

Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ

Twentieth Sunday After Pentecost

October 27, 2019

9:30 a.m.



Photograph Courtesy of Philip Wei

**A Just Peace Church
An Open and Affirming Congregation
A God is Still Speaking Congregation**

Our faith is 2000 years old; our thinking isn't

**A compassionate community, intentionally inclusive,
openly searching, joyfully serving in the way of Christ**

Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ
A Just Peace, Open & Affirming, & God Is Still Speaking Congregation

"An inclusive spiritual family shaping a better you for creating a better world.
A place to make a difference."

Twentieth Sunday After Pentecost

October 27, 2019

Sacred Fellowship 9:30 a.m.

We are delighted that you are here today! We hope you will find us an affirming, uplifting, and committed family of faith. Here we work to make everyone, without any exceptions, to feel accepted, inspired, and encouraged in their spiritual journey. In dialogue, we seek to understand. In encouragement, we seek to heal. In all things we yearn to live by love, for peace, with joy. This is a place where your intellect will be challenged, your heart will be nurtured, and your spirit refreshed. Varying beliefs are expressed openly and freely, and your doubts will not be suppressed. We trust that we are all, every person and part of creation, continuing to be blessed by God's grace; and that in community we can help each other to see this grace alive in our lives and relationships. We hope to share our gifts with you, even as we pray that you will want to share your gifts with us. Whoever you are and wherever you may be in your life's journey, we invite you to be a part of our lives and our spiritual home. Welcome!

CALLED TOGETHER AS SPIRITUAL FAMILY

Gathering Music

Welcome and Announcements

Please sign the registration pads when they are handed out
by the ushers and pass to your neighbor in the pew.

We ask that you please shut off cell phones and practice quietness during the service.
Please join us for fellowship and refreshments after the worship in the Fellowship Hall.

* = You are invited to stand as you are able.

Prelude

Welcoming the Light of Love in Our Midst Acolyte lights altar candle.
We prepare ourselves for communing with the sacred as love's light is brought into our awareness. The light of love burns within and among each of us, and we carry that light into our sanctuary; visually reminding us of the image of the divine that lives in our hearts, minds, and souls – and that we nourish through our faith-filled fellowship.

Choral Introit

In Thy Temple

Affirming God's Presence in Us All

"You Matter!"

Sharing Christ's Peace

As a sign of our reconciliation with God and one another, greet and welcome those around you and share "the peace of Christ."

***Opening Hymn**

Congregation's Choice

Sharing Christ's Peace

As a sign of our reconciliation with God and one another, greet and welcome those around you and share "the peace of Christ."

***Hymn for Transformation** "In the Midst of New Dimensions" #391

***Centering Our Souls** Reflections on Joel 2.28 & Sirach 35.12-17

You whose spirit is poured out on all flesh...who inspires children to prophesy about a better world to come, the elderly to dream of what could be rather than what is, and youth to see visions of racial, environmental, economic, and social justice for all peoples and creation:

We are humbled by our too often limited vision of a more loving, just, and peaceful existence.

Teach us to strive for wisdom rather than wealth, for compassion rather than comfort, for soul-satisfaction rather than security, and for integrity rather than influence.

Grant us discerning minds, humble hearts, and diligent spirits to create a world in which poverty does not exist, where all oppression ceases, and when we all see with the eyes where there is no 'us' versus 'them.'

Remind us that generosity is born not of pride, partiality, or privilege, but of gratitude, equality, and grace.

Encourage and sustain us with the will to do what is right and best, not what is prudent and successful. And so may we live by your values with all our life, now and always.

WE LISTEN FOR THE SACRED IN THE MIDST OF OUR LIVES

Prayers

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns, and Acts of Compassion or Kindness

Silent Meditation: The Prayers of the People

Pastoral Prayer

Unison Prayer

"Prayer from the New Zealand Book of Common Prayer"

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver, Source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven: The hallowing of your name echo through the universe! The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world! Your heavenly will be done by all created beings! Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth. With the bread we need for today, feed us. In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and test, strengthen us. From trials too great to endure, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us. For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. May it be so.

***Hymn for Life Infused** "Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness" #286

Scripture Lessons Joel 2.23-32, Sirach 35.12-17

Message "Discerning the Time"

***Hymn for Visions Enacted** "Be Now My Vision" #451

WE DEDICATE OURSELVES TO GOD'S SERVICE THROUGH FAITHFULNESS

Giving of Our Tithes and Offerings

Gift of Music: Choral Anthem My Shepard will Supply My Need
Virgil Thomson

***Song of Dedication** Tune: Old Hundredth #778

***Unison Prayer of Dedication** "Teach Us Again and Again"
Ted Loder

O God, be with those for whom these gifts are given, and bless us who give them that we may dedicate ourselves as well, and passionately move against the ugliness and injustice and violence in your world without becoming unjust or ugly or abusive. Teach us again and again that the reward for loving is having our capacity to love stretched to include even those we define as enemies. So would we dare to live as vagabonds of faith, risking something big for something right, challenging all that shrinks and separates people, pressing on toward the freedom that enlarges life by sharing it with all our brothers and sisters, and empowers us not to be afraid; in Christ's name and spirit. May it be.

Choral Benediction

Go In Peace

Encouragement for the Journey

Rev. William Sloane Coffin

May God give you the grace never to sell yourself short;
grace to risk something big for something good;
grace to remember that the world is too dangerous for anything but truth
and too small for anything but love.

So, may God take your minds and think through them;
may God take your lips and speak through them;
may God take your hearts and set them on fire.

Postlude

The Light of Love Goes into the World

Love's light is not extinguished from our worship, but is transferred from the flame of the candles to the passion in our hearts that we may go forth to let the light of love shine through us as we go to serve in the world.

WE GO FORTH AS PEACEMAKERS TO CREATE JUSTICE FOR ALL

Our worship is fulfilled, and our purpose is confirmed,
through our service as God's stewards to the world and all creation.
Use the blessings God has given you as you share
the joy in your heart, the wisdom in your mind,
the love in your spirit, and the peace in your soul.

Thank you for sharing sacred fellowship with us.

Plymouth Congregational UCC is an open and affirming church, embracing diversity in our congregation and community, and affirming the dignity and worth of every person. We are an inclusive community of faith that celebrates God's presence through shared stories and experiences of sacred meaning on Sundays, and through the nurturing of divine values and virtues manifested in active practices in our daily lives. We welcome all persons into the full life and ministry of the church, regardless of race, ethnic background, gender/sexual identity, sexual orientation, physical or cognitive capabilities, nationality/citizenship, or circumstance of life. We are also a Just Peace church, emphasizing peace and nonviolence in all our relationships, personally and collectively, because we see the sacred worth of every person throughout this good earth. We are a Progressive Christian family of faith. We invite you to hear our experiences of the divine even as we are curious in learning about your own spiritual journey. We hope our values may intersect as together we strive to make our corner of the world a better place. Get to know us! We'd like to get to know you!

Keeping in Prayer

Ralph Reynold Mike & Michele Ettelston Dave Talbot
Dick Brace Eric Wahlstedt Family of John Chivers
Kyle Greenwood Family of Peggy Suntum Jesse Armstrong
The family of Robert Slagle
Pastor Bret's Mom, Ruth Ann Myers
Bob Feeny and Sam Lovett,
members-in-discernment in the Merrimack Association

If you have any prayer requests, please fill out a prayer card located in the pew rack and drop it in the offering plate.

Save these Dates

November 3rd - All Saints & Remembrance Sunday
November 10th – Finalize Vision & Mission Meeting
November 19th – Holiday Clean-Up Day in Kitchen

Announcements

Rev. Dr. Tony Clark - Plymouth Congregational UCC welcomes the Rev. Dr. Tony Clark to preach and bring us greetings from the national office of the UCC in Cleveland. He will be with us this **today**. Please give him a warm welcome!

Rev. Dr. Tony Clark, is the Minister for Committees on Ministry Development and Leadership with the Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization (MESA) Team of the United Church of Christ. In this position he is called to provide resources and training opportunities for Committees on Ministry, the bodies across the denomination that discern the readiness and fitness for ministry in and on behalf of the UCC. An Ohio native, he most recently served as Pastor at Arlington Community Church in Kensington, CA and has previously served churches in Missouri and Minnesota. He holds a M.Div. from Eden Theological Seminary as well as a B.S. in Microbiology and a Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine, both from the Ohio State University. He and his husband and cat moved to Cleveland at the end of 2018, and they keep busy making improvements to their 110 year old house.

Director of Christian Education Opening – Position open, part-time, at Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ. Estimated 13 hour per week, includes Sundays, 10-month period. Minimum education required: Associates Degree. Salary commensurate with experience. Send letter of interest to: Human Resources, PCUCC, P.O. Box 86, Plymouth, NH 03264.

Coffee Hour – Today will be our "Reduced Sugar Sunday". All are welcome.

We are continuing to accept surplus garden produce and other items to share. Please leave a cash donation which will go to "Voices against Violence".

Tuesday, **November 19th** will be Holiday Clean-up Day in the kitchen from 9:30 to 11:30 AM. Come and help get the kitchen ready for everyone to use during a busy time of year. Mark your calendars and sign up on the bulletin board. Please note that the day of the week will be on a rotating schedule to allow more helpers to attend.

There are many opportunities to help in the kitchen by setting up prior to the service, cleaning up afterwards or bringing in snacks. You may sign-up on the bulletin board near the pass-through window to help or use one of the dated tags on the Will-U poster at the entrance to Fellowship Hall if you are bringing a snack. Please contact Chris Pollock at 603-674-8590 or e-mail at rpollock@metrocast.net to sign up or if you have any questions. Thank you from the Hospitality Committee!

SERVICE EXCHANGE FUNDRAISER NEWS - More than 30 services have been offered so far. We can receive a few more.

Today, a list of all services offered or requested will be displayed downstairs in the fellowship hall. If you want an item, take the matching card. You can directly contact the provider to work out the details. Enjoy this personal contact, the service given and the contribution to our church budget.

Questions can be answered by Eleanor Spencer, Kathy Henning, Arline Bownes or Peggy Martin.

Book Group – The Book Group will be meet on Monday, **October 28th**. We will discuss *My Stroke of Insight* by Jill Bolte Taylor, and on **November 4th & 18th**, *Gilead* by Marilyn Robinson.

All Saints & Remembrance Sunday - is Sunday, **November 3rd**. We'll light a candle and ring a bell for those who have passed on to life eternal in the last year. Names of members of the church will be listed in the bulletin, but family and friends of members will also be recognized as loved ones come forward to speak their names and light a candle.

Donations Needed – PCUCC is in need of medium-size plastic containers for Meals for Many and groups that reserve space in our church. Thank you!

Hooray! – The elevator has been repaired and is in working order!

Greetings members of Plymouth Congregational UCC! We will be having a meeting to finalize our vision and mission statements of our church as we prepare for a new era of ministry in a changing world. The meeting will be after worship on Sunday, **November 10th**. To assist us in creating an accurate, meaningful and inspiring statements, please review the following documents. It includes the Core Values of our Church as determined on September 8th, the vision and mission

statements created by the small group envisioning our future meetings and alternative set of statements for your consideration. These will be used as a basis of inspiration for the final statements we adopt. Please take time to study these statements carefully and prayerfully, letting the Spirit speak to you as to who God is calling us to be into the future. We will collectively decide what statements we affirm as we listen to God's still-speaking voice. May God's wisdom and blessings abide with us in our discernment.

The Rev. Bret S. Myers, Interim Pastor
Deborah Healey, Church Office Administrator
David Williams, Director of Music
Ashley Paine, Organist/Accompanist
Larry Spencer, Church Treasurer
Celia Woolverton, Grace Counseling

pastor@uccplymouth.org
office@uccplymouth.org
musicdirector@uccplymouth.org
organist@uccplymouth.org
treasurer@uccplymouth.org
gracecounseling@uccplymouth.org

Rev. Dr. Tony Clark, Guest Pastor

Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ
4 Post Office Square, PO Box 86
Plymouth, NH 03264

(603)536-2626 • office@uccplymouth.org • www.uccplymouth.org

*Please make an appointment with Rev. Myers if you would like to meet with the pastor.
You may call the church office at 603-536-2626,
email him at revbmyers@yahoo.com, or call/text his cell at 608-370-9472.*

*Bret's office hours are Sunday 10:45 AM – 12:00 PM, Tuesday 1:00-7:00 PM,
Wednesday 1:00 – 8:00 PM, Thursday 2:00-5:00 PM and other hours by appointment.*

Core Values of Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ

Created September 8, 2019

Core Values Ranked

- 1) Young families/Youth Outreach
- 2) Warm and Welcoming
- 3) Environmental Justice & Responsibility
- 4) Community Missions/Outreach
- 5) Community Support
- 6) Ecumenical Cooperation
- 7) Connecting with Plymouth State University
- 8) Visionary & Forward-Thinking
- 9) Hospitality (esp. to community groups)
- 10) Loving, Caring, Compassionate, Kind
- 11) Respectful and Non-Judgmental
- 12) Translate Ideals into Action
- 13) Life-long Spiritual Learning
- 14) Dedicated to Peace-Making
- 15) Educational development/formation (for all ages)
- 16) Sensitivity to Scheduling (all ages)
- 17) Adventurous
- 18) Understanding Non-Christian Religions
- 19) Ecumenical Leadership
- 20) Implementing Strategies for Age-Inclusiveness
- 21) Sanctuary/Immigrant-Welcoming
- 22) Covenantal
- 23) Self-Critical
- 24) Bringing Church Outside the Church (meeting people at work, play, etc.)

It was agreed to categorize these core values into smaller groupings as some overlap and may apply to several categories. Below is a suggested grouping of 7 of these collective values (the first being agreed upon by those present as suggested by a new member):

7 Collective Core Values

- I. **Attitude/Spirit/Practice of Being a Place of Sanctuary:** warm & welcoming, immigrant welcoming, respectful/non-judgmental, nonviolent/peaceful, refuge for the oppressed.
- II. **Young Families/Youth Outreach:** attracting, nurturing, and developing a setting that invites and inspires participation by young people – who are the future of the church.
- III. **Inclusivity:** warm & welcoming, hospitable to community, creating sense of belonging for all ages and people, etc.
- IV. **Advocacy and Faith in Practice:** environmental justice & responsibility, ideals to action, visionary/forward-thinking, life-long learning, peace-making, bring church outside of church, etc.

- V. **Community Collaboration:** community missions/outreach/support/cooperation/connection, visionary, hospitable, ideals to action, adventurous, covenantal, outside our own doors, etc.
- VI. **Virtues/Spirit of the Church:** visionary/forward-thinking, hospitality, peace-making, adventurous, covenantal, self-critical.
- VII. **Spiritual Formation:** life-long spiritual learning, peace-making, educational development, activities for all ages, adventurous, learning/understanding non-Christian religions, ecumenism, self-critical.

Small Group Envisioning Our Future Workshop #1

Vision Statement

We are a welcoming and inclusive community of faith. We acknowledge current issues and understandings to bring our ideas to promote peace, justice, and love to the world.

Small Group Envisioning Our Future Workshop #2

Vision Statement

We strive to be a place of sanctuary for all.

We warmly welcome those who are seeking acceptance, understanding, and a spiritual home.

We believe God is still speaking; therefore we welcome diversity of faith and self-identity.

We strive to be an active presence in the community
by engaging in social and environmental justice,
and providing local and global support.

Mission Statement

We live out our faith by:

- Providing a diverse and vibrant worship and music program.
 - Engaging in mission and outreach activities for all ages.
- Offering people in the community opportunities to nurture their spiritual journeys.
 - Respecting individuality and creating a sense of belonging for all.
- Engaging and collaboratively working with the town of Plymouth, local agencies, and Plymouth State University.
 - Providing space for various community groups.
- Having members actively engaged in ministry teams of the church.

Small Group Envisioning Our Future Workshop #3

Vision Statement

We are to be welcoming to **ALL**, as we affirm that **ALL** persons matter.

We open ourselves to a sharing of spiritual and religious experiences and stories.

We seek to take an active role in the betterment of our local, national, and global community.

In accordance with the values of Jesus, we aspire to grow spiritually in improving the world.

Mission Statement

We will prioritize educational and spiritual programs to attract younger families and nourish people of all ages.

We will plan and support local activities and projects within our church, and in collaboration with the wider public, community, and Plymouth State University (e.g., church suppers, music programs, etc.).

We will provide transportation ministry to members and the community (e.g., veterans home, homebound, meals for many, doctor's appointments, etc.).

We will publicize/advertise church events (including enlistment of tech support).

We will enhance environmental sustainability and outreach (including battery supply for solar array).

We will provide opportunities to share our stories.

Small Group Envisioning Our Future Workshop #4

Vision Statement

Our priorities for envisioning our future include:

- Love and model kindness
- Do justice: economic, social, environmental through outreach and service
- Be pioneers of change and activists for meaningful and intentional inclusivity

Mission Statement

Our mission initiatives and priorities are:

- Be sensitive to and advocates for those in need locally
- Provide mission and outreach programs locally and globally (e.g., service, travel)
- Increase opportunities for intergenerational interaction
- Make our facilities accessible to those of differing abilities and ages
- Pastor and congregation actively involved in visiting parishioners in all settings

Additional Statements for Consideration inspired by the Collective Core Values of Plymouth Congregational UCC

Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ: Who We Are and Our Purpose

Our Identity: We are a progressive and inclusive spiritual family creatively shaping a better you for creating a better world. We are a place of inspiration designed to make a difference in our community and beyond: opening minds, nurturing hearts, and transforming souls. Together we strive to birth beauty through compassion, peace, and justice – interpersonally, inter-religiously, and internationally. Questions are welcomed, and journeys are shared here!

Our Vision: We dream of a church, community, and world where all people are loved and treated with respect and loving-kindness, where peace is the way as well as the goal, and where justice prevails for those whose ethnicity, gender, sexual orientations and identities, dis/abilities, spiritual beliefs, and other distinguishing characteristics are not only affirmed but celebrated. We seek to make these values realized in our daily lives and our social structures. And so we advocate for the disenfranchised and oppressed in accordance with

Christ's own Spirit. We vow to bring about personal, relational, communal, and systemic changes to our world by practicing peaceful ways, engendering justice, and lavishing love on every person and creature, and the earth as a whole, so that God's values and presence are felt both near and far. We are to be one world where compassion reigns in every relationship. We are all siblings who care for one another throughout the journey of life.

Our Mission:

We dedicate ourselves to be persons and a community of shared values which provides sanctuary to those seeking spiritual, physical, and emotional refuge.

We commit ourselves to being respectful and non-judgmental towards all persons; not based on their beliefs, but on the sanctity of their souls.

We will promote methods and practices of nonviolence and peace in all our relationships – personal, communal, and global.

We will be inclusive of all persons: affirming the worth and dignity of each and every one – no exceptions.

We will nurture everyone according to where they are at on their own journey of life: affirming goodness, acknowledging loss and failings, offering forgiveness, encouraging improvement, and sustaining the sacredness of mutuality and friendship.

We will find ways to bridge generation gaps and build intergenerational understanding and respect, and especially nourish those of younger years and tender spirits so that they may truly find in us a haven of hospitality and belonging.

We will educate ourselves on how to reach out to those different than ourselves, be advocates for the oppressed, consciences for the privileged, and agents of healing for the afflicted and voiceless.

We will collaborate with others within our wider community to create a better world: enlisting people, assisting programs, participating in activities, and enacting changes that breed positive transformation.

We will be proactive, forward-thinking, and risk-takers in carrying out the ministries of our church; knowing that the divine is with us as we venture towards healing and wholeness in our world.

We will be self-critical; acknowledging our failings without being disempowered, and being willing to change ourselves to be of greater service to the world in which we are called to bless.

We will do this throughout our lives, from birth to death; for this is how we embrace and give grace to life.

Our Motto: An 'Open and Affirming' and 'Just Peace' Church embracing diversity and attesting to the worth and dignity of all.