Seasoned volunteers know her as soon as she starts walking down the corridor at the Wellmark YMCA at 5th and Grand downtown. I’ll call her Misty, but of course, that’s not her real name. She comes to the Plymouth Career Closet for Women every month, for roughly nine months. She used to be a health care administrator in another state, but now is here trying to get divorced from an abusive spouse. She suffers from some untreated illnesses but keeps interviewing for jobs.

When three women met 10 years ago to talk about opening the Career Closet, they just wanted to meet a clear need for work wear. The Women’s Resource Center offered them free space, and the ministry took off. Later, the downtown YMCA offered free space and continues to do so. We couldn’t exist without those partnerships, and we are so grateful as we celebrate our 10th anniversary in February.

Our data prove the persistent need for the closet. In 2018, we saw 1,058 visits, including 201 new clients. But 2018 brought some changes: Our volunteer list shrunk to about 20 dedicated souls, and we moved from Plymouth Women’s embrace to work with the Board of Benevolences. We put out a call last fall for new volunteers and got a good 15 more. We have fewer unstaffed shifts now, which is so exciting, but the need for about a dozen more volunteers is urgent. We can’t keep ministering to Des Moines women without more hands. The closet relies solely on donations of time, treasure and talents. Want to help? Donate gently used career wear anytime during the week on the ground floor rack, or help sort clothes on Wednesdays from 4:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. We need people to dedicate a half-hour a month to deliver sorted clothes from Plymouth to the Y. And we need people who can staff the closet Mondays from 12:45 p.m. to 4 p.m.; Thursdays from 12:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. and the first two Saturdays of each month from 8:45 a.m. to noon. Even if you did one shift a month, that helps!

We believe God put us in this exact place to help, and we are eager to serve working women who can’t afford clothes as we are serving women like Misty, who need kindness and support—as well as great clothes—when they come to our door. For all of us involved, it’s not just about clothes. It’s about making struggling women feel better about themselves, believing in what they can accomplish and getting connected to other resources in town. We hope you’ll prayerfully consider joining our movement. Want to learn more? Send us a note at plymouthcareercloset10@gmail.com.
Let’s talk about the Plymouth Church budget. As we start the 2019 budget year, we face some challenges. But we also have some real opportunities.

I want to begin with the big picture: Plymouth Church has never been financially stronger. We are debt-free, we have successfully raised funds to sustain our much-loved Transition into Ministry program and we are well on our way to funding badly needed work on the Rollins Tower. Our facility is in excellent shape. We have a whole lot to be grateful for.

At the same time, the annual operating budget poses a bit of a challenge. Pledge income has essentially remained flat over the last four or five years. And when we dig into the numbers a little, we see a pattern: The people who are here are more committed to Plymouth and its mission than ever before. A substantial number of households increased their pledge to Plymouth for 2019 and did so by a significant amount. (I am so very grateful). But that increased giving is offset by the departures of people who are not happy with the direction of the church—be it the Black Lives Matter banner, our work with immigrants and refugees or conversations about climate change.

When you add in the increased giving of some and subtract the decreased giving of others, the resulting income number remains flat. This is a challenge, of course. But it also presents a real opportunity, and we intend to make the most of it.

I am so grateful for the partners I have in this work: to Jennifer Hines, who is a budget and expense-control genius, to the Board of Christian Stewardship which planned and executed an outstanding campaign in 2018, and to the Board of Trustees, which has been a great source of wisdom this year.

We all worked together, and here is where we landed: In late January, the Trustees proposed a 2019 budget that is NOT in balance. It calls for a budget deficit of $86,000.

That is a big gap. But there is good news and even better news here.

The good news is that we can afford it. Over the years, Plymouth has accumulated substantial cash reserves. (This is in addition to, and separate from, the assets of the Plymouth Church Foundation). We can use a portion of accumulated cash reserves to plug the gap and pay our bills in 2019.

Of course, this is not a sustainable budgeting practice. But that brings me to the even better news. Along with the proposed 2019 budget, the Board of Trustees has also asked the Church Council to convene the Long Range Planning Task Force. This group (consisting of the Moderator, Moderator Elect and past six moderators of the Church Council) will be asked to seek input and explore strategies to match revenue and expense in the church budget beyond 2019. And they have been asked to do this in a way that aligns with the strategic priorities of the congregation. The group will work through the first half of the year and present a set of recommendations for Church Council’s consideration.

So let’s look at the big picture. What are we really talking about here? We need to make about a 5% adjustment to our annual operating budget. Doing so will position Plymouth for a sustainable future. Doing so in a way that is careful and strategic will, I believe, strengthen the church’s commitment to the things that matter most. And the people we are asking to help us figure this out are smart and faithful. They care deeply about the church.

(continued on page 10)
Paula helps plan Conversations for final time

It is one of the ways that Plymouth gives back to the wider United Church of Christ. And most of us know nothing about it.

Conversations is an annual gathering of Senior Ministers serving congregations of larger membership in the United Church of Christ. Each January we set aside a few days for renewal and connection. (Usually at the beach). And each year, a dynamic church leader provides a keynote presentation—people like Peter Marty (publisher of The Christian Century), theologian Rita Nakashima Brock, scholar Diana Butler Bass and James Frobes, former senior minister of The Riverside Church. I have come to value these opportunities for connection and renewal, and I know many of my colleagues do as well.

And I know something else: these same colleagues are deeply grateful for the work of Paula Wilkerson.

Conversations could not happen without Paula. For 13 of the past 15 years, Plymouth staff member Paula Wilkerson has played a critical role in helping to plan and facilitate Conversations—working with the planning team, tending to registrations and other logistical matters. Participants look forward to seeing her each summer (along with husband Roe, her self-identified “arm candy”). And leaders across the United Church of Christ have come to know and appreciate Paula’s many gifts and deep dedication to the church.

Paula tells us that 13 years is enough, and that her time with us in January was her last Conversations. So I introduced my colleagues to a practice of Plymouth Church: we had a blob of blessing for Paula. Together, we gave thanks to God for her incredible work. More than a few tears were shed.

I am proud to be part of church that would so willingly share Paula’s gifts, and so grateful that she chooses to share them. Congratulations on a job that was very well done!

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RESCHEDULED: JAZZ AS ACTIVIST MUSIC

Join us on Feb. 17 at 4 p.m. in Waveland Hall for Jazz in the Fight for Civil Rights. This late afternoon will feature University of Iowa’s, Dr. Damani Phillips. Dr. Phillips’ presentation invites us to view the contribution of jazz to the Civil Rights movement through a combination of live performance, spoken remarks and visual presentation. This unique program focuses on jazz music’s alignment with the African-American fight for civil rights and the backstory behind that creation. This event is presented by Arts@Plymouth, sponsored by the Board of Music and Fine Arts in collaboration with the Anti-Racism committee.
CURRENT HAPPENINGS

PWAG

Plymouth Women’s Adventure Groups incorporate fun, togetherness, spiritual moments, and acts of kindness in their small group activities. Many activities are spiritual and acts of kindness by their very nature. For example, a group wrapped gifts together for their Project Memories families, and shared appetizers while they worked to make a happier Christmas for others.

Another group visited the Buddhist Zen Center on SW 14th Street. After a short orientation, they entered the meditation/worship space and meditated. Their act of kindness was to donate to the Zen Center. Later at Starbucks they shared their current Zen moments as well as impediments, followed by a prayer for everyone in the group.

In December, two other PWAG groups enjoyed Christmas adventures. One group took a class to make stained glass ornaments. Another group visited Terrace Hill during its Christmas Open House.

CLIMATE WEEKEND

People of faith are called to protect God’s creation for future generations, says UCC Rev. Jim Antal, who will lead worship services Feb. 9 and 10. Rev. Antal, Special Advisor on Climate Change to the UCC and author of Climate Church, Climate World: How People of Faith Much Work for Change, also will be keynote speaker at a Climate Revival Conference at Plymouth Feb. 9, sponsored by the Plymouth Creation Care & Justice Coalition, the Iowa Interfaith Power & Light, the Interfaith Green Coalition, and the Indianola Green Team. Rev. Antal’s book is available at Beavardale Books, online, and at most Des Moines-area public libraries.

THE CRY OF JOB

The Plymouth Gallery will feature The Cry of Job, art exhibit by Jeannette (Jean) Powell Berry from Feb. 16-Mar. 30. Jean Berry’s graphic and vivid work reflects her grief on the loss of her teenage daughter. She also shares other portraits of emotion and journey through life. Ms. Berry will be at the Fellowship Forum on Feb. 17 at 10:10 a.m. in the Greenwood Room. She will speak on her process as she chooses themes in her different series. Also, on Feb. 17 at 12:15 p.m., Ms. Berry will conduct a walking tour in the Gallery for the current exhibit.

Jeanneatte Berry moved to Des Moines in 1960. She earned an Associate of Arts degree from DMACC and a Bachelor of Arts from Drake University. She is the recipient of the NAACP’s King Celebration Award and her work has been exhibited around the world and here in Iowa. These events are sponsored by the Plymouth Gallery Committee, Plymouth Music and Fine Arts Committee and the Anti-Racism Committee.

FEBRUARY LUNCH & LEARN

Please join us Feb. 21 at 12:15 p.m. for lunch and an inspiring program about Dogpatch Urban Gardens. Plymouth member Jenny Quiner is the co-founder of Dogpatch, an urban farm that specializes in organically growing annual vegetable crops in northwest Des Moines. We will learn about FarmHer Jenny’s journey of starting the farm, how the farm has evolved in three short years, and how Dogpatch Urban Gardens has positively impacted the Des Moines community.

Cost for the meal is $10 and reservations are due by noon on Feb. 19. Register by calling the church office (515.255.3149), in person Sunday, Feb. 17 in Waveland Hall, or online at plymouthchurch.com/resources under Register for Events. If you forget to make a reservation, you are invited to bring your own lunch and enjoy our program. As always, men are welcome. See you there!

PLYMOUTH WOMEN SPECIAL EVENT

Need a break from the winter cold? Warm up inside the Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden’s tropical conservatory while enjoying some of the Midwest’s best blues music. Del “Saxman” Jones will perform on Feb. 10 from 2-4 p.m. as part of the Botanical Blues Winter Concert Series. Due to the popularity of these concerts, we plan to meet inside the conservatory around 1 p.m. The address is 909 Robert D. Ray in Des Moines. Cost is $10 ($9 for seniors 65+ and free for members). Light snacks and beverages will be available for purchase at the Trellis Cafe prior to the concert. For more information visit dmbotanicalgarden.com. Please try to register ahead of time (click on Register for Events at plymouthchurch.com) so we will know to look for you! If unable to register, no worries. Please join us! Women and men are all welcome! Questions? Call Sunny Cook at 515.422.7282.

PLYMOUTH BRIDGE

Plymouth Bridge is a fun group of men and women who play party bridge on Wednesday afternoons. We meet at 12:30 p.m. in the Burling Room and encourage new players to join us. All are welcome but we need to know you’re coming by Monday mornings. Email Judith Jaastad at jwrite@city.net or call her at 515.277.1144.
CURRENT HAPPENINGS

GROWING UP IN BLACK DES MOINES:
DRIVEN

Venise Berry is an Associate Professor of Journalism and African American studies at the University of Iowa. She will share readings from her latest book, *Driven: Reflections on Love, Career and the Pursuit of Happiness* on Feb. 24 at 10:15 a.m. at Plymouth Grounds Coffee Shop and at 12:15 p.m. in the Burling Room. With humor and wisdom, she will offer insight on her experience growing up as an opinionated, educated, professional, feminist Black woman in Des Moines during the 1970s. A book signing will follow the presentation and will also include a co-signing with Plymouth member, Anita Fleming-Rife. Venise and Anita, along with Ayo Dayo, co-edited *Black Culture & Contemporary Issues*. This book is included in the Anti-Racism Reading Material bibliography released by the Plymouth Anti-Racism committee.

GROWING UP IN BLACK DES MOINES: CRY TOUGH

On Mar. 3 Steven Torriano Berry will present stories from his book, *T.E.A.R.S. (Teach Everybody All Racism Sucks)*, at 10:15 a.m. in Plymouth Grounds Coffee Shop and 12:15 p.m. in the Burling Room. *T.E.A.R.S.* explores the relationship of two young boys and the lasting impact of racism on their lives as they grow into young men in Iowa. Mr. Berry is a Professor Emeritus of Radio, Television and Film at Howard University. He has written books and created and produced television series and full-length films. Working with the Smithsonian, he has restored early black films from the 1920s and 1930s. Book will be available for purchase and signing. This event is sponsored by the Plymouth Anti-Racism committee.
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<tr>
<th>SUNDAY</th>
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| Matins Warm Up, 8:15 a.m.  
Hand Chime Choir Warm Up, 8:30 a.m.  
Childcare, 8:45 a.m.  
**Worship, 9 & 11 a.m.: Matt Mardis-LeCroy**  
Church School, 9:15 a.m.  
Chancel Choir Warm Up, 9:45 a.m.  
After Worship Fellowship, 10 a.m. & Noon  
My Growing Infant & Toddler, 10:10 a.m.  
Fellowship Forum, 10:10 a.m.  
Senior Experience, 10:15 a.m.  
Hand Chime Choir Warm Up, 10:30 a.m.  
Flower Delivery Team, Noon  
Financial Peace University, 6 p.m. | Tai Chi, 7 a.m.  
Faith Builders, 9 a.m.  
Quilting, 10 a.m.  
Yoga, 5:15 p.m.  
Board of Benevolences, 5:30 p.m.  
Board of Music & Fine Arts, 5:30 p.m.  
Anti-Racism Committee, 5:30 p.m.  
COCI Centering Prayer, 5:45 p.m.  
RENEW Leadership Team, 6:15 p.m.  
Troop 50 Scout Meeting, 7 p.m. | AMENS, 6:45 a.m.  
AMOS Circle Meeting, 10:30 a.m.  
Career Closet Meeting, 5 p.m.  
Board of Christian Education, 5:30 p.m.  
Board of Christian Stewardship, 5:30 p.m.  
Line Dancing, 6:30 p.m.  
Stephen Ministers Meeting, 6:30 p.m. |
| 10     | 11     | 12      |
| Matins, 8:15 a.m.  
Glory Choir, 8:30 a.m.  
Childcare, 8:45 a.m.  
**Worship, 9 & 11 a.m.: Rev. Jim Antal**  
Church School, 9:15 a.m.  
Chancel Choir Warm Up, 9:45 a.m.  
After Worship Fellowship, 10 a.m. & Noon  
My Growing Infant & Toddler, 10:10 a.m.  
Fellowship Forum, 10:10 a.m.  
Senior Experience, 10:15 a.m.  
Descant Choir Warm Up, 10:45 a.m.  
Flower Delivery Team, Noon  
Creation Care & Justice Lunch, Noon  
Anti-Racism Education Subcommittee, 12:30 p.m.  
New Member Potluck, 1 p.m. | Tai Chi, 7 a.m.  
Quilting, 10 a.m.  
Plymouth Women Board Meeting, 4 p.m.  
Yoga, 5:15 p.m.  
COCI Centering Prayer, 5:45 p.m.  
Troop 50 Scout Meeting, 7 p.m.  
Transition from Prison Meeting, 7 p.m. | AMENS, 6:45 a.m.  
Mental Health & Disability Task Force, 5:30 p.m.  
Peace Committee Meeting, 5:30 p.m.  
Youth Executive Committee Meeting, 5:30 p.m.  
AMOS Core Meeting, 6 p.m.  
Board of Membership, 5:30 p.m.  
Line Dancing, 6:30 p.m.  
Board of Deacons, 7 p.m. |
| 17     | 18     | 19      |
| **Family Promise, 8 a.m.**  
**Matins Warm Up, 8:15 a.m.**  
**Hallelujah! Choir Warm Up, 8:30 a.m.**  
**Childcare, 8:45 a.m.**  
**Worship, 9 & 11 a.m.: Matt Mardis-LeCroy**  
**Church School, 9:15 a.m.**  
**Chancel Choir Warm Up, 9:45 a.m.**  
**After Worship Fellowship, 10 a.m. & Noon**  
**My Growing Infant & Toddler, 10:10 a.m.**  
**Fellowship Forum, 10:10 a.m.**  
**Senior Experience, 10:15 a.m.**  
**Descant Choir Warm Up, 10:45 a.m.**  
**Flower Delivery Team, Noon**  
**Willits LGBTQ Committee, 12:30 p.m.**  
**Dr. Damani Phillips Concert, 1 p.m.**  
**Financial Peace University, 6 p.m.** | Tai Chi, 7 a.m.  
Faith Builders, 9 a.m.  
Quilting, 10 a.m.  
Plymouth Women Board Meeting, 4 p.m.  
Arts & Memorials Meeting, 5 p.m.  
Yoga, 5:15 p.m.  
Board of Christian Social Action, 6 p.m.  
Troop 50 Scout Meeting, 7 p.m.  
Transition from Prison Meeting, 7 p.m. | AMENS, 6:45 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. |
| 24     | 25     | 26      |
| Matins Warm Up, 8:15 a.m.  
Soul Singers Warm Up, 8:30 a.m.  
Childcare, 8:45 a.m.  
**Worship, 9 & 11 a.m.: Valerie Miller-Coleman**  
Church School, 9:15 a.m.  
Chancel Choir Warm Up, 9:45 a.m.  
After Worship Fellowship, 10 a.m. & Noon  
Fellowship Forum, 10:10 a.m.  
Flower Delivery Team, Noon | Tai Chi, 7 a.m.  
Faith Builders, 9 a.m.  
Quilting, 10 a.m.  
Yoga, 5:15 p.m.  
Troop 50 Scout Meeting, 7 p.m. | AMENS, 6:45 a.m.  
Shawl Knitting Ministry, 5 p.m.  
Line Dancing, 6:30 p.m. |
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<td>TaI Chi, Noon</td>
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<td>RENEW, 3 p.m.</td>
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<td>Bridge, 12:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Bible in 90 Days, 6 p.m.</td>
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<td>Food Buddies, 4:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Career Closet Sorting, 4 p.m.</td>
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<td>Worship: 5:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Stephen Minister Leadership Team, 4 p.m.</td>
<td>Plymouth 20/30, 6 p.m.</td>
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<td>Rev. Jim Antal</td>
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<td>Youth Conversations, 4:45 p.m.</td>
<td>Chancel Choir, 7 p.m.</td>
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<td>Children’s Choirs, 5 p.m.</td>
<td>Basketball Open Gym, 8 p.m.</td>
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<td>Hand Chime Choir, 6 p.m.</td>
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<td>H.S. Youth Dinner, 6 p.m.</td>
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<td>Spanish Class, 6:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Confirmation Class Theme Night, 7 p.m.</td>
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<td>13 Adult Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.</td>
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<td>RENEW, 10 a.m.</td>
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<td>Trustees Finance Meeting, 12:15 p.m.</td>
<td>Chancel Chorale Rehearsal, 6 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>Rev. Jim Antal</td>
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<td>Coyote Run Farm Pick Up, 4:45 p.m.</td>
<td>Chancel Choir Rehearsal, 7 p.m.</td>
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<td>Youth Conversations, 4:45 p.m.</td>
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<td>H.S. Youth Dinner, 6 p.m.</td>
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<td>20 Adult Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.</td>
<td>WISE Meeting, 7:15 a.m.</td>
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<td>TaI Chi, Noon</td>
<td>Plymouth Lunch &amp; Learn, 12:15 p.m.</td>
<td>FWAG, 11 a.m.</td>
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<td>Bridge, 12:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Personnel Committee, 5 p.m.</td>
<td>RENEW, 3 p.m.</td>
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<td>Career Closet Sorting, 4 p.m.</td>
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<td>Worship: 5:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Children’s Choirs, 5 p.m.</td>
<td>Plymouth 20/30, 6 p.m.</td>
<td>Rev. Jim Antal</td>
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<td>Hand Chime Choir, 5:45 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bridge, 12:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Bible in 90 Days, 6 p.m.</td>
<td>RENEW, 3 p.m.</td>
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<td>Career Closet Sorting, 4 p.m.</td>
<td>Chancel Choir, 7 p.m.</td>
<td>Food Buddies, 4:30 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coyote Run Farm Pick Up, 4:45 p.m.</td>
<td>Basketball Open Gym, 8 p.m.</td>
<td>Worship: 5:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Youth Conversations, 4:45 p.m.</td>
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<td>Laura Robinson</td>
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<td>Children’s Choirs, 5 p.m.</td>
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<td>Childcare, 5:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Hand Chime Choir, 5:45 p.m.</td>
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<td>HS Youth Dinner, 6 p.m.</td>
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<td>Soul Singers, 6 p.m.</td>
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<td>Spanish Class, 6:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Confirmation Class Fellowship, 7 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plymouth Bells, 7 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matins Rehearsal, 7 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plymouth Bells Rehearsal, 7 p.m.</td>
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In the recent past, the Plymouth Quilting Group has lovingly provided quilts to clients of Orchard Place and Iowa Youth Homes. Happily, those agencies currently have an abundant supply of quilts for their needs. Beginning in 2019, the Quilting Group is partnering with Habitat for Humanity’s “Aging in Place” program. Each year 100 area houses are repaired and renovated to help people stay in their homes safely as they age. Our Quilters have been asked to supply 25 quilts for one of the quarterly events. We can do that! Would you like to help us fulfill this request? We meet on Mondays in the Room 318 from 10 a.m. to noon. If that doesn’t fit your schedule, we can provide homework. We already have six quilts “fit to be tied,” which could be done at home. Contact Linda Railsback at 515.255.7818 to participate.

We are ALWAYS open to new people, including youth of whatever age and gender. We know Mondays at 10 a.m. may not work well for those in school or a structured workplace. If there is a request/demand, we’d be happy to meet with some other folks at another time, please let us know!

Please support the Tower Restoration project. A large area (50 square feet) of the quilting room has been temporarily given up to store music, which was moved to prevent further moisture damage from a room in the leaking tower. Once the tower is repaired, those materials will be moved back to where they belong. As we gain quilters and projects, the extra space will be appreciated!

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**Senior Experience Class**

**H.S. Seniors & Parents: Senior Experience Class**

Sundays, Feb. 3, 10, 17 | 10:15 -11:30 a.m. | Greenwood Room

**Senior Blessing:**

Sunday, Feb. 24 at 9 a.m. worship

Please sign up online or RSVP to Marissa Hernandez-Evans, mherandez-evans@plymouthchurch.com if interested in attending.
Scout Troop 50: Teaching Leadership and Values

Troop 50 is a vibrant troop that has been a proud part of Plymouth for 97 years. Currently we have over 60 active men and women between the ages of 11-17. Last year, our troop had 14 overnight excursions with several high adventures including canoeing for five days down a river in Missouri and backpacking in a very remote area of Colorado.

But scouting is not limited to campouts; it excels at training young men and women to be leaders. Each patrol (sub group of scouts) elects a peer to be their leader and the entire troop elects a Senior Patrol leader who runs the meetings, helps plan the year of activities, interacts with adult leadership, and basically oversees the entire troop. If an adult leader sees something out of line, he informs the senior patrol leader, who then works with the patrol leaders who work within their patrols to resolve the issue. Adult leadership guides the scouts, but the scouts are truly running the show.

As scouts complete requirements and rank up they go through an interviewing process where first they are interviewed by three adults and then are interviewed by the adult leader in charge, the scoutmaster. If you want your child to be ready for their first job interview, send them to scouts. It teaches them how to manage being questioned about their knowledge in an interview setting. This happens again and again through each rank. By the time they are an Eagle Scout, they have been through 14 interviews.

Scouting also teaches core values as outlined in the Scout Law – A scout is: trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent. During the interviews, scouts are often asked to give examples of how they have lived out these values. As a mother of two teenagers, who has hauled many a pungent scout home from a campout, I chuckle at clean, but what a wonderful set of values for all of us to strive toward.

My own children who have been an active part of Troop 50 for six years have gained amazing self-confidence from succeeding at difficult tasks, whether it be getting interviewed by adults, being a leader to their peers or sleeping in a tent in -46 degree windchill (yes, this really happened.) Come and join us on our adventure. We meet in the gym on Mondays at 7 p.m. Contact Scoutmaster Carl Wiederaenders directly with any questions at 515.490.9083.

BY PAM HYDE

Blessed are the “Piece” Makers
Of course I don’t like adopting a budget out of balance. Of course I don’t enjoy conversations about closing the gap. But I really do believe that this is an opportunity. We can rise to meet this moment; that we can wisely adjust the life of the church in a way that honors our key priorities and frees us for many years of faithful ministry.

This conversation will be a big focus of my life for the next couple of months. I welcome your input and I covet your prayers—for Plymouth, for our leaders, for openness to all the Spirit is trying to tell us.

If we do this in the right way, someday the people of Plymouth will look back on us in gratitude.

Thank you for sharing the journey, See you in church!

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The Cuba Partnership Team at Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ is collecting used cell phones that will be given to people at Ebenezer Baptist Church, our “sister church” in Havana, Cuba.

During the months of February and March, people can drop off their used phones at the Plymouth Church office, during regular office hours. And after all Plymouth services on the weekends of Feb. 23-24 and March 2-3, members of our partnership team will staff a table to accept donated phones.

Some guidelines: All cell phones that operate on “SIM” cards will be acceptable. Personal information on those phones needs to be erased and the phones need to be unlocked. If the charger for a specific phone is available, attach it to that phone when you donate it. And the older “flip phones” do not work for re-use in Cuba and we will not accept those.

The donated phones will be checked over this coming summer, and they will be delivered to the people of Ebenezer Church next fall, when another Plymouth delegation is scheduled to travel to Cuba.

If you have questions or need more information, you can contact the Cuba Partnership Team’s co-chairs Esther Burgett at EsBurgett@aol.com or Jan Campbell at jancampbell@me.com.
Plymouth Church 2019 Budget Approved

2019 PLEDGE RECAP
As the Preserving the Past, Building the Future Campaign winds to a close, the Board of Christian Stewardship would like to thank ALL the members of Plymouth Church for their financial promises to advance the ministries of the church.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New pledges</th>
<th>Pledge Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>$123,339</td>
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<tr>
<td>172</td>
<td>$685,183</td>
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<tr>
<td>293</td>
<td>$731,304</td>
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<tr>
<td>114</td>
<td>$195,231</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>634</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,735,057</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We have not yet received 2019 pledge cards from 64 households that pledged in 2018. Their 2018 pledges total $86,885. The Trustees established the 2019 pledge budget at $1,761,123 based on the $1,735,057 in pledges received and an estimate of 30% of the total of the pledges from the 64 households that pledged in 2018 but haven’t yet pledged for 2019. It is never too late to let us know what your financial commitment (pledge) will be. You can make a pledge online at www.plymouthchurch.com or by returning a pledge card to the church office.

TOWER RESTORATION
We have received 312 pledges totaling $400,939 for the tower restoration project, $199,561 short of our $600,500 fundraising goal. Work on the Tower Restoration will begin on or about Apr. 15 and will continue for approximately three months.

CHURCH COUNCIL ADOPTS BUDGET
The Church Council voted unanimously to adopt the 2019 budget recommended by the board of Trustees. Total income is projected to be $2,211,923, a 1.9% increase from 2018 income. Pledge income of $1,761,123 accounts for 80% of the income total, with the remaining income coming from non-pledge gifts and donations for building use.

The Church Council approved an expense budget of $2,298,041, which exceeds projected income by $86,118. Board ministry budgets will remain at or slightly below 2018 levels, as will administrative expenses. Building operations costs are budgeted to increase 2.4%. Program staff (ministers and program directors) salaries will remain the same with no increase in pay. Support and custodial staff employed at least one year will receive a pay increase of 2%.

We are fortunate to have accumulated cash reserves in excess of $437,000 to cover this deficit budget while maintaining adequate cash reserves (the Trustees have a policy to retain reserves of at least 10% of the total operating budget). The Long Range Planning Task Force will seek input and explore strategies to match revenue and expense in the Plymouth Church operating budget beyond 2019, in keeping with the strategic priorities of the congregation.

Please contact Jennifer Hines, Director of Operations and Finance, at jhines@plymouthchurch.com or 515.255.3149 x19, if you would like more information.
For more information about Plymouth Church, please scan this code to visit our website at www.plymouthchurch.com, follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/plymouthchurch and Instagram at 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

Plymouth Church Program Staff

Matt Mardis-LeCroy .................................................Senior Minister
Lindsey Braun ..................................................Minister of Discipleship
Cindy Eaton-Eklund .................................Director of Communications
Christopher Goodson ....................Director of Music and Fine Arts
Carl Gravander ...................................................Organist
Nikira Hernandez-Evans ..........................Associate Minister
Jennifer Hines ..............................Director of Operations and Finance
Karen Jeske ...............................Transition into Ministry Coordinator
Valerie Miller-Coleman.....Minister of Community Engagement
LeAnn Stubbs ..........................Minister of Care and Welcome
Laura Robinson ..........................Associate Minister
Jan Van Wyk ..........................Director of Plymouth Nursery School
Susan Waller ..........................Director of Youth Ministry

FEBRUARY 2019  VOLUME 30 ISSUE 2 (USPS 007018)

The CONTACT is published monthly by Plymouth Congregational Church United Church of Christ, 4126 Ingersoll Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50312-2792. Phone: 515.255.3149 Fax: 515.255.8667

Periodicals Postage Paid at Des Moines, Iowa. Subscription rate: $1 per year. Cindy Eaton-Eklund, Editor.

Postmaster, send address changes to: 4126 Ingersoll Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50312-2792