YOUTH GARAGE SALE

This is our biggest fundraiser of the year and we count on it to keep the Matins Tour affordable for all who want to participate. HOW CAN YOU HELP?

DONATE YOUR STUFF

We need volume and quality. Encourage friends, neighbors and family to make tax deductible donations and help a great cause. The Plymouth Youth Garage Sale will accept gently used household items, furniture and clean clothing beginning Sunday, March 29 thru Wednesday, April 1.

DROP-OFF TIMES

Sunday: 1-5 p.m.
Monday: 8 a.m.-8 p.m.
Tuesday: 8 a.m.-8 p.m.
Wednesday: 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

Enter through the lower level of the parking garage and drop off your items at the church gym.

LARGE ITEM PICK-UP*

Pick up will be available for large items March 28 and 29 by appointment. Please contact Jim Green at 312.480.9270 or jgreen7@yahoo.com by noon on March 27 to schedule a pickup time.

*Pick-up trucks and drivers: Do you have a pick-up truck and a little time to help our Large Item Pick-up Team on Saturday, March 28 and Sunday, March 29?

VOLUNTEER

Yes, Matins and their parents work the sale to earn points, but all church members are encouraged to sign up. Not only are you helping these terrific youth spread their ministry, you get to shop the Garage Sale Pre-Sale! Sign up to work at least five hours and you will be eligible to shop on Thursday evening from 5-7 p.m. Sign up to come.

RECRUIT SHOPPERS

Help us spread the word! Invite all your bargain-hunting friends and family. The Plymouth gym, garage and Waveland Hall will be wall-to-wall with something for everyone. The sale is Friday, April 3 from 8 a.m.-6 p.m. and Saturday, April 4 from 8 a.m.-12 p.m. OR, for a $20 tax deductible donation, shop during the Garage Sale Pre-Sale on Thursday night from 5-7 p.m! Bring your cash and shop to help support the Matins annual youth choir trip as well as youth outreach and service opportunities.

GARAGE SALE DONATIONS:
March 29-April 1

GARAGE SALE SHOPPING:
April 3-4
Bread for the Journey

What a difference a year can make! I want to take this column to talk to you about the financial condition of Plymouth Church. And right up front I want you to know how grateful I am for the picture I get to paint in this column.

Over the last several years, we have accomplished some truly remarkable things together. We retired all of the debt on the building, we sustained our Transition into Ministry program and then just last year we completed a $1.1 million dollar project to repair the historic Rollin’s Tower. (As of now, we have received all but $25,000 of the money pledged to the Tower project. That is amazing!). Plymouth people stepped up in a big way to make all of these projects possible while also supporting the annual operating budget of the church.

As a result, Plymouth Church today is in the best financial shape of its 163 year history.

In terms of the annual operating budget, 2019 was a bit of a roller coaster ride. Facing some negative giving trends, in January of 2019 Church Council adopted a 2019 that included an $86,000 deficit. In response to that number, Church Council made some adjustments to our staffing at mid-year. We decided not to fill the ministerial position vacated by Valerie Miller-Coleman and to reduce one administrative support position to part-time hours. We knew that we would have to find a more sustainable staff configuration.

But then we actually ended 2019 with a surplus of $116,481.

How did that happen?

The short answer: a lot of open staff positions and an unexpected bequest drove the 2019 budget into the black. But, of course, we are not counting on either of those things for 2020. So what do we do now?

Let’s start with the 2020 Stewardship Campaign. I was (to be honest) a little nervous about this, because we had to plan and mostly execute the campaign without a Director of Operations and Finance. But Pam Duffy and the Board of Stewardship did an outstanding job. For the 2020 budget, we have 613 pledging households—pretty much what we had in 2019. But for 2020 we are seeing both an increase in households increasing their pledge (up 15% over 2019) and a dramatic increase in households making a new pledge (68 new pledges). These are good results!

However, we also had some givers who had to reduce a pledge, either due to a change in their financial circumstances (usually a retirement) or a death. The net result? A slight decrease in budgeted pledge giving as compared to 2019. We can work with that.

Then there is another category of givers—what we call “non pledge givers.” This is a group of people who do NOT make a pledge but who DO give to the church. This population amounted to a couple of hundred households in 2019—a significant group. Gifts from this group can vary in size from a couple of hundred dollars to tens of thousands. Because this group does not record a pledge with the church office, we have to “guesstimate” what these gifts will be and build that number into our budget. (The accountants call this “forecasting”). In 2019 income from this group came in quite a bit lower than expected.

So we have, essentially, a flat pledge income number and uncertainty about the non-pledge income category. But the story is not complete. We had one more factor to consider in building the 2020 budget: an unprecedented surplus in the church’s cash reserves.

Over the last ten years, we have budgeted some kind of deficit every single year. But we have only realized a deficit in three of the last ten years. We more typically realize a surplus and that surplus money just piles up.

The Trustees have a long-standing policy of retaining 10% of the annual operating budget in our cash as a “rainy day fund.” That would be about $210,000. At the end of 2020 we had over $550,000 dollars in those reserves. So the Trustees have recently adopted a new policy that obligates them to consider not only a minimum for cash reserves but also a maximum—a “ceiling” as well as a “floor.” At some point, it is neither faithful nor prudent to pile up cash. The people who give money to Plymouth Church expect us to spend that money (continued on page 9)

Plymouth Welcomes:
Rushing Kimball to TiM Program

BY: KAREN QUANCE JESKE | TiM Coordinator

The Transition into Ministry Committee is pleased to announce Rushing Kimball as the newest Associate Minister in the Transition into Ministry program. Rushing will join us in June after he completes the Masters of Divinity from Candler School of Theology in Atlanta. He will be the 15th “TiM” to come to Plymouth.

Rushing is a native Floridian from the Orlando area and discovered a home in the Methodist tradition during his teen years. It is in that tradition that he is seeking ordination and we can all look forward to learning more about Methodism while he is with us. Before seminary, Rushing graduated from the University of Northern Florida in Jacksonville receiving his degree in International Studies.

Reference letters sent to us on Rushing’s behalf describe him as kind, caring, and a calm peaceful presence. The TiM Committee and Plymouth members who met him were impressed with his faith, his resilience, his ease with people, and how much fun he was to be with throughout a very busy weekend. He loves to get to know people over a cup of coffee and his hobbies and interests include study of the Enneagram, musical theater, travel, hiking, and camping.

Rushing has expressed an interest in learning how to be a pastor in a progressive, stable congregation and in ministering to people of all ages. He is confident in his pastoral care skills and eager to take part in the whole breadth of ministry we offer at Plymouth. He is eager to share his gifts with us and continue to stretch and grow in his call to ministry. He is also very interested in checking out the Iowa State Fair this summer! I hope you will join me in welcoming Rushing to Plymouth this summer! (continued on next page)

New Associate Minister, Rushing Kimball

God is Still Speaking, and Plymouth is Listening

Thank you to everyone that came out in the February cold to participate in the Congregational Triad Conversations! There are two more Triad Conversations left to attend in March!

AT PLYMOUTH

EDGATER

Wednesday, March 4, 7:30-8:30 p.m.
2925 Cascade Ave., WDM 50266
(Confirmation, Westland)
Thursday, March 12, 9-11 a.m.

If you were unable to attend a triad session we still want to hear from you! Even if you were able to participate but have more to say, please follow the link below to the confidential online survey:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/plymouthchurch2020
NEW ARTWORK AT PLYMOUTH
You may have noticed colorful new artwork hanging in the second-level south hall near the geraniums. This custom plaque from Sticks Gallery was commissioned by the family and friends of dedicated Plymouth volunteer Kendra Williams, who passed away on Sept. 2, 2019. The plaque seeks to honor Kendra’s legacy of love, service, adventure, and, most notably, how she helped others grow nearer to God by letting her own light shine.

FRENCH ORGAN & CHORAL CONCERT
On Sunday, April 5, 4 p.m., Arts@Plymouth presents Carl Graudson and the Plymouth Chancel Choir in a concert of music by celebrated French composer Louis Vierne (1870-1937). We are celebrating Vierne’s sesquicentennial birthday anniversary and featuring his Messe Solemne, Op. 16, a setting of the Mass text for choir and organ. Join us!

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: stoba.dan@gmail.com.

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!

BOUNDARY WATERS TRIP
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, slipping 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 and camping experience, this trip is for YOU! No matter your desired activity level, the wood-fired Norwegian sauna awaits you. Trip will be held Aug. 14-20! If you are interested, please sign up to attend ONE of these two information sessions: Thursday, Mar. 19 & 20, 7 p.m. in the Inspiration Lounge, and help personally deliver them to Plymouth members who are homebound in the hospital. If you are interested, please contact Sarah Masengar at smasengar@plymouthchurch.org or call 515.255.3149.

SINGING CHURCH SUNDAY: “FOR THE BEAUTY OF THE EARTH”
The year has flown by and it’s almost time to close out the 2019-2020 Children’s Choir year. Sunday, Apr. 19 will culminate this wonderful year of worship leadership by the Children’s Choirs in our annual Singing Church Sunday service. The combined choirs of Plymouth Church, along with special speakers, will lead worship through scripture, meditation, and song with a special focus of Creation, Care, and Justice as we prepare to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day, on Apr. 22.

The K-12 choir will lead the entire 9 a.m. service; the K-8 choirs will present a combined anthem with the Chancel Choir in the 11 a.m. service. These choirs have lived out their love of God and others through song and are eager to share their gifts in worship together with our Plymouth community. Don’t miss this wonderful worship service.

LIVE A LITTLE
Shop for a cause on Thursday, April 2. The Plymouth Women’s Scholarship Committee invites you to shop in Waveland Hall on Thursday, April 2, from 5-8 p.m. Take advantage of this special shopping event to browse the goods available to support the Plymouth Women’s Scholarship Committee. 10% of the proceeds will be donated to the Plymouth Women’s Scholarship Committee. For more information, email: stoba.dan@gmail.com.

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Creating Change
With a Lenten Small Group Study & Spiritual Practice

JOY WILHELM
Anti-Racism Committee

Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World and Become a Good Ancestor by Layla F. Saad will be the subject of a small group study and personal spiritual practice during Lent. The book is designed as a workbook which uses a daily step by step reflection process that encourages personal self examination of racist thoughts and behaviours. The author is also a speaker and podcast host on the topics of race, identity, leadership, personal transformation and social change. As an East African, Arab, British, Black Muslim woman who was born and raised in the UK and currently lives in Qatar, she sits at the unique intersection of identities from which she has drawn rich and intriguing perspectives.

LINDSEY BRAUN
Minister of Discipleship

advancing the mission of Plymouth Church. That is why the 2020 budget utilizes about $56,000 of our accumulated cash reserves. By drawing on those funds, we can continue to maintain our facility, get a 2% cost of living adjustment for our staff, and fund critical mission priorities. I believe this honors the intention of the people who gave us the money in the first place.

Church Council adopted the 2020 budget at its January meeting. I am deeply grateful to Franklin Codel and the Board of Trustees for all of their work on this; I am delighted to have Emily Tripp on the team as our brand new Director of Operations and Finance. Working with Franklin and with Nancy Bussert, our fabulous staff accountant, Emily produced a first draft of the 2020 budget during her first week on the job!

So it is a good budget and the church is in a good place. To bring this column in for a landing, I want you to step back from the trees and try to see the forest for a moment.

In order to get an accurate head count for the dinner, we need everyone who plans to come to sign-up by April 6th at noon. You can sign-up on the website or by calling the church office at 515.255.3149 or by emailing Karen Jeske at kjeske@plymouthchurch.com. You can pay with a credit card online or with a check or cash at the event. Adults are $15 each and children 12 and under are $8 each.

New this year: you can also reserve a table for you and seven other people under are $8 each.

If that sounds like a great idea to you, Plymouth will once again host a sit-down dinner before Maundy Thursday. This is a wonderful opportunity to gather with old Plymouth friends, make new Plymouth friends, or invite guests to church.

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New this year: you can also reserve a table for you and seven friends for $100. So, organize a group and get signed up soon.

Karen Jeske
Connections Coordinator

MAUNDY THURSDAY DINNER

At Plymouth, the Maundy Thursday worship service on April 9 will mark the beginning of Holy Week worship. In the Christian tradition, Maundy Thursday is the commemoration of the Last Supper. So what better way to launch into Holy Week than to begin with fellowship and a meal?

If that sounds like a great idea to you, Plymouth will once again host a sit-down dinner before Maundy Thursday worship. This is a wonderful opportunity to gather with old Plymouth friends, make new Plymouth friends, or invite guests to church.

The dinner will begin at 6 p.m. in Waveland Hall. The menu will be roasted pork loin, cheesy potatoes, green beans, green salad, and dessert. A vegetarian main dish will also be available to substitute for the pork.

Maundy Thursday Dinner

Bread for the Journey Cont.

LINDSEY BRAUN
Minister of Discipleship

The guide can be used as a personal reflection journey or through participation in a small group. Small groups with up to six members will meet six Wednesdays, Mar. 4 to Apr. 8 from 7-8:30 p.m. in the Peace, Harmony & Reflection Rooms of the Spiritual Growth Center. Journaling is highly recommended to keep a record of one’s responses to questions at the end of each daily prompt. The small group is a structured process with trained facilitators that allows participants to share. Contact Kay Riley at kayjriley@gmail.com to sign up for a small group. Books for both the small group or personal reflection are available to purchase in Waveland Hall after services for $23.40 or can be ordered online in a variety of formats. This study is sponsored by Plymouth’s Anti-Racism Committee.

K-2ND OWL

Our Whole Lives (OWL) sexuality education program starts with this simple premise and builds from there. For the last two months, 29 kindergarten through second grade students (both Plymouth members and friends) have been guided through the early elementary OWL curriculum by trained facilitators Bobbie Backer and Shayla McCormally. In eight, one-hour workshops, students have learned about caring, compassion, respect, and justice as it relates to bodies – their own and others. All subjects are presented in a developmentally appropriate way. Children learn about birth, babies, bodies, feelings, and families through songs, stories, activities, and at-home prompts to promote family dialogue. This early elementary curriculum is the first in a series of OWL classes that lift up the program values of self-worth, sexual health, responsibility, and justice and inclusivity. OWL is also available at the upper elementary, middle, and high school levels, as well as for adults of all ages. We give thanks to Bobbie and Shayla for facilitating this hugely popular session, and to Brigitte Stevens, Elizabeth Baker, and Barb Godwin for helping to facilitate parent conversations while children have been in class. If you are interested in learning more about OWL at any level, or in becoming a trained facilitator, you can visit the UCC’s OWL website: ucc.org/justice-sexuality-education, our whole lives or contact Lindsey Braun at lbraun@plymouthchurch.com.
We Do Justice! Join Us!

The United Church of Christ has a long history of “doing justice” dating back to standing with abolitionists in the early 1800s. Our denomination stood in the '60s with the Civil Rights movement. We’ve been advocating for LGBTQ rights since the '70s. We took on environmental racism in the '80s. And in 2005, we were the first denomination in America to endorse marriage equality.

Plymouth UCC has been doing justice since our founding in 1857 when we were known as an abolitionist church. Throughout Plymouth history, we have been on the side of peace, social, economic and racial justice. Since the 1930s our church leaders have been spearheading interfaith and racial justice work in the community and various groups at Plymouth have held studies and forums on current issues. See Plymouth’s 150 Year Anniversary notebook, 2007.

We often use resources available on the UCC website and work in partnership with faith groups like the Interfaith Alliance of Iowa, Interfaith Power and Light and other denominations, as well as community advocacy groups like the ACLU-Iowa, American Friends Service Committee, and Iowans for Gun Safety, among others. We share and promote those action alerts but realize that we care about, such as immigration, voting rights, gun safety, racial justice, lifting the blockade against Cuba, climate education and action, training businesses to be aware of human trafficking, and a host of other issues. Action alerts will be developed by each group for their issues and then congregants can choose which action alert(s) they wish to receive by topic. Each group will send no more than two action alerts per month, as well as information about events and educational pieces related to the group’s issue areas. We also are working with Emily Tripp to integrate P-JPAN into the church’s new database system, Touch Point.

We are called to live out our faith in today’s world and that witness for justice begins at home. Make your voice heard on the issues that matter most to you! Join P-JPAN by signing up in the lobby or at the sunrise service at 6:30 a.m., led by our 7th grade confirmation students, and then for festival worship with choirs and brass at 9 and 11 a.m. services on Mar. 28/29 and Apr. 18/19. Waveland at Saturday services or after the 9 and 11 a.m. services on Mar. 28/29 and Apr. 18/19.

Holy Week Worship

God calls us together. And our life as a community is never more meaningful than it is during Holy Week. This year, don’t miss a moment. On Saturday, April 4 at 5:30 p.m. and Sunday, April 5 at 9 and 11 a.m., it is festival worship with palms as we celebrate Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Then, on Thursday at 7:30 p.m., it is our traditional Maundy Thursday service of communion and Tenebrae with the Chancel Choir. On Good Friday, we gather at 7:30 p.m. for worship with the Matins Choir.

Holy Saturday worship on April 11 at 5:30 p.m. makes time and space to grieve and wait together. Then, on Easter Sunday, April 12, join us for the sunrise service at 6:30 a.m., led by our 7th grade confirmation students, and then for festival worship with choirs and brass at 9 and 11 a.m.

The journey means more when we make it together. All are welcome for Holy Week worship at Plymouth Church!
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

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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

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