

The Plymouth Placard



January 2005

WORSHIP FOR JANUARY

JANUARY 2
SECOND SUNDAY OF
CHRISTMASTIDE

JOHN 1.1-18
“WHAT IS GOD SAYING?”

JANUARY 9
FIRST SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY
MATTHEW 3.13-17

JANUARY 16
ISAIAH 49.1-7
“HOW ARE WE CALLED?”

JANUARY 23
ANNUAL
CONGREGATIONAL
MEETING
MATTHEW 12.4-23
“GET ON BOARD!”

JANUARY 30
MICAH 6.1-8 AND MATTHEW 5.1-12
“BLESSED JUSTICE,
BLESSED RELATIONSHIP”



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

Democracy, Discernment, or Both?

On January 23, we will gather as a church to do what some in our tradition find to be at the very heart of who we are: we'll hold a congregational meeting.

Think about it: the *Episcopal* Church is administered by bishops (*episkopos* in Greek); the *Presbyterian* Church is administered by elders (*presbyter* in Greek); and our predecessor denomination, the *Congregational* Church, is administered by the congregation. The names not only describe the polity of the church, but they also reveal our ecclesiology (our theology of the church). One of the tenets we in the United Church hold dear is that Jesus Christ is the head of the church, not a presiding bishop, not a pope, not a head of state. And likewise, all covenanted members of the church share in the decision-making process.

So, that makes us a democracy, right? Well sort of. We do participate in making decisions for the church: we voted to call Sharon as our associate minister, we voted to approve changes to our constitution two years ago, and we'll vote near the end of the month to approve or change the 2005 budget and the slate of committee nominees. Still sounds pretty democratic, doesn't it?

The missing element that I have not yet described is *discernment*: seeking the intention of God in the midst of our busy decision-making. As a caveat, I do not subscribe to the theology that God has an overarching plan for humankind. I sometimes flinch when I hear people talk about "God's will" (which is usually voiced in the wake of a disaster or a death). The reason I use the word intention is that I do think that God has a desire for humanity and the cosmos to be whole, and so I think that God lures us toward wholeness. Yet we need to be *active seekers* of where God is leading us.

We can and should ask for God's guidance in prayer when making big decisions, both in

church and in the rest of our lives. Does that mean that we'll see the answer we're looking for written in a cloud (or receive an email from YHWH@almighty.org)? Probably not. Usually, God is a bit more subtle than some of us would like.



Even if she does have intention, God has entrusted us with free will. So, while I encourage us to be prayerful in all things – including approving nominees and budgets – I also want to acknowledge that God has given us hearts and minds to use. So, I'd encourage you to pray, feel, and think!

As we gather for our annual congregational meeting, let's remember the privilege of our inheritance: that we own our property, call our own clergy, fund and approve our own budgets, and use our God-given graces in making our own decisions. In an era when Archbishop Chaput is trying to impose a 1984-esque version of "thoughtcrime" on our Roman Catholic sisters and brothers, it's great to be not just democratic, but also discerning.

Grace and peace,

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Plymouth Congregational UCC Annual Meeting Announcement

Our annual meeting is scheduled for Sunday, January 23rd immediately following the second worship service. Yes, it is nearly that time of year again, time for our congregation to gather together and vote on new officers, new committee members, and the annual budget. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend. This is an important time for our congregation to meet and set plans for the coming church year.



Be(a) Here for the January 9th Forum

In the New Year we consider new possibilities, both personally and corporately, as the congregation of Plymouth Congregational UCC. What are our visions? Who are we becoming? How shall our actions profess our faith?

I have the privilege of joining you in this exploration during the Forum on Sunday, January 9th. As one who has supported UCC congregations over the past 18 years in meeting their capital challenges, I will be sharing the dynamics of a capital campaign adventure — its potential challenges and blessings. I look forward to our meeting and considering the consequences of opening this "giving door" in our lives together.

Note: Bea Stoner will be with us the week of January 8-15th to conduct feasibility interviews for a future capital campaign.

New Member Dinner

Mark your calendars for Sunday, January 9, 2005, at 5:30 PM. The Congregational Life Committee is sponsoring a potluck dinner at church for new members and their families (everyone who has joined since Hal and Jean joined the church or who is planning to join in the new members class this winter), for church staff, and for members of the Evangelism Committee. Please bring a dish to share, based on the first letter of your last name, as follows:

A - F Hot Dish
G - M Salad
N - T Dessert
U - Z Side Dish

We will provide bread and beverages. We hope you will all join us for this happy celebration of burgeoning growth at Plymouth!

Hilltopper Luncheon and Program Thursday, January 13

Join us for lunch at noon followed by a discussion of program ideas for 2005. It's a new year – bring yourself and your ideas! New members are welcome at any time. Sign up in the fellowship hall or call the church office to RSVP, 482-9212. Hope to see you there!

Women's Retreat Chicken Soup/Women's Wisdom

Whether you're 15 or 115, a new member or a founding mother, join us for a day of spiritual renewal. We will gather to break bread and celebrate *Sophia/Wisdom* at the Edwards House in Ft. Collins from 8:30 AM-5 PM on March 5th. Space is limited to 25, please sign up in the fellowship hall. Cost is \$40 for breakfast, lunch, snack and miscellaneous. This will also be an opportunity to discuss the future of the Women's Friendship Group. Contact Marsha Scott (225-1912) or Rev. Sharon Benton (482-9212) if you have any questions or need help with cost..

The Middle- Third Herd Events for January



January 7 Herd Happy Hour

Meet at Old Chicago's (Harmony & Timberline). We'll have a table at 5 PM. Come when you can for discounted drinks and appetizers. This is a fun and relaxing way to meet new people at Plymouth. Please RSVP to Andrea Kelly at 4kellyfam@comcast.net if you'll be there so we can reserve a big enough table. See you there!

January 15 Planning Meeting

Ben Slocumb and Dianne Stober (703 Dearborn St.) will host the next Herd Potluck Planning Party from 6-9 PM. Please bring a dish to pass, your 2005 calendars, and any activity ideas you have. We'll have sitters for the kiddos so bring some \$\$\$ to contribute if you're bringing your children. Please RSVP to Ben and Dianne at 225-6446 or e-mail dianne.stober@comcast.net.

Food Drive a Success!

Thanks to everyone who donated money or canned goods to our November food drive for the Food Bank for Larimer County. We raised \$2,299 and donated 334 pounds of food.

Christmas Giving

Once again, you, the members of PCC, have brought Christmas happiness to children at the Fort Collins Family Center. The children, as well as the members of the Social Concerns Committee, wish to extend their thanks for your abundant generosity and caring giving. In order to keep the spirit of Christmas, we must give it away. If this is true, you will all be blessed.

Something New for the New Year!

Early in the New Year, the Peace and Justice Team will unveil a special section in the Fireside Room library. Books, videos, magazines, newsletters, CDs and other materials relating to peace and justice issues will be grouped together. Blue dots on the spines will mark these items which are available for reference and check-out. Print your name and date taken on the card found in the item and put the card in the box marked "Borrowed Items." A month is the usual check-out period.

Donations to this section are welcome, either permanent or long-term loan. Temporary donations should be marked with the owner's name, so eventually we can return them to the donor.

We encourage members to take a look at this special section and to explore the valuable resources which link peace and justice issues to our faith and daily life.

For more information please contact Linda Mahan (484-2259) or Margaret Smith (493-3857).

Living Open and Affirming

What do you think of when you hear the word "democracy"? Words that pop into my head are "freedom", "justice", and "equality". How does this tie into Plymouth and our ONA statement? Plymouth decided to become Open & Affirming to show our denomination and our community that we believe in the freedom to love whom we want, that we would fight for social justice for GLBT persons, and that equality in marriage rights for same sex partners is a must. As a member of the GLBT community I'm a little more than disappointed at how the presidential election turned out, but I realized that I must turn back to my faith and my church for healing and to regroup. When I hear on CNN that our country is "moving back to morality", I can't help but let out a cynical laugh at how this implies that my faith community is lacking in morals. Churches like Plymouth that include GLBT members and give blessing to same sex marriage are paving the path to show this country just what kind of morals we have –

Venezuelan Exchange 2005

The UCC (Rocky Mountain Conference), the Disciples of Christ (Christian Church) and the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela present Venezuelan Exchange Opportunities 2005. You can participate in a variety of ways, please consider the following:

Work Trips to Venezuela

- An Intergenerational Construction Trip: March 23 - April 4
- Youth Camp and Work Trip: Mid - July
- Medical Mission Trip: October 9 - 17

Assist at home by being a host

The UEPV Delegation Visits the Rocky Mountain Region: Mid - June. Visit and meet with delegates from Venezuela at cluster activities. Hear the

UEPV's stories of their country's and churches' struggles and dreams

Other ways to participate in this important work include

- Donating money to support these exchanges
- Volunteering as a translator
- Praying for the church in Venezuela
- Meeting UEPV delegates when they visit
- Serving on the Global Partners Committee to assist in planning

For more information and to get copies of the 2005 Global Partnership Application Form check under Mission Notes on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall. You can also contact Danni and Merv Bangert at 303-444-0350 or e-mail them at bangert@infionline.net.

Please keep these members and friends in your prayers.

Recently in the Hospital:

- † Golda Jaspers
- † Marti Stahmer
- † Rich Maroncelli
- † Dan Dauner

Our Sympathy is with:

- † The family of Juanita Feit, long-time member of Plymouth, who passed away December 16th. A service was conducted by Hal and a reception followed in our fellowship hall.
- † The family of Ruth Smith who also passed away in December.
- † The family of Roy Hinkel whose sister passed away December 12th.

Congratulations to:

- † Jim and Dorothy Taylor on renewing their vows on their 25th wedding anniversary during worship January 2nd.

Thank you:

- † To all who helped decorate, participated in services and programs, helped with planning, with music, and general enjoyment of the holidays at Plymouth.
- † For the outpouring of giving to the tsunami victims; \$100,000 given by UCC to tsunami relief.

Many, Many Thanks!

Donna Greene would like to recognize and thank three special folks in our congregation. Tobey Yadon has been participating in and helping to launch our college fellowship group on Wednesday mornings which is going very well. He also single-handedly cooked all of the chili (two kinds) for the Youth Education Committee's hosting of the Advent Festival. He even took care of recruiting volunteers to clean up (thanks to those folks as well) and stayed till everyone was gone and the church kitchen looked cleaner than before he started!

Roger Smith has been primarily responsible for helping relocate the choir storage in order for us to offer Sharon office space. This required relocating all the SS supplies in the large closet at the end of the North wing, assembling a large storage cabinet, building custom storage for the choir music and robes, hauling mass quantities of cardboard to recycle, and delivering donations to various recipients. Furthermore, Roger graciously didn't yell when asked, since he already had his tools out, if he might be able to construct a nice set of steps for the stage in the North room as well as hang some cubbies, and finish our miniature display of model architecture from the 1st Century. Thanks Roger, really!

Kari Alexander is member of Plymouth and one of our Sr. High SS leaders. Kari also is an Iliff student who is working as many temp jobs as she can over her Christmas break. Despite a real need for income, Kari insisted on helping with some of the tasks that were piling up at Plymouth. Thanks Kari for stocking the new storage cabinet (a behemoth thing salvaged from the closet that the choir now uses) with the art supplies that were beginning to take over all the available floor space in the art room. Not a fun job at all, but Kari just came in and took care of it.

Life & Care

One whole month. As you might imagine, I'm beginning to get a sense of the workings of Plymouth and my place in its ministry. I'm still asking most of your names each time we meet, and it will be some time before I come to know the unique culture of each group and committee. I do, however, feel blessedly welcomed by each of you, and it seems I have come home.

Advent was the perfect season to throw myself into the joyful chaos of a congregation as active as Plymouth. But now that the New Year has begun, there is (hopefully) some time to reflect on this role to which you and the Spirit have called me: *Associate Minister for Congregational Life and Care*.

With the grace-filled direction of Dick Einerson, you have begun a strong ministry of congregational care. Members share the joy and responsibility of visiting congregants, providing meals during tough times, writing cards to offer support and sharing prayers of need and hope. These are only *a few* of the ways you serve.

Regarding congregational life—which seems to encompass, well, the life of the congregation—there are small groups and new members to nourish them. In the near future there will be even more opportunities to discover or enhance your own leadership skills in the lay ministry to which each person is called. Within this realm, I will also be working with the Youth Group leaders who help maintain a meaningful ministry with Plymouth's young people. The congregational life aspect of our community, being so vibrant, is one about which I am still learning. It's exciting to be in this time of growth with you.

Of course, this is only a glimpse. I continue to encounter new pieces of the Plymouth pie, so I welcome your visits and any insights you may share—about how you understand congregational life and care and how you'd like to be involved. Congregational life and care embraces many facets of the church as I believe Christ modeled it: each of us in fellowship with one another. This fellowship is also my prayer for our time together. I am blessed to be here, and I look forward to getting to know you better.

In the Spirit,

Attention Placard Contributors!

The deadline for the February Placard is **Monday, January 17th**. Please e-mail your articles to Karin Marsh (plymouth@plymouthucc.org) AND Lauren Mingus (lpmingus@earthlink.net). NOTE: To help save time, when possible, please submit articles in font style Garamond, 12 point type. Please do not include tabs, bullets or indentations. .

Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ

An open & affirming
congregation.

Gathered in 1903.

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TAIZÉ SERVICE

**WHO: YOU!
EVERYONE IS WELCOME!**

**WHEN: SUNDAY,
JANUARY 16 AT 6:00 PM**

WHERE: PLYMOUTH CONG'L UCC

COST: FREE-WILL OFFERING FOR SUPPER

CHILDCARE: YOU BET!

MORE INFO: WWW.TAIZE.FR



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