

# *the Herald* October 2016

*God is Still Speaking*

*Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ, Dodgeville,*

*Wisconsin*

*From the Pastor's Pen...*



Lately there is one word that keeps coming up on my radar, and that word is relevance. Part of my job is to stay informed of emerging trends – especially with so many Christian congregations experiencing a decline in numbers, and the one question everyone seems to be asking these days is how do we remain culturally relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in a way that engages the younger generations?

Answers to the question are varied, from praise bands in worship, to virtual church services online, to coffee bars and donut shops in the church lobby. All of these ideas are legitimate attempts to be culturally relevant, and sometimes these things work – for a time – but eventually all roads lead back to the flip-side relevance, and that is that what is relevant varies, depending on where you are and who you are trying to engage with. What is relevant in the suburbs of Chicago or even Madison may not be particularly relevant here in Dodgeville, Wisconsin. What is relevant to 20 somethings, may not appeal to folks in their 40's. Relevance is important, but if we get too caught up chasing it, it could turn into a game of Wack-A-Mole.

Recently I read an article in Christianity Today where a pastor said, "We need to stop worrying about being culturally relevant and start being contextually real." What a great insight. Ministry is not about being relevant so much as it is about being real. And it's not about the culture so much as it is about our context. It's about living a real life in the context of other people's real lives."

The other night one of our members was talking about another local church who had found a way to engage with children through horses, which in turn brought in the parents of the children. That church has found a way to be contextually real AND meet the needs of the community.

I believe that we too have found a similar intersection where we can reach out to families through our Wacky Wednesday program. Wacky Wednesday so far, has been a tremendous learning experience for us; and as we get to know the children over games, books and artistic expression I can't help but notice that both kids and adults are starting to form those precious relationships that are so vital to our faith tradition and to our life together in community. These tiny seeds we have planted are sprouting and beginning to take root! It is a hope-filled time for us that is not only exciting, but is contextually real.

Contextual reality is personal; it listens to people, and recognizes their needs. Contextual reality invites people in and sometimes means getting our hands dirty. Jesus was contextually real. He didn't care about being relevant to his culture. Not to the Jewish culture he lived in, or the Roman culture that was oppressing them. He was authentic; he was real, and he embraced the reality of whatever context he found himself in whether that be the company of tax-collectors, prostitutes, lepers, or even Roman officials. From town to town, from crowd to crowd, from person to person...he embraced it all without ever betraying his core reality.

So what reality are we living in? What reality are the people around us living in? And what better reality does Jesus have for all of us together? Dealing with people takes time. It means asking questions; it means listening; it means caring, and it means inviting them in. This is how we earn people's trust so that they'll allow us to share the deeper reality



that's only found in Jesus. A reality that fits any context. And any culture.

Blessings and Peace,  
Pastor Joy

### ***Moderator's Report***

I have always loved October. On the farm in Fond du Lac County, where I was raised, it always struck me as a more relaxed time. It shouldn't have. The work was as hard. Honestly, I did not love being a farm boy. It is more enjoyable to reflect on it as a part of my past than imagine it as a lifelong endeavor. The most valued lesson that I take with me from my boyhood is the one that taught me the determination to work hard. Farming takes patience, strong will, creativity and to some degree, stubbornness. These are qualities that translate well to making many of life's endeavors fruitful. The stubborn part isn't always helpful, but it does get a person back on his feet after being knocked on his or her heels a few times.

Since I've been a Plymouth member I have seen our church "knocked on its' heels" a few times. In fact, we have sustained a pretty consistent barrage over the last few years in the form of waning enthusiasm, un-yoking and declining membership. It is no secret that traditional Christian Denominations as a whole are feeling the pinch of a society that wants less and less to do with organized faith. In the coming months we will need to do a great deal of creative thinking about our direction forward. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of September, the council and trustees will hopefully make a start at determining this new collective direction by meeting together and sharing our thoughts. Also with us will be a pair of consultants who specialize in developing plans of action for churches in situations like ours. What changes will grow out of this? I'm not sure. I am certain that change must occur. I expect it will take patience, creativity and stubbornness to yield a fruitful result.

A constant positive about Plymouth People has always been generosity. We continue to be giving both financially and of our time and talent. Our stewardship campaign is just around the corner. I would be neglectful if I were to begin discussing next year's finances before updating you on this year. We are in general, on pace to meet our financial goals. Each of us still needs to be mindful that in part, our 2016 budget was based on the pledges we all made last year. Let's do our best to meet those commitments. The trustees will soon be taking on the hard work of assessing our 2017 finances. It will as always be a useful tool for them to understand what Plymouth can expect in the way of new annual pledges. I and others will in the months of October and November be spending time during Sunday Services talking more about the importance of tithing.

In the spirit of aiding our fiscal needs at Plymouth, it was decided at the most recent Council Meeting that an increase in our pasty price would be wise. The price will increase from \$5.00 to \$6.00. The increase will take effect in November. Pasties are the Plymouth calling card. They are also a tremendous amount of work for many. I can't say enough how important they are to funding what we do and financially supporting the best of who we are. Pasties, like farming, take stubborn determination to make a reality. Please make sure to be part of a pasty shift as often as possible.

Wacky Wednesday is underway. An average of 13 students has attended the three sessions. It has been great fun thus far. Our first day began with a rain-soaked contingent arriving at 2:30 on the 7<sup>th</sup> of September. Everyone dried off and dug in. The Sunday School Room and Fellowship Hall have been a flurry of activity on each day. I offer many thanks to the many volunteers from Dodgeville and Plymouth that have aided in the project thus far. I have had to draw a great deal on my boyhood lessons regarding patience. We have been working with a diverse group with varying ability levels. They do share a common energy for artistic learning. In the coming months we will continue to spend time focusing on reading assistance and supplementing it with adult mentorship during game and snack time. I am now quite good at “Chutes and Ladders” and “Candyland”. Thanks, Bill D

## Promises, Promises

### Series I: God’s Promising Beginning cont...

**10/2 The Promise of Passover** -- Exod 12:1-13; 13:1-8 (Luke 22:14-20), **Pent 20**

The text here talks about the promise of the last plague, the promise to free Israel from slavery. The text focuses on the Passover experience and the annual remembrance of this delivery in the Passover meal -- the term “festival” is important. Israel was to celebrate the festival of Passover every year. The connection between the Passover and Christ’s last supper and sacrificial death is important -- especially since October 2 is world communion Sunday.

**10/9 The Golden Calf** -- Exod 32:1-1-14 (Luke 23:34), **Pent 21**

The story of the golden calf is one of the primary stories of Israel’s infidelity to God. No sooner had Israel been delivered, had the covenant renewed, and been given the gift of the Ten Commandments ... than Israel grew weak in faith and betrayed God. Israel lost faith because its human leader Moses had disappeared. Israel wanted a tangible god that it could see -- a god made of gold. So Aaron made a calf that was a false image of the true God -- Aaron made the calf and declared, “Tomorrow shall be a festival to the Lord.” Note again the term festival. Rather than worship God in spirit and truth at the festival of Passover, the people chose to worship the Lord at their own “festival” -- “the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to revel.” The term “revel” may indicate sexual rites. God and Moses get into an argument about whose people Israel is. God suggested starting over and making Moses into a new Abraham: “of you I will make a great nation.” But Moses reminded God of the divine promise: “Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel your servant, how you swore to them by your own self.” And God did remember the promise and forgave Israel.

### Series II -- The Unfolding Promises of God through the Prophets

*Oct. 16 (Pentecost 22) through Nov. 20 (Christ the King)*

*Note: In this sub-series, all of the texts feature prophetic speaking. But the overall theme remains God’s promises and the fidelity of God to those promises. The mission of God requires the ongoing speaking and revelation of God’s word.*

**10/16 God Answer's Hannah's Prayer** -- 1 Sam 1:9-11, 19-20; 2:1-10 (Luke 1:47-55), **Pent 22**

One of the most interesting things about the psalm Hannah sings in 1 Samuel 2 is that it isn't an "individual song of thanksgiving" such as one might expect. Rather, it is a "national song of thanksgiving" -- the sort of song one might sing after a national victory. One reason that this is significant is that God's answer to Hannah's prayer was a key moment not just for Hannah, but for Israel as a nation. The child born to Hannah -- Samuel -- would be the last of the judges and the prophet who ushered in the era of the monarchy. Hannah's prayer was very simple: "look on the mystery of your servant, and remember me!" God's unfolding plan for the nation of Israel began with God noticing the misery of one poor sufferer -- and remembering the promise to Israel.

**10/23 God's Promise to David** -- 2 Sam 7:1-17 (Luke 1:30-33), **Pent 23**

Theme of God's promises continues with one of the most important texts in the Old Testament -- the covenantal promise with David. The text is built theologically around the threefold meaning of the Hebrew term *bet*, which can mean 1) a "house [for humans]," here David's "palace"; 2) a "temple" (or "house for a god"), and 3) a "dynasty" (as in "the house of Windsor.") David has already moved to Jerusalem and built himself a "house" or palace. He then thinks to build God a "house" -- a temple. At first, Nathan blesses this idea, but God speaks to him and commands David to stop, instead God promises to build David a house -- a dynasty. David's son will be God's son and will call God father. A son from David's line will forever be king in Israel. From this promise eventually comes the Messiah -- the perfect king, the son of David. One wonders if Jesus' move to call God "Father" is based on this text and his own messianic self-understanding.

**10/30 God's Promised Fidelity to a Widow and a Prophet** -- 1 Kgs 17:1-16 (Luke 4:24-26), **Pent 24/Reformation**

After David's kingdom split into two, the northern country Israel experienced faithful leadership. King Ahab and Queen Jezebel (who originally came from the land of Sidon) are examples. Under their leadership, Israel joined into the syncretistic worship of false gods such as Baal and Asherah. Evil practices such as child sacrifice also were known, see 1 Kings 16:31-34. God ordained the prophet Elijah to command a drought to announce God's judgment and punishment. During the drought, Elijah himself also experienced the resulting loss of food and water. So God sent him, ironically, to a widow in Jezebel's homeland of Sidon in order to be fed. The story of the widow receiving Elijah -- sharing her last grain and oil with her guest and then experiencing a miracle of ongoing grain and oil -- is a classic story of God's abundant provision, of hospitality to the stranger, of learning to be a guest, and also of God showing up in the middle of suffering. Here, God's promise is a promise first of judgment but then of welcome and provision. And it happens in Jezebel's home country!

**2016 Plymouth UCC Council Meeting, September 20, 2106**

Present: Earl Barnes, Bill DuWell, Chuck Roethe, Gary McHone, Steve Freeman, Dave Pearson, Pastor Joylynn Graham, Gretchen Pearson  
Excused: Julie Neal

Opening Prayer-Pastor Joy

Agenda Changes & approval: Chuck moved and Gary seconded a motion to approve the minutes as written. Approved.

Corrections and Approval of Council Minutes of August 16, 2016: Chuck moved and Dave seconded to approve the minutes as written. Approved.

**Pastors Report:**

- Council/Trustee Retreat: Pastor Joy reported a phone call with the firm recommended by the UCC conference. The recommendation is that we NOT do a retreat and meet in the context of a council meeting with the trustees. Plan for two hours and they will make a proposal and the council/trustees will

decided whether we move forward. The meeting will be Tuesday, September 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. There are many things we can do more efficiently and someone from the outside can look at our church with “new eyes” to help us find direction. How do we grow our ministry and follow Christ faithfully despite our shrinking numbers?

- Christmas falls on a Sunday with Christmas Eve service on Saturday. Do we want to have our regular service on Sunday? Would people come? Comments were made that our Christmas Eve service will be well attended, but there probably would not be much if any attendance the next morning. Gary moved we not hold a regular service on Sunday the 26<sup>th</sup>. Chuck seconded. Discussion – perhaps we should ask the congregation first and then make a decision. Gary amended his motion to ask the congregation in the newsletter if anyone is interested in a Christmas Day service and then make the final decision at the October Council meeting. Chuck seconded. Approved.
- Pastor’s vacation dates have changed to October 3-11. The Diaconate committee has planned the Sunday service.

#### **Financial Report:** Steve, Dave, Earl

- Meeting with the accountant: Steve discussed with Plymouth’s accountant how the accounts could be made more understandable, i.e. income and outgo on one page rather than separate pages and reports. There are too many pages for each monthly financial report and we would like to see it in a more concise form. It is important to see the comparisons between the current year and former year(s).
- Dave discussed the financial report. Earl discussed the profit and loss previous year comparison. Chuck moved to ask the accountant to move \$7000 out of the Outreach Fund to the Local Mission fund. Bill seconded. Approved.
- Gretchen moved to accept the financial reports. Earl seconded. Approved.

#### **Committee Reports**

Education: Julie (No report)

Diaconate: Gary

- Diaconate will provide some refreshments for the meeting on September 27<sup>th</sup>.
- World Communion Day is October 2<sup>nd</sup>. The Narrative Lectionary is about Passover so we will have unleavened bread for communion.

Trustees: Steve - Building Maintenance Updates. The back storage room needs repair and contractors have said the outside needs to be fixed first before the inside is fixed. The Trustees will get an assessment.

Mission: Chuck

- There was a detailed discussion on the funding for the mission committee.
- Neighbors in Need offering is October 2<sup>nd</sup> which will tie in to World Wide Communion Sunday. Earl will give the Moment for Mission talk for the Joyful Noise.

#### **Other Business:** Bill:

- After School Program: Report on first two weeks – Sixteen children were at the second Wednesday program. Mixed ages and abilities. Feeding Friends program uses some of the same volunteers, but there is a good base of volunteers so far. More volunteers would be desirable in case some regulars are unable to attend.
- Insurance Board gun policy recommendations – It was decided that it seems rather pointless to address this issue at all.
- Bill will draft a policy statement regarding Plymouth’s Facebook page and website.
- Pasty Pricing – Dave moved the price of pasties be increased to \$6 starting in October. Steve seconded. Approved
- Stewardship Campaign – Bill will draft the letter thanking for past contributions and inform recipients of all the programs we are involved in. Letter will be sent out sometime in October.

Dave moved, Steve seconded to adjourn. Approved.

Respectfully submitted, Gretchen Pearson, Clerk, **Next meeting October 18<sup>th</sup> at 7pm**

## PASTY HELPERS NEEDED

Making pasties is a major fund-raiser at Plymouth and occurs on the second Saturday of the month from October to April. More workers are needed to fill time slots. Below are the tasks involved. Please call Denise at 574-5668 or Jill at 935-2561 if you are willing to assist.

Thursday evening -4:30- 6:30 potato peeling (flexibility in this time)

Friday morning- 7:30 am -9 or so - pastry making

Saturday- 4:30 am until 8:00 am- first shift pasty making

Saturday- 8:00 am until 11:00 am-second shift pasty making

Saturday 6:00 am-8:00 am- sales

Saturday 8:00- 10:00am- sales

Saturday 10:00 am-12:30 pm- sales

Saturday 10:30- 12:30- clean up

Free coffee and donuts and great conversations are offered Saturday mornings to all pasty workers!



## *Plymouth UCC 2016 -17 Pasty Sale Dates*

*October 8<sup>th</sup>*

*November 12*

*December 10*

*January 14*

*February 11*

*March 11*

*April 8*

*At the October 8<sup>th</sup> sale the pasty price is \$5 & for the other months the price increases to \$6.*

*Thanks for supporting this fund-raiser*

## **Plymouth Community Conversations**

*The point is to communicate and give everyone a voice.*

*The next Plymouth Community Conversations will be on October 16<sup>th</sup>*

*Please join us.*



## Feeding Friends Community Meal

Plymouth will host the Feeding Friends dinner on Wednesday, October 12th at 5:00pm. The meal will be Stroganoff, French Bread, Corn, Salads & Dessert and the coordinators will be Dave & Gretchen.

Joyful Noise offerings help with the purchase of food for this meal but all food donations are more than welcome since the number of people attending the meal is over 100 people. Please contact Dave & Gretchen if you can help by donating food or with meal prep, serving and cleanup.

Food prep time is from 3:30pm-5pm with meal serving at 5:00 pm until 6:30pm.

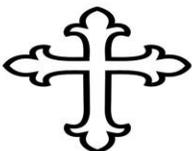


## Thanksgiving Eve Community Meal

Last year was a major success and everyone has decided that we want to do it again! Please start thinking about this very important event sponsored by all four mainline Dodgeville churches and Feeding Friends.

A Thanksgiving dinner will be served starting at 5 pm to be followed by an ecumenical worship service at 7 pm. Choir members please consider participating in an ecumenical choir. Last year was fantastic!

We will collect donations towards this meal in November.



## Food Pantry Wish List

Jelly/jam, Peanut butter, Pancake mix, Syrup, Hamburger Helper, Ketchup, Boxed potatoes, Canned meals, Canned vegetables, Jello/pudding, Cake Mix, Boxed desserts, Muffin Mix

Cash donations are also welcome

*The CAMPFIRE CHURCH SERVICE ON SEPTEMBER 14<sup>th</sup> at UMC followed the Feeding Friends meal and was well received.*





### Wacky Wednesday Updates

#### The new After-School program kicked off on SEPTEMBER 7<sup>th</sup>!

As of this week, we are up to 15 children who seemed to be engaged in building a puppet stage, and creating puppets with which they are acting out “delicious” impromptu stories. Each week it feels like our routine gets smoother and smoother and it is apparent that this certainly requires a group effort to be successful. Thank you to all who have contributed their time, games, rain

ponchos and umbrellas, snacks, patience, and expertise. And I know the children thank you, as well!

**DONATIONS WANTED:** Legos and board games for ages 5-8.



#### Newsletter Submissions

Please email the info for the November 2016 Newsletter to Sherry @ [Plymouth@mhtc.net](mailto:Plymouth@mhtc.net) by October 24<sup>th</sup>. THANK YOU!



Be sure and check out the website at [plymouthuccdodgeville.org](http://plymouthuccdodgeville.org)

There is a place on the website to submit emails & events to the church office and to view recent photos and upcoming events.

## *Pastor Joy's Schedule*

Pastor Hours: Pastor Joy will be available Tuesday through Thursday for Pastoral visits or Pastoral care. Please feel free to drop by the office or you can call for an appointment. Pastor Joy may be reached at: 553-0149 or the church office at 935-5727 or [plymouth@mhtc.net](mailto:plymouth@mhtc.net)

**Choir practice is Wednesday at 7pm.**

**New voices are more than welcome. Contact Lisa Duwell for more information. 553-4513.**



## **SUNDAY SCHOOL UPDATE**

We have curriculum, we have a nicely appointed classroom, and we have willing teachers. We just need one more thing – STUDENTS! If you know of children between the ages of 5 and 13 who would like to attend Sunday School at Plymouth, please contact Julie Neal at [david.neal@frontier.com](mailto:david.neal@frontier.com) or by phone at 623-2400. We would love to get a program up and running.

## **Community Grief Support Groups Offered: September - December 2016**

Grief continues well after loss occurs and each individual experiences it in unique ways. It is not uncommon for grief to come in intense waves, especially within the first year. Many find it helpful to talk with others going through similar experiences. To support you during this time, Home Health United is offering a number of support groups to anyone in the community who has experienced a loss. The groups are offered at no cost to participants.

### **When Mourning Dawns**

Weekly interactive sessions designed for those grieving the loss of someone in their life. This group is intended for adults and prior registration is required. A minimum number must be registered for the group to take place. Attendance at all sessions is highly recommended.

### **Spouse/Partner Loss**

A series for those grieving the loss of a spouse/partner, exploring the unique issues specific to this type of loss. This group is intended for adults, and prior registration is required. A minimum number must be registered for the group to take place. Attendance at all sessions is highly recommended.

### **Grief through the Holidays**

Although the holiday season can be a time of family, fun and food, for some people it can be a time of mourning and grief for a loved one lost. Home Health United recognizes holidays can be difficult for those who are grieving. We are offering Holiday Grief Support Groups to anyone who has experienced a loss. “Grief Through the Holidays” is intended for adults. No registration is required, and there is no cost.

For more information, please contact Home Health United-Hospice at 877-356-4514 or [RUsherwood@hhuvns.org](mailto:RUsherwood@hhuvns.org). A complete listing of grief support offerings can be found on our website. Briana Freye, Communication Marketing Assistant, Home Health United



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3 <b>Pastor Joy on vacation 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 11th</b>	4	5 Wacky Wednesday 2:30-5:30 Choir 7pm	6	7	8 Pasty making
9	10	11	12 Wacky Wednesday 2:30-5:30 Feeding Friends 5 pm Choir 7pm	13 Trustee Meeting	14	15
16 Plymouth Community Conversations	17	18 Diaconate Meeting 5pm & Council Meeting 7pm	19 Ruth Circle Wacky Wednesday 2:30-5:30 Choir 7pm	20	21	22
23	24 Newsletter content due	25	26 Wacky Wednesday 2:30-5:30 Choir 7pm	27 Trustee Meeting 7pm	28	29
30	31					

**Plymouth Congregational  
United Church of Christ**  
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**Pastor**

Reverend Joylynn Graham

Cell 553-0149

[pastorjoylynn@gmail.com](mailto:pastorjoylynn@gmail.com)

**Office Administrator**

Sherry Miess

Office 935-5727

Email :[Plymouth@mhtc.net](mailto:Plymouth@mhtc.net)

**Maintenance**

Keely Thomas

Home 935-9259

**Organist**

Marilyn Dunn

**Choir Director**

Lisa Duwell

**Council Moderator**

Bill Duwell

**Vice Moderator**

Chuck Roethe

**TV Broadcast Schedule**

Sunday worship is on Dodgeville Local Access channel. (MHTC channel 10). The schedule is as follows:

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

Sermons are also available for viewing on our website:

[plymouthuccdodgeville.org](http://plymouthuccdodgeville.org) and on YouTube.com

***HAPPY BIRTHDAY***

***Maggie Whitish 11<sup>th</sup>***

***Shirley Barnes 28<sup>th</sup>***

***Ross Bettner 31<sup>st</sup>***

***CELEBRATE***



***Church Council***

*Bill DuWell, Moderator*

*Chuck Roethe, Vice Moderator*

*Steve Freeman, Trustees*

*Gary McHone, Diaconate*

*Chuck Roethe, Mission*

*Gretchen Pearson, Clerk*

*Julie Neal, Christian Ed*

*Dave Pearson, Treasurer*

*Earl Barnes, Finical Secretary*