

Plymouth press

WINTER 2014 • 2015

FROM THE INTERIM SENIOR MINISTER

Guiding Our Journey Together

The Rev. Tom Lenhart



In October, I was in Australia to perform the wedding of the daughter of Australian friends.

One of the wonders of traveling is to rediscover that worldwide, people are similar in many ways. We worry about many of the same things – our children, our jobs, our parents. We seek many of the same things – security, a good future for our children, a better tomorrow. Yet there are differences, wonderful differences – boots and bonnets here not trunks and hoods – and those of greater significance.

The same can be said for churches. Christian churches share much; most fundamentally, an abiding belief in a faith that trans-

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Advent & Christmas Events & Services

In addition to our Advent worship services, Plymouth will prepare for the celebration of Christmas with a variety of events and projects. We hope you'll be a part of our season of glad tidings. For more information, visit the church website.

DECEMBER 5

Greening of the Church, 6:30 p.m.

Plymouth decks the halls and gathers for yuletide cheer at our annual Greening. There'll be a potluck dinner, crafts activities for young and old, Advent wreath-making, Christmas carols, plus opportunities to help decorate the sanctuary and arcade.

DECEMBER 7

Christmas Pageant, 12:30 p.m.

You don't have to be young to enjoy our annual Christmas Pageant, the re-telling of the Nativity in words and music by Plymouth children and youth.



DECEMBER 14

Christmas Carol Service, 6 p.m.

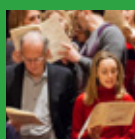
The Plymouth Choir will sing carols from the 14th to 20th centuries, encompassing Italian, Bohemian, Basque, German, English and American Spiritual traditions. A prelude of traditional carols for harp and tone chimes begins at 5:30 p.m.

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Editor: John J. Scibilia, CCA
Executive Administrator

Associate Editor: Amy Harnell,
Deputy Executive
Administrator

Production Services: Wendy Healy,
Griffin Communications

Please send address changes to:

Plymouth Church
75 Hicks St.
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201
info@plymouthchurch.org
www.plymouthchurch.org

At Plymouth Church, our mission is to:

- Know God by placing Jesus Christ at the center of our lives through worshipping God, studying God's Word and responding to God's call.
- Grow together in community by learning together, serving together and caring for each other.
- Live out our faith boldly and generously by pursuing God's shalom in our world.

2014-2015 CHURCH COUNCIL

Sandra Deming, President; Jim Anderson, Vice President; Jonathan Insull, Treasurer; Lee Scott, Secretary; Jeff Bollerman, David Burrell, Penelope Kulko, Kirsten Loreen, Timothy Malefyt, Mike Snypes, Rebecca Yaggy, Dick Yancey, and Ruth Ziegler

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The Rev. Tom Lenhart, Interim Senior Minister

The Rev. Dr. Jane Huber,
Interim Assistant Minister

Bruce Oelschlager, Minister of Music

Julia Rassmann, Director,
Ministry to Families and Children

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PLYMOUTH CHURCH SCHOOL

Director, Plymouth Church School: Gail Rose

Director, Plymouth Day Camp:
Andrea Beaulieu

Administrator: Natalie Fuentes

Parent Coordinator: Mindy Goldstein



FROM THE COUNCIL

Extending Hospitality

Sandra Deming, Plymouth Council President



THIS MONTH, we heartily welcome interim senior minister Tom Lenhart and his wife, Lynn. Plymouth is fortunate that they said "Yes" to our appeal to spend a year or so here.

The Council has already started building a relationship with the ministry team of Tom and Jane Huber, assistant interim minister. While Tom generously steps out of retirement to lead us with his breadth of experience, Jane, it seems, got up to speed so quickly since her May arrival, that

she already is well seasoned in the ways of Plymouth. She is deeply immersed in the life of Plymouth, working with our youth, Vacation Bible Camp, and leading the ministry of presence to accompany immigrant children. We're glad she has been here to lead worship, preach and provide program guidance.

The Council is looking forward to this strong interim pastoral team joining our conversations. As many of you know, David Fisher and Al Bunis sat at our Council table, sharing their experience and insight. Our discussions and decisions always greatly benefited from their participation, and we welcome the addition of Tom and Jane.

As a Council, we recognize the need to welcome visitors and potential new members. As a community, we want to make an effort on Sunday mornings to be aware of visitors in our midst, and to welcome them and share the warmth and love of Plymouth. Surely this is part of our mission. To that end, you'll see several Council members at the back of the church after service to greet visitors, and we'll make a concerted effort at Fellowship Hour to talk to each guest. We're also planning to offer new members classes twice a year as in the past.

The posture of welcome is at the heart of our mission. Each of us – individually and collectively – needs to do our part to offer a warm welcome to all who come seeking respite, meaning, peace, love, friendship, or just show up out of curiosity.

And that includes reaching out to one another, too, just as Jesus would.

See you on Sunday.

SHELTER MINISTRY

'Felt like a Bedroom'

Plymouth's Shelter Ministry, in cooperation with CAMBA, was filled with simple acts of love throughout the month of October. Members, Youth Group and our 567 Group all pitched in and made this home for our guests.

"I saw the chapel set up with the cots. It seemed so cozy," said CAMBA Manager Yehudit Moch. Perhaps the highest compliment was paid by one of our guests, "This really felt like a bedroom."

John Leighton, co-leader with Nancy Trott, reflects on the shelter experience in a current Plymouth Blog. It's worth a look. Visit our church website.



Sign Your Child Up for *Christmas Gift-Making*

While Christmas for kids seems like it's mostly the season to receive, it's also one of giving. Thankfully, children genuinely love to give, and it can be frustrating for them, when, because of their young age, they're not able to give presents. This year, our Sunday School children have the opportunity to be Santa's Helpers. On Saturdays, Nov. 29, and Dec. 13, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., those 12 and under can join us for crafts and other fun activities. While parents shop or run errands, our oldest children (with adult support) will supervise the younger ones' gift-making. Activities will include decorating flower pots for gifts, and creating personalized presents for family members. In the spirit of giving, each participating family is asked to donate an unwrapped present for the annual Colony House toy drive. RSVP required and online signup is available on our website. Help us begin a new Plymouth tradition.



MUSIC MINISTRY

The Songs that *Change our Lives*

Bruce Oelschlager, Minister of Music



IF YOU'VE never been to a Plymouth Christmas activity besides worship you're going to be in for a treat this year. Those who regularly participate in church activities know that it's an inspiring time of year to be at Plymouth,

growing together so we can live out our faith in more meaningful ways.

From the Greening of the Church at the beginning of Advent, through Christmas

Eve, every event brings us closer to God and to each other. The formal events, such as the Carol service led by the choir, inspire our hearts to experience the awe and wonder of the incarnation. The informal events like the Greening allow us to have a good time together while preparing our surroundings for this festive season.

It's an arc of activity in our music program that starts in October when we begin learning the nuts and bolts of the music. When we get comfortable with the music, it becomes part of us and how we view the world and our lives. This is the spiritual time of music-making that makes all the

preparations worth it. We then can share our love of God and each other through the music that is now part of our life story. This is the joy that comes with singing during this special season.

Our children especially, learn through the music they sing, what being a Christian is all about, and how it can positively affect their daily lives. Through the pageant, they come to realize that Christmas isn't just about earthly presents and parties. They sing the songs that shape our Christian story of loss of perfection to the saving grace that the baby Jesus is to become for us.

Come, join Plymouth in any or all of its activities and sing the songs that change our lives.

Traditional Yankee Fair

Food, Fun, Festivities







FROM THE ASSISTANT MINISTER

More to Learn, *New Ways to Grow*

The Rev. Dr. Jane Huber, Interim Assistant Minister



IN EARLY NOVEMBER, the Yankee Fair was a highlight for the community, with fun for everyone and opportunities to meet new people. Thank you to everyone who made the day such a great success.

Later in the month, we welcomed the Rev. Tom Lenhart as interim senior minister, and launched the search for a new senior minister.

The seasons of Advent and Christmas are times of anticipation and excitement, beauty and light, and we've scheduled meaningful services and celebratory music to welcome the birth of Christ.

Throughout the fall, the committee for Christian Spiritual Development (CSD) initiated several new programs and opportunities for learning. Programming continues this winter, offering many ways to grow and learn at Plymouth. From community-building, to volunteer opportunities, to interfaith scripture-reading and prayerful meditation, CSD supports opportunities for exploring what it means to be deeply engaged in the life and work of Plymouth. Please see the new CSD programs on the website and in the eNews, and consider joining us on a Wednesday evening.

May the seasons of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany be times of light and promise for all.

ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING MINISTRY

Not Just Talk

IN OCTOBER, we hosted speakers from Sanctuary for Families, Restore, and End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT) for a "Not Just Talk: Taking Action on Human Trafficking" event.

The three-hour forum on Oct. 18 featured professionals working to end this problem in New York City who discussed how we can help make a difference. Ending human trafficking is close to our heart at Plymouth, and one of the issues that funding from the Underground Thrift benefits.

"Liberty is the soul's right to breathe," the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher said from our pulpit in 1887.

Beth Fleisher, head of the Anti-Human Trafficking Ministry who planned the



event, recently wrote on her blog: "There's a phrase that sticks in my head from a Sunday School song that we sang when I was a kid: 'Whatsoever you do, to the least of my brothers, that you do unto me.' This morning I may search for the gender-neutral translation of that Bible passage, but I think you get the idea: when we work with our hands to reach out to women and children so badly treated by our own neighbors, in our own community we reach out and touch the divine." You can read Beth's blog by visiting our website.

YOUTH MINISTRY

Teen Group *in Full Swing*

THE HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP

began meeting in October, gathering three times a month for fun, conversation and service projects. Thanks to everyone for their participation and to leaders Robert Ferris and John Leighton for their commitment to our youth.

For more information, see the Youth Group activities section on the Plymouth website, look for program announcements in the eNews, or contact the Rev. Jane Huber.



Join in —the blog

The Plymouth Blog was launched in mid-October and has been drawing a lot of visitors. The blog is a town square for sharing thoughts and engaging readers. You can even join the conversation with your response. If you haven't seen it yet, stop by the website today and check it out.





PLYMOUTH CHURCH SCHOOL

Children are *hard at work*

Gail Rose, Director

Each day when the weather permits, in the Cranberry Street playground, the children are hard at work learning how to play with each other. A typical day will find all corners of the playground in use. It's a true laboratory for growth. Children love to test their growing bodies with new physical challenges, as well as make social connections with new friends.

Children teach us to observe the world around us closely. Rocks, bugs, seeds and leaves provide them with evidence that the world is a magical place. With these needs in mind, the school plans on purchasing a new shed for equipment and some new tables for eating and working outside. A portion of the funds raised from Yankee Fair will be used for this purpose.

Chapel on Friday continues to play a central role in the life of the school. The weekly story, blessing and song provide us with a central theme that encourages compassion for others. A seasonal community project allows the group to come together and help others. Our project this fall supported the work of a medical mission that helps children born with cleft palates. A visit from a member of the team allowed the children to ask questions about how doctors can help children in need.

Beginning in January, Plymouth Church School staff and families will be intimately involved with an exhibit called "The Wonder of Learning," which is coming to Brooklyn from the schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy.



The exhibit will highlight the importance of education and schools as places for discussion and mutual exchange. Educators and parents from around the country will attend conferences and workshops and our teachers to be inspired by best practices in the field.

As you can imagine, computers are in use in our classrooms for documentation and communication. We've found that the children prefer to investigate real materials. We are, however, using technology to our advantage in the school office. Our new online application promises to simplify the transfer of information between home and school and allow us to fully integrate the enrollment process. This will allow us to spend more time working directly with the children. What could be better?

Senior Interim Minister

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forms and saves lives. However, churches are different in important ways. In the Congregational tradition, we believe strongly in the authority of the local church to chart its future, while some of our sister churches are more hierarchical. I'm looking forward to learning some of the things that are unique to Plymouth, including its history and vision for the future.

The word interim means, at least in one sense, a time of being in between. Plymouth is, indeed, in between David's and Al's ministries, and that of your next settled minister. Yet, I think it's better thought of as an active time of transition – a time to celebrate the joys of the past, continue the momentum of the present, and begin to plan for a vital future. I look forward to taking part in your transition.

A wise minister once said that a minister is like a river guide for their congregation. He or she helps those journeying down the river to pick the right craft – canoe, kayak or rowboat – for a particular place on the river. But in the end, the river guide and the congregation are making the same journey together. I look forward to journeying with you a little down the river in the coming months. I also hope to meet and to get to know each of you in my time at Plymouth Church.

Peace and blessings.

Baptisms

Sept. 21, 2014

Wilhelmina Beatrice Wood Pater
Daughter of Jaime St. Peter and
Josh Pater

Sept. 28, 2014

Ethan Douglass Hogue
Son of Jeannette King and Phil Hogue

Christmas Events and Services

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DECEMBER 24

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, 6 p.m.

A service of a joyful mix of favorite hymns sung by the Plymouth Choir. A prelude with harp begins at 5:30 p.m.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Toy Drive

Since 1904, Colony has provided social and educational programs for underprivileged children and their families. Plymouth's toy donations help Santa deliver Christmas joy to young children at Colony day care centers. Please drop off your unwrapped toys for boys and girls ages 2 ½ to 4 ½ by Dec. 12.

Baking Holiday Treats

Plymouth's home bakers deliver tasty treats during the Christmas season, particularly for the reception following our Dec. 15 Christmas Carol Service. Contribute to a delicious Plymouth tradition. Check weekly announcements for details, or contact Christine Dugan.



Poinsettias for the Sanctuary

Each Christmas, Plymouth collects donations from members and friends so we can decorate our sanctuary with fresh poinsettias. Your message of celebration is printed in the bulletin. Order your poinsettias online or use the form available at church.

Underground Thrift Store Open

Sundays, 12:30 to 4:30 p.m.



Participants from the "Not Just Talk" anti-human trafficking event in October visit the store.

With winter upon us, it's a good opportunity to check out the racks at the Underground Thrift Store. You'd be surprised what you might find.

Open Sundays 12:30 to 4:30 p.m.

WE ALSO NEED VOLUNTEERS.

If interested, contact Dee Crowell, dacrowell@gmail.com.

Our anti-slavery and anti-human trafficking partner for 2014-15 is ECPAT, a non-profit that works to end these issues at the source.

Gifts for *the King*



Plymouth's annual "Gifts for the King" will be donated to the Mission School of Hope (MSH) to purchase a truck to transport medical workers, materials and supplies to its mission site in Eastern Cameroon, Africa.

MSH provides medical care, education and support to the Baka people, a nomadic African tribe. The Rev. Charles Sagay discovered these people, who were in great need, about 30 years ago and has dedicated his life to their survival and self-sufficiency. MSH advocates for the education of the Baka children so they can learn to help their people.

Plymouth Church began partnering with MSH about 10 years ago, and our gifts have

enabled the Baka tribe to have clean water, school buildings and a medical clinic. The Rev. Sagay and the tribe refer to our partnership as the "backbone" of the ministry.

One of the biggest challenges facing MSH is the poor condition of the access roads to the mission site. MSH doesn't own a vehicle, making it difficult, time consuming, costly and dangerous to transport what's needed.

The Rev. Sagay says the gift of a truck could transform lives, and sends his love and appreciation to Plymouth. They thank the Lord for this special partnership.

Go to our website if you'd like to contribute.