



2860 Coventry Road, Shaker Heights, Ohio 44120
216.921.3510 • www.plymouthchurchucc.org

Rev. Dr. Matthew Wooster
Senior Minister

Pastor Dillon Shipman
Designated Associate Minister

James P. Riggs
Minister of Music & The Arts

Leslie Szalay
Director of Christian Education

"My house is a house of prayer for all people." (Isaiah 56:7) • An Open and Affirming Congregation

May 30, 2023

Dear Plymouth Church,

I write to express my heartfelt gratitude to you for the wonderful celebration of my 25th anniversary at Plymouth. That is a day I will always hold in my heart with fondness; a day that was filled with celebration for our shared ministry. I am deeply grateful for the twenty-five years that we have shared.

I am also writing to share with you that I have accepted the call to be the next Director of Music Ministries at Fairmount Presbyterian Church in Cleveland Heights. Our Lenten journey, "God in the Wilderness" led me on a journey and a nudge from God to explore this opportunity. This decision was made after much prayer and discernment, especially given the proximity of our churches.

The time for a transition seems right. Plymouth Church has strong lay and ministerial leadership. The church navigated challenges during the pandemic and began a good chapter with Rev. Matt Wooster two years ago. I know that this will be a good home for whoever may follow me. I want to emphasize that I am *not* leaving on bad terms. Quite the contrary, I am proud of all we have accomplished together! Plymouth will always hold a special place for me, as this is where I have spent the bulk of my career.

I am ready for this new opportunity to apply my gifts in a different context. And I feel that Plymouth will benefit from new and fresh musical leadership. There remains great potential at Plymouth for both art and music ministry. I will do my part to respect boundaries and to give space. I will, however, be cheering you on in spirit.

Sunday, June 25 will be my last day at Plymouth. Given the incredible celebration for my 25th anniversary, I do not desire, nor do I expect there to be any further celebration on my departure. A moment of release and blessing during the worship service will suffice.

Hymn singing has been the foundation of what we do each time we gather to worship. I leave you with this text by Jane Parker Huber which was sung on Plymouth's 100th anniversary, "Shape us as your congregations, called together, sent afar, so as people or as nations we can serve you where we are. O accept the praise we bring you, bless the work of human hands. Hear the hymns our voices sing you, echoing through years and lands."

With gratitude, love, and peace,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James P. Riggs". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

James P. Riggs, Minister of Music and The Arts