that was a Plymouth Foundation competitive grant—thank you! We are in good shape with equipment.

Space-wise, we are looking forward to having the music library functional so the large music stacks will depart. With an average of eight people in 318, space is at a premium. It is a blessing to have three sets of eight-foot tables to spread out quilt tops, batting, and back to assemble quilts, critique design, and tie. We can leave the projects—just lock the door and leave—rather than having to put everything away every session.

Since February 2019, we have donated 68 quilts. Habitat for Humanity received 25 (two double, two queen, remaining twin), 20 twin went to Central Iowa Shelter and Services, and 20 twin went to Sleep in Heavenly Peace. Three went to a clerical furnishing for a single mom. There are 12 baby quilts ready for Salvation Army and 12 twins for Sleep in Heavenly Peace that are waiting to be picked up. Twelve quilt tops are waiting to be sandwiched (back, batting, top). Quilts are available to anyone who needs one. “Need” can be by parishes or clergy request, or request from community organization. We have pledged a queen, two twins, and four baby sacks to Family Promise for January 2020.

expenses are minimal except for the batting. Amazon Prime and JoAnn Fabric are the most cost-effective places to order it. Batting comes in rolls 60 inches long and 24 inches in diameter, so moving and storing are cumbersome.

Needs: People! All ages, states of expertise, and genders welcome! We’d be delighted to work with youth who are interested in design and fabric.

We are flexible, non-judgmental, patient, and we laugh a lot. A second need was mentioned above: moving the music to the music library. A third is the ongoing funding for supplies, especially batting.

Since we use four machines/session, we will not cycle through all machines for some time. They should not need retuning for 12-18 months. Fourth, we need folks to assemble the packets in the basket by the Visitors’ Center. Quilting is a fine indoor sport, a healthy alternative to snacking, and ends up with some vibrant creations to donate. If you can sew a straight line or you’d like to learn to do it, please consider joining us.

Mary Riche took a lovely photographic quilt blessing in August 2019. Thank you for recognizing us at all three services.

If you have any questions, call Mary Stuart or Linda Railback at 515.255.7818.

MARCIA GILMER

December 2019

CONTACT
Advent Schedule

Winter came early this year. Somehow it made the box store appearance of decked out Christmas trees in the days after Halloween seem less jarring. Yet as the cards play and the glitz glitters and the holiday parties crowd our calendars, the soul seems hungry for something. Perhaps it’s wise enough to know that Advent is the season of waiting. There is something that’s not here yet. Some combination of the hope, peace, joy, love, and light that is ready to be born into the world. The Psalmist says, “My soul in silence waits for God.” So in this season of waiting, with all the different songs on our Advent mix-tape, make room for a track of silence. Even if it’s just a few minutes, your soul will thank you. You might be surprised by what you hear.

NOVEMBER
30 Greening Plymouth Church Saturday, 5:30 p.m., Waveland Hall
30 Elizabeth’s Song First Saturday of Advent Saturday, 5:30 p.m., Waveland Hall

DECEMBER
1 Elizabeth’s Song First Sunday of Advent Sunday, 9 & 11 a.m., Sanctuary
4 Youth – Hygee for Your Holidays We will begin an Advent tradition taken from the Danish! In Denmark, the peak of Hygge (pronounced HOO-GA and sometimes translated as “the art of coziness”) is during the darkest days of the year. On this first Wednesday of Advent, youth will have creative time to make either a candle or Advent Mason Jar to take home to observe during Advent. Over the next three weeks, we will continue to explore Hygge and the symbols and meaning of Advent seen through this Danish tradition! Wednesday, 4 p.m., Youth Room
4 The Gift of Bring a Good Friend – Feelings & Listening Explore how to identify and manage feelings as well as how and why we listen. There will be one-on-one and group exercises. Wednesday, 7 p.m., Greenwood Room
5 Living WOW – Card-Making Thursday, 2 p.m., Greenwood Room
5 VesperS Worship Join us for a weekly worship service during the Advent season with prayer, reflection, and music. Thursday, 5:30 p.m., Sanctuary
7 The Magnificat Second Saturday of Advent Saturday, 5:30 p.m., Waveland Hall
7 Handel’s Messiah Concert Arts/ Plymouth presents G.F. Handel’s beloved work Messiah, part I (the Christmas portion), with the Plymouth Chancel Choir, Soloists, and Orchestra. Join us to hear this perennial favorite presented in spectacular style! Admission is free with an opportunity to give a love offering that supports the costs of the production. Saturday, 7 p.m., Sanctuary
8 The Magnificat Second Sunday of Advent Sunday, 9 & 11 a.m., Sanctuary
8 Plymouth Soup Supper & Carol Sing We suggest a $5 minimum donation per attendee for the supper. Funds raised through this fundraiser support Chancel Choir’s NEW Choral Scholarship Fund. Sunday, 5:30 p.m., Waveland Hall, followed by caroling in the Sanctuary
11 Youth – Hygee for Your Holidays Wednesday, 4 p.m., Youth Room
11 The Gift of Bring a Good Friend – Process vs. Results What does it mean to be present for another person? What should we really focus on? There will be one-on-one and group exercises. Wednesday, 7 p.m., Greenwood Room
12 Living WOW – Movie Thursday, 2 p.m., Greenwood Room
12 Vespers Worship Thursday, 8:30 p.m., Sanctuary
13 Plymouth Church Goes Caroling Whether you’re 2 or 92, you’re invited to go caroling with Plymouth Church! We invite you and anyone who loves to sing Christmas cards to join us in spreading the cheer and good news of the season throughout our community! Join us for a simple supper featuring a child-friendly menu, then we’ll distribute music, divide into groups, and go caroling! Friday, 5:30 p.m., Waveland Hall
14 Service of Lessons and Carols Third Saturday of Advent Plymouth members will get in the spirit of the season through a special music-filled service. Saturday, 5:30 p.m., Waveland Hall
15 Service of Lessons and Carols Third Sunday of Advent Plymouth members will get in the spirit of the season through these special music-filled services. The 9 a.m. service will feature lessons and carols from K-12 Choirs. The 11 a.m. service will feature lessons and carols, including selections from Messiah, by the Chancel Choir. Sunday, 9 & 11 a.m., Sanctuary
15 Youth – Service & Outreach Project Shopping, wrapping, lunch, delivery & carol singing for our friends at Mosaic in Urbandale. Youth will shop for special needs and wants for our friends at Mosaic. We will come back to church to wrap gifts and eat lunch. We will then go over to Mosaic’s group homes to deliver gifts and spread holiday cheer with a carol sing! Sunday, 10:15 p.m., Youth Room
16 Longest Night Worship Service Dec. 21 is the winter solstice. It is the longest night of the year. As we feel the darkness growing deeper around us, many of us sense the need to go deeper within ourselves. In the midst of decorated everything and holiday music everywhere, we long for a time of quiet and reflection. At Plymouth, we choose to recognize that longest night on Monday, Dec. 16. Come and join with us for candle-lighting, healing prayers, quiet, scripture, heart-felt reflections and music that acknowledges God’s Presence is for you and that God’s Word comes to shine light into your life and our world. Monday, 6 p.m., Waveland Hall
18 Youth – Hygee for Your Holidays Wednesday, 4 p.m., Youth Room
19 Vespers Worship Thursday, 5:30 p.m., Sanctuary
20 FA-LA-LA and All That Jazz Concert Come for a helping of sparkling holiday favorites with some jazzy surprises. Enjoy the interplay of strings, percussion, and winds. Linger for the warmth of friends and chorus-made treats. Tickets available at dmcgov.org or at the door. Friday, 7:30 p.m., Sanctuary
21 TUBACHRISTMAS TUBACHRISTMAS is a free concert with a warm, rich, organ like sound from a huge low brass choir of tubas and euphoniums playing your favorite Christmas carol melodies. This 46th annual holiday tradition has won the ears and hearts of audiences each year at over 300 cities around the country and international. This year, TUBACHRISTMAS Des Moines is pleased to perform in a new location at Plymouth Church. Saturday, 2 p.m., Sanctuary
24 Christmas Eve Worship Services
5 p.m. – Family Christmas Eve Service, Sanctuary. 7 p.m. – Candlelight Service, Waveland Hall. Music by the Saturday Night Band. 9 p.m. – Carols and Carol Service, Sanctuary. Plymouth Bells will present an extended prelude and Chancel Choir will lead worship. Service will include carols by candlelight, choral anthems, and reflections by Matt Mardis-LeCroy. 11 p.m. – Carols and Carols Service, Sanctuary. The Matins Choir will lead worship. Service will include carols by candlelight, choral anthems, and reflections by Matt Mardis-LeCroy.
28 Rebecca’s Lament Saturday Night Worship Saturday, 5:30 p.m., Waveland Hall
29 Rebecca’s Lament Worship – ONLY ONE SERVICE! Sunday, 11 a.m., Sanctuary
For more information about Plymouth Church, please scan this code to visit our website at www.plymouthchurch.com, follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/plymouthchurch and Instagram @PlymouthUCC.
If you are not able to visit on Sunday, a podcast of a portion of the previous week’s service featuring the sermon is available on iTunes, or on the Plymouth website under Resources/Sermon Podcasts.
Print copies of most sermons may be downloaded from the website at Resources/Sermon Library.

To submit information for the Contact, email Cindy Eaton-Eklund, ceaton@plymouthchurch.com

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