



the Herald

February 2017
God is Still Speaking
Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ Dodgeville, WI

From the Pastor's Pen...



The season of Epiphany begins twelve days after Christmas, on January 6, and continues until the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. During this season, we center upon events from the ministry of Jesus, concentrating on the theme: God, in Jesus, personally appeared (Greek: *epiphaneia*) on earth, and was revealed to us directly through human flesh. During the Epiphany season, we focus on Jesus Christ.

The Epiphany begins with astrologers from the east arriving in Bethlehem and making inquiries about the location of the newborn king of the Jews. We're told that they had observed his star at its rising and came to pay him homage. After a few wrong turns, these astrologers, or magi, finally found themselves before the Christ child, and they immediately prostrated themselves. Indeed, their lives were changed forever! Pope Benedict XVI described ultimate faith experiences like those of the magi, in these words: "Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person – Jesus Christ – who gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction."

These magi possessed something unique. They possessed the humility and the openness of mind and heart to seek and welcome Jesus. When they set out to follow that star, they embarked on a journey of faith, a search for meaning and purpose, for the things of God. As they journeyed, they encountered people and events along the way that could have prevented them from achieving their goal, but they were not deterred. Their search mirrors our own life-long search for compassion, justice, peace and forgiveness. And it is there that we find the heart of the message of this Epiphany celebration.

We search; we seek; we encounter, and we are changed. And when we are changed, the world is changed. Too often people are led to believe that religion, worship, and going to church are about personal salvation, about earning one's way into Heaven. They believe that if they just say the right things, believe the right things, and do the right things, they will be rewarded in the afterlife. But God revealed God's self in the flesh, to show us that it is through everyday encounter that the kingdom of Heaven is made manifest.

Father Richard Rohr explains: "Francis of Assisi knew that if you can accept that the finite manifests the infinite and that the physical is the doorway to the spiritual (the foundational principle we call "incarnation") then all you need is right here and right now—in this world. *This* is the way to *that!* Heaven includes Earth."

The kingdom of Heaven is a choice we make. It is here; it is now; it is you; it is me. All we have to do is open ourselves to it, encounter it, welcome it, prostrate ourselves before it, and we will be forever changed.

I notice that we, including me, spend a great deal of time worrying about what is going to happen next. We are at a place in history where there is much upheaval, much change, much uncertainty, and the future looks pretty grim right now. We are a nation divided with questionable leadership and

From the Pastor's Pen, continued

questionable values, and every hour of every day we are assaulted with reports of some new outrage being enacted by our government. As the church, we are called to speak truth to power; we are called to be agents of justice and righteousness; we are called to lift up the poor and needy; and to welcome and embrace the stranger, yet at this time in our history we don't know which direction to turn first.

It is a good time to remember that the kingdom of Heaven is a choice we make. It is here; it is now; it is you; it is me. All we have to do is open ourselves to it, encounter it, welcome it, prostrate ourselves before it, and we will be forever changed. And you see, the thing about that is that when we are forever changed, that means the world is forever changed.

During the Epiphany season we focus on Jesus Christ. We focus on the incarnation of God through human flesh, showing us that the infinite is revealed through the finite. We seek to encounter him through every expression of creation, from iguanas, to rocks, to tiny drops of rain. Jesus – the one “who gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”

“And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Joy

Scripture Readings for the Month of February

<u>February 5</u> Fifth Sunday After Epiphany	Luke 7:1-17 (Psalm 119:105-107 or 119:107) Healing the centurion's slave by a word and raising the widow's son at Nain
<u>February 12</u> Sixth Sunday After Epiphany	Luke 7:18-35 (Psalm 146:5-10) Tell John what you see and hear
<u>February 19</u> Seventh Sunday After Epiphany	Luke 7:36-50 (Psalm 130:3-6) Woman weeps at Jesus' feet and is forgiven
<u>February 26</u> Transfiguration	Luke 9:28-45 (Psalm 36:5-10 or 36:9) Transfiguration, healing a boy with a demon, passion prediction

Moderator's Report

This month's report is in many ways a progress report. We all want to feel we are progressing, advancing, doing better. One difficulty I find with asking the question, "Do I feel we are progressing as a congregation?", is that progress can be happening under my nose and I don't even recognize it. I often fail to acknowledge the incremental improvements that Plymouth is making. Betterment in the area of communication amongst each other is a step forward I feel we've made that I believe will pay dividends. Communication does not always mean saying nice things about each other. In my view, conveying constructive criticisms when necessary will aid our committees and pastor far more than a, "If I can't say something nice philosophy", ever will. I have my ears open, as does Pastor Joylynn and the Pastoral Relations Committee. Tell us what's on your mind. I can't promise we can solve a problem. I can only promise we will try.

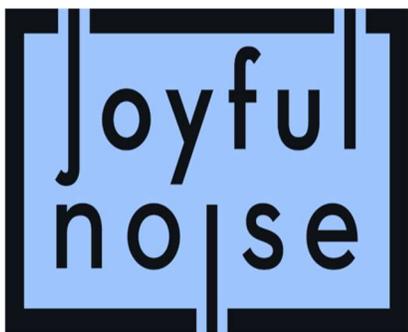
I have a few year end and new year items to highlight. I must mention a sincerest thanks to those committee members and chairs that have finished up terms of service. Your efforts are invaluable. You will be missed. Thanks also to those continuing volunteer service and new committee members. Our recent annual meeting resulted in a vote that approved new committee members and the 2017 budget. We could still use some volunteers for the Trustee Committee. If you can, please consider helping in that area.

Pastor Joylynn and I continue to work on the hiring of a new Office Administrator. We are optimistic we will have that position filled in the very near future. Thank you Nancy Schmit for continuing to help Plymouth in the interim.

I close with get well wishes to Ross Vivian and Orville James. We miss you, Love you and support you. Our prayers for the speediest recovery possible are going out to you daily.

All the Best,

Bill D.



Thanks to your generosity in January, we can serve folks very close to home **and** help rebuild homes in Oklahoma.

\$569.49 was collected for the Food Pantry

\$372.43 was donated to the Mission Trip

The February Joyful Noise Offering is designated for the
Community Connections Free Clinic.

Diaconate News

The diaconate committee will be meeting the third Tuesday of each month from 5:30 pm until 6:45 pm. If you are interested in joining the meeting please feel free to stop in and check it out, and . . . if you are interested in helping to serve communion or usher or do liturgical readings please contact any member of the committee and we can get you set up. Also, as I do in church every weekend if you would like to serve fellowship please see the clip board at the back of the sanctuary on the ushers table.

Mark your calendars we have some special event in the works, February 26th we are serving a pancake breakfast after service. We will have sausages, scrambled eggs, pancakes, fruit, and applesauce, orange juice, fruit juice, coffee or tea... make sure you plan to attend and bring your appetite and fellowship. Pastor joylynn will probably have this on the calendar but I will put it out as a reminder as well.

March 1st is Ash Wednesday. There will be a joint ecumenical service at the united Methodist Church, and for this to work well we all need to show our support and attend.

Again, mark your calendars for March 19th. We will be serving a traditional St. Patty's day meal of cooked potatoes, cabbage, and carrots. We will have corned beef roasts with gravy and rye bread and toasters available along with Thousand Island dressing and Swiss cheese and sour kraut if you want to make a Rueben. We will serve an alternate meat to be determined if you do not care for corned beef we will also have desserts and juices and coffee. This meal will be held during our community conversations so bring your enthusiasm and appetite and fellowship and brainstorm with your church friends.

Again, if you are interested in the meeting or helping to serve on the committee let someone know so we can get you set up. Thanks.

Diaconate Committee Chair,

Gary McHone

715- 897- 0661 cell

gmchone@hotmail.com



Sunday, February 26

Fat Tuesday (ok, Fat Sunday) Pancake Breakfast following Worship

Pancakes, Sausage, Fruit, & King Cake

Come One, Come All for Food, Fellowship, and Fun

Plymouth UCC Council Meeting January 26, 2017

Opening Reflection and Prayer-Pastor Joy

Present: Bill DuWell, Steve Freeman, Earl Barnes, Dave Pearson, Chuck Roethe, Mark Pepelea, Lisa Pepelea, Gretchen Pearson, Pastor Joylynn Graham, Gary McHone.

Excused: Julie Neal

Agenda changes and approval: Change Chuck to Lisa and Steve to Mark as Chuck and Steve will no longer be on the Council. Dave moved to approve and Mark seconded. Approved.

Corrections and Approval of Council Minutes of Dec. 20th, 2016. Gary moved, Steve seconded to accept the minutes as read. Approved

Pastors Report: Joy

- Office Administrator – Pastor Joy has received four applicants, and has interviewed three so far. Bill and Pastor will do second interviews on Friday. Nancy Schmit has graciously offered to spend some time with the new person.
- Files needs to be organized as they are very mixed up and council members are invited to have some input into what should be saved and what should not.
- Community Conversation – First conversation for our Mission statement was a success.
- Pastor presented a covenant that was written by the people who marched in Washington. She will re-work it to present to the next community conversation. Again, it is extremely important that council members be present.
- Miscellaneous – Lent – Last year we worked ecumenically. There was minimal representation from our Church. Pastor Jim has approached Pastor Joy about doing it again this year. The council agreed we are not ready to be involved each Wednesday of Lent as Choir and Wacky Wednesday and Feeding Friends occur the same afternoon and evening. We will still participate in the Ash Wednesday service at the Methodist Church. Maundy Thursday supper will be at Plymouth, and the Good Friday service will be at Plymouth.

Financial Report: Steve, Dave, Earl, and Mark –

- Financials are sent digitally to the Council ahead of the meeting.
- Trustees need to bring to the table the needs of the building and the finances should be reported by the treasurer and the financial secretary. The Trustees are responsible for the undesignated memorial funds. A proposal will be brought to the council at the next meeting regarding a financial team including the financial secretary, treasurer and the Church's accountant.
- The Mission Committee gets an amount from the endowment. The committee would like to take the amount left from the previous year and use it for the following year. The Afterschool Program would like to roll any unused funds over for the 2017/2018 school year. This will be looked into and a recommendation made at the next Council meeting
- Earl reported on Stewardship, 2016. The amount received was \$58,000. There is another large donation not yet counted so the total will exceed \$60,000. Pledges for 2016 were for \$52,000. The difference between pledges and actual donations is between \$8,000 and \$10,000. Rather than take the pledge number for the new budget, we should use the stewardship from the previous year and make adjustments. Pledges for 2017 are down \$6000 from last year. However there are some members who give regularly but do not pledge. Another way to look at stewardship is to take an average giving from the last three years to establish the budget for the following year.

February Council Meeting, continued

- Chuck moved to accept the financial report. Pastor Joy seconded. Approved.

Committee Reports

Education: No Report

Mission: Lisa and Chuck –

- Lisa is the new chairperson of the Mission committee.
- The Joyful Noise calendar is completed with some changes and adjustments. This Sunday's offering will be the mission trip to Oklahoma. The Mission account is at the Mineral Point UCC.

Diaconate: Gary – Discussed two meals that are planned (Fat Sunday Pancake breakfast after the service February 26th and a St. Patrick's Day lunch March 12th). Plans for Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday are being made.

Trustees: Building Maintenance Updates - Steve and Mark

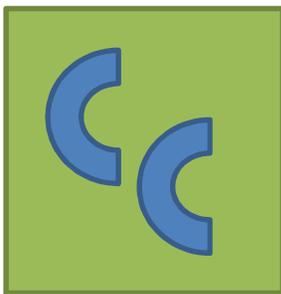
- Mark is the new chairperson of the Trustees.
- Talked to plumber about the slow-moving sink in the sacristy.
- Leak in storage area was an ice dam. No leakage in the wall so there is nothing to repair.
- Water fountain on the second floor does not work. Mark will contact the plumber.
- The elevator was inspected recently.
- Steve purchased a snow blower that can be used by the church.

Other Business: Bill:

- Pastoral Contract and Duties have been completed and sent to the state association, W4 has been completed and sent to the Accountant. Nancy Schmit's paper work is also done.
- Wacky Wednesday – Hard work, worth it. The volunteers and Judy Campbell will meet on Tuesday to do some planning for the rest of the year. Three grant proposals are in the works.
- Committee Members – More members for the Trustee committee are needed.
- Better securing of Sunday's offering – Suggestions were made.
- Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) Commitment for \$4000 in 2017 will be sent by Bill DuWell.
- Meeting Schedule change – Trustees will now meet the second Thursday of the month which is before the Council meeting.

Next meeting Feb 21st 2017 at 7pm

February Community Conversation on February 19



We will continue our conversation on creating our Mission and Vision statements. During the last conversation participants were asked to think about a future news headline for our church. Please come prepared to show your headline.



FEBRUARY 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 Wacky Weds, 2:30-5:30 pm Choir, 7 pm	2	3	4
5 Worship, 10 am Fellowship Adult Ed, 11:30 am	6	7	8 Wacky Weds, 2:30-5:30 pm Feeding Friends, 5 pm Choir, 7 pm	9 Trustees, 7 pm	10	11 
12 Worship, 10 am Fellowship Adult Ed, 11:30 am	13	14 	15 Wacky Weds, 2:30-5:30 pm Choir, 7 pm	16	17	18
19 Worship, 10 am Com. Conv. After Worship Adult Ed, 11:30 am	20	21 Diaconate, 5:30 pm Council, 7 pm	22 Wacky Weds, 2:30-5:30 pm Choir, 7 pm	23 Newsletter Items Due  Ruth Circle Country Kitchen At Noon	24	25
26 Worship, 10 am FAT TUESDAY PANCAKE BREAKFAST Adult Ed, 11:30 am	27	28	Joylynn's Office Hours Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 10 am – 2 pm			

Pastor

Reverend Joylynn Graham

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Interim Office Administrator

Nancy Schmit

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Email: Plymouth@mhtc.net

Maintenance

Keely Thomas

Home 935-9259

Organist

Marilyn Dunn

Choir Director

Lisa Duwell

Council Moderator

Bill Duwell

Vice Moderator

Chuck Roethe

Ruth Circle

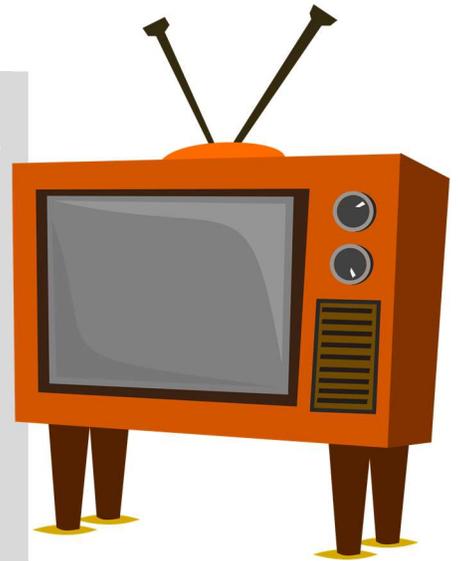
Circle the Fourth Thursday of each month on your calendar.

The decision was made on January 26 that going forward, the fourth Thursday of each month is a very good day to meet. Join us for the next Ruth Circle at the Country Kitchen on **February 23 at noon.**

Our Sunday Worship Service may be viewed on the Dodgeville Local Access Channel (MHTC channel 10)

- **Sunday at 4 pm**
- **Tuesday at 7 pm**
- **Thursday at 8 am**

Sermons are also available for viewing on our website: plymouthuccdodgeville.org and on YouTube.com



Happy Birthday

Linda McCarthy – 1
Ross Vivian – 4
Hazel Kelly – 6
Ginger Jones – 7
Marie Fry – 8
Gretchen Pearson – 9
Annie Freeman – 14
Daniel Brown – 16
Ridge Halverson – 17
Steve Freeman – 18
Bill Boyer – 23
Calvin Dampf – 26
Ralph Martin – 28



Church Council

Bill DuWell, Moderator

Chuck Roethe, Vice Moderator

Mark Pepelea, Trustees

Gary McHone, Diaconate

Chuck Roethe, Mission

Gretchen Pearson, Clerk

Julie Neal, Christian Ed

Dave Pearson, Treasurer

Earl Barnes, Financial Secretary



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