Cheers for our library team!

BY MEG GISSLEN AND CHERYL DAVENPORT

More than three years of efforts by the team of Meg and Wayne Gisslen (at right in the photo) and Cheryl and John Davenport (at left in photo) have remade the Elaine Marsh Library into an accessible, attractive room holding a remarkable, relevant collection—and an online catalog! As new volunteers take over this month, we pause to appreciate our outgoing library team. —Editor

Cheryl Davenport and Meg Gisslen met sorting a sea of children’s books in the Education Wing. Paula Northwood asked if they might “help” on the Elaine Marsh library committee. Says Meg: “You don’t say ‘No’ to Paula.” Thus, the project started. Meg said “the team adopted the mission to reconnect the library to the church. We coordinated with boards, studied topical “best” book lists for current thinking, entered all books into an electronic database for easy review in the online catalog, and found ways to promote new and relevant books.”

The collection now has 3,000+ titles, including works by Nobel and Pulitzer prize–winning authors Toni Morrison and Robert Hass, Biblical interpretation, poetry, biographies, spiritual inspiration from Jack Spong and Thich Nhat Hanh, works by Plymouth authors, and 300+ children’s, young adult, and picture books.

Some form of a library has existed at Plymouth since the church moved to 19th and Niccollet, according to Archivist Mary Welfling. First, members could check out books from the church office; later, the books were shelved in the Parlor, in a library named for Star Tribune editor and second Plymouth Moderator Gideon Seymour. By the early 1980s, the library had moved to its current space and was renamed the Elaine Marsh Library.

Cheryl recalled some of the team’s endeavors. “In September of 2017, we had a library sale, allowing us to de-access old, worn-out or dated books. . . the resulting dollars went into the library fund to obtain current materials. “We expanded the library into The Hub, located in the Education wing, . . . to increase awareness and access among the younger people . . .

“We have actively added current books on topics of interest to the congregation—the environment, gun violence/control, mortality, books by all of the Literary Witnesses guests over the years, and racism.”

Says Seth Patterson, Director of Spiritual Formation and Theater: Thank you, library team, for your generous gift to this church!
The mystery of God’s love
BY PAULA NORTHWOOD, ACTING SENIOR MINISTER

It’s the Advent season, and once again we gently unwrap the Christmas story in a quiet process of waiting and reflection amid the noisy bustle of programs and special events. For some, December is a challenging time, mostly because of the lack of daylight hours and unpredictable weather. For others it is a magical time full of wonder, surprise, family gatherings and playing in our winter wonderland.

Simone Weil, mystic and political activist, said, “Waiting patiently in expectation is the foundation of a spiritual life.” Waiting patiently in expectation—that is Advent. For the faith community, Advent is the time we set aside to search for the meaning of God’s coming into our midst. We begin a spiritual journey to explore the meaning of what God was doing through the incarnation, the taking on of flesh. We understand that it is not something that just happened in the past but is a recurring possibility here and now.

It is also a time for heightened awareness of what God is doing now . . .

Looking ahead to January 2020, I am very pleased that the Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church Choir will return to Plymouth Church on January 19 to sing with the Plymouth Choir, and we will travel to their church on January 26—a marvelous tradition of singing together that has gone on for many years! And...looking way ahead...on May 10 the 11 a.m. service will feature a repeat performance of Carol Barnett’s “Bluegrass Mass,” with the incredible bluegrass band Monroe Crossing!

May you have a blessed Advent and Christmas surrounded by so much beautiful music!

Special guests, old favorites and new melodies!
BY PHILIP BRUNELLE, ORGANIST-CHOIRMASTER

This month, the Plymouth sanctuary will be filled with music—special guests, old favorites and some new melodies!

The Plymouth Choir opens the month with Handel's festive “O Thou That Tellest” from Messiah, and music of Britten, Rachmaninoff, Byrd and Saint-Saëns will also be heard at the 11 a.m. service. Music of contemporary composers will include Justin Merritt (from St. Olaf College), Justin Loveland (a world premiere) and Richard Rodney Bennett.

Tony Ross, the principal cellist of the Minnesota Orchestra will return on Dec. 15. Harpist Lynne Aspnes will be with us on Christmas Eve for both the 7:45 and 10:45 p.m. services. The later service will include three beloved pieces: Paul Manz’s work, “E’en so, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come”; John Rutter’s “All Bells in Paradise”; and Harold Darke’s legendary “In the Bleak Midwinter.” Jocelyn Hagen's contemplative carol, “In Bethlehem Tonight,” first heard last Christmas Eve, will conclude the choir's offerings.
Advent: Hope, peace, joy and love
BY BETH HOFFMAN FAETH, MINISTER FOR CONGREGATIONAL CARE & WORSHIP
A new year commences in the Christian church with Advent, which this year begins Dec. 1. The four weeks preceding Christmas are known as a time of expectation, preparation and waiting. The touchstones of the season, known through the lighting of the Advent Candles and weaving throughout the Sunday liturgy, are: hope, peace, joy and love. As the world literally grows darker during December, may these themes bring us light and lead us in a direction that fills our lives with meaning and purpose.

The word *advent* means “a coming into being or use” and “the arrival of something—or someone—notable.” During the four Sundays of Advent, we will explore how hope, peace, joy and love are coming into being at and beyond Plymouth Church.

Advent is a beautiful opportunity to develop or begin a spiritual practice. This might include daily readings, meditation, prayer-filled walking, an Advent altar set up in the home, family conversations about these notable words—hope, peace, joy, love—as well as ruminating on the gifts found in the waiting and the preparations for Christmas. If you are interested in resources for this special time, or long to center yourself spiritually but are unsure of where to start, I would welcome a conversation.

Beginning Sunday, Nov. 24, and every month following on the last Sunday, at 5 p.m., we will have a Vespers service. This time of worship will offer reflection, silence, music and other elements to foster your spiritual life. If your spirit is feeling frayed or fractured, or if you are seeking healing in your life, this may be an avenue towards deeper connection with the Divine.

“The Longest Night: A Solstice Service of Remembrance” will be held on Friday, Dec. 20, at 5:30 p.m. With music provided by Sara Thomsen, we will gather to honor the darkness in our world and our spirits, especially as we grieve loved ones in this holiday season. With the encouragement of one another and God, we welcome the light that comes with the lengthening of the days and the promises of Christmas.

Our glorious tradition of Christmas Eve at Plymouth Church offers three services: 4:45 p.m., with our children and youth as worship leaders; 7:45 p.m., with our beloved church soloists; and 10:45 p.m., with our esteemed church choir. Please bring friends and family to celebrate!

May your heart be open to the whispers of the Spirit during this precious season. I observe Advent as the gift of time, an opportunity for something holy and new to be born into my life and into the world. May it be for you, as well.

Blessings, Beth

Dreaming, playing and learning at Academia Elze
BY KARINA ELZE, ACADEMIA ELZE PRINCIPAL
As we approach the end of a wonderful year, we want to express our gratitude to Plymouth Congregational Church for providing us the opportunity to teach our students and and make a difference in our families’ lives in this beautiful and welcoming facility. With your help we have been able to give access to an equitable, high-quality Spanish immersion program to low-income families, and we hope to be able to offer this opportunity to more families in the coming years.

Academia Elze believes in the empowerment of Latino families. Through our partnership with the YWCA, we inspire, coach and prepare Latino teachers who want to obtain their CDA (Child Development Associate) and join the professional workforce with the training, experience and credentials they need to grow their careers. The importance of feeling self-achievement and self-belonging in our community is critical to our success.

It is a privilege to give back to our community while doing what we love most. Thank you again for your support.

A book we recommended for the end of the year is *I Am Love* by Susan Verde. The book reminds children and adults that love means showing kindness and living with gratitude.

_Felices Fiestas and Feliz año 2020 de parte de Academia Elze!_
Discover how self-driving cars will re-shape our cities, streets and neighborhoods, during the Dec. 1 Sunday Forum. Thomas Fisher’s talk is presented by the Climate and Environmental Justice Group.

Self-driving cars are coming, and their arrival will change the shape and functioning of, inter alia, our downtowns (parking ramps will be unnecessary), freeways (lanes will be fewer and narrower), and neighborhoods (home garages will be re-purposed). With the changes will come opportunities for re-imagining and re-designing our surroundings. Come get a glimpse of what this future will look like with Thomas Fisher, who holds the Dayton Hudson Chair in Urban Design at the University of Minnesota School of Architecture and College of Design. He is currently Director of the Minnesota Design Center and served previously as the Editorial Director of Progressive Architecture magazine.

Dec. 8 Reclaiming Basketry: Working Through Stigma to Reach Creative Potential; presented by Martha Bird is an interdisciplinary artist who specializes in traditional and sculptural basketry. A Certified Holistic RN, Martha holds an MA in Human Development and has exhibited nationally and at many Minnesota venues. She is also a 2019 recipient of an Artist Initiative Grant from the MN State Arts Board. The Conn Theater.

Dec. 15 Affordable Housing IV: No Room at the Inn? Congregations Stepping Up for Shelter and Housing; presented by the Beacon Leadership Team of The Board of Outreach. Plymouth founded the organization that would become Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative and built Lydia Apartments out of a deeply held faith response to people sleeping on our church property. Congregations like ours have been providing temporary shelter through Families Moving Forward. Plymouth has completed our 18th apartment building, Great River Landing, and more are coming.

Our speaker, Rev. Emily Goldthwaite-Fries, Beacon Senior Congregational Organizer, formerly with Mayflower UCC, has witnessed the powerful role congregations can play in the healing of communities. Share in a time of reflection on the need and our response in the spirit of Advent as we remember the birth of Jesus in the stable. Emily earned her Masters of Divinity at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley and has worked in ministries in South Dakota, Iowa, Illinois, Palestine and Israel.

Sunday Forums are opportunities for conversations about faith and life. The Sunday Forum Committee seeks to provide a thoughtful and welcoming learning environment for members and friends of Plymouth Congregational Church. The weekly presentations are intended to enrich the spiritual lives of members and guests.

New members!
On Oct. 27, 15 new members joined Plymouth Church. Pictured, from left are: (front row) Leah Young, Jeff Young, Joy Osborn, Alicia Gibson, Celia Hemmerich, Mae, and Joe Strangfeld; (back row) Cody Bourdot, Erik Steen, Grace Forbord, Jeff Vigil, Kathy Vigil, Maria Gisselquist and John Gisselquist. Not pictured: Joan Frentz, Bob Stockman. Please join in welcoming each and all of them to our faith community!
A successful first season of Theater 45°

BY THE THEATER 45° TEAM
On Nov. 18, Theater 45° completed its inaugural six-part series, *Step Back, Listen Up: Stories we all need to hear.*

Every other Monday night this fall, our Chapel was filled with Plymouth members and guests to hear stories from performers from Blackout Improv, Irreducible Grace Foundation, Interact Center, Alliance of Latinx MN Artists (ALMA), Washburn High School and zAmya Theater.

Each of these groups was asked to tell stories from their perspective that they think are not being heard in the dominant culture. Over 500 people attended these performances that began and ended with some sort of communal ritualized action.

Theater 45° will continue offering stories that we all need to hear throughout the year, and this series will return in fall 2020.

—Seth Patterson, Artistic Director
—Ashawnti Ford, Producing Artistic Director
—Rob Thomas, Managing Artistic Director

The Christian of the Future

“...will not exist at all,” said theologian Karl Rahner. For over a year, the Plymouth Contemplatives have gathered to pray and explore Christianity's mystical dimensions. How might we re-incorporate contemplative practices into congregational life? How may we rediscover what it means to “consent to God’s presence and action within,” as Centering Prayer teaches?

As way of example, I sat down with Peg Birk to hear her spiritual journey. Peg is a Deacon serving on the Lead Minister Search Committee and is a long-term practicing contemplative. After a decade in evangelical churches, Peg returned to her Episcopal roots, where she learned about spiritual direction, meditation (*Living Buddha, Living Christ* by Thich Nhat Hanh was her entry point) and a new way of thinking about her relationship with God. When she turned 30, she began attending week-long silent retreats.

“I just listened and learned a lot about the power of sitting in silence together.” While she describes wanting to have some big mystical experience take “the shades off my eyes,” instead she heard: “I am. Just be.” Today she works to have the humility and trust to live by this wisdom.

Peg made her way to Plymouth when she got involved in the gay rights movement. Plymouth “is this social justice-minded place with incredibly loving, intelligent and wonderful people.” It has become the primary source of her “spiritual joy and growth” in the last few years.

At the contemplative retreat Dan Wolpert led last spring, Peg was walking the labyrinth when she was drawn to a forsythia bush. She later shared with the group: “The bush is the burning love of God, beckoning me, the beloved, to step out of the safe labyrinth path and walk slowly toward this pure, fierce, and fiery love. I yearn for a deeper union with this all-consuming perfect love that draws me in . . . so that I may be free to love the beloved I have sensed and known since baptism.”

“We don’t realize how deeply and passionately we are pursued by God,” Peg said. To nurture her contemplative life, Peg spends time each morning reading a meditation (currently Richard Rohr), sitting in silence and journaling. She also visits with a spiritual director bi-monthly and retreats at least once a year. “God is alive in all things. And God is life-giving,” Peg told me. The active mysticism of people like Peg makes me hopeful for the future of Christianity.

**The Plymouth Contemplatives are an affinity group committed to personal and collective transformation through spiritual practice. We gather every second Monday from 7 to 9 p.m. All are welcome.**
Tips for Year-end Giving

BY JOY HANSEN, ACCOUNTING MANAGER

IMPORTANT TAX TIPS
To ensure the deductibility of your church contributions, please do not file your 2019 income tax return until you have received a written acknowledgment of your contributions from the church. Some of your contributions may not be tax-deductible if you file your tax return before receiving this written acknowledgement. To qualify for a 2019 tax-deductible stock gift, be sure your stockbroker/advisor has initiated the transfer of shares to Plymouth’s account by Dec. 31, 2019.

YEAR-END CONTRIBUTIONS
The Accounting Department will gladly receive your year-end contributions through Dec 31. However, the church office will close early—at noon—on Dec. 31, so please consider bringing your year-end gifts in early. IRS regulations state that gifts must be postmarked or received by Dec. 31 in order to receive 2019 tax credit. Please clearly mark your envelope “2019” for these year-end gifts. We are unable to give 2019 tax credit for checks that are “pre-dated” and are not received by the church or postmarked by Dec. 31. If you have any questions, contact Joy Hansen at 612/977-1265 or joyh@plymouth.org.

Have you considered the tax benefits of giving appreciated stock to fulfill or increase your 2019 Pledge and/or Capital Campaign pledge? The process is really simple! Please contact Joy Hansen at 612/977-1265 or joyh@plymouth.org, or check our website: www.plymouth.org/act/give-2/. Scroll down to “Gifts of Stock.” Plymouth’s account number with Charles Schwab is #3429-0850, DTC #0164.

TO VIEW YOUR PLEDGE OR GIVING—
Log into your account:

• Please go to the Plymouth website (http://www.plymouth.org).
• Select “ACT” then click on “Member Login”
• On the page that opens, enter your email or user name and your password.
• You’ll be taken to your overview page.

View your pledge or giving:

• From your overview page, find the “My Giving Summary” section.
• Click the “My Giving History” or “My Pledge History” link.

You can give online, too!
Please see our giving tips for instructions on how to give online (https://www.plymouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Online-giving-procedures.pdf). You can give a one-time gift or set up a profile and designate a recurrent gift. It’s that simple. If you have any questions, please contact Joy Hansen.

YOU MAY GIVE VIA TEXT
Just text to make pledge payments or to give to Plymouth’s operating fund. Text 612/999-2874. The first time only, you will see a form requesting contact and credit card information. You may give one time or set up a recurring payment.

Thank you for your generosity and faithfulness to Plymouth Congregational Church!

Feeding our hungry neighbors

BY JEAN TRACY, THIRD SUNDAY MEAL LEADER, AND DAVE ENGHUSEN, GROVELAND FOOD SHELF DIRECTOR

During the season of Advent and Christmas, our minds and hearts turn toward those in our community. While our Third Sunday Meal program and our partners at Groveland Emergency Food Shelf feed our neighbors all year around, the Christmas Offering is an especially opportune time to fill the larder for those in our community in need. Here are program updates.

Jean Tracy writes: “Each month, around 150 people gather at Plymouth’s Third Sunday Meal for a warm, hearty dinner. These guests—our neighbors in need—receive much more than great food. At Plymouth, they find a safe, welcoming place where they are treated with dignity and care. There’s a chaplain and a health professional to answer questions and suggest resources. There’s a bike repair clinic, a table where they can help themselves to things like hats, socks and soap, and another table with information about community resources.

“Third Sunday Meal is possible through generous monetary donations and volunteers’ time.”

Dave Enghusen writes: “Over the past five years, Groveland Food Shelf has seen a gradual but definite slowing
Results of the Nov. 10 special meeting

BY ALLISON CAMPBELL JENSEN, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATION

During the Nov. 10, 2019 worship service, a special meeting of the congregation was held. Petitioners had convened the congregational meeting concerning a decision of the Leadership Council. Of the 561 members who voted at the meeting, 189 members voted in favor of the proposed revised action plan, while 372 voted against. This vote affirmed the Leadership Council Embroidery Implementation Plan.

Thank you, every Plymouth member and friend who participated, for taking part in this important meeting.

On Nov. 11, Paula Northwood, Beth Hoffman Faeth and Seth Patterson sent a letter to the congregation via email. They wrote: “First and foremost, we hold up our covenant to be a loving community that is committed to walk together as we discern the future. We live in a changing world. Our commitment to racial justice and our desire to be inclusive of all people’s history require new ideas, creativity and innovation. We may differ on how that can be done, but the shared commitment has been visible at Plymouth from the beginning. [The Nov. 10] vote is not the conclusion of our work but the continuation of work started at the inception of this church. Every generation is responsible for how this [work] gets carried out.

“As we look to the future, it is possible to hold two things in our hearts at the same time: the need to grieve our loss and the desire to deepen our relationships as we work toward healing. . . . It is our prayer that this moment is seen as a gateway to who we are becoming and how we are learning to be loving, inclusive and caring people. It is our hope that we all will be invigorated to do more to welcome our neighbors, to be a comfort to each other in these uncertain times, and to embody the love of God into the world. This is what it means to be a covenant people.”

Please know your clergy are open to conversation with all. They may be reached at: paulan@plymouth.org; bethf@plymouth.org; sethp@plymouth.org.

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CHRISTMAS OFFERING, cont.

of visits. Low unemployment helped many of our visitors to need assistance less often or not at all. In the fall last year, however, we saw the trend reverse. In 2019, visits have risen more than 10%, topping 2,000 people per month for the first time in several years.

“So what has changed? Jobs are still available but new housing and commercial developments in the neighborhood have caused existing housing costs to rise. Old brownstones, affordable a short time ago, now have prices of $900 for a studio and over $1,000 for a one bedroom. New housing is averaging between $1,300 and $1,800 per month. We still see many seniors, but new customers are trending younger, with many between 20 and 40. Homeless adult customers have increased from a handful to over 100.

“Groveland is a disparate community including people of varied ages, ethnicities, identities and backgrounds. We’re also three programs: a neighborhood food shelf, a refuge for homeless youth and a food shelf at Minneapolis Community & Technical College. We thank you for your support in the past, present and future.”
Women’s Art Institute celebrates 20 years

BY LYNNETTE BLACK, CO-CHAIR OF THE GALLERY COMMITTEE

Join in celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Women’s Art Institute (WAI) with a special exhibition by 12 artists from the class of 2018. The Women’s Art Institute was founded to encourage and deepen the art practice of advanced women artists of all ages and backgrounds.

DEC. 8: DON’T MISS!
Sunday Forum, 10 a.m. Martha Bird, one of the participating artists, will present Reclaiming Basketry: Working Through Stigma To Reach Creative Potential.

Dec. 8: Opening Reception, 11 a.m.–1 p.m. Meet the artists in the gallery!

WAI is a rigorous four-week studio intensive, which combines open studio work, individual tutoring, critiques and presentations from visiting artists, art historians, critics and museum curators, as well as visits to the studios of prominent local women artists. Issues of inclusion of women artists’ work in art history, museums and gallery representation, in the past as well as in the contemporary art world, are explored. In addition, thought-provoking conversations, reflective writing sessions and critical thinking are encouraged.

Elizabeth Erickson and Patricia Olson founded WAI at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. It currently resides at St. Catherine University, St Paul.

Exhibiting artists are Shari Albers, Lynnette K. Black, Susan Skach-Bejarano, Martha Bird, Chris Cinque, Colleen Cosgrove, Kathleen Daniels, Cyndi Kaye Meier, Julia Nellessen, Brenda Olson, Kristin Palm and Kathleen Yennie.

The exhibit will be on display through Jan. 15, 2020. For more information on Women’s Art Institute (WAI): www.stkate.edu/events/wai

Grace and Gratitude
BY SUSAN SKACH-BEJARANO

The Women’s Art Institute was founded to encourage and deepen the art practice of advanced women artists of all ages and backgrounds.

Reveal by Martha Bird

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Revealing Basketry: Working Through Stigma To Reach Creative Potential.

Grace and Gratitude
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Following the Nov. 10 congregational meeting, the Racial Justice Initiative was heartened by the commitment expressed by adherents of each plan to strengthen our mutual understanding and knowledge of racial justice, equity and inclusion at Plymouth. All seem to agree on the need for more educational programming on racial justice issues, building relationships with communities of color and bringing new art and voices into Plymouth to represent a larger and more inclusive version of who we are.

Leading up to the vote, Plymouth Church had sponsored strong programs this fall—Sundays @ 10 Salons on Racial Justice, Theater 45°’s Step Back, Listen Up series, and a presentation by a prominent civil rights historian Bill Green, the author of The Children of Lincoln, about the history of racism in Minnesota.

We have planned more programs and initiatives for the coming months. The Racial Justice Initiative humbly and respectfully invites all of you to join us as we move forward.

The Racial Justice Initiative will continue to work with the six boards of the church and other groups as we 1) examine our white privilege and ways that our culture of white power has unintentionally contributed to systemic racism and, based on that understanding, 2) discern how to take right actions here at Plymouth. Each of the programs we’ve planned or support will use this standard as its foundation.

Through the Spiritual Exploration Committee, Plymouth members can participate in The New York Times 1619 Project, a series that acknowledges the 400th year anniversary of slaves being shipped to the shores of our country and examines the legacy of slavery in America. The series will build on the research of distinguished black academics, journalists and writers. We will discuss pulitzercenter.org/sites/default/files/full_issue_of_the_1619_project.pdf, its essays, short prose, poetry and associated podcasts. We will also explore how the recent scholarship and viewpoints it contains might impact the contemporary church in America and Plymouth in particular. Ann Ludlow, member of the Racial Justice Initiative, and retired tenured faculty member of Minneapolis Community and Technical College, will lead these classes on Monday nights from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., Jan. 27 and Feb. 3, 10, 17 and 24.

On March 1, 2020, we will show the film Doctrine of Discovery: In the Name of Christ. Viewers will learn about the history of the Doctrine of Discovery (by which European explorers justified the takeover of lands in the New World), its basis in Christian theology, its effects on indigenous people and how we might work to undo its negative impacts. A study guide will be cited for those who want to do more reading on this important topic.


We are also in the process of exploring how we can engage with various efforts against voter suppression. We would like to help everyone who is eligible vote in the 2020 elections. We will seek Plymouth members who may want to join this initiative during 2020.

After the new year, Seth Patterson and Professor Joan Thompson will lead a class entitled Forced into Camps. Their presentations and class conversations will examine the parallels between the WWII Japanese internment camps established by the U.S. government and the current camps holding asylum seekers and would-be immigrants on the U.S. border with Mexico.

Members of the Racial Justice Initiative will continue to create or sponsor other programs, initiatives and relationships that inspire and guide us all in making Plymouth a place that attracts and welcomes our members, their friends and families, and a wide and diverse group of neighbors and people from the broader community.

We will continue collaborating with church leadership, interested member groups and the entire congregation. Thank you for sharing this journey with us.
Warm hearts, warm neighbors winter gear update!

BY NINA JONSON, PROGRAMS MANAGER

Wow! What a generous community we have. Not only have our Plymouth Church members been incredibly giving, but the generosity has been contagious. We have noticed people in the building for VocalEssence rehearsals, recovery group meetings and other community events bringing winter gear to warm up our neighbors as well.

By mid-November, we had collected 200 coats, 150 pairs of gloves, 35 pairs of boots and 25 pairs of snow pants. These items have been delivered to a recently immigrated family from Nigeria, visitors to the Brian Coyle Community Center, which serves predominantly members of the Somali and East African communities, Minneapolis Public Schools, the Minnesota Council of Churches for recent immigrants, Simpson Shelter and the Groveland Food Shelf.

We also had people from the neighborhood come in looking for warm winter gear and have been able to provide them what they need, on the spot.

The enthusiasm of our community for giving, coupled with our deep understanding of the chill of a Minnesota winter, has truly led this drive to be an overwhelming success. We are so grateful for this opportunity for our congregation to come together to love our neighbors.

The organizers, the Children and Youth Programs, and the Immigrant Welcoming Work Group, are grateful for all your gifts!

It’s our neighbors’ holiday party!

Nicollet Square Holiday Party could use your help! Dec. 19, the annual Holiday Party for residents of Nicollet Square, a supportive housing for young adults, will be held. You can help by gifting Target or Amazon gift cards in any amount to be used to purchase various items that the residents need or want. Please send the cards to Penny Bond, 100 Promenade Ave., 501N, Wayzata, MN 55391. If you are a baker or are making cookies for the holidays, think about baking extra to be used for the party and to make plates for the youth to take back to their apartments. These can be dropped off at the reception desk on Sunday, Dec. 15. Thank you in advance for your generosity. If you have questions please email Penny at pbondmn@comcast.net or call her, 612/710-2421.

ORNAMENTS WANTED!

After the success of last year’s Advent display of Family Nativity Scenes, our Programs Manager Nina Jonson would like to expand our holiday celebration to include more members of our church community. From Nov. 27 through Dec. 24, we will have a display tree in Jones Commons, where each week 12 ornaments and the story of their significance will be displayed for our church community to enjoy. Whether the ornament is a 100-year-old heirloom passed down through the family, an egg carton jingle bell made as baby’s first ornament, an ornament with a hilarious story, or one that evokes a great memory, we want to show them off. Ornaments will be on display for one week, so no worries that it won’t be able to be hung on your tree. If you have an ornament you are willing to lend, please contact Nina Jonson, ninaj@plymouth.org. Christmas ornaments are something that we all have, and we all love. Let’s come together around our shared love of festive decorations and wonderful memories, and decorate a beautiful and meaningful tree together!
Plymouth hosts the Homeless Memorial Dec. 19

BY HANNAH CAMPBELL GUSTAFSON, OUTREACH COORDINATOR

Life on the streets is precarious, and every year, people without housing die. We join in remembering those who have died in the last year with our partners Simpson Housing Services, who organize the Homeless Memorial March on Dec. 19.

Marchers gather by 5 p.m. at the Government Center Plaza in downtown Minneapolis. There they will see signs displaying the names of those who have died during the last year. Marchers are encouraged to take a sign to carry during the march. Please refrain from bringing signs with political, religious, or other messages. The organizers support and encourage religious and political dialogue. However, this event is about honoring those who have died.

At 5 p.m. a speaker will make a few comments. Following this message, the marchers will leave the Government Center Plaza heading west along 5th Street, then south along Nicollet Avenue. Marchers will follow the route silently through downtown and south to Plymouth Congregational Church.

A service will be held at the church starting at 6 p.m. Acting Senior Minister Paula Northwood will be among those at the service. At 7 p.m., a community meal will follow for all.

If you wish to volunteer to help with the march or with hospitality here at Plymouth, please contact Hannah Campbell Gustafson, hannahcg@plymouth.org or 612/977-1262.

Winter Solstice with Sara Thomsen

On Dec. 20, celebrate the Winter Solstice—the turning of the year—with singer Sara Thomsen and her spouse Paula Pedersen. Please gather in Guild Hall. The evening will offer soulful music and a reflective time. You may buy $20 advance tickets at: songlikeaseedbrownpapertickets.com.

Sara Thomsen also joins us for the Longest Night Service, which begins at 5:30 p.m., Dec. 20, in the Chapel.

Doing Theology in the Age of Trump: April 24–25

BY MARK LARSON

On April 24 and 25, 2020, two Westar Institute fellows, Dr. John Caputo and Dr. Clayton Crockett, will lead a Jesus Seminar on the Road event at Plymouth Church.

Each of them are contributors to the recent book Doing Theology in the Age of Trump. Dr. Caputo is the Thomas J. Watson Professor of Religion Emeritus, Syracuse University and the David R. Cook Professor of Philosophy Emeritus, Villanova University.

Dr. Crockett is currently Professor of Philosophy and Religion and the Director of the Religious Studies program at the University of Central Arkansas.

The event will be focused on an exploration of the recent rise of Christian Nationalism, using the book as a resource. “This book is a work of theological resistance. It is not so much about the presidency of Donald Trump as it is about what his popularity and rise to power reveal about the state of Christianity and the moral character of the evangelical Right in the United States today,” a reviewer wrote.

“More specifically, it is about the threat of white Christian nationalism, which is the particular form that the nationalist populist movement of Trumpism has adopted for itself.”

This will be the ninth time Plymouth has hosted a JSOR event and we are looking forward to seeing you there. For more information about the Westar Institute, please see their website (https://www.westarinstitute.org/).
# December 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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| **01 First Sunday in Advent** | 8:45–12:15 Childcare  
9:00 First Service  
9:00 Archives—open for visitors  
10:00 Sundays @ 10  
11:00 Second Service—Advent Communion  
12:15 Church Tour |
| **05 Thursday** | 9:00 Archives Committee  
10:30 Meals on Wheels  
12:00 Plymouth Pew Clergy Discussion Group  
2:15 OLLI & VocalEssence class: Welcome Christmas!  
3:00 Strobel Drop-in Center  
6:30 Second Service Committee  
7:00 Vivir Mi Vida Salsa Dance |
| **06 Friday** | 4:30 Parents Night Out |
| **07 Saturday** | 4:30 Parents Night Out |
| **08 Sunday** | 8:45–12:15 Childcare  
9:00 First Service  
9:00 Archives—open for visitors  
9:30 Adult Handbells  
10:00 Sundays @ 10  
11:00 Second Service  
11:00 Christmas Festival  
12:00 Artist reception  
12:30 Christmas Festival caroling  
4:00 Welcome Christmas! VocalEssence concert (tickets: 612/371-5656) |
| **09 Monday** | 6:30 Racial Justice Initiative—Civil Rights Trip presentation |
| **10 Tuesday** | 9:00 Contemplative Prayer  
9:00 Archives Committee  
4:00 Building and Grounds  
5:30 Lead Minister Search Committee |
| **11 Wednesday** | 9:00 Knit-A-Bit  
9:30 Groveland Food Shelf  
10:00 Conversations from the Heart Practice Group  
10:00 HABIT 18 Support Group  
1:00 Strobel Drop-in Center  
2:00 Archives  
5:00 Katy’s Cafe  
5:30 Board of Fine Arts  
6:00 100 Hands  
6:00 Cherub Choir  
6:00 Young Voices  
6:00 Youth Choir  
6:00 Intro Bells |
| **12 Thursday** | 9:00 Archives Committee  
10:30 Meals on Wheels  
11:00 HABIT caregivers meeting  
3:00 Strobel Drop-in Center  
7:00 Plymouth Keyboard Music Club  
7:00 Vivir Mi Vida Salsa Dance |
| **13 Friday** | 7:30 Welcome Christmas! VocalEssence concert (tickets: 612/371-5656) |
| **14 Saturday** | 7:30 Welcome Christmas! VocalEssence concert (tickets: 612/371-5656) |
| **15 Sunday** | 8:45–12:15 Childcare  
9:00 First Service  
9:00 Archives—open for visitors  
9:30 Adult Handbells  
10:00 Sundays @ 10  
11:00 Second Service  
12:00 Church Tour  
5:00 Third Sunday Meal |
| **16 Monday** | 9:00 Knit-A-Bit  
9:30 Groveland Food Shelf  
10:00 Conversations from the Heart Practice Group |
| **17 Tuesday** | 9:00 Contemplative Prayer  
9:00 Archives Committee  
11:30 Strobel Drop-In Center (offsite)  
5:00 BeFriends  
6:00 Immigrant Welcoming Working Group |
| **18 Wednesday** | 9:00 Knit-A-Bit  
9:30 Groveland Food Shelf  
10:00 Conversations from the Heart Practice Group |
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<td>22 Sunday</td>
<td>8:45–12:15 Childcare</td>
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<td>9:00 First Service</td>
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<td>9:00 Archives—open for visitors</td>
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<td>9:30 Adult Handbells</td>
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<td>10:00 Sundays @ 10</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10:00 Wear Your Holiday Sweater Party</td>
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<td>11:00 Second Service</td>
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<td>12:00 Christmas Eve decorating in the Sanctuary (contact Tim Brunelle)</td>
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<td>23 Monday</td>
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<td>24 Christmas Eve</td>
<td>4:45 Candlelight service</td>
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<td>7:45 Candlelight service</td>
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<td>10:45 Candlelight service</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 Christmas Day</td>
<td>Plymouth Church is closed for the Christmas holiday.</td>
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<td>26 Thursday</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 Friday</td>
<td>8:45–12:15 Childcare</td>
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<td>10:00 Worship Service</td>
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<td>5:00 Vespers—reflective service of healing, with music and silence</td>
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<tr>
<td>29 Sunday</td>
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<td>5:00 Vespers—reflective service of healing, with music and silence</td>
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<td>30 Monday</td>
<td>9:00–12 noon Church office is open.</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 New Year's Eve</td>
<td>9:00–12 noon Church office is open.</td>
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**MARRIED**
Franny Quirsfeld & Justin Kaczmar

**BIRTHS**
Leon Paul Scholtz, child of Marie and Paul Scholtz
Hazel Margaret Stehlik, child of Mark Stehlik and Sarah “Sadie” Marshall Stehlik; grandchild of Bill Marshall and Margaret Shreves

**BAPTISM**
Gia Ramsey Ansari, child of Akila and Ramsey Ansari, grandchild of Aimee Maidi, great-grandchild of Lois Larson

**BEREAVED**
Judy Jaskowiak, death of stepson Brian Jaskowiak; Melissa and Craig Wiklund, death of Melissa’s stepbrother; Nathan Wiklund and Emily Wiklund Hayhurst, death of stepuncle
Elaine Wynne and Larry Johnson (Strobel Drop-In Coordinator), death of brother(-in-law) Richard Benson
Jill and Jeff Nelson, death of Jill’s brother, Dan Lundeen

**Death**
Robert “Bob” Reed II; husband of Karen Reed; father of Wil Reed (Kris), Robert “Rob” Reed III and Andrew Reed; grandfather of Lauren Reed and Lexi Reed
Allan Lotsberg, husband of Jackie Lotsberg; brother-in-law of Mark Christian

Vespers, 5 p.m., the last Sunday of the month, through April

Vespers services, times of reflection, music and silence, offer another opportunity to foster your spiritual life. Our clergy will offer these worship gatherings on the last Sunday of the month through the month of April.

We meet Dec. 29 this month.
Please come.
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Submit items for publication no later than Dec. 13 for the January issue. We reserve the right to edit or delay the publication of any article.

SUNDAY & HOLIDAY WORSHIP

Dec. 1, 8, 15, 22
9 a.m. First Service
11 a.m. Second Service

Dec. 20
Longest Night Service, 5:30 p.m., Chapel
Winter Solstice Celebration, 7 p.m.

Christmas Eve, Dec. 24
4:45, 7:45 and 10:45 p.m.

Dec. 29
10 a.m. Worship Service
5 p.m., Vespers, in the Chapel

Plymouth Congregational Church
1900 Nicollet Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55403-3789

Address Service Requested

Christmas Festival Dec. 8

Let’s come together as a church community to celebrate the Christmas season. All activities will be on the main floor from the Fireside Room to Jones Commons to Guild Hall.

9:00 a.m. First Service
10:00 a.m. Sundays @ 10 educational & spiritual offerings
11:00 a.m. Second Service

The Festival begins
Kid-friendly food in Jones Commons
Activities in the Chapel and the Fireside Room

12 Noon
The Festival continues
Food will be served in Guild Hall
Activities throughout the main floor will include crafts, carol singing, making pet blankets and more! Fun for all ages.

1:30 p.m. Festival concludes

Photo by Plymouth member Mark Christman.