

# The Herald

## PLYMOUTH UCC DODGEVILLE



Plymouth Congregational  
United Church of Christ

# DECEMBER

## 2023

### Members Present vote to install Reverend Jennifer Seach as Plymouth UCC's new pastor.

Reverend Jennifer was voted in on Sunday, November 4, 2023. Fellowship followed worship with a potluck. The food was great and it was a pleasure to visit with everyone and to get to know Reverend Jennifer.

Pastor Jennifer will be installed on January 21, 3 pm, with a potluck following. Please let us know if you will be bringing a dish to pass. We are always in need of vegetarian dishes.

The vote pertaining to the addition of gutters added to the eastside of the building was approved.

Deadline for poinsettia orders is Sunday, December 3. I will call the order in on Monday.

Hanging of the Greens, Sunday, December 3, following worship. Pizza will be served.

There is a congregational meeting on December 10, following worship. This meeting will discuss the bid to repair the front stairs. After discussion, those present will vote whether to approve or disapprove. Please plan on attending for more information. All absentee votes must be turned in before the meeting.

Christmas Eve worship, December 24, will be at 5 pm.

December 31, 2023, following worship there will be a congregational meeting to discuss the upcoming budget. Please plan to attend.

Beginning in 2024, starting with January 7, worship will permanently be at 10 am.

With the start of 2024, please consider signing up to help with worship duties. There is an explanation of duties included in this newsletter. We would love to have your help.

**OUR VISION** "To be a welcoming and thriving Christian Community, living our faith through reflection and action, while remaining grounded in God's love."

**OUR MISSION** "To grow and share our faith, worship God, and follow Jesus Christ in the ways of love, peace, compassion, justice and the nurturing of God's creation."

#### Church Office:

##### Office Administrator Hours

Tuesday-Thursday

8:00 am - 2:00 pm

##### Pastor:

Reverend Jennifer Seach

##### Office Administrator:

Mary Haag

935-5727

[plymouth@mhtc.net](mailto:plymouth@mhtc.net)

##### Maintenance:

Harry Zelhofer

##### Organist:

Marilyn Dunn

##### Choir Director:

## *From the Pastor...*



Dear Ones,

The beginning of Advent this week means that Christmas is coming. I love both these seasons- with the thoughts of hope, peace, joy, and love. Yet commercial Christmas can detract from these. Jesus is the one person who might really prefer gifts to others for his birthday (which probably wasn't in December), but a lot of stuff isn't the gift he would want. So many of us have more than enough stuff anyway and don't need more knickknacks or sweaters (though if someone does need a knickknack or sweater, by all means do get that for them). Consumer choices are powerful- what we buy and where we buy. Matters. With every dollar, we cast a vote for a more just world in which people are paid a living wage, children get to be children, animals don't suffer, and environmental impact is reduced. Or we vote for not doing any of that.

A gift is one way to show someone they're in your thoughts, remind them of who they are to you, or celebrate what they mean to you. You want your gift to reflect your values- and as a Christmas gift, it should reflect Jesus' values also. This season, use consumer power, which is substantial, to support people that are important to you and also support projects you care about.

If Christmas means anything at all, and I think it does, it is about hope, peace, joy, and love- about believing that even in darkness there is light. Christmas means believing in miracles, that love and goodness do matter. If people of goodwill do not hold onto hope, who will? The nihilistic part of me sometimes wonders if we are all just doomed- the planet, the creatures, the coral reefs, the pandas and polar bears, our children and grandchildren. There is so much grief, so many self-professed Christians who ostentatiously display the cross while shouting at immigrants and not feeding the poor, so many who wave the flag and proclaim that the US is a Christian nation. But Christmas can remind us of miracles.

Alexander Smith wrote that "Christmas is the day that holds all time together." In our consumer culture, the holiness of the day so often gets lost amid the Black-Friday and Cyber Monday and other sales, the promotions, the pressure- even competition- to get the best gifts. And all this consumerism is disguised as "nothing is too much if only you love someone". But Christmas is about making the world radically more just and loving. Much of the celebration of it contributes to maintaining empire, the very thing that Jesus stood against and that killed him. At Christmas, we buy products sewn by women making .02 per piece of clothing and working in unsafe conditions. We fill stockings with chocolate made from cocoa beans picked by child slaves in Ghana. Amazon, Walmart, Nestle and other deeply unethical corporations make enormous profits, adding to the wealth of billionaires. So much wrapping paper goes to the already loaded landfills.

I do not think this is what Jesus wants for his birthday. He spoke of the dignity and worth of every person and refused to allow others to be treated as commodities. He told the poor that they are beloved by God. And he told us to care for the oppressed.

Church, I love Christmas and love gifts. Somehow, I want these to be compatible. Ethical consumerism is about choosing goods that are ethically sourced, ethically made and ethically distributed. When enough consumers shop in a morally conscious way, companies take notice. Burger King does not offer an Impossible Whopper because

they realized that meat is bad for the environment. They offer it because they can sell it. There are a few companies that might be ethical without consumer pressure, but most won't. Their goal is profit. We can celebrate Christmas and make the world better at the same time though. Rather than aimlessly cruising Walmart or the mall trying to find a random gift to buy or clicking "add to cart", we can shop intentionally and thoughtfully. Big box stores and soulless conglomerates (who are not people despite the Citizens United ruling) will not miss our money- though I don't actually care if they do- but for small businesses, our purchases might make a world of difference. Consumer choices matter. With our purchases of food and items, we cast a vote for a more just world in which people are paid a living wage, children get to be children, animals don't suffer, and environmental impact is reduced. Or we can vote for not doing any of that. In the status quo- the way most companies do business- money is the only measure of success. Jesus didn't go with the status quo. The Christmas machine tells us more, more, more. But Christ tells us that we don't need all the things. Voting with dollars isn't the only way to make a difference, of course, but many of us do not even notice how we participate in the economy. Seeking products that reflect our values: environmental impact, peace, and the well-being of the children and adults involved in making the products.

### **An entirely incomplete and totally arbitrary list of Christmas Suggestions: (some are 501C3s)**

Gifts of time or experience are wonderful, since most of us don't really need more things. In the last few years, I have given my spouse hockey tickets, concert tickets, baseball tickets, a night out at the theater, and a car detail. Go to a fancy restaurant (where they treat employees well). Take a dance class or kayak class. Perhaps offer of an afternoon of childcare, help with a cleaning or organizing project, or setting up the Roku. Many of us have lovely items that we can pass on to others- who might appreciate a family memento more than anything, a souvenir brought back from exotic travels, a treasured book. Handmade gifts are often appreciated also- baked goods, paintings, arts or crafts, knitting or sewing.

Donations to a cause that someone cares about are lovely: donate to our church, Planned Parenthood, American Diabetes Association, Trevor Project, Nature Conservancy, Earth Justice, Rainforest Alliance, the Humane Society, Best Friends animal rescue... [Donors Choose](#) lets you look at teachers' classroom wishlists- want to buy art supplies for a kindergarten class in New Hampshire? Library books by diverse authors for a middle school in Montana? Science equipment for a high school in Oklahoma? Think of things like a gift of bees through Heifer International, malaria nets, a couple loans on Kiva- with the stories of who will be helped by those loans.

[Gifts from Palestine](#). My favorites (hard to choose) are the olive wood Samaritan woman and the sterling olive leaf jewelry, but there is so much.

[Goodee](#) is a curated marketplace offering homewares, kid things, and other products for better living... a platform centered around responsible brands and artisans producing timeless everyday objects and consumers looking to make a difference with their purchases. A certified B Corps member of 1% For the Planet, GOODEE supports marginalized communities, increasing the circularity of their goods, and more.

[Done good](#) is another curated marketplace. Every brand is vetted for things like ethics and sustainability, along with affordability and quality.

[Buy Me Once](#) Most consumer goods are of low quality and are meant to break and be replaced, which leads to wasted resources and more trash in our landfills. BuyMeOnce is a marketplace where you can find high quality goods in just about every category. To decide which products to sell, they look at the materials and craftsmanship, customer reviews, and whether the product was made as ethically and sustainably as possible. Some things even come with lifetime warranties!

[Made Trade](#). Made Trade is a curated online shop with a wide selection of products that are eco-conscious, fair trade, vegan, and/or made in the USA, so you can shop by values. On each product page, you can find out a lot about the brand's values and ethical practices, materials used, etc., so you can be an informed consumer (without spending a bunch of time researching.)

[The Zero Waste store](#). Is a marketplace for sustainable products- shampoo bars, bamboo toothbrushes, makeup, cleaning products.

[Thistle Farms](#)- Products handcrafted by women survivors of systems of prostitution and exploitation- with free housing, healthcare and trauma care, and advocacy. Candles, lotions, jewelry, kiddo things, clothing, and more.

### **For Children:**

[World Wildlife Fund](#) and similar charities allow symbolic animal adoptions. For \$60 on WWF, you can adopt an endangered animal (you can choose or let the child choose), and then the kiddo will receive a stuffed animal, an adoption certificate, and information about their species: giraffe, panda, arctic hare, sloth, penguin, sea turtle, and more. They learn about animals and are excited to know that they are helping creatures.

The [David Sheldrake Wildlife Trust](#) focuses on animal conservation in Africa. They care for orphaned elephants, rhinos, and giraffes. Donors have the option of fostering specific creatures, then receive, via email, a fostering certificate with a profile of their animal, its current status, a photo as well as an interactive map of where that animal was found. Then, each month, DSWF sends out a summary of the elephant's progress with new photos. DSWF gives kids a full year of connection with a real-life animal they have helped!

[Save the Chimps](#) provides a permanent sanctuary for the lifelong care of chimpanzees rescued from research laboratories, the entertainment industry, and the pet trade. The rescued chimps live on three small islands in Florida. Caged for most of their lives, the chimps now have space, freedom, and companionship. You can adopt a chimp for a year and find out more about that chimpanzee or you could send food- carrots for one or oatmeal for a family of chimps.

Your kiddo loves Sea Turtles? Adopt one through the Sea Turtle Conservancy. Horses? Try World Horse Welfare or Equus Foundation. Hummingbirds? Try the American Bird Conservancy. Wolves? Maybe Wolf Haven International.

[EarthHero](#), a certified B Corps, has [green toys](#) and [ecokids art supplies](#). You can search for items by value- LGBTQ owned, women owned, sustainable, etc

### **Coffee, Chocolate, and other Foods:**

Fair trade chocolate and coffee make delicious gifts and empower others. We have lots of Equal Exchange chocolate, coffee, and other items at church. Here are a few other coffee, chocolate, and food sellers:

[Stroopies](#) cinnamon waffle cookies, woman owned and employing resettled refugee women. As part of their benefit package the women have 30 min of English class during their paid workday and go on several community building field trips each year.

[Les Chocolateries Askanya](#). Haiti is bean-to-bar chocolate made from locally grown cacao and sugar in Haiti. Whereas most chocolate is made from cacao exported at impossibly low prices with the majority of profit being earned by manufacturers in the US or Europe, Askanya works to make honestly-sourced chocolate from beginning to end in Haiti.

The [US Café](#) in Muskegon, MI is run by a nonprofit focused on independent living for people with disabilities. Local Black Businesswoman who serves there also sells spice flavor packs. Kaja's flavor packs- Cajun and lemon garlic pepper blends.

### **Clothing and Jewelry:**

[Elegantees](#) aims to fight human trafficking in Nepal through employment opportunities. All products are made ethically, and most are made by women who have overcome trafficking.

[Lev Apparel](#) fights against sex-trafficking and the fast fashion industry by paying garment workers a fair and livable wage so they are not so vulnerable to exploitation.

[Sela Designs](#) gives away 100% of profits to a rotating list of charities. They sell beautiful handmade jewelry.

[Trades of Hope](#) is fair trade: "Your purchase helps provide Artisans in areas of extreme poverty and their children with access to education, health care, and clean water programs. Every purchase gives hope to families in India's slums."

[Able Clothing](#). Makes wardrobe pieces that empower both the women who wear them and the women who make them.

[Haiti Design](#) mantra is "MEN ANPIL, CHAY PA LOU", a Haitian proverb meaning many hands make work light.

[Encircled](#) Woman-owned, ethically and sustainably made in Canada work-leisure clothes.

[Quince](#) sustainable ethical fashion (including a \$ 50 cashmere sweater)

[The Starfish Project](#). Social Enterprise with a Holistic Care Program that cares for women escaping human trafficking and exploitation in Asia. Women and girls experience freedom, establish independence and develop careers.

### Home Goods:

Every curated product sold by [Remington](#) is handcrafted meeting sustainable and ethical practices. Home goods, candles and more

Blankets and throws from [Shopdignify](#) I love the Kantha holiday throws.

[Kana cookwear](#)- environmental and sustainable. They have a bread baker's bundle!

Eco friendly dinnerware- [Our Place](#), [Public Goods](#),

[The Citizenry](#). keeps prices low and wages for artisans high so rugs, pillows, tablecloths, gorgeous baskets, and more are affordable.

[Leapingbunny](#) offers a guide to cruelty free beauty products: hair, lotion, makeup

[Cheekbone Beauty](#) is an Indigenous-owned and founded Canadian cosmetics company creating cosmetics designed for low environmental impact.

[Bishop and Wilde](#) is a queer- and woman-owned online bookstore with full access to the same catalog as major online retailers.

A unique [hand-made stationery line](#). Bipoc owned and features black Americans. There is a series focused on women for Women's History Month

[Kahini Wala](#). Beautiful toys and woven goods made by Bangladeshi women who are finding safe work outside of garment factories. 20% OFF (holidaycheer22)

[Sojourn Studios](#) Porcelain ornaments and jewelry, from women along the Thailand-Myanmar border.

[West paw](#) has treats, toys, and beds for our four-legged family members (the canine ones anyway) Made sustainably in Montana. I think Fergus is getting a new bed (and I hope he doesn't eat it). Code Winter23 for 20% off.

Support local artists. Remember those who were part of the [Fall Art Tour](#)? [Lauren Thuli's](#) paintings have made our church so lovely since the Merrimac and Main Open House. I also love this [women of the bible series](#).

You can search [Etsy](#) for ethical gifts, for bipoc owned shops, and for queer owned shops, and purchase items made by humans, rather than mass produced.

These are just a few of the ways to celebrate the birth of Christ by helping make the kind of world that Jesus wanted. You can find whatever interests you- search online for ethical gifts. Ethical gifts for gardeners. Ethical food gifts. Ethical toys.

Also in this country alone, approximately 5 million tons of trash will be produced at Christmas, but we can reduce that impact. Reuse gift paper or gift bags. You can also repurpose paper bags, old maps, scrap fabric. Or make the wrapping part of the gift- use cloth produce bags, a scarf, reusable food wrap, even small gifts inside reusable snack bags. I give many gifts in reusable grocery bags. They are inexpensive, and we all need them.

One of the best parts of Christmas and holiday season is the food, of course. Food dollars are votes for the food systems that we want, and we vote this way multiple times every single day. Do we want clean food with less environmental impact, less suffering for animals, less waste? Or do we not? While travelling a few years ago, I saw a meme comparing products in Europe to their US counterparts: in this country, our foods are filled with chemicals, preservatives, dyes, and all sorts of things I know nothing about. The exact same foods in Europe had short lists of ingredients, all of which were recognizable (literally, the exact same products). Be sure that the roast or ham on your table came from an animal that had a good life. Support a local bakery. Have local ice cream and eggnog.

By being intentional and paying attention to how we do Christmas, we can celebrate those we love, observe the birth of Christ, and make the world more just and beautiful at the same time. That seems like something Jesus would like. This year, for his birthday, celebrate the incarnation with gifts that make the world better, support causes you believe in, and avoid negative impacts on people, animals and the environment. What God truly wants is hope, peace, joy, and love- a more just world where all can flourish. Our Christmas choices can contribute to that world. To truly celebrate the birth of the Christ who cared for the poor and vulnerable, they should.

Christmas Blessings, Pastor Jennifer

(One more- Jólábókaflóðið is an Icelandic word that translates “Christmas book flood” It is a Christmas Eve tradition- giving and receiving books, and maybe some hot chocolate, cookies, or candy- and spending the evening reading and sharing stories together. How beautiful would that be.... After our 5pm Christmas Eve service?)





## **Seeking help with Usher/Reader/Communion duties during worship!**

There's nothing difficult here, but all is necessary to ensure the service runs smoothly.

### **Usher Duties:**

- **Unlock doors and turn on lights and fan**
  - **Unlock side door and use key to ensure it stays in unlocked position**
  - **Turn automated door opener on**
  - **Unlock main (front) door**
- **Turn on sound system (1 button located in sacristy)**
- **Light candles during prelude prior to start of service using candle lighter/snuffer**
- **Ring bell during prelude (no set number of chimes, just "several")**
- **Collect offering and Joyful Noise donations**
  - **Before collection, wait at back of church until pastor brings the collection plates down**
  - **After collection wait at back until doxology starts then bring plates forward**
  - **Finish doxology and prayer of thanksgiving, then return to your seat**
- **Hold/pass the microphone around for Prayers of the People and Announcements as needed**
- **Extinguish candles during last hymn and carry flame back down the aisle with lighter/snuffer**
- **When sanctuary is empty after service, lock the front door and turn off the lights and sound system**

### **Reader Duties:**

- **Sit up front by the lectern at the start of worship.**
- **Read the Call to Worship and Opening Prayer after pastor does the Welcome**
- **Invite the Congregation to Passing of the Peace**
- **Read the scripture after the first hymn**  
(Mary Haag will email you the readings and prayers prior to worship)

IN THE LIFE OF OUR CHURCH...

You are the life of the church



- Return to sitting with the congregation after the gospel reading.

#### Communion Duties:

- Purchase and bring with you a loaf of bakery bread (unsliced)
- Cut ends off and set aside.
- Cut part way through the center portion across the middle to make it easier to tear during service
- Cut ends into small pieces (20 or so)
- Place large partially cut piece on one side of bread dish and small pieces on the other side.
- Place bread dish on the right side of the altar (from behind the altar) and cover with the the cloth
- Get wine from under the sink in sacristy and pour approx. 1 cup into the small pitcher
- Take a small bottle of grape juice from under the sink and pour approx, half into the small chalice
- Place the pitcher, large chalice (empty), and small chalice on the left side of the altar and cover with the cloth
- When communion starts, get the chalices and serve communion with the pastor.
- After worship, clear the communion dishes from the altar and wash in sacristy sink, placing in rack to dry

Leftover wine and grape juice in chalices can be poured down the drain.

Discard leftover bread downstairs and save opened 1/2 bottle of grape juice in refrigerator in Fellowship Hall.

It sounds like a lot, but all of it can be easily accomplished by 2 people, arriving 30 minutes prior to service. If you've never done some of these tasks before and want someone to walk you through it, please contact Lisa Pepelea [lkpep@yahoo.com](mailto:lkpep@yahoo.com)



Every Sunday is a good time to bring a guest with you to Sunday Worship.

**NEWSLETTER DEADLINE**

December 28



## Mission

Would you like to get involved? Volunteer for one of our missions.

**Little Free Pantry** - Serves the members of the community by providing food for anyone in need. The Pantry is found outside in the front of the church. Donated food items should be easy to open and easy to eat with minimal to no preparation. We could also use some toiletries and personal items. Food pantry shelf is located downstairs next to the door leading into the fellowship hall.

**Pasty** - Pasty season is here. Pasties are on the minds of members of the community and even those outside of the community who have heard about Plymouth's pasties. Workers are needed to make this successful each month. Please sign up to work one or more Saturdays through the entire season. Call into the office or contact Denise Whitish. Please let us know how you can help. Let's keep the best pasties in town available. Remaining dates are January 13 and March 9.

# Be a part of the Church

**Faith Explorers** - Wednesdays, 10:30 am via Zoom and Faith Explorers. If you have questions or doubts, you are in the right place. If you want to meet with others who have questions and doubts, then this group is for you. Please contact Earl Barnes for more information.

**Plymouth Circle of Care** - This is a group of volunteers who are ready to help you if you need help. Whether it's a ride or a hot meal that is needed please contact a member of this group.

**Care Team** - A Plymouth Care Team for the purpose visiting those members who are no longer able to get out and about. The Care Team, along with the Pastor will visit on a monthly basis and offer communion as well. If you are interested in joining the Care Team, we need you! If you are interested in joining the Care Team please contact the church.

**Moderator**

**Gary McHone**

**Vice Moderator**

**Open**

**Trustees**

**Shirley Barnes**

**Diaconate**

**Harry Zelhofer**

**Mission**

**Chuck Roethe**

**Clerk**

**Mary Stellick**

**Christian Education**

**Treasurer**

**Steve Pieroni**

**Financial Secretary**

**Earl Barnes**

**If your address, phone/  
cell number, or email  
have changed, please con-  
tact the office so that we  
may update our records .  
You may call the office at  
935-5727, or email the  
office at  
[plymouth@mhtc.net](mailto:plymouth@mhtc.net).**

## Happy Birthday:

December

12 - Jane Bettner  
29 - Isaac Steele

January

9 - Jeanne Kamholtz  
20 - Gretchen James  
29 - Jean Brown



## JOYFUL NOISE

Thanks to your generosity in October

Food Pantry	\$10.00
Hodan	\$104.07
Maui fire relief	\$144.79
Neighbors in Need	\$34.40

December Joyful Noise Offering is designated for:

Sierra Leone Orphanage  
The Christmas Fund  
Gaza Humanitarian Relief

Thank you!!!

### Pastor Relations Committee

Jill Roethe  
Lisa Pepelea  
Gary McHone  
Earl Barnes  
Harry Zelhofer



### Circle of Care

Earl and Shirley Barnes  
Liz Bothfeld  
Harry and Gary McHone  
Dave and Gretchen Pearson  
Rod and Mary Lukes  
Lisa Pepelea  
Chuck Roethe  
Ross Vivian

### Schedules

#### Usher/Reader/Communion

### December

3 - Earl and Shirley Barnes

10 - Gary McHone

17 - Chuck and Jill Roethe

24 - Dave Pearson and Steve Pieroni

31 - Mark and Lisa Pepelea

\*If you would like to volunteer to help with  
Worship, please contact Lisa Pepelea or the  
church office.

### Joyful Noise

Sierra Leone Orphanage  
The Christmas Fund  
Gaza Humanitarian Relief

### Fellowship

3 - Pizza

10 -

17 -

24 - No Fellowship

31 -



Join us for in-person worship on Sundays at 10:30

# October Council Meeting Minutes

## Plymouth UCC Council Meeting Minutes

October 17, 2023

Members Present: Gary McHone, Steve Pieroni, Chuck Roethe, Mary Stellick, Harry Zelhofer

Absent: Earl Barnes, Shirley Barnes

Guest: Ann Dolan

Meeting was called to order by Gary at 7:05.

Ann Dolan presented information from the WCUCC on the Leadership Forward campaign, which was begun this year to fund the Damascus Project (formerly Lay Academy), Catalyst Grants to Congregations, and Ministerial Support. The Council discussed this campaign and agreed that we would need to educate the congregation before making any commitment to it. Gary will ask Ann to come and explain it during a worship service in the near future.

The minutes of the September 19<sup>th</sup> meeting were reviewed, with the date change noted. Chuck moved to approve them, Steve seconded. Motion carried.

### **Committee Reports**

#### Diaconate

Randy has resigned from the committee and Harry has joined as Chair.

Harry distributed a booklet from the UCC on resources for the relationship between pastors and congregations.

Cleaning of the upstairs classroom/storage room is ongoing.

Harry is going to try to get some people (quartet?) to sing at the Christmas Eve service.

#### Trustees

Chimney Specialists was not interested in addressing our chimney liner concern. Ken Reese thought it would be ok if it is monitored for now. Steve will try contacting a company in Madison to see if they would do an estimate.

Steve also contacted a mason to get a bid on repairing/replacing the front steps.

An estimate of \$10,900 was received by Midwest Roofing to complete the gutters.

## Financial

The Treasurer's has not been sent from the accountant, should have it tomorrow.

Earl emailed his report to the Council.

It was agreed to add Earl as a signer for the account at Farmer's Bank so he can access records.

## Missions

The Joyful Noise offering for November will be for the Homeless Coalition.

## **Old Business**

The Safe Conduct/Sex Offender policy and Directory Update were tabled until next meeting.

## **New Business**

Motion by Mary to recommend approval of \$10,900 for gutters by the congregation, with a Congregational Meeting to vote on it on November 5, 2023. Seconded by Harry. Motion carried.

Merrimac & Main Center committee asked to be able to put a "Donate" button on the church website. Steve moved and Chuck seconded to not approve this request. Motion carried.

Discussion about needing to develop an agreement with the Merrimac & Main Center re expectations and boundaries, with no formal action taken at this time.

Motion to adjourn made by Steve seconded by Harry. Meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Next meeting is Tuesday, November 28, 2023.

Submitted by Mary Stellick, Clerk