

Keep the Message | Rev. Dr. Matt Wooster

**First Sunday in Lent
March 9, 2025**

"My house is a house of prayer for all people." (Isaiah 56:7)
Plymouth is A Just Peace Church and An Open and Affirming Congregation

WELCOME!

Here we believe that God is love;
and that love is for everyone.

God's extravagant love changes the world
and moves us to respond in gratitude.

Whoever you are, and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here,
and you are invited to shape this community with your God-given gifts.

Open and Affirming Statement

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 people of any age, color, ability, sexual orientation or gender expression. We embrace those of varying theological and political beliefs, and differing ethnic, socio-economic, and educational backgrounds. Our congregation joyfully welcomes all to join 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)

Families with Children

Children of all ages are always welcome at Plymouth! We offer many programs and events throughout the year to foster faith development in children and fellowship among our families. We strive to make worship family-friendly and to provide support to families while attending church by offering Busy Bags, Children's Worship Bulletins, a comfort room with toys and a changing table, and a Children's Worship Space with quiet activities. Professionally-staffed childcare for kids 4 and under is available every Sunday from 9am-12pm on the second floor. Sunday School for kids Pre-K to 8th grade takes place during worship, except for on the first Sunday of the month when there is no Sunday School to encourage families to worship together and receive communion.

Large print bulletins and hearing enhancement devices are available.
Please ask an usher.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

Our Approach to God

Music calls us to worship so we may listen for God speaking to us. When the service begins with preparation music, please silence your voices and devices.

**All are invited to rise in body or spirit*

Preparation Music Psalm-Prelude, Set I, No. 1Herbert Howells
George A. Sargeant, organ

Welcome

***Call to Worship:** Kendalle Cobb

One: Christ has set you free. Stand fast on God's foundation.

All: Be strong of heart. Take courage from the faith of Moses and Miriam that braved the parted sea.

One: Even as the skies may thunder and the sea may roar,
God is at the center.

All: Be steady in faith. Find assurance in the lives of generations past who trusted in God and revealed God's glory.

***Hymn #20** (black hymnal) God of Abraham and Sarah*Constantine*

Prayer of Confession

O God our foundation, we confess to you that we have often been careless and distracted. Though we long for your strength, we are hesitant to devote our attention and energy to your will. We fall too easily into despair and wasted anger. We find it easier to cast blame than to be responsible for the good you have given us to do.

Yet you are still faithful in your love for us, filling us with the grace of your Spirit so that we may yet embody your holiness and peace. Amen.

Silent Reflection

Words of Assurance

ONE: Lift up your hearts!

ALL: We lift them up to God!

***Hymn of Praise** *Faithfulness*

Pardon for sin and a peace so enduring,
Your own dear presence to cheer and to guide.
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine with ten thousand beside.
Great is your faithfulness! Great is your faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed your hand has provided,
Great is your faithfulness, God, unto me!

***Passing of the Peace**

ONE: The peace of Christ be with you!

ALL: And also with you!

Children in pre-school through 8th grade are invited to depart for Sunday School

The Proclamation of God’s Word

Choral Anthem Behold the Lamb of God (from “Messiah”)G.F. Handel
Plymouth Choir

Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

Scripture Reading Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Sermon Keep the Message Rev. Dr. Matt Wooster
Generational Wisdom for Trying Times, part 1

***Hymn #454** (black hymnal)

Lord, I Want to Be a Christian *I Want to Be a Christian*

Prayers of the People & the Lord’s Prayer (debts/debtors)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.

Prayer Response The First Song of Isaiah Jack Noble White

Surely it is God who saves me, I will trust in him and not be afraid,
For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense, and He will be my Savior.

Therefore you will draw water with rejoicing from the springs of salvation,
And on that day you will say, “Give thanks to the Lord and call upon His name.”

Living Out the Word of God

Announcements of Church Life

Call to Offering

Offertory All Things Bright and Beautiful Susan E. Geschke
Plymouth Ringers

***Doxology**.....*Old 100th*

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, you heavenly host:
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

***Prayer of Dedication**

God of life, with eyes wide open to your mercies, we offer our gifts of time, energy, and money. We ask your blessing upon all of these resources, that they may strengthen the ministry of your love for the world. Amen.

***Hymn #439** (black hymnal) A Mighty Fortress is our God.....*Ein' feste Burg*

***Commission and Benediction**

***Congregational Response** Bless the Lord, My Soul*Taizé*

Bless the Lord, my Soul, and bless God's holy name.

Bless the Lord, my soul, who leads me into life.

Voluntary

Intermezzo from Piano Sonata No.3 in F minor, Op.5Johannes Brahms
Lynna Bao, Piano

Many in the congregation wish to remain seated for the Voluntary. If you choose to leave, please be aware of those still participating in this part of the service. The Voluntary is music for worship and we ask that all be respectful of one another's worship practices, including those participating via livestream. Following the Voluntary, you may greet the ministers.

God of Abraham and Sarah

James Gertmenian, 1986; alt.

1 God of A - bra - ham and Sar - ah, God of Mo - ses, Mir - iam's Guide;
 2 God who danc - es in cre - a - tion, spin - ning stars a - bove our heads;
 3 God who loves the poor in spir - it, God who com - forts those who mourn;
 4 In our lives from birth to dy - ing, depth of sor - row, height of joy;

God of Da - vid and the proph - ets, God in Je - sus glo - ri - fied:
 God whose face is scribed in mu - sic, by whose hand the earth is fed:
 Balm for wounds, the friend of sin - ners, tak - ing the side of earth's for - lorn:
 Prais - ing God in ev - ery sea - son, let ev - ery key our hearts em - ploy.

Up from the dust you raise a peo - ple, breathe in the breath of life, of soul;
 Up from the ground you raise the moun - tains, raise our spir - its, lift our eyes;
 Up from the depths you raise your peo - ple, giv - ing them cour - age for the day;
 Praise is the heal - ing, praise, the glo - ry, praise is the fin - al mys - ter - y;

Down through the years the peo - ple praise you till al - le - lu - ias make them whole!
 Down through the years your peo - ple praise you till al - le - lu - ias flood the skies!
 Down through the years the peo - ple praise you till al - le - lu - ias light their way!
 Down through the years let peo - ple praise you till al - le - lu - ias set them free!

The healing power of praise and the history of God's dealings with humankind are the themes of this hymn, written by a United Church of Christ minister who is the grandson of Armenian immigrants. The tune is named for his father.

Tune: CONSTANTINE 8.7.8.7.D.
 Melody by James Gertmenian, 1986
 Harm. Ronald Huntington, 1986; alt.

Lord, I Want To Be a Christian

454

African-American spiritual

Deut. 6:5-6; 10:12-16

1 Lord, I want to be a Chris-tian in my heart, in my heart;
 2 Lord, I want to be more lov - ing in my heart, in my heart,
 3 Lord, I want to be more ho - ly in my heart, in my heart;
 4 Lord, I want to be like Je - sus in my heart, in my heart;

Lord, I want to be a Chris-tian in my heart.
 Lord, I want to be more lov - ing in my heart.
 Lord, I want to be more ho - ly in my heart.
 Lord, I want to be like Je - sus in my heart.

Refrain

In my heart, In my heart, in my heart,
 In my heart, in my heart, in my heart,

Lord, I want to be a Chris-tian in my heart.
 Lord, I want to be more lov - ing in my heart.
 Lord, I want to be more ho - ly in my heart.
 Lord, I want to be like Je - sus in my heart.

Many of the enslaved of antebellum America did not want to become Christians because they did not want to adopt the religion of their captors. But this spiritual attests that the Christian faith was an internal strength and aim for many.

Tune: I WANT TO BE A CHRISTIAN
 8.6.8.3. with refrain
African-American spiritual
 Arr. Joyce Finch Johnson, 1992

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

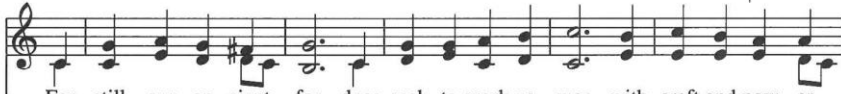
439

*Martin Luther, c. 1529**Ps. 46**Transl. Frederick H. Hedge, 1853; adapt. Ruth Duck, 1981*

1 A might - y for - tress is our God, a bul - wark nev - er fail - ing,
 2 Did we in our own strength con - fide, our striv - ing would be los - ing,
 3 And though this world with dev - ils filled should threat - en to un - do us,
 4 That word be - yond all earth - ly powers for - ev - er is a - bid - ing;



Our pres - ent help a - mid the flood of mor - tal ills pre - vail - ing.
 But there is one who takes our side, the One of God's own choos - ing.
 We will not fear for God has willed the truth to tri - umph through us.
 The Spir - it and the gifts are ours, for Christ is with us sid - ing.



For still our an - cient foe does seek to work us woe with craft and pow - er
 You ask who that may be? Christ Je - sus sets us free! With might - y power to
 The powers of e - vil grim, we trem - ble not for them; their rage we can en -
 Let goods and kin - dred go, this mor - tal life al - so; the bod - y they may



great, and armed with cru - el hate, on earth with - out an e - qual.
 save, vic - to - rious o'er the grave, Christ will pre - vail tri - um - phant.
 dure, for lo, their doom is sure: one lit - tle word shall fell them.
 kill; God's truth shall tri - umph still; God's reign en - dures for - ev - er.



There is speculation that this psalm paraphrase was written in 1527 when Martin Luther's friend was burned at the stake, or in 1529, when Lutheran German princes protested the revocation of their liberties. It has been translated into more than fifty languages.

Tune: EIN' FESTE BURG (isometric) 8.7.8.7.6.6.6.6.7.

Martin Luther, c. 1529

Harm. The New Hymnal for American Youth, 1930; alt.

For another version, see 440

MUSIC NOTES

Each Sunday during the season of Lent, the organ prelude will be one of twentieth-century British composer Herbert Howells' six Psalm Preludes. The first three date from the World War I years and the remainder from the late 1930s as World War II approached. They are musical meditations on verses from the Psalms, and with the exception of the last, follow a pattern of a quiet beginning, a gradual buildup to a sustained climax, and finally a fading away to near-nothingness. The first set is less stylistically mature than the second; Howell's distinct harmonic language, though hinted at, had yet to fully flower. Set I, No. 1 takes as its inspiration Psalm 34, verse 6: "The poor called out, and the Lord heard them and saved them from all their troubles."

G.F. Handel's *Messiah* is an oratorio composed in 1741. The text was compiled from the King James Bible and the Coverdale Psalter by Charles Jennens. It was first performed in Dublin on April 13, 1742 and received its London premiere a year later. After an initially modest public reception, the oratorio gained in popularity, eventually becoming one of the best-known and most frequently performed choral works in Western music. There are three sections. The second, or Lenten section, begins with *Behold the Lamb of God*, a slow, stately chorus notable for its dotted rhythms. The text is John 1:29, in which John the Baptist meets Jesus and recognizes him as the promised Savior.

Susan E. Geschke is an American composer and arranger of handbell music. She graduated summa cum laude from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and continued there to earn her doctorate. Her choirs include ringers of all ages and levels of experience. She is known as an energetic and inspiring conductor with a reputation for combining hard work with fun. She enthusiastically promotes opportunities for combined musical efforts, i.e. handbells and flute, handbells and choir, etc. She actively composes and arranges handbell music and has more than 100 publications ranging from original pieces to traditional to contemporary styles of music. Her setting of *All Things Bright and Beautiful* was written in 2000.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today

Ushers: Team 4

Greeter: Charlene & Mendle Adams

Plymouth 101 – Are you interested in learning more about the church, how to get involved or the process of becoming a member? You're cordially invited to Plymouth 101, an informational gathering with refreshments and fellowship. We'll meet in the parlor directly after worship.

Youth Group - Youth Group is this evening from 5:00-7:00pm in the Krumbine Room! All youth in 6th through 12th grades are invited to join us every time we gather for food, fun, and discussion.

This Week at Plymouth

Lenten Dinners – Join us on Wednesdays 6-7:30 pm throughout Lent for a shared Lenten Dinner. We will share a meal and then share a “Faith Talks” program. The suggested donation is \$10/person or \$25/family. A sign-up sheet is in the Welcome Center for you to mark which weeks you plan to attend. A minimum of 25 reservations will make each week possible, so please sign up by the Sunday before.

Community Conversation on Immigration – Shaker Library is holding an immigration round table discussion on March 13 at 7 pm. At this event, community members can engage in open and meaningful dialogue about immigration. Everyone at the table will be treated as equals, but a few experts will be joining the conversation and contributing their wisdom and experience to help inform and enrich the discussion.

Upcoming Events

Piano Concert – Save the Date! On Sunday, March 16, at 4 pm, Plymouth’s organ scholar, Lynna Bao, will present a piano recital in the Sanctuary. More details to come.

Lunch Club – Join us on Wednesday, March 19, for food, fellowship, and learning. We will enjoy Chicken and Black Bean Enchiladas, Salad, Chips and Guac, and Lemon Bars before hearing a presentation from Plymouth’s Green Team on exciting new initiatives that they will be introducing to our congregations, including a Memorial Forest! The suggested donation for lunch is \$10. Please sign up by Sunday, March 16 in the Welcome Center or RSVP to Pastor Dillon by email.

Pilgrimage Coffee Hour – Sunday, March 23, members from the Pilgrimage to the Southern Border will be sharing photos and stories from their trip during coffee hour. Don’t miss it!

Community Life

Plymouth Church T-Shirts – Want to show your Plymouth Church pride? We have a new T-shirt available for purchase to spread the word about Plymouth! The Evangelism & Growth Committee created these shirts for everyone in the church to wear at events like Pride, volunteering or anywhere you choose. The shirts come in a variety of background colors and sizes. They are \$22.52 plus the cost of shipping. To order, go to <https://www.bonfire.com> and search “Plymouth Church”. If you need assistance ordering a shirt, please contact Beth Karr at BethKarr@aol.com or (216) 973-8919 by April 12.

Sermon Podcast – Missed a sermon? Want to listen again or share it with someone else? Look for the Plymouth Church UCC podcast wherever you listen to podcasts!

Bible Study – Led by Rev. Dr. Matt Wooster on Monday nights, 5:30 pm on Zoom. Join us for a weekly study to become more familiar with Scriptures and the wisdom they hold. Each week is a self-contained discussion on a passage that will be the focus of an upcoming worship service. No preparation required. Interested? Contact Rev. Matt Wooster to sign up for the weekly email containing the passage and the Zoom link.

Pastoral Care – If you have a Pastoral Care need or have an emergency, please contact Rev. Dr. Matthew Wooster at 330-714-9471.

Little Free Pantry – Shelf stable food is available 24/7 from our Little Free Pantry, located in the north end of the parking lot, near the Children’s Garden.

Financial Assistance – Do you need help paying a bill, rent, or buying food and other essentials? Through the loving support of this community, funds are available. If you are in need of assistance, please do not hesitate to email Rev. Matt Wooster at mwooster@plymouthchurchucc.org (this is confidential) with your needs.

Plymouth Family

Happy Anniversary to: Terry & Barbara Shockey and Phil & Sue Coverdale

Happy Birthday to: Virginia Nix, J. Atlee Horner, Paula Colahan-Sederstrom, Janet Purinton, Sue Galicz, Angela Zawada, Kate Haffke, Louise Haffke, Michael Schiavoni, and Morgan Shields

This Week's Calendar

Sunday, March 9

Daylight Saving Time Begins

10:30 am Worship @ Sanct
11:00 am HCC Worship @ Chapel
12:00 pm Plymouth 101 @ Parlor
12:00 pm K/1 OWL @ 201
12:00 pm B&G Meeting @ Library
12:00 pm Personnel Meeting @ 204
5:00 pm Youth Group @ KR

Monday, March 10

5:30 pm Bible Study @ Zoom

Tuesday, March 11

6:00 pm Cleveland Food Bank Volunteering

Wednesday, March 12

1:00 pm Meditative Arts @ Atrium
7:00 pm Lenten Dinner @ FH

Thursday, March 13

6:30 pm Plymouth Ringers @ Bell Room
7:00 pm Boy Scouts Meeting @ FH
7:30 pm Plymouth Choir @ Choir Room

Friday, March 14

1:00 pm Women's AA Meeting @ Parlor

Saturday, March 15

No events scheduled

Sunday, March 16

10:30 am Worship @ Sanct
11:00 am HCC Worship @ Chapel
11:30 am Coffee Hour @ FH
12:00 pm K/1 OWL @ 201
4:00 pm Lynna Bao Concert @ Sanct



Give Online

Use this QR Code to give online. If you would like to make recurring online gifts, please use your REALM login. If you don't have an account, please email

kkundrat@plymouthchurchucc.org to request access.

Ministers of Plymouth Church

The Congregation of Plymouth Church

Senior Minister, Rev. Dr. Matthew Wooster

Designated Associate Minister, Pastor Dillon Shipman

Director of Music & the Arts, George Sargeant

Director of Christian Education, Leslie Szalay

Facility Manager, Paul Holter

Office & Communications Administrator, Brenna Threatt

Finance Manager, Kathryn Kundrat

Church Sexton, Derrick Williams

Organ Scholar, Lynna Bao



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