This is the question the strategic planning committee has wrestled with in one form or another nearly every week since our first meeting on September 28, 2019. Each time the question surfaces it feels a little bit heavier than the last. Sometimes, I have felt buried by it because of the endless thoughts that race through my mind. At other times, I have felt completely defeated by it, terrified I will never feel like we found the right path. I think the reason this question carries so much weight for me is because I see the magnitude of its impact: our congregation, our community, our longing to become the people God wants us to be. And just when I feel like this question is insurmountable, I look to my left and to my right, and hear my fellow committee members remind me we do not have to answer it alone. God has given us one another: A community of hearts and minds who have entered into a covenant with one another and who desire to do this work and be the vibrant congregation we are called to be. It is in this fact that I find tremendous joy and excitement for our future.

Throughout the month of February, the strategic planning committee will invite the congregation to participate in one of several congregational triad (groups of three) conversations. During these conversations, you will be asked six questions about Plymouth Church. These questions will be provided in advance so you can pray on them and really think about what you want to share. Our strategic consultant, Reverend Sarai Rice, has helped us develop our questions and the process. While we are still finalizing the questions, I can tell you now one of the questions you will be asked is, “What is God calling Plymouth Church to commit to doing over the next five years?”

I know I speak on behalf of my fellow committee members when I say we cannot wait to hear what each of you has to say. Please make every effort to attend. Until then, I hope you will prayerfully consider what God is calling Plymouth Church to commit to doing.

CAROLINE BETTIS
Strategic Planning Committee

What is God calling Plymouth Church to commit to doing over the next five years?
Bread for the Journey

It is time, Plymouth Church. It is time for you to show up. Show up for strategic planning. Show up for our Lenten journey. Show up for a critical conversation about the life we share as God’s people.

For months now, I have been saying something I believe in my bones: the people who show up in this season will set the course for Plymouth Church for years to come.

But now I am ready to get much more specific. Now is the time for you to show up. Right now I want you to do some dreaming with us; I want your voice in the mix as we explore the question of our identity.

Plymouth’s Strategic Planning Steering Committee has been putting in long hours, meeting almost weekly since late September. They have learned about wider trends in American religion; they’ve worked to get their arms around Plymouth’s recent history. They have interviewed staff, lay leaders and people who have recently left the church. They have reached out to other congregations that are doing exciting things to learn more about their planning processes.

And, at the same time, they have been designing and refining a process for helping all of us come together and do some dreaming about the future of Plymouth Church.

We call them Triad Conversations. Here is how it works: We will gather in large groups, split off into smaller groups of three and then take turns answering six big questions, one specifically for high school youth, another which takes place off-campus, hopefully at one of the care centers where a lot of Plymouth people live.

We intend to capture responses from several hundred Plymouth people over the course of these sessions. But we reserve the right to plan even more sessions in the future, especially if there is some segment of the congregation we feel we have not reached. And if none of these opportunities work for you, be on the lookout for opportunities to answer the questions by email.

Bottom line: We want your input. Yours, specifically. The input only you can give. For the sake of Plymouth’s future, for the love of a gracious God, please show up and let’s do some dreaming together.

And then, after you do that, it will be time for Lent. For 40 days we will prepare for Easter. But this year Lent may matter more than ever before.

Here is a preview of my March 1 sermon: Lent begins with the story of Jesus “temptation” in the wilderness. I put the word “temptation” in scare quotes because I do not believe this is a story about Jesus being tempted to do naughty things—to cheat on his diet or go 40 mph on University in Windsor Heights. No, Jesus goes to the wilderness to wrestle with the question of his own identity: What does it mean to be God’s beloved and chosen one? What is the work God has prepared for me to do?

So here is what I want from you:

1. Commit to taking part in one of our February Triad Conversations. It just won’t be the same without you.
2. Plan on making Lent a time when you will read Life Together along with me and join the conversation about our identity as a community.

It is like I keep saying: the people who show up in this season will set the course for Plymouth Church for years to come.

Make sure that you are one of them.

Grace and Peace,

[Signature]

Matt Mardis-Lecroy
Senior Minister
CURRENT HAPPENINGS

GUN SAFETY ACTION OPPORTUNITIES
The Plymouth Peace Committee is joining with the Interfaith Alliance of Iowa and “We Can End Gun Violence Coalition” to sign a letter to legislators urging opposition to the constitutional amendment that would add strict scrutiny language to the Iowa Constitution. This language could threaten future sensible gun safety legislation. There will be an information session about advocating for gun safety at the Capitol on Monday, Feb. 10 from 11:45-12:30 p.m. during Moral Mondays. A “We Can End Gun Violence” Press Conference will be held from 12:40-1 p.m. Following the Press Conference, participants are encouraged to visit their legislators. You may sign the letter on the Interfaith Alliance Legislative Update or contact rosenbury@tmhc1.com for the link.

DES MOINES METRO OPERA PRESENTS: ZACHARY JAMES ON BROADWAY
On Sunday, Feb. 16 at 2 p.m. in the Sanctuary, spend an intimate afternoon with DMMO favorite and Broadway star, bass Zachary James. Enjoy this critically acclaimed one-man show, which combines tales from his time in the Tony Award-winning revival of South Pacific at the Lincoln Center, his portrayal of “Lurch” in the original cast of The Addams Family, as well as performances of greatest hits from Oklahoma, Sweeney Todd, Les Miserables, Pajama Game, On The Town, Phantom of the Opera, Carousel, The Fantasticks, Camelot, and Most Happy Fella.

INFANT & TODDLER CLASS FOR FAMILIES
Plymouth’s Classes for Families walk families through important stages in faith formation and life. Parents of children two years old and younger are welcome to join our Infant & Toddler class. Here you will be empowered to share life experiences, connect with others who are in a similar stage in life, and grow as a community of faith. This class is taught to work in our reception office. Our office volunteers answer phones, assist visitors, and help out our church staff. Shifts are mornings or afternoons on week days. Please contact Betty Foxburgh for more information by phone at 515.720.4256 or by email at bettydickfosburgh@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, Feb. 14. Contact Dian Meek at 515.255.7220 for more information.

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 at sfaa.dan@gmail.com.

EXTRA COATS?
Have any nice but rarely worn coats hanging in your closet? How about purses, scarves, or jewelry that are in good condition but you’re no longer using? Think about donating them to the Plymouth Women’s Career Closet. Coats are a hot commodity this time of year as our Iowa winter has set in. You can leave your donations on the rack by the door of the lower-level parking garage.

CURRENT HAPPENINGS

FAITHFUL READERS
Our next meeting will be on Thursday, Feb. 27 at 7 p.m. in the Inspiration Lounge. Our book is Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens. For more information, contact Jean Nelson at 515.255.5019.

LUTHER COLLEGE NORDIC CHOIR CONCERT
On Sunday, Feb. 9 at 4 p.m. in the Sanctuary, the Luther College Nordic Choir will be performing. Nordic Choir, founded in 1946, enjoys national and international stature as one of the premier Nordic Choirs in the United States. Acclaimed for the way it honors the Lutheran choral tradition while also featuring new and innovative choral works, the choir showcases versatility, artistry, and technical mastery across many genres of music. Tickets are available online for $10 at tickets.luther.edu or on Sunday mornings. Tickets will also be available at the door prior to the concert for $15. Join us for the thrilling concert!

OFFICE VOLUNTEERS
We are looking for more volunteers willing to work in our reception office. Our office volunteers answer phones, assist visitors, and help out our church staff. Shifts are mornings or afternoons on week days. Please contact Betty Foxburgh for more information by phone at 515.720.4256 or by email at bettydickfosburgh@gmail.com.

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. These students range in age from 18-21, and many are students at Des Moines metro high schools. We call them baristas, and we are very proud that we have a 92% rate of employment for these students after they leave Plymouth Grounds. Shop is open Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to noon, and Wednesdays from 4-6:30 p.m. Come visit us for coffee/tea and cookies!

STEPHEN MINISTRY
Need a non-judgmental person to walk with you as you wrestle with a problem, an illness or a loss? Stephen Ministers are trained members of Plymouth Church, who are available to help bring a spiritual presence in your life through caring, listening presence and prayer. Contact Leslie Stubbs at 515.255.3148 to discuss having a Stephen Minister assigned to walk with you.

PLYMOUTH WOMEN SCHOLARSHIP
The Board of Plymouth Women Scholarship Committee will award up to four scholarships in the spring of 2020 to college students who are preparing for a career in service. The estates of Susan B. Turner, Opal Jordan, and Mary and Frederick Royal fund these scholarships. Paper copies of the application for the scholarships are available in the church office. The application is also available online as a form-fillable PDF. The applications are due March 31.

JOIN THE INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE
Do you play an instrument? Join Plymouth’s Instrumental Ensemble – a short-term commitment – to prepare an instrumental selection and present it in worship. We will rehearse on two Wednesday evenings, Feb. 12 & 19, 8-8:45 p.m. in the Sanctuary. We will play on Sunday, Feb. 23. Did you used to play an instrument, but it’s been sitting in the closet gathering dust? Well, now is your chance to pull it out, dust it off, and fall in love with making music again! This opportunity is designed for people like you – join us! Contact Christopher Goodson (cgoodson@plymouthchurch.com) by Monday, Feb. 10, to pre-register.

LENTEN VESPERS
If you are in need of a chance to pause, to pray, to savor Scripture and good music? Starting on March 5, join us on Thursday nights from 5:30-6 p.m. for Lenten Vespers. All are welcome!
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<th>Date</th>
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<td>2-3</td>
<td>Masses, 8:15 a.m.; Choir Director, 8:30 a.m.; Chancel Choir, 8:45 a.m.</td>
<td>Guilt, 10 a.m.; Moral Mondays, 12 p.m.; Yoga, 5:15 p.m.; CODI Centering Prayer, 5:45 p.m.; Scout Meeting, 7 p.m.</td>
<td>AMENs, 6:45 a.m.; Shavuot Knitting Ministry, 5 p.m.; Peace Committee, 5:30 p.m.; AMOS, 6 p.m.; Line Dancing, 6:30 p.m.; Stephen Ministers, 6:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>4-5</td>
<td>AMENs, 6:45 a.m.; Community Circle, 10 a.m.</td>
<td>AMENs, 6:45 a.m.; Shavuot Knitting Ministry, 5 p.m.; Peace Committee, 5:30 p.m.; AMOS, 6 p.m.; Line Dancing, 6:30 p.m.; Stephen Ministers, 6:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>6-7</td>
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Plymouth members in their 20s and 30s are invited to gather on the Third Thursdays of each month from 6-7:30 p.m. for a monthly dose of MOJO. Together, we will enjoy a potluck dinner and conversation about the various callings of our faith in the context of young adulthood.

Throughout 2020 we plan to explore: Resilience, Creativity, Joy, Freedom, Courage, and Hope among others.

In addition to these conversations, the group will engage in group prayer practices and will be encouraged to interact between gatherings on their Facebook group page (find it at Plymouth Young Adults group). Childcare will be available.

If you have any questions, please contact Karen Jeske at kjeske@plymouthchurch.com.

February Lunch & Learn

For our Lunch and Learn on Feb. 20 members of Plymouth’s Anti-Racism Committee will discuss the 1619 Project. Since Jan. 22, over 100 Plymouth members have been participating in this six-week study of the contributions of black Americans and the many ways the legacy of slavery continues to shape society in the United States. What has been learned so far in the sessions? How are we all enriched by others’ perspectives of history? What are some local opportunities available to us to make change?

Please join us for what will surely be a fascinating presentation. Enjoy a delicious lunch at 12:15 p.m.; the 35-50 minute program follows at 12:40 p.m. Cost for the meal is $10. If you will bring your own lunch, let us know when registering so you are not charged. Register before noon on Tuesday, Feb. 18 by phone (515.255.3149); online by clicking here; or in person (Sunday, Feb. 16 in Waveland Hall).

All are welcome!
**Living WOW!**

Let us remind you what that is. Living WOW stands for: Living Well, Olderering Well.

**GREY MATTERS!**  
Thursdays, 2-4 p.m. in Burling  
Get to know one another through sharing stories, watching films, playing games, exploring new places and ideas. Here is our February schedule:  
- Feb. 6: MOVIE! Groundhog Day  
- Feb. 13: Learn & Discuss St. Valentine  
- Feb. 20: Trivial Pursuit  
- Feb. 27: DMARC Hunger Simulation

**SECOND MONDAYS − Coming this fall!**  
Now that the nest is empty, it’s time to re-discover the church for you.

**BOUNDARY WATERS TRIP − Aug. 14-20**  
Calling ALL adults to come join Pastor LeAnn & Pastor Mary Kate for exploration—both spiritual and wilderness! Whether you’re looking for more of a retreat style, sipping tea in the lodge, afternoon fishing, and plenty of time to relax and take in the beauty of the boundary waters, OR you’re looking for a full wilderness canoeing experience, this trip is for YOU! No matter your desired activity level, the wood-fired Norwegian sauna awaits you…  
*Contact Mary Kate Buchanan if you are interested in joining the adventure this summer*

**BIBLE STUDY**  
Wednesdays, 7-8 p.m. Inspiration Lounge  
No preparation or reservations required. Just come, read, and discuss the upcoming weekend’s scripture text in a supporting and engaging environment.

**SECOND MONDAYS − Coming this fall!**  
Now that the nest is empty, it’s time to re-discover the church for you.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS SERIES − Coming soon!**  
Hear from experts, gather information, gain resources & support.

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**CHILD & FAMILY MINISTRIES**

**Could you be Plymouth’s next Director of Child and Family Ministries?**  
Are you passionate about Church School, Classes for Families, Our Whole Lives, Vacation Bible School and all the other ways Plymouth ministers to kids? Do you have strong organizational skills, a back-ground in education, a proven track record in overseeing effective programs for children? Are you a team player, a person of faith, someone who resonates with Plymouth’s values?  
We are looking for a full-time Director of Child and Family Ministries—someone who can work with staff and lay leaders to guide faith formation programs for children and their families. Interested people are invited submit a cover letter and resume to mmardis-lecroy@plymouthchurch.com.

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**LOOK OUT!**  
Lenten Season: Feb. 26-April 9  
40 Days of Lent for Folks Over 50!

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**FLOWER DELIVERY TEAM:**  
In Need of Volunteers!  
Each week you read in the worship bulletin the names of the people who donated the lovely flower arrangements that grace our Chancel during worship. Have you ever wondered what happens to that display once worship is over? It goes to good use, thanks to the dedicated work of Plymouth Church’s Flower Delivery Team!  
Immediately after 11 a.m. worship concludes, volunteers retreat to the sacristy and go to work dissecting the arrangements. They redesign the flowers and foliage into smaller bouquets. Then, the best part of all, they personally deliver them to Plymouth members who are homebound or in the hospital. Plymouth is in need of more volunteers to help with this very important ministry. Do you have a teen who needs to fulfill hours for Silver Cord? This is a fantastic intergenerational opportunity for them to interact with older members of their church community who are in need! It is also a great opportunity for groups like Plymouth Women Adventure Groups (PWAG), who participate in a “random act of kindness” as part of each adventure.  
If your group, or family, or Board, or you yourself would like to volunteer, please contact Sarah Masengarb, Administrative Assistant of Care and Welcome at smasengarb@plymouthchurch.com or 515.255.3149.
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 @PlymouthChurch. 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
Mary Kate Buchanan .............................................Associate Minister
Cindy Eaton-Eklund ...............................................Director of Communications
Christopher Goodson ...........................................Director of Music and Fine Arts
Carl Gravander ..............................................................Organist
Nikira Hernandez-Evans ..................................Associate Minister
Karen Jeske ..........................................................Transition into Ministry Coordinator
LeAnn Stubbs ..........................................................Minister of Care and Welcome
Jan Van Wyk .........................................................Director of Plymouth Nursery School
Emily Tripp ..........................................................Director of Operations and Finance
Susan Waller ..........................................................Director of Youth Ministry

FEBRUARY 2020  VOLUME 31 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.