



# The Bell

**PLYMOUTH CHURCH**  
FORT WAYNE + UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
PLYMOUTHFW.ORG

## **From the Senior Pastor** **Dismantling Racism One Book at a Time**

Anti-racism and its relationship with the gospel are core passions I've had for well over fifteen years. I was certified in 2016 through the Disciples of Christ to co-facilitate one-day anti-racism trainings for churches and am currently serving on the Indiana-Kentucky Conference's Anti-Racism Task Force, which has been meeting since early 2021. You could say that I am unapologetically *evangelical* when it comes to dismantling racism.

For two weeks in September, I led a Chapel Class on the topic of Institutional Racism, which is how racism persists in organizations, institutional structures, and policies. It was exciting to share about the projects we have initiated here over the past year to help dismantle the legacies of racism that are still institutionally with us. It's my conviction that such legacies hurt not only people of color but white people as well.

A few projects have focused on addressing needs of staff: adjusting our payroll process to prevent deposit delays and updating our HR Policy to address situations of racial microaggressions, either originating from other staff or from congregation members. Another project has been to change the way the Benevolence Committee evaluates grant applications: from making them colorblind to race-conscious in requiring demographic information on the leadership and board representation of organizations seeking support. A fourth area has been the diversification in religious imagery within our building. Examples include the new Mayflower Room painting of Jesus calming the storm created by a Chinese artist, and Education Room #204 now has a picture of Jesus, represented as Black, holding communion elements. Some of these projects will require ongoing implementation oversight to ensure they are being lived out.

During the Chapel Class, we also looked at new potential projects, and the latest one to begin is regarding the Amistad Library. A group of volunteers has just completed a survey of the racial makeup of the authors of the library's books.

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## **Worship at Plymouth**

Plymouth Church is currently offering an in-person worship service every **Sunday at 10:00 am**. Masks are required at this time. From **8:30 am to 9:45 am**, we offer a time of fellowship, with coffee provided, in the Folsom Room. Our chapel class education hour meets from **9:00 am to 10:00 am**.

Our services are also livestreamed every **Sunday at 10:00 am**. These will be available on our [YouTube Channel](#). A link to our YouTube Channel will be posted on our [Facebook page](#) every **Sunday morning at 8:00 am** and included in the Weekly Bulletin. Each livestream is uploaded to the Sermon Archive page on [our website](#) on **Monday mornings**.

Plymouth also has a private Facebook group available to members called [Plymouth Generations](#). Join this Facebook group to communicate easily with other Plymouth people! You must already have a Facebook account to join this group.

Plymouth Church sends out the Weekly Bulletin to keep you up-to-date on things like online gatherings, ways to help others while social distancing, and other news. The Weekly Bulletin is now sent out on **Saturdays at 7:00 pm**. If you are not receiving these messages, please check your spam folder first. If you still are not receiving them, please contact our Communications Specialist Elizabeth at [edp@plymouthfw.org](mailto:edp@plymouthfw.org).

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It was impractical to research the background of every author of every book (there are over 1000), but we reviewed a randomized portion of books to give us an estimate of the racial composition of the books' authors.

The first step in addressing disparities is having good data to understand where we are at. Our working hypothesis was that it was likely that the overwhelming number of authors were white. What would you consider an appropriate distribution of authorial origins? 40 percent people of color? 25 percent? 10 percent? According to the 2020 Census, people of color make up over 40% of the US population. Worldwide, close to 2/3 of all Christians live in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, or Asia.

Our research estimated that white authors compose 93% of the books: that's a problem. There are really only two possible conclusions available. The first, which I would affirm, is that our library does not reflect the breadth of Christian voices it should. The alternative conclusion is that it is fine the way it is, because authors of color have nothing of importance to add to our library or are of lesser quality to white authors. This latter option is a racist conclusion, which is antithetical to the gospel. That leaves us with the former, and thus compels us to work to diversify the voices and insights expressed therein.

Now that we know where we are, we have two processes that will help rectify this situation, one a longer-term solution, and one a short-term response. Long term, books are periodically retired. The plan is for every two books retired, one of the replacements should come from an author of color. Given that Christians of color are approaching half of the US population and are already well over that percentage worldwide, that seems like a fair and achievable goal. Historically, white authors, biblical scholars, theologians, and pastors have monopolized space of publicized faith reflections, and this policy is a means to correct that disparity.

The second and more short-term response is to select several dozen books, both classics and contemporary publications, of Black authors, mainly Christian but not exclusively, that are currently absent from our library. This would include titles like *Jesus and the Disinherited* by Howard Thurman, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* by Audre Lorde, or Karen Baker Fletcher's *Sisters of Dust*, *Sisters of Spirit*, for instance.

We will not stop at adding Black Christian authors – we will also look to add important works of Latino, Asian, and Indigenous voices as well, but that's where we will begin, understanding that this will be a long, ongoing process. We cannot defeat the sin of racism in a day, or necessarily even in our lifetimes, but we can be – indeed, we are called to be – intentional in our institutional life to reflect anti-racist, gospel values. Along with other projects yet unknown or unidentified, it includes dismantling racism one book at a time.

Peace,

Rev. Dr. Timothy C. Murphy  
Senior Pastor and Teacher

## Indiana Center for Middle East Peace Upcoming Programs

**HUWAIDA ARRAF – GALA 2021\***  
**Saturday, October 30, 5:30 - 9:00 pm**  
Orchard Ridge Country Club  
4531 Lower Huntington Rd, Fort  
Wayne, IN 46809

Heavy appetizers, silent auction, music, and more. Contact Linda Kerr for registration and benefactor Levels at [linda.kerr72@gmail.com](mailto:linda.kerr72@gmail.com) or (260) 341-2796.

Huwaida Arraf is a Palestinian-American activist-lawyer in Detroit, with US and Israeli citizenship. She is co-founder (with husband, Adam Shapiro, and others) of the International Solidarity Movement; Chair of the Free Gaza Movement, the organization behind the Gaza Freedom Flotillas (she was aboard 2008 and 2010 Free Gaza boats); and charter member of the Palestine Feminist Collective.

*\*For the safety of all our guests, vaccination and masks are required.*

**REV. LOREN McGRAIL—UCC**  
Mission Representative to Bethlehem  
**Thursday, November 18, 6:30 pm**  
Plymouth Congregational Church

Free, open to the public. Masks required.

UCC minister, artist, and poet, Loren McGrail served as mission co-worker for UCC and Disciples of Christ in Palestine/Israel in 2018-2021. She writes about her work for Palestinians, as well as immigrants and refugees based on her witness at the San Diego border. Part of her work in Bethlehem was taking oral histories of Palestinian refugee women from the 1948 Nakba; she also worked with women who made traditional embroidered Palestinian thobs (dresses) for small wooden dolls to witness to Palestine's cultural heritage.

## From the Associate Pastor



It's been just a little over a month since I celebrated my first Sunday at Plymouth Church as your new associate pastor, and what a month it's been! I have received such a warm and hospitable welcome from both congregation members and fellow staff, and it didn't take long for me to feel right at home! I've had a chance to meet many of you, though I'm still working on learning everyone's names. It's a bit overwhelming to tradition from a church of 40 to a church of 400, but I'm slowly learning how everything works.

So far, I have been incredibly impressed with the ministry that goes on at Plymouth, not just on Sunday morning, but throughout the week. In addition to tremendous worship on Sunday mornings, I've shared delicious dinners with you on Wednesday nights, sat in on board and committee meetings, attended meet and greets at member's homes, and prayed with members during our weekly Joys and Concerns meetings. I've blessed pets, had breakfast and lunch meetings, and drank lots and lots of coffee. That's just a snapshot of my activities since arriving just over one month ago.

As I look forward, I am excited to think about all that we have yet to experience together for the first time. My favorite liturgical season—Advent—is coming up in just over a month, and I look forward to celebrating that rich season with all of you. I am anxious to experience the Board's Head Festival for the first time, in whatever form that may take this year. I particularly look forward to getting to know more of Plymouth's youth when our Covenant classes begin in January.

Overall, I feel incredibly blessed to be in ministry with all of you. Change is always difficult, and moving from Connecticut to Indiana has certainly been a big change, but the sweet, sweet spirit of the Holy Spirit that is alive and well here at Plymouth has helped me navigate that change with joy, gratitude and hope.

Thank you!

Rev. Sara Ofner-Seals  
Associate Pastor

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## Luminous Night Service

As we approach the holiday season, many of us may be struggling with grief, loneliness, or other difficult emotions. It can be especially difficult to navigate those emotions during a time of year in which so much emphasis is placed on parties and celebration. If you struggle with finding joy during the holiday season, or if you could use a quieter, more reflective way to observe this sacred time of year, please consider joining us for our Luminous Night service, held on **Wednesday, December 1 at 7:00 pm.**

Filled with reflective readings, music, and prayer, it is a time to be together and acknowledge God's presence and love, even in the midst of loss, loneliness and grief. We hope this service will be a gift to those who need it most this coming holiday season.



## Benevolence Committee Seeking Recommendations

As we prepare to send invitations to apply for Benevolence Grants to various organizations in Fort Wayne and abroad, the Benevolence Committee would love to hear your recommendations for non-profits that may not know about this resource. A regular Benevolence Grant may be up to \$2,000, and a Capacity Building Grant may be up to \$20,000. Organizations must be 501(3)c non-profits, and their work should align with at least one of our four covenants (although the more the merrier).

Invitations will go out no later than November 1, so please be sure to **let us know your recommendations by October 29**. Please send the name of the organization and, if possible, the name, phone number, and email address of a contact there, to [pfbenevolencegrant@gmail.com](mailto:pfbenevolencegrant@gmail.com)

Thanks so much!



## Stay Up to Date with Plymouth Church!

Are you following Plymouth on social media? If you aren't, you may be missing important updates about special events! You can find us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#), where we post event reminders and updates, share photos from events and other happenings around the church, and more. On our [YouTube channel](#), you'll find our past worship services and be able to tune in each Sunday morning for a livestream of our service. You can also find links to all our social media channels and more on our [LinkTree](#).

## October Supply Drive



E&M will be collecting to help provide necessary items for the Afghan refugees being resettled in Fort Wayne. Catholic Charities here in Fort Wayne is overseeing the outfitting of the homes of our new neighbors, so we will deliver what we collect to them. Our supply drive for October will be **Saturday, October 30, from 9:00 am to 11:00 am**, at the Folsom Room entrance. You may, of course, drop items in the supply drive bin in the Folsom Room all month, until October 31.

As of this writing, Catholic Charities cannot yet accept furniture donations, but we will update you as their capacity increases. For a list of necessary kitchen items, linen/household items, cleaning supplies, and toiletries – as well as volunteer opportunities – please visit [this link](#).

*Please note that donated items should be new.*

"no one leaves home unless  
home is the mouth of a shark  
you only run for the border  
when you see the whole city running as well."  
-- Warsan Shire, "Home"

## Tapping Into Faith Returns

With COVID-19 numbers declining, E&M has decided it is time to get back into the fun of monthly Tapping Into Faith events at Mad Anthony Brewing Co., at Taylor and Broadway. This casual gathering of Plymouth folks and sometimes neighbors from the community is a great chance to enjoy good company, good conversation about different questions and topics in faith, and, of course, a tasty snack and beverage.

Appetizers to share will be provided by Plymouth, and you're welcome to purchase whatever food you like. If you do not drink alcohol, you can enjoy Mad's home-brewed root beer or red cream soda, as well as the usual iced tea and sodas.

Please know that we cannot demand or enforce vaccination status or mask-wearing for this event so make your decision accordingly. You are more than welcome to wear a mask yourself, of course – at least while you aren't eating or drinking.

We will be meeting in the **Mad Room** on the last Monday of the month, beginning **October 25 at 7:30 pm**, and hope to see you there!

Mad Anthony Brewing Co. is located at 2002 Broadway, Fort Wayne, IN.





# Community Pantry Update

The E&M Board is delighted that a community pantry now lives in Plymouth's parking lot! At this pantry, the people who share this community, including us, will have the chance to give when they are able, to take what they need when they need it, and to help maintain the cleanliness of the pantry and the area.

The great news is that this pantry is getting used! Keeping up with demand in our location is turning out to be some work, which means it is needed by many. If you would like to donate some items to the pantry, that's fantastic!

**For the health and safety of our neighbors, please keep in mind the following guidelines.**

- Stock only food items that are **non-perishable, unopened** (in original packaging), and **not expired**. This means no fresh produce, unfortunately, which tends to go bad quickly in the pantries and attract bugs and other pests.
  - Suggested items include, but are not limited to: bottled water, juice boxes, rice, dry pasta, cereal, canned goods (with pop-tops please – not everyone has a can opener), soups, sauces, shelf-stable meals, peanut butter.
- Also helpful are personal hygiene supplies, menstrual products, and basic household cleaning supplies like dish soap, sponges, and all-purpose cleaner. These also should be in their sealed original packaging.
- If you notice open or expired food, or fresh produce, please remove it from the pantry and use it yourself if you like or dispose of it properly if necessary.
- If you notice a small spill or similar, and have the supplies to do so, please give it a quick clean! If the pantry has bugs and/or is in disrepair, please contact [forwardindiana@hotmail.com](mailto:forwardindiana@hotmail.com) with the pantry location and problem so they can coordinate maintenance.



Thanks for being the church, friends

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## November Chapel Class: Food Deserts and Insecurity in the Fort

Chapel classes in November promise to both provoke and enthuse. Weekly guests, each a genuine asset in this arena, will share about their work and the differences they are making.

**November 7** - Katie Savoie, Community Harvest Food Bank illumines their efforts in reducing food insecurity across the region.

**November 14** - Mary Tyndall, St Joe Community Health Foundation will address eliminating food deserts, ways for increasing food affordability, and teaching cooking skills to families.

**November 21** - Becky Larson, Nutritional Services Fort Wayne Community Schools will be discussing aspects of food sourcing and government's role, nutrient needs at each age, and how they are addressing weekend food needs.

**November 28** - (tentatively) Terri Theisen, Purdue Extension will introduce the class to the Johnnie Mae Farm on Winter Street and how urban agriculture is taking hold in our city.

Chapel classes take place from **9:00 am to 10:00 am in the Chapel on Sundays**. All are welcome!

## Fall Children's Sunday School Updates



In the Preschool/Elementary class our fall stories take us on a journey through the Hebrew Scriptures. We will follow the Hebrew people as they build first an ark, then a tabernacle, and then the temple as places to come close to God. We'll stick with them while the temple is destroyed and the people are sent into exile, and wonder with them as they return to Jerusalem and decide how to rebuild their community. Following a year of worshiping apart, these stories give us a way to talk about where we found God outside of our building and how to be together again.

These events come to life in our classroom thanks to storytelling materials made by Sam Lipscomb. He built us an ark, a tabernacle, and a temple that the kids can work with as we learn these stories.

Our Youth Class continues to ask big questions about God -- and search for their answers through short video lessons, journaling activities, and exploring their Bibles. Some of their upcoming questions include "Why should I pray when God doesn't answer all my prayers?" and "Can I be a Christian without going to Church?"

Both our Preschool/Elementary class and our Youth class now meet indoors from **9:00 am to 9:50 am on Sunday mornings**. New students are always welcome to drop in!



On World Communion Sunday, our kids decorated these people of the world to come to the Communion Table. It is great to see the kids help create our storytelling materials!

## Plymouth People In Our Prayers

Charlie Belch, Donna Belch, Colleen Carteaux, Kris Conner, Brad Crowder, Heather Dollarhite, Lynda and Mike Eckard, Laura Ehrhardt, Ann Filler, Eric Glenn, Caroline Godsell, Joan Hartwig, Bob Huff, Nancy Jordan, Nancy Kilduski, Elizabeth Klooze, Ginny Laudadio, Beth Lauer, Mary Joan Lauer, Brian Laurenz, Carol Lewark, Joan Lipscomb, Sheldon Lockwood, Gerald Lockwood, Connie Mabe, Janet McCoy, Mary McCoy family, Chris McDonough, Dave and James Alan Mendenhall, Candace Murphy, Jim Nelson, Bonnie Pennock, Cindy Pflueger, Tod Ramsey, Noel Resor, Claire Roney, Jacqueline Sanders, Rick Schilb, Vivian Schilb, Barbara Senn, John Shannon, Maureen Shea, Travis Sheets, Shirley Slater, Johanna Smith, Marian Waltz, Stan Volz

**Sympathy** is extended to Erin Shaw and Clara Bowling in the death of Rebecca Huff, step-mother, on August 24.

**Sympathy** is extended to Doris Grandos in the death of her husband, Norman Grandos, on September 9.

**Sympathy** is extended to John Escosa in the death of his mother, Dorothy Escosa, on October 17.



## Open Prayer in the Sanctuary

Per a number of requests, Plymouth has decided to open our sanctuary on **Thursdays from 12:30 pm to 4:30 pm** for a time of personal prayer. All are welcome and can come and go as they please. Please enter through the Berry Street office entrance and check in with our receptionist. If you have any questions, please email us at [office@plymouthfw.org](mailto:office@plymouthfw.org) or call (260) 423-9424.

## Centering Prayer Group

During the months of October and November, Rev. Sara will be leading a centering prayer group in the chapel as part of Wednesday night live activities. The group will meet in the chapel on **Wednesdays from 6:45 pm to 7:30 pm**. Centering prayer is a form of silent, contemplative prayer meant to open the heart to God's presence and action within. Whether you are new to centering prayer, or practice it regularly, all are welcome to join this group. We will be working loosely with the book *The Heart of Centering Prayer* by Cynthia Bourgeault, though purchase of the book is not required for participation.

Please note that there will be **no Centering Prayer sessions on October 27 or November 24.**



## Indiana-Kentucky Conference UCC COVID-19 Guidance

Rev. Murphy received updated guidance from our Conference Minister, Rev. Chad Abbott, on May 14 in light of the CDC's evolving guidelines on mask wearing. It comes from the Wisconsin Council of Churches, released May 13, entitled "Love Builds Up."

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to be a significant factor in our lives for when and how we gather together. The current abatement and the hope associated with vaccines, however, does not yet mean a return to "normal."

Click [here](#) to view the full guidance.

## COVID-19 Vaccination Eligibility

The state of Indiana has opened COVID-19 vaccination eligibility to **anyone 12 and older.**

If you are eligible, you can schedule an appointment [here](#). If you have difficulty registering online, you can dial 211 from any phone for assistance.



## November Birthdays

2 Katherine Caldwell	12 Laura Kinner	23 Matt Brown
2 Louise Misegades	14 Carol Miller	23 Kirstin Springer
2 Jan Younger	15 Ty Ratajczak	23 Ruth Anne Sprunger
3 Scott Avery	16 Pam Etheridge	24 Kathleen Simunek
6 Mary Argus	16 Jacob Key	25 Doug Powers
6 Tim Cunningham	16 Patrick Vonderau	25 Jessie Throop-Voors
7 Al Bohnstedt	17 Katie Carboneau	25 Christine Week
7 William Spindler	19 Erin Shaw	26 Chris Randolph
8 Miles Nicholson	20 Lowell Beineke	27 Nancy Kilduski
9 Rose Pyle	20 Amber Butler	28 Eric Congdon
10 Mary Ann Cree	20 Valerie Pelz	29 Ed Gomez
10 Michael McCoy	22 Darlene Smith	30 Brent Blalock
10 Cindy Ottinger	22 Ross Sunday	30 Stan Holdeman
11 Julie Creek	22 Deb Tuttle	
12 Brian Army	23 Mary Bir	

## Financial Report

September 2021

	Month	Month	Month	YTD	YTD	YTD
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Actual	Budget	Variance
<b>Total Income</b>	\$55,193	\$63,541	(\$8,348)	\$619,321	\$648,819	(\$29,498)
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$87,488	\$81,886	\$5,602	\$577,231	\$639,746	(\$62,515)
<b>Net Income (Loss)</b>	(\$32,295)	(\$18,345)	(\$13,950)	\$42,090	\$9,073	\$33,017

## Contact Us

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**Whoever You Are, Wherever You Are on Life's Journey, You Are Welcome Here!**