

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2026
LENTEN EDITION

INSIDE
COMMUNITY + EDUCATION + LENT
& HOLY WEEK + MUSIC + HISTORY

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:
PLYMOUTHLAWRENCE.COM





That's what this season is about. Not fixing everything or making it all better. Just showing up and letting the grief do its work. Letting it carve out that hollow space where compassion lives...

Rev. Dr. Valerie Miller-Coleman

In this Edition

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2026

LENTEN EDITION

COMMUNITY

- The View From Here **03**
- All Things in Moderation **05**
- Operationally Speaking **07**
- Justice Matters **08**
- Enter In Project Update **09**
- Enter In Learning Oportunities
& Meeting **11**
- Flower Donations **13**
- Blood Drive **13**
- Women's Coffee **13**
- SOMOS Language Program **14**
- Men's Retreat **15**
- Dads Talk God **16**
- Chili Cook Off **25**

EDUCATION

- 17** Plymouth Academy
- 19** Kids at Plymouth: Wednesdays
- 19** K-1st Grade and 4th-5th Grade OWL
- 20** 8th Grade Stepping Stone Small Group

LENT & HOLY WEEK

- 21** Taizé
- 22** Ash Wednesday
- 23** Holy Week
- 24** Easter

MUSIC

- 26** The Sailor's Bible Musical
- 27** Chancel Choir Major Work
- 28** Music at Plymouth

HISTORY

- 29** 50-Year Plus Member Spotlight: Jim Whitenight



THE View FROM Here

Rev. Dr. Valerie Miller-Coleman

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, and this year I'm feeling the weight of that ritual more than usual. We'll gather and mark each other's foreheads with ashes, saying what we all know but rarely speak out loud: we are dust and to dust we shall return. It's the kind of truth that hollows you out a little. Makes you lighter. Opens up room inside for something else to grow.

We've known so much collective loss lately. Institutions crumbling, civic responsibility abandoned, constitutional rights trampled. Closer to home we've said goodbye to parents and grandparents, friends we thought we'd have longer. Quieter losses too—the kind that don't make headlines but break hearts just the same. We need this season. We need permission to grieve, to rest, to let ourselves be carved out and made new.

It's time for "The Way of the Cross," our Lenten worship series through the second half of John's Gospel. We're going to walk with Jesus through Jerusalem in the days leading up to the cross, and John doesn't pull any punches.

Friends,
we're about
to carve out
some
space.

We'll hear Jesus getting that awful call no one wants to hear—his friend Lazarus is dying. We'll watch him show up too late, stand beside Mary and Martha as they demand to know why he wasn't there when they needed him most. We'll see their grief break something loose in Jesus, like a door opening up inside him, and suddenly he'll know what it is to arrive too late, to leave things unsaid, to rage against the unfairness of it all.

That's what this season is about. Not fixing everything or making it all better. Just showing up and letting the grief do its work. Letting it carve out that hollow space where compassion lives, where we learn we're not alone in this.

We'll be gathering in covenant groups and book studies, prayer gatherings and service teams, sharing our lives and listening for God's story unfolding right here among us. We'll come together for worship and peel back the week, let our souls breathe a little. And we'll tackle the questions that matter most: Why do innocent people suffer? How can a loving God permit evil to persist? What does it mean to follow a savior who knows what it is to grieve?

By Easter, I think we'll all be a couple sizes bigger on the inside. That's what happens when you make room for both grief and resurrection.

Lent is a gift. It gives us permission to be human, to be mortal, to know our limits and our pain. And then it reminds us: we belong to God. In our anger, in our doubt, in our fear, in our helplessness, we are beloved children held by a love that will not let us go.

We'll do this together.

See you in church,



Valerie

All Things in Moderation

Rich Bireta - Plymouth 2025 Moderator

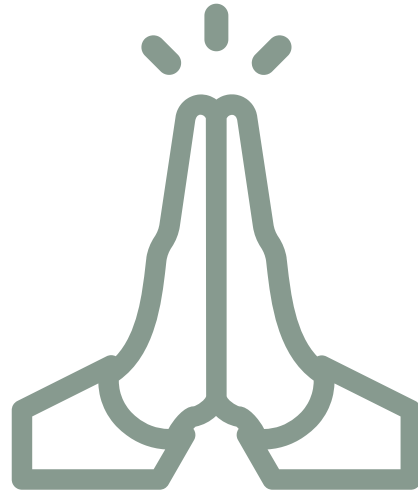
My Last Column

This will be my last opportunity to speak to you through the words of this column. By the time this is printed and in your hands or on your computer screens we will have completed our Annual Meeting and Jenny O'Brien will be our Moderator. You will also have had an opportunity to read our 2025 Annual Report.

I recommend reading or at least reviewing that entire report. From this you will gain an appreciation of the breadth, depth, and talents of this congregation and staff and learn some surprising new things about our church and our activities.

(On a side note, I noticed during my review of the Annual Report that once again my Moderator's Reflection is the longest article. I was reminded of the 2012 Annual Report, my last report as church Treasurer, where I took some good-natured ribbing during the Annual Meeting because my Treasurer's Report ran to six pages that year (Yes, it was too long)).

At the risk of repeating myself, I would like to tell you what a pleasure it was to work with Immediate Past Moderator Sonia Jordan and Moderator-Elect (and now Moderator) Jenny O'Brien. The job of Moderator is not a one-person job. We often refer to these three positions as "the Moderator Team". That term is a practical reflection of the teamwork required to do this work.



I would also like to repeat my appreciation for the members of the Project Management Committee. Their work of balancing competing interests and grappling with a complex renovation/construction/new organ project can not be understated. Please see my column in the Annual Report for a complete list of members who continue to serve on this committee.

Our Church Council serves as the governing body of our church. These members meet monthly and collectively make both routine and strategic or complex decisions on our behalf. You can find a complete roster of the 10 voting Council members on the nominating ballot in the Annual Report. Get to know who they are. Engage them in conversation before church or during coffee hour (hint: look for red name tags!) and please join me in expressing our appreciation for the time and energy they devote to our church!

Rich

I received a comment from a member in January that took me by surprise. They felt that members did not know to whom they could take their questions and concerns regarding church matters.

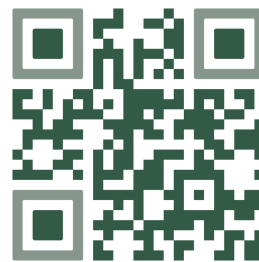
The answer is clear. **Talk to the Moderator!**

~~My~~ The Moderator's email is printed in the bulletin each week and is available in the church office.

She looks forward to hearing from you on this or other matters that may be on your mind. If you don't receive a complete answer, or if further discussion is necessary, you will at least be pointed in the correct direction for your question or concern.

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](#).



Operationally Speaking...

Liz Snith - Plymouth Operations Director

I'm so glad life has led me back to Plymouth. I started attending in 2013, right after I moved to Lawrence to start my PhD in Communication Studies at KU. I joined the church staff as Membership Associate in 2018; my tenure happened across two pastoral transitions and the pandemic. Eventually, my job morphed into Welcome & Care Coordinator. A few accomplishments about which I am still proud: I facilitated the church's transition to a new membership database, moderated online fellowship groups during Covid, worked with the Membership board to create systems for welcoming visitors and new members (including the Welcome Table and Discover Plymouth), and helped rewrite the bylaws. Essentially, I fell in love with church work—the minutia and the overall mission.

I finished my degree and in 2022, my family moved to Ohio. We had our daughter Gideon and moved to North Carolina. When Gideon was really little, I did a small amount of litigation consulting and all but full-time mommy-ing. I cherish that intense time together; Gideon started preschool in September and I'm excited for what comes next.

When I was offered the position of Plymouth's Operations Director, I knew God was calling me back to the church. This position is fairly new; Jaron Asher worked with church leaders to split the old Business Administrator job in half. As Director of Operations, my purview is



long-term strategic planning and supervision of the Admin Team, including our Administrative Assistant, Ann Lounsbury; our Accountant, Melissa Praderio; our Facilities Manager, Matt Del Vecchio, and our Business Manager, Brittani Anderson. Brittani provides the counterpoint to my job, managing the week-to-week business needs of the church so that I can focus on the big picture. Basically, I'm working on all the important but non-pressing projects that get moved to the back burner when you have to keep a big church functioning.

I am working with the staff and lay leaders to identify crucial long-term projects and setting goals to make sure they happen. My hope is to develop some needed systems, document the ones we have in place, and strategize to cut operating expenses so that we can have more resources to grow our church and better live out our mission. Plymouth is a thriving church community and I am so grateful to be back, for the worship of God and the service of all.

Liz

Justice Matters

Network Meeting

Plymouth's Justice Matters team invites all Plymouth members and friends to stand up for justice by attending our Annual Network Meeting on Sunday, February 15 at 10:30am in room 202 North.

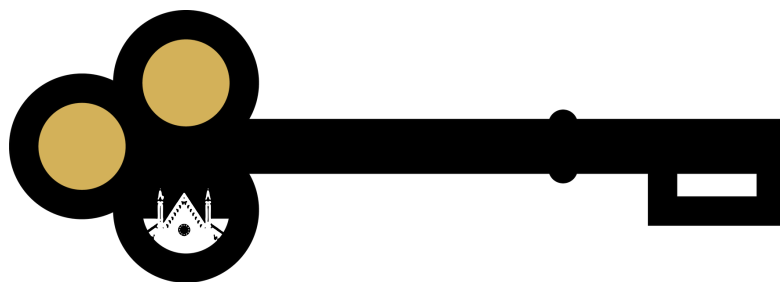
If you are newer to the Justice Matters community, we will have a breakout session to answer questions and connect with you.

We will be preparing to mobilize our congregation for the Nehemiah Action Assembly on April 26th at 2:00pm at the Double Tree Hotel.

Justice Matters is a local multi-faith organization consisting of faith communities and neighborhood networks coming together to surface, understand and address issues of justice, playing a key role in our community around issues of affordable housing, chronic homelessness, elder care, youth trauma, and restorative practices.

RSVP for the February 15 meeting online here.





Enter In

Project Management Committee Update

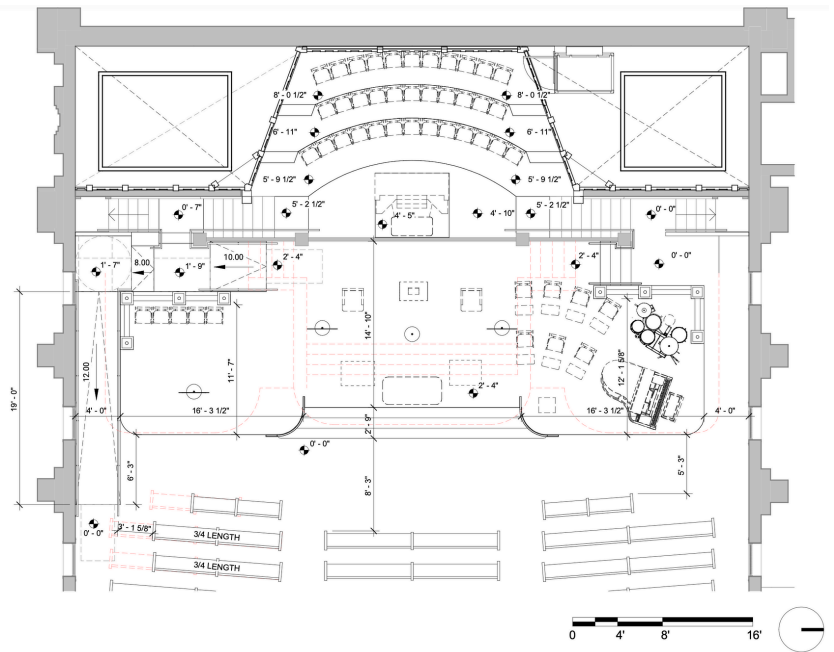
Twelve dedicated Plymouth folks have amassed a phenomenal amount of time, commitment, and passion to assist Plymouth Church in an upgraded sanctuary space – while at all times remembering the past and respecting it for any future changes. *Where are we with the project?*

In recent days and weeks, your **Project Management Committee** has submitted design recommendations to the Church Council for acceptance. The renovation project is really four identifiable important parts – three are easy to see in the rendering while the fourth needs more explanation. The most important part of the sanctuary renovation is preparing for the newly purchased pipe organ. As you remember, the pipe organ construction will not begin until 2027 and will not be completely installed until January, 2028. This is a two-million-dollar project that requires months of design, disassembling Plymouth's current organ (some of the parts will be used in the new organ), and constructing case work to contain the hundreds of new, moving parts required.

The reconstruction of the choir loft area will

allow a lower placement for choir members with an accessible lift hidden behind part of the new casework. The new loft will accommodate 30+ choir members and place the director in a similar place but much lower where all performers can see the director and the director can see them. The most striking part of the new choir loft and organ casework is the commitment made to use all the historical wood and when needed, construct new pieces to look exactly like the old. The new organ pipes are proposed to have some color with limited meaningful etching. Plymouth Congregants got to hear (and see!) from the designer himself on Sunday, January 25 as he presented interactively from Wyomissing, Pennsylvania.

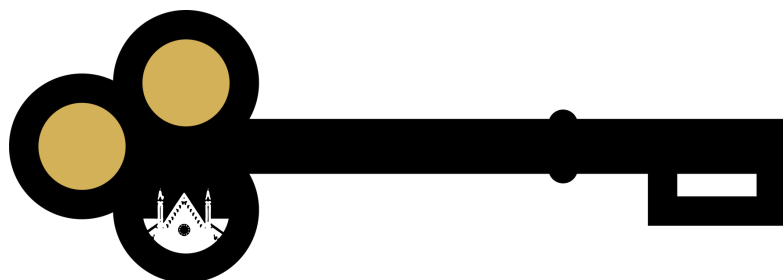
The third most obvious renovation will be the new design of the worship chancel. This space will be elevated across the front of the sanctuary with an accessible ramp on the south side. Those who have participated in worship from the floor include the pianist, the bell choirs, string ensembles, instrumentalists from the Gathering of Grace service, and ensemble performers. The new chancel will have all worship participants on the same



The other changes and improvements that will happen with this project are not seen in the renderings. Notably, there will be all new wood flooring installed. There will be a hearing loop installed for greater accessibility. There will be improvements made to the air handling systems. The sanctuary sound system will be new with multitudes of sound enhancing measures taken. Lighting of the sanctuary will be improved. And finally, all the walls and the ceiling of the historical structure will receive new paint.

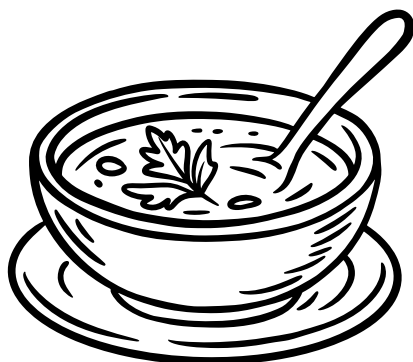
to worship. A special thank you is extended to Moderator Elect Jenny O'Brien and her committee for the work to plan and implement an alternative worship experience in the Mayflower Room after construction begins.

10



Enter In

Learning Opportunities & Meeting



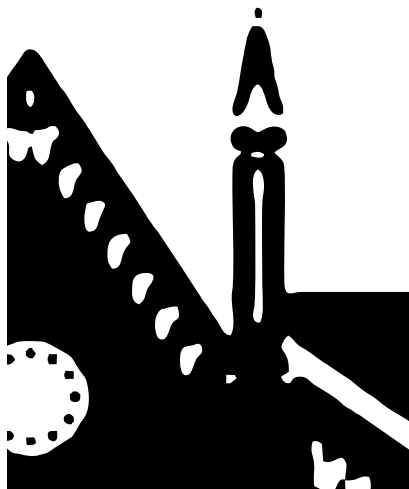
Soup, Learn, Share

THIS Wednesday, February 11 • 5:30-7:30pm
The Mayflower Room

The Project Management Committee will host a soup supper beginning at 5:30pm with several information roundtables available to share current news from the Project Management Committee and to answer your questions and hear your concerns. Some of the roundtables will include: **Designing a Worship Experience with an Enlarged Chancel, Touring the Sanctuary to See/Hear About Proposed Changes, Financing “Enter In,” How it Works with Risks/Rewards, Worshiping in a Renovated Sanctuary – What and How, and Sharing Facts About Enter In.**

All are encouraged to attend this learning opportunity, but if you know for sure you’re coming, your RSVP will be helpful for our planning. **You can RSVP through the Plymouth Office at administration@plymouthlawrence.com or online here.**





The History of Change at Plymouth Church

Sunday, February 15 • 10:45 - 11:30am

The Mayflower Room

The History of Change at Plymouth Church presented by Plymouth Historian Susan McCarthy. Susan will review the significant changes made with the Plymouth Church structure, giving special attention to sanctuary changes. Time will be allotted for questions and comments.



If you missed the January 22 **Interactive Learning Session with Eric Keebler**, you can watch the video **here!**



In this meeting, Eric discussed his preparations to design the renovated west end of the sanctuary through a study of changes made with the Plymouth pipe organ, the choir loft, and organ casework. Eric has completed the new casework design for Enter In with acoustic improvements for Plymouth's new organ.

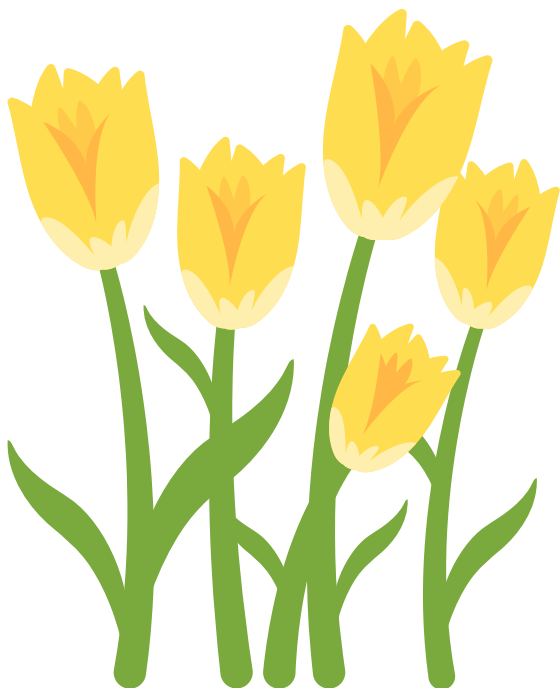
Called Congregational Meeting February 22, 2026

A called congregational meeting of Plymouth Congregational Church will be held **February 22, 2026 in the sanctuary at the conclusion of the 9:30 worship service.**

The pupose of the meeting will be to "discuss and vote upon the proposed modifications to the chancel" as requested in a petition received by the Moderator and signed by 5% of the members of the congregation.



Flower Donations



With a new year, we have a new set of Sundays available for flower donations. The flowers you give beautify the sanctuary and enhance our worship experience. Your donations do double duty. On Monday, Plymouth's Flower Ministry divides these arrangements into smaller bouquets, which they deliver to members who are ill, experiencing a loss in the family, or unable to come to church in person.

Forms for donations, plus the calendar for 2026, are on the wall just outside the church office. As with everything else, the cost of flowers has increased in recent years. At its December meeting, the Deacons Board voted to increase the default amount of an arrangement from \$67 to \$100. It has been many years since that amount was raised.

The Deacons thank you for your generosity!



SAVE THE DATE!
BLOOD DRIVE

MARCH 3 • 10AM-3PM



NEW LOCATION FOR PLYMOUTH WOMEN'S COFFEE

Beginning February 10 meetings will be at:
Z's Divine Espresso
2350 W. 31st Street

Please join us as we continue meeting at 9:30 a.m. on the second and fourth Tuesdays. Contact Stacy England by phone or text at 620-262-7986 with questions!

Dear friends of Plymouth,

As we enter a new year of service in our community, we want to highlight one of our mission partners:

Somos Plymouth Language Program.

In 2025, administration of the program transitioned to a new organization, Somos Lawrence. In recognition of this change, the program is now called Somos Plymouth Language Program (SPLP).



About Somos Lawrence

Somos Lawrence is a Ballard Center partner that assists non-English speaking residents, particularly Spanish speakers, by breaking down language, cultural and financial barriers.

Somos Lawrence provides a range of support to individuals and families, including language interpretation, assistance with school enrollment, and help navigating taxes, housing and medical care. In addition, they host cultural and community events throughout the year.

Get Involved

Somos Plymouth Language Program is one of our valued mission partners. Other mission partners include Family Promise, Head Start, Just Food, Justice Matters, Kansas Interfaith Action (KIFA) and LINK.

The language program relies on volunteers, including conversation partners who work with level 1 and level 2 ESL students in small groups, or in our general conversation class. In addition, we have volunteer roles for door greeters and childcare assistance. While most of our ESL students are native Spanish speakers, it is not necessary to speak Spanish in order to volunteer.

You can express interest in becoming a volunteer on the Somos Plymouth website at any time.

Building Community

Whether you are involved with the language program or one of our other mission partners, you are helping us build stronger ties within our congregation, and just as importantly, touching the lives of people in our city who need the support of a caring community.

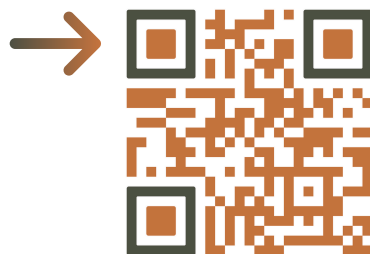
We are grateful for the work so many of you do to demonstrate, through your actions, that service is at the heart of Plymouth.

With peace and gratitude,
Plymouth Service and Justice Board



FIRST ANNUAL MEN'S RETREAT

MORE DETAILS
& REGISTRATION



NAVIGATING NEW DIRECTIONS



TALL OAKS CONFERENCE CENTER
LINWOOD, KANSAS
MARCH 6-8 2026

The **First Annual Men's Retreat** will be led by **Pastor Keith Herron** as we explore **Navigating New Directions**, learning to travel in our stories, even as they change.

Life can be seen as a cycle of from dependence to independence to interdependence and circling back again.

We'll explore stories we hold in the library of our own lives, and we'll explore how we change the trajectory of our lives by navigating new directions as we consider the threshold moments of formation, integration, and intimacy as part of a meaningful whole.



DADS TALK GOD

THE LAST THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH
JOHNNY'S WEST • 7:30PM

Join fellow Plymouth Dads to take time out of your busy schedule to reflect and talk about your own faith and spiritual growth. Whether you are deeply rooted in faith, full of doubt, new to Christianity, or a lifelong practitioner, you are welcome and encouraged to bring your experience to the group. A conversation prompt will be given each month – no study or prep work necessary.

This group is for any Plymouth dad with high school aged kids or younger. We hope you can join the conversation!

We know schedules get crazy, so don't worry if you can't arrive right at 7:30.

For questions, contact:
Ben Miller-Coleman
benjamin.t.coleman@gmail.com
or Brantley Dean
brantleyqdean@gmail.com



Lenten Wedne

at Plymouth Church

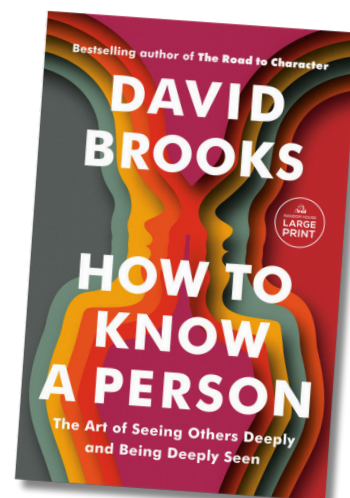


Spiritual Book Club

Facilitated by **Judith Galas**

This Lent the Spiritual Book Club will read David Brooks' *How to Know a Person: the Art of Seeing Others Deeply and Being Deeply Seen*.

The book, which is \$20 in paperback, is widely available. The Raven Bookstore can have it within five days of your order. Judith Galas will facilitate the book discussion. Judith asks that you sign up only if you know that you can make the first meeting and most of the others. Contact her at judithcgalas@gmail.com. It's possible this new beginning will help establish an ongoing spiritual book club at Plymouth.



Centering Prayer

Facilitated by **Rev. Dr. Valerie Miller-Coleman**

Prayer seems like a simple practice, but that doesn't mean it's always easy. Practicing together with a good teacher helps. Wednesday evenings during Lent we'll gather to practice and study Centering Prayer as taught by Father Thomas Keating, a Trappist monk who brought monastic prayer to the local congregation.

Expect contemplative silence, some video and in-person teaching, and companionship as we learn to pray together. No previous experience or study necessary.



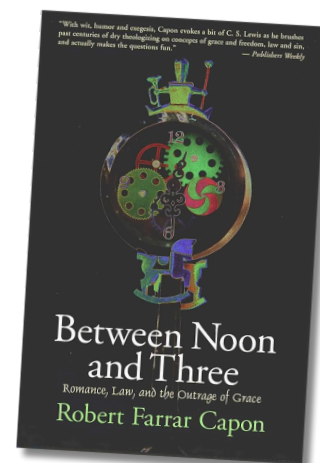
sdays



The Radical Grace of God

Facilitated by **Rev. Michael Brecke**

A Lenten discussion about the radical grace of God, based on Robert Farrar Capon's book "From Noon to Three: Romance, Law, and the Outrage of Grace." Robert Farrar Capon is an Episcopal priest and author. In this book he explores God's radical grace, how we relate to that grace and its relationship to and between "the law and the Gospel." This will be a no holds barred, freewheeling discussion of God's grace and our comfort zones.



Baptism Class

Facilitated by **Rev. Caroline Dean**

This will be a small group for parents, adults, and older youth seeking baptism. We will have interactive teaching sessions, share resources and explore baptism together. Most of all it will be a great way to connect with other families and members at Plymouth. Childcare is available.



**Sign Up
Online Here**

Wednesday Nights* from February 25-April 1 • 6-7pm

*We will not meet on March 18, Spring Break week! | **Childcare available.**

Kids at Plymo

Wednesdays



Kidz Camp!



Kidz Camp! is a place for kids about to go into kindergarten through elementary school to gather for learning and play, singing songs and playing games from **Tall Oaks Church Camp**.



K-1st Grade and 4th-5th Grade "Our Whole Lives" Courses

Our Whole Lives equips children & adults with accurate, age-appropriate information in six subject areas: human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behavior, sexual health, and society and culture.

Grounded in a holistic view of sexuality, Our Whole Lives not only provides facts about anatomy and human development, but also helps participants clarify their values, build interpersonal skills, and understand the spiritual, emotional, and social aspects of sexuality.

For K-1st Grade OWL, a parent or caregiver is encouraged to attend with their K-1 student.



**More
Details &
Sign Up
Online Here**

uth

Sunday Evenings



8th Grade Stepping Stone Small Group

Plymouth's Stepping Stone program is a cradle-to-graduation family ministry that transforms faith formation for children, youth and parents. Stepping Stone gatherings encourage and equip parents to be confident and effective faith mentors for their youth. In these groups you will find spiritual practices and transformative conversations with other parents about things that really matter to parents and students at key junctures in your child's development.

These groups are for parents and youth in 8th grade. *There is one meeting with parents only.*

The 8th grade Stepping Stone small group will gather at Plymouth on Sunday evenings from 4:30-6pm on the following dates:

Sunday, February 22 (Students and Parents),

Sunday, March 1 (Parents Only) and

Sunday, March 8 (Students and Parents)

*Save the date for our 8 Grade Stepping Stone Blessing on **Sunday, March 29** in worship.*

You will also receive extra resources & take-home rituals. Susie Roman will be facilitating the 8th grade Stepping Stone group.

Email Rev. Caroline Dean with any questions:
associatepastor@plymouthlawrence.com

Sign Up Online Here





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

Feb 20 • Plymouth Congregational Church
Feb 27 • Plymouth Congregational Church (925 Vermont St)
March 6 • First Baptist Church (Kasold Dr)
March 13 • Plymouth Congregational Church
March 20 • Plymouth Congregational Church
March 27 • St. John the Evangelist Church (1234 Kentucky St)
April 24 • Trinity Lutheran Church

2026

Interested in receiving emails about Taizé services?

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

ASH WED NES DAY

Our **Lenten** journey
begins on Ash
Wednesday.

Join us at **6pm on
February 18** for this
service of worship with
the imposition of ashes.

AT PLYMOUTH CHURCH

Wednesday • February 18 • 2026

HOLY WEEK

AT PLYMOUTH CHURCH

Palm Sunday Services

Sunday, March 29 • 9:30 & 11:30am

Our Holy Week pilgrimage begins.

Maundy Thursday Service

Thursday, April 2 • 7:30pm

The journey to the cross intensifies.

Good Friday Service

Friday, April 3 • 7:30pm

Dramatic presentation of the Passion
Narrative using still life characters
and music.

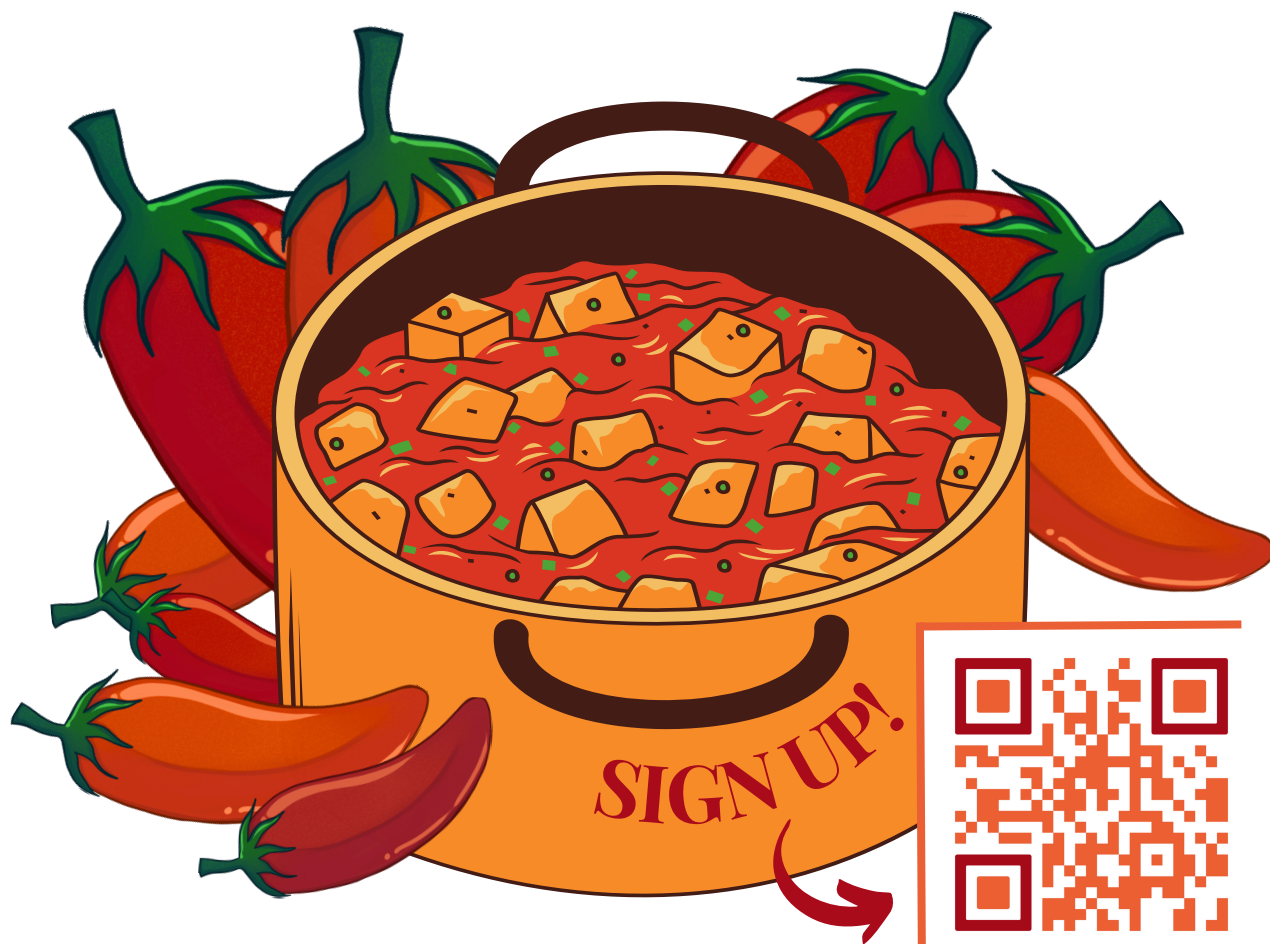
EASTER SUNDAY

AT PLYMOUTH CHURCH

Sunday, April 5 • 9:30 & 11:30am

Our journey culminates in the
celebration of resurrection life!

Christ is risen. He is risen, indeed!



CHILI COOK OFF

**THE BENTONVILLE, ARKANSAS TRIP TEAM
WILL BE HOSTING OUR ANNUAL CHILI
COOK OFF FUNDRAISER ON APRIL 10 AT
6PM AT PLYMOUTH IN THE MAYFLOWER
ROOM**

We need Chili Cooks! You must fill out the form to participate as a cook in the Chili Cook Off competition. Sign up by **April 6.**

If you are not able to cook, save the date to attend the Chili Cook Off and support our youth service-learning trip. May the best Chili Cook win!

This year our high school youth and mentors are raising funds for a trip to Bentonville, Arkansas • July 5-10 • **Focusing on Economic Justice**



THE SAILOR'S BIBLE

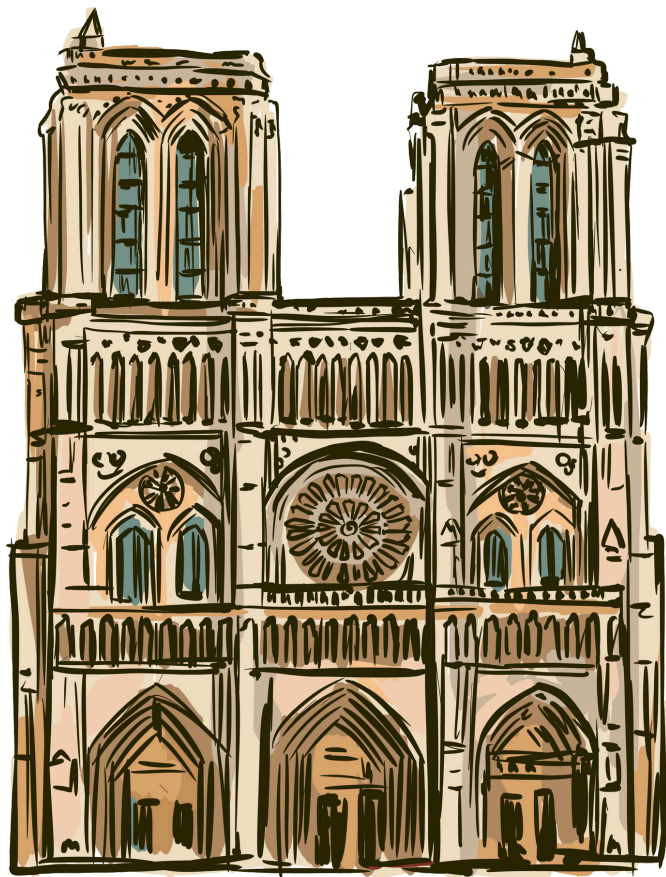


YOUTH MUSICAL
SUNDAY, MAY 17 • 2026
IN THE 9:30 WORSHIP SERVICE

Come set sail with the Carol and Chapel Youth Choirs on Sunday, May 17 as they present their spring musical, The Sailor's Bible!

You will be guided through the stories of Noah and the Great Flood, Jonah and the Great Fish, and Paul's Shipwreck. Each tour contains colorful characters and songs that will educate, enlighten, and entertain.

Frequently, the Bible uses the ocean as a symbol for the chaos of life that is beyond our control. Only the power of God is greater than the natural forces of wind and wave; only the presence of God can bring peace to the hurricanes of life. Don't forget to mark your calendars to attend and support the youth choirs and actors at Plymouth!



Requiem

Gabriel Fauré

Plymouth Chancel Choir
Major Work
Sunday, May 3 • 2026
in the 9:30 Worship Service

Gabriel Fauré finished composing Requiem in 1888. This 'first version' consisted of five movements and was accompanied by strings, harp, timpani, and organ. An expanded version included two additional movements, the "Offertoire" and the "Libera me." The noted American choral conductor Dennis Keene observed, Requiem "depicts the timelessness of human existence, the procession of generations, human longings, profound sorrow, fear of the unknown, as well as light, hope, the ultimate joys of heaven, and, above all, peace."

Fauré commented about the work, "Everything I managed to entertain by way of religious illusion I put into my Requiem, which moreover is dominated from beginning to end by a very human feeling of faith in eternal rest."

If you have an interest in singing this powerful music, please contact Kim Manz asap at music@plymouthlawrence.com for a rehearsal schedule and music.

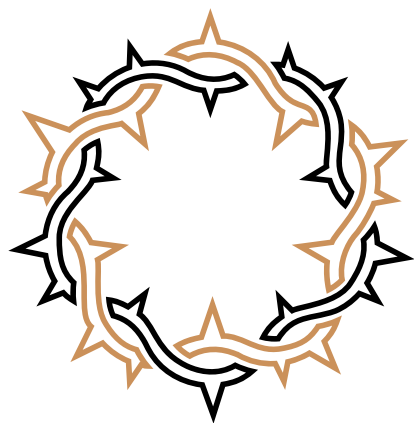
Music at Plymouth



Plymouth Brass

The Plymouth Brass will be playing for worship at 9:30 on Easter Sunday, April 5. There will be one rehearsal on Saturday, April 4 at 10am.

Please contact Kim Manz at **music@plymouthlawrence.com** if you are interested in playing in the ensemble. Music is available in advance for practicing.



Good Friday Service

Friday, April 3 • 7:30pm

The annual Good Friday service is a dramatic presentation of the Passion Narrative using still life characters and music.

Please contact Kim Manz at **music@plymouthlawrence.com** if you are interested in participating in this powerful service.

Celebrating Plymouth's 50 Plus Year Members

by Stacy England

Jim Whitenight

Like many members of Plymouth Church, Jim Whitenight enjoys the sermons. He said, "Hearing the good sermons that I'm hearing now from our ministers is really wonderful."

Jim also enjoys another aspect of belonging. "Part of it is being in the choir. I've been in the choir since around 1974." Singing in the choir creates an opportunity to develop friendships.

Steve Bradt also sings in the choir. "I have valued the time I've gotten to spend in choir with Jim - for close to 46 years - more than I can imagine," said Steve. "Jim is one of the kindest and most generous people I know. His enthusiasm is contagious. The choir has been tremendously important to Jim. It's a big part of who he is."

Jim, who was born to Ken and Ethel (Hack) Whitenight in 1947, moved to Lawrence with his family in 1950. "We're all brothers in our family. I'm the youngest, and there were Pete, Chris, and Ken."

"It's just Pete and me and Ken that are alive. Pete lives outside of town in Mom and Dad's old house." Ken lives in Austin, Texas, and Chris died of cancer in 1992.

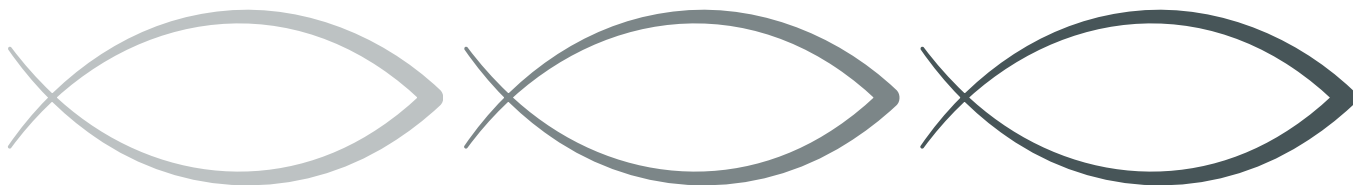
The Whitenights joined Plymouth in 1961, when Jim was in junior high. "We joined the church here. We used to go over to the Methodist Church years earlier, but my folks decided they liked it here better, so we moved."

"I was involved in youth activities. We had a youth fellowship on Sunday nights at Plymouth when I was in junior high and through high school.

Jim's mom, Ethel, was a sister of Al Hack. The children in the two families grew up together. "We spent a lot of time as kids playing together. On Thanksgiving and Christmas, we got together, and we opened presents early Christmas morning, and things like that."

Jim attended Cordley Elementary School, Central Junior High, and Lawrence High. "I graduated from there in '65."

A friend introduced Jim to Janet Rider several years later, and they married on July 24, 1971. "Her name became Whitenight when we got married. We were married, right, about 53 years." Janet died in December of 2024.



“We had two children, Jennifer and Jeff. Jennifer lives with me. She moved in before Janet passed away, to help out. She's still living there, and we help each other out a lot.”

Jeff, who has two adult children, Cameron and Addison, works at Crown Toyota. “They come over on Sunday, and we watch the games on TV, sports things, and stuff like that.”

“You know, I went through junior high, high school, and I graduated from high school in 65. Soon after graduation, I started working. And that's pretty much what I did until I retired.”

Jim started working part-time at his dad's store, The Town Shop on 839 Mass, after school while he was in high school. “I'd go and do clean-up work and run errands for the business,” he said.

Eventually, Jim took a job at one of the largest employers in Lawrence. “I worked at the Kmart Distribution Center for about 30 years,” he said. “I had to be at work by 7:15. For the most part, I enjoyed my work. I left when I retired in 2013.

Jim is now one of the volunteers who helps to clean the church. “That was shortly after I retired in 2013.”

Watching Chiefs football games and KU basketball is something Jim enjoys.

He also likes nature. Jim has been feeding birds for years. “I just put out food for them during the winter. I like the Cardinals, the Blue Jays, and some other pretty birds. I've seen Northern Flickers around. They have spots on their stomach and a black stripe down the front.

Fishing is another hobby. “I like to go fishing in the spring and summer when the weather's nice. Clinton Lake and Lone Star are mostly where I go,” said Jim. “I caught a catfish a long time ago, when I was fishing with a friend. And it was, I think, 13 pounds or so. They can get pretty big.



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