

NOVEMBER 2025
HARVEST HOME EDITION

INSIDE
COMMUNITY + YOUTH
MUSIC + GRATITUDE

ROCK

PLYMOUTH CHURCH
LAWRENCE, KANSAS



SAFE SPACE

Plymouth is a congregation that speaks its mind. In the service of and belief in a loving and accepting God, we gladly own our role as disciples of Jesus Christ in our respective time and place in the world.

TO FIND US ONLINE, PLEASE VISIT:
PLYMOUTHLOWRENCE.COM





“Thank God I am in charge of so little, or this could never have happened; life is much wider, richer and more profound than I am comfortable with.”

Anne Lamott

Original cover image from the Plymouth Halloween Parade taken by **John Henry**.

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HARVEST HOME EDITION

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Sightlines

The Associate Pastor's **View** from Here

Rev. Caroline Lawson Dean



"My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead... But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing... I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost."

—Thomas Merton (1915–1968)

This summer, during a clergy retreat in Wyoming, I had the chance to go horse trail riding. Our theologian-in-residence and United Church of Christ colleague, Cameron Trimble, a pilot and public theologian, shared a lesson about "flying loose."

When Cameron was learning to fly a new plane, her instructor warned her of upcoming turbulence. He coached her with the mantra, "fly loose." He explained that airplanes are designed for steady flight; gripping the controls too tightly actually makes the ride less

stable and less safe. The key to navigating rough skies is to trust the plane's design, and "fly loose."

This advice also applies to riding horses. Our horses knew the trails well. Tensing up with anxiety or reactivity, tightening our grip on the reins unnecessarily, only made the ride harder and more dangerous. Cameron reminded us to relax, trust the horses, and "fly loose."

We are all flying through turbulent times, in our nation, in our wider world, and even in our church as we navigate the "messy middle" of a renovation project. Our teams of lay leaders are working hard. Together we are dreaming about worshipping in a new space for a season sometime in 2026 – faithfully vetting possible design options. We're thinking carefully about the most transparent and best processes around these decisions. It's natural to want to tighten our grip when things feel uncertain.

But maybe, in these moments, the call is to “fly loose.” To acknowledge our gifts and to also recognize where our control ends and where the Holy Spirit’s guidance begins.

Anne Lamott captures this well: “Thank God I am in charge of so little, or this could never have happened; life is much wider, richer and more profound than I am comfortable with.”

In this demanding moment, we are called to build courageous community: advocating for the vulnerable, resisting authoritarian powers, and doing justice. But we must also resist the urge to clutch so tightly that we burn ourselves out or lose touch with God’s steadying hand. To “fly loose” means to trust, to rest in God’s grace amid uncertainty, and to find strength in surrender.

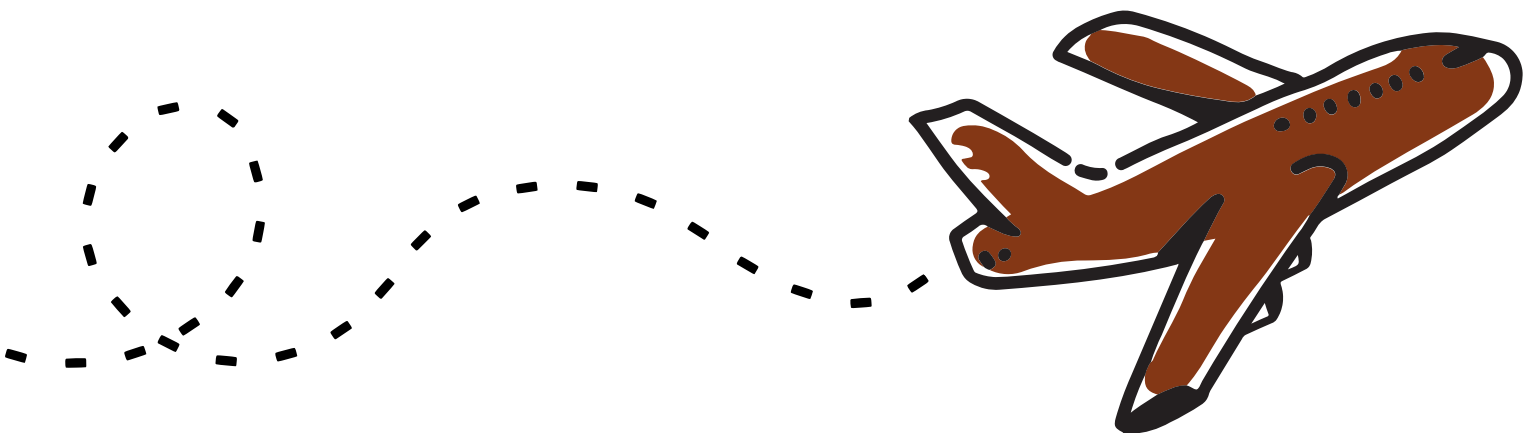
May contemplative practices ground us as we navigate this sacred work together.

With Grace and Peace,



Caroline Dean
Associate Pastor

P.S. Valerie returns from sabbatical on December 1st. Do not hesitate to reach out anytime with feedback or requests for prayer.



All things in moderation.

Rich Bireta - Plymouth 2025 Moderator

Fall Traditions at Plymouth Church

One of the things I love about living in the midwest is the fact that we experience all four seasons throughout the year. Occasionally we'll have one of those luxurious, sunny, mild days with the temperature in the 70s and the humidity low and someone will remark to me, "Don't you wish the weather was like this all year?" My usual response to that is "Yeah, but then it would be like southern California and everyone would want to live here. Then where would we be?"

I look forward to the changing of the seasons. This is especially true each March. I'll be drinking my morning coffee looking out the window and I'll notice how dull gray and brown the landscape looks. Spring arrives suddenly over the course of a week with grass turning the ground green and the trees leafing out. The vibrant colors create a beautiful sight.

The same is true each fall as we bid a not-so-fond farewell to the heat and humidity of summer and welcome cool, crisp mornings and leaves turning red and yellow which creates a distinct sense of autumn that we can feel with our senses of sight, smell and through the cool temperatures.

I think I welcome each change of season because of the traditions that we revisit each season. In the fall at Plymouth Church that means we look forward to sharing a traditional Harvest Home meal on the

Sunday before the Thanksgiving holiday, November 23 this year. We enjoy turkey, stuffing, rolls, gravy, green bean casserole, cranberry sauce and pie, lots of pie, thanks to the hard work of our members on the Fellowship Board and the combined work of all you who contribute by bringing a side dish or dessert.

There is a second, less visible tradition that also occurs on the Sunday before Thanksgiving each year. This is the day when we mark the end of the Annual Appeal by asking members to turn in their pledge cards for next year.

The process of creating a budget for our church spans a full six months from mid summer when boards and committees create a vision and supporting budget requests for their programs for the following year to the Annual Meeting in February at which the budget is formally approved by you, the members of this church.

A key part of this budget process is the distribution and receipt of pledge cards from members and friends of Plymouth. Pledges make up 75%, the majority of our income each year.

I'm asking each of you to please fill out and return your pledge card, or complete a pledge form on the church's website if you have not already done so. Every pledge is important, no matter its size. Turning in a pledge card will ease the job of the Finance Committee and

Church Council as they work to finalize a 2026 budget.

The results of this year's Annual Appeal and the recommended budget will be shared with you at a meeting between services on January 11.

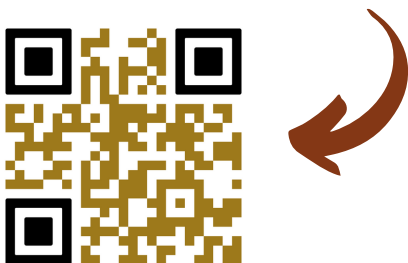
Happy Thanksgiving!

~ Rich

My email is printed in the bulletin each week and is available in the church office. I look forward to hearing from you on this or other matters that may be on your mind!

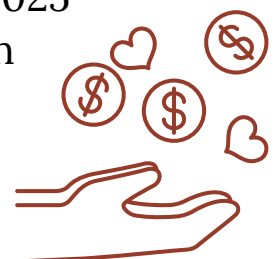
All members of the church are welcome to attend the meeting of the Church Council, held in the Mayflower Room on the 4th Tuesday each month (third Tuesday in November, December and January). There is time allotted on each agenda for comment from members.

Minutes of church council meetings going as far back as March 2023 are available at the church's web site: **plymouthlawrence.com**. From the home page select "About" and under About select "Plymouth Governance". You will also find a current copy of the bylaws and other governance documents here.



Please plan ahead for your 2025 gifts to Plymouth at year end!

The postal service is not as quick as it once was. Please keep in mind potential delays with mail delivery. Gifts received to the Church office by December 31, 2025 will be included on your 2025 Giving Statements.



Our Financial Impact

2025 Budget Percentages



Worship

Sunday Services
Online Worship
Lenten Services
Taizé
Major Choral Works
Candle Light Vigils
Jazz & Welcome Sunday
Thanksgiving Sunday
Christmas Eve

24%



Education

Sunday School
Children & Family Ministry
Confirmation & Youth Ministry
Our Whole Lives (OWL)
Bible Studies
Plymouth Academy

15%



Called to Grow

Plymouth's 2026 Annual Appeal



Congregational Care

Stephen Ministry
Covenant Groups
Discover Plymouth
Grief Support
Mental Wellness Team

Service & Justice

Community Mission Partners

L.I.N.K.
Family Promise
Just Food
Somos Plymouth
Language Program
Justice Matters

Justice & Advocacy Groups

LGBTQ+ Advocacy
Racial Justice Ministries
Plymouth Immigrant
& Refugee Alliance
Moms Demand Action

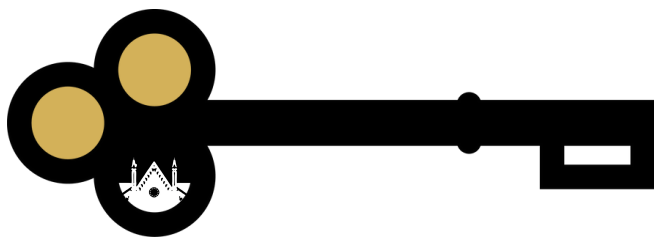
Music & Fine Arts

Chancel Choir
Plymouth Strings
Plymouth Brass
Children's Choirs
Handbell Choirs
Dramatic Arts
Visual Arts

15%

19%

27%



Enter In

SANCTUARY AND ORGAN PROJECT UPDATE

Designing, pricing, and timeline management are all underway with the Plymouth Enter In Sanctuary Project. Work remains to provide the Project Management Committee with needed information to choose a design and make a recommendation to the Plymouth Church Council. As a recent PMC meeting, architects were given a unanimous nod to provide cost estimates for the project that includes the renovation of the choir loft, adjustments in casework design for the new pipe organ, acoustic improvements, and proposed changes to the chancel itself.

The chancel remains the biggest challenge. Congregants' survey comments endorsed many of the proposed changes, but sentiment remains with many of the congregation to leave the chancel unchanged. The most recent design under consideration by the PMC finds a proposed chancel that is significantly higher; a chancel that would use a lift to make it accessible to anyone; and a chancel width that would allow all worship leaders to be on the same level.

After a sanctuary design is approved by the

PMC, a recommendation will be made to the Church Council. The final direction will be determined by the Council. Only at that point, can the architects begin work with contractors to set demolition dates, new construction timelines, and preparations for a new organ. When a design is ready for presentation to the Church Council, an opportunity will be given to all Plymouth congregants to see the proposed project in detail.

It remains unknown when actual sanctuary construction will get underway. The new pipe organ is on a timeline to be completed by the end of 2027. A special design company from Pennsylvania is working with the Schoenberg Pipe Organ Company to design the casework around the new pipes.

Support for the Project Management Committee is appreciated! We know the timelines can be frustrating and create some angst. More information will be given as soon as it becomes available.

Terry Schmidt
Chair, Project Management Committee

Sojourning During the Renovation

Jenny O'Brien
Moderator-Elect and
Alternative Worship
Committee Chair

As a people of faith, we are no stranger to the sojourn. The Israelites left their homes in Egypt and wandered for 40 years in the desert. Early Christians took to the road to spread the Gospel. Our spiritual ancestors crossed an ocean to make a home in a new land, and across the prairie to found this very church.

We often take personal sojourns – a vacation, a sabbatical, a retreat. And in every journey, great or small, we learn something new. Remember just five years ago when we were forced away from our church home to worship in the lonely ether of live streams and Zoom calls? That experience taught us that we can do hard things, made us more resilient, and opened up new ways to come together.

Next year, during the renovation of the Sanctuary, we will take a little sojourn together. That's not to say it will be without challenges. But we are a strong, smart, patient congregation filled with creative problem-solvers, so I have confidence we'll be OK, and will learn something along the way.

Here are the plans so far:

- Plymouth staff and lay leaders will make every effort to preserve current activities and events.
- Construction will begin some time after Easter (April 5) and is anticipated to take around eight months.
- Times for Worship and other activities will not change.
- We will worship in the Mayflower Room, with overflow in the Heritage Room or other rooms as needed. The Mayflower Room will remain set up for worship throughout the construction period.
- The Narthex will be available for coffee hour and other activities.
- The basement will be used for construction staging and will not be available.
- Some activities, such as the Harvest Home dinner and Dinner Theater, will need to happen off-site.

The main concern will be space. The Mayflower Room can seat 200-230, with another 40-60 in the Heritage Room. Typical attendance at the 9:30 service is 250-300, so it will be tight.

The **Alternative Worship Committee** will continue to hear concerns and provide updates. Please contact me with any specific concerns or ideas.

Pastors' Emergency Fund

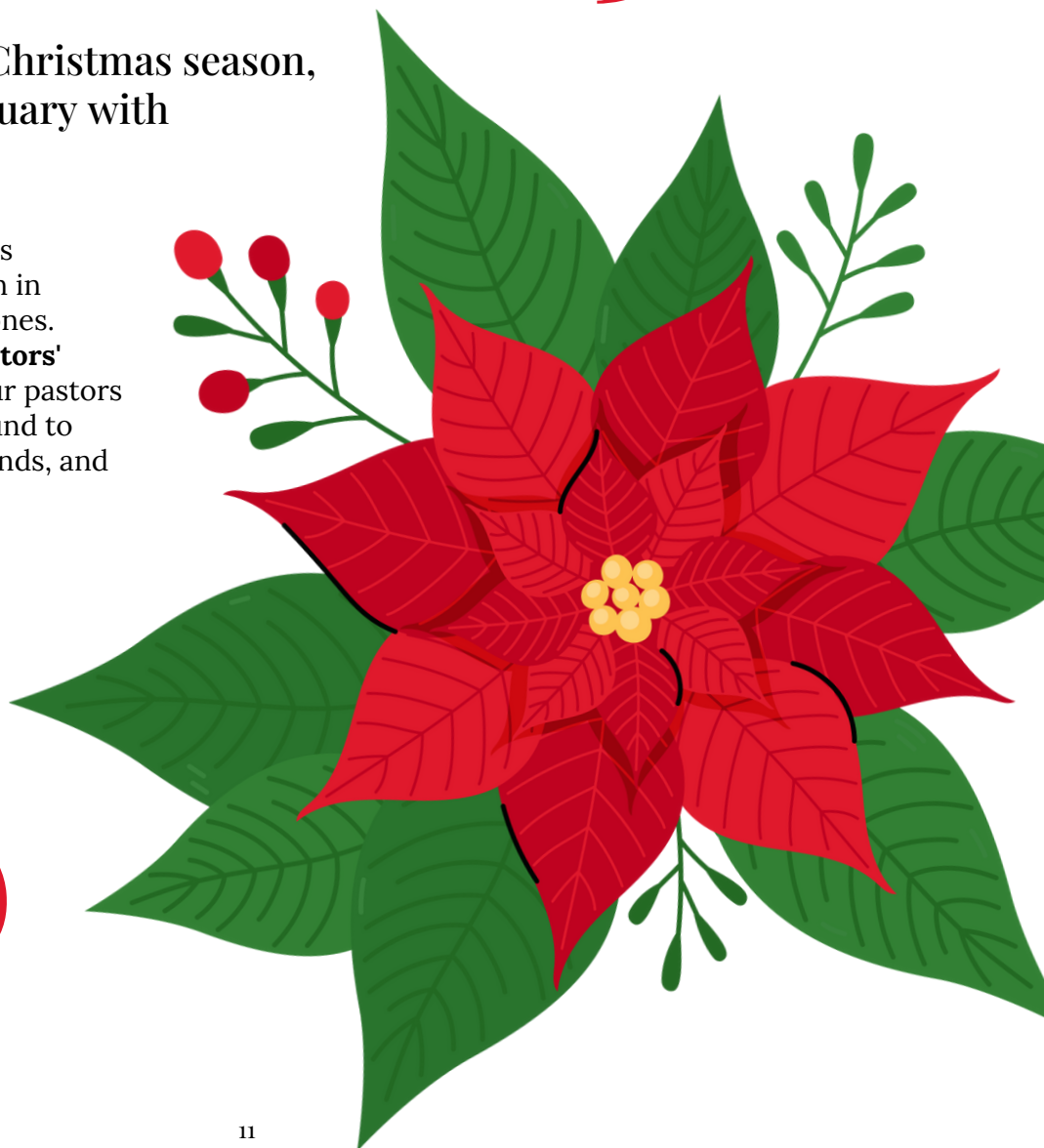
Poinsettias 2025

Each year during the Christmas season, we decorate our sanctuary with beautiful poinsettias.

Plymouth members and friends purchase the poinsettias, often in memory or in honor of loved ones. Others give directly to the **Pastors' Emergency Fund**. Likewise, our pastors use the Pastors' Emergency Fund to assist Plymouth members, friends, and community members in need.



Order
Online





Plymouth's Advent Bake Sale



Order
Online



Sunday • December 7

We want your favorite cookies, cakes, pies, bars, breads, Christmas candy, and gingerbread creations for the sale!

Drop off is available on Saturday, December 6 from 9-11am in the kitchen by the Mayflower Room OR Sunday, December 7 between 8:30 and 9am.

100% of the proceeds go to Plymouth's Mission Partners!

Cookies will be replated so please use minimal packaging!





Advent Gingerbread House Extravaganza

SUNDAY • NOVEMBER 30

An afternoon of fellowship!—making gingerbread houses, singing carols, and eating a light meal together as we begin Advent.

Create your own gingerbread house masterpieces beginning at 4pm in the Mayflower Room. Kits will be provided for each family. **\$20 per gingerbread house.**

There is no cost for the meal, **but we do need some people to sign up to bring soup, cookies, and bread!** If you sign up to volunteer, you should be at the Mayflower Room at 3pm.

Bring the family and enjoy the fun! Sign up early due to the limited availability of gingerbread houses. Wear festive garb or ugly sweaters!

This event is sponsored by the **Board of Christian Education and Music and Fine Arts Board.**

Sign up here!



PLYMOUTH YOUTH SERVICE CORPS

LINK SERVICE PROJECT

Saturday, November 8 • 9-10:30am

Support our neighbors with a hot meal.
We will be doing casserole prep and making
special crafts for our 50 year members.

MORE DETAILS AND SIGN UP! →



HARVEST HOME MEAL SERVING AT PLYMOUTH

Sunday, November 23 • 8:45-11:30am

Set up, serve, and clean up at the Harvest Home Meal.

SIGN UP TO SERVE! →

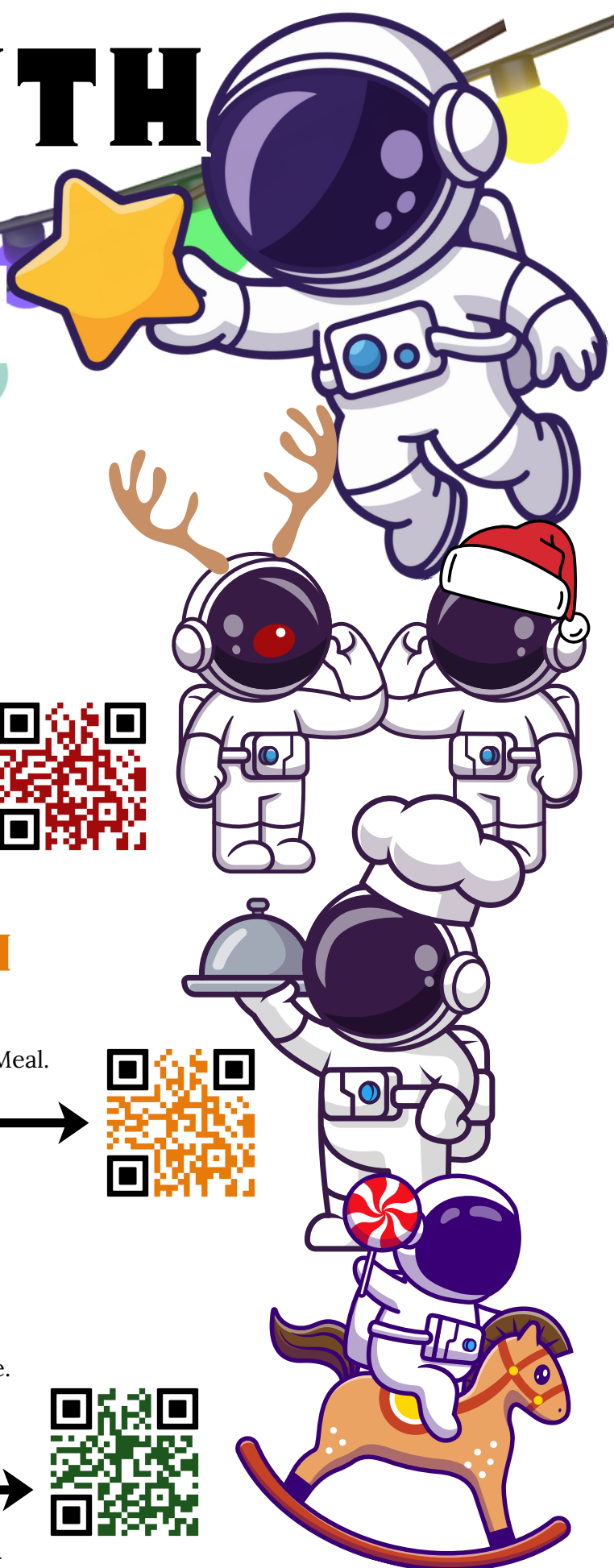


YOUTH SERVICE CORPS CHRISTMAS CAROLING

December 14th • 4:30-6pm

6th-12th Grade Students and friends are welcome.
Join us to spread Christmas cheer and love from
our Plymouth Community.

SIGN UP FOR CAROLING! →





The Hanging of the Greens

**Saturday
November 29 • 9am**

Come and help decorate
Plymouth Church for the Advent
and Christmas seasons!

Trees, lights, garlands, bows, and
ornaments transform Plymouth
into a special, holy space for
Christmastide.

It's a big job, but moves quickly
with many hands to help, and
some jobs can be accomplished
ahead of Saturday if you have
availability during the week.

Contact Kim Manz with an
questions!
music@plymouthlawrence.com





PLYMOUTH CHANCEL CHOIR MAJOR CHORAL WORK
DECEMBER 7 - 9:30AM

In the 1980's Conrad Susa was approached by Phillip Brunelle, the director of the Plymouth Music Series of Minnesota about composing a companion piece to Britten's A Ceremony of Carols. Susa took the request as needing to write a piece of music that would have universal appeal, be accessible, and lasting worth. When struggling with how to compose such a piece, a friend, Gary Holt, showed him a collection of traditional Spanish carols he had sung as a boy in Arizona. Susa, excited by the collection, assembled them to form a narrative.



Susa said: "Finally, the overriding image of a Southwestern pināta party for the new baby led me to add guitar and marimba to Britten's harp and to compose connective music and totally re-conceive the carols. In an often overlooked detail in the Christmas story, the New Baby bawls loudly as the shepherds leave in the final bars of Chiquiriquitin. His parents must now dandle and soothe him to sleep. Tired themselves, they drift off as the angels hover about them in protective adoration."

Of the ten movements, eight will be sung in Spanish and two in English.

WHAT A WONDERFUL SUNDAY TO INVITE FAMILY AND
FRIENDS TO EXPERIENCE MUSIC AND WORSHIP AT PLYMOUTH!



Plymouth's Annual Harvest Home Meal

Sunday • November 23

Come and join us on **Sunday, November 23**, as we express our thanks and gratitude together as a community.

We will have a combined service at 9:30am featuring the musical talents of the Gathering of Grace Band, the Plymouth Brass Ensemble and the Chancel Choir. We will also honor our 50+ year members and then gather for a massive and delicious Harvest Home feast!

Feeding nearly 400 members would not be possible without donations of side dishes, pies, money and the efforts of a team of volunteers. There will be sign up sheets at the Ministry Table in the Narthex beginning Sunday, November 2 through November 16th. So, come, join in and help us make this feast the tastiest yet!



These beloved church members have been a part of Plymouth's storied history for over 50 years. This month, we honor them at our **Harvest Home Celebration and Dinner.**

50-Year Members of Plymouth Congregational Church

1975

Ken Bishop
Beverly Carothers
Carolyn Kelly
John Lungstrum
Linda Lungstrum
Janet Meyer
Keith Meyer
Bob Newton
Pat Newton
Janet Riley
Cindy Thompson
Carol Wallace
Cliff Wallace
Lois Zarembo
Stanley Zarembo

1974

John Brandt
Sally Brandt
Gary Clark
Jeannie Clark
Leslie Dienes
Clara Hemphill
Phil Hemphill
Dick Orchard
Georgia Orchard
Jim Underwood

1973

David Bushouse
Sharon Learned
Kaye Moeser
Gaile Stephens
Roger Stoner
Shere Stoner
Barbara Thomas

1972

Paula Aiken

1971

Ruth Anne Sneegas

1969

Mark Buhler
Lori Michel
Jan Willey

1967

Pete Curran
Debby Wedel

1965

Donna Riehm
Harold Riehm

1963

Alan Hack

1962

Jerry Cooley
David Phelps
Judy Shunk

1961

Ron Johnson
Susan McClintic
Jim Whitenight

1960

Larry Johnson
Gene Puckett

1957

Mary Anne King
Jeanne Underwood

1955

Marilyn Bradt

1954

Bev Mayer

1951

Barbara Brand

1949

Barbara Murphy

Harvest Home History

At our last Harvest Home Meal in 2024, I was seated in the Mayflower Room across from David Bergeron and Geraldo Souza. Just before I got up to leave Geraldo reached out to me and asked about how this tradition had begun, and I told him I didn't know – but as historian for the church, it seemed like something I should know. Thus began my search through Annual Reports, files and calls with members trying to uncover the history of this wonderful tradition.

Right off the bat, here is the answer to Geraldo's question: November 18, 1973. That is the date of the first Plymouth Thanksgiving dinner. It was preceded that Sunday by a service in the morning preached by Butch Henderson on the theme of "Giving Thanks." Thus, the idea for starting the dinner at Plymouth can be credited to pastor Butch Henderson, who preached at Plymouth from 1973 to 1986. Approximately 500 members attended the feast, which was held that evening. Funds raised for the dinner were \$126, of which \$66 were dispersed for expenses, leaving a balance of \$60 for the following year.

That first dinner, like all that have followed, took place on Thanksgiving Sunday or the Sunday before Thanksgiving Day. But unlike all the dinners that have followed, the first



by Susan McCarthy

two dinners were held in the evening. In 1974, there was a church service at 6pm followed by the dinner. Members were asked to bring a dish, but the turkeys were donated by Rusty's Food Center.

By the third year of the tradition in 1975, dinner was scheduled to follow the Sunday morning service. I did not find any notes that accounted for this change. Requests for member food contributions were now specific: members were asked to bring a vegetable, salad, bread, or dessert. Coffee, milk, butter and turkey were provided. But here's the catch in these still early years. Each family was asked to bring their own table service, yes everything: silverware, glasses, cups, plates and napkins! Reservations were required, but if one didn't manage to reserve a spot, you were still welcome at a cost of \$2 a head.

I found the first mention of the musical concert for members waiting in the sanctuary for their section to be called in 1975. Children made table decorations in their Sunday school classes, and Jr High students laid out placemats while High school students took care of clean-up. 1978 was the first time I found mention of the senior members or 50-year members of the church being dismissed first to have their

meals. That tradition continues to this day.

As the years go by, requests for dishes from members continued to be refined. In 1979 requests were either for sweet or scalloped potatoes, fruit salad or cranberries, or pies.

Members picked up donated turkeys at Rusty's and cooked them at home before bringing them sliced and ready to be served to the church. There were always calls for more turkey cookers in the bulletins! Roasters were needed to keep the meat warm while waiting for the dinner to begin, so members were asked to bring their roasters too. Warm gravy was poured into thermal coffee carafes which helped with serving. In the early 1980s, Stan & Lois Zaremba's son Scott was in 4-H. One of his projects was to raise turkeys, which they donated and delivered to the church. Members again picked up the birds and roasted them. This went on for several years. When members brought contributions in their own serving ware, invariably notices would appear in subsequent bulletins about items that were left. Some of these were family heirlooms, so folks were anxious to get them, back!

The Board of Deacons managed the dinner until the establishment of the Fellowship Board in 1993. As I looked through years of Annual Reports, Board Reports, and Bulletins, notices about the Thanksgiving Dinner gradually became more prevalent among other church activities. After about ten years of the tradition, the Thanksgiving Dinner coordinator, which changed from year to year, started making charts to keep track of the approximately twenty jobs, along with who was assigned to each duty. On the charts were things like "in charge of butter," "cut pies," or "fuse box?" I interpret that last one to mean that in the prior year a fuse blew, and the coordinators were determined not to have it happen again!

The Mayflower Room was always used as the main dining room, but overflow rooms were 201 and 202 North, and the basement. Sometimes we borrowed extra tables and chairs from St. John's Catholic Church. In 1979 Margey Frederick was the chairwoman, and she added more lines at the serving tables to help speed up the process. It was also her idea to start using the basement for seating.

In 1980 the church started collecting canned goods on Thanksgiving Sunday for distribution to the Ballard Center. The Plymouth Youth went on a scavenger hunt for canned goods to take to the Salvation Army. Plates were almost always taken to shut-ins or members who could not attend the dinner in person.

In the 1990s, cashiers set up at the door into the Heritage Room and the back door into the Mayflower Room. That custom was discontinued in the 2000s. Donations were still taken, but increasingly the dinner was funded by an account set up by the Estate of Bob Frederick in 2012. Bob especially loved the dinner and wanted to see it continue forever. Each year the interest from his endowment of \$10,000 is used for the annual dinner, which usually provides around \$480. The current balance of that endowment is \$13,800. The dinner has also been funded as a line item in the annual budget since 2017. The amount ranges from \$1,000 to \$3,000 and donations are always willingly accepted. (Thanks for the figures, Rich Bireta.)

Up until the renovation and reconstruction of North Church, which occurred in the late 1990s, the kitchen was in the area where the pastors' offices are today. The old kitchen was much smaller, with hardly any storage or counter area, but it did have a large dishwasher. Beverly Carothers, who was Senior Deacon for several years – but was also in charge of several Thanksgiving

dinners, remembers Mary Ellen Yoe as one of the saints of the kitchen for being able to keep it working during the high-pressured hours of the dinner. Plymouth's china and silverware was used in those days. (Where all this china came from, or what happened to it, is unknown.) You can imagine the traffic going back and forth, across the hallway, bringing food from the kitchen to the Mayflower Room. Pies were often cut on tables in the hallway.

Once construction had reached a point where holding the dinner was impossible because of the mess, pie service only was offered in lieu of the entire dinner. That was in 1999. I remember that because it was my idea to just serve pie! But the church still took full Thanksgiving meals, catered by Hy-Vee, to about thirty shut-ins. That year there was enough left over pie to donate to Link the following week and feed those attending the American Indian service. Because a much smaller amount was spent on the dinner that year, donations were made to Adopt a Family in December and to ECKAN.

In more recent times, the Fellowship Board has worked on a more accurate estimate for how much food is needed for the meal. Not an easy task! For instance, in 2011, after the dinner, there were 7 pans of stuffing and 7 pans of sweet, 3 pans of cranberries, 2 pans of turkey, 6 bags of gravy and 1 full box of rolls left over. That was after food was given to Family Promise, the shelter, and shut-ins. By 2015 a decision was made to reduce 15 the amount of turkey and stuffing, reduce cranberries by 4 pans, and sweet potatoes by two pans.

In 2015 recipes for the requested fruit salad, green bean casserole, sweet potatoes and stuffing were adhered to the back side of aluminum pans members picked up to return with their contributions. That brings us up to date with the standardization of dishes and

pies for our dinner. Over the more than 50 years of this great tradition, the people who have worked so hard to give this meal to the people of Plymouth have truly refined the process so that today it is an amazing operation of efficiency born of love and service. There is so much work that goes on behind the curtain, it is amazing this tradition has lasted over 50 years. This year, enjoy your meal, but think a little about where it started and all the people who have pushed it forward all these years!





Taizé services include reflective readings, simple music, and meditation. Consider adding a Taizé service to your community prayer practice.

All services are on Fridays at 6pm.

Upcoming Services

2025

December 5 - First United Methodist Church
December 12 - St Margaret's Episcopal Church
December 19 - St. John the Evangelist Church

2026

January 23 - Plymouth Congregational church
February 20 - TBD
February 27 - Plymouth Congregational church
March 6 - First Baptist Church
March 13 - TBD
March 20 - TBD
March 27 - St. John the Evangelist Church
April 24 - TBD

Interested in receiving emails about Taizé services?

Contact Christina Bloomquist to be added to the mailing list. christina.r912@gmail.com

Rock

NOVEMBER 2025
HARVEST HOME
EDITION



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