BY: DIANE KRELL

On a frigid night of January 14, 1994, three Bosnian families—11 people in total—arrived at the Des Moines International Airport.

About 12 Plymouth committee members were there to meet the plane and welcome the families to Iowa. Hundreds of volunteer hours had been spent by dozens of volunteers preparing for this arrival!

Never could I have imagined the impact this project would have on my life.

Two months earlier, the Iowa Bureau of Refugee Services contacted Plymouth Church to ask if we would be willing to support one family from Bosnia. Faith Ferre, Minister of Discipleship, put out a call to the congregation for volunteers. Fifteen Plymouth members attended an organizational meeting during the first week of December. Knowing there was little time left before the family arrived, the group unanimously accepted the mission to sponsor a family.

Soon after, Faith received another phone call from the refugee agency with an urgent plea. A group of three Bosnian families from the same family group needed to stay together. Would Plymouth please consider accepting three refugee families? The volunteer committee was stunned to learn that our assignment had tripled, but we quickly agreed to the challenge.

The committee knew the project's success would require active support from the whole congregation. Over the next four weeks, the Plymouth community pulled together to provide three fully furnished apartments not far from the church. Three sponsors agreed to be the primary contact for each of the families. I was the sponsor for the Imsirovic family, which included Muharem, his wife Suvada, their son Nermin (7) and son Edin (4).

(continued on page 5)
Every five years at Plymouth, our Ministers and Program Staff are eligible for a Sabbatical. This year, multiple staff were eligible for sabbatical: Cindy Eaton-Eklund, Susan Waller, and Lindsey Braun.

**CINDY EATON-EKLUND**

Cindy, Director of Communications, left on sabbatical in April and returned July 6.

“It’s a sincere gift to be a non-pastoral member of the program staff who receives the gift of a sabbatical every five years. I’ve just returned from my three-month sabbatical and feel energized personally, and excited about the future of social media for Plymouth Church, the project I studied during my time away. I’m still putting wraps on an official social media policy and program for our church.

“An official social media content calendar will be at the center of this program, but the most important piece of knowledge I bring back is that social media is evolving every minute of every day. The things I learned last month will most likely change tomorrow with different technology and certainly with different social media algorithms! So my sabbatical study essentially will never end. Besides ensuring a good social media presence for Plymouth Church, I’m continuing to stay on top of a changing social media environment. It’s invigorating!”

— Cindy Eaton-Eklund

**SUSAN WALLER**

Susan is currently on sabbatical and will return beginning of October. She will be using her sabbatical to consider the shape of an integrative arts program at Plymouth. This kind of programming would build on our already-excellent Music and Fine Arts base, but explore greater use of the arts in worship, in community ministry and in collaboration with other congregations.

**LINDSEY BRAUN**

Lindsey, Minister of Vitality and Outreach, will leave for her sabbatical beginning in September and return in December.

“My plan for this time is to divide it into thirds as is traditional: one month for rest and renewal, one month for personal study, and one month for study that will directly and immediately impact my ministry with Plymouth Church.

“The “Plymouth” part of my sabbatical will, I hope, be fodder for a renewal of my and Plymouth’s imagination and connection across the wider United Church of Christ. I plan to interview at least six colleagues across the denomination to learn from them about the experiments, challenges, and successes they have found in transformational ministry. My hope is that these interviews will help expand Plymouth’s imagination for what is possible in church at this moment of transition in our shared life AND help folks connect to our covenantal partners across the United Church of Christ. We are all in this together!”

— Lindsey Braun
Best Wishes to Mary Kate

Transition into Ministry Update

BY: KAREN QUANCE JESKE

After 26 months in our Transition into Ministry (TiM) program, Mary Kate Buchanan has accepted a call to join First Community Church in Columbus, Ohio, as their Minister of Pastoral Care. Pastoral Care is a true passion and calling for Mary Kate and she is an Ohio native, so we can rejoice in the holy spirit connecting her to the next right call.

Mary Kate joined us immediately after graduating from Princeton Theological Seminary in June 2019. During her time with us she kick-started a new weekly Bible study, offered new programming for older adults, reworked the Discover Plymouth curriculum, demonstrated the spirituality of cooking on Facebook, and most recently, she worked with Frank Thomas to create a cancer support group at Plymouth. Anyone who has interacted with Mary Kate knows she is caring and a lot of fun. We have been blessed by her time with us and we bless her as she joins First Community Church. Her last weekend of worship at Plymouth was July 25-26.

If you want to congratulate her directly, feel free to send an email to: mbuchanan@plymouthchurch.com and it will be forwarded to her. Similarly, cards or notes can be mailed to Plymouth Church with “ATTN: Mary Kate Buchanan.” The church will forward letters to her.

So what about our next TiM? As you know, we paused the recruitment of our next TiM Associate Minister during the pandemic, but with conditions rapidly improving, we re-started that search process two months ago. We welcome your prayers over the next month as we look for a new TiM pastor to join us this fall.

This work we all do together to welcome first-call pastors, learn with them, grow with them, and then send them with our blessings to their next calls is a blessing. Thank you for your support and the encouragement you give our residents.

As always, if you have any questions about the TiM Program, you are welcome to contact me at kjeske@plymouthchurch.com.

Best Wishes to Mary Kate

FINANCIAL PEACE UNIVERSITY

Do you feel weighed down by debt? Are you feeling alone and stressed with how much money you owe to student loans, credit cards, car loans or your mortgage? Financial Peace will offer you a nonjudgmental, supportive group that works!

Since 2013 over 100 families at Plymouth have paid off a total of $325,000 in non-mortgage debt, with each class group averaging $38,961.

One couple who recently completed the class paid off $27,142 in debt and cut up six credit cards, as well as planning to pay off the remaining balance of a five-year car loan in eight months. We invite you to consider joining us for the next class beginning Sunday January 2, 2022!
Best Wishes to Dan Olson

Facility Team Update

BY: ELSIE BRAULT

For those who didn’t know him, Dan Olson was Plymouth’s Facility Manager. He has been on staff at Plymouth for 21 years, but will be moving to Sioux City, Iowa. Our facility is old and complex compared to many churches in the community, and Dan did an excellent job of keeping it in good condition, whether it’s meant climbing around in the attic, learning about boilers or working with a myriad of vendors, facilities staff, church staff and committees to ensure the right work was done at the right time and for the right price. When you look at Plymouth Church’s beautiful structure, you can thank Dan Olson for a great deal of that! We’re very grateful to this good and faithful servant of Plymouth Church!

Dan said the biggest change he saw while at Plymouth was the 2003 addition. This addition included the parking garage and East entrance. He said the thing he will miss most about Plymouth is working with staff and parishioners.

On Dan’s final day here, July 16, the church hosted a small BBQ-themed wedding shower for Dan and his fiancee, Sarah Nitzschke. See some photos from that shower on the right. Dan and Sarah are to be married on October 2. We wish Dan and his wife-to-be all the best in Sioux City! If you’d like to send Dan a card, please send it to Plymouth church with “ATTN: Dan Olson.” The church will forward letters to him.

DAN MOWRY

Dan Mowry has been selected as Plymouth’s new Facility Manager. Formerly our Assistant Facility Manager, Dan Mowry has been on staff here at Plymouth for nearly seven years. Dan has been busy keeping things running in our church. He plans to hire an additional facilities team member. Dan also has hired a cleaning business. This business will do some basic cleaning at Plymouth for a couple of months, allowing our staff to focus on building needs.
After the families arrived, we had to navigate the required government paperwork and set up necessary medical and dental appointments. We registered the children at Greenwood Elementary and Plymouth Nursery School. Plymouth members also stepped up to help the Bosnian men and women of working age find jobs.

I dedicated a year of my life to help strangers from a foreign country who did not speak my language. During that time, we formed a bond that has lasted for 27 years. I now consider the Imsirovics like my own family. We get together to reminisce and celebrate significant milestones in our lives. I even visited Bosnia in 2000 to meet their family still living there.

Before Suvada learned English, her first job was washing dishes at El Patio Restaurant; she is now Supervisor of Housekeeping at Mercy Hospital. Nermin is married with a baby and is a hospitalist at Mercy. Edin is also married with a toddler son and is an ICU nurse at the Veterans Hospital.

Along with fellow Plymouth members, I expanded my horizons by taking on a project to help a family from the other side of the world. I was inspired to work alongside such a dedicated group of volunteers. The task at hand was monumental, but we pulled it all together with hard work and congregational support.

I am pleased Plymouth will be welcoming a new refugee family into our community this year. Once again, Plymouth members have the opportunity to practice radical love and open their hearts to a family who speaks a different language, from a place we may know little about. Still, I know we are up to the challenge. We did it before, and we will do it again.

I encourage anyone who has the time and desire to consider how you might become a part of this enormous undertaking because “It Takes a Village.”

To read more about the Plymouth Welcomes a Refugee Family Project and find ways to get involved, visit: plymouthchurch.com/refugee-family-project.

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Refugee Family Update

Thank you, Plymouth, for the many donations of furniture and household items for our upcoming refugee family! For now, our household needs have been met. As we get closer to the arrival of the family, we will let you know if we have additional needs for other household items. For those of you who have donated furniture and are keeping it in your home for now, we will notify you when the family is arriving and arrange to pick up the furniture at your home. We are still anticipating the arrival of our family at the end of August or early September. Plymouth has done it again! What an outpouring of radical love.

Watch the Plymouth Weekly for more updates in the coming weeks! To read more about the project, visit: plymouthchurch.com/refugee-family-project.
Jen Jensen:
Member in Discernment

BY: KAREN QUANCE JESKE

How does one of our members know if they are called to ordained ministry? While the United Church of Christ provides some insights in its Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers, our denomination also makes sure these Marks are studied and considered alongside thoughtful and faithful members of the local church.

Jen Jensen is the latest member of Plymouth to become a Member in Discernment (MiD) among us. The Church Council approved her MiD status at its meeting in June. The Council also recommended that Jen be referred to the Iowa Conference, Committee for Authorized Ministry as an official MiD at the Conference as well.

Prior to these actions, Jen met faithfully for discernment work with Pastor Lindsey Braun, and her Local Church Discernment Committee composed of Karen Jeske, Jared Walter, Kay Riley, Ron Eslinger, Amy Anderson, and Brianne Magel. She has also been accepted to begin coursework at the United Theological Seminary in Minnesota this fall.

The Committee reviewed with Jen her call story, her spiritual autobiography, and the United Church of Christ’s Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers. The Plymouth Church Discernment Committee affirmed that Jen has a discernible call to ministry, has skills in multiple areas of the Marks, and is ready to enter into the official Member in Discernment process.

The Local Church Discernment Committee will continue to work with Jen as she begins seminary at the United Theological Seminary. With official recognition from the Council, she can begin her studies feeling the support of our entire faith community behind her.

STEPHEN MINISTRY

What is Stephen Ministry? Our Stephen Ministers are trained members of Plymouth Church who are available to help bring a spiritual presence into your life through caring, listening, and prayer. If you are struggling with something in your life and looking for someone to walk it with you, please reach out. Contact LeAnn Stubbs at 515.255.3149 or lstubbs@plymouthchurch.com to discuss having a Stephen Minister assigned to work with you.
Pride Parade 2021

On Sunday, June 27, Plymouth Church participated in the Pride “Parade.” Attendees were encouraged to deck out their cars with Pride and drive the parade route through Waterworks Park to view all the Pride displays. We heard that around 3000 cars came through the parade route. It was such a joyful way for Plymouth to show up and make an impact in our community!

Plymouth Courtyard

Thank you to all the wonderful gardeners who worked so hard to clean up our courtyard! Next time you’re at Plymouth, be sure to stop by and see it!
Would you like to support the future generations of Plymouth Church? We need you!

The Board of Christian Education for Children and Families (BCE) is looking for board members and committee members. The recent change to the bylaws has expanded the scope of BCE to birth through grade 12. BCE is looking for members with a passion for children and families, especially folks with experience or expertise with older youth, and people with connections throughout the church, including folks who aren’t actively parenting right now.

**BCE is also forming committees focused on:**

- Education and Faith Formation
- Family Connections
- Service Projects and Social Action
- Safety, Security & Space

If you are interested in serving on the board or a committee, or want to have a conversation about where you could serve, please email Georgia Sheriff at gsheriff@plymouthchurch.com with the subject “BCE Interest.”

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**CHILDREN & YOUTH PROGRAMMING**

Plymouth is hard at work prepping for 2021-2022 program year for children and youth. Activities will be available for grades K-12. Music programming will also resume in September. Currently, details are still in the works, but stay tuned in mid-August for more information!
What is Your Gift?

BY: GEORGIA SHERIFF

There are so many ways to share your interests and talents in our ministry to children and families in the coming year. Take a look:

- **Assembly**: We have materials to prep. Join us weekly, monthly or once-in-a-while.
- **Technology**: Have you become a Zoom expert? We can use your help "behind the scenes" with online programs.
- **Leader**: Join our teaching team as we deliver faith content in new and fun ways. Prefer in-person or online? Let us know!
- **Hobby**: Share your hobby with families and kids, something you love to do, something you collect—the possibilities are endless!!
- **Planning**: Join one of these committees: Education and Faith Formation; Family Connections; Service Projects and Social Action; Safety, Security & Space.
- **Greeter**: Join our volunteers who greet children and families as they head to programs
- **Hallway Helper**: Welcome and assist children and families as they make their way to activities

For more information or to sign up, visit: tiny.cc/CFM2021. Or email gsheriff@plymouthchurch.com.

Confirmation Guides

BY: LINDSEY BRAUN

WANTED! Curious and caring adults to serve as Confirmation Guides.

**WHAT is a confirmation guide**, you ask? Guides accompany a small group of 7th and 8th graders on their two-year confirmation journey. Commitment includes three Wednesdays per month from October to April for regular theme nights, service projects, and fellowship nights, and a retreat weekend at the end of the second year.

You do not have to have children this age to accompany our young people on this exciting leg of their faith journey! Deepen your faith while building a relationship with our young people. What could be better? For more information or to sign up, contact Lindsey Braun (lbraun@plymouthchurch.com).
New Sunday Worship Schedule

The people of Plymouth have been surveyed multiple times in the last few years, sharing their feedback with Plymouth leaders (both staff and lay) so we can set priorities and move where the Spirit is calling us next.

In the survey of the congregation 2½ years ago, a clear desire surfaced for more education, formation, and spiritual growth opportunities for adults. In the survey of parents with young children a year and a half ago, a clear desire surfaced for more family-friendly worship opportunities, more consistent and reliable church school programming, and more opportunities for parents to engage in their own spiritual growth and formation. Plymouth’s strategic plan surfaced education and a commitment to our children and youth as huge priorities. COVID has created hunger in people to make meaning of our own lives and gather to share.

We have been listening! A group of staff representing Worship, Music, Connections, and Education (for adults, youth, and children & families) met to process what we’ve heard and draft a new Sunday morning schedule to meet the needs of a new moment in our life as a congregation.

These changes are in the works. Stay tuned for more details. A full schedule will be shared later in the month of August. New schedule will begin on Sunday, September 12. These changes will provide more consistent and robust opportunities for fellowship, formation through worship, and classes for people of all ages.

Our staff are excited about the opportunities this new schedule creates for learning, formation, and growth, as well as joy-filled worship and fellowship.

REGULAR WEEKLY OFFERINGS

STAY IN TOUCH!

On this page, you will find all of our regular weekly offerings during this month. We also have regular weekly email offerings. To sign up, visit: eepurl.com/dhGrYv

MONDAYS...

Monday Moderator Minute Email: On Mondays, you will receive a biweekly email update from our Moderator, Jodi Gruening, and Moderator-elect, Greg Kenyon.

THURSDAYS...

Plymouth Weekly Email: On Thursdays, you will receive an email with a list of highlighted activities going on at Plymouth Church.

FRIDAYS...

Lawn Concerts: Join us on the Ingersoll lawn for the “Sounds of the City” concert series. These concerts are family friendly. We recommend bringing camping chairs for a place to sit during the concert. Masks are not required. In the event of inclement weather, the concert will be moved into the Sanctuary. Please note some date changes:
- Aug. 6 (7 p.m.) | Plumero Band
- Aug. 20 (7 p.m.) | NOLA Jazz Trio
- Aug. 27 (7 p.m.) | Thornwood Clarinet Quartet
- Sept. 17 (6 p.m.) | Saturday Night Band

SATURDAYS...

Saturday Night Worship: This service will be outside on Plymouth’s upper level parking deck at 5:30 p.m. each Saturday. This service is led by Saturday Night Band. Masks optional.

SUNDAYS...

Sunday Morning Worship: Join us in the Plymouth Sanctuary from 9 to 9:45 a.m. or 11 to 11:45 a.m. each weekend for Sunday Morning Worship. Masks are required at the 9 a.m. service and optional at 11 a.m.

Virtual Sunday Morning Worship: Join us live on our Facebook page or YouTube channel for a live stream of both the 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. in-person worship services.

Fellowship Forum (Hybrid): Sunday morning at 10 a.m., join us in Greenwood Room or on Zoom for our weekly conversation about God, life and whatever happens to come up. To join virtually, visit the Plymouth website and click the Fellowship Forum icon.
CURRENT HAPPENINGS

INGERSOLL LIVE 2021
Please plan to visit the Plymouth Booth when you, your friends or family are having fun at Ingersoll Live 2021. This is an annual summer event (with the exception of 2020) that takes place Saturday, August 28. This street festival is a family-friendly neighborhood celebration. Live music, kids activities, and food and beverages galore will certainly provide for an enjoyable day and evening. The Board of Membership will be at the Plymouth’s booth, so please stop by and enjoy the free fun our booth will be offering. Hope to see all of your bright and smiling faces at Ingersoll Live!

VOLUNTEER EMAIL LIST
Looking for a way to connect and serve God and one another with a friend, your family, or church? This is it! To be added to this email blast list of volunteer opportunities, visit: eepurl.com/heSU4b. By subscribing to these emails, you will hear from us each Friday with details about volunteer opportunities available at Plymouth. If there aren’t currently any volunteers needed, we will continue to email each Friday to let you know.

GOT HEARING AIDS?
Did you know that you can connect your hearing aids to our sound system at Plymouth? The Sanctuary, Greenwood/Burling, and Waveland Hall all have a T-coil system connected to the A/V equipment. Visit our website for more details: plymouthchurch.com/news/hearing-assistance-at-plymouth. We also have hearing devices available during worship services. Ask a staff member or Deacon for help.

PLYMOUTH WOMEN ADVENTURE GROUPS
Are you feeling disconnected after this past year at church? If you identify as a woman and are interested in:
- Cultivating friendships with other Plymouth women who are eager to learn, love, and grow,
- Going on adventures that keep the spirit of wonder and learning alive,
- Engage in acts of kindness that create opportunities to spread God’s grace across the community,

PWAG is the perfect opportunity for you! Our upcoming sessions will begin this fall and we are looking for new members to join our group. Please contact Chloe Bodenhamer at chloe.fontanini@gmail.com with questions and more information on joining. If you are interested, please reach out prior to September 1.

HIROSHIMA & NAGASAKI OBSERVANCES
The annual Hiroshima and Nagasaki remembrance and memorial service will be held Friday, August 6, at 7 p.m. at the Japanese Bell on the Capitol grounds. The service will include poetry, music, the traditional ringing of the bell and placement of flowers. A second event will be held at First Unitarian Church, 1800 Bell Avenue, on Sunday, August 8 from 1:30-3 p.m. This program will focus on Global Zero and the reinstatement of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) also known as the Iran nuclear deal. The Plymouth Peace Committee is a cosponsor of these events.

FLOWER DELIVERY TEAM
Have you ever wondered what happens to the flowers after they’ve beautified the space in Sunday service? They are taken apart by a team of volunteers, converted into 2 or 3 smaller bouquets, and delivered to people who might appreciate a floral greeting from their friends at Plymouth. We are gathering an intrepid band of folks who will take turns in this ministry of care for those who are sick or unable to attend service. If you would like to be part of this ministry, please email Diane Hayes dhayes@plymouthchurch.com.

CHANCEL FLOWERS
You may notice flowers during our Weekend Worship services on occasion. If you would like to donate flowers on an available week, sign up at any of our indoor worship events, or contact Diane Hayes: dhayes@plymouthchurch.com.

CHURCH OFFICE VOLUNTEERS WANTED
Do you have free time during the week and are looking for something safe you can do? Plymouth is looking for volunteers to assist our church staff in covering phone shifts during the week. If you would like to learn more or are interested in volunteering, please contact Betty Fosburgh: bettydickfosburgh@gmail.com.
Plymouth Church Staff

Sarai Rice ................................................................. Interim Senior Minister
Nancy Bassett .......................................................... Accountant
Elsie Brault .............................................................. Communications Assistant
Lindsey Braun ......................................................... Minister of Vitality & Outreach
Alex Cooney ............................................................. Media Director
Cindy Eaton-Eklund ................................................... Director of Communications
Christopher Goodson .............................................. Director of Music and Fine Arts
Carl Gravander .......................................................... Organist
Diane Hayes ............................................................. Music & Fine Arts Administrative Assistant
Seth Hedquist ......................................................... Interim Director of the Saturday Night Band
Karen Quance Jeske .................................................. Director of TiM Programs
Rushing Kimball ........................................................ Associate Minister
Dan Mowry ............................................................... Facility Manager
Dan Schott ............................................................... Executive Assistant
Georgia Sheriff ........................................................ Children & Family Ministries Consultant
LeAnn Stubbs .......................................................... Minister of Care & Welcome
Emily Tripp ............................................................. Director of Operations and Finance
Susan Waller ........................................................... Director of Youth Ministry

For more information about Plymouth Church, please visit our website at www.plymouthchurch.com, follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/plymouthchurch and Instagram @PlymouthChurch.

You will find all of our Weekend Worship recordings available on our YouTube channel: PlymouthChurch DSM. We also have several Live video offerings throughout the week on our Facebook page.

To submit information for the Contact, email Elsie Brault, ewunn@plymouthchurch.com. All contact submissions must be made by the 15th of the month prior.