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COVID GUIDELINES

Plymouth members managed to avoid contracting Covid-19 for nearly two years. However, the newest variant has infected a few members.

Please continue to be vigilant, since this virus can still be lethal, especially for people with pre-existing conditions.

- Go home, stay away from other people, and contact your health care provider if you have any of these symptoms: Fever or feeling feverish; Chills; A new cough; Shortness of breath; A new sore throat; New muscle aches; New headache; New loss of smell or taste.
- 2. Masks are recommended at worship services and other gatherings at Plymouth.
- 3. Weather permitting, we encourage people to fellowship outside after the service.
- 4. Spread yourselves out in the sanctuary for social distancing.
- 5. We will continue to use the small individual containers for communion; and make masks and hand sanitizers available.
- 6. We are thankful that the majority of Plymouth people have been vaccinated; and strongly encourage getting vaccinated and boosted.

Agenda

Plymouth Congregational Church Annual Meeting January 30, 2022

- 1. Opening Prayer—Pastor Charles Wei
- 2. Review and Adoption of the January 2021 Annual Meeting Minutes
- 3. Highlights of Committee Reports
- 4. Bylaw Updates: Work in Progress
- 5. Request for Congregational Feedback: Prioritization of Needs
- 6. Presentation and Adoption of Proposed Budget for 2022
- 7. Election of Council Officers for 2022
- 8. Good of the Community
- 9. Closing Prayer—Pastor Charles Wei

Plymouth Congregational UCC Annual Meeting January 31, 2021 via Zoom

- 1. Meeting began at 12:05 p.m. Pastor Roger Lynn reviewed Zoom directions with 24 attendees and thanked Dean Pavlakis for his valuable technical assistance with Zoom.
- 2. Opening prayer by Pastor Roger Lynn.
- 3. Minutes were approved.
- 4. Jennifer Thompson introduced her next Initiative Process---The Post COVID Church. Part of her investigation will include conversations with clergy, our local UCC conference and the National UCC conference. She plans to have progress reports in the February, March, and April Waymarks, a discussion and report to the church council in May, another report in the June Waymarks, and a summer discussion. There will be questions included for the congregation to offer feedback.
- 5. Pat Christian summarized the past budget year:
 - There was a change in daycare ownership increasing our legal expenses.
 - Our new bookkeeper, Karen Wynne, helped to streamline the bookkeeping and has participated in Webinars to learn more about church related finances. She has also taken over much of the church's accounting work, everything except payroll, as she is proficient in QuickBooks, saving us on accounting fees.
 - Pledge income was down as were expenses but not as much.
 - Budget for the new year is conservative and optimistic.

 The president discouns is \$104,210...(down slightly).

The projected income is \$164,210. (down slightly from last year) The projected expenses are \$198,000.

- We do have reserve funds to cover the shortfall if necessary. We are also applying for a PPP (Paycheck Protection Program) loan which can be used for salaries and utilities and therefore is not required to be repaid.
- Pat Buell asked whether the \$3000 that had been designated for pastor sabbatical, interim pastor, and new pastor search expenses in the 2020

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- budget has been transferred. Pat Christian and Karen will make sure that is done for both 2020 and 2021 and will confer with Pat Buell if necessary.
- The Betty Purvis bequest has been put in the Christian Education account at Ascent Bank which is unrestricted. The amount is over the FDIC limits but some of that money will be transferred to another bank under a program Ascent Bank offers for this situation.
- Gus Byrom moved to accept the budget. Hal Fossum seconded and it passed unanimously by Zoom ballot.
- The current signers on the US Bank Endowment Account are Pat Buell and Don Harriott. Pat Christian will file the appropriate paperwork to remove their names and add hers and another council member. Most of those funds will then be transferred to the United Church Funds Endowment account, as was the intent when the US Bank account was set up. The Endowment Fund at United Church Funds book value as of December 31, 2020 was \$47,387.32 and the market value was \$79,274.91.
- Roger thanked Liz Gundersen for her time as Moderator and for agreeing to serve as Vice-Moderator. He then thanked Hal Fossum for his time serving on Buildings and Grounds.

Council members are: Jan Clinard: Moderator

Liz Gundersen: Vice Moderator Mission and Outreach: open

Pat Christian: Treasurer Mary Drysdale: Secretary

Boyce Fowler: Buildings and Grounds--Volunteers

who will also help if needed are Don Harriott, Skeeter Warner, Scott Thompson, Ann Byrd, Steve Mandeville (Day Care) and Dick and Florence Mayer (Columbarium).

Lynn Bolin moved to accept Jan and Boyce as new council members, Sunny Ray Mandeville seconded. All approved by Zoom ballot.

7. Lynn Bolin, Pat Christian and Jan Clinard all thanked the council members for their work during the unusual, trying year.

- 8. Roger reiterated our efforts to return to in-person church as soon as possible and asked for ideas on when we could possibly consider that.
- 9. Liz Gundersen thanked Sunny Ray for her help in organizing the pre-Christmas Eve service on the church lawn.
- 10. Florence Mayer commented on looking forward to being back to in-person church.
- 11. Sunny Ray offered to host the first Women's Group meeting.
- 12. Closing prayer—Roger
- 13. Meeting adjourned at 1:10 p.m.

Plymouth Congregational Church Moderator's Report for 2021

Jan Clinard

2021 began with Council meetings on zoom, online church services, and a settled pastor, office manager, bookkeeper, music director, and janitor. All of this changed in 2021.

A year ago, Pastor Roger Lynn wrote in Waymarks, "We can't always control what



happens to us, but we can choose how we will respond, and when our response is shaped by an awareness that God is with us, then we are well on our way to a full, richer, more abundant experience in life." On March 7, Roger announced his retirement after a 5 ½ year ministry with Plymouth. Roger kept his "feet firmly planted in the flow" with skillful, reassuring leadership, insightful writing and messages, technical skills, and trust that our "future will unfold in marvelous, amazing, and surprising ways." His prediction seems true.

By June 27, when we shared Roger's last service as pastor with guests, music, "A Litany of Departure," and tears, as Roger removed his stole and robe, we had already hired a supply pastor team and signed a Letter of Call for a Designated Term Pastor, Charles Wei.

When Reverends Stephen Brehe and Mark Wilson learned of Roger's retirement, they offered to serve as a "bridge between the past and future," not only filling the pulpit, but providing pastoral care, bible





study, and managing other church functions. Mark, who held master's degrees in biology and theology, had retired from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Stephen had retired as the Dean of St. Peter's Cathedral. Both had served as interim pastors and taught bible study courses jointly; but their backgrounds and theological approaches differed markedly. Mark paired science and theology with slide-enhanced sermons and Steve reflected the "high church" experience. On Easter Sunday, in-person services resumed, although many parishioners continued to take advantage of online

options. We were especially grateful to them as they planned funerals and eulogized long-time members Ed Miller and Jim Erickson. Not only did the congregation and the Council feel blessed by their service from July through the first of October, but they enjoyed their time with us and expressed how "amazed and pleased" they were about how quickly we moved along in our search process.

That process began with Conference Minister Marc Stewart teaching Council members about the nuances of searching for Interim, Designated Term, and Settled Pastors; forming a Search Committee; more study about the search process; reviewing profiles; interviewing candidates via Zoom; and working through discernment. The Interim Search Committee (Jennifer Jeffries Thompson, Terry Tatchell, Frank Kromkowski, Lynn Bolin, and me) were immediately impressed with Rev. Charles Wei's profile, then by his first and second interviews, his personality, his answers and his questions.

We expected him to move from California and begin here August 29, but when he was nearly packed and ready to move, he tore his shoulder while trimming a tree. After dealing with pain for several days, he went to the emergency room, ultimately requiring four surgeries and antibiotic treatments until he was well enough to travel. We extended our contracts with Steve and Mark and finally welcomed Pastor Charles to the pulpit on October 17.

Charles quickly recognized a need and reached out to members to reinvigorate or reconstitute the committees that are critical to maintaining a congregational approach to worship and community service and to achieving Plymouth's Mission "to nurture our congregation and the wider community with acts of love and a vision of God's image in all things." Reorganizing committees led to reorganizing our bylaws to accurately reflect the roles of committees, most of which will be chaired by council members. At some point this year, the congregation will be asked to vote on updated bylaws.

We hired Gloria Soja as office manager to replace outgoing Allison Rowland in April; Gail Tronstad replaced bookkeeper Karen Wynn in August; Dave Donaldson's departure led first to shared custodial help; then to the hiring of Tomiejo Steele; and in December, Steve and Nancy Michelson were hired as a team of music directors to replace Charlotte Dike, who moved to another state. The formation of a Personnel Committee, led by Vice Moderator Liz Gunderson, was an important asset to the Council in dealing with such significant turnover.

In response to a suggestion by Reverends Brehe and Wilson, Gloria put together a notebook for Council members, which has proven to be a critical tool for organizing the paperwork generated by the new hires, work on bylaws, committee reorganization, minutes from meetings, policies, and budget reports.

At last year's Annual Meeting, we anticipated a "Post-COVID Church." We hope this spring will finally signal a true return to community health. Despite the difficulties caused by a mutating virus and so many personnel changes, Plymouth has accomplished much this year, including a series of workshops on the book, The Bible Tells Me So, speakers addressing elements of Creation Care, and successful fundraising. An ad-hoc committee is working on selection and purchase of soundboard, camera, and microphones to improve the online experience, which continues to provide important outreach.

We enjoy sharing worship services, pastoral care, friendship, spiritual guidance, management, and food with Pastor Charles. Many members have already gotten

to know him by serving on committees, sharing meals, involving him in community events, or simply visiting his church office. Please invite friends to our worship services and outreach events, so they can come to know our Pastor and help grow this church.

Plymouth Church was incredibly blessed this year. Perhaps divine intervention, as well as the solid foundation laid by Roger and staff, helped us transition successfully to a new place, with new, energetic staff, lively music, and moving worship services. Our challenge in the coming year will be to sustain this energy, to use our assets strategically, and to work together in a spirit of love, joy, hope, and faith to nurture our congregation and the wider community.

Plymouth Congregational Church Pastor's Report for 2021

Rev. Charles Wei

I have only been with you all for a few months, but so much has happened since I arrived in October. For posterity's sake, I feel that it is important to include the events that transpired right before my arrival. As everyone knows, I was supposed to arrive at Plymouth in August of 2021, however I was prevented from doing so because I tore the pectoralis muscle on my right side, which led to a 3-week stay in the hospital, 4 surgeries, and 6 weeks of IV antibiotics afterwards. During that time, I was encouraged and uplifted by the prayers



of the congregation, and comforted by the fact that Steve Brehe and Mark Wilson agreed to stay on as interim pastors until I recovered enough to travel.

When I finally did arrive, I was greeted with so much love and enthusiasm, that any lingering guilt about not showing up at the previously designated date was swept away. Everyone has been so kind, welcoming, and careful with me, making sure that I've been taking care of myself, and that I don't overexert myself.

That being said, there was much work to do, and I hit the ground running. Many things had lapsed because of the pandemic, and I knew that the congregation needed to get organized again if we were going to do the work that God has set before us to do. To that end, I tried to get to know the members of the congregation as quickly as possible, not only to start building relationships, but also to determine who would be effective and spiritually fed by helping with one of the various committees that we need in place to run the church. I am happy to report that as of right now, the Buildings & Grounds, Hospitality, Outreach &

Social Justice, Pastoral Care, Personnel, and Worship Committees have all been formed and have taken on the responsibilities of running the church. There are a few more committees that might be convened, but we are well on our way to where we need to be.

During this restructuring, we noticed that the church bylaws were outdated, so we are currently in the process of revising them. This is more about bring the bylaws in line with what is already happening at the church, rather than changing the way that we do things. We are hoping to have the bylaws ready for the congregation to vote on later this year.

I've been getting to know some of the other leaders in the wider community, religious and otherwise, and I intend on continuing to build those bridges in the coming year. It is my hope that Plymouth Congregational Church will be expanding our partnerships throughout Helena, in a similar manner to our current efforts with First Christian Church, Family Promise, Helena Community Gardens, Helena Food Share, and others.

Helena has become the home that I didn't know I was looking for, and I look forward to a new year full of heartwarming fellowship, faithful mission, meaningful worship, and more wonderful surprises.

Grace and peace,

Rev. Charles Wei

Plymouth Congregational Church Committee Reports for 2021

Outreach and Social Justice Committee

Jennifer Jeffries-Thompson

OSJ Committee members: Gus Byrom, Frank Kromkowski, Brenda Senne, Suzanne Nybo and Patti Burke

Plymouth's work for missions, social justice, and educational outreach has long been the soul and heart of what happens through our membership. It is that kind of activity that identifies us historically with the United Church of Christ, the denomination instrumental in purging slavery; bringing to focus women's rights and gender identities; the church pushing for civil rights, and the one that defines creation care as essential to Christian life. That's a lot to live up to. During Civil War, World War, open rebellion, political upheavals, civil unrest and climate change, there are UCC leaders and churches taking controversial stands. In times of robust economy or hard times, in sickness and in health, with flourishing membership or even dwindling participation, the United Church of Christ stands for something.

If you refer to the Annual Report 2020, you will note that there was no report for Outreach and Social Justice. That is partially due to the absolutely bewildering influence of COVID-19, and its imposition on how we, as a church, extend ourselves person-to-person. In a spirit of optimism in the fall, 2021, and coincidentally with the arrival of Rev. Wei, the work and workers associated with Outreach and Social Justice, were re-invested. This report is a combination of programs and service projects that Plymouth manages to accomplish on "automatic pilot", as well as some thoughts on what might happen in the coming months, pandemic or not.

Outreach/Education

 Book reading and discussion, taught by Rev. Steve Brehe and Mark Wilson (Interim Supply Ministers), "The Bible Tells Me So: Why Defending Scripture Has Made Us Unable to Read It", by Peter Enns, summer 2021, for four weeks; in-person class with approximately 30 participants most of whom were not associated with Plymouth but found their way to Plymouth's

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lower level Fellowship Hall;

• "Let's Talk About It: Creation Care" featuring three in-person lectures October through December; series included Dr. Eric Meyer, Associate Professor, Theology Department, Carroll College, speaking on the theology of the land, a faith-based perspective on how we can steward our island home, Earth; Matt Elsaesser, owner of 406 Recycling who provided an overview of challenges and opportunities of recycling locally; and Jeff Van Tine, landscape photographer, who presented imagery of endangered Montana scenes and discussed the habitual use of fossil fuels. Jeff's photos, recently featured at the Holter Museum of Art, have been exhibited at Plymouth throughout the building.

Local Concerns:

 The local Jewish Community is purchasing the original synagogue in Helena; the Romanesque/Moorish building, completed in 1895, passed from the hands of the local Jewish community in the 1930's. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Called "The Menorah Project", Plymouth's stated goal was to raise \$800, one hundred dollars for each candle on the Menorah, to help with the purchase of the building. Far surpassing the goal, Plymouth people raised a total of \$1760 over the course of 3 weeks.



• The annual Christmas project called "Empty Stockings" is traditionally used to provide goods or resources to a person or family in need of support during the holidays. This year Plymouth supported a family long associated with our congregation who is struggling with a serious medical condition. "Empty Stockings" raised \$2885, which included a \$500 contribution from Town Pump.

Digital or written articles:

- Waymarks featured a continuation of a series called "[More] Hope in Hard Times", which include interviews with and photographs of Plymouth folk who are doing some amazing things even though COVID keeps them close to home;
- Waymarks also included three articles called "Couch Time", a

- summary reflection on the 2021 Initiative describing the Post-COVID Church;
- Lenten Devotionals booklet was provided free of charge to 15 persons requesting copies. Written and printed by the "Still Speaking" UCC pastors and friends who also prepare the daily meditation of the same name.

Art Displays:

- "Seasonal Mandalas: Photographic Images" taken and developed by Rev. Roger Lynn from 2015 to 2021; includes imagery from the Helena area and permanently displayed in the church hall outside the sanctuary;
- Landscape views by photographer Jeff Van Tine, December 2021 and January 2022; temporarily exhibited throughout the building.



Social Justice

- Budgeted donations included:
 - Family Promise, Montana Veterans Foundation, Good Shepherd Church – UCC – Sahuarita, AZ (food bank), CUE (UCC Seminary), and Gas Vouchers. (The Gas Voucher program served constituents when the building was open during COVID. Plymouth continues to be the only non-profit in the area providing this service, which costs approximately \$300 per month, and is funded primarily by the Mission Offering.)
- Dave Donaldson and Kathleen Culver provided one meal to God's Love during the pandemic. Dave also cooked a Christmas dinner for the residents of the Willis Cruse House in 2020.
- Candidate Forum for Helena City Commissioner Race; originally scheduled

to be held at Plymouth, but convened on-line per COVID concerns; meanwhile committee members offered weeks of assistance in developing questions for the candidates focusing on social justice and ethical leadership concerns.

Plans for the Future

The Outreach and Social Justice Committee met this fall to prioritize the many interests and concerns held by the congregation in hopes of directing our cumulative efforts in certain ways. The year ahead is not planned in totality, knowing that things come up, that emergencies arise, and that we do our best work when love and the Spirit guides us. Some of the areas in which we would like to devote our energies include:

- Mental Health and Advocacy in Lewis and Clark County
- Support for the newly relocated Afghan refugees
- Affordable Housing and Habitat for Humanity
- Little Sprouts (Day Care) partnership
- Assistance to the Native American Community
- Food fellowships of all kinds, COVID dependent

As always if you would like to be part of this ministry, have thoughts about the items mentioned, or suggestions about what other ways our resources can be directed, don't hesitate to speak to or write to one of the committee members listed in the introduction.

Pastoral Care Committee

Lynn Bolin RN, Parish Nurse

The Care Committee will now be called the Pastoral Care Committee.

The Committee members include: Joy Bruck, Kathleen Culver, Amy Demaree, Carol Ann Jacobsen, Evelyn Nelson, Lynn Bolin and we are excited to have Linda Burns join us recently.

The Committee has continued to be in contact, either with visits or by phone, with those members who are unable to attend Church regularly. We sent cards

and Christmas cookies in December as well as cards at other holidays and other occasions affecting those members. We provided meals for one family during this year. With the arrival of Pastor Wei in October, I was able to accompany and introduce the Pastor to most of these members.

Pastor Wei and the Parish Nurse will share the visitation duties and other members of the Committee will accompany us.

Pastor Wei will meet with the Committee on a regular basis.

Personnel Committee

Liz Gunderson

In July 2021, when our Pastoral Support Team of Steve Brehe and Mark Wilson arrived, we started to review several of the church's administrative procedures. Gloria Soja and I participated in a webinar recommended by our UCC Insurance Board called 'Employment Practices: Liability Considerations for Ministries'. After viewing this, it was clear that we needed a committee to address two issues:

- Update our Employee Handbook
- Address church employment policies, particularly record keeping, written regular reviews and dispute resolution procedures.

With guidance from staff at MT/NWY-UCC, Frank Kromkowski, Carol Ann Jacobson, Jan Clinard, and I, worked over several months with an Employee Handbook template, and adapted it for Plymouth. The final version was accepted by the Council at the December 2021 meeting.

The Personnel Committee has been formed, consisting of the Council Vice-Chair (Liz Gundersen), Frank Kromkowski, and Hal Fossum.

Our responsibilities include: developing positive working relationships with pastor and staff, hiring and termination of staff, maintaining job descriptions, performing initial and yearly staff evaluations, evaluating the pastor in capacity as staff supervisor, ensuring maintenance of personnel files, and addressing employee

grievances (with assistance from pastor and/or council as needed).

We report to the Council when appropriate.

So far, this committee has worked to hire the new janitor Tommie Jo Steele, and new music directors Steve and Nancy Michelson. We have started performance reviews, and are in the process of adopting a standardized Performance Evaluation Form.

Building and Grounds Committee

Boyce Fowler

The Building and Grounds Committee members are: Boyce Fowler, Terry Tatchell, Don Harriott, and Hal Fossum.

In June 2021 a clean the church and grounds was arranged by Jay Shelden identifying items to be addressed. Rain gutters were cleaned, windows washed, flower beds cleaned, junipers trimmed, trees trimmed off the roof of the west side of the day care and the day care playground cleaned of weeds and pine needles. The Women's group arranged a luncheon for workers which had accomplished much in a few hours of working together.

The Little Sprouts Day Care and Preschool contract was reviewed and extended for 60 months with Director Tarah Bullock. Tarah indicated that she has maintained a full number of children and staff during the pandemic year. Kitchen facet leaks were repaired, and the fire suppression system in the kitchen was installed which now needs to be connected to an alarm system. Bids have been obtained for that to happen.

Many months of this year church services were streamed to our membership because of the COVID. The Drysdale's grandson, Lucas, was hired to do that task on Sundays.

The snow removal contact was again approved with Nitro-green for the winter season.

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Worship Committee Report

Robie Culver

Worship Committee members are: Pastor Charles Wei, Robie Culver, Sunny Ray Mandeville, and Carol McKerrow.

The worship experience at Plymouth in 2021 was marked with the continued challenge of providing online services, uniquely crafted by Pastor Roger and Charlotte Dike, but we were all thankful to eventually return to our beautiful sanctuary. The experience of providing online service, while not the ideal worship experience, has allowed Plymouth the ability to reach out to those who cannot or choose not to attend services in person. Thank you so much to Lucas Jensen, a sophomore at Capital High (and Mary and Rich Drysdale's grandson) for diligently working to help us stream services online.

Saying goodbye to our beloved Pastor Roger was bittersweet for Plymouth in 2021. While we are always aware that personal ministry doesn't last forever, it is always sad to see our spiritual leaders make the decision to retire. Change is often difficult but also provides an opportunity for growth and positive change.

Following a meaningful and emotional retirement service conducted by Roger Lynn, Plymouth was faced the task of temporarily filling our pulpit until we could install another minister. Blessed by the innovation of two local, well-seasoned ministers from totally different backgrounds who offered their professional services, Plymouth experienced a summer and early fall of consistent and creative services and pastoral leadership. Thank you, Father Steven Brehe and Mark Wilson, for your contribution to Plymouth's transitional ministry.

Pastor Charles Wei became Plymouth's dedicated pastor in October and jumped right in to finding his way into the hearts of the Plymouth congregation. He is an inspired and creative worship leader. He has engaged a renewed worship committee that is eager to help him develop meaningful worship services.

Following the resignation of the highly talented Charlotte Dike as Plymouth's

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Director of Music, our church was blessed with engaging the experience and visionary music leadership of the delightful couple that is Dr. Steve and Nancy Michaelson. We are very excited for their music leadership and assistance with crafting music into our worship experience.

As always, your thoughts, ideas, and input regarding worship will be gratefully received. Please share your thoughts with the members of the worship committee or Pastor Charles.

Women's Fellowship

Sunny Ray Mandeville and Mary Drysdale

The Women's Fellowship gathered for a brunch in June at Florence Mayer's house. After our usual break for the summer, we had meetings at 10:00 on the 2nd Tuesday in September, October and November. Our November speaker was our new Pastor, Charles Wei. We enjoyed learning more about him. Due to COVID concerns we did not meet for monthly luncheons. However, we did enjoy a catered luncheon in the Fellowship Room in December with Gloria Soja, our church office manager, as guest speaker. We hope to continue meetings in the new year with speakers or discussions on topics chosen by the monthly hostess. The group is open to all women and guests are always welcome. Should COVID concerns diminish we may be able to begin monthly luncheons on the 4th Tuesdays and the annual brunch in June.

Plymouth's Initiative Process

Jennifer Jeffries Thompson

An *initiative* is "an individual action that <u>begins</u> a process, often done without direct managerial influence." It is a way of focusing attention on a topic that needs further exploration. For Plymouth Church the "Initiative Process" enables us to explore, research and prepare a recommendation regarding a topic, a need, or anticipated challenge that requires more thought or attention than time allows staff or volunteers to explore.

Initiative 2021: What is the Post-COVID Church?

Presented to Plymouth Church Council, May 2021

They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Mark 11: 4 - 6

Who's Watching the Donkey?

Last January in a spirit of optimism and hopefulness, the Council through Pastor Roger Lynn anticipated that with the development of a vaccine, the pandemic

would eventually be behind us. The new initiative describing and looking forward to a post-COVID Church could be an outline of what to expect in the near future. Alas, the viral concerns are still among us. The following report, shared with the Council in May 2021 is already dated. (Some statistical updates are included in bold.) The report is offered to you in the same spirit it was divined:



a spirit of optimism and hopefulness.

When will it be post-COVID and how will we recognize it? I am like the kid in the back seat of the car going on a long road trip. "Are we there, yet?" she asks when there are still hundreds of miles before us.

In May 2021 there were 3 million COVID deaths reported world-wide and 540,00 deaths in the US. The January 2022 update lists 5,534,527 worldwide and 843,00 in the US. In May in Montana about 1500 deaths were reported; by January '22 that number rose to 2934. 42% of adults report struggles with anxiety and depression. 22 million jobs have been lost, and unemployment stands at 6%. [Currently unemployment stands at 3.9% in U.S.; 2.8% in Montana; and 1.6% in Lewis and Clark County. While that may sound good, the number reflects those who apply for unemployment, not those who have given up.] There is much written about how the pandemic affects people, and you know or have heard or experienced what has become a common listing. Isolation, boredom, feeling of helplessness, and a fear of getting sick.

"We've had lots of time to get to know ourselves better, which often leaves us more bewildered and less trusting of our judgment. We're drained.... This isn't the time to be hard on ourselves for not knowing exactly what we want, except to continue to remain healthy and alive and to do what we can to make sure the same goes for our neighbors and loved ones..." Time Dec. 14, 2020, Julia Zorthian

For all its inherent threats and complications COVID has impacted the way we worship; how we extend ourselves; it calls into question the necessity for a building; and made impossible a loving tradition of touch, communion, and engagement.

The Christian Science Monitor reported recently that 42% of churches in the U.S. have seen significant drops in financial giving. At Plymouth we are experiencing a significant shortfall. [Currently, we are happy to report that giving has recovered, per the budget prepared for the Annual Meeting, 2022.] The

discussion of whether we mask, distance, meet in person, etc. become polarizing discussions. Though not caused by Covid-19, the retirement of our beloved pastor and the introduction of a new and equally- wonderful designated minister, impacts the place where we are – a transition, under magnification.

... Faced with change, the exciting response is anticipation and curiosity. The protective response is avoidance and anguish...Turning the unknown into something we look forward to exploring is the antidote to the fear of death... WSJ March 20, 21, Esther Perel

Where are we? What are we? Curious or anguished? Anticipating or avoiding? Things may not return to "normal", and that may not be a bad thing. Have we collectively swallowed the "antidote to the fear of death or dying"? Is the unknown something we fear, or do we look forward to it?

State of the Church webinar (UCC), February 2021, Bishop W. Darin Moore remarked: "We are the church, and we are shifting. The "tri-demic" (health, finances, social unrest) is accelerating the challenging realities that faced the pre-COVID church. The churches most at risk are those with underlying prior conditions—like "museum ministry" mindset."

So, when it is all said and done, how will the post-COVID church be different? There is no one answer, except most authorities and spiritual leaders concur that digital outreach – whether in worship or programs – must be part of our new identity.

Early on we talked about routines and how they become habits; habits are hard to break. If your habit on Sunday morning lately is to leisurely greet the day, enjoy a cup of coffee while listening to the church service remotely, and finding time or opportunity to read the paper, prepare taxes, and dust a bit, that sounds like a productive and perhaps meaningful use of time.

Some of these newly developed habits will be hard to change, much like resetting the TV remote, coffee brewer, or clocks after Day Light Saving. Simply put, it will

take a conscientious effort on the part of church leadership to remind and inform about the values of personal connections, engagement and all the ways we "touch" one another. For all its importance and ability to reach new audiences, on-line connections cannot take the place of touch no matter how professional or effective. But it can be a tool.

"We are still nowhere near a mature understanding of the lessons of this national experience... Yet some things are coming into focus...how little of what we have to tell each other is communicated in words...As we contemplate returning to a world without masks, will our capacity to interact with each other be profoundly weakened, like unused muscles, and need to be retrained..." WSJ March 20, 21, 2021, Pete Buttigieg

How will we recognize Plymouth as a post-COVID church?

- It's when science indicates it is relatively safe to gather in person, to remove the physical and emotional blue construction tape, masks and distancing requirements;
- when we can break bread together (communion, potlucks, fellowship, etc.);
- when we can shake hands, give hugs, stand close to those we have learned to care for:
- when we can invite our friends and neighbors to join us in learning, exploring, discussion, engagement, singing and worship;
- when we can safely look forward to being in the midst of 100's at a time;
- when we can lovingly and aggressively reach out to those who need our time, our resources, and collective energy in person, eyeball to eyeball, hand to hand.

Are we there yet? Not quite, but getting closer.

When we contemplate life at Plymouth after the fear of contamination and contagion subsides, we are left with the same challenges we have already identified. They are the ones you have heard before, and the antidotes have been shared many times. Except now, it is more crucial than ever to embrace this

attitude. <u>The Five Practices of Fruitful Churches</u>, listed in Rev. Robert Schnase's book of the same title and included in Plymouth's Annual Report 2019 are:

- Radical Hospitality
- Passionate Worship
- Intentional Faith Development
- Risk-taking Mission and Service
- Extravagant Generosity

Are you ready for some homework?

Suggestion Number 1 (Did you ever do homework that was "suggested" not assigned? Me either.)

Schnase's list is nice and energizing, and it means different things to different people. As a congregation it would be to our benefit to take the time to define what each of those components means and how that would look in the post-COVID Plymouth church. What if the Worship Committee considered "passionate worship" at their next gathering. What does that look like? Similarly, what would happen if Outreach and Social Justice Committee investigates missions and services that are risky. What would they be? Do you see a role for your committee? Could we all gather again in May and compare notes?

Or Suggestion Number 2

What if we looked at the next year or so as a succession of stages, small transitions, that in the end will bring us to a time when we can safely resume the spiritual privileges that mean so much to us. For instance, what if 3 months this summer, while taking advantage of opportunities to be outside in worship and fellowship, we find time to address:

the <u>outreach plan</u>: who needs our help; how can we provide it; who are our partners in this endeavor?

During the fall, we move on to:

Plymouth's Mission is to nurture our congregation and the wider community with acts of love and a vision of God's image in all things.

the <u>execution</u> of a small part of engagement, a re-introduction of what Plymouth has come to mean to the community; Plymouth as place for safe discussion, inquiry, all within the guidance and inspiration of faithful and scriptural examples

In the winter, we could look forward to:

a time to celebrate: new beginnings, a new wine-skin, new spiritual leadership, new collaborations, and the privilege of looking back with pride and looking forward to great expectations.

Or Suggestion Number 3

Be smart; be prepared; be informed. Join a book discussion this year like "Fishing Tips" by John Pentland, or <u>The Five Practices of Fruitful Churches</u> by Robert Schnase, or any like reading and discussion offered by other faith communities. Be part of the plan rather than a critical spectator.

Rev. Lillian Daniel wrote in her "Still-Speaking Column" (UCC – April 2021), about the future church when COVID is past:

"What is dead is gone because it has been transformed into something entirely new... and there's no going back."

Out of context that sounds a little bleak. But the meaning behind it is we are on new, holy ground. What is before us may be untested, but it can be exhilarating and fulfilling and life-transforming. We must work to make it so.

My favorite UCC published author – so far—is Rev. Quinn Caldwell. He lives near Syracuse, NY, formerly pastor of the local Plymouth UCC there, now "doing laundry" for his growing family and farming the land. He is funny, insightful, spiritual, steadfast. One of his contributions to the Lenten Meditations ("Promises, Promises" 2021) reflected on the Palm Sunday scripture, specifically illuminating the part when the disciples go to collect a donkey. A couple of bystanders said something like, "Hey, what are you doing with that donkey?"

Whatever response the bystanders received, it apparently was "cool", accepted, legitimate as Quinn interprets. There seemed to have been some sort of code. (Could it have been the name "Jesus", the request, a posture – who knows?) But Quinn's most remarkable and relevant take on this episode speaks to me. In whatever way this important transaction took place, it required some planning, the involvement of "innocent bystanders", communication, an understanding and respect for what was to follow.

Church leaders, members, friends: think big, think long range, think aggressively knowing that our time in thought and in planning is a gift. Do it now! Be prepared for opening night. Because if we are not ready to watch the donkey, we will have missed a great opportunity. It literally could mean the difference between a fine future or a sad end. If you are waiting for someone else to be called, it won't happen. It hasn't happened so far. What can we do this time to be different and competent and effective? Name it.

Rev. Caldwell closes his meditation with this prayer:

Father/Mother, Give me the discipline to be part not just of your revolution, but of your organization too, because I know somebody has to be willing to watch the donkey till you're ready to ride it. Amen.

Treasurer's Report for 2021

Pat Christian

Financial Affairs Committee members are: Pat Christian, Lynn Bolin, Jennifer Thompson, and Don Harriott.

Recap of the 2021 Plymouth Congregational Church UCC Budget year

2021, year 2 of the pandemic, saw Plymouth in recovery mode. Before diving into the details of the budget year, some notable events in the life of Plymouth included:

- The departure of Karen Wynne, our bookkeeper for over a year. She helped us transition to doing more of our financial tasks in-house and helped us secure the PPP loan we utilized to pay salaries in 2021. We wish her the best in her new position at the Myrna Loy.
- Speaking of the PPP loan, we secured a Paycheck Protection Plan loan of \$20,449.45 through Ascent Bank, which has now been officially forgiven (see line 32 of the included spreadsheet). These funds allowed us to continue staffing the church, so we were prepared to reopen for Easter last April.
- A generous donation of \$20,000 designated for the Endowment Fund held at the United Church Funds brought the value of that fund over the \$100,000 goal set by the Plymouth committee that established the fund, allowing us to begin drawing the income from the fund. Taking the earnings from the fund will provide \$4000 a year, so this gift will truly keep giving in perpetuity.
- The church made an improvement to its fire suppression system in the kitchen
- The church also requested and paid for an engineering design for a future new boiler system. With these plans in place, we are prepared to move forward to replace the boiler when it is determined to be appropriate.

On the income side of the budget, I am very happy to report that we received *more* pledge income than we budgeted for. This is a result of a significant number of people contributing more than their initial pledge. Thank you! The same is true of our general donations, which is money from collection plate and people who have not formally pledged to Plymouth during the stewardship campaign. Our community is so generous.

Proposed 2022 budget

The budget committee and the council have worked hard to draft a responsible budget for 2022, balancing the needs and realities of the congregation. Our estimate of our total income is \$206,334 based on donations, facility use fees, interest, and an anticipated transfer from savings to cover a potential shortfall.

Our proposed expenditures for 2022 are generally similar to 2021 except in the area of worship where we budgeted for a number of one-time expenses for the piano and for new sheet music for the choir. We are committed to continuing the use of outside musicians during worship which enhances our worship experience.

January 27, 2022 draft 2022 Budget Accounts	2021 BUDGET	12/31/2021 ACTUAL	2022 PROPOSED
INCOME:			
4110 Donated Income			
4110 - Pledge	108,470.00	108,723.00	113,740.00
4111 - General Donations	9,000.00	13,129.11	12,700.00
4120 - Donated Income - Other - Boiler	0.00	7,000.00	5,000.00
4170 - Endownment Funds	0.00	20,200.00	5,000.00
4125 - Other Donations	400.00	2,355.02	5,500.00
4510 - Memorial	0.00	410.00	1,000.00
TOTAL 4100 - DONATED INCOME	117,870.00	151,817.13	137,940.00
4150 - General Fundraisers			
4150 - Let's Talk About It	0.00	80.00	0.00
4150 - General Fundraisers - Other	0.00	4,570.00	100.00
TOTAL 4150 - GENERAL FUNDRAISERS	0.00	4,650.00	100.00
		,	
4200 - Facility Use Donations			
4210 - Use Donations - Monthly	44,000.00	47,629.00	48,600.00
4230 - Use Donations - Ad Hoc	500.00	580.00	800.00
4240 - Use Donations - Cmty Grdn	770.00		770.00
TOTAL 4200 - FACILITY USE DONATIONS	45,270.00	48,209.00	50,170.00
TOTAL 4223 - INT FROM INVESTMENTS	5,300.00	5,263.72	8,300.00
		,	_,
TOTAL 4224 - INTEREST FROM SAV, CHECK, Etc	90.00	257.01	100.00
Columbarium		3,400.00	
TOTAL 4901 - GRANT INCOME	0.00	1,200.00	500.00
TOTAL ANTICIPATED NEW INCOME	168,530.00	214,796.86	197,110.00
PPP LOAN, NOW FORGIVEN		20,449.45	
TRANSFERS FROM SAVINGS		11,700.00	9,224.79
CARRY OVER FROM 2021			
GRAND TOTAL ALL INCOME	168,530.00	246,946.31	206,334.79

EXPENDITURES:			
Administrative Expenses			
6001 - Accounting Fees	1,800.00	2,050.00	2,000.00
6002 - Bank Service Charges	10.00	40.00	40.00
6003- Pay Pal Expenses	175.00	71.66	50.00
6004 - Legal Expenses	1,000.00	0.00	0.00
6005 Pension Board Dues		140.98	
6006 - Licenses and Permits	31.00	31.00	56.00
6010 - Postage and Delivery	1,500.00	1,133.20	1,000.00
6022 - Printing Service Contract	1,800.00	1,517.08	2,300.00
TOTAL 6000 - ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSE	6,316.00	4,983.92	5,446.00
Mt/N. Wyoming Conference:			
6031 - Conf Annual Meeting Fees	200.00	0.00	200.00
6032 - OCWM Pledge	10,000.00	10,833.97	10,000.00
6033 - Conference Per Capita Dues	2,440.00	2,643.29	2,200.00
6035 - Comerence Per Capita Dues	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL 6030 - MT/N. WYO CONFERENCE	12,640.00	13,477.26	12,400.00
TOTAL SOSS MITTAL WITE SOLUTERENCE	22,040.00	25,477.25	12,400.00
Education:			
6115b - Adult Ed - Faith Devlpmt	200.00	0.00	250.00
6115c - Educational Supplies	0.00	0.00	250.00
TOTAL 6115 - EDUCATION	200.00	0.00	500.00
Supplies:			
6130 - Supplies - Other	150.00	118.21	120.00
6130a - Office & Computer Supplies	1,500.00	1,330.91	1,300.00
6130e - Cleaning/Lavatory Supplies	1,200.00	1,227.42	1,350.00
TOTAL 6130 - SUPPLIES	2,850.00	2,676.54	2,770.00
	2,000.00	2,070.04	2,770.00
Advertising:			
6190 - Advertising - Other	300.00	0.00	600.00
6191 - Advertising - Staff	0.00	20.00	
TOTAL 6190 - ADVERTISING	300.00	20.00	600.00
TOTAL 6204 - BD DISCRETIONARY FUND	300.00	104.30	200.00
Programs & Ministries:			
6210 -Special Ministries	2,000.00	7,070.00	1,000.00
6213 - Special Forums - Expense	0.00	,	,
6213 - Fellowship Events	1,000.00	330.00	
TOTAL 6209 - PROGRAM & MINISTRIES	3,000.00	7,400.00	1,000.00

Worship:				
6251 - Instrument Repairs/Tuning		250.00	93.00	1,216.00
6252 - Music/Choir		335.00	317.00	702.00
6253 - Supplies for Services		185.00	121.41	80.00
6255a - Supply pastors		0.00	150.00	600.00
6255b - Accompaniests		400.00	450.00	400.00
6255c - Musicians		2,400.00	1,200.00	1,350.00
62545 - Worship on line costs		600.00	59.97	5,277.00
TOTAL 6250 - WORSHIP EXPENSES		4,170.00	2,391.38	9,625.00
Personnel Salaries/Benefits:				
6304 - Office Manager		12,896.00	7,818.50	11,250.00
			,	•
6306 - Bookkeeper		12,896.00	10,966.28	11,625.00
6320 - Youth Ministries/Ed Coord		0.00	0.00	0.00
Social media & communications 6315 - Streaming technnician			550.00	1,000.00 550.00
6322 - Nursery Attendant - Salary		900.00	850.00	850.00
				830.00
6325 - Vacation Coverage 6326 - Music Leadership		0.00 10,140.00	9,061.25	10,800.00
6326 - Music Leadership		ĺ	•	•
6330 - Custodian Salary		3,125.00	2,222.10	2,300.00
6344 Moving expenses			4,612.80	
6350 - Pastor's Salary -		32,903.00	26,838.49	72,500.00
6345 Pastor - temporary summer			4,795.00	
6350a-Pastor's Tax Deferred Retiremt A/c			300.00	
6351 - Pastor's Health & Dental			1,415.00	
6352 - Pastor Housing Allowance		20,400.00	12,622.96	
6353 - Pastor Life/Disability		150.00		
6354 - Pastor Pension		7,964.00	3,136.30	
6355 - Pastor Self Employment church port	tion	3,586.00	1,793.04	3,802.00
6356 - Pastor Professional Ministry Expens	es	2,500.00	920.35	2,500.00
6357 Pastor FSA Plan			250.00	750.00
6366 - Pastor Health Exp Assistance		10,000.00	7,594.64	0.00
TOTAL 6300 - PERSONNEL SALARY/BENFT	Г	117,460.00	95,746.71	117,927.00
Payroll Expenses:				
6372 - Fed Soc Sec/Fed Medicare		3056.71	1,759.71	1,763.79
6376 - Mt State Fd/Unemployment		500.00	767.84	768.00
TOTAL 6370 - PAYROLL EXPENSES		3,556.71	2,527.55	2,531.79

Facility Maintenance:			
6414 - Fire Security	275.00	5,015.00	450.00
6416 repairs and maintenance	2,000.00	107.90	110.00
6416 - Repairs/Maint - Other		9,200.00	0.00
6416a - Building Repairs		1,061.60	1,000.00
6416c - Equipment Repairs		524.99	700.00
6416e - Lawn Care	1,640.00	2,795.00	2,800.00
6416f - Snow Plowing	4,000.00	6,546.58	4,245.00
TOTAL 6410 - FACILITY MAINTENANCE	7,915.00	25,251.07	9,305.00
TOTAL 6420 - INS: PROPERTY & LIABILITY	13,904.00	17,901.50	16,500.00
TOTAL 6425 - PROPERTY TAX	9,600.00	9,342.06	10,000.00
Utilities:			
6431 - Gas & Electric	9,000.00	8,634.72	9,000.00
6432 - Sanitation	900.00	823.35	850.00
6433 - Water/sewer	3,900.00	5,141.61	5,500.00
6434 - Web pages/internet	850.00	882.22	840.00
6435 - Telephone	850.00	838.80	840.00
TOTAL 6430 - UTILITIES	15,500.00	16,320.70	17,030.00
TOTAL 6440 - MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSE	500.00	961.86	500.00
TOTAL 6600 - GRANT EXPENSES	0.00	0.00	0.00
GRAND TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSE	198,211.71	199,104.85	206,334.79
NET ORDINARY INCOME:	(29,681.71)	47,841.46	0.00
Transfers out of general fund	1		
Transfer to savings	1	3,400.00	
To endowment fund at UCF	1	20,000.00	-
To boiler savings account		7,000.00	
TOTAL TRANSFERS OUT OF GENERAL FUND	3,000.00	30,400.00	-
TOTAL NET INCOME (LOSS)	(32,681.71)	17,441.46	0.00

PLYMOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH Balance Sheet

As of December 31, 2021

	Dec 31, 21
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
1000 · Checking Accounts	
1005 - Checking - Campership (4195)	1,709.37
1006 - Checking - Columbarium (4195)	3.279.67
1007 · Checking - New Boiler (4195)	5,300.00
1008 : Checking - Sabbatical,(4195)	-1,612.80
1010 - Checking - General (4195)	
1011 Just Coffee	314.88
1012 Mission Money	2,620.89
1014 - Pastors Discretion	2,019.66
1010 Checking - General (4195) - Other	78,275,44
Total 1018 - Checking - General (4195)	83,230.87
1000 - Checking Accounts - Other	317.45
Total 1000 - Checking Accounts	92,224.56
1020 · Memorial Funds Sav (2324) Ascen	
1029b - Memorial Fund - Ken Davenport E	10,162.36
1020c - Memorial Fund Rev Bill Hawk	200.00
1020 - Memorial Funds Sav (2324) Ascen - Other	10,643.42
Total 1020 - Memorial Funds Sav (2324) Ascen	21,005,78
1021A - Betty Purvis Account	
1021B · Christian Ed Youth Unrestricted	-9,180.92
1021C - Christian Ed Youth R (3460) A	60,532.89
Total 1021A · Betty Purvis Account	51,351,97
1022 · Building Reserve Fd (3452) Asce	27,573.12
Total Checking/Savings	192,155,43
Accounts Receivable	
1100 · Accounts Receivable	500.00
Total Accounts Receivable	500.00
Other Current Assets	
1025 - Certificates of Deposit	
1025 A · Youth Programs - 24852	5.008.30
1025 B Sabbatical - 24855	9.022.40
1025 C · Boiler - 24853	100,165.86
1025 D · Columbarium - 24854	8,013.27
Total 1025 - Certificates of Deposit	122,209 83
1200 - Investment Accounts	
1245 - UCC Foundation Endowment	90,429.67
Total 1200 - Investment Accounts	90,429.67
Total Other Current Assets	212.639.50
Total Current Assets	405,294.93
TOTAL ASSETS	405,294.93
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PLYMOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH Balance Sheet

As of December 31, 2021

	Dec 31, 21
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Other Current Liabilities	
2005 - UCC Special Offerings	640.00
2010 · Funeral Assistance	2,495.36
2011 - Key & Room Deposits	150.00
2100 - Payroll Liabilities	
2110 - FMed/FSoc Payable Employee	908.17
2120 - Fed Income Tax W/H	-1,102.76
2130 - State Income Tax W/H	407.00
2140 · SUUDSI Payable	34.28
2170 · FMed/FSoc Payable - Employer	908.17
Total 2100 - Payroll Liabilities	1,154.86
2750 · Pastor's Discretion	2,019.66
2800 - Deferred Revenue	
2650 - Just Coffee Program	400:37
2700 Mission Money - Gas Vouchers	-1,922.11
Total 2800 - Deferred Revenue	-1,521.74
Total Other Current Liabilities	4,938.14
Total Current Liabilities	4,938.14
Total Liabilities	4,938,14
Equity	
3160 - With Restrictions	
2300 - Sabbiatical, Interim	9,000.00
2400 - Reserve - New Boller	17,600.00
2510 · Memorial Fund	10,637.93
2520 - Ken Davenport Estate	10,162.36
2530 · Rev. Bill Hawk Memorial	200.00
2600 · Endowment Funds Gifts	4,249.36
2610 · Christian Ed Youth	10,213.09
2620 - Building Reserve Fd	11,564,97
2625 - Campership	1,709.37
2675 - Columbarium Fund	8,179.67
Total 3160 · With Restrictions	83,516.75
32000 - Unrestricted Net Assets	231,456.68
Net Income	85,383,36
Total Equity	400,356.79
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	405,294.93



Plymouth's Mission is to nurture our congregation and the wider community with acts of love and a vision of God's image in all things.