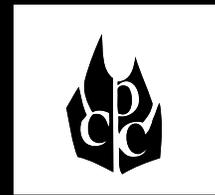


the flame



Vol. LII No. 1
January–
March 2021

PLYMOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH | MINNEAPOLIS

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

The Promise of a New Beginning

DEWAYNE L. DAVIS, LEAD MINISTER

This beginning has been quietly forming, waiting until you were ready to emerge.

—John O'Donohue

I don't make New Year's resolutions, but I admit that I love the feeling I get from the start of the New Year. It is a feeling that anything is possible as long as I fix and determine my purpose and pursue it with firmness and determination. There is something about this seemingly natural break in the calendar that invites a posture of starting fresh, of leaning into a new beginning. It is a time filled with promise and possibility as if the world before us is open to anything. I suspect I imbibed this feeling in the church of my youth. Every New Year's Eve, my family attended watch-night services, in which we prayed and sang in the New Year well into the next morning, embracing the promise and possibility that we can make something real, good and lasting throughout the coming year.

I feel that promise and possibility so acutely as I join my new church home at Plymouth Congregational Church. I have been in and around churches all my life. As the son of a Pentecostal pastor of two churches and a missionary of the women's church

auxiliary, I have witnessed all sides of the church experience—the good, the bad, the ups and the downs. I have wandered away from the church and returned, drawn irresistibly to its witness and fellowship when the world's answers and structures simply could not soothe my restlessness. Although I often wondered if the church could ever be the witness the broken world needs, I kept seeing time and again the church rise to the moment to lift up hopes, voices and possibilities that other institutions have missed. I know what it feels like to assume that church is hypocritical and judgmental while also finding church to be the only place where my presence was not only welcomed but expected, respected and celebrated.

At this time in my life and ministry, Plymouth stands out as the ideal home for our family and any other person who wants to lean into the big questions of our times, recognize and confront the injustices that surround us and bear witness to the promise and possibility of a beloved community formed and sustained by the bonds of covenant.

So, I come to this community at a time of a great turning, when the hunger for community and the drive for justice have grown more urgent in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic



and the killing of George Floyd. As we begin a new year, we carry within us the struggle and anxieties of the previous year. The disappointments we experienced and the losses we accumulated are fresh and visceral. Yet, the promise of a new beginning is infectiously hopeful and delightful. I am eager to get to work, to get to know Plymouth and its people better, to dream and search together, to be surprised by our collective imagination, to realize the abundance that flows from our life of covenant and common purpose. This beginning of our journey together has been quietly forming. Let us now resolve to live and lean into its promise through our call to seek and serve God within, among and beyond ourselves. May it be so.

Interview With John Humphrey

BY DAG YOUNG

If you go to Plymouth, then chances are you know John Humphrey. He's been here his entire life! He was baptized, confirmed (in 1962) and married here. His brother got married here, and so did his daughter, Nina Jonson (Plymouth's Director of Children & Youth Ministries). I guess that's what happens when you've been here since you were born.

Today, John enjoys volunteer work, like recycling and composting at the Groveland Food Shelf, and being a pen pal and Zoom friend to immigrant detainees. When he's not volunteering, he loves spending time with his grandkids, Zinnia and Adella; walking; reading; Zoom socializing and jigsaw puzzles. If not for the pandemic, you'd also find him playing tennis, working with Hundred Hands and sorting books in the Plymouth Church Library. He also serves on several church committees, including the Community Safety Committee of Plymouth's Racial Justice Initiative.



A couple of months ago, when we were still able to meet at church for Kids Clubs, I sat down with John and asked him some questions about his life.

Dag: What's your favorite color?

John: Right now it's yellow: yellow like the sun, yellow like warmth.

Dag: What's one of the biggest differences between your childhood and mine?

John: When I was a kid, we didn't have computers at all. They didn't exist—not even the great big ones. So that's

huge. And, believe it or not, though they can be hard to see, I do think there are more signs of hope for racial justice than I saw in my childhood. Racism was kind of buried when I was young, and we didn't talk about it. But it was there and it was bad. And now it's still bad, but at least it's visible and we're talking about it.

Dag: What has your life taught you about dealing with difficult times?

John: I could go on for a long time about this. I think it has taught me that when your favorite dog dies, you don't ever stop loving that dog, but your life will somehow go on. That's been good to learn.

Dag: What's your favorite joke?

John: It's the only one I ever remember: What does an agnostic dyslexic insomniac do? He lies awake all night wondering, "Is there a dog?"

Dag: What do you like most about Plymouth?

John: I love Confirmation Sunday when the kids get up and read their statements of faith, just like I read mine when I was a kid here a long time ago. I like that we have kids involved in the church. I think if you have a church with no kids, you don't have a church. I like that if people feel strongly about something, Plymouth helps them figure out ways they can act on it. When gay people wanted to be able to get married, Plymouth worked really, really hard—I mean hundreds of people—to help make that happen. So if you feel strongly about something, Plymouth can help you make a change for the better in the world.

Dag: What's your favorite food?

John: Oh heavens. I don't have too many that aren't a favorite—that's the problem.

Dag: Then this might be a little easier: If you could have any meal for dinner tonight, what would you have?

John: The best meal I ever had, we were sitting on a beach in Mexico and we had grilled sea bass. Oh my, it was so delicious. It was at night with torches lit around us. It was so lovely. I think I would have that meal.

A Festive Month of Music

BY PHILIP BRUNELLE, ORGANIST-CHOIRMASTER

With the coming of 2021, one of the interesting things for me is discovering the names of composers of choral music celebrating a special anniversary. Some of the names whose music you will be hearing in Sunday services include William Burleigh, Marcel Dupré, Camille Saint-Saëns and Jan Sweelinck, as well as hymn writers James Weldon Johnson, Edmund Plumptre, Richard Wilbur and Dante Alighieri. You may not recall their texts, but when you hear them you will say "Ah-ha!"

During these winter months, when Epiphany flows into Lent and we are still worshipping virtually, there are many wonderful pieces of music that I will select from past years from our choirs' performances; we are also so fortunate to have the Plymouth Quintet of soloists and our Jazz Trio. As I have said before—and as you know—we

will remain creative and offer you every Sunday a beautiful, meaningful worship experience. And, as the New Year begins, here is a wonderful carol from medieval times still relevant today:

The Light of the World is more clear to our sight
As errors disperse and we see God aright:
The gospel of pardon, of love and accord,
Will conquer oppression and shatter the sword:
The Light of the World in the darkness has shone,
And grows in our sight as the ages flow on.

Philip Brunelle



Your Ongoing Support

Even though we cannot gather, the ministry of the church continues, and we deeply appreciate your ongoing support. Thank you for your generosity! The ministry, support and programs continue because of your continued donations. To make this even easier, you may text your gifts to 612-999-2874 or go the Plymouth Church website at plymouth.org/give.

Thank you!

Complete Your Pledge Card

The Annual Stewardship Drive has begun. Please complete your pledge card and mail it in, or complete it online at plymouth.org/pledge.



Plymouth Sunday Forum

BY REBECCA MILLER

If you haven't seen the Sunday Forum web page, please go to plymouth.org/explore/forum/ (or select "Explore" on the top left of the website and then select the first item, "Sunday Forum"). You will find a list of upcoming Sunday Forums as well as recordings of the fall sessions.

Below are the planned topics and/or speakers we have in the works. Look for more info on our webpage. Bring on 2021!

— Rebecca Miller, Bryce Hamilton, John Humphrey, Tim Jensen, Jane Koll, Seth Patterson, Jackie Prince

January 3: Transformation - The Work of Butter(flies)

The mission of Butter Bakery Cafe, a general benefit corporation serving the Kingfield/Lyndale neighborhoods, is one of transformation. Join Dan on the journey of coffee shop/bakery as it seeks to create sustainable communities in the food and hospitality industry and in neighborhood organizing.

January 10: Countering Voter Suppression, presented in collaboration with the Racial Justice Initiative

January 17: An Education Worth Dying For: Lessons on Fighting White Supremacy in Education

As the ravages of COVID-19 continue to impact classrooms in unprecedented ways, the question of being educated at the risk of physical health confronts us. However, Black

communities have been facing this very dilemma for centuries at the hands of white supremacy. In this session, Dr. Brian Lozenski will discuss how a deeper understanding of African Americans' educational experiences and philosophies can provide answers in our current landscape.

January 24: We will assume you've already read quite a bit about DeWayne Davis, our new lead minister. Come hear what he has to say and ask (a few) questions.

January 31: Empowering Adult Immigrants through Education, presented in collaboration with the Immigrant Welcoming Group (Board of Outreach)

February 7: We Are the Story, quilt exhibit, presented in collaboration with the Gallery Committee (Board of Fine Arts)

February 14: Academia Elze

Karina Elze, Educational Coordinator, has many degrees, M.Ed, University of Minnesota, B.A. in Early Childhood Studies, and A.S. in Early Childhood Education.

Karen Eustis, Director, B.S. Law, A.S. Liberal Arts, Certificate Graphic Design.

February 21: Truth and Reparations in MN, presented in collaboration with the Racial Justice Initiative

Curtiss DeYoung

February 28: Isaiah, presented in collaboration with the Racial Justice Initiative

March 7: Minneapolis: An Urban Biography, presented in collaboration with the Board of Spiritual Formation

CONN GALLERY

I Wish I Knew How It Feels to Be Free—Quilts by Dorothy Burge: Virtual Exhibit

BY LYNETTE BLACK

Plymouth is privileged to host "I Wish I Knew How It Feels to Be Free," one of seven traveling exhibitions for "We Are the Story," a multi-site initiative of quilt exhibits and community events sponsored by Textile Center and Women of Color Quilters Network (WCQN). The initiative was led and curated by Carolyn Mazloomi, WCQN founder and a member of Textile Center's National Artist Advisory Council.

The artist, Dorothy Burge stated "I Wish I Knew How It Feels to Be Free" is a series of social justice art quilts that document and raise awareness on systemic criminal justice issues that restrict the lives of African Americans in this country. My art is one form of my activism. My quilts are designed to raise awareness, encourage dialogue and spur viewers to action. Art is also a tool to document history and current events."

Dorothy's quilts are designed to touch the viewer's heart, head and hands.



Exciting Line-Up of Spiritual Exploration Offerings Start in January

BY MEMBERS OF THE SPIRITUAL EXPLORATION COMMITTEE

The Spiritual Exploration Committee is honored to work with several Plymouth working groups and committees to help advance some fascinating classes for the winter/spring semester. The Racial Justice Initiative, Mortality Project, Immigrant Welcoming Working Group, Plymouth Contemplatives and the clergy are all coordinating offerings with our committee's assistance. Pilgrims of all ages on their spiritual journey are welcome to participate.

As has become the norm, most programs will be held via Zoom, but they will be a combination of lecture and interactive/group discussion. This term will run from January through April and will be comprised of a wide variety of classes, including "Seeing White," Podcast and Discussion"; "Plymouth READS *I'm Still Here*, by Austin Charming Brown"; "Intersection: Racial Injustice and Immigration"; "Illuminating the Way: Exploring Contemplative Practices and Insights"; "Book Study

on *Learning to Walk in the Dark* by Barbara Brown Taylor"; "Book Study on *Braiding Sweetgrass*, by Robin Wall Kimmerer"; "The Heart of Aging With Wisdom"; "Minneapolis and the Many Layers of Our Story"; and "Introduction to Centering Prayer/Centering Prayer in Practice." More information is available on Plymouth's website and will be published via digital and email announcements regarding class descriptions, times, dates and registration instructions.

CONSTRUCTION

New Choir Shelves in One Groveland



Many thanks to the Plymouth members who built the wall and shored up the flooring in One Groveland on which the new choir library shelves from the Wenger Corporation were installed. Thank you, gentlemen, for your impressive work!

PARISH REGISTER

BEREAVED

Dawn Hofstrand & E.J. Kelley, death of Dawn's father, Skip Hofstrand; Tim and SuLin Kelley, death of grandfather

John & Carole Humphrey, death of John's sister-in-law Nancy Humphrey; Gingie Ward & Mike Bird, death of Gingie's sister-in-law; Helen Anderson, death of niece-in-law; Nina & Jasper Jonson, death of Nina's aunt; Zinnia and Adella Jonson, death of great-aunt
Rebecca Miller & Karl Jones, death of Rebecca's father, Harley Miller

DECEASED

Jack Cole, father(-in-law) of Tracy & John Rode
Gretchen Crosby, wife of Robert Crosby

Sunny Hansen, wife of Tor Hansen; mother of Sonja Johnson and Tor Sundal Hansen

Kenneth "Ken" Nelson; husband of Janet Nelson; father(-in-law) of Cathy Nelson-Messer & Bob Messer; grandfather of Kendall Messer (Brian Elkin), Colin Messer, and Brenna Anderson (Peter Anderson)

Susan Peterson

Plymouth Film Club Discussion: *The River and the Wall*

BY RICHARD JEWELL

Plymouth Film Club is offering a discussion of *The River and the Wall* (2019, 97 min., documentary) Sunday, Feb. 7, at 12:30 p.m. on Zoom. The guest hosts who chose the film are Plymouth's IWWG—the Immigrant Welcoming Working Group. Beth Faeth and Joan Thompson, both travelers on Plymouth's recent border trip to Arizona, will facilitate the discussion. The film is appropriate for all ages; please view it individually before the discussion (see options below).

Presidents have been talking for many decades about building physical barriers between Mexico and the U.S. to better control immigration. Though multiple administrations from both parties have been involved in building border fences, under President Trump the process was accelerated.

In 2018, five friends decided to bike, hike, boat and ride horseback 1200 miles to see “the wall” along the Rio Grande in Texas. Their filmed journey is a gorgeous testament to

the beauty of this “Grande” North American river, as well as a telling story of a partly-built wall that divides not just the people of two nations, but also U.S. ranchers, park visitors and citizens from the river.

The five friends start in El Paso. We see the rugged beauty of the Rio Grande and environmental issues in building the wall. As the friends descend into the Lower Valley of the river in more heavily populated areas, they learn of other issues: immigration, ranchers' access to land and U.S. citizens' access to state parks and national wildlife refuges.

The Hollywood Reporter calls *The River and the Wall* “visually stunning and politically sharp.” The film won three awards, one of them at the internationally famous SXSW Film Festival. Conservation filmmaker Ben Masters recruited a National Geographic explorer, an ornithologist, another conservationist and a river guide for the trip.

Join us in watching *The River and the Wall* on your own and then discussing it with Plymouth members Feb. 7. Watch a 2-min. preview trailer at <https://theriverandthewall.com> or a 4-min. teaser at www.youtube.com/watch?v=XtB5KmrMtY. The entire film is available as follows:

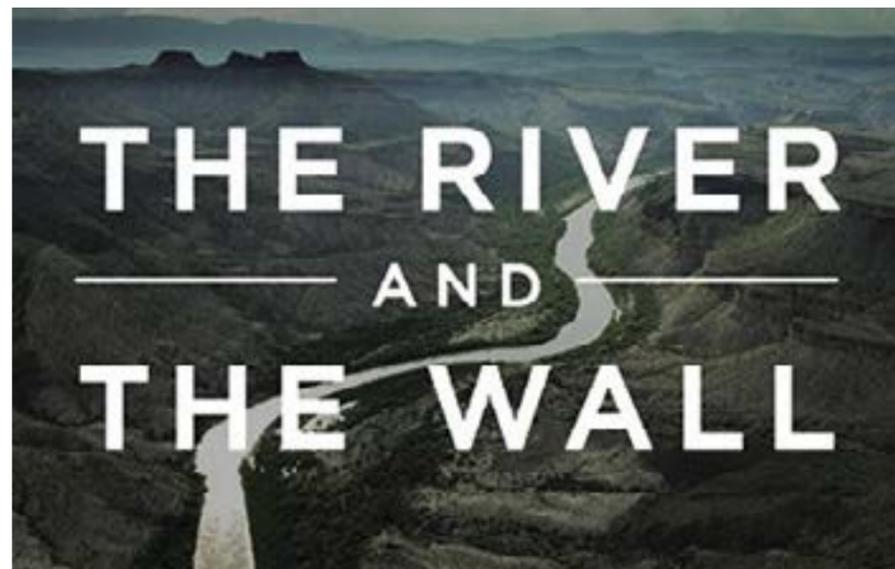
RENT (Note: some services may require a subscription): Amazon Prime, iTunes, Netflix, Starz (7-day free trial), Tubi, YouTube, Vimeo.

BUY (Some let you buy and watch online): Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Best Buy.

To join the discussion, go to <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89339693168>

at 12:30 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 7.

If you haven't used Zoom yet show up ten minutes early to download its simple, safe software. We will look forward to seeing you for this very topical discussion about an excellent film!



Living Water

BY EMILY JARRETT HUGHES

Living water—what is that? It's both water and something more. To me, the term “Living Water” helps name one of my deepest thirsts—to find a wellspring of life that can sustain me even through my bleakest moments.

We often feel better when we go to the water, right? All of life goes to the water to be nurtured. I also believe that deepening our spiritual relationship with the water can help us move towards the more mystical qualities of Living Water.

This fall, a small group of hardy folk joined me in a spiritual exploration of our Christian relationship to water. We gathered on the shore of Lake of

the Isles to be in contemplation by the water. We sang, sprinkled ourselves with water, sat in silence and offered our prayers through flowers. It was so wonderfully alive—informed by the breeze, birds, trees and the (physically distant) presence of each other.

Praying by the water is a celebration of how God's presence is moving towards even greater fullness in our earth and in our bodies. This is the antidote to Armageddon or exit-strategy theology. The invitation is to come into even deeper relationship with where we live, to more deeply inhabit our bodies and to come home to ourselves.

I'm very excited that this contemplative worship by the water will continue monthly throughout the year. Please join me the fourth Sunday of the month at 9 a.m. outside at Lake of the Isles. We'll have an online option available as a backup if the weather doesn't cooperate.

Please reach out to me at emily (at) wisdomdances.com with any questions about directions, weather or anything else.



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SUNDAY WORSHIP

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(www.plymouth.org/WORSHIP)
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