

# the flame

Plymouth Congregational Church | Minneapolis

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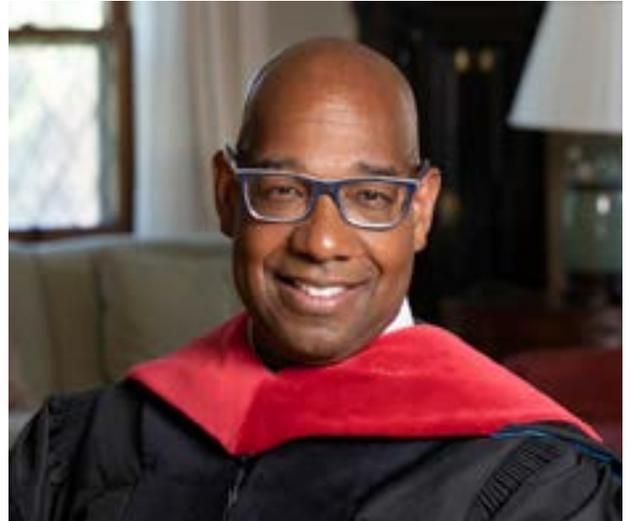
# The Wholeness of Creation: A Lenten Journey of Restoration and Connection

DEWAYNE L. DAVIS, LEAD MINISTER

When I was in elementary school and could not take another minute in class, I would get up and walk out to go home at least a couple of times a week. It happened enough and caused enough problems that my parents and teachers had to sit me down and ask me what was wrong. I did not have the words to explain what I felt; the only words I could think of described physical illness. But what I was feeling was not physical, and I was not sick. Something was going on in my soul, and my child's mind could not process or articulate it.

Even at that young age, I could sense the presence of anxiety and precarity, although those were not words I knew or would use until adulthood. I remember this incident because it was the first time I attempted to explain what it feels like to be estranged and fragmented. I now realize that I was trying to say something about what was going on in my heart, what the author Joyce Rupp describes as the “deeper self, sanctuary of the soul, secret chamber, the unconscious, and the hidden or interior realm.” As I've grown older, I've learned to spot those moments when I'm desperately crying out for peace, balance, and wholeness.

I suspect everyone has had to confront that inchoate mix of “attitudes, hopes, and longings” for peace, balance, and connection within and with our surroundings. Every year during the season of Lent, we revisit our traditions and biblical stories to help us revive and restore some of what feels missing or lifeless. Still, I wonder if the familiar theological constructs of the season, like temptation, sacrifice, and salvation, inadvertently stifle the possibilities and opportunities for spiritual growth. The gospel story, the good news of God's presence with us in the life, ministry, and resurrection of Jesus, is not just a story about God rescuing believers from the mess and failure of a tragic, broken world at some far-off future at the fulfillment of God's glory. That good news also anticipates the promise and possibility of experiencing transformation now because God is at work in the world.



The prophets spoke of God doing something new and asked their hearers if they perceived it. The Apostle Paul wrote the churches in Corinth and Galatia declaring that there is a new creation because of the Christ event. In what sense can we now experience that newness, unity, and reconciliation with God? What does it mean to be whole, individually and communally, to relate to each other, God, and nature with balance, respect, and reciprocity? How do unity and connection to God combat individualism, fragmentation, exclusion, and disconnection?

Frederick Buechner posits that we all possess “a vision of wholeness that we sense is our true home and that beckons us.” It is a feeling that our feelings of separation and disconnection are neither natural nor permanent . . . that within us and in all creation is “indivisible wholeness and holiness of proceeding from the hand of Holiness itself.” Therefore, we are not talking so much about a consummated rescue at the end of time, but communion with God experienced presently, connection and restoration realized in partnership and unity with a loving, responsive, present God.

What is likely to emerge when we approach ourselves, our neighbors, and our surroundings with this sense of wholeness as an untapped interior gift of grace? When we relinquish the need to fix what we think is broken and embrace all things the way God sees them—whole, integrated, connected beyond what is wrong, ugly,

or broken? Perhaps all things really have been made new, and in Christ, there is a new creation, and all we need to do is open ourselves to it, intentionally orienting ourselves toward what connects us to others and the creation. Maybe the season of Lent is about a journey to see ourselves as part of something lofty, lasting, and loving, even if what we are experiencing now feels futile and precarious. As Buechner saw it, "there is treasure buried in the field of every one of our days, even the bleakest or dullest, and it is our business, as we journey, to keep our eyes peeled for it." All around us, the world testifies to what integration,

connection, and engagement look like with ourselves, others, and God. May your journey this season of Lent be filled with the gift of wholeness.

**In partnership  
and unity  
with a loving,  
responsive,  
present God.**

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## Grace Notes

PHILIP BRUNELLE, ORGANIST-CHOIRMASTER

The months of March and April are filled with marvelous music—not a surprise!

First of all, please mark March 9 at 7 p.m. when the fantastic French organist Daniel Roth returns to Plymouth Church for an organ recital. Daniel is one of the world's finest organists; he is not to be missed not only for his stylistic playing but also for his amazing skill as an improviser. There is no charge for the concert.

The Plymouth Choir will sing a wide range of music as always—from music of Iowa native Elaine Hagenberg and Frenchmen Francis Poulenc and Pierre Villette to "Psalm 42" by Judith Weir, whose title is "Master of the King's Musick" in England. She composed this anthem for the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II, and our performance on March 12 marks its U.S. premiere! Other British composers featured this spring include John Gardner, Malcolm Williamson, and William Byrd.

Please note that there is now a word about each Sunday's music in the bulletin, giving you a bit of background on the music heard that Sunday. I trust this will be of interest in learning more about the wide range of composers heard every Sunday.



Lastly, the final Plymouth Chamber Music program for the spring will be on April 23 at 4 p.m. in Guild Hall: *Transformations*—a beautiful blending of the music of David Evan Thomas, the paintings of Carolyn Brunelle, and narrations by Rev. DeWayne Davis and Katherine Ferrand. And it is free!

Happy spring!

Philip

# Mental Health Sunday

Save the Date: March 19, 2023

Join us on March 19 for a very special morning filled with important resources, compelling information, poignant worship, and a celebration of Plymouth's long-standing ministry in the Drop In Center. Rev. Dr. Rachael Keefe, pastor of Living Table UCC in Minneapolis, will be joining us as a guest preacher at both worship services and will also facilitate Sunday Forum, entitled "Lifesaving Church."

Rev. Dr. Keefe is an author, a painter, and a poet. Previously, she served as a clinical chaplain at a state psychiatric hospital, where she worked with patients, staff, clergy, and faith communities to increase understanding and welcome of persons living with severe and persistent symptoms of mental illness.



In addition to worship and the Forum on March 19, community organizations serving those living with mental illness will have tables filled with resources and information in Guild Hall, where coffee fellowship will be served. From 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m., we will host a reception celebrating Plymouth Drop In Center's 50+ years. We will hear about the impact Drop In has had on our beloved participants and volunteers, enjoy good food, share music and art, and even play a round of Bingo as we celebrate this essential, steadfast ministry of Plymouth Congregational Church.

Please plan to join us for any or all of these significant events on March 19, 2023. Questions? Please contact Rev. Beth Hoffman Faeth.

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## LENT AND EASTER

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### Lent

Lenten Meditations are available at [Plymouth.org](http://Plymouth.org);  
print copies are available Sundays.

**Mental Health Sunday**

**March 19**

**Palm Sunday**

**April 2**

**Maundy Thursday**

**April 6, 7 p.m.**

### Easter

**April 9**

Worship Services Online and In Person  
at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m.

Easter Brunch, 9:30–11:00 a.m.

Egg Hunt at 10 a.m.

Easter Bonnet station and Photo Booth  
Between Services

# Get ready for Some More Fun this Summer!

NINA JONSON, DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRIES

Thanks to the amazing work of our Children and Youth Specialist Sandy Spieler and her leadership with Wintergenerational Revival, time has been freed up for me to get a jump start on summer programming. We are excited to share all of the fun we have in store!



If you have grandkids, younger neighbors, or friends you'd like to sign up for camp, please do so. Our summer camp offerings are a great way to introduce people to Plymouth Church.

**Preschool Peace Camp** (ages 2.5-going into kindergarten): Our busy, friendly city. Maximum number of attendees 12, cost \$25.

**Peace Camp** (completed kindergarten-fourth grade): the Science of the World. Maximum number of attendees 30, cost \$40

**Musical Spectacular** (grades 4-12): Creating our own adventure. Maximum number of attendees 35, cost \$75

And Plymouth folks, don't miss our two Musical Spectacular performances: August 4 at 10:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.!

**Camp Plymouth**, folks of all ages, singles, couples, families, multigenerations, everyone is welcome! August 17-20, cost \$150-400 depending on household size, length of stay, and accommodations.

**Middle School Duluth Trip** (rising 6th-8th graders)

June 16-17, cost \$75

**High School Madison Trip** (rising 9th graders-recent grads)

June 23-25, cost \$200

**All-Ages Outing to the Minnesota State Fair**, August 27.

We are also working on a canoe trip to the Boundary Waters

Registration for all of these events will be available online!

For any questions or to learn more, email [ninaj@plymouth.org](mailto:ninaj@plymouth.org)

See you this summer!



# Flowers, an Ongoing Plymouth Tradition

BARB SOUTHER, BOARD OF FINE ARTS

Have you noticed the Sunday flowers or the decorating at Advent, Christmas, Epiphany and Lent, Holy Week, and Easter? “As long as there has been a Plymouth Church, there have always been flowers,” according to Organist-Choirmaster Philip Brunelle at a recent meeting of the Board of Fine Arts. It’s due to a little behind-the-scenes committee known as the Flower Committee, which carries on the work of Climate and Environmental Justice, the Arts, and Pastoral Care by beautifying our spaces throughout the year.

Each Sunday’s flower arrangement in the sanctuary serves multiple functions. The donor is memorializing a loved one(s) or acknowledging a special occasion. The suggested donation is \$75; contact Doug Freeman in the church office ([dougf@plymouth.org](mailto:dougf@plymouth.org) or 612-977-1279) if you’d like to sponsor flowers. The donor can take the arrangement after the 11 a.m. service to enjoy at home or they may choose to share their floral gift with others. Flower Committee members then break down the arrangement into 3-4 bouquets for members to take on a first-come basis. Clergy often bring bouquets on their pastoral care visits as well. This tradition fulfills a mission of providing church members and others a bright spot at a time of need. Additionally, on some Sundays, the arrangement is placed in Jones Commons to be enjoyed throughout the week by the hundreds of people who enter our doors.

From a Fine Arts perspective, the Flower Committee’s efforts at Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany—chaired by Janeen Rae—and again for Lent, Holy Week, and Easter—chaired by Barb Souther—beautify every corner of the church, inside and outside, and bring gladness and joy to all who enter Plymouth, members and beyond. At these key times of the year, the Flower Committee works in community with and supports several church groups: youth wreath sales; the young families group that decorates the sanctuary for our beloved Christmas Eve candlelight services; the Voyagers Fellowship Group, which removes Christmas decorations at Epiphany; and church members Rachel and Sanna Walker, who fashion the poinsettia and lily pyramids.

The Flower Committee is, as Philip put it, an “aging” group and our numbers are shrinking, so here’s where you can help! As we reconvene coming out of the

pandemic, the committee is seeking interested people of all genders and ages to join us in these rewarding endeavors throughout the year. We already have our first recruit, a high schooler who is ready and eager to come along on our journey. No floral design experience is necessary; training is happily provided. Help spread joy through arranging and decorating Plymouth with flowers! Please contact chair Barb Souther at [bsouther@q.com](mailto:bsouther@q.com) or the church office.



# Plymouth Reads Poetry

HOWONA SULLIVAN JANZEN

The sixth annual “Plymouth Reads Poetry” event will take place Sunday, May 7, 2023, at 12:15 p.m. in the sunny chapel, immediately following the 11 a.m. service. As it was last year, the event will be hybrid—you can attend in person or participate online. Come share a favorite poem or two of your own or of another with other poetry lovers. Open to all members, visitors, and guests. This poetry gathering has been surprising and moving in past years. Please join us!

For more information, contact Carrie Bassett, 612-229-1937 or [carolinebassett7@gmail.com](mailto:carolinebassett7@gmail.com)



## Plymouth Film Club: *Midnight Traveler*

JOAN THOMPSON

Sunday, April 23. Guest Host—Immigrant Welcoming Working Group (IWWG).

IWWG and Plymouth Film Club are offering a viewing and discussion of Hassan Fazili and Emelie Mahdavian’s highly awarded film *Midnight Traveler* (2019, 90 minutes, documentary) on April 23. The showing begins at 12:30. Joan Thompson and Erika Charlesworth-Seiler from IWWG will co-lead the discussion after the film and offer an additional opportunity to see a brief interview with Emelie Mahdavian and producer Su Kim with insights into the film’s creation. Film Club shows films on the largest “screen” at Plymouth—the entire south wall of Jackman Hall—for enhanced viewing.

Hassan Fazili and his wife Fatima Hussani are Afghan filmmakers. When the Taliban puts a price on Hassan’s head in 2015, the couple flee to Tajikistan with two young daughters. Their asylum claim is rejected; they are deported back to Afghanistan and must engage smugglers in order to flee with the hope of reaching Germany.

The film traces the family’s harrowing journey of more than three years. Filmed entirely on the family’s cell phones by Hassan, Fatima, and Nargis, the older daughter, *Midnight Traveler* is an intimate look at the family’s lives and the challenges they encounter, as

well as the moments of joy they find in the most difficult circumstances.

In the time since the Fazili family’s journey, the withdrawal of the United States from Afghanistan led to a rapid takeover by the Taliban and even more Afghan families fleeing their country. In January, the AP reported that unauthorized “migrant entry numbers into Europe hit [a] six-year high” in 2022. According to an EU agency tracking migrations, “Syrians, Afghans and Tunisians together accounted for roughly 47% of the attempted border crossings.”

This film brings the difficult travel and endless waits of these many journeys to light through the eyes of one family. Vanessa H. Larson of the *Washington Post* wrote, “In showing such a personal . . . view of the global migration crisis through one family’s story, *Midnight Traveler* is a timely, essential film.”

Please join Plymouth Film Club and IWWG to view and discuss this film, which has 23 wins and 18 nominations at national and international film festivals. Coffee & tea are provided. Lunch: BYO or order sandwiches early from Cajun Boiling (opens at noon) to pick up by 12:15.

# The Pilgrimage: An Interfaith Civil Rights Journey

DEWAYNE L. DAVIS, LEAD MINISTER

Over Martin Luther King (MLK) weekend, Minneapolis senior clergy traveled to Atlanta, Birmingham, Selma, and Montgomery for an interfaith civil rights journey.

We heard Bryan Stevenson, author of *Just Mercy*, present at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, walked the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, memorialized the innocent children killed at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, visited the new Legacy Museum and National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, and bore witness at the myriad of powerful museums and monuments paying homage to the leaders and foot soldiers of the Civil Rights Movement.

Our hearts and souls were touched as we prayed together at significant moments, sharing each of our traditions' words of healing and reconciliation.

We are bringing our pilgrimage back to Minneapolis to share the lessons and insights we gleaned on this remarkable multi-faith journey.

Please join us for a series of three presentations of our trip and for panel discussions and worship to commemorate the convergence of Ramadan, Passover, and Easter on three consecutive Sundays in March from 4:30 to 5:00 p.m.

**March 12** at Temple Israel—video premiere and panel discussion.

**March 19** at Westminster Presbyterian—video and panel discussion.

**March 26** at Fellowship Ministry Baptist Church—an interfaith service of song and reflections.



# Members Art Show

The Gallery Committee is preparing to fill the walls of our Gallery with the incredible work of our members and staff for the biennial Plymouth Members Art Show. This event showcases our members' dedication and support of the visual arts. The 2023 Plymouth Members Show will run from April 2 through June 11, 2023.

Members of all ages and staff are invited to show their work: painting, drawing, sculpture, textiles, ceramics, photography, printmaking, etc. It's easy to participate. No one is turned away, but there is a limit of 2 pieces per artist.

You can download, review, and complete the required exhibition agreement and information sheet from Plymouth's website (available at <https://www.plymouth.org/explore/arts/>). Bring the signed agreement with you when you drop off your work. We will also have the forms available for you when you drop off your work. All artists *must* have a signed agreement on file.

We will accept art in the Gallery on Thursday, March 23; Friday, March 24; and Saturday, March 25, from 9 a.m. to noon. Please bring your ready-to-hang or -display pieces (2 maximum per member), labeled with your name, contact information, and information about your work, including title/description, medium, size, and insurance value.

Please go to <https://www.plymouth.org/explore/arts/> and find the link under Members Art Show for information and paperwork to download. If you need assistance, please feel free to contact Gregg Daubert at [gsdaubert@gmail.com](mailto:gsdaubert@gmail.com) or speak with Carolyn Brunelle.

The Members Art Show is a great Plymouth tradition. While the show does open on April 2, please be sure to join us for the Artists' Reception on April 23 after 11 a.m. service. It's a great way to become better acquainted with the vibrant arts and artists in our Plymouth Church community. We look forward to seeing you there!



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## PARISH REGISTER

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### RECENT BIRTH

**Ari Jay Lavie**, child of Amelia van Iwaarden & Oren Lavie, grandchild of Ellen & Jim van Iwaarden

### RECENT BAPTISM

**Charles Taber**, child of Nathan Stock and Kate Taber

### RECENTLY BEREAVED

**Peter Albrecht** and **Gale Sharpe**, death of their sister, Martha Albrecht; **Ana and Libby Albrecht**, death of aunt

**Elizabeth Blanchette**, death of her mother, Patti Kerschner

**Barb Iverson**, death of her brother Cal Riedesel

### RECENTLY DECEASED

#### Jean Howell

**Frank Jesse**, husband of Cretia Jesse, father of Kimberly Hogan, Michelle Jesse, and David Jesse

**Dolores Lenore**, wife of James Jenkins, mother of Kristin Makholm, grandmother of Lila Franklin and Leo Franklin

#### Anita Makar

#### Madalyn Staupe Traun

**Dean Wahlberg**, husband of Marilyn Wahlberg; father of Susan Lamb; grandfather(-in-law) of Jennifer Lamb Molitor & Brent Molitor; great-grandfather of Maxine, Josephine, and Camille Molitor

# You Asked, Teens Answered: Volume II

THE 8TH–12TH GRADERS OF PLYMOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

We are so glad you all enjoyed hearing from our teenagers at Plymouth! They've really enjoyed responding to your questions, and it means a lot to them that people care about their views.

Here are a few more questions we threw out at them recently.

**Q:** How can I make my space more comfortable for teens and their friends?

**A:** Have food and beverages available . . . in large quantities. Let people use the Wi-Fi. Feel free to say Hi and chat for a bit, but then please give us space—don't hover or come clean up after us. Please talk to us like you already trust us and our friends, not like we need to earn your trust. Do not expect the teens' friends to automatically like you; it's okay to just be a trusted adult. Know that how teens host looks different than how adults host, and that is okay. Please don't try to tell us how to host our friends.

**Q:** What would you say are the most pressing issues facing our world today?

**A:** Such a huge range of answers, and this sparked a great amount of conversation.

Global warming/climate change, what is happening in Iran, racism, gun violence, the ever-widening political divide, the wage gap, censorship in schools (book banning, teachers having to get their lessons approved, the unfounded fear of Critical Race Theory, etc.), sexual assault, and safety for marginalized groups.

The number one thing the kids agreed on was we need to move from "awareness" to action—no one should still be learning about racism or climate change, they should be doing things to combat it.

**Q:** What is a piece of advice you and your friends wish you could give to parents, or what is a home rule you wish you could immediately change?

**A:** We had so many discussions about this, and many of the answers across kids were the same. I have done my best to compile or group similar responses together.

Please don't take away the Wi-Fi/ phone access at night—I don't always sleep on the same schedule, and I get really anxious if I feel like my friends are having conversations I can't be a part of and that makes it even harder to sleep.

I am growing up, but there are still so many things I can't do—please follow through on the things that I am not yet able to do on my own, like scheduling appointments, filling out paperwork, picking up prescriptions, signing permission slips, getting additional support in school, etc. I still need help advocating for things.

Please don't ever talk about another one of your children to me—even if I don't get along with my siblings all the time, it is us against the world, and it's really awkward when a parent talks



about one sibling to others. Also, please don't get mad at me if my sibling was the one who did something.

If you ask me a question, please listen to my answer. Don't interrupt me or immediately talk about something else. In addition, if I say I need to talk to you, please give me your full attention, because to me, what I am telling you is really important.

You've done a great job of building up my self-esteem, so if I come and say I don't like my outfit, or my hair, or how I look that day, it doesn't mean that I hate myself. I know I am beautiful always, *and* I can have a time that I don't like how I look.

Please don't get irrationally scared about something if I'm not worried about it. Many things already give me reason to be worried and anxious, so in a moment when I don't feel that way, please don't instill worry.

Please, please, please don't ever criticize yourself in front of me, and don't ever criticize my other parent. How you talk about yourself and my other parent impacts me more than you could ever know.

Please remind me that you love me. It doesn't have to be a big deal—a post-it note, a shoulder squeeze, watching

something I like on TV with me without making commentary about it, giving me your full attention—these are all little things that show me you care!

It is such a gift to get such candid responses from our teens. As always, if you have a question, submit it to [ninaj@plymouth.org](mailto:ninaj@plymouth.org).



# Sunday Forum

REBECCA MILLER

We have all enjoyed having people re-engage at Sunday Forums, and our committee is thrilled to see so many gathered again. I think you're as delighted as we are to be together! Please join us for more fascinating talks this spring. If you miss a session or want to revisit, we will continue to offer an online option that's viewable at a later time. As always, if you have ideas, please let any of us know. We look forward to seeing you on Sundays at 10 in the chapel or online.

Jackie Prince (Chair), Bryce Hamilton, John Humphrey, Jane Koll, Rebecca Miller, Seth Patterson, Myra Starkenburg

## March 26

### **Easter Offering Beneficiaries**

The beneficiaries of the Easter Offering will describe their programs and challenges.

## April 2

### **Plymouth Experiences at the Border**

Participants of Plymouth's Immigrant Welcoming Working Group will discuss their trip in late February to the Arizona border. There will be photos and there will be good stories. Their intent is to share not just the trip, but also the feeling and experience of being at the border. This presentation will speak to your spirit.

## April 9

### **Easter Sunday—No Sunday Forum**

## April 16

### **The Dakota**

Sisoka Duta is a Dakota person from Lake Traverse reservation who will speak about his people, language, culture, and history as well as the story of Dakota people from creation to present and thoughts on the future of the Dakota people.

## April 23

### **A Life in Climate Policy**

Michale Noble will speak on a life in climate policy, with a special emphasis on how progress at the states remained steady, even though the power of money in politics thwarted meaningful federal action for 32 years, under 16 years of Republican presidents and

16 years of Democratic ones. He will describe the incredible game-changing momentum currently, as evidenced by the Inflation Reduction Act in Congress and the 100 Percent Clean Electricity Standard just signed by Governor Tim Walz.

## April 30

### **Regenerative Agriculture as a Framework for Advancing Climate-Friendly Landscapes**

Executive director Mark Muller will talk about the importance of building regenerative landscapes in the context of our changing climate.

## May 7

### **Equitable Development in the Recovery of East Lake Street**

Taylor Smrikárova, Property Development Director at Redesign will speak about their work on Lake Street.

## May 14

### **How Can We Help Minneapolis Re-imagine Community Safety?**

The Re-imagining Community Safety (RICS) group is working to meaningfully contribute to community safety in Minneapolis in the context of racial justice. What have we accomplished? What are our plans for 2023? How can you become more involved if you choose to?

## May 21

Racial Justice Sunday—Elizabeth Glidden

# Matters of Church and State and Personal Conscience: Plymouth Church Responds to the Vietnam War

JIM OLSON

By 1971 many in our country were exhausted by the turbulence surrounding the Vietnam War. In the year before, student demonstrators at Kent State had been gunned down by National Guardsmen, and an operation into Cambodia seemed to signal an expanding war. As with every other place where people gathered, discussions of Vietnam tore at Plymouth members' hearts and consciences. In response, a group of them signed a document that was published in the *Minneapolis Star* on March 30 and the *Minneapolis Tribune* on March 31. Under the headline "Christian Conscience," it demanded an end to the war and the military draft. It urged a reduction in defense spending and the power of the Pentagon. It was a bold document that approached the barrier between church and state, as well as the blurred territory between patriotism and personal conscience.

It was certainly not the church's first involvement in the movement against the Vietnam War. In 1967, with Rev. Howard Conn's strong recommendation, a young Yale Divinity School graduate was hired at Plymouth as an Assistant Minister. In his first sermon on July 23, Roger Paine gave a blistering condemnation of the Vietnam War. In it he called for the church to become "the conscience of the nation," and for the clergy to not "hide in its robes." For the next four years while at Plymouth Church, Paine was actively involved in the anti-war movement. He encouraged civil disobedience, attending University demonstrations where draft cards were burned. He helped arrange the distribution of anti-war leaflets to arriving worshippers. He was involved in the organization of community peace rallies. Like many of the young, he had lost patience with our government's approach to Vietnam and saw rebellion as a valid response. As a minister he thus brought the turbulence of the war to the doorstep of Plymouth Church.

Paine's approach received a mixed reaction within the congregation and staff at Plymouth. As in the country at large, Plymouth members held a variety of views on the war. In the congregation were those who had served and sacrificed in World War II and Korea. Some members supported the government's approach to the Vietnam War and saw dissent as a betrayal of the men and women who

were fighting it. They were directly at odds with Paine's view. Paine often engaged in activities without consulting other ministers or church boards. Some feared that his actions were being seen as representing Plymouth Church without that body giving proper sanction.

It is out of this history that the "Christian Conscience" letter grew. While Howard Conn's signature on the letter signals he was in agreement with Paine's denunciation of the war, he found Paine's approach undisciplined and perhaps outside of Plymouth's and Congregationalism's practices. "Christian Conscience" took a different approach to dissent than Paine advocated. Conn was insistent that the document presented a plea, not from Plymouth Church, but from a "group of members within a congregation." By emphasizing this in the letter, Conn and the other signers sought to maintain the division of church versus state and clarify the difference between individual and congregational conscience. Those members signing the document were even required to pay \$10 toward the expense of its publishing. Thus, the article was not sponsored by church money, but by the group of signers. Conn saw this distinction as consistent with a Congregational emphasis that within the church, the individual "must dictate their own participation in society as their consciences define their faith." This approach was consistent with how Conn performed another duty during the Vietnam War, writing letters to local draft boards in support of young members seeking status as conscientious objectors. Conn made it clear in these letters that Plymouth Church as a congregation did not make recommendations in such matters, but that he as a minister knew the young men, had discussed the matter with them, and found their requests for a conscience objector's status sincere and justifiable.

Some in the congregation still balked at the approach in "Christian Conscience." They felt that with "Plymouth Congregational Church" appearing in the text, the document was viewed as a pronouncement by the church, pushing its involvement into areas of state. To these members, Conn contended that "the very purpose of the church is to relate ourselves to principles and ideals which are vital to us." And since the Vietnam War raised

We call your attention to this advertisement which appeared in  
The Minneapolis (Minnesota) Star March 30, 1971  
The Minneapolis (Minnesota) Tribune March 31, 1971

# CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE

## a plea from some members within a congregation

Our consciences would witness to our grave concern over the tragic damage to society which we see resulting from American participation in the Southeast Asian War. As members of Plymouth Congregational Church of Minneapolis, which by polity does not take group stands on social issues, we as individuals find our Christian motivation prompting us to urge upon our government the following steps:

- 1** To terminate the Vietnam conflict. All American forces should be withdrawn promptly from all points without attempting to determine for the peoples of Asia what governments they shall have.
- 2** To end the military draft. Only those young men who choose to do so should be asked to fight wars in far parts of the world.
- 3** To curb the power of the Pentagon. We urge a sharp reduction in defense spending and military programs, to reduce them to defensive precautions.
- 4** To work for world peace through world law, world communication, and world trade.
- 5** To re-order American priorities at home. We encourage the shift of budgetary expenditures to programs that will lift the quality of life for people: welfare, health, education, human rights, ecology.

matters of profound moral principle, "church members are called to speak their consciences on the issue."

The names of the individuals and couples who signed "Christian Conscience" appear at the bottom of the document. In signing, they entered the anti-war movement that would eventually hasten our withdrawal

from that conflict. A few of the signers are still on the Plymouth active membership roles. Some would say they misrepresented the congregation and stepped beyond the bounds of church. Others would say they courageously exercised their Christian conscience.

- reduce them to defensive precautions.
- 4** To work for world peace through world law, world communication, and world trade.
- 5** To re-order American priorities at home. We encourage the shift of budgetary expenditures to programs that will lift the quality of life for people: welfare, health, education, human rights, ecology.

As persons who have covenanted to share our differing understandings of God's ways, we see the moral imperatives of the religious life as involving the brotherhood, the compassion, and the justice represented by these five concerns. We respect the right of fellow church members and fellow citizens to other views, desiring only to witness to our own.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry E. Allen  
Mrs. Alan R. Anderson  
Robert Donald Anderson  
Mr. and Mrs. Eulan E. Anderson  
Mr. and Mrs. Timothy L. Barrett  
B. A. Baumgarten  
Doug Beebe  
Lloyd and Jacqueline Beebe  
Mrs. William M. Bracken  
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**SUNDAY WORSHIP**

**Please check our website ([www.plymouth.org](http://www.plymouth.org)) for services.**

**Plymouth Congregational Church**

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**Offerings in person and online**

More information may be found on [www.plymouth.org](http://www.plymouth.org).

**Weekly Sunday Services**

**In-Person and Online**

9 a.m. and 11 a.m..

[www.plymouth.org/worship](http://www.plymouth.org/worship)

**Sundays @ 10 a.m.**

**Sunday Forum**

See schedule at [Plymouth.org](http://Plymouth.org)

**Church School**

See [Plymouth.org](http://Plymouth.org) for more info.

**Group Discussion Hour**

**Coffee and Fellowship @ 10 and Noon**

**Midweek Mingle**

**Wednesday Nights, 5:30–7:00 p.m.**

Choirs, Chapel Singers, Young voices, Youth Group, 100 Hands, Creative Quarterly, The BIG Question, Community Dinner

More information at [Plymouth.org](http://Plymouth.org)

**Contemplative Prayer**

available

Thursday mornings at 9 a.m.