



**Plymouth  
Church**  
UNITED CHURCH *of* CHRIST

# Annual Report 2008

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## Annual Meeting of the Congregation Minutes: Sunday, November 11, 2008

The meeting was convened after the conclusion of worship upon the determination that a quorum of members was present.

The Rev. Stephen C. Adams opened the meeting with a prayer.

A call was made for a motion to dispense with reading the 2006 Annual Meeting minutes which appear in the 2007 Annual Report. The motion to dispense with the reading was made and seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Likewise a motion was called to approve the 2006 Annual Meeting minutes. This motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously.

Rev. David M. Powers presented his report. Rev. Powers' term as Interim Senior Minister was to conclude at the end of the calendar year. He conveyed his gratitude to the congregation for the opportunity to serve Plymouth Church. Rev. Powers urged the congregation to look forward to new opportunities and challenges as we welcome our new Senior Minister.

Christine Bretz presented the Treasurer's Report, stating that the financial affairs of the church are in good order.

Bob Perkins presented the report of the Foundation, summarizing the activity for the year and the value of the fund.

Jeff Pollock presented the President's Report, where he summarized the major achievements of the year.

Cooper White reported on the work of the Nominating Committee and drew attention to:

1. The list of nominations for elected positions for 2008 which has appeared in the Sunday bulletin for the past 2 weeks.
2. The last page of the Annual Report, "Plymouth Church Leadership Roster for 2008."

Cooper White then read the names of the nominees and the positions for which they have been nominated and called them to the front of the church. A voice vote was held and all those nominated were unanimously elected. Jeff Pollock thanked the Nominating Committee for their important work and the newly elected leaders of Plymouth.

Jeff Pollock then honored Plymouth's long-term members and announced a special reception for them in the Parlor following the Annual Meeting.

There being no new business, the President adjourned the meeting and called upon Rev. David M. Powers to provide the benediction.

Respectfully submitted,

~ Tim Mendelsohn, Clerk

## Special Meeting of the Congregation, March 25, 2007

On March 25, 2007, a special meeting of Plymouth Church of Shaker Heights was convened in the Sanctuary following the church service. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss a capital campaign for the restoration of the exterior of the church. Following an extensive discussion, the following Resolution was proposed:

RESOLVED, that Plymouth Church of Shaker Heights restore and renovate the steeple, roof, masonry and other exterior structures of the church as shall be determined by the Church Council in consultation with the Building & Grounds Department and the church architect;

That the total cost of the project not exceed \$2 million;

That the church commence a capital campaign with a goal of \$700,000 from contributions from members and friends of the church;

That the Foundation Fund contribute to the total cost of the project by matching amounts contributed by members and friends of the church dollar-for-dollar in an amount not to exceed \$1 million;

That the church be authorized to borrow from a third party lender an amount not to exceed \$600,000 for the exterior renovation project on such terms as shall be determined by Church Council in consultation with the Finance Committee, with the intent that the amount borrowed shall be minimized to the extent possible; and

That the congregation appoint Bud Menges as Chairman of the capital campaign and Janet Neary as Chair of Lead Gifts and that they proceed immediately with their planning, using such professional consulting services as they deem advisable.

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the Resolution. The Resolution was adopted unanimously with 81 votes in favor, no votes against, and no abstentions.

~ Respectfully submitted,  
R. Jeffrey Pollock, President

## Special Meeting of the Congregation, September 30, 2007

Congregational Meeting held immediately after the worship service on September 30, 2007.

Minutes of the meeting

Jeff Pollock welcomed everyone at 11:48AM. Rev. Stephen C. Adams opened the meeting with a prayer. Volunteers passed out individual ballots and clipboards for members to sign-in. Jeff read the wording on the ballot:

**Motion:** To accept the recommendation of the Pulpit Committee and to call the Rev. Shawnthea Monroe-Mueller as Senior Minister of Plymouth Church of Shaker Heights.

There were three check boxes: In favor of the Motion, Opposed to the Motion, and Abstention.

Tom Daniels moved we accept the motion. Peter Sweeney seconded the motion.

Heidi Makela thanked the Pulpit Committee for their hard work. Jeff Pollock mentioned that the only requirement for the vote is that 2/3 of those present must vote in favor of the candidate.

Ballots were collected by 12:00.

While the ballots were being counted, several people came up to the lectern to speak. Jack Horner spoke eloquently of the need for us to support our excellent staff and volunteers. He emphasized how essential reconciliation was to Plymouth Church.

At 12:12PM, Robb Forward and Christine Bretz announced that the counting was complete. Jeff Pollock announced that the vote was unanimous in favor of calling the Rev. Dr. Shawnthea Monroe-Mueller as Senior Minister of Plymouth Church of Shaker Heights.

After enthusiastic applause, we adjourned to Fellowship Hall where we greeted Rev. Dr. Shawnthea Monroe-Mueller.

~ Respectfully submitted,  
Tim Mendelsohn, Clerk of Council

## President's Report

This report encompasses the more than two year period of my tenure as president. Plymouth Church has moved successfully through a period of significant transition to a firm foundation in our ministerial leadership, church building, and worship.

With the beginning of the new church year in 2006, Plymouth was blessed with the addition of the Rev. David M. Powers as our Interim Senior Minister and the Rev. Stephen C. Adams as Acting Associate Minister. The Pulpit Committee then embarked on discerning the selection of a new Senior Minister.

In the Spring 2007, the congregation authorized a capital campaign for the restoration and renovation of the steeple, roof, masonry, and other exterior structures of the church. The campaign exceeded the goal of \$1 million in individual pledges with an additional contribution from the Foundation. Renovation of the steeple and replacement of the roof was completed in 2007.

In September 2007 the church voted unanimously to call the Rev. Dr. Shawnthea Monroe as the new Senior Minister. Rev. David M. Powers completed his ministry at the end of the

year, and Rev. Dr. Monroe commenced her service in January 2008.

Rev. Dr. Monroe has successfully completed her first year with Plymouth, establishing strong leadership, energizing our worship experience, and guiding us toward renewal. Rev. Stephen C. Adams accepted a call to another local congregation within our denomination. The pastoral counseling which Rev. Adams had so ably provided will now be continued with Rev. Lois Annich. Rev. Annich is an ordained minister with substantial experience in pastoral care. In addition, the church honored Jim Riggs with a new title, Minister of Music and the Arts, in recognition of his contribution and service

As we move into a new calendar year, Plymouth has accomplished much for which we are blessed. The transition to our new Senior Minister is now complete. The renovation of the church envisioned by the capital campaign will be completed at the end of this year. A multitude of programs and activities continue at Plymouth Church. We have achieved these successes through the contributions of many dedicated members. I thank the congregation for the privilege to serve our beloved church.

~ Jeff Pollock, President, Church Council

## Report of the Finance Committee

Your Finance Committee is neither boring nor perfunctory. We have even expanded our base size to take advantage of our congregation's vast resource of financial acumen. We have accepted the challenge of the lay and ordained leadership, and the office staff, to be a greater presence in oversight and direction.

In 2008, the Finance Committee ramped up its activity due to the Council approved Audit of 2007, and several other pressing financial matters. The Committee accepted the completed audit by Saltz, Shamis and Goldfarb (SS&G) and presented it to the full Council, who in turn accepted the final draft. The suggestions of Pam Plott of SS&G have all been addressed and resolved. Overall, SS&G's report had nothing of a derogatory nature to report and strongly complemented and applauded Rachel Perry and the staff of Plymouth Church for their accounting performance. The Committee will provide the incoming Council with a comparison presentation of conducting an Agreed Upon Procedures Review versus an audit for the next fiscal review.

We continued to meet regularly with Rachel Perry to review the financial operations of the church. We have monitored the Capital Campaign progress and are pleased to report that it is on schedule and, most importantly, on budget.

We have heard regular reports from the Stewardship Campaign and feel comfortable with the efforts of the committee, the practicality of the goal and the progress of the process.

We have held combined meetings with the Directors of the Foundation and the Personnel Committee. This is an effort to include all parties concerned in the sensitive financial decisions being made in these changing financial and staff transitional times.

Your Finance Committee has endeavored to answer the constitutional charge, to "oversee the Treasurer to assure that the appropriate financial controls are in place and are being followed, and to monitor overall budgetary compliance." Knowing that, we kept our focus

on the task. Therefore; I confidently present the following report from our treasurer, Christine Bretz.

~ Robb Forward, Chair, Finance Committee

## Report of the Treasurer

There will be challenges to the end-of-year 2008 financial picture for Plymouth Church in the midst of this fall's worldwide economic turmoil. On the positive side, the Plymouth Foundation made its 2008 \$250,000 match for the capital campaign, which is the second installment towards the total \$1,000,000 that will be given during the course of the campaign. And, while the 2008 budget that was passed by Church Council assumed that we will be at break-even point, I am pleased to report that current projections indicate that Plymouth will be in the black. This has been achieved not only with budget-minded spending, but cost savings in various categories and careful monitoring of the capital campaign expenditures. Rachel Perry and Sky Arsinchuck are to be commended for their stewardship of the capital campaign that will come in under budget! I discuss finances periodically with the financial staff to review the actual year-to-date results to ensure that we are on track.

In 2008 the specific accomplishments include:

- Completed and accepted the audit from SS&G who found no exception to our finances;
- Achieved year-to-date surplus in the actual operating results;
- Participated in quarterly meetings of the Plymouth Foundation Fund, assisting Foundation Directors in review and reallocation of investments;
- Participated in periodic meetings with the Finance Committee to review compensation and capital campaign results.

### General Funds

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The General Fund is the operating fund of the church. This is the fund referred to when we discuss pledging and offerings and from which expenses such as compensation and benefits, building operations and all department charges are drawn. Capital campaign needs during the year have been monitored to allow for the timely transfer of funds for such expenditures.

### Special Funds

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The Special Funds are those funds which are restricted for a specific purpose. These funds are managed by Department Chairs who monitor activity for adherence to the budget.

In 2008, as in the last few years, the Special Funds were included in Council's budgeting process to permit departments to include these assets in their budgeting. Many of the Special Fund accounts line items are funded by distributions from the Plymouth Church Foundation. These Foundation funds were created by donors for specific uses. Proper planning and spending of these gifts is another way in which the financial team works to safeguard the congregation's gifts.

## Foundation Fund

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The Foundation Fund is the endowment of the Church and provides important support to the General Fund and to specially authorized activities and programs.

A detailed report of the Foundation's 2008 activities will be incorporated into the year-end Treasurer's financial report, which is issued in *The Perspective*. Some investment changes were made in 2008 to generate the Foundation's \$250,000 matching contribution to the capital campaign and to reposition the remaining investments. The Foundation Fund's investments have declined with the reduction in the financial markets and we will continue to monitor the investment allocation to maximize returns while safeguarding the assets. Contributions to the Foundation are encouraged from all members of the congregation, especially in light of the fact that its funds are being reduced to provide the capital campaign match.

It has been a year of great effort on the part of the financial staff for the audit as well as the continuing requirements of the capital campaign. Rachel Perry has done a great job on these tasks and I certainly appreciate her capable talents.

~ Christine Bretz, Treasurer

## Report of the Church Office November 1, 2007 through October 31, 2008

### Summary of Changes in Membership:

Total membership as of November 1, 2007:	720
New members received during this period:	19
Members who transferred to other churches:	9
Deceased Members	11
Members who resigned their membership	4
Members culled (officially removed)during this period:	60
<b>Total membership as of October 31, 2007</b>	<b>655</b>

### Additions to Membership

#### Members were received as follows:

**0 by Confirmation:** No Confirmation Class was held this year

#### **12 by Letter of Transfer:**

Lucas Carrion	Heidi Klein	Carolyn Nilson
Kristy Eastridge	Don Monroe	Noel Nilson
Eric Goodman	Shawnthea Monroe	Frederick Perry
Jill Goodman	Walter Mueller	Judith Perry

#### **2 by Re-affirmation of Faith:**

Gracia Green	Janet Wilkens
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#### **3 by Confession of Faith:**

Andrew Cleminshaw	Bill Oeflein	Tique Oeflein
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#### **2 by Reinstatement by Church Council:**

Brandt Butze	Suzanne Rappaport
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### Losses to Membership

#### **9 members were removed by Letter of Transfer:**

Rev. Joseph Blotz	Michael & Teri Nichols	Ken & Susan Ulmer
Jennifer Haynes	* Betsy Scarborough	James & Kathleen Young

**6 Members were removed due to death**, for whom a Funeral or Memorial Service was conducted at Plymouth Church or by Plymouth Church staff:

Elizabeth Badal	Diane Connelly	Arthur Donato
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Nan Montgomery

Virginia Smith

Winifred Wagner

**5 Members were removed due to death:**

Jane Butler

George Ludwig

Gwendolyn Stephenson

Mary Culp

Gladys Shroyer

**4 Members resigned their membership:**

Donald Butler

Diane Kirby

Martin &amp; Kristen Schulz

**60 Members were removed** as a result of a report by the Membership Review Task Force, Dept. of Evangelism & Growth. Presented to Plymouth Church Council 12/12/2007:

Peter Anderson

Kenneth Haber

Robert Nix

William Anderson

Peter &amp; Susan Harding

Tuboson Ogunsanwo

James Austin

James Harding

Jill Olwert

Henrietta Blyth

Robert Harding

David Opatrny

James &amp; Janet Brady

Kelly Kelly

Christian &amp; Donna Patno

Carolina Brownlee

Sarah Knowlton

Michael Pope

Polly Caldwell

Arana Lynch

Susan Powell

Gary Cook

Maxine Lynch

Bailey Rice

Connie Coughlin

Paul &amp; Marjie Martin

William Root

Laura Defino

Mary McCrea

Kimberly Rutkai

Neall &amp; Muffie Distad

William McKnight

Lou Sauer

Melissa Downey

James &amp; Marianne Millican

Debra Scudamore

Elizabeth Farrell

Cindy Miller

Jonathan Scudamore

Jocelyn Fazekas

Kirsten Mogg

David &amp; Maxine Stevens

Deborah Ford

William Mogg

Jennifer Stevens

Gregory Frey

Linda Morriw

Angela Valventos

Mark Genger

Robert Nelson

Lisa Young

David &amp; Linda Graham

**Other Funerals and/or Memorial Services****3 Funeral and/or Memorial Services** were conducted at Plymouth Church or by Plymouth Church staff for a non-member:

Margaret Barr

Emerson Roesch

Harriet Sahley

**Baptisms****8 people received the sacrament of Christian Baptism:**

William Boukalik

Henry Ellert

Grayson Rapp

Andrew Cleminshaw

Abigail Goodman

Morgan Scarlett

C a t h e r i n e

Gabriel Prepetit

Cleminshaw

**Weddings****2 weddings were conducted at Plymouth Church or by Plymouth Church staff:**

Matthew Brakey &amp; Erica Martin . . . . . June 28, 2008

Jennifer Hill &amp; Alejandro Cruz . . . . . August 16, 2008

## Fifty Year Members

Name	Date Joined	Name	Date Joined
Mrs Ruth Dunn	4/12/1925	Mr Terry Shockey	4/6/1952
Ms Mary Bowers	3/29/1931	Mr Lee Wagner	4/6/1952
Mrs Betsy Schrader	4/1/1936	Mr Michael Weil	5/11/1952
Mr Donald Campbell	4/5/1936	Mrs Margaret Tritton	10/5/1952
Mr John Doxsey	5/9/1937	Mrs Betty Newman	10/5/1952
Mrs Miriam Freer	12/4/1938	Mr Albert Swain	3/29/1953
Mrs Ruth Kennedy	4/2/1939	Mrs LaVerne Swain	3/29/1953
Mr Glenn Crow	10/1/1939	Mr Frank Carpenter	1/3/1954
Miss Barbara Denison	3/17/1940	Mrs Priscilla Cross	1/3/1954
Dr Robert Spurney	10/6/1940	Mrs Margaret Mahannah	1/3/1954
Mr Robert K. Bissell	3/29/1942	Mrs E. Bruce Chaney	3/7/1954
Mrs Joanne Ross	3/29/1942	Mrs Barbara Kacir	4/15/1954
Mrs Gerald Cannon	4/18/1943	Mrs Anne Cook	10/3/1954
		Mr J Paxton Van	
Mrs Olga McMahon	4/18/1943	Sweringen	10/3/1954
Mr John Horner, Jr	12/19/1943	Mrs Georgia Garner	10/3/1954
Mr Richard Gray	4/2/1944	Mrs Ruth Nowicky	1/2/1955
Mr Charles Davis	3/25/1945	Mr Robert Ginn	3/6/1955
Mrs Roland Hill	3/25/1945	Mrs Barbara Ginn	3/6/1955
Mr Thomas Murphy	12/23/1945	Dr Francis Owens, Sr	3/6/1955
Mrs Marguerite Campbell	4/14/1946	Mrs Vilma Buell	3/4/1956
Dr Marcia Christian	4/14/1946	Mrs Hetty Griffiths	3/4/1956
Mr Richard McCrea	4/14/1946	Mrs Mary Alice Horner	3/4/1956
Mrs Lorrie Robertson	4/14/1946	Ms Karen McCloskey	3/29/1956
Mrs Lydene Rutter	5/26/1946	Mr James Chaney	5/6/1956
Dr Carl Gray	3/21/1948	Mrs Gloria Donato	5/6/1956
Mr Norman Mandell	3/21/1948	Mr William Robinson	10/7/1956
Mrs Margaret Campbell	12/19/1948	Mr John Schier	10/7/1956
Mrs Virginia Rondeau	12/19/1948	Mrs Mary Jordan Davis	11/18/1956
Mr C. Richard Brubaker	4/10/1949	Dr Wilma Evans	1/6/1957
Mrs Donald C. Opatrny	10/2/1949	Mrs Anna Zverina	1/5/1958
Mrs Jean Forrest	12/18/1949	Ms Joyce Johns	10/5/1958
Mr William Ginn	12/24/1950	Mrs Carol Mau	11/23/1958

## Senior Minister, Rev. Dr. Shawnthea Monroe

When you buy a house in the winter, like Neil and I did, the first spring is full of surprises. Trees flowered, perennials sprouted, blossoms appeared seemingly from out of nowhere. Every day revealed another hidden treasure, some unexpected plant that had been dormant months earlier. Besides doing some necessary pruning, fertilizing, and a bit of weeding, we decided not to make any big changes for a year so we knew what we had to work with. Now we've got a plan for next spring.

The first year in a church is a lot like the first spring in a garden - full of delightful surprises and unexpected gifts, as well as some unanticipated challenges. I've spent these last nine months doing some necessary pruning, fertilizing, and weeding, but mostly I've been watching to see what blooms at Plymouth Church - and what I have to work with. The good news is there is an abundance of gifts!

In worship, our attendance has risen significantly over the year before as members and friends have returned and visitors found their way into worship. Plymouth has a remarkable worship staff. Jim Riggs is one of the finest church musicians I've ever known, blessed with musical talent, boundless energy, and a deep faith. Stephen Adams has a unique spiritual sensitivity and keen aesthetic eye - and we will miss him dearly. Working with the Worship Department, we have put together Sunday services that are inspiring and beautifully integrated. Two of the highlights this year were the Wednesday Lenten services and the crowded sanctuary on Easter. I'm looking forward to incorporating lay readers into worship, as well as developing opportunities for our children to participate in worship.

We have seen more visitors recently, and welcomed 19 new members into our Plymouth family. I can't thank the Evangelism and Growth Department enough for the fine work they've been doing contacting old members, following up with visitors, and doing the public relations work that is so essential to church growth. We have a number of new members ready to join in the coming year and I look forward to more robust growth in the congregation.

On the spiritual development side, it was great to work with the Witnessing Department and help create some new adult education opportunities, as well as host a successful Town Hall Forum on the state of education. The new Monday bible study has been a big success, with 15-20 participants every week. For 2009, we plan to host another Town Hall Forum, this one focusing on how faith communities can serve veterans. In addition, I'd like to start an adult theology discussion group by next fall. I also learned more about Stephen Ministry, the role it plays at Plymouth Church and the potential for growth in this program.

One of the greatest gifts of Plymouth Church is the talented and committed staff. I was surprised by the amount of time I spend on management issues, but it's really a pleasure because the people who work at this church are an outstanding group of individuals. In the spring, we had our first staff retreat and came away with a plan of action and a shared sense of purpose. I'm looking forward to welcoming the Rev. Lois Annich to our staff, and finding the right person to minister to our children and youth.

Another gift was working with the lay leaders at Plymouth Church. There is an amazing breadth and depth of talent in this congregation. In particular, it was a pleasure working

with Jeff Pollock and Robb Forward, as well as the other lay leaders. Together, we set some priorities and goals at our Council retreat, and I'm pleased to say we are making progress. My plan for 2009 is to continue to address our goals (increased attendance, more vibrant youth and children's ministry, and financial health) and set new priorities as the church continues to thrive.

In the wider community, I've busy raising the profile of Plymouth Church by talking with reporters, participating in community worship services, marching in the PRIDE parade, and attending Conference and Association meetings. Everywhere I go people are excited to hear what's happening at Plymouth Church. The buzz, as they say, is good.

Professionally, I finished my second book, **Faith in Conversation**, co-written with Dr. Shannon Craigo-Snell at Yale. I also wrote articles for the **Biblical Preaching Journal**, **The Clergy Journal**, and finished my work for the **Feasting on the Word** commentary series. For my continuing education, I attended the Festival of Homiletics in May and a writer's conference in August. In addition, I continue to serve on the Board of the Louisville Institute, which is a lot of work but deeply rewarding.

Returning to the garden metaphor, I did some pruning this year. We simplified the worship service in a way that fits the spirit of this congregation, and up-dated the language we use in the doxology. We're celebrating the conclusion of the Candy Circle ministry, and reinvented the Women's Fellowship meetings. I also planted a few new things. We adopted a new logo that communicates the new energy and vitality at Plymouth, and launched a fabulous new website where lots of people listen to sermons on line. There's a new youth group and a new (old) way of doing Sunday school. We celebrated Jim Riggs' 10th anniversary and bid good bye to Stephen Adams, who leaves to serve Archwood UCC in Cleveland.

All in all, it's been a wonderful first year. Now that I see the natural gifts and amazing potential of Plymouth Church, I'm ready to start making some new plans with you, planting some new programs, strengthening old ones, and growing in faith as we seek to be the church God has called us to be. May God bless us in the coming year!

### Acting Associate Minister, Rev. Stephen C. Adams

As we complete our first year of ministry with our new settled Senior Pastor, my time with Plymouth comes to a close. This year has been one of discernment for me. It has become clear to me that my call as Acting Associate Minister, was one of transition through the interim time and bridging Shawnthea's first year, and not to be a settled Associate Minister as I had first believed. Church lingo would call this an unintentional interim. The church is moving into a new time and new staffing configuration in the new year ahead. I have accepted the position of Interim Pastor for Archwood, UCC.

I have been blessed in many ways having been a part of the life and ministry of this church. The Plymouth Church community will remain in my thoughts and prayers.

Pastoral Care

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The year has been filled with regular pastoral care visitation in homes, nursing homes, hospitals and hospice facilities. I have continued to coordinate visits done by myself and the other staff. The Prayer Cards in the pews, have become a vital tool in caring for the wider church community. This has increased the awareness of those in need of prayer and support. Those noted on the cards are held in prayer each week by the staff, and the use of the prayer cards facilitated re-instituting the Prayer Chain ministry. Mrs. Pam Markt has continued to coordinate the Prayer Chain. The list of prayer requests also helps the Lay-visitation ChristCare group to be aware of needs within the congregation. I have also worked with many individuals and couples in counseling, as well as referring members to professionals in the community.

Over this past year I have conducted 4 funerals, 1 wedding, 1 Holy Union, and 1 baptism. I thoroughly enjoy doing the counseling sessions prior to the weddings and unions. It's such a privilege to facilitate deeper communication between a couple as they seek to grow in their relationship with each other and God.

### Caring Department

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Besides being the staff liaison for the department, I also work directing with the ministries that come under the Caring Department. I have enjoyed attending the Women's Association gatherings and the Wednesday Night Food and Fellowship. It was a blessing to see the Women's Association gatherings become a scheduled monthly event with Shawnthea's guidance and support.

**ChristCare:** I have continued to help facilitate the ChristCare Equiper meetings. I led an educational retreat for the current and former CC Equipers. We held it at Trinity Commons. The day was filled with renewal and reconnection.

**Stephen Ministry:** I continued to help facilitate the bi-monthly Stephen Ministry meetings. This year has been one of focus on the Caregivers as well as the Care receivers. A number of our Caregivers have needed to refrain from taking Care receivers due to circumstances in their own lives. The group has been important in caring for each other. I led an education retreat for the SM Leaders and Caregivers. Stephen Ministry needs people to come forward for training, as well as previously trained Stephen Ministers to become active again, to meet the growing pastoral needs of this congregation.

### Children and Youth

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I continued to cover the leadership with much of the youth programming this year, due to position of Associate for Children, Youth and Families, not being filled as anticipated.

**Youth Mission Trips:** I coordinated the youth/adult mission trip this year. In June we took the Senior High & Junior High youth and adults to the Heifer Ranch in Perryville, Arkansas. This was again a "learning and serving" trip. We worked on the Ranch, caring for the animals, land and crops. For many, it was a "first working" with farm animals so closely. The animals were from the many places around the world where people are supported by Heifer. We worked with camels, water buffalo, donkey, llamas, ducks, chicken, pigs, rabbits, sheep, goats and cattle. We even had to deal with the wild life in the woods as well: snakes, spiders, and wasps to name a few. The physical work was balanced with the work of learning about the world's needs and conditions

around hunger and poverty. Heifer doesn't just supply animals to people, but helps to teach sustainable living and love and care of neighbor.

**Youth Program:** I have continued to be involved in the planning of the youth events and in the adult leadership (ie. Sr. High Lock-in and Middle School Lock-in.) I continued to co-lead one of the Youth ChristCare groups that meets every other week on Sunday afternoons. The Dively Books for High School Seniors this year will be given in June, 2009.

### Partnership and Services

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I am the staff liaison to the P&S Department. I enjoy being a resource to the department and supporting the vital ministry of our congregation's wider mission. We are working directly in many local outreach ministries, as well as financially supporting many organizations locally, and throughout the United States and abroad. As a department we furthered the new dialogue about the theological and moral grounds that focus our decisions to fund various programs from year to year. The giving in 2009 will reflect these discussions, as some previously funded agencies will cease to receive funding, some will have funding amounts increased or decreased, and new agencies are being added. Again this year, I have been involved in various ways with our ministries through Buckeye-Woodland School, Interfaith Hospitality Network, Hunger Center and SERRV, and as staff liaison with the Deaconess Foundation.

### Worship

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I have continued to be a part of worship planning and leadership. Although my role has changed in some ways over this year, worship continues to be a vital part of my life and ministry.

### Wider Church

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**NOCC:** As a part of the wider church community, I am the liaison for Plymouth to the Northern Ohio Coalition Chapter. This is a group of lay and clergy that represent all of the ONA churches in Northern Ohio, and supports the various ONA congregations, including those going through the ONA process. The group also facilitates educational, worship and spiritually nurturing opportunities for the wider community. Dee Burt has begun taking a lay-leadership role as the designated ONA person and has pulled together other interested lay people to keep issues around ONA alive in the life of the congregation.

**Shaker Ecumenical Clergy:** Thanks to Rev. Peter Faas, of Christ Episcopal Church, the Shaker Heights clergy continued to gather monthly to support each other, share information with each other about the various programs and ministries of our congregations, and to discuss concerns common to us in Shaker Heights and the nation. We currently have clergy attending from Baptist, Episcopal, Methodist, UCC, Unitarian Universalist, Unity, and Roman Catholic congregations. The Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service last year was a success. We met with the mayor of Shaker Heights this past year and out of that discussion a Shaker Heights Volunteer Work Day for the religious community was born.

In closing, although I did not know for certain going into this past year that I'd be leaving at its close, I continue to feel God's leading in my life and the life of this congregation.

One of the most common sins of our culture is the desire that things remain the same. I fall prey to that sin all too often myself. I am thankful for my Call to Plymouth Church and the time we have journeyed together. These two years are not a long time, but they have been significant.

## Minster of Music and The Arts, James P. Riggs

This report reflects information beginning in January 2008 to the present. In June 2008 I marked my tenth anniversary at Plymouth Church. I remain grateful for the wonderful celebration the church gave me including a title change to Minister of Music and The Arts. God is good and we are blessed as seen in the report that follows.

The year 2008 hailed the arrival of The Rev. Dr. Shawnthea Monroe, Plymouth's new Senior Minister. It has been a privilege and a joy for me to work with this talented woman in worship planning and in other facets within the life of the church. I look forward to learning and sharing in ministry with Shawnthea, our talented staff, and the good people of Plymouth Church.

The second season of AND (A New Day) was launched in January with about 12-18 children participating. During the season of Epiphany "MoreLight" services were offered with the children offering musical leadership. Also in January, a handbell reading session was held for local churches. This ministry enabled folks from all abilities of musicianship to come to Plymouth to learn about ringing and to preview new music.

Plymouth's ongoing partnership with the Cleveland Art Museum's Viva and Gala Around Town continued in March with a concert by the Brentano String Quartet. Again the Museum is presenting the Calder Quartet for a concert in November. It is great to hear these distinguished quartets perform at Plymouth. The Chancel Choir enjoyed its second year partnership with Fairmount Presbyterian Church and First Baptist Church for a performance of Ralph Vaughan Williams' **Dona Nobis Pacem** and **Serenade to Music** with orchestra under the leadership of Robert Porco, Director of Choruses for the Cleveland Orchestra. Plymouth remains a home to CIM, Music Together, and the Cleveland Pops Orchestra.

In April music was provided for the installation service of Dr. Monroe and in the same weekend the church partnered with the Cleveland Chapter of the American Guild of Organists to bring acclaimed composer K. Lee Scott to Plymouth to lead a hymn festival with a community choir, brass, handbells, and organ.

Summer Choir played a vital role in musical leadership during the summer months, as did the paid soloists and volunteers from the choir. The music staff saw several changes this year. Abigail Rockwood completed her degree at CIM and left Plymouth in May, after two wonderful years of service, to accept a position at St. Paul's Cathedral, Buffalo, NY. Alto Soloist, Jennifer Rice, departed in August after five years of devoted service to move to Pittsburgh to pursue other career opportunities.

Elizabeth Tredent, a sophomore at CIM, has been hired as Alto Soloist and Patrick Wickliffe has been hired as our new Music Intern. In addition to our other talented

soloists and volunteers the Chancel Choir now has a roster of thirty-three - the highest in years! In fact, after purchasing new choir robes last year, the choir is now in need of purchasing additional robes. Indeed this is a great problem to have. In addition, the Plymouth Ringers has a full ensemble of committed folks ringing the churches four-octave set of handbells. Words cannot fully express my gratitude and joy at the devotion and leadership of these folks.

I played for seven funerals/memorial services. I oversee and meet with ArtsPlymouth, attend meetings of the Worship Department and Church Council. With the departure of the Rev. Stephen C. Adams, I, along with other staff, am helping during this transition in making sure there is staff coverage. For me, that includes helping with Confirmation and being the staff liaison to the Caring Department.

Outside of Plymouth, I led a workshop for the Cleveland Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, played two organ recitals, attended the Montreat Conference on Church Music, participated in the Berkshire Choral Festival, and attended the UCC Musicians Conference. I continue to teach two organ students.

Looking ahead - PipeScreams VI is back again in a few weeks with another power point presentation and, hopefully, for the first time will be taped for viewing on YouTube. Work is under way for our third choir partnership of Haydn's Creation with distinguished guest conductor, Robert Page. And, another bell workshop will be held in January 2009.

For the coming year my goals include involving more children/youth in worship leadership, resurrecting the Plymouth Pulse Drum Circle, and beginning an evaluation process of Plymouth's three Steinway Pianos - two of these pianos are at least eighty years old and showing signs of needed repair.

Lastly, I would like to share that "worship is happening." With fine preaching and fine music leadership now is the time for all of us to come together weekly to share our joys, our sorrows, our hopes, our failures; to pray, to sing, to laugh, to cry. Our church will grow only when we realize the need to attend worship on a regular basis. Now is the time to make a difference.

My heartfelt thanks to you Plymouth Church, the staff, and the leadership for your ongoing support of me and sacred music in this place. I look forward to seeing what the ever still-speaking God has in store for your individual lives and for Plymouth Church in the coming year.

## Director of Operations & Finance, Rachel Perry

I want to thank Jeff Pollock for providing tremendous leadership as Plymouth's President over the last two and half years. Likewise, Christine Bretz, Treasurer, has been a wonderful partner in managing Plymouth's finances over the last two years. Finally, I would like to thank Dave Fulton for his ongoing support and assistance in managing the property as chair of B&G for the last several years. My staff continues to work diligently on behalf of Plymouth Church. Sky Arsinchuck stands out for his superior management of the property including the day-to-day oversight of the capital improvement project. Our major accomplishments are highlighted below:

## Financial

- The capital campaign continues to be a great success. Restoration work is still underway and it is projected to be both on time and on budget. After raising \$1.15 million in pledges (compared to the original goal of \$700,000) donors fulfilled 99% of their pledges for 2007 and have fulfilled 82% of their 2008 pledges at the time of this writing. The financing structure includes pledges, matching gifts from the Foundation and short-term borrowing from National City. The timing of the Foundation matches and borrowing are being managed to ensure liquidity, positive earnings on unspent funds and lowest costs for borrowed funds.
- Successfully completed a GAAP audit of our 2007 financial statements in the summer of 2008. The auditors gave us a clean audit review concluding that our financial statements are accurate and present Plymouth's financial information fairly. The full GAAP audit mandated a temporary conversion of our fund-based records to a GAAP format, which required significant effort by Connie Spielman, Financial Assistant, and me between January and August of this year. As a result of recommendations made by the auditors, we have or are in the process of implementing two policy changes (keeping donation envelopes and adopting a conflict of interest policy).
- Investigated alternatives for Plymouth's cash during the financial crisis in the fall of 2008, with input from the Finance Committee and Foundation Directors. We considered repo sweep accounts, opening additional bank accounts, and tiered CDs, but in the end (and partially based on FDIC insured limits being raised to \$250,000) determined to keep our cash at National City Bank and Vanguard for now. I am regularly working with National City to ensure that we are enrolled in the best possible account (highest earnings/lowest fees) available.
- Completed a detailed analysis of special funds and made recommendations accepted by Council to transfer some dormant funds to the operating budget, to more appropriately distribute interest earnings, and to encourage Department chairs to use continuing special funds as they are intended. One specific change that grew out of this discussion was the combining of the Easter, Christmas and Sanctuary Flower Funds into the Worship Enrichment & Flower Fund.
- Provided ongoing financial information and assisted with budgeting for the 2008 mission trip.
- Created a proportional analysis of operating expenses that distributes operational expenses and compensation expenses to every department and ministry.
- Strengthened the Finance Committee by asking two members-at-large with significant financial expertise to join.
- Conducted ongoing analysis of gas and electric utility costs and supplier options to enjoy the best savings possible with helpful advice from Mike & Cindy Brakey.
- Continued to work with Parent's Day Out to more precisely budget.
- The annual campaign for FY2008 faced challenges as it was undertaken during the interim ministry period. The campaign asked members to consider the Heart, Soul & Spirit of Plymouth Church and aimed to reconnect our Plymouth Family. While the total amount pledged was 4% below 2007 pledges, it did attract 19 new pledges and raised the average family pledge amount to its highest level to date. I was involved in all aspects of the campaign.
- The annual campaign for FY2009 is currently underway. Its theme is Giving In

Faith To Serve (GIFTS) and its goal is to raise \$700,000. The most significant challenge to this year's campaign is the current economic uncertainty. At the time of this writing, those who have pledged for 2009 have increased by 8% over what they pledged for 2008. I am providing data and data analysis for the campaign.

- A projected budget deficit for FY2008 required that Departments cut 3% from their spending requests for the current year. In addition, a portion of the '07 surplus offset the '08 deficit.
- At the time of this writing, the budgeting process for FY 2009 has just begun. I am estimating all revenue numbers and fixed costs (operational and compensation-related) and Departments are preparing their budget requests. Once 2009 annual pledges are received and the Finance and Personnel Committees make their recommendations regarding fixed cost spending levels, Council will pass the FY2009 budget in December of 2008.

### Personnel

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- Selected a new health insurance provider after much research into costs and coverage. By selecting a higher deductible plan (church pays half the deductible amount for each employee), we should save at least a few thousand dollars annually. In addition, the new provider includes more doctors and medical facilities than our last plan.
- Worked on employment agreements and hiring paperwork for new employees.
- Continue to manage the Vantage flexible spending program and employee retirement plans.
- Planning for regulatory changes related to 403(b) plans that go into effect Jan. 1, 2009.
- Celebrated Gale Jones' 29 years of service as Plymouth's Housekeeper. Also helped Gale prepare for retirement by assisting with paperwork related to her retirement income and health insurance.
- Contracted with Euclid Industrial Maintenance to increase James Lake's hours as our Evening and Weekend Custodian and to bring Rose Munn on as our part-time Housekeeper.
- Managed office, financial and custodial staff.
- Provided financial data for profiles used in minister searches.
- Continuing to collect disclosure forms from volunteers for children's programs.

### Information Technology

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- Worked with IT consultants to install new server and to better organize drives within server by function area.
- Based on recommendations from Mike Kimmel, started working with Sermoncast which allows us to offer audio recordings of sermons on our website. We had hoped to be able to offer entire worship service recordings online, but copyright issues for music make that too expensive and too complicated.
- Launched our new website. After much research about website templates and new hosting companies and with much assistance from Mike Kimmel and Simon Williams, we chose Churchsites.com. Over the summer, I designed the website while we worked out the technical details. The new site was launched in early September and it includes a home page with a slide show and our new logo; individual pages for each department of the church; audio sermons; an up-to-date calendar; downloadable documents such as pledge cards, the

- Perspective, Constitution, etc.; and a map and directions.
- Completed installation of a new web-based HVAC system which allows for more efficient heating and air conditioning scheduling.
- Continued managing all tasks associated with server management, setting up new users, installing new software, managing and updating virus software, upgrading hardware, performing weekly server backup function, and dealing with urgent problems as they arise.
- Other IT tasks include: ACS backups, maintenance of office equipment, management of HVAC system, and management of phone system.

## Facility

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Our facility is beautifully maintained thanks to the tireless work of our maintenance and custodial staff. They work diligently to set up for meetings and other occasions, to clean the entire building including extra cleaning projects in the summer, to ensure that the building is secure, and to perform sudden repair and maintenance work as needed. Sky Arsinchuck, Gale Jones (retired in June), James Lake and Rose Munn are a blessing for Plymouth. They work very hard and take the initiative to creatively solve problems. Many of the projects listed below were successfully completed because of the hard work and dedication of Sky Arsinchuck.

- Managed all aspects of the capital improvement project, from financial to construction, with significant assistance from the B&G Department. Phase 1 ran from June, 2007 through February, 2008. It included steeple restoration, sanctuary roof replacement, cupola restoration, front entrance rebuild, and chimney repairs. The quality of the work by Frost Building Maintenance and Gaede Serne Architects has been superior and we were honored with the Shaker Heights Landmark Commission Preservation Honor Award in September 2008 for our Phase 1 work. Phase 2, which began in May 2008 and should wrap up in November 2008, includes roof replacement on the two building wings, masonry repairs throughout the entire building, window restoration on the sanctuary building, wood repairs throughout the building, exterior painting, new gutters and downspouts, and storm sewer repairs. The project is on time and on budget.
- Launched the Green Initiative in September, 2008. B&G started discussing "green" ideas late in 2007 when it agreed to budget for Plymouth's participation in the Entrepreneurs for Sustainability - Sustainability Implementation Group process for faith-based organizations. That process is scheduled to commence this year. Staff have taken some small steps such as purchasing green cleaning supplies, using 100% recycled paper, placing more recycling bins throughout the building, and generally trying to consume less gas and electricity. The dozen members who are participating in the Green Initiative are developing short- and long-term goals and are currently in the process of considering two architect proposals for an assessment and an energy audit.
- Replaced the elevator motor. After the elevator stopped working at the end of last year, we considered replacing the pump and motor, but that decision would have forced us to replace the elevator jack as well. Because we are unsure if we will try to improve the current elevator or be forced to build an entirely new elevator shaft, we decided to replace just the motor for now.
- Designed and installed new interior signs. After much feedback from members and visitors alike, we determined that we needed more informative interior signs.

Template signs were up in the summer and based on comments related to the templates, the sign design and layout were finalized and the new signs were created and installed.

- Entered into a new copier lease for both a black and white and a color machine. The lease is less expensive than our former lease and the machines are higher quality. The color machine allows us to print the Perspective newsletter in color.
- Completed electric wiring and circuitry upgrades in education wing.
- Ordered defibrillator from Cardiac Science, a brand recommended by the American Heart Association. Staff were formally trained. I introduced the AED to the ushers who will be more formally trained later this year.
- Repaired and repainted the Sanctuary ceiling due to damage caused prior to new roof installation.
- Increased our property valuation for insurance purposes after investigation revealed that our organs were undervalued.
- Created long-term maintenance plan to help guide future budget decisions and planning.
- Oversaw the redecoration of Shawnthea's office.
- Purchase a new sound system for the Chapel.

#### Other

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- Redesigned Nominating Committee notebooks to include more descriptive information about elected offices and more user-friendly tables and documents.
- Continue to serve as Vice President of the local chapter of the National Association of Church Business Administrators.
- Gave a meditation at a Lenten service in February.
- Prepared the UCC year-end report that asks for membership and financial information.
- Helped Shawnthea with the new logo design process by finding and interviewing designers and working with the selected designer to finalize the logo.
- Investigated volunteer opportunities for staff. The staff will undertake its first group volunteer session at the Cleveland Food Bank in November. I have started volunteering myself for Senior Outreach Services.

#### Tenants

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- The Cleveland Institute of Music's Department of Continuing and Preparatory Music continues to hold lessons here five days a week in three rooms during the school year. In addition, CIM held five concerts in our Chapel.
- Continued relationship with the Cleveland Museum of Art which hosted the Brentano String Quartet at Plymouth in March and will host the Calder Quartet in November as part of its Viva! & Gala Around Town concert series.
- Continued relationship with the Cleveland Pops Orchestra which holds rehearsals in our Fellowship Hall five times a year.
- Our ongoing affiliations with Music Together, Interlochen, and several individual musicians make Plymouth a music center for the community.
- Worked with City of Shaker Heights to update the occupancy permits for both Head Start and Parents' Day Out (PDO).
- We continued to work with the Head Start and PDO programs to meet their ongoing maintenance, cleaning and scheduling needs, including projects mandated by changing codes.
- Continue to host elections in Fellowship Hall.

- Continued to host many additional groups, including several AA groups, the Cleveland Ecumenical Institute, English Language classes, Girl Scout activities, IHN, Shaker Condo Association, Tai Chi, and others.

### Acting Dir. of Children's Programming, Lindsey Robison

During the past year as the Acting Director of Children's Programming I have seen some positive changes. After a year of having Sunday School during church, it was decided that it would be best to move it back to 9:30 am, before church. With that move came the choosing of new curriculum. A small committee was presented with four different curriculums that I thought would best suit the children and the committee picked the one they saw fit. The committee picked **Gather Round**, which is a Bible based curriculum that teaches the children through Bible verses about justice, peace and how to fit the scriptures and teachings into their everyday lives. These lessons are taught using scripture, prayer and stories. The children are able to choose from different responding activities at the end of each lesson.

I have had the privilege to recently start a 9-12 grade Senior High Youth Group. Here for the youth come together, learn about each other, and most importantly have FUN! Some activities that we have already partaken in are, whirlyball, movie night, game night, and we volunteered at the Fall Funfest at the Shaker Heights Family Center. A Halloween Party, snow tubing, and cookie baking are just a few of the events we have to look forward to. The meeting time is usually Sundays 6:30-8:30 p.m. in the Krumbine Room unless planned otherwise.

## Parent's Day Out

Parent's Day Out has had another very successful year! We have maintained a full enrollment thanks in large part to the positive word-of-mouth advertising we get from current and past PDO families recommending us to their friends. We are so pleased to get this positive feedback and outstanding support from the parents who entrust us with their children. It is an affirmation that we are providing a quality program.

Both the PDO KIDS (ages 2 ½ - 4) and PDO PRE-K (ages 4-5) programs are popular with families from a wide range of eastern suburbs. This year we have 65 children enrolled, representing 61 families. There are 5 families who are members of Plymouth Church. Church members receive priority registration as well as a discount on tuition. Thanks to a scholarship fund set up by Debbie White, former director of PDO, we are able to offer financial assistance to families who need it.

A strong and dedicated staff continues to be the heart of our program. The child care industry typically has a high staff turnover rate and we are very lucky to have teachers who have devoted themselves to PDO for many years: Judy Thomas is beginning her 13th year at PDO, while Karen Sommers is starting her 11th year, and Yvette Shenk her 10th. Darlene Leahy is going into her 7th year and Melissa Lindsley her 4th year. We also have one new staff member, Monica Herbst, who joined the PDO family this fall. All of these women are incredibly hard-working and care deeply about the children and families who attend PDO. Their love and loyalty is what makes PDO the well-respected program that it has become and I cannot thank them enough!

~ Jean Albrecht, Director

## Department of Building & Grounds

The Department of Building & Grounds oversees all operational issues of the church including the building (utilities, grounds, cleaning, electrical, plumbing, roofing, painting, security, taxes, etc.) and church administration (office equipment including computers, office supplies, postage, etc.). In addition, we manage both the financial and operational impact of Plymouth's many building users.

### Capital Improvements

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This year B&G primarily focused on overseeing the church's exterior capital improvement project. Below is a summary of B&G's capital improvement work:

#### Phase 1: June, 2007 - February, 2008

Phase 1 included complete steeple restoration, sanctuary roof replacement, cupola restoration, front entrance rebuild, and chimney repairs. Frost Building Maintenance worked with subs Scaffco, Warren Roofing, and Javorek Metals and Gaede Serne Architects oversaw the entire project on the church's behalf. The quality of the work was superior and we were honored with the Shaker Heights Landmark Commission Preservation Honor Award in September 2008 for our Phase 1 work.

#### Phase 2: May, 2008 - December, 2008

Phase 2 includes roof replacement on the two building wings, masonry repairs throughout the entire building, window restoration on the sanctuary building, wood repairs throughout the building, exterior painting, new gutters and downspouts, and storm sewer repairs. Frost Building Maintenance is working with subs Scaffco, Durable Slate, and M&M Restoration. Gaede Serne Architects continues to oversee the project on the church's behalf. Both Gaede Serne Architects and Frost Building Maintenance met all of our expectations by completing their work in a timely and efficient manner and consistently provided high quality work. They always were highly cooperative and consistently worked very smoothly with members of the church staff. B&G worked hard to manage the project carefully so that we would meet our budget. At the time of this printing the project is on time and on budget!

### Other Projects

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- Plymouth's Green Initiative kicked off in September 2008. This subcommittee of B&G is investigating ways to implement sustainability practices at the church. Small steps are being taken right away, such as increasing recycling, using "green" cleaning supplies, and using 100% recycled paper. Larger projects are being considered including having an energy audit performed and creating a community garden.
- While we have been preoccupied with the capital improvement work, some other smaller projects/expenses occurred this year. Those projects include: designing and installing new interior signage, redecorating Shawnthea's office, repairing and repainting the sanctuary ceiling, replacing the computer server, and entering

- into a new and less expensive lease for our black and white and color copy machines.
- We continue to monitor our utility usage and look for ways to be more efficient, cut our usage and take advantage of savings rates. We upgraded our HVAC computer system to operate more efficiently.
  - Our elevator was out of service for a month at the end of 2007. We considered replacing the entire elevator jack, but decided instead to replace the motor as a short-term fix while we consider the long-term possible solutions. Those possible solutions include replacing the elevator jack on the existing elevator or building an entirely new elevator shaft and system.
  - We considered our property valuation for insurance purposes and decided that our organs were underinsured. We added coverage for an additional \$700,000, which fully covers the organs and all other property.
  - We continued to work closely with the Cleveland Institute of Music, Head Start, and PDO, our three most regular building users. In addition, the Cleveland Museum of Art continues to host Viva! & Gala Around Town concerts and the Cleveland Pops Orchestra continues to rehearse at Plymouth.

Rachel Perry, Director of Operations & Finance, and Sky Arsinchuck, Property Manager, monitored the capital improvement project with extraordinary diligence and skill, while expertly managing the ongoing maintenance of our physical plant, assisted by the other able members of the Plymouth staff. On behalf of our congregation, I wish to express to them my very deep gratitude. By the time this report is published, the project will be completed, with the possible exception of a few minor jobs that may have to wait until next spring. The exterior of Plymouth Church is in the best condition and has the finest appearance that it has enjoyed in many decades. Many thanks to the loyal members of our congregation whose generosity made possible these major improvements to the condition of our church building and to the enhancement of its beauty.

~ David C. Fulton, chair

## Archives Committee

As the basic work of establishing proper archives is virtually completed, no committee meetings were held in the past year. Three projects remain:

1. Find someone who will keep the archives up to date by adding copies of last year's records to their proper files.
2. Establishing one or more proper scrapbooks for posters, printed material, publicity, etc. (A volunteer has been found for this task.)
3. A basic review of pre-1920's materials and proper disposition of these items.

~ Jack E. Doxsey, Chairman

## Caring Department

The focus of the Caring Department for 2008 has been to make sure each committee is working well and meeting a need within the church. A few of the committees are no longer active (Lay-visitation), but we have added the Meal Ministry as well as the Feed

## Our Neighbors Initiative.

The Department's meetings are open to all. We have tried to meet more often this year and have found that a day meeting works well and enables more to attend. The various committees are listed below with a brief update about each:

### Stephen Ministry:

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A retreat for Stephen Ministry was held at Trinity Cathedral last winter. At present there are 8 Stephen Ministers of which 5 are Stephen Ministry leaders. A new training class needs to be held, hopefully sometime in 2009. The committee discussed ways to make the congregation more aware of the many services Stephen Ministry offers and to increase the number of people in the congregation who are served. There have been times when the Stephen Ministers have not had people to work with despite the fact that their small numbers. Emphasis was placed on the need for strong support from Plymouth's ministers for this program to succeed. Shawnthea attended a program on October 11th to learn more about Stephen Ministry.

### ChristCare

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ChristCare Groups are entering their seventh year at Plymouth Church. During this period, we have served over 100 members and friends of Plymouth Church. There are currently seven active groups, six adult and one youth group. See the ChristCare report for more details.

### Meal Ministry:

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Beth Karr felt a call to head up this new ministry. On the recommendation of the ministers and church members, she links meal makers with those people in the congregation who could use a meal due to illness, birth of a baby or any other reason. The response for meal makers has been good and we are beginning to communicate better with Beth to see that all those in need are served.

### Wednesday Night Food & Fellowship:

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Shelli Smith cooks as well as oversees various persons assuming responsibility for different weeks. Suppers will be hosted when there are programs scheduled by various Plymouth groups, such as ArtsPlymouth or the youth choir. The first dinner this fall will be held the evening of Pipe Screams.

### Memorial Receptions:

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Memorial receptions are under the leadership of Lydene Rutter and Jeannie Chaney. They provide lovely receptions after memorial services and are funded by the donations of thankful recipients. The silver closet was recently reorganized by members of the group. Lydene suggested having a sign-up sheet in the office for those wishing to use the silver. Jeannie is taking several pieces of silver in for repair.

### Flower Ministry:

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Teams take turns arranging bouquets from the altar flowers on Sunday and delivering them to brighten the days of others as suggested by the ministers and prayer requests.

Pam Beck is the coordinator.

#### Women's Association:

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Women's Association is coordinated by Lydene Rutter and Jeannie Chaney. Last spring attendance fell off and Lydene was having trouble making the lunch time meal. This fall Shelli Smith began cooking the meals. The group has agreed to a lunch meeting the 3rd Tuesday of every month and they will plan programs when they can. The group's last meeting was on October 21<sup>st</sup>. Rev. Dr. Shawnthea Monroe was the speaker.

#### Prayer Shawl Ministry:

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Plymouth's Prayer Shawl Ministry is flourishing. About 10 members gather at noon two Wednesdays a month to create prayer shawls which are given at times of joy and of stress. More than 166 shawls have been created and delivered since the ministry began in 2006. This year 4 baby blankets were created and presented to newborns and their families. The group continues to make hats and scarves for children at Buckeye-Woodland School. They were on display on the altar and dedicated during worship on October 19<sup>th</sup>, then delivered to the school. Over 200 hats and scarves have been created during the past 3 years. The group has been fortunate to receive several donations of yarn. Anyone is welcome to participate even if they cannot join the group in person. If anyone wants to give a prayer shawl to someone they know, even if it's not a Plymouth member, they can contact Peggy Stephens.

#### Candy Circle :

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Candy Circle is coordinated by Jeannie Chaney. Over the last few years the number of candy makers has dwindled. Finding able candy makers and dippers has become increasingly difficult and therefore, this fall will be the last time the group officially meets to make candy. Cooking will take place on November 6th and 7th and making the candy will be November 10th-14th. The Caring Committee is hoping that many people will offer to help the group this November and then celebrate their ministry during a special coffee hour to be held on November 23rd.

#### Picnic:

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The annual church-wide picnic was co-hosted by the Caring Department in June and was a huge success. Jim Riggs' 10 years at Plymouth was celebrated and the morning was filled with much fun, food, and music.

#### 50+ Year member Reception:

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The reception for 50-year-and-more members will be held November 9th this year. Typically 75-100 people attend these receptions. Sandwiches, punch, and cupcakes will be served. Eight people will be receiving badges this year.

#### Feed Our Neighbors:

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This initiative was started by the Caring Department this spring after it was noted that there was a growing request from strangers coming into the church asking for help with food. Church members have responded overwhelmingly to the initiative and we now have a small food pantry as well as grocery store gift cards to give to those in need.

~ Debbie White (chair) and Connie Naugle (vice chair)

## Candy Circle

In November 2007 the Candy Circle worked for one and one half weeks at which time we were able to produce one hundred and fifty pounds of candy. This was quite an accomplishment as we had a small number of workers due to deaths and illness but were helped by some new volunteers.

In February and March we were able to meet again and we produced 323 delicious Easter Eggs.

There was no distribution of our funds during the past year.

~ Jeannie Chaney, Chair

## ChristCare Groups

ChristCare Groups are entering their seventh year at Plymouth Church. These groups have become an important part of what makes Plymouth Church so special. During that period, we have commissioned 21 group leaders (including our equippers, who serve as the trainers and support system for group leaders) and over 100 members and friends of Plymouth Church have been members of various groups. There are currently seven active groups (six adult and one youth group for senior high students).

For ChristCare at Plymouth, 2008 has been a year of transition. Marisue Besse, one of the first equippers, has resigned after 7 years of exceptional leadership. She also disbanded her Lay Visitation ChristCare group. We owe her a debt of gratitude for her role in fostering ChristCare groups at Plymouth Church. Our newest equipper, Rev. Stephen C. Adams, will be leaving us at the end of October as he accepts a new call. We will miss Stephen's gentle spirituality. The two youth ChristCare groups combined into one. This is a normal evolution as youth graduate from high school and new students enter the upper grades.

Our groups are mature and continue evolving to meet the needs of their members. As you can see from the list below, we have groups that meet the needs of parents; groups that focus on society's issues; and groups with a fellowship/social, as well as spiritual, focus.

ChristCare Groups have four elements – Prayer and Worship, Fellowship, Biblical Equipping and Missional Service. Each group may have a particular focus, but each element is essential and is what sets ChristCare apart from other small groups. All groups are designed to be open at all times to new members and maintain strict confidentiality so that members are free to share as much or as little as they choose. The Missional Service element is increasingly apparent at Plymouth. For example, group members coordinate and serve communion, host coffee hour, serve as ushers on Sunday morning, and volunteer for IHN. Outside Plymouth, they are volunteers at the Cleveland Food Bank, New Life Community, the Shaker Hunger Center and Merrick House.

What is very apparent for ChristCare members is the special bond that develops between them. In times of difficulty, these connections have provided comfort and support in a very special way. Groups have experienced many significant transitions of their members – births, deaths, divorces, becoming empty nesters. These events have been made easier by the love, care, and prayers given by other members. Many have said that, for the first time, they are comfortable praying aloud and talking about the Bible. Deep relationships have developed between people who have, up until recently, only worked on committees together.

Regularly the group leaders meet with the equippers at SEA (Support, Encouragement and Accountability) Group meetings. It gives each leader a chance to tell how their group is going, to ask questions and bring up problems, if any. Two leaders also give a detailed "in-depth" report either on how it's going either for their group or for themselves as a leader. SEA Group is essentially a ChristCare group for the leaders with the same functions, including confidentiality, prayer & worship, fellowship, missional activities and Biblical Equipping. We recently reduced the meeting frequency to every other month.

The current ChristCare groups are:

Church & Society I	1st & 3rd Wednesdays, 7 - 8:30 pm	led by Laurie Rose
Church & Society II	1st & 3rd Wednesdays, 7 - 8:30 pm	led by Tim Mendelsohn
Readings on Faith w/Fellowship	1st & 3rd Thursdays, 7:30 - 9 pm	led by Megan Bhatia
Frantic Fathers	2nd & 4th Tuesdays, 7 - 8:30 pm	led by Simon Williams
Parents of Youth & Young Adults	1st & 3rd Sundays, 5 - 6:30 pm	led by Mary Bright
Youth ChristCare	1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sundays, 11:45 am - 1:15 pm (based on school schedules)	led by Jeannie Clarkson and Gloria Sturghill
Plymouth Cinematics	Meetings, times and locations vary	led by Pam Beck

~ Tim Mendelsohn, ChristCare Leader

## Stephen Ministry

Stephen Ministry provides supportive, non-judgmental, confidential care to members of our congregation and others. This year Plymouth's Stephen Ministers have had approximately 226 contacts with their care receivers.

The Stephen ministers meet twice monthly for peer supervision and continuing education. These meetings help us to improve our skills and support each other in our ministry. Continuing Education this year focused on an in-depth study of **Soul**

**Calling, Breathing Spirit into a Life of Service**, by Julie Ruth Harley. These monthly discussions were lively and inspiring. You may have noticed quotations from the book on the Stephen Ministry bulletin board.

At our annual retreat, we watched "Dominick and Eugene," a movie about the relationship between two brothers, one of whom is mentally challenged. The movie demonstrated the humanity of both men and challenged us to answer the question: "Who is the Christ figure?" The retreat was held at Trinity Commons and was a very stimulating and spiritual day.

Throughout the year, the leaders met regularly with Stephen C. Adams who is our staff liaison. We appreciate the insight and support he has provided and we will miss his sensitivity and contributions to our ministry.

The Stephen Ministers are looking forward to being a caring resource for the congregation during this period of transition.

If you or someone you know would like a Stephen Minister, or if you wish to learn more about Stephen Ministry or are interested in becoming a Stephen Minister, we urge you to contact one of the Stephen Ministry leaders. We will probably conduct a training class in 2009.

~ Norma Adams, Ellie Neuhauser, Kathy Smyth Rasey, Linda Tuthill, Leaders

## Wednesday Night Food and Fellowship

The 2008 Wednesday Night Food and Fellowship season was shortened to run from Epiphany through Lent. It was decided that we would only have dinners when there were events or services happening at church that would already draw people in. The children's music program, AND (A New Day), ran throughout this time. Epiphany brought the More Light children's worship services and Lent saw the traditional Wednesday evening Lenten services.

Attendance at the dinners was a steady group of around 50 people- many were families with children. It was a pleasure to have several families and groups help out by hosting a dinner, either cooking or coordinating the meal being brought in. As always, the evening was made brighter by having faithful volunteer Tess Eppich at piano.

~ Shelli Smith, coordinator

## Department of Children and Youth

The Department of Children and Youth's (C&Y) responsibility is to "coordinate the religious education functions of the church and promote the spiritual formation of Plymouth's children and youth." During 2008, this included overseeing Sunday School,

Pre-school Church, Children's Church, the Infant and Toddler Nursery, Confirmation, Vacation Bible School, Pre-K - 4th Grade Activities (formerly known as Children's Council), Youth Groups (grades 6 - 12), Youth Mission Trips, administration of the Dively Fund, and Parent's Day Out (PDO).

The current members of C&Y are Sandy Kaups, Chair; Scott Sutorius, Vice Chair (through June); Alex Green, Member-at-Large; Lindsey Robison (Children's Programming); Jean Albrecht (PDO); Karen Sommers (Nursery/Toddler Room); Shelli Smith; Gloria Sturghill; and Rev. Stephen C. Adams (through October).

As we entered our second transitional year, we faced some changes to our Committee. During the year, Scott and Stephen were called to other locations. The Children & Family minister search is on-going with Russell Lamb leading the search. We are hopeful to have someone in place by next fall.

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### Sunday School

Throughout the Spring Session, we continued with the Sunday School programming that was put in place for 2007-2008. This was a one-hour Sunday morning children's program held during worship in Fellowship Hall using the Workshop Rotation format for children in grades K-8. We evaluated the program in May and recommended changing the program back to a more traditional model. In September, we reverted to offering a Sunday School children's programming from 9:30-10:20 a.m. with three different grade levels: K-2, 3-5, and 6-8. We used **Gather Round** which is a Bible-based curriculum for all ages that teaches the children and youth "to embrace service and peacemaking, and to share their Christian faith with others."

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### Pre-school Church

The pre-school church program for three and four year olds was held in Room 2 during worship. Pam Beck, parents, and other volunteers taught for lengths of 1 week to 1 month. We also use the **Gather Round** curriculum for this age group.

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### Children's Church

We did not have a Children's Church class through June as we were completing the one-hour format from the 2007-08 year. However, we reinstated Children's Church programming during the worship hour beginning in September under the direction of Lindsey Robison. It is held in Room 102 for children in grades K-4th. The curriculum used is **Godly Play**. **Godly Play** presents Bible stories to the children in a more visual, imaginative way and it gives the children a chance to respond to the stories using hands on activities.

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### Infant and Toddler Nursery

The Infant and Toddler Nursery room cares for children from birth to 4 years old. The Nursery is located in Room 202. Karen Sommers is the main staff support. She is helped each week by either Melissa Nealon or Judy Thomas. The nursery is staffed on Sunday mornings from 9:15 a.m. until noon. They have also provided child care for most of the special events throughout the year, including the Lenten Dinner and Service on Wednesday evenings and the Mission Trip Fundraiser dinner.

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## Confirmation

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The Confirmation program was restarted this year under Shawnthea's leadership, with help from adult leaders and staff members. Since we did not have a Confirmation class in 2007-08, this year's class is a combination of the current 9th and 10th grade students. Classes are held on Wednesday evenings beginning in October.

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## Vacation Bible School

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Plymouth's fifth annual Vacation Bible School was held this year from July 21st - 24th. Lindsey Robison, Ginny Williams, Pam Beck and Janet Wilkens worked together to make it a great experience for the kids. Over 20 children from pre-K to 4th grade participated, including a lot of non-Plymouth members. Some heard of the program through our website, and there were a lot of friends of Plymouth members. There were four morning sessions and a Thursday evening session designed so that the entire family could participate. The Heifer Ranch curriculum "Animal Crackers" was used. There was no cost for the program, except approximately \$60 for snacks. So, we did not charge for attendance (in the past the cost has been \$20 per child). We should consider this in the future if possible. The children raised money during the week and used it to purchase chicks through the Heifer program.

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## Pre-K - 4th Grade Activities (formerly known as Children's Council)

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We held many activities this year for our pre-kindergarteners through fourth graders. We started the year with AND (A New Day, the Children's Music & Arts Ministry), and weekly "More Light" worship services organized and presented by Jim Riggs. This was followed in February with baking Valentine's Day cookies which were delivered to members and friends who can't make it to church regularly. In April we hosted our special Holy Week Egg Hunt where the children find eggs filled with symbols of the season rather than candy. To complete the year, we are planning activities for UNICEF boxes for Halloween, a food drive to benefit the Hunger Center, SugarPlum workshop and a Christmas Pageant.

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## Youth Group Activities (Grades 6-12)

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We have two youth group age levels at Plymouth: the first for 6th - 8th graders led by Shelli Smith and Connie Naugle; and a Senior High Youth Group for 9th - 12th graders, which is being led by Lindsey Robison and Robb Forward.

The groups participated in many activities this year including: Cosmic bowling, movie and board game nights, our annual Car Wash on the day of the All-Church picnic, Mission Trip (see below for more details), weekend trip to NYC, Whirlyball, volunteered our time at Shaker Family Center Fall Funfest and had a Halloween Costume competition.

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## Mission Trip

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Combined Junior/Senior High Mission Trip to Heifer Ranch, Arkansas  
See Rev. Stephen Adam's report.

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## Dively Fund

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In 1983, Michael Dively established an annual scholarship in memory of his mother, Harriet Dively, who was an active member of Plymouth Church. In 2002, a proposal to

the endowment fund was accepted which changed the Fund's support for the Church's youth program in two ways:

- To fund the Harriet Dively Books, to be presented annually to high school seniors in recognition of their contributions to Plymouth Church.
- To enhance the youth programs of Plymouth Church, as determined by Church Council.

This year, the Annual Harriet Dively Senior Recognition Books were presented to high school seniors.

## PDO

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See Jean Albrecht's report.

~ Sandy Kaups, Chair

## Department of Evangelism and Growth

Department members are: Marisue Besse, Sue Galicz, Roberta Gilles, Sheryl Harris, Sharon Mendelsohn, Brian Smith.

Now concluding its fourth year, the department continues its efforts to introduce Plymouth Church to the wider community, to welcome all visitors, and to introduce joining members to their new church family.

The department has several committees and ministries to achieve these goals.

### Publicity and Marketing

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This mission is to create advertising, design marketing tools, write press releases and implement direct mail campaigns, with the purpose of generating public awareness of Plymouth within the greater community.

Sharon Mendelsohn has created ads appearing in The Sun Press for Christmas and Easter. Sharon also submits weekly press releases announcing activities, programs, staff changes, and building renovation. She coordinates with newspaper writers on feature articles.

Sharon Mendelsohn and Sue Galicz, designed and implemented an Easter postcard mailing entitled, **Come for the Mystery. Stay for the Miracle.** With the help of Roberta Gilles and Marisue Besse, it was mailed to 1,000 households made up of new homeowners in nearby zip codes, and the Plymouth mailing list of members, friends, and visitors.

### New Neighbor Ministry

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This initiative continues to reach out to new homeowners in Shaker Heights. Our tri-fold brochure, **Our Neighborhood Worshiping Community; A Guide to Houses of Worship in the Shaker Heights Area**, is given to new Shaker Heights residents by Pat Pogue. This brochure includes a welcome letter from Rev. Dr.

Shawnthea Monroe and includes the names, addresses, phone numbers and web addresses of area churches and synagogues.

### Visitor Information Ministry

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Sharon Mendelsohn is responsible for this behind-the-scenes task of managing the roster of visitor' names, addresses, attendance, and other information in the church database. Welcoming letters are sent to all first-time visitors, and Visitor Reports on new and returning visitors are prepared for the ministerial staff's weekly review. Marisue Besse calls all first-time visitors to welcome them and ask them to return.

### Inquirers' Gatherings and New Member Ministry

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Frequent visitors are invited to Inquirers' Gatherings as a prologue to membership. These are available several times a year. Rev. Dr. Shawnthea Monroe gives a 90-minute orientation to Plymouth. The second gathering includes dinner and questions. New members are welcomed with a reception in their honor following the service.

"New member ambassadors" support new members throughout their first year of membership. These ambassadors are Roberta Gilles, Rob Kiener, Karen Nordstrom, Paul Qua, Mike Rapp, and Linda Tuthill. Brian Smith takes pictures of new members for our bulletin board. We thank this group because they believe it is their privilege and responsibility to support the congregation's desire to keep new members connected to Plymouth Church.

### Website Committee

On September 5, 2008 Plymouth's new website launched ([www.plymouthchurchucc.org](http://www.plymouthchurchucc.org)). It includes a home page with a slide show and our new logo; individual pages for each department of the church; audio sermons; an up-to-date calendar; downloadable documents such as pledge cards, the Perspective, Constitution, etc.; and a map and directions. We continue to hear that visitors to the church found us first through our website. Clearly, this continues to be an important evangelism tool.

Thanks to the hard work of Mike Kimmel, Simon Williams and Rachel Perry for investigating the website design and hosting options and the options for audio offerings on the site. Thanks to Rachel Perry for creating the new site using ChurchSites.com and thanks to Karen Schmauder for continuing to update the site with current information. Finally, thanks to Rachel Gardiner for ensuring that sermons are recorded and uploaded to the site.

~ Marisue Besse, Chair

### Department of Partnership and Service

The department of Partnership and Service has met four times during 2008. During this year, Cindy Chapman has served as chair, Tracey Key as vice-chair and Stephen C.

Adams as the staff liaison. The department meetings have benefitted from the regular attendance of our liaisons with partner organizations: Jeannie Clarkson, Barb McCue and Merce Robinson from Plymouth IHN; Sally Menges for Buckeye-Woodland; and Leslie Landreth, SERRV.

Our main task as a department this year was to better educate ourselves and the congregation about the partner organizations we fund through Partnership and Service. We discussed the essential role of a church-member liaison for local Cleveland organizations as a person who reports to Partnership and Service about how funds are spent and educates the congregation about the organization.

One of the difficulties we acknowledged this year was that we do not have enough people to volunteer in all of the organizations that we currently support financially. We decided to focus our volunteer resources and our financial resources in a more concentrated way on fewer partner organizations. It is our hope that with new members joining, new volunteer interests will surface, and we can add new partner organizations based on where the energy of the congregation is focused. This year we added Senior Outreach services to our list of partner organizations. This is a local Cleveland organization that aims to meet the growing needs of seniors living at home alone.

Each year, partnership and service has a \$1000 special outreach fund that is designated to a particular organization to meet an unforeseen need. In 2007, we voted to award that money to the Cleveland Botanical Garden's youth green core program, a program that provides Cleveland youth with a paid summer internship. Our gift was matched dollar for dollar by a challenge grant. Youth in this internship learn organic gardening, healthy cooking and the skills of taking a product to market. This year, we decided to add this program to our regular budget as a partner organization beginning 2009. The 2008 special outreach funds went to the Cleveland Foodbank to help cover the increased need for food assistance in the wake of the power outage caused by Hurricane Ike.

Plymouth is 5-for-5 again this year, a designation the United Church of Christ has created to recognize those congregations that fulfill their covenant by supporting Our Church's Wider Mission Basic Support in addition to collecting One Great Hour of Sharing (for Global Ministries and Church World Service), Neighbors in Need (for Justice and Witness Ministries and the Council for American Indian Ministry), Strengthen the Church (for leadership development in small new and renewing congregations), and the Christmas Offering (for support for retired UCC pastors). Plymouth also collects special offerings from time-to-time for other purposes.

~ Cindy Chapman, Chair

## 2008 Budgeted Giving and Special Collections Chart

## Buckeye-Woodland

Buckeye-Woodland Elementary School, Plymouth's partner school, honors Plymouth Church for all of its help and support this past school year and wishes to thank us for the following contributions:

- Bert Antoine, Sally Menges, Pat Pogue and Doris Vargo served as tutors, reading with the students on a weekly basis throughout the year. They are volunteers with the Public Education Initiative of the Jewish Federation of Cleveland.
- The Peg Gray Book Fund collected \$5230.63 which was sent to the school, so that at least 7- 8 books per student in grades K - 8 were selected for their home libraries. Labels within each book acknowledged the gift as coming from Plymouth Church during the Book Fair on May 22.
- Fifty-Eight backpacks with school supplies were donated by you last September and given to those students who had no supplies to call their own.
- The Science Fair was held on May 28, and the Plymouth judges included Anne Cook and Sally Menges.
- The Prayer Shawl Ministry contributed forty-four hats for students in grade K - 3 in November. An additional five hats and mittens were donated in January.
- The Partnerships & Service Department contributed \$3800 in September 2007, and the principal has submitted a statement accounting for its expenditure.
- ArtsPlymouth generously contributed \$2069 to the school, providing an opportunity for all students in the school to attend selected theatrical and instrumental performances during the school year.
- The Women's Association also sent a generous contribution
- In-kind donations to the school from the following were gratefully acknowledged;
  - Carol Skoglund: Fifty-eight hand calculators
  - Janet Neary: Special supplies and several Harmonicas
  - Ida Mercer: School supplies

~ Sally Menges

## Hunger

After five years of service coordinating the volunteers for the Shaker Heights Hungers Center, Tess Eppich has been replaced by Catherine Hankins. Plymouth continues to assist with staffing this center, which helps approximately 200 household each month.

We will conduct a food drive in November. Financial support for the InterAct Cleveland Hunger Center and the Shaker Heights Hunger Center is a budgeted item, augmented

by contributions designated for "hunger" in the offering plate

~ Catherine Hankins, Coordinator

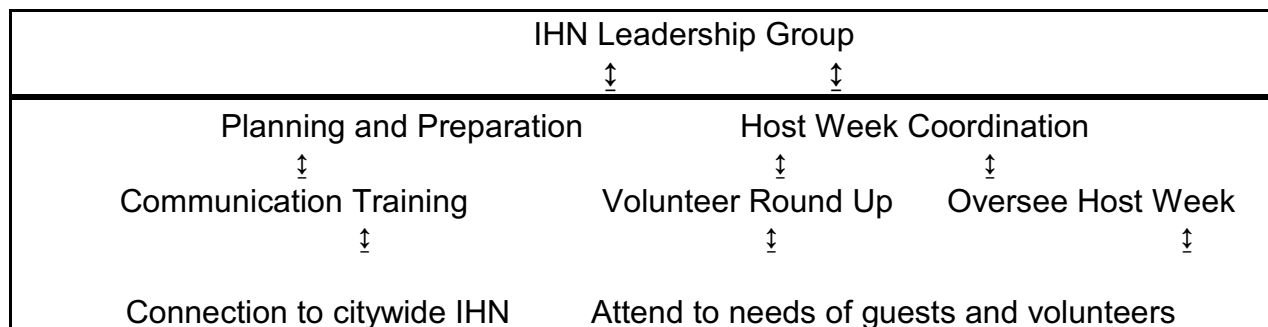
## IHN

Plymouth IHN (Interfaith Hospitality Network) had a successful year in providing shelter for homeless families. We were able to host the IHN guests three times this year: April, August and October. We cared for a total of 28 guests in 11 families over the three weeks.

To host a week of IHN takes a great deal of help. The volunteer positions are broken primarily into two-hour assignments. We are always in search of more volunteers.. Twelve people volunteered for the first time this year.

<u>Host Week</u>	<u>Guests</u>	<u>Volunteers</u>
April, 08	4 adults and 9 children	64 volunteers
August, 08	4 adults and 4 children	58 volunteers
October, 08	3 adults and 4 children	61 volunteers

Members of the IHN Leadership Group grew from three to four members. One member stepped down and two others stepped up. Currently, Gloria Sturghill, Merce Robinson, Barb McCue and Jeannie Clarkson share the coordination duties. The huge coordination job has been broken down into groups of tasks and the IHN Leadership Group works together to get the work done. We would like to encourage at least two more people to join the group in order to have different people handling each host week.



The Day Captain position was brought back in August to give continuity to the guests, to lessen the workload of the evening shifts, and to increase safety. The Day Captain takes charge from 5:30 PM through dinner and evening shifts and leaves when the overnight hosts arrive at 9:00PM. The Day Captain is someone with experience who is more familiar with the rules and how to handle different experiences. It is hoped that this will encourage new volunteers for the evening shifts.

In June, a celebration/training event was an overwhelming success. Invitations were sent to everyone who had volunteered in the past. Twenty-four folks responded that they would come but 38 actually attended. In Fellowship Hall, a party atmosphere was provided with balloons and colorful tablecloths. An icebreaker bingo game started the

evening. Funny skits with audience participation were used to illustrate common problems that come up during host weeks as well as introduce the position of Day Captain. IHN awards were given each attendee to honor the work they had done to make IHN successful. Pizza and dessert was served. The party ended with a plea for more help and a blessing for all.

~ Barb McCue, Co-Cordinator

## SERRV

Plymouth's SERRV committee, which includes Jim and Jeannie Chaney, Leslie Landreth, Barbara McCue, Helen Mercer, Jinny Nix, Kathy Smythe-Rasey, and Jane Underwood, meets in the fall of each year to order fairly traded handicrafts and foods from around the world through SERRV International. These products are then offered for sale in the weeks leading to Christmas.

SERRV is an organization that promotes living wages, women's rights and eco-friendly production through partnerships with small-scale artisans and farmer groups. SERRV prohibits child labor. Proceeds of \$1568 from the 2007 sale will be used to purchase merchandise for the 2008 sale and to support the giving mission of Plymouth as identified by the Partnership and Service Department.

~ Leslie Landreth, Chair

## Stewardship Department

The Stewardship Department's elected members for 2008 are Gloria Sturghill, Chair; Rob Kiener, Vice- Chair; and Anne Cook as Member-at-Large. Ex-officio members of the department are the Senior Minister, President of Council and Church Treasurer. The role of this department is to create and implement fundraising so that Plymouth can continue to fund its internal financial needs, such as salaries, building maintenance ,and programs within the church, as well as external financial support for the larger community.

The functions of the Stewardship Department are the Annual Campaign, Planned Giving, New Member Pledging and membership on the Finance Committee. The Chair (or Vice-Chair) of the department attends the monthly Finance Committee meetings. We hoped to focus attention on Planned Giving and New Member Pledging this year, but in order to make the best use of the committee's time and talent, the bulk of our attention was focused on the Annual Campaign.

Christine Bretz, as Church Treasurer, has been attending the quarterly meetings of Plymouth's Foundation. We had a discussion about the fact that an effort to better market the Foundation to raise awareness and opportunities for charitable giving should be further explored by the members of both the Foundation and the Stewardship Department in the future. Since the Foundation donates substantially to supplement Plymouth's annual budget, additional gifts to the Foundation strengthen it as well as Plymouth. As for New Member Pledging, more attention needs to be given to this area. Having a volunteer from the department at the Inquirer's Gatherings explaining

Stewardship at Plymouth would be a start.

This month, as the Annual Campaign kicks off, we will discuss budgeting and planning for 2009.

~ Gloria Sturghill, Chair

## Annual Campaign Committee

As we began planning for the 2008-2009 Annual Campaign, we wanted to make certain that we reached as many of our members and friends as possible. Our discussions helped us to realize that there are times when someone wants to donate but isn't financially able to do so. That same person may have time to volunteer and/or skills in certain areas. Our theme for the year - "Giving in Faith to Serve (GIFTS)" - came from those discussions. We set our goal at \$700,000, realizing that many families are paying their pledges for the successful capital campaign of 2007, and are also being affected by the current financial situation in the country. This goal will allow us to fund our current activities, but we are also asking for everyone to think about all of their GIFTS - to think about what Plymouth has done for them and what they can give to Plymouth - time and/or talents and/or finances.

The campaign kicked off with an all-church lunch on Sunday September 28 and runs through the end of October. We had inserts in the bulletin, articles in the Perspective, made use of Plymouth's newly-redesigned website, and asked three members to give "Stewardship Moments" on Sunday mornings, explaining why Plymouth is their church home and why they feel that support of the church is important. On Sunday, October 19, Rev. Roger Underwood, who spoke during Rev. Monroe's installation service, gave a sermon on Stewardship. The campaign wrapped up on "Celebration Sunday, October 26" with an all-church special coffee hour with a cake designed by Ramona Bause. Having the campaign in October allows us time to establish the budget before the end of December and more effectively plan for the coming year.

Graphic Designer Cynthia Van Lenten, who helped with the design of last year's printed materials, again designed our logo and brochure layout. Instead of a tear-off pledge card as part of the brochure, we decided to have a separate pledge card that can be mailed in, dropped in the collection plate or left in the office. All members received a letter from the committee that described the campaign and its goals, a brochure and the pledge card to be returned as soon as possible. On the website, we have placed a copy of the brochure and pledge card on the Stewardship Department page. Also, Pam Beck has designed a four-question survey asking members to think about Plymouth. She will be including some of the answers in a bulletin insert over the next few weeks and is videotaping those who have volunteered so that we can prepare a DVD of the comments to be used as a promotional piece for Plymouth. Answers to the survey will also be on the website. Anyone searching the site will be able to read in our own words what this church means, or has meant, to us. It's a powerful message to someone who might be searching for a new church home.

We were a small but extremely dedicated committee and I would like to thank everyone for their hard work - from the printed materials to party planning - Rob Kiener, Pam Beck, Paul Qua, Anne Cook, Shelli Smith and Betsy Stueber. I would also like to thank

the staff of Plymouth - especially Rachel Perry, Karen Schmauder and Rachel Gardiner - for their assistance. So many things would not have been possible without their assistance.

~ Gloria Sturghill, Chair

## Witnessing Department

The Witnessing Department provided a wide range of Adult Education programs throughout the past year, led primarily by members of our congregation and our ministerial staff. We also invited guest speakers from our national UCC office and from our community.

In January, we presented a series of programs examining the work of the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries. Jan Resseger, Plymouth member and UCC Minister for Public Education and Witness, coordinated this series and was a presenter along with Ann L. Hansen and Dr. Edie Rasell. Following this series, Plymouth member Cindy Chapman led an "Introduction to New Testament Gospels," and we continued the "Questions of Faith" video/discussion series with lay leader, Steve Kaufman.

In March we began the "Faces of Poverty" series, with a focus on issues of homelessness and poverty, led by Plymouth members Mary Bright (New Life Community) and Chris Karr (North East Ohio Coalition for the Homeless) and guest speaker Donna Kelly of the Care Alliance. We observed Earth Day (April 20) with guest speaker David Webster of the Clean Air Conservancy.

We learned about 20th century theologians with Jeff Pollock (An Introduction to Reinhold Niebuhr) and Rev. Shawnthea Monroe (Karl Barth and the Church) and examined "The Faith and Power of Pentecost" with Plymouth member, Bill Green. And on May 18, we participated in the UCC's "Conversation on Race" with Plymouth youth who are members of the Student Group on Race Relations at Shaker Heights High School. We finished our spring program with "Tai Chi as Movement Meditation," led by Charlene Nevans.

Our Department met monthly throughout the summer with Jan Resseger to plan our first Town Hall Meeting, "The State of Public Education: Federal Education Policy and How it Affects Our Children." This meeting was held on September 21, and was co-sponsored by the Shaker Heights PTO, the Shaker Heights Teachers Association and the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Teachers Union. Presentations by a panel of local educational leaders were followed by a question and answer session and reception.

We began our fall Adult Education programming with "The Book of Exodus: a 5-week Bible study course," led by Cindy Chapman, and then Steve Kaufman led a new video/discussion course, "Living the Questions." We will conclude the year with a 2-week course led by Bill Green, "William Sloan Coffin, Pastor and Prophet," and a 4-week Spiritual Journaling course led by Plymouth member Linda Tuthill.

An additional new Adult Education offering this fall is Rev. Dr. Shawnthea Monroe's Monday evening Bible Study based on the lectionary readings. This program has been well-received, and Rev. Monroe intends to continue throughout the program year.

We are very fortunate to have such a wealth of capable lay-leaders and teachers in our congregation who are willing to share their experience and knowledge through our Adult Education programs.

Reports of committees within the Witnessing Department follow this report.

Charlene Nevans, Chair

## Fossil Fuel

During this year the informal, early-morning, senior men's gathering known as "Fossil Fuel" continued to meet at Plymouth on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month at 8:00 am in Room 102. Membership in this sometimes energetic group is open to any member or friend of Plymouth Church who (a) regards himself as meeting the qualifications described above and (b) appears at the meetings.

Discussion topics were varied in this election year, but did feature some analysis of our domestic politics (the discussions remained polite, if intense) as well as readings concerning the changing international scene, particularly the rise of China and India as world-class economic powers.

The Fossils also bestirred themselves to Fuel some discussion programs, the first of which took place after worship on Sunday, February 17th on the topic of "Aging in Place" in our community, seeking to determine issues of interest to our congregation on this subject. This was followed by a lunchtime discussion on Sunday, April 27th chaired by Peter A. DeGolia, M.D. on the topic of "Maintaining Physical and Mental Health and Fitness." A third luncheon program on the subject of Estate Planning moderated by Bob Brucken is scheduled for Sunday, November 2.

## Open and Affirming (ONA)

Plymouth's Open and Affirming (ONA as designated by UCC General Synod, 1985) Statement accepted by our members on February 13, 2005:

"Plymouth Church is an Open and Affirming congregation. We celebrate and find strength in our diversity and view it as a way to understand the inclusiveness of God. We welcome persons of any age, color, ability, or sexual orientation. We embrace those of varying theological and political beliefs, and differing ethnic, socio-economic, and educational backgrounds. Our congregation joyfully welcomes all to join us in worship, ministry, fellowship, leadership, sacraments and blessings. With God's guidance, Jesus' example and the Spirit's inspiration, we commit ourselves to ongoing study, prayer, conversation and action, so that it may truly be said of Plymouth Church "My house is a house of prayer for ALL people." (Isaiah 56:7)"

Per the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns, "every ONA church gives witness to the surrounding community...to other churches...to the wider world...to all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender people and their allies...spreading the message that their church is home to disciples who are working for justice."

So, what have WE done, specifically, to WITNESS in the past year?

- Designed a new Plymouth Church banner which was introduced at the Cleveland Pride Parade on June 21, 2008. Marchers promoting Plymouth with "THE BANNER" and wearing "GOD IS STILL SPEAKING," ballcaps (!) were: Roberta Gilles; Sandy & Aleksa Kaup; Heidi Klein; Shawnthea Monroe, Walter, Clara & Ren Mueller; Carolyn Nilson; Karen Reich; Kristin, Peter, Wyatt & Jack Sweeney; Dee Burt. What fun!! This was three times more than we had in 2007, our first year to participate. Hopefully in June , '09 we'll increase our numbers three times more!
- Sponsored Coffee Hour on February 10th to celebrate our 3rd ONA Anniversary. We're grateful for the assistance of Gordon Gilles, Norma Nelson, Leslie Landreth, Reggie Williams.
- An "ONA Advisory Group" is being formed to act as a clearinghouse for information that will assist our congregation in our mission to witness.

~ Dee Burt, ONA Coordinator

## Plymouth in The City

Plymouth in The City is also a function of the Witnessing Department. Plymouth in the City continues in its tenth year. We gather for lunch at the City Club on the 4th Monday of September, October, and January through May. Usually we are 8-10 in number, representing a range of opinions and eager to hear different views on topics that illuminate the ways faith and work are related.

## Department of Worship

"The angels of heaven are marching around the borders of Zion's holy ground. Their music harmonious how it doth ring, and this is the heavenly song they sing. Holy, holy, holiness unto the Lord. Love ye, love ye, love ye one another" ~ A Shaker Song

The worship experience in 2008 was indeed enlivened with by the arrival of our new senior minister, Rev. Dr. Shawnthea Monroe. As a department, our goals were to ease the transition, energize lay resources in support of our new minister, and listen and respond to Shawnthea's and others' ideas.

### This Year's Highlights

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- Rev. Stephen C. Adams led a healing service with the laying on of hands on March 12.
- An Agape meal and Tenebrae service were offered on March 26.
- The Chancel Choir partnered with the choirs from First Baptist and Fairmount Presbyterian to sing Vaughn Williams' *Dona Nobis Pacem*.
- Plymouth Church hosted a multi-choir hymn festival "The Glory of Christ" on Sunday evening April 6th.

- Summer worship services in the chapel, in part, were focused on a theology for worship and what it means to be part of the United Church of Christ. In support, a **Liturgical Corner** will be created in the Plymouth Perspective to improve member understanding of the liturgical calendar, lexicology (historical context and meaning of words), and ecclesiology (church doctrine, furnishings and adornments).
- A Homecoming Service was held on September 7th to celebrate our return to the sanctuary for worship. Plans for the fall include expanded lay involvement in worship, e.g., children as acolytes and others as liturgists.
- A "Peace" service and dedication of a Peace Pole to be placed on church grounds was held on September 14th.
- On October 12th, Reverend Adams presented his final sermon, "The Peace of God."

### New Ideas and Changes Made

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- In Advent 2007, the Chancel Choir wore new robes and member-made stoles, and sang the Vivaldi **Gloria** at worship on December 16th.
- In preparation for each Sunday in Advent, a member was asked to design a bulletin cover paired with another member who was asked to write a poem to be printed on the back of the bulletin. The goal, according to Rev. Adams, was to provide a beginning and ending to each worship service.
- Soon after Shawnthea's arrival, she shared with the department and Church Council that worship service would likely run 75 minutes to accommodate announcements and presentations at the beginning of the service, the children's message and prayer requests.
- CD recordings of sermons are now made available by request to those unable to participate in worship at Plymouth. Two CD players were purchased and are loaned, as needed, to listeners.
- Ushers were asked to add the greeting of members and visitors to their duties. The impact on the number of ushers needed was lessened by renovation activities that included closure of the narthex during part of the year.
- The Church Council unanimously adopted a department resolution on May 28th to consolidate three separate flower funds to assure adequate funding throughout the church year. The Chancel Committee, working in close coordination with the ministers and members, will also be allowed to purchase non-flower decorations to enhance worship in the chancel, sanctuary and chapel.
- During the summer, announcements of upcoming church activities and events traditionally printed in the bulletin were removed and printed separately as an insert. Recycle boxes were placed at the doors for members and visitors who wish to leave their bulletins and/or inserts.

### Suggestions for 2009

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- A review of the provisional statement of the Department of Worship's role
- More ideas and discussion on lay involvement, including recruitment, in the work of the department's committees: Chancel, Coffee Hour, Communion and Ushers.
- Further consideration of the use of church grounds to enhance worship; and

- Consideration of surveying members and visitors regarding their worship experience from their arrival to their departure from Plymouth.

In closing, it was a very good year for the Worship Department. As the report attests, ministerial and lay contributions to worship fulfillment were many.

"The Lord, your God, is in your midst...he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult you with loud singing."  
Zephaniah 3:17

~ Keith Rasey, Chair

## ArtsPlymouth

**Mission:** ArtsPlymouth is dedicated to presenting arts events for the spiritual enrichment of the congregation of Plymouth Church and the community it serves.

After taking a year hiatus, ArtsPlymouth sponsored the North Coast Chamber Players in concert in the John D. Herr Memorial Chapel on Sunday, August 10, 2008, as a benefit for the Caring Department's new initiative "Feed Our Neighbors." The event raised \$236.00.

On Sunday, September 14, 2008, a peace pole, purchased by ArtsPlymouth last summer, along with two new park benches were dedicated. The park benches were collaboration between ArtsPlymouth and the Chancel Committee. The pole is inscribed in six different languages using the words, "May Peace Prevail on Earth." A space on our beautiful grounds is being created where folks may meditate and pray for peace.

For the remainder of the year, ArtsPlymouth is focusing on the visual arts. Framed photos from our church archives are being hung in the main hallway. "From the Past will Come the Future" is the theme of this project that will complement the stewardship campaign.

During Advent a set of commissioned hangings by Clare Degerness will grace the sanctuary that will reflect on the themes of Prophets, Angels, Shepherds, Joseph, and Emmanuel, that will be part of a sermon series preached by the Rev. Dr. Shawntea Monroe.

Lent will take us on "A Photographic Meditation on Handel's **Messiah Part 2.**" This intergenerational event will allow folks to photograph an image that speaks to them. Throughout the six week period of Lent (February 25-April 12, 2009) the chapel will become an art gallery as well as a place for meditation and prayer.

ArtsPlymouth is proud of the partnership it has had with our partnered school, Buckeye-Woodland during the past eight years. Again this year we will be providing funding that will enable the children in grades K-8 to experience art events. The cost of this project is \$1,200.

Lastly ArtsPlymouth is working on a three to five year vision plan to engage the arts and make a difference in our own space at Plymouth and in our greater community. The 2008-2009 ArtsPlymouth Team consists of Karl Kaups, Noel Nilson, Karen Reich, James Riggs, Carol Skoglund, and Jan Wilkens.

## Chancel Committee

The Chancel Committee works with the ministerial and music staff to prepare our worship spaces. This can include the use of flowers, altar cloths, candles, banners and other artwork.

A few articles were added to the inventory, e.g., window box baskets, this year. We will soon commission a new set of banners for use during Advent and for later displays throughout the church. We continue to use and treasure the many hangings and altar cloths woven by Jan Daniel.

Once again we enjoyed flowers from congregants' gardens during summer services in the Chapel. This has become a spontaneous and glorious sharing when members and children can help prepare the worship space. Also, a large calendar for flower donations is now posted in the main hallway to encourage and record the various requests of members.

The "Flower Ministry" organized by Pam Beck, delivers flowers from the worship services to persons who are homebound, in need of our support and prayers, or experiencing a time of joy in their lives. Carol Mau continues to oversee some of the Sunday flower donations, baptisms, and weddings. Pat Pogue planned and prepared the Sanctuary for Easter Sunday including the creation of the traditional flower cross.

The Chancel Committee and the Worship Department are thankful to all who make contributions of flowers, artwork, and special donations. Such gifts offered to celebrate, memorialize and honor surely enhance our worship space and experience.

~ Martha Brandt-Pollock, Chair

## Plymouth Church Leadership Roster for 2009

