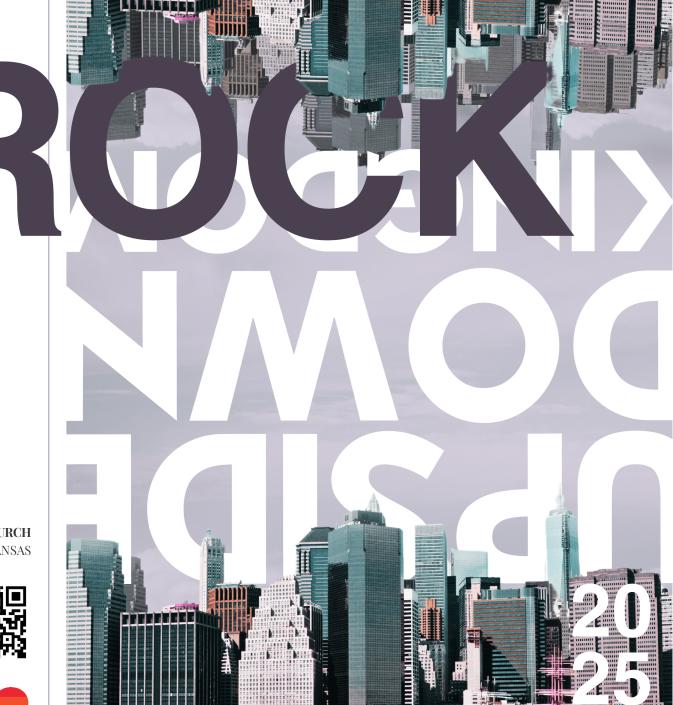
LENTEN EDITION

INSIDE

COMMUNITY + GATHERING & MISSION LENT & HOLY WEEK + MUSIC + HISTORY



PLYMOUTH CHURCH LAWRENCE, KANSAS



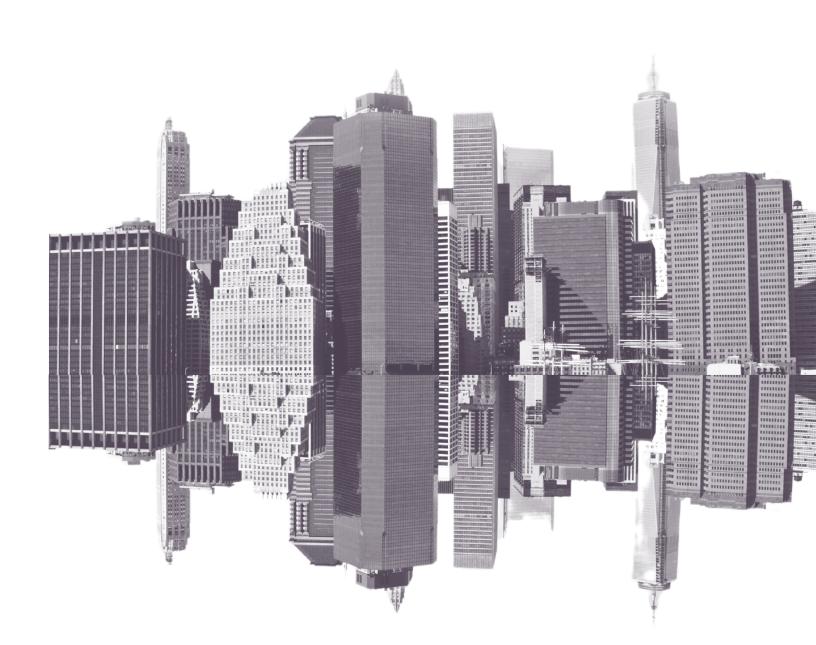


SAFE SPACE

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



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THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

LENT IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER, AND IT FEELS LIKE EXACTLY THE RIGHT TIME TO SLOW DOWN AND DO SOME HONEST THINKING ABOUT WHAT REALLY MATTERS. BUT HERE'S THE THING – JESUS NEVER EXPECTED HIS FOLLOWERS TO FIGURE EVERYTHING OUT ON THEIR OWN. NEITHER SHOULD WE.

Rev. Dr. Valerie Miller-Coleman

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Rev. Dr. Valerie Miller-Coleman

You know what keeps catching my attention lately? The way Jesus brought people together. Not just the big crowds who showed up for his teaching, but those smaller circles of friends who walked with him, shared meals, and weren't afraid to ask him the hard questions. That's where the real transformation happened - around dinner tables and on long walks, in conversations that started simple and went deep fast.

We've been talking about this in our "Jesus for President" series - how Jesus had such a different take on power and leadership than what we usually see. These days, when everyone seems to be shouting about who's in charge and who gets to call the shots, I find myself wondering what Jesus would make of it all. (Though I have some pretty good guesses!)

Lent is just around the corner, and it feels like exactly the right time to slow down and do some honest thinking about what really matters. But here's the thing – Jesus never expected his followers to figure everything out on their own. Neither should we.

That's why I'm really excited about our Lenten Covenant Groups starting up next month.

I TAKE REAL COMFORT IN KNOWING WE'RE NOT THE FIRST PEOPLE OF FAITH TO NAVIGATE UNCERTAIN TIMES. NOT BY A LONG SHOT. AND WE'VE GOT EACH OTHER - WHICH COUNTS FOR AN AWFUL LOT.

FROM HERE.

FROM HERE

Picture this: 8-12 people meeting regularly throughout Lent, creating space to be real with each other and with God. No need to have all the answers – just bring your questions, your hopes, maybe your worries about the state of things, and your willingness to walk alongside others who are figuring it out too.

Let's be honest – we're living in quite a moment. None of us can say for sure what's coming next for our nation or even our town. But I take real comfort in knowing we're not the first people of faith to navigate uncertain times. Not by a long shot. And we've got each other – which counts for an awful lot.

New to Plymouth? Been here forever? Faith feeling solid? Full of questions? There's a spot for you in these groups. You can sign up next Sunday after worship, or just give the church office a call to find a group that works with your schedule.

I can't think of a better way to journey through Lent than with this community. Together, we'll keep working out what it means to follow Jesus's way in our own time and place. And I've got a feeling we'll find some courage and wisdom along the way.

See you in church,

Valerie



ALL THINGS IN

Rich Bireta - Plymouth 2025 Moderator



I am humbled and honored to have been selected to be Moderator this year. I also feel well prepared for this role. Since 2006 I have been the church's Treasurer, served on the Stewardship Board then as Deputy Treasurer and have completed a year as Moderator-Elect.

By way of introduction for those of you who do not know me, my wife Jane and I have been members of this congregation for over 30 years. We've raised six children in this church. All of our children are now adults with one living in Lawrence, three children living in Denver (with four grandchildren) and two children living in Chicago (with one grandchild). If we are not in Lawrence we are likely in Denver! Jane and I are both retired and find ourselves living a busy, retired life. In my spare time I work as a substitute teacher a dozen days a year and run a software business as a hobby with one of our sons writing and supporting software used to time road rally events across North America. Jane and I both work with the AARP Tax-Aide Foundation as volunteer tax preparers.

For the first 15 years of our membership I was content to be a Sunday-morning member. When I expanded my participation to include serving on boards and committees I felt like our membership took a quantum leap forward. I encourage other Sunday-morning members to consider taking the next step by considering serving on a board or committee or joining a small group that matches your interest. There are many such groups to choose from.

As a congregation we have a busy year ahead of us with work on the organ and sanctuary project the main task ahead of us. As Terry Schmidt reported at the Annual Meeting, we have contracted for a new organ and have selected an architect (Clark Huesemann). The tasks of determining a final design and construction budget and deciding on where to hold services during construction are actively being worked by the Project Management Committee.

The Moderator of our congregation is tasked with being the lay leader of our congregation.



MODERATION.

As such, I know from experience that you will not hesitate to contact me with your questions and concerns. My email is printed in the bulletin each week and is available in the church office. I look forward to hearing from you.



SAVE THE DATE: UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST GENERAL SYNOD 2025 - KANSAS CITY

The General Synod of our denomination, the United Church of Christ, will be held in Kansas City this summer July 11-15. Attendees will gather for worship and fellowship, attend to general business, offer public witness, and set the denomination's priorities for ministry for the coming years. The event will also include workshops, generative plenary sessions, inspirational worship, an engaging youth program, and a robust exhibit space.

This event is held every three years and is held in various locations around the country. There will be opportunities to volunteer to work at the event as well as to attend the event. Watch for further details!

A NOTE FROM THE ASSOCIATE PASTOR'S DESK...



Dear Plymouth Community,

I am excited to continue to share the news that I am preparing for my upcoming Sabbatical. I will be taking the months of May, June, and July of this year to refresh and spiritually recharge. I am truly grateful for this opportunity.

You might be wondering, "What is a sabbatical?" In our tradition, called clergy members are often granted sabbaticals after a number of years of service in a congregation. A sabbatical is a designated period of time away from regular duties, intended for rest, study, and personal renewal.

My last day in the office before my sabbatical will be Wednesday, April 30th, and I will return on Sunday, August 3rd. Should you have any questions regarding my sabbatical or our programming this spring and summer, please don't hesitate to reach out as these dates approach.

During my Sabbatical, Rev. Valerie Miller-Coleman and Colton Pasquale will be excellent points of contact for you. I am grateful for this opportunity to continue to discover the gifts of sabbath practices in my personal and vocation life.

With Gratitude,

Rev. Caroline Lawson Dean

Associate Pastor Plymouth Congregational, Lawrence, KS



FOR THIS YEAR'S
CHRISTMAS EVE OFFERING,
COLLECTED IN CHURCH
AND ONLINE, YOU GAVE
\$7,645 TO BE DIVIDED
AMONG THREE
RECIPIENTS: JUST FOOD,
JUSTICE MATTERS,
AND OUR CHURCH'S
WIDER MISSION.
THAT EXCEEDS
OUR 2023 TOTAL
BY MORE THAN
\$1,000!

You also brought happy holidays to the Willow Domestic Violence Center and the Lawrence Community Shelter, donating gift cards, comfort kit items, socks, and underwear. These gifts help some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

In addition, the Service and Justice Board used endowment funds to donate \$741 to the UCC California Wildfires Appeal to help displaced families, churches, and communities rebuild in the wake of the devastating fires. Closer to home, we used endowment funds to purchase \$252 of diapers and wipes for the Community Children's Center — that's 872 diapers and 20 packages of wipes! And Plymouth LINK used part of their budget to replace a broken stove in the LINK kitchen, just in time for Thanksgiving.

Together, our giving is making a difference!

Sincerely,

Your Board of Service and Justice

PROJECT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE UPDATE

AUTHOR CONNIE HABASH WROTE, "WINTERTIME HAS MANY SPIRITUAL GIFTS FOR US; PERHAPS THE GREATEST ARE OPPORTUNITIES TO BE STILL AND QUIET, TEACHING US THE WAY TO INNER PEACE."

HOWEVER, THAT HAS NOT BEEN
THE MODUS OPERANDI OF THE
PLYMOUTH PROJECT
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
(PMC) OVER THE PAST THREE
MONTHS! FAR FROM BEING STILL
AND QUIET, THE PMC HAS BEEN
ACTIVELY MEETING EVERY TWO
WEEKS, DILIGENTLY STUDYING,
DEBATING, AND EXPLORING
NUMEROUS DESIGN CONCEPTS
TO MEET THE GOALS OF THE
"ENTER IN PROJECT."

WHILE WE ARE NOT YET READY TO EMBRACE STILLNESS, WE ARE MAKING STEADY PROGRESS. Here are some of the major accomplishments to date:

- 1. A new pipe organ has been ordered and is now in line for construction.
- 2. A small electric organ has been secured to assist the music ministry during the 36-month waiting period for the new pipe organ.
- 3. Schematic options for sanctuary renovation have been extensively examined, debated, and vetted with the help of design architects and consultants.

Unfortunately, we are not yet at the stage where we can present finalized options to the congregation for feedback.

WHAT'S TAKING SO LONG?

The process of bringing the congregation firm planning ideas has been slowed as we carefully navigate three key challenges:



Keep up with the project and ask questions here!





SANCTUARY AND ORGAN PROJECT AT PLYMOUTH CHURCH

- Ensuring compatibility with historical preservation guidelines.
- Aligning plans with available funding and financial realities.
- Meeting the needs of a **growing church** family while balancing competing priorities.

Despite these challenges, the PMC remains committed to progress and aims to schedule a congregational meeting for input by late February or early March.

UPCOMING PRIORITIES

In the weeks ahead, the PMC will focus on:

- Securing design concepts that qualify for historical tax credits, a major funding source for the "Enter In" project, by engaging experts at the state level.
- Refining designs to ensure they align with realistic financing based on pledges.

- Determining the optimal timeline for sanctuary closure during construction and identifying the best location for continuing worship services during that period.
- Completing grant applications to help offset budgetary needs.

YOUR INPUT IS VALUED!

We welcome your comments, suggestions, and opinions! You can share your thoughts in two ways:

- 1. Submit your ideas via the website.
- 2. Speak directly with a member of the PMC.

The Project Management Committee members are: Terry Schmidt, Chair, Doug Eason, Vice-Chair, Judy Burch, Rich Bireta, Sonia Jordan, Doni Mooberry Slough, Stephen Carttar, Dave Miller, Valerie McGhee, Kim Manz, Matt Del Vecchio and Valerie Miller-Coleman.

LENTEN COVENANT COMMUNITIES OF

THIS LENT, WE'RE TURNING TOWARD ONE ANOTHER WITH INTENTION, BLESSING, AND DEEPENING THE BONDS BETWEEN US.

Groups will gather on Wednesday evenings through the season of Lent (March and April) to share life and build friendship.

Covenant Groups will meet weekly.

Childcare and rooms for gathering will be available at Plymouth on the following Wednesday evenings:

March 12th 6pm-7pm

March 19th (No session because of Spring Break)

March 26th 6pm-7pm

April 2nd 6pm-7pm

April 9th 6pm-7pm

April 16th 6pm-7pm

March 5th from 6pm-7pm - Ash Wednesday worship service.

Lenten Covenant Groups may choose to attend together.

Childcare will be provided during worship.

LENTEN COVENANT GROUPS AT PLYMOUTH ARE COMMUNITIES OF 8–12 PEOPLE WHO MEET WEEKLY DURING LENT.

Our program is built on an intentional journey, and low-pressure conversations with the goal of deepening our faith and our relationships.

There is no prep work to attend a session. Simply show up to your group. Childcare is available.

The curriculum focuses on the "Essential Practices of the Christian Faith."

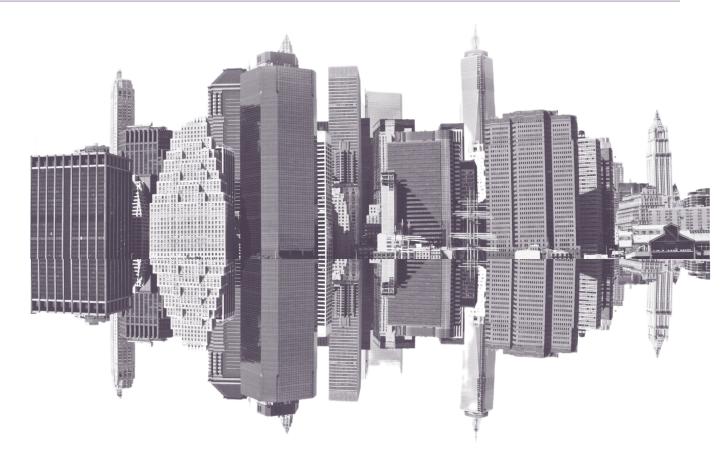
In group time, we will consider challenges to those practices and engage in exercises that promote group connection.

GROUPS BLESSING

Sign up for all groups here.







LGBTQ+ FAMILIES: COMMUNITIES OF BLESSING

Facilitated by trained lay leaders.

Join a circle of friendship, solidarity and prayer.

We will share spiritual resources and sacred friendship for these chaotic times. There will be no prep work to attend each session. Resources for community care and support will be shared via email.

Childcare is available.



LENTEN STEPPING STONE GATHERINGS

PARENTING ISN'T EASY! THESE SMALL GROUP CIRCLES ARE MEANT TO SURROUND FAMILIES WITH COMMUNITY AND SPIRITUAL SUPPORT.

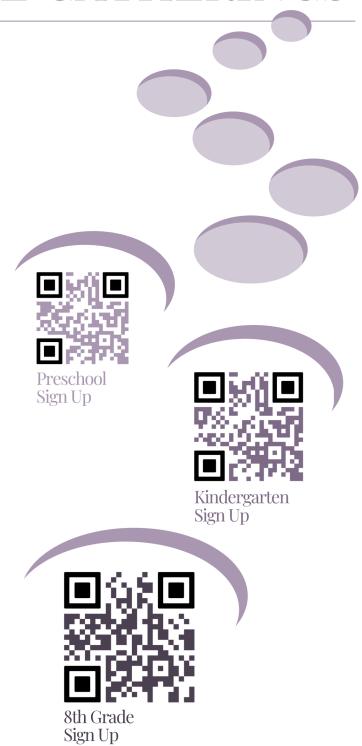
This Lent we are offering Stepping Stone Circles for **Preschool**, **Kindergarten**, and 8th **Grade students**, parents and their families.

Plymouth's Stepping Stone gatherings cultivate community among families with children at key junctures in their child's development.

You'll find simple spiritual practices and good conversation about things that really matter to parents and kids. You'll also foster deep, meaningful relationships with other parents and other families within our church community.

Each group will meet for 4 weeks starting in March or early April either on Wednesday evenings (5:30-7pm) or Sunday evenings (4:30-6pm) at Plymouth Church.

Childcare is available on-site.



CHILL COOK OFF

The Tulsa Service-Learning Trip team will be hosting our Annual Chili Cook Off fundraiser on April 4th 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 1st.

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!

Our high school youth and mentors are raising funds to partner again this year with "Be The Neighbor." We are focusing on "Race and Reconciliation" in Tulsa, OK July 6th-12th.

Chili Sign Up







ASH WEDNESDAY

AT PLYMOUTH CHURCH

LUKE 9:51-62

OUR LENTEN JOURNEY BEGINS ON ASH WEDNESDAY.

JOIN US AT **6PM ON MARCH 5** FOR THIS SERVICE OF WORSHIP, COMMUNION, AND THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES.

PALM SUNDAY SERVICES

Sunday, April 13 • 9:30 & 11:30am Our Holy Week pilgrimage begins.

MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE

Thursday, April 17 • 7:30pm The journey to the cross intensifies.

GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE

Friday, April 18 • 7:30pm

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

EASTER SUNDAY SERVICES

Sunday, April 20 • 9:30 & 11:30am

Our journey culminates in the celebration of resurrection life!

Christ is risen. He is risen, indeed!

EASTER SUNDAY

AT PLYMOUTH CHURCH

APRIL 20 • 9:30 & 11:30AM

Our journey culminates in the celebration of resurrection life!

Christ is risen. He is risen, indeed!

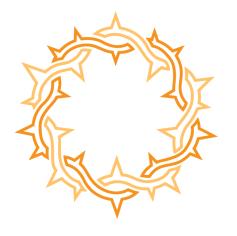
MUSIC AT PLYMOUTH



PLYMOUTH BRASS

The Plymouth Brass will be playing for worship at 9:30 on Easter Sunday, April 20. There will be one rehearsal on Saturday, April 19 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 18

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.

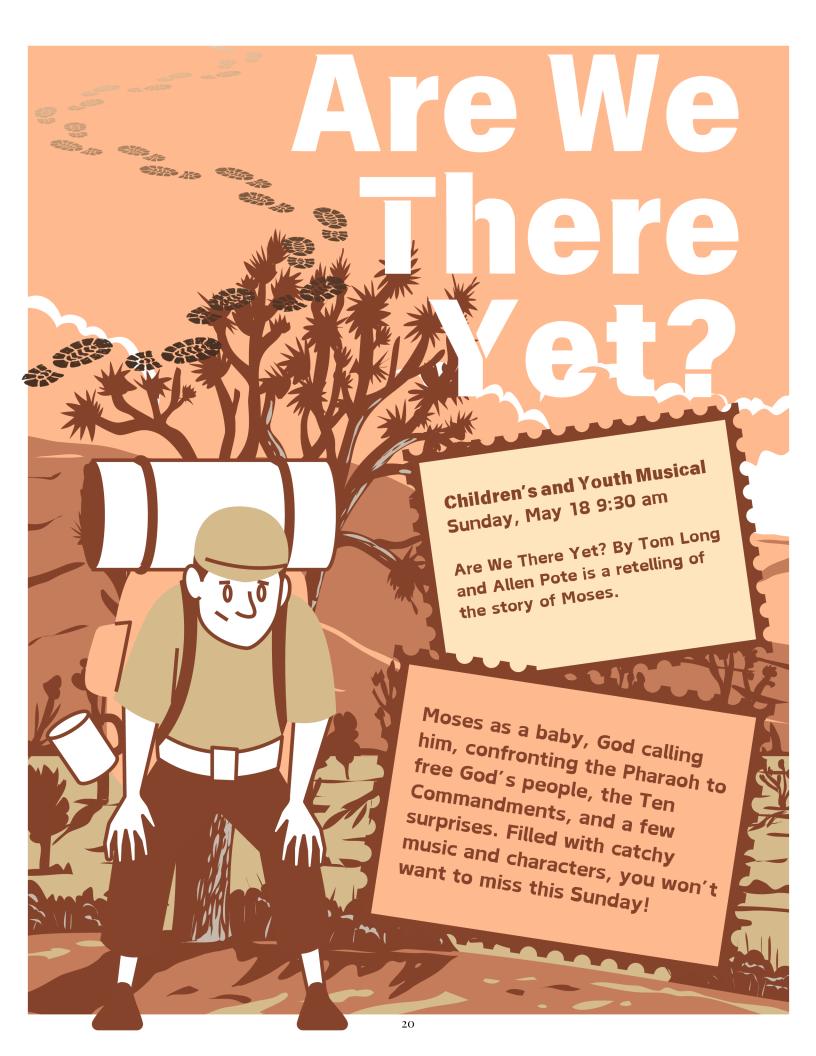


SPRING MAJOR CHORAL WORK

Sunday • May 11 • 2025

Written for the 75th anniversary of the Wayne Oratorio Society (Philadelphia), **Dan Forrest's CREATION** honors the 225th anniversary of Haydn's similarly titled masterpiece. This work for chorus and orchestra is less a strict narrative, and more a celebration of the wonders and beauties of our world, using a variety of ancient texts as thematic commentary.

The Chancel Choir will be singing the *Creation Suite* from **Creation.**The suite contains the movements Introit, Light, The Garden, Wings,
Deep Blue and Ish Ishah. Each movement is varied musically and
features ancient and modern texts woven together to depict the
awesomeness and vastness of creation.





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

Feb 28, Plymouth Congregational Church

March 7, TBD

March 14, St Margarets

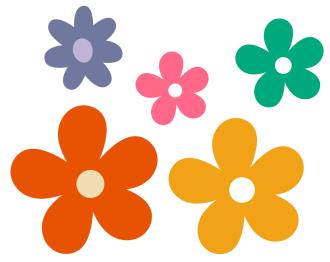
March 21, First United Methodist Church
March 28, First Baptist Church

April 4, TBD

April 11, St. John the Evangelist Church April 25, TBD

FLOWER DONATIONS

The flowers on the altar, given by members of the congregation, brighten the sanctuary and contribute to the beauty of our worship. But, did you know that these flowers have recently been taking on a second life after Sunday? Our Monday volunteers separate the flowers into smaller vases and deliver those arrangements to members who may not be able to attend church in person. There are several Sundays still available for flowers this year. The sign-up sheet is posted on the wall outside the church office, next to the mailboxes or you can call the church office and speak to Ann Lounsbury. Please consider making a donation. It will bring cheer to all.





COMMUNITY BLOOD DRIVE

Friday February 21st 12pm-5pmMayflower Room
at Plymouth Congregational Church



SIGN UP HERE!

ASK THE HISTORY COMMITTEE

Susan McCarthy - Plymouth Historian



How long has there been a kitchen at Plymouth Church?

The original Plymouth Church building dates to 1870 and there was no kitchen included in the original design. This fact makes the stories about the early Plymouth women making coffee and carrying it down to Massachusetts Street to sell and raise money for various things even more intriguing. Where did they make the coffee? How did they transport hot liquid down the street? And in what? There are so many difficulties if you think about the modern conveniences they lacked. But I'm getting away from my topic!

In May of 1901, several women from the Ladies Social Circle, and one young woman from the Daughters of Plymouth Church, appeared before the Trustees (their version of our current Church Council) along with their architect, John Haskell. They wanted to add a kitchen in the north side of the church. They estimated the cost would be \$600, and they had already raised \$420. The women were still raising money and hoped to have over \$500 by September.

The Trustees took their proposal under advisement. At the September meeting, the ladies were informed that it was not wise to begin construction until they more funding in hand. Back to fund raising! Now skip ahead six months to the Spring of 1902, when the Board accepted the bids of "W.R. Carter and the Graeber Brothers" for the addition of a kitchen and lavatories to the church. So this is the date bathrooms were added to Plymouth as well!

The kitchen did not stay on the north side for long. It was moved to the south side where it was located in the Parish Hall in 1916 and then in South Church in the 1950s. After the 1955 fire, North Church was built and the kitchen moved again in 1958. It was located across the hall from its current location. Finally, when North Church was renovated in 2001 it was moved across the hall to its current location, where it is the source of coffee, endless supplies of cookies, and lots of meals. And it all started in 1901.

PLYMOUTH'S 50 PLUS YEAR MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

by Stacy England

DEBBY WEDEL

For Debby Wedel, Plymouth Church is a place for spiritual growth. "It lets you believe in so many ways, but yet we are able to blend it all together and everybody gets along," she said. Debby also values the building itself and the history behind it.

But it's the people who make Plymouth special to Debby. "Everything I'm thinking of revolves back to the people," she said.

Attending supper groups allowed Debby and her husband, Dennis, to get acquainted with other members. "As a branch off of one of the supper groups, there was a group of mothers. We all got our babies together, because they were about the same age, and we met to do social things."

Working on various boards created friendships as she became familiar with other members of Plymouth. "At different times, I've been on the Fellowship Board and the Christian Ed Board. I taught Sunday School and helped with Vacation Bible School," she said.

Debby is a volunteer office receptionist. She has worked with Caring Ministries and WeCare receptions after funerals. When Plymouth had a Thrift Shop, she helped with that ministry and the church garage sale. She has served on Deacons and a search committee.

Debby and Dennis's involvement in Sunday school led to more friendships. Dennis played on the Plymouth Rocks church softball team for a while, and they have both served as ushers.

Debby and Dennis have been monthly LINK coordinators. "Many friendships have been made through our LINK involvement. We'd encourage others to be coordinators if they're interested," she said.

"Several years ago, we fell into the habit of going to the Gathering of Grace service. We intentionally sit in different places there." When the Wedels attend the traditional service, they often sit in the balcony. Like many long-time members, Debby began attending as a teenager. When she was younger, Debby participated at a UCC church in Eudora. When her family moved to Lawrence, she was close enough to walk to church and began attending Plymouth in 1965. She was confirmed in 1967.

"My husband was raised with a Methodist background. Before that, his family was Mennonite," she said.

After Debby and Dennis became engaged, they attended Plymouth together when Debby was home from Kansas State Teacher College, now Emporia State University. After Debby graduated in May 1974, they were married at Plymouth in June 1974, with Butch Henderson officiating. Last year, they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.

Debby began her teaching career that year as well. For two years, she taught second grade in a brand-new building at Shawnee Heights Elementary School.

Their three sons, Tony, born in 1977, Brett, born in 1979, and Kyle, born in 1982, were baptized, attended Sunday school, and confirmed at Plymouth. Dennis joined Plymouth in 1978.

The family moved to acreage east of Lawrence in 1976, and Debby began teaching kindergarten at Tonganoxie Elementary. The boys attended school in the Tonganoxie School District. After taking five years off when her sons were young, she retired in 2008 after teaching kindergarten for 27 years.

"I substituted in K through high school and enjoyed that. It showed me what I needed to prepare my kindergartners for. The longer I worked with other classes, the more I realized that I thoroughly enjoyed kindergarten." It was a busy time as Debby earned her Master's in Education from ESU in 1986.

Debby and Dennis have six grandchildren from ages 9 to 18. Tony, his wife, and their two daughters live in Garden City. Brett lives west of Tonganoxie with his wife and two sons. Kyle and his wife live in Olathe with their daughter and son.

"The one thing that my husband and I do a lot of is motorcycle riding and traveling." She and Dennis enjoy traveling and riding a Honda Gold Wing together. "In the mountainous areas, there's no better way to travel." Debby is the navigator for their trips. They have traveled together to all 50 states, except Alaska. "Alaska is in our plans for this fall."

She said, "We love doing that and do a lot of fishing together. A lot. We enjoy fishing, especially when we get to get away to Florida."

They enjoy other activities as well. "I also love to bake. I love making cinnamon rolls and pies. We can our own apple pie filling. Dennis helps me," she said. "I love watching the Jayhawks. Basketball is my No. 1, but this year and the last couple of years, it's been fun to watch the football team. And of course, the Chiefs."

In the past, Debby volunteered at the gift shop at Lawrence Memorial Hospital. She enjoys reading, garage sales, thrifting, and consignment stores. And she is a member of PEO.

Debby and Dennis were also involved with the Lied Center, and continue to help with the Christmas Eve service.

She volunteers in the office. If you call when Debby is the scheduled volunteer receptionist, you will hear the smile in her voice when she answers the phone. She is cordial and happy when members or visitors stop by the office and graciously provides directions to all.

FEB/MARCH 2025 LENTEN EDITION





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