

The Plymouth Bell

Plymouth Congregational
United Church of Christ



2401 Atwood Avenue, Madison, WI 53704

web site: www.pcucc.org

December 2018

What's Going On?

- Worship
 - First Sunday of Advent 12/2;
Hanging of the Greens
 - Kid's Program 12/16
 - Choir/Recorders 12/23
 - Christmas Eve 7 pm 12/24
- Events
 - Card writing 12/9
 - Santa's Helpers 12/16 10:30 am – 1 pm
- Education
 - Church School each Sunday
 - Confirmation class 12/2 and 12/16 at 5 pm.
- Service
 - Jail Ministry card writing
- Community
 - Prayers, cards, calls, visits for those in need and shut-ins
- Always
 - Be present to God's Spirit
 - Love of God
 - Love of neighbor
 - Give thanks!

How Can I Help?

- Loaves & Fish project: do good, then report on index cards
- Sundays: lectors, greeters, ushers, Social Hour hosts
- Community: food pantry collection, PEP collection, bell ringing
- Get involved: team work
- Always: prayers, cards, calls, visits, helping hand
- Give thanks!

Note: more information on events and ways to help are included later in this issue.

From the Pastor's Desk

Christmas is in the air already, so it seems. The week after Thanksgiving I heard a number of folks talking about how they just felt a need for Christmas, and so had put up trees and decorations much earlier than usual. I myself broke my own "rule" about this and started putting up decorations Thanksgiving Day (I almost always wait until after the First Sunday of Advent). So I understand the feeling – there has been so much challenging news, so many angry or disrespectful words spoken, so many awful images in the news of neighborhoods in flames or flooded out, yet another mass shooting scene, people (including children) running from tear gas attacks at our border; well, I could go on and on – you know what I'm talking about.

So, I think we understand how for many of us, as the song goes, "we need a little Christmas now." Not Christmas in the sense of bargain sales or even tinsel or shiny lights. We need a sense of the wonder and awe, of the blessing of new beginnings, of hope and peace as real possibilities unfold before us. But how can we hold onto this spirit of Christmas when we are so wrapped up in the busyness of work, school, meetings, errands, folks to take care of, gatherings to prepare for, all done in the midst of still unfolding news and opinions that challenge our spirits? I don't know about you, but I certainly could use some spiritual help this Advent as we approach Christmas, and so I invite you to join with me in a "Mindful Advent" journey. On December 2nd at our worship service we will begin the Advent journey by discussing how we can live more mindful of the true spirit of the season, in a way that will hopefully be accessible to all. We will provide a simple exercise (holy homework!) for you to do at home, as individuals or even as a family, that won't take much time but will help you to be present to Advent waiting and watchfulness. If you can't be at worship on December 2nd, just email me and I'll send you the resources needed. Or you can check our website (blog page), Facebook page, Twitter feed, or Instagram feed daily for a reminder of how to celebrate a Mindful Advent day. If you "follow" Plymouth on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, you will automatically get these messages. And feel free to invite any friends you know who need a spiritual uplift this season to follow us on this Mindful Advent journey.

Another new "tool" we are going to be trying out in December is a weekly newsletter "update" – shorter than the usual Bell, focusing mostly on the week ahead. We hope this will be a way for us to keep you up-to-date on events at Plymouth or of interest to you, in an easy-to-access format. It will come via email, but we will also post it on the website, and will post it in the mail for those currently receiving hardcopy newsletters.



This Advent and Christmas, amid the hustle and bustle of daily living, may your spirit be present to God's Spirit and your heart open to receive and give blessings, as we remember that the true gift of the season comes to us wrapped in bands of cloth, lying in straw in a lowly manger.

Peace and hope and joy and love to you,

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Among Our Friends and Members

Redacted for privacy



The Plymouth Bell

A Newsletter of

Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ

An Open & Affirming, Just Peace, Immigrant-Welcoming Congregation

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Church School News

December is, of course, the Advent season as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Church School students will be learning about the prophecies and the preparations as they meet in regular classes December 2, 9 and 23.

On December 16th the youth will present the Christmas Pageant, once again directed by Adam and Carrie Hinterthuer. All students are encouraged to participate and there are plenty of speaking and non-speaking parts. We are also looking for young musicians to present Christmas songs on piano or other instruments as part of the December 16th service. Rehearsals are planned for Sunday, December 9th after church and Saturday, December 15th, time to be determined.

There will be no church school classes on December 30th. On January 6th we will have a One Room Sunday School class to celebrate Epiphany, the arrival of the Kings (or Magi or Wise Ones) to honor the child Jesus.

A Card Writing Event, December 9

On Sunday, December 9th, there will be a card writing event at Plymouth Church at which you are invited to write to folks from our congregation that may not be able to attend worship regularly, have been out due to illness, or otherwise need a card to cheer them up. Cards, address labels, and stamps will be provided. All you need to do is gather at a table in Fellowship Hall during Coffee Hour (look for Carol Walker), choose a card, write a message, and affix an address label and stamp. If you have a question, please contact Carol at 608-244-2680 or clmwrwgw@tds.net. Hope to see you there!



Santa's Helpers

Santa's Helpers will be at Plymouth on Sunday, December 16th, immediately following worship and until 1 pm. Kids of all ages are invited to attend to make crafts, eat lunch (including a vegetarian option), and watch a Christmas movie while parents have some kid-free time to tend to holiday preparations. Adults are also encouraged to attend to help facilitate a craft table (all are simple projects) or the wrapping station (wrapping paper donations are welcome!). Also, if you have a craft you'd like to prepare and do with the children, come join us, please email Carrie to let her know what you're planning! Please sign up your children (or yourself as a volunteer!) on the Congregational Life Bulletin Board in Fellowship Hall. If you have any questions, please contact Carrie Hinterthuer (carrie_hinterthuer@yahoo.com).

Christmas Eve Service, December 24

December 24th, Christmas Eve, members will gather with family and friends at Plymouth, 7:00 p.m., for a joyous service of carols and story and light. We join in worship as we await the birth of our Lord and Savior together.

December Birthday Blessings

12/07 – David Bechtolt
12/07 – Brynn Hinterthuer
12/08 – Barb Hoffman
12/08 – Rick Reiner
12/09 – Ann Lacy
12/10 – John Rai
12/11 – Kathy Gentz
12/12 – Noel Goeddel
12/12 – Tess Rickert
12/12 – Paul Spetz
12/17 – Jim Zuelsdorf

12/21 – Mark Walter
12/22 – Stuart Martell
12/23 – Violet Goeddel
12/23 – Joe Klafka
12/24 – Connor Halloran
12/24 – David Mickle
12/24 – Donald Nelson
12/24 – Johanna Oosterwyk
12/25 – Sofia LeBlanc
12/26 – Carol Walker
12/29 – Elijah Rickenbach

Mittens and Hats for Christmas

By Meg Shepherd

Knitting is, in my experience, a kind of religious practice. My needles and yarn are a rosary, each stitch a prayer. It is a joy to bring these tangible prayers of the past year to Plymouth in the form of hand knitted mittens and hats.

Donna Salzwedel and I will again display our year's manufacture on the first three Sundays in December--December 2, 9, and 16. These items may be purchased for Christmas gift giving or for placing on the church's mitten tree. All money received supports the projects of Plymouth Church. Other knitters, crocheters, and fiber artists are invited to add items they have made to the sale.



Annual Meeting, January 27!

Plymouth's Annual Meeting will be Sunday, January 27th, 2019, to begin immediately following the worship service. Why, you may ask, are we telling you now? First, so you can get this on your calendar. Second, reports for Plymouth's Annual Report are needed so that the Annual Report may be prepared no later than two weeks prior to Annual Meeting. **Team reports are due to the Church Office no later than 9 am Monday, January 14th.**

Bellringers Needed!

Are you looking for a fun and rewarding way to volunteer as an individual or as a family this holiday season? The Salvation Army of Dane County has an opportunity for you! By ringing bells for only two hours, you will raise over \$90 to help house the homeless, feed the hungry, and provide mentoring and education to at-risk children. The Christmas Red Kettle Campaign runs from November 9th through December 24th, with many locations and shifts available. Please go to ringbellsdane.org to sign up or call 250-2235 for more information.

Update on Loaves and Fishes

As was mentioned in the November Bell, Plymouth folk are participating in a special mission project to do some good in the world. Envelopes have been distributed, and we've already received a number of index cards back, describing the good that has been done by all of you. People locally and across the globe have been helped already; the recipients so far include: a Madison school teacher, Boys and Girls Club, Voces de la Frontera, Tree of Life Synagogue (Pittsburgh, scene of mass shooting in October), CROP, UNICEF, a local seamstress, Save the Children (refugee relief), a neighbor in need who has been helpful and friendly, PEP Atwood, FEED Kitchen, Goodman Center, DAIS, hiring an ASL interpreter for a convention, Sierra Club, Good Shepherd UCC (Rev. Randy Mayer's church), Lost Pet Service, Heifer International (Send a Girl to School), 100 Black Men of Madison, Shelter from the Storm, Beacon House, winter coats for needy children, food gift cards for high school students, Jubilee Farm UCC (IL), among others.

We hope this update inspires you, if you haven't already distributed your "loaves and fishes," to find a place "where your great passion and the world's great needs meet" (Frederick Buechner) and "go and do good." Don't forget to let us know what you did by writing it on the provided index card (anonymously) and placing your card in the offering plate (or get it to Pastor Leslie). More index cards are available at the church. We would like to receive the index cards by 12/31, if possible. We have started work on the art project using these cards, which will be going up soon.



A Plymouth Garden Recap

Hello garden friends! This will be the last garden bed email of 2018 – thanks to the hard work and the cheerful, "can-do" attitude of garden superstar Carol Walker, the beds have been put to bed for another year. We met at the beds on Thursday (which turned out to be a beautiful day to work outside!) and set to work pulling up as many of the poor frozen beets, radishes, and turnip greens as we could wrench from the soil. These were composted, and then each bed was spread with a light blanket of fresh straw, using up about 2/3 of a bale. The remaining straw was bagged and stored in the shed along with the empty pots, watering cans, roll of chicken wire, and (here is where Carol's can-do attitude really made the difference!) both the green and the red hoses, neatly coiled! (I have struggled in the past to disconnect the hoses, and Rain has kindly done that work...)

Our final count of vegetables harvested and delivered to the pantry in 2018 was respectable: an estimated 49 pounds of beets (mostly with their greens), 28 pounds of carrots, 16 pounds of radishes, 15 pounds of sweet potatoes, 8 pounds of turnips, 7 pounds of onions, 5-6 gallon bags of green beans, 65 cucumbers, 37 patty pan squash, and a couple of gallon bags of spinach.

Many thanks to everyone who helped in the beds this year: Carol first and foremost, but Rain Zephyr and Katarina Klafka also put in a good amount of time, and Melissa LeBlanc and Pastor Leslie also helped, as did onion-donor Donna Salzwedel!

By Ann Lacy

College Scholarships Available

Members of Plymouth UCC are invited to apply for 2019-2020 college scholarships of \$1,000 to \$2,000 from the Frank E. Page Scholarship Fund. Applicants should be planning to begin or continue education at any accredited 2- or 4-year college or university, and should have a record of academic achievement, service to church and community, and demonstrated financial need. The application deadline is February 15, 2019; contact scholarships@firstcongrmadison.org for an electronic application. Please speak with Marleen Lippert for more information (608-838-3563).

The Christmas Fund

On **Sunday, December 23rd** we will **dedicate offerings to the Christmas Fund**, one of the four special offerings of the UCC. For 115 years, the Christmas Fund (officially "The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund") has been a tangible expression of the church's appreciation for those who have helped "shepherd the light" by serving the church in the past and now find themselves facing unexpected financial need. Donations to this Fund help the Pension Boards' Ministerial Assistance program to provide direct financial assistance (not administration) in the form of pension supplementation, emergency grants, and a Christmas "Thank You" gift to retired clergy and lay employees. All of this special offering goes to direct aid, none to administration. Special offering envelopes are available in the back of the sanctuary or the church office; make checks out to Plymouth Church and put "Christmas Fund" in the memo line. Thank you for helping those who dedicated so much to the work of the church.



Planning Ahead for Women's Wild Winter Weekend

Dates for the Women's Wild Winter Weekend are February 22 to 24 (Friday to Sunday) and March 1 to 3, 2019. Plymouth women are registering for the first weekend. The cost is \$230 with a \$30 subsidy returned after the event by the Southwest Association of the Wisconsin Conference.

Because we so enjoy our time at Moon Beach, the WWWW group has requested an extended (4 day) weekend option this year beginning on Thursday (February 21) with check-in between 3 and 5 pm and dinner at 5:30. The extended weekend will cost \$299 and will include some relaxed optional activities. Meals and housing are included.

We will travel together on Thursday and/or Friday to Moon Beach Camp located between Eagle River and St. Germain in Wisconsin's beautiful north woods. All women of UCC churches and their friends or relatives are invited for a pampered weekend with programming you can select to participate in. Let me know if you'd like more information. Online registration begins on January 2, and these popular events fill quickly.

By Gail Holmes, Camp Coordinator

Upcoming Events at Pilgrim Center and Moon Beach

- **Epiphany Retreat:** Dec. 27 - January 1 - Moon Beach
- **Jesus Core retreat** - Sponsored by Wisconsin Conference UCC and Pilgrim Center: January 11-13, 2019
- **MLK Jr. Day Anti-Racism Training and Retreat** - Sponsored by Wisconsin Conference UCC and Moon Beach: January 20-22, 2019
- **"Care for the Caregiver" - A Retreat for Parents and Caregivers:** January 25-27, 2019 - Moon Beach



A Note from the Financial Secretary

Contributions for 2018 must be made on or prior to Sunday, December 30th, if you wish to have them reflected on your 2018 Individual Financial Statement.

If you wish **expenses to be drawn off the 2018 Budget**, please submit them to the Church Office on or before Friday, December 28th. Thanks!

Office Hours

Pastor's office hours: Tuesday-Friday 8:30 am – 12:30 pm and by appointment. Monday is the Pastor's day off; emergency contacts only, please. Note: Pastor Leslie will be on vacation December 25th – 31st (except for Sunday, December 30th).

Office Administrator's hours: Tuesday-Friday, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm.

Please note that the Church Office will be closed December 25th and January 1st.

Deadlines: Articles for the weekly bulletin insert and weekly newsletter are due by Thursday, 8:00 am. Please email articles to Sally at swolf@pcucc.org.

Have You Turned in Your 2019 Estimate of Giving Card?

If so, thank you very much! We have received 35 pledges so far, which is about 70 percent of what we have been receiving in recent years. If you have not pledged yet, there is still time! There are pledge cards (and EFT forms) located by the sign-up sheets in the Narthex. Please drop your completed cards in the offering plate on Sunday or mail them to the church as soon as possible. You may also email your estimate to our financial secretary at swolf@pcucc.org. These cards provide you with the opportunity to prayerfully consider your 2019 pledge to Plymouth and are a valuable input into the planning process for the Budget Group for 2019.

Discipleship Team Page

**Plymouth's Discipleship Team
will hold a joint meeting with**

Plymouth's Immigration Group on Sunday, December 9...

...instead of on our usual "first Sunday of the month." At the meeting, we'll finalize our budget for next year, and wrap up our work for 2018.

In recent months, money from the Discipleship Team supported:

\$200.....CWS CROP Walk
\$500.....GCC Thanksgiving baskets
Up to \$10,000..."Loaves & Fishes" project

**Thank you to everyone
who brought in donations for
GCC Thanksgiving baskets!**



On the afternoon of Sunday, November 18, two Plymouth members had the happy task of transporting bags (and bags and bags) filled with roaster pans, stuffing mix, jars of gravy, cans of vegetables, fruit, broth, and cranberry sauce, and boxes of mac & cheese—all donated by Plymouth people—to the Goodman Community Center for their annual drive to fill Thanksgiving baskets. Thanks for your generosity, and look for a final tally of items donated in

November in a future bulletin or newsletter!

Two annual Christmas projects:

Writing Christmas cards for people in the Dane County Jail

Cards are in the red box on the table with the sign-up sheets in the narthex, along with guidelines on what to write (and what *not* to write) from the Jail Chaplain. *Unsealed* cards are due back at Plymouth no later than Sunday, December 9.

Again this year, Plymouth shoppers are buying holiday gifts for a family through The Road Home. All gifts have been "claimed" this year—thanks for the enthusiastic response!

Garden beds are resting for the winter

Our final count of vegetables harvested and delivered to the GCC food pantry in 2018 was respectable: an estimated 49 pounds of beets (mostly with their greens), 28 pounds of carrots, 16 pounds of radishes, 15 pounds of sweet potatoes, eight pounds of turnips, seven pounds of onions, five or six gallon bags of green beans, 65 cucumbers, 37 patty pan squash, and a couple of gallon bags of spinach. We're already dreaming of next year...

Many thanks to everyone who helped in the beds this year, spreading (and donating!) mulch, planting seeds, weeding, watering, harvesting, composting... 2018 garden friends included Katarina Klafka, Melissa LeBlanc, Donna Salzwedel (our source for onions!) Leslie Schenk, Rain Zephyr, and super worker Carol Walker!

For any Discipleship Team questions or comments, please connect with Discipleship Team Leader Ann Lacy, (608) 213-4469, annwilsonlacy@gmail.com

SpaceCom update

At the November Church Council meeting, SpaceCom presented a revised renewal plan—basically an outline of proposed work with general cost estimates—for Fellowship Hall and the kitchen. Council recommended including up to \$96,000 for this renewal work in 2019 church budget planning.

SpaceCom's proposed plan addresses such long-identified needs as replacing the obsolete fluorescent tube lighting with energy-efficient LED lights, installing new floor covering (thus encapsulating the current asbestos tile flooring), and replacing the antiquated (and leaking) dishwasher. Other highlights include:

- opening up the wall between the current Youth Room and the former adult library, moving the pool table into this expanded space, and adding more youth-friendly furniture;
- installing bay inserts around the upper part of the windows to admit more natural light;
- installing a pull-down screen and adding conversational groupings of sturdy upholstered furniture in Fellowship Hall;
- replacing the current accordion partition with a modern partition;
- updating kitchen appliances, countertops, and cupboards.

If approved as part of the budget by the congregation at the Annual Meeting in January, the plan will be fine-tuned in the spring, and implemented in the summer of 2019, beginning as early as feasible in May for completion in August.

Informal congregational information sessions on the revised plan are scheduled for December 9 and January 13. Input is welcome! Materials can also be shared electronically; please contact SpaceCom Chair Ann Lacy, 213-4469, annwilsonlacy@gmail.com

The Mission of Plymouth Congregational UCC

To joyfully celebrate God's love and the gospel of Jesus Christ in our worship, our teaching, and our lives;

To create a diverse, accepting faith community that welcomes all and empowers all to accept the grace God freely offers to each of us, no matter who we are or where we are in life's spiritual journey; and

To develop, demonstrate, and strengthen Christian discipleship by reaching out to all God's people, caring for those in need, and seeking to lead the world toward love, justice, and peace.

Adopted by Church Council on August 16, 2007

Worship News

- Advent: keep these dates in mind –
 - Advent begins 12/2 (with hanging of the greens after service);
 - Children’s program will be on 12/16 (will the camel make a return visit?),
 - the Chancel Choir will bless us with special seasonal offerings on 12/23, while the Recorders group will offer the prelude
 - our traditional Candlelit Christmas Eve service will be on 12/24 at 7:00 pm (celebrate the 200th anniversary of the writing of “Silent Night”)

Sunday Lectionary Readings for December:

Dec. 2: Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; Luke 21:25-36

Dec 9: Malachi 3:1-4; Luke 1:68-79; Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6

Dec. 16: Zephaniah 3:14-20; Isaiah 12:2-6; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18

Dec. 23: Micah 5:2-5a; Psalm 80:1-7; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:46-55

Dec. 24: Isaiah 62:6-12; Psalm 97; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:1-20

Dec. 30: 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52

Jan. 6: Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14; Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12

Help needed: Blessings are experienced by all in attendance when they hear many voices, and are greeted, helped, and serviced by many of their friends, so be sure to sign up to help as liturgist, greeter, children’s messenger, and/or coffee hour server. See below for the schedule of worship assistants who have signed up so far for June (lots of opportunities still available, as you can see), and be sure to **sign up to help!** Thank you.

	Liturgist	Greeter	Children’s message	Coffee Hour Organizers
Dec. 2	Johanna Oosterwyk			Shelley Hagan
Dec. 9	Maria Hanson			
Dec. 16				
Dec. 23				
Dec. 30				

Life and Ministry of God's People of Plymouth UCC, Dec. 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 8am Women's AA B'fast 10am KIS 10:30am ACA
2 8:45am Choir 9:30am Worship & Church School 10:30am Hanging of the Greens & Coffee Hour Budget Group 12-2 PEP 5pm Confirmation	3 5:30 pm ACA 6 pm SOTS 6:30pm ACA	4 6:45pm Co- Counsel 3pm Girl Scout 8219 4pm Orion 6pm AA Committee meeting	5 Noon Plymouth Book Club 5:30 pm YFWG 6:30pm SOTS 7pm Recorders	6 11:30am- 3pm PEP 4pm PEP Board	7 9:30 am MDG 5:30pm OA 6:30pm IA	8 8am Men's AA B'fast 10am KIS 10:30am ACA
9 8:30am Choir 9:30am Worship & Church School 10:30am Coffee Hr. Card Writing Event Education Discipleship Immigration 12-2 PEP & YFWG	10 5:30 pm ACA 6 pm SOTS 6:30pm ACA	11 4pm Orion	12 6:30pm SOTS 7pm Recorders	13 11:30am- 3pm PEP 7:15 pm Business Team	14 5:30pm OA 6:30pm IA	15 10am KIS 10:30am ACA
16 8:30am Choir 9:30am Worship Children's Program 10:30am Coffee Hr. Santa's Helpers Congregational Life 12-2 PEP 5 pm Confirmation	17 5:30 pm ACA 6 pm SOTS 6:30pm ACA	18 2pm Contemporary Reading Group 4pm Orion 6:45 pm Co- Counsel	19 5:30 pm YFWG 6:30pm SOTS 7pm Recorders	20 11:30am- 3pm PEP 7:30pm Church Council	21 9:30am MDG 5:30pm OA 6:30pm IA	22 10am KIS 10:30am ACA
23 8:30am Choir 9:30am Worship Choir Program Church School 10:30am Coffee Hr. Worship Team 12-2 PEP& YFWG	24 7 pm Christmas Eve Service	25 Christmas Day	26 5:30pm SOTS 7pm Recorders	27 11:30am- 3pm PEP	28 5:30pm OA 6:30pm IA	29 10am KIS 10:30am ACA
30 8:45am Choir 9:30am Worship 10:30am Coffee Hr. 12-2 PEP	31 New Year's Eve					