

The Plymouth Placard



March 2005

WORSHIP FOR MARCH

MARCH 6

NEW MEMBERS' SUNDAY
ONE SERVICE ONLY AT 10:45 AM
JOHN 9.1-17
"DON'T YOU SEE?"

MARCH 13

AMISTAD SUNDAY
EZEKIEL 37.1-14
"REVITALIZING FAITH"

MARCH 20 PALM SUNDAY

MATTHEW 21.1-11 & PHILIPPIANS 2.5-11
"HOW IS GOD WITH US?"

TAIZÉ SERVICE AT 6:00 PM
FOLLOWED BY A FELLOWSHIP MEAL

MARCH 24 MAUNDY THURSDAY

SIMPLE FELLOWSHIP MEAL AT 6:30 PM
SERVICE OF TENEBRAE FOLLOWS IMMEDIATELY

THE GREAT VIGIL OF EASTER

BEGINS ON SATURDAY EVENING AT 6:00 PM AND
CONTINUES UNTIL OUR 8:15 AM SERVICE ON
EASTER MORNING. THE DEACONS WILL HAVE A SIGN-
UP SHEET AVAILABLE IN ADVANCE.

MARCH 27 EASTER SUNDAY

IDENTICAL SERVICES AT 8:15 AND 10:45 AM

OUR SERVICES ARE AT 8:15 AND 10:45 AM,
UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.



Living the Questions

Since Ash Wednesday, Sharon and I each have been leading a class using a new DVD-based curriculum called "Living the Questions." So far, it's been an outstanding course, not only in terms of the materials but also those who form the two groups. For several years, I've been looking for a spiritual formation curriculum for adults that would be useful for newcomers to our faith tradition, as well as to those who want to dig deeper into progressive Christian theology. And I'm glad to say that "Living the Questions" does both.

We begin each session with a brief time of centering through a tea ceremony. We watch parts of the DVD, featuring such notable theologians as John Shelby Spong, Marcus Borg, John Dominic Crossan, Nancy Ammerman, and John Bell. And we close with another time of centering and prayer, led by a member of the group.

The topics covered span from "Intimacy with God," to "Social Justice and the Prophets" to "Compassion: The Heart of Jesus' Ministry." In other words, it's not only intellectual, but it uses the intellect and experience as avenues to the heart of spirituality.

I can assure you that this will not be the last time "Living the Questions" is offered at Plymouth. I envision using the course on a regular basis as we welcome new members, as others in the congregation want an "adult confirmation" class, and as a resource for helping us live into our call as a progressive church.

The DVD hasn't said so, but I'm sure the title comes from Rainer Maria Rilke's "Letters to a Young Poet," which contain these wonderful words:

Have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves....The point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.

These are powerful words for us who pursue a relationship with God in the postmodern age. We

– all of us – have questions about our faith. Perhaps the largest of these questions is *Is it true?* Is God there? Is there a spiritual force that permeates the universe? Who was Jesus? If God loves us, why does God allow suffering? Was Jesus divine? How do we interpret the resurrection: bodily? spiritually? metaphorically? These are *wonderful questions* to ask yourself and to wrestle with.



This morning at coffee hour, I was speaking with a visitor who told me that she had had negative experiences in previous churches and she said she had "a lot of questions." My response to her, and to each of you, is that Plymouth is a great place to ask questions. It is a congregation in which you are welcome not only to have doubts, but to express them, for they are a sign of an engaged faith. Doubt is an important way station on the journey of faith, but it's not typically enriching if we get stuck there. So, keep asking questions! And if we have patience, live our lives fully, and love our questions, we may live our way into some answers.

As Lent draws to a close, and as Easter calls us to new life, I wish you grace and peace.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

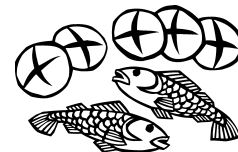
All Church Potluck to Celebrate New Members

During the service (one service, 10:45 AM) on March 6 we will welcome new members to the congregation. Afterwards, we will celebrate the whole community with a potluck and getting to know each other. Please bring a dish to share and a table setting (fork, spoon, knife and plate).

Youth Sunday...

...is coming soon – April 10th to be exact. Keep an eye out for special activities and planning for Senior Highs or contact Peter and Elizabeth for details (493-3415). Junior High will be doing coffee hour, so we're all involved and very excited.

Palm Sunday Food Drive



The Social Concerns Committee will sponsor a food drive for the Food Bank on Palm Sunday, March 20, 2005. Foods needed are canned protein products such as tuna, meats, beans, peanut butter, and baking mixes. Also needed are toilet articles such as shampoo, lotion, tooth paste, deodorant, hygiene products, diapers.

The Food Bank can purchase \$10.20 worth of food for every \$1.00 contributed. There will be barrels in the Fellowship Hall for food products and toilet articles. Checks may be made out to Plymouth.

Easter Lilies

If you would like to purchase a lily to decorate our chancel on Easter Sunday, please fill in the form below, place it in the offering plate, mail it or drop it off at the office. Deadline is Monday, March 14.

Cost is \$11.00 per plant. You may designate a lily in memory or in honor of a special person or a special occasion.



Name _____

In Memory of _____

(OR) in Honor of _____

Number of Plants _____ Enclosed \$ _____

Please make checks payable to Plymouth Church.



HEAR YE! HEAR YE!

WHAT?
ALL-CHURCH RETREAT
AT LAFORET

WHAT?!!
AN EXCITING,
REFRESHING AND
AMAZING OPPORTUNITY

WHO?
FOR ALL CHURCH
MEMBERS!

WHEN?
MARK YOUR CALENDARS
FOR SEPTEMBER 17-18



One Great Hour of Sharing

On March 6th our congregation joins the combined efforts of all participating churches of the United Church of Christ, along with nine other denominations, in the One Great Hour of Sharing. Since 1949, American churches have joined together in support of this nation-wide effort.

“When was it we saw you a stranger and welcomed you?”



This short passage from Matthew 25:38 marks the theme of this year’s campaign — to help those around the world even though they are actual strangers to us, but brothers and sisters to us here in this congregation in the effects of severe hardships, disasters, and conflicts. You can bring your One Great Hour of Sharing envelope with you to the March 6th service. Our church’s Mission Committee urges each member to support this effort.

TAIZÉ SERVICE

**SUNDAY, MARCH 20
6:00 PM**

**ENJOY A FELLOWSHIP SUPPER FOLLOWING THE SERVICE.
CHILDCARE AVAILABLE.**

MORE INFO: WWW.TAIZE.FR

Hilltopper Luncheon and Program

Thursday, March 10th

Food and fellowship begins at noon. Following lunch, Ray Becker will show slides of Plymouth Church. Please sign up in the fellowship hall or call the church office to RSVP, 482-9212.

XYZ Progressive Dinner

On Saturday, March 12th, we will meet at Mary and Don Carpenter's home, 5018 Snow Mesa Drive, Ft. Collins starting at 5:45 PM. for appetizers. We will then "progress" to Karen and John Smith's for the main course in our Progressive Dinner. Next will be dessert at Geri and Wil Stutheit's home. Please plan on providing some food for one of these courses. A sign-up list is on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall. The main dish at the Smith's will be corned beef and cabbage (which you can help prepare or better yet, donate a couple of dollars towards the purchase and we'll prepare it!) After you sign up, we will contact you to coordinate the food. For information, call Jodie Rankin 221-2037.

Get A Grip

The Get-A-Grip social group will be attending My Fair Lady at the Carousel Dinner Theater on the evening of March 19th. There will be a discount if we have more than 20 people attending. This event is not restricted to GAG'ers – all are welcome! Please let Colleen Shepperd (223-8229, kokysue@yahoo.com) know whether you plan to attend by March 6th.

Middle Third Herd



March 4th — Herd Happy Hour @ The Crown Pub (134 S. College). We'll meet at 5 PM for drinks and appetizers. Come when you can. Please RSVP to Andrea Kelly at kellyfam@comcast.net so we can reserve a large enough table.

March 5th — The Plymouth Film Series presents **Pay It Forward** at 7:30 PM in the fellowship hall. Dianne Stober will be leading the film discussion the next morning: Sunday, March 6th at 9:30 AM. in the forum room. If you can't make the film showing Saturday evening, at least come and support Dianne during the discussion.

March 9th - **Colorado Eagles Hockey** at the Budweiser Events Center. 7:05 PM. Please contact Todd Mingus for ticket information at lpmingus@earthlink.net

April 2 — **Dessert and Card Party** at 7 PM hosted by Doug & Mary Robinson (6124 Hamilton Ct.). This will be a night out for adults. Bring your favorite dessert and drinks. Please RSVP to damsrob@comcast.net.

April 14th — **The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe** at the Lincoln Center. 5:30 PM. Tickets are \$6 and go on sale March 14th. Contact Andrea Kelly by Sunday, March 13th if you are interested 4kellyfam@comcast.net or 282-7511.

Living Open and Affirming

Plymouth in the Community by Bob Kling for the ONA Committee

What a pleasure it was, to see Plymouth playing such a positive public role in the community on Saturday the 12th of February! At the "Freedom to Marry" rally in Old Town Square, a healthy cross-section of the greater Ft. Collins population gathered to enjoy some music, inspirational talk, camaraderie, and great weather, all in support of equal marriage rights for opposite-sex and same-sex couples. The rally was followed by a parade and the sharing of more music, friendship and a bit of wedding cake at Avogadro's Number restaurant.

Plymouth Church was represented at a level that should make us proud. Sharon was one of the featured speakers and offered some inspirational comments about faith and marriage and love and inclusiveness. One of our youth members read to the crowd his letter to President Bush, objecting to the administration's recent homophobic response to a kids' TV show. Plymouth was mentioned by yet another speaker as PFLAG's regular meeting place, and by yet a fourth as the location of a Lambda Center forum on GLBT legislative issues to be held the following week. Several Plymouth families were represented in the crowd.

To anyone who had their ears and eyes open to it, Plymouth stood out as a church that really is "Open and Affirming", both inside our walls and out!

Stewardship: It's More Than Just Money

How often have you heard someone say a phrase and immediately assume you know what they are referring to? At a recent Church Council meeting I asked the group to write down the first thing that came to their mind when I said "STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN". After a minute I asked if anyone wrote down the word PRAYER or TIME or TALENT? How about you?

I did not intend to put them, or you, on the spot but rather to lift up that STEWARDSHIP is really about what we do with all the GIFT's God has entrusted to us, including but not only money.

As part of the Stewardship "team" I want to let you know that we are starting a program now to uplift the gifts many of you are already sharing and the impact these have on people in our congregation and beyond. The emphases will be on four of the many ways we build our relationship with one another and live out our understand of what it means to be a believer in Christ. This is a Feeling thing even more than a Mind thing. Which I suppose is why we use the word Faith when talking about our belief in a God we cannot see, yet have so much trust in.

We hope you enjoy this journey of uplifting and are willing to share with others your JOY in Serving and Sharing as good Stewards of the Gifts of

Capital Campaign Update

March 6 - Forum (9:30 – 10:00 AM) • March 13 – After Worship (Noon – 1:00 PM)

As reported at the annual meeting in January, our Capital Campaign consultant, Bea Stoner, recommended that we: 1) Delay our Capital Campaign until January 2006 and 2) Prioritize our proposed major funding requirements and complete them in phases. Come hear the rationale for these recommendations. Learn what factors favor our readiness for a fund-raising campaign and what challenges require concerted attention prior to embarking upon such a campaign. Hear about our planned next steps and where we are in the campaign planning/education process. While the purpose of the meetings is strictly informational, there will be time for questions and answers. Copies of the two-page Executive Summary of Bea's Campaign Feasibility Study, as well as copies of her entire 20-page study report, will be available.

Peace with Justice Discussion

March 13

With great excitement the Peace and Justice Team is pleased to announce the Peace with Justice Church declaration we have crafted following the process of the past year of congregation dialogue and reflection. We've drawn from discussions in the adult education forums, book studies, a film series, Lenten Dinners, and small group dialogues to create the following declaration:

We believe Jesus' teachings call us to enact shalom, to live in wholeness, harmony, community well-being and with equal justice.

We affirm a process of justice-making and peace-making which encourages open dialogue, reconciliation, constructive change and nonviolence. Therefore, we are called and committed to being a Peace with Justice Church in our worship, education, community life and outreach.

For two decades the Just Peace movement has been a grassroots effort of UCC congregations committed to corporately naming and boldly proclaiming a public identity of working for justice and peace. Congregations affirm the theological framework and shape their identity around the vision of a "just peace", a vision of shalom, that is the interrelationship of friendship, justice and common security from violence.

Following the second service on **March 13** we

will meet in the Fireside Room to discuss the Declaration and what future directions we see this taking our congregation. Please join us or speak with us during a coffee hour.

Peace and Justice Team

Don Heyse, Phil Koster, Linda Mahan, Hugh Sanborn, Margaret and Paul Smith, Nancy Sturtevant, Betty Weber

Peace and Justice Library

In the Fireside Room, the Peace and Justice Library occupies the two bottom shelves on the left-hand side of the fireplace, as you face the fireplace. Items are marked with blue dots on the spines. The Peace and Justice Team is developing a collection of A-V materials, books, catalogs, kits, magazines, etc. to provide resources on peace and justice themes for members to use in any groups to which they belong, or for personal use. We are open to suggestions.

Donations: Just now we're interested in donations of books which have been previously used in Plymouth classes on peace and justice themes. Donations may be permanent, or long-term loans to the library. You may leave donated items on the library's shelves; please include a note with your name and whether they are gifts or on loan.

We encourage members to check this developing library and to explore the valuable resources which link peace and justice issues to our faith and daily life.

Questions? Contact Linda Mahan (484-2259) or Margaret Smith (493-3857.)

Navajo Mission Alert!

We are going back to Shiprock, NM to work September 15, 16 & 17. The fund raising golf tournament will be August 27th.

Note of explanation: Plymouth has been sending work teams of 10 - 12 persons to the Navajo Reservation to repair and build homes. We join a consortium of Northern Colorado churches for this effort. The commitment is 5 days at your expense. Building supplies are furnished. This will be Plymouth's 5th year and many can testify to its rewards. For more information contact Paula & Tom Dille @ 207-1977.

Please keep these members and friends in your prayers.

Recently in the Hospital:

† Sarah Lollar
† Miriam Poole
† Phil Moeckli
† Kim Troup
† Harry Kittleman
† Martha Haire

Our Sympathy is with:

† The family of Margaret Hofferber, long-time member of Plymouth, who passed away February 11th. A service was conducted by Hal and a reception followed in our fellowship hall.

Thank you to Plymouth Congregational UCC church for prayer support and cards expressing your love and concern for us and Suzi's brother, Gary, during his 9 month illness and at the time of his death in early January 2005. We appreciate the thoughtfulness that many of you demonstrated throughout this time with your inquires and reminders that you were sharing this part of our journey with us. We were able to have an active and meaningful part in his memorial service which was held on January 29, 2005 in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

*Sincerely,
Phil & Suzi Koster and family*

"God Is Still Speaking"

Plymouth UCC in Spring, Texas has about 70 members. On January 9 and 16 together, Plymouth welcomed 30 visitors.

Plymouth in DesMoines, Iowa has over 3,200 members. One Sunday in December, they stopped counting after 75 visitors.

From Daniel Hamlin, Greenbelt Community UCC, Greenbelt, MD. "The Sunday after Christmas a visitor waited until the sanctuary was clear, then introduced himself. He hadn't been in any church for over five years. He was in despair that Christianity was being used to judge, separate, and divide people when Christ intended exactly the opposite. Then he saw the ad and drove 50 miles to the nearest UCC church which happened to be us. We hugged. In tears he said worship here was a "holy moment." The next day he called. He'd begun to wonder if his experience had been some kind of fluke. That night he went to the church's website and read all the sermons posted there. Reassured it was no fluke, he phoned to say the welcome he received here from so many people was his Christmas. In the circular way of these things, he was Christ to us. 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me...' He was back again last Sunday, another 100 mile round

Plymouth Prayer Tree

The Plymouth Prayer Tree has 22 active members. The congregation's "Joys and Concerns," expressed during the Sunday morning prayer time, are forwarded to these members each week. If you have additional prayer requests, please contact Betty Clark at 229-9944 or e-mail her at bettyclarkfc@juno.com.

NEWS & NOTES

February 12, 2005

Dear friends and members of Plymouth,

I write to you from an Indian café on a sidewalk in Phnom Penh. How I come to be in Cambodia is just another miracle along this amazing journey.

When I left Colorado in November to settle in southern France, bringing along my dog Serafina, I thought that was adventure enough. (The trip, broken by two days in New York, went mostly well. Aside from my totally bizarre anxiety attack on the plane out of Denver, the only unpleasantness was spending five hours in the Paris airport trying to find a blade of grass, a speck of dirt for Serafina to pee. She held it until the flower bed outside the Bordeaux airport. Such a trooper!)

We both loved our little house on a hillside overlooking fields, farms, vineyards and forest. We got along okay with my French housemate Anne and her big German shepherd Timor. I spent more and more time at Plum Village, just a half-hour walk away, and thoroughly enjoyed the Christmas – New Year retreat. The dharma talk by Thich Nhat Hanh (Thây) on Christmas Eve was inspiring and beautiful – about Christ and the Holy Spirit and Buddha. I thought fondly of my Christian family at Plymouth.

Then on January 9 I flew to Hanoi. By the grace of God I have been granted the privilege to be one of 90 lay people and 100 monks and nuns accompanying Thây on his return to Vietnam. After 40 years of exile, he has been invited home. And he is being received like a king. More and more people – as word spreads of his return – are flocking to his talks, though he has not been allowed to speak to large public gatherings. He is limited to speaking in pagodas and the occasional small auditorium. We have visited dozens of pagodas, first in Hanoi and then in Saigon, where the delegation is received with great ceremony.

Having people bow to us has been very humbling. Especially in the north, many of them have never seen Westerners before, and especially not Western Buddhists. (Almost all the lay people are Western, and about half our monks and nuns.) Outside a pagoda in Hanoi, through a fortuitous young woman who interpreted into halting English, a woman told me that they had no idea there were any Buddhists outside Asia. To see their beloved long-lost teacher with a retinue of Western monastics and lay folk raises their religion to a status they can barely comprehend.

And Thây is revolutionizing Vietnamese Buddhism. This is nothing new. His writings and social action have gotten him in trouble since he was a young dharma teacher and activist in the early 1950s. His banishment in 1965 was no loss to the Buddhist hierarchy. But now that Vietnam is opening to the West – and wants to join the WTO – they need him. The local press has been trumpeting the “religious freedom” that Thây’s presence here celebrates.

The religious and political situation in Vietnam is complex, and we understand only a fraction of what is going on. But Thây has been spreading his message of mindfulness, love and a return to the essence of the Buddha’s teachings... and people are eating it up.

An example: Thây led a retreat outside Saigon for 1000 monks and nuns. The first couple of days the atmosphere was very somber and serious, with a strict adherence to form. One aspect I could grasp was the absolute separation of the sexes. Monks and nuns rarely interact, eat in separate areas, and observe a patriarchal hierarchy. The youngest novice monk takes precedence over the most venerable nun, and a nun never looks a monk in the eyes, even when speaking to him. Well, this is not the Plum Village way!

Gently, skillfully, the Plum Village monks and nuns taught a new way of being. By the end of the week, the Vietnamese monks and nuns had participated in mixed small group discussions and formed the kinds of affectionate bonds that make Plum Village such a happy place. The last event of the retreat was a tea ceremony with performances by the blended small groups. The huge meditation hall rang with laughter and glee as groups of monks and nuns sang songs and even danced on the stage. The happiness and sense of freedom was an unbelievable contrast with the first day. Once again, Thây had worked his magic of love and compassion.

Yesterday my visa expired and I was supposed to fly home to France. Instead, I arranged for Serafina to be looked after for another month and I flew to Cambodia to renew my visa. (I couldn’t do it in Vietnam because it’s been Chinese New Year for almost a week and all the offices are closed.)

I’ve never done anything like this and I’m not ready to go home. I certainly never thought I would take off on my own and go to Cambodia, of all places! But it’s beautiful here (especially after huge, congested, noisy Saigon), the people are warm and friendly, and if I’m lucky I’ll get to spend a few days at Angkor Wat. The deeper truth is that in the last month I’ve learned more about how to live than in many years and I want to learn more. It all comes down to the practice of mindfulness. And as Sister Jina, the principal abbess of Plum Village, told me the other day, “the path to liberation is paved with our afflictions.” The only way to attain freedom is to embrace our suffering. It’s a paradox I don’t fully understand, but true happiness can only be found in the acceptance of despair, fear, grief. (For more about this read [When Things Fall Apart](#) by Pema Chodron.)

This land, so broken by years and centuries of war, flood, earthquake and genocide, embodies that paradox. And I am blessed to be here! Thank you all for your support and prayers. I miss you and send you my love.

Jane Ellen (Janelle) Combelic
jec@riverrock.org

Parish Health Ministry

The Parish Nurses at Plymouth are interested in expanding our role into a Parish Health Ministry program that would include more health practitioners. If you are a physician, nurse, mental health therapist, social worker, physical therapist, occupational therapist, dietitian, minister or other health professional and would like to help us promote and support a healthy congregation, please let us know. We will probably be exploring our roles as integrators of faith and health through screenings, education, referrals, health advocacy, support groups and health counseling.

If you are interested or just have questions or suggestions please contact:
Marietta Zimmerman- 221-5474
Dottie Mattern-493-5033

“What is Truth?”

A phrase that has haunted the Gospels, from when Pontius Pilate replies to Jesus' statement, “Everyone who belongs to the truth can hear my voice,” down to today's theological arena of the church. “What is truth?” When one goes to the gospels there is an apparent similarity of the texts, a harmony of language, ideas, and phrases. But there is also disagreement, a dissonance with in the language, ideas, and phrases. Matthew Boulton, currently a Professor at Andover-Newton Theological Seminary, created a script while he was a Student at Harvard Seminary in 1996 that brings these concepts out in performance.

The Anointed is a play in one act that uses five Gospels as voices to tell the story of Jesus' life. Additional voices are added to place the Gospel voices into historical context and to bring Jesus' Disciples to life.

United Campus Ministry has brought together a cast and several performance dates at a few of our supporting congregations in a hope that you will be able to witness this gift to our community.

Performance Dates, Times, and Locations:

March 20 – Hart of the Rockies, Disciples of Christ Church @ 10:30 AM

March 25 – First United Methodist Church
Good Friday @ 7:30 PM

The Performances are free, but a donation will be collected after each performance to help support the UCM Service-Learning trip to Russia in May. For more information call 482-8487.

Thank You

From: Wider Church Ministries, a Covenanted Ministry of the United Church of Christ "We rejoice in your gift sent to undergird Christ's mission in the world. We will apply it faithfully, and speed it on its way, to be converted into new life and hope for many. Along with your giving, we covet your prayers that the deepest needs of all God's children will be met. Thank you. Total Amount of Gift Received International Emergency \$1,668.00 Tsunami Relief

From: Poudre Valley Hospital Foundation, Fort Collins, Colorado. "On behalf of the Poudre Valley Hospital Foundation we would like to thank you for your generous gift of \$425.00 to the Children's Clinic Endowment Fund" (Salud Family Health Center).

Dear Friends,

As the New Year begins, we would like to wish you a happy and peaceful year as well as to announce the birth of our 1st daughter Miss Norah Charlotte Beres! Norah was born on November 5th and she has become the third generation on her mother's side to be born on this day (following in the footsteps of her 2nd cousin Anna and her Grandpa Fred)! Norah weighed in at 6 lbs. 10 oz. and was 18 inches long. She has just now passed her 2-month birthday and is bringing much joy and laughter to her sleep deprived parents."

Love, Sarah, John, and Norah

*Sarah (Edmonds) and John Beres
85 Barker Hill Drive
Guilford, CT 06437*

The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down; and if God calls you, you shall say, “Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.” So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, “Samuel! Samuel!” and Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”— 1 Samuel 3:8-10

Today somebody asked me if I perceived what I do as a “call” – perhaps because I spoke of Moses’ call in this week’s sermon. It may appear pompous, in some ways, for you or me to claim to hear a personal call from God. Even Samuel, despite his resting place in God’s Temple beside the Ark of the Covenant, in no way imagined that the LORD his God would call directly on him. Three times Samuel answered the wrong teacher.

This neglect seems logical, however, in the light of a statement just 5 verses prior to the above passage: “The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.” *Of course* Samuel would mistake the voice. He had no precedent for hearing God’s call in his day and age. Much, it seems, like March 2005CE. I often encounter the conviction that “the word of YHWH [is] rare in [these] days.”

But even if the writer of 1 Samuel was convinced of God’s silence, the very next passage contradicts him by God’s very own voice calling out to the boy – not once, but 4 times! What does that say about the perceived “silence” of God in our day?

Even beyond the UCC’s Still Speaking initiative, I believe that God is continuing to call us each in our own way. But in our innocence we may, like Samuel, answer the wrong teacher.

In modern Christian conversation, many people equate a “call from God” with entrance into ordained ministry. And while those who receive calls to particular vocations are rarely as eager as Isaiah (“Here am I; send me”) – and in fact are more apt to respond with a “no thank you” Like Moses or Jonah (you can see how far that got them) – this concept of “God’s call” remains fenced into an all too narrow category.

Relegating “call” to one vocation distances the majority of faithful people from hearing God’s voice in their own lives when it comes. It allows us to look to other people, ideas or things that are not the true sources of our calls. God never stops calling. Even if we are called to live quiet lives of no great distinction, our lives themselves can be witness to God’s call in our lives.

This month, listen for God’s call in your life. The voice you hear may astound you with its message.

Still Listening,
Sharon

Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ

An open & affirming
congregation.
Gathered in 1903.
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Alda Frucci, Porter Industries
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Ft. Collins, CO 80521
Permit No. 109



NEWS & NOTES

Geller Center Classic

The United Campus Ministry is holding its first annual Golf Tournament to raise money for a service learning trip to Russia. The Golf Tournament is April 30 at Collindale Golf Course. The tournament is a scramble and the registration fee is \$640 per team of 4 or \$160 per person which includes green fees, use of a golf cart, a gift bag and lunch. To register contact Event Director, Shilo Wilkinson at 482-8487 or e-mail: Geller-Classic@hotmail.com.

Science Fair Judges Needed

Bennett Elementary School is having its Science Fair on April 11 for judging and April 12 for the public. The teacher in charge asked if Plymouth Church could provide 8-10 judges for the Fair. The time is 9 AM- 2 PM on the 11th for judging and lunch will be provided if a person could stay through the lunch period. Any period of time

during those hours is acceptable. No experience necessary. It is fun and educational. There may be about 100 exhibits.

Please contact Mary Shultz as soon as possible at 484-6710 or shultzmaryshult@aol.com.

9Health Fair

The 9Health Fair will be held throughout Larimer County in April. The health fair includes a number of educational booths and screenings. Blood tests include: Complete Blood Chemistry - \$30; PSA - \$25 BMI (body mass index), bone density screening, and more.

Dates for the 9Health Fair:

April 14 – Red Feather Medical Clinic

April 16 – Wellington Federated Church

April 16 – Loveland High School

April 22 & 23 – Christ Center Community Church – Fort Collins

All fairs are open 7:00 AM – Noon. If you are interested in volunteering for the fair, call 1-800-332-3078.