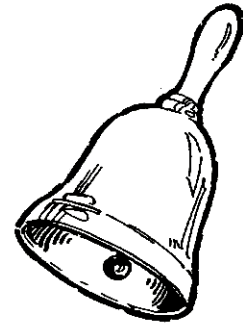


The Plymouth Bell

Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ
2401 Atwood Avenue, Madison, WI 53704
web site: www.pcucc.org



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February 2012

Taking some Sabbath rest

A virtue in my family is the Protestant work ethic. I learned early the value of working hard and having a sense of determination to accomplish that which you set out to do. My mother would never let us just sit and watch TV. We were required to have a project in our hands to work on, such as knitting or sewing.

I have learned over the years that working too hard, or burying your nose in the grindstone, causes one to miss things in life. On my second trip to Russia as head of a delegation of business and professional women from North Carolina, I was responsible for claiming the excess baggage of our group when we arrived back in Moscow after a visit to North Ossetia. I had to complete this job in a timely manner so I could get the group to a meeting with Jack Matlock, the US Ambassador to the Soviet Union.

When I got off the bus in front of the Hotel I worked my way through a group of black men wearing colorful costumes and speaking excellent English. I recall thinking how unusual this was and briefly wondered who they were and what they were doing in Moscow. I later discovered it was Paul Simon and Ladysmith Black Mombazo that I had plowed through and they were performing that night at Gorky Park. What an opportunity I missed! I did not stop to listen to the music of voices around me. We are called to listen, for God speaks – God asks us “Where are you?”

During one of my Installation services, Rev. Avery Post reminded me that we get too busy – too busy to take a Sabbath rest. Sometimes it is easier to be “too busy” rather than take the Sabbath break and look into our soul and listen to the inner voice that calls us to be centered.

As a society we live in the whirlwind. We justify our frantic activity with getting ahead, having more money, being more powerful, being more successful. What would happen if we just paused, took a deep breath and listened for the voice of God? Life would go on and we might just be refreshed, refreshed enough to have new life breathed into us and our projects.

During this long, crazy, and weird winter let us take some Sabbath rest. Let us take time for prayer and fellowship; for nurture and to center ourselves in our faith. Find some time when you are not preoccupied with all that must be accomplished and maybe you will find the path where God inspires and creates within you.

See you in church,

Rev. Patricia

Ash Wednesday Service, February 22nd.

Ash Wednesday or the Day of Ashes traces its origins back to the 6th century. It is the day Lent begins and is a time to humble oneself with fasting and prayer. It follows Shrove Tuesday or Fat Tuesday, referring to the using up of all the fat for cooking that was in the house. In Biblical times ashes were a way to express mourning, sorrow for sins and faults (Job 2: 12-13). In modern times we try to incorporate this history into a beginning of change or transformation in our lives, opening up a better connect with God. We focus on ways

we can correct wrongs and learn new ways to live in this world. For example, the United Church of Christ focuses on a Carbon Fast and if you would like more information please go to www.ucc.org

Plymouth will celebrate Ash Wednesday with a service on Feb. 22nd at 7:00 p.m. We will distribute ashes in the form of a cross on the forehead as a spiritual mark and seal of baptism. Please join us as we honor and celebrate this tradition and begin the journey to the Cross.

Pilgrims Together Ecumenical Lenten Services

Eastside congregations have worshiped together for over 25 years in Wednesday Ecumenical and Good Friday services, of which Plymouth has been a part. This Lent, Plymouth Church will host the Good Friday service on April 6th, beginning at 1:00 p.m. And, as there is not a meal before Good Friday worship, Plymouth will not be responsible for providing a soup and bread meal this year.

Following is the schedule for Wednesday Lenten services. A soup supper will be served by the host congregation at 6:00, with worship at 7:00.

February 29 – St. Dennis Catholic Church, 505 Dempsey Road

March 7 – Monona United Methodist, 606 Nichols Road (Rev. Patricia preaching)

March 14 – Lakeview Moravian Church, 3565 Tulane Avenue

March 21 – St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, 4011 Major Avenue

March 28 – Immaculate Heart of Mary, 5101 Schofield Street

April 6 – Good Friday Service, Plymouth Church

Offerings from these services will benefit the good work of Porchlight, Inc. – an organization that helps decrease the homeless population of Madison in a variety of ways. For more information please go to their website at www.porchlightinc.org.

Church School News

For the Church School students, February starts with a One Room Sunday School Class “All about Plymouth Church” on February 5. We will talk about what the people of Plymouth do, in and out of the church, to keep Plymouth running smoothly and to carry out the church’s mission in the community and in the world.

Regular Sunday School classes meet for the rest of the month, ending with the first Sunday of Lent on February 26. Watch for more information about a Church School Lenten mission project in the next Bell.

Drop In Scripture Convening on Second and Fourth Sundays in February

YES! Back by popular demand. Drop In Scripture is making an encore appearance at Plymouth Church on the second and fourth Sundays in February. No tickets required. Some preparation is suggested.

February 12 the participants will take up Mark 9:2-9, the last of the Epiphany texts. With this account of the transfiguration, a kind of last disclosure bearing witness to Jesus, the church year moves on from the season of Epiphany (revelation) and makes the turn toward Ash Wednesday and Lent. The text invites us to consider what is being revealed about Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration? Why are Peter and the other disciples terrified? Most mysterious of all, why does Jesus command the witnesses to this startling event not to tell anyone?

Then on February 26 the group will consider Mark 8:31-38. This passage carries the reader well into the Lenten season. Following Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus announces that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering and be killed. Peter cannot bear the thought. He rebukes Jesus who in turn rebukes

Peter. What's going on here? Then Jesus teaches about discipleship. Does following Jesus really mean taking up a cross? How can suffering and death be a way to life? What's the deal?

The give and take around these texts promises to be lively.

Women's Wild Winter Weekend

The mission project for the Women's Wild Winter Weekend (March 2-4) at Moon Beach Camp is making "Little Dresses for Africa." Dresses can be created from pillowcases or a yard of cotton fabric, using a pattern to make various sizes, thread, double fold bias tape, and 16" of 1/4" wide elastic. If you have some gently used pillowcases, fabric, thread, tape or elastic that you can donate, please pass them along for us to take to Moon Beach. This dress will be a prized possession for a grateful little girl in Africa. And we'll bring back pictures of our creations for everyone to see!

Of course, all women of Plymouth are invited to the WWWW to join with other UCC Wisconsin women. We'll travel in my van (road trip!) and have a grand time. Let me know if you'd like to come along. You'd share the weekend with Jodi Cowle, Gail Holmes, Kari Iverson, Bonnie Peterson, and Lois Schulz.

Gail Holmes, Camp Coordinator 249-1846 glholmes@wisc.edu

On Behalf of Plymouth Church.....

We extend our grateful appreciation to Rev. Patricia for the skillful, kind and enthusiastic leadership that she provided to us in 2011 and look forward to more of her guidance as we officially enter the start of Plymouth's 2012 church year. It takes a special kind of person who is willing to relocate to an area where everyone and everything is new, whose good-natured presence is by our sides as we travel through our time of transition and who is committed to helping us become an even better faith community that is ready to welcome a new, settled pastor. Thanks for helping us in our journey Rev. Patricia!

Laura Stalder, Moderator

Second Task of the Interim Period: Discerning our purpose and identity

Dear Friends

It is time to begin the second discussion of the interim period. I have included a copy of the worksheet we will be using in this newsletter and copies will be in the back of the sanctuary. This discussion will require a bit more preparation on your part and it is a very important discussion that will inform the search process, so please participate. Review the work sheet and answer the questions before we meet.

We will meet after worship the four Sundays in February. There will be a sign up sheet in the sanctuary for these meetings. If you are not able to attend any of the groups and want to please contact the office and we will see when we can schedule a fifth group.

We will record your thoughts and ideas as we did with the last group – put them up on the walls and then Sally will publish them so all have access.

I look forward to this next step in our process.

Blessings,

Rev. Patricia

February Interim Session Worksheet

Bible Study: 1 Peter 2: 9-10

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Once you were not a people,
but now you are God's people;
once you had not received mercy,
but now you have received mercy.

How does this passage inform our purpose and identity?

What mighty acts are we called to here?

Take a few moments and dream about the future of Plymouth. What will it look like in 5 years, in 10 years.

What will be different about worship?

What will be our mission focus?

Who are we as the people of God?

What areas of Social Justice will we be engaged in?

How will we deal with our call to be Stewards?

What will our education program look like?

What changes will we have made to our building to accommodate the change we envision?

How will we be different from other churches in the area?

How will we be the same as other churches in the area?

What will be our unique challenges and opportunities?

PULPIT COMMITTEE UPDATE

This is the first of the monthly Pulpit Committee updates that we'll be putting in the Bell. As you are already aware, Plymouth's Pulpit Committee (PC) is the group that will be working together to search for Plymouth's next Pastor. After completing a thorough Search, we will recommend the Minister whom we feel is the best fit for Plymouth and will present this person for a Congregational vote.

The PC met in early January with Rev. Joanne Thomson, Associate Conference Minister. Rev. Thomson is the Wisconsin UCC Conference staff person who will be guiding us through the Search process and will be meeting with us as needed. She will especially be a key person for us when we get to the stage where we are looking at profiles (like a very detailed resume) and interviewing candidates. Rev. Thomson is very familiar with Plymouth Church and believes that we will have many excellent Pastors to consider.

At our meeting, Rev. Thomson gave us an excellent overview of the process and directed us to many resources. She reminded our group that the Search process is one of discernment in which we are supported by our faith foundation and are to listen for the Holy Spirit's guidance. In order to assist us in this, we'll be incorporating Scripture, prayer and faith discussion in our gatherings. While we will work diligently towards the goal of calling a new Pastor, we also know that this is too important of a task to rush through the steps. Knowing that

each step has a purpose and that it will take time, we ask that the Congregation support us with prayer and patience.

The PC has set up a weekly meeting schedule, with David Mickle as our chairperson. An overview of the various tasks ahead of us was detailed in the January Bell. Complete information about the Search process may be found at <http://www.ucc.org/ministers/a-pilgrimage-through.html>. These are the actual materials that we'll be using, so feel free to access them. Each month our Bell article will reflect the stage or task we're currently at. We encourage Plymouth folk to ask questions or share thoughts along the way. At the end of this article, our contact information is listed so please let one of us know if we can be of help. We'll always be able to give you information about where we are in the process as we go along. Later however, when we get to the point where folks are being considered as possible candidates, we'll need to keep the names and details about individuals confidential. But, we will continue to keep you informed about our progress.

The PC's next task will be to begin to put together a Local Church Profile. This is the document that will inform potential candidates about Plymouth Church. In it we'll be describing the Plymouth community of faith as accurately and truthfully as possible, telling about our history, our membership, our congregational life, our relationships with previous pastors, financial situation, our community/city and about our hopes and dreams for our future direction. Important to this step is having intentional discussion about these areas with Church members so that we can broaden the discernment and input. Rev. Patricia has scheduled opportunities in February for folks to begin to focus on what Plymouth Church will look like in the future, where we may be going, what values we want to uphold and what we want to take with us as well as leave behind. We encourage everyone to attend one of these sessions and give their opinions. Later, we'll be asking folks to assist us in developing our Profile by filling out a survey. The PC will be compiling this input along with some additional information and completing the Church Profile. We look forward to having many congregational opinions to consider. Our future leadership decisions depend on knowing who we feel Plymouth Church is, where we want to go in the future and what we'll be needing. So, please, make sure that your voice is heard.

And...feel free to be in touch with any one of us:

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Ann Lacy elmside@ameritech.net, 249-0231

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David Mickle davidcmickle@gmail.com, 258-1517

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Rain Zephyr r_zephyr@yahoo.com, 698-6423

Thanks to Plymouth volunteers with The Road Home

Many thanks to our January volunteers with The Road Home! Those who gave of time, food and/or money on Sunday (and served a large and harmonious group of guests) were organizer Judi Ohlsen, Richard Christofferson, Brian Elvert, Shelley and Joanna Hagen, Rita Honnold, Patricia Hough, Marleen Lippert, Kate Mickle, Ron Ohlsen, Carol Walker, and Lynn Welch. Plymouth's Saturday volunteers were – Zoya Cottom, Ann Lacy, Gert Lang, Emi Reiner, the Rickert and Spetz families, Lois Schulz, Rheda Schultz, and Laura Stalder – were all ready to serve food and entertain children, but for the first time in several years, *all* of the families in shelter at Immanuel Lutheran Church had weekend passes to stay with family or friends, and so the shelter was closed for the weekend! This was good news for the guests, if a little disappointing for the servers... ☺

Four weeks out of each year, Immanuel Lutheran Church houses homeless families who are on “the road home” to stable housing, and twice during each of the weeks that Immanuel hosts the families, Plymouth volunteers serve them dinner – and usually also provide childcare for a couple of hours on at least one of our nights. Our next opportunity to buddy with the folks at Immanuel will be in June; we’ll be on again after that in August, and will have our last pair of dates in December. Mark your calendars for the dates below, and look for more information on how to get involved in bulletins and *The Plymouth Bell* in May!

Sunday, June 3 and Saturday, June 9

Sunday, August 5 and Saturday, August 11

Sunday, December 9 and Saturday, December 15

Happiness is a warm . . .

To Charlie Brown, happiness is a warm puppy. Others may say happiness is a warm fire in the fireplace or a warm house after shoveling snow in the cold. Happiness can be a warm blanket, or a warm hand offered in a handshake.

There are also those who would say happiness would be a warm hat or mittens on a cold January day. To those people (at least some of them) our little church says, “Here is some happiness for you! Our mitten tree was set up and filled to overflowing just for you.”

Thanks to each and every one of you who added to the mitten tree, and just so you know how much warmth and happiness will be provided, here is an itemized list of your donations.

Mittens 46 pair, Gloves 28 pair, Scarves 2, Socks 6, Hats 23, Hat 7 and mitten sets 6
Total items 111

Thank you again for making this donation to our Navajo friends out west.

Thank you from the Road Home

On behalf of the families, staff and board members at The Road Home Dane County, I would like to thank you for your gift of \$3,078 to the Housing & Hope Campaign. Because of your contribution, families with children who would have had no other housing option are currently stable and reaching new goals in the first 15 Housing & Hope apartments. We are currently working to develop a second neighborhood of 15 units so we can offer this effective solution to more families.

Since 1999, The Road Home has effectively served homeless families in collaboration with faith communities and other partners. Over the years we have grown from a small start-up shelter to a multi-program agency known for effective work and excellent outcomes. We continue to add new programs and services in pursuit of our vision of safe, affordable housing for all families. This success, and the success of the Housing & Hope initiative, is only possible because of thoughtful contributions from people like you. We are grateful for your generosity and commitment to helping our families provide a stable and safe home for their children. We look forward to sharing a great campaign victory with you.

Again, we thank you for your support in helping us succeed in our mission.

Sincerely,

Kristin Rucinski

Thank you from the Salvation Army

The Salvation Army would like to thank you for your participation in the 2011 Red Kettle Christmas campaign. The Plymouth UCC helped make the 2011 Red Kettle campaign exceptional as we raised over \$679,000 which was \$19,000 over the goal. Also, for the first time ever, we had 54% of our kettle shifts filled.

We especially appreciate the efforts of Plymouth UCC. Your group raised \$639.74 during the 5 shifts you volunteered on behalf of Plymouth UCC.

Your generous gift of time to ring bells allows The Salvation Army of Dane County to continue its mission of serving the homeless, hurting, and hungry in our community.

The Kettle Campaign supports numerous local programs for at-risk youth such as: Kid's Café, sports and recreation, and after-school tutoring. We also offer shelter, food, and counseling to homeless families and single women.

As you can see, it is by volunteering to ring bells that you really do make a difference. Volunteering during the Christmas season continues to help The Salvation Army serve Dane County throughout the year.

Sincerely,

Donald L. Haar

Kettle Coordinator

From the Parish Nurse:

For Our Minds and Spirits: "The simple act of paying attention can go a long ways." ~ Unknown

For Our Bodies: There is a disease that experts fear we pay too little attention to: mononucleosis, a.k.a. "the kissing disease". The reason our attention has waned with this disease, is probably because Epstein-Barr virus (the herpes virus that causes mono) is so common. It is believed that around 95 percent of adults in the United States have been infected by the age of 35 to 40 years of age. Once we have the disease, we are immune. Also, many of us who become infected will never even display symptoms. Still, this disease can alter the lives of many for several months or longer.

The worst symptoms are experienced by young adults and adolescents. Approximately 35 to 50 percent will develop multiple symptoms, and these symptoms will take months to resolve.

Mono is spread through saliva, and has an incubation period of about 4-8 weeks. We can protect ourselves by avoiding sharing food, drinks and utensils; covering our coughs; and avoiding kissing (admittedly, that's a tough one). Symptoms include: fatigue; weakness; sore throat (perhaps a strep throat that doesn't get better with antibiotics); fever; swollen lymph nodes in the neck and/or armpits; swollen tonsils; headache; skin rash; loss of appetite; soft, swollen spleen; night sweats. Most of these symptoms will ease after a couple of weeks, but the fatigue, swollen lymph nodes and spleen may last for several months.

Enlargement of the spleen is always a risk and requires that we rest and avoid strenuous activity until it resolves. Problems with the liver are also a possibility (hepatitis, jaundice). Anemia, thrombocytopenia (low count of platelets), inflammation of the heart, complications with the nervous system (meningitis, encephalitis, Guillain-Barre syndrome) are less common complications, but possibilities. Also, mono is much more serious in people who have impaired immune systems.

Once symptoms are noticed, we should see our doctor. Although there are no medications that cure this illness, we will need tracking. The doctor may also choose to treat some of the symptoms with medications like corticosteroids. We'll need to drink lots of fluids, use over-the-counter pain medications if we have pain or a fever (avoiding aspirin on children under age 16), and gargle with salt water to ease the sore throat. Returning to sports or other vigorous activity will have to wait until we feel completely normal again.

With this illness, the more rest we get, the sooner we will recover. Returning to our usual schedule too soon can increase the risk of a relapse. For students, this can be a difficult time, causing them to lose as much as a semester of school time, so they will need support and encouragement. This is an infection that demands rest and patience. Remember: pay attention to symptoms, then seek help.

Peggy Bezruki, Lake Edge Parish Nurse

Global Ministries: Whom Shall I Send?

Written by Tom & Linnea Morse

And I heard the voice of God saying, whom shall I send and who will go for us? Isaiah 6:8a

Churches in China are growing rapidly. This growth isn't the result of massive missionary efforts from the west after China's opening, but fruits of the work being quietly done by Chinese believers who held on to their faith through all of China's turmoil.

I want to tell you about Mr. K as he told me his story. Mr. K is about 40 years old and has a smile that makes you want to hear what he has to say. He was born in Northern Jiangsu province into a family of farmers.

"I was 19 years old when I first learned about Christianity from a classmate's mother-in-law. She had us pray before and after meals, which introduced us to these ideas for the first time. I had little interest in religion, but was willing to pray if it meant I could eat. One day I was walking past a small church and heard the sound of hymns being sung. When I glanced inside the feeling of comfort and peace I felt in that moment led me to believe. I realized God cared for me and it was a moment of great joy. After that I looked forward all week to my Sunday meetings with God. In the congregation no one else had even a middle school education, and 90% of them were illiterate. So they started asking me to preach or help them with reading the Bible. Looking back, it was my happiest year.

Outside of church, my friends had encouraged me to start raising chickens. I had invested in the supplies: feed, eggs, fences. One night I was outside, and sisters from the church came looking for me, but I didn't hear them knocking on my door. When I heard that I had missed them, I became focused on why it was they were searching for me. I stared at the sky unable to sleep, I knew they were going to ask me to study at the seminary, but I wanted to say "no."

Then I remembered the verse that says, "Whom can I send? Who can go for us?" And I realized that for my church I was the only one to do this on their behalf. It was my calling. The next day a sister from the church came and asked me to study at the seminary, and I happily agreed.

I had been focused on raising chickens, but God told me to raise my sights."

Together we pray for higher visions for ourselves, our church, our world.

Tom and Linnea Morse, Global Ministries missionaries, serve with the Nanjing Drum Tower Hospital in China in English communications.

The Road Home Bulletin for January 2012

Did you know? Case managers and families of The Road Home are always working on long-term goals to help families move forward. Volunteers are often part of this team. "Cassie" has been in stable housing for over two

years and recently completed her GED after several months of studying and preparing. This was a huge accomplishment for Cassie, who had been homeless for over 6 months and experienced several traumatic events.

A volunteer was there to help tutor and support Cassie the entire way. The Road Home staff sent Cassie a card congratulating her on reaching her goal, and when her case manager visited Cassie's home the following week, the card was hung proudly on her wall. Cassie can now hold her head higher, be a good example for her kids to never give up, and model how important education is to them. She had employment during her time in the Second Chance Apartment Project, but now the range of opportunities for employment has greatly increased. Cassie takes pride in her accomplishment, and she is also thankful for the staff and volunteers who helped make this goal a reality.

The Road Home has a way for everybody to get involved if they choose. Perhaps you like to cook and could bring a dish for families in shelter? Or maybe you'd like to tutor a child or adult? If you want to share whatever special talent you have with homeless or formerly homeless families, The Road Home would love to connect with you. Come learn more about how you can help by attending a Homes for Families Tour. Dates and times can be found on our website at www.trhome.org.

Thank you,

Kristin Rucinski

Interim Executive Director
The Road Home Dane County
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Porchlight Update

You all probably have heard about the fire at Brooks Street. It was tragic event and admittedly as had its impact on us, overall, with tremendous community support we have been able deal with this adversity. No one was seriously injured and most were returned Brooks Street the very next evening. With the help of St. Francis House next door, all occupants of units impacted by the fire and smoke have been housed. The fire damage was confined to mainly one wing of one floor with mainly smoke damage (16 units). Clean-up and reconstruction are progressing rapidly and we plan on having all units able to be occupied by March 1. Community donations have been so overwhelming that we can no longer take donated items. As people return to their rooms and assess what they can and cannot save, we may be requesting specific items. Very limited contents insurance coverage and cash donations for the fire will be allocate on a per person basis to the residents affected. Thanks to all of you that offered your support during this very difficult time.

Our numbers of guests for January have been far above previous years. Throughout the month of January, we have AVERAGED well over 150 guests per night with a peak of 170 last week. This week we saw 160 everyday (except Friday night with 147 and Saturday with 158). This is an increase of about 25-30 guests per night over last January. So please, if you can, plan on feeding 160 persons per night through most of February. Again, weekends and nice weather will reduce the numbers somewhat, but please plan on 160. We have particularly experienced shortages with breakfast staples, cereal, juice and milk, so to the extent you can bring those items or more of those items, we would appreciate it.

We are planning to have our Volunteer Appreciation Brunch again this year. It will be on Saturday, May 12 at Grace Episcopal Church Gild Hall. The entrance is at the rear of the courtyard on West Washington. This is straight in back of the entrance where the guests line up to enter the shelter. Registration will be at 8:45 am, we will try to begin the brunch at 9:15 am with a program beginning a little after 9:30 and tours for those that want them afterward. Please forward this to all of your volunteers, as this is an excellent change to network and find out what else is going on with homelessness and Porchlight. Please do e-mail me and let me know who and

how many you anticipate will be present. We will be sending out a couple more reminders, though, before the event.

Also, many of you have helped with our Madison Cares Capital Campaign to construct a new Safe Haven facility at Nakoosa Trail. We began construction this past fall and did not have the time to do a formal ground-breaking ceremony before winter set in. We still plan on a ground-breaking at the site (just off from Stoughton Road where it intersects with Highway 30)...near where the Cub Foods was located before it recently closed). The date for the groundbreaking is Tuesday, April 17 at 12:00 noon. You do not need to RSVP, you can simply show up and participate in the celebration.

Thanks so much to all of you for what you do and how much you continue to help. As our numbers continue to grow, your assistance as volunteers is more important than ever!