

NEWS

firstplymouth

congregational church



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Home



This past May when I told people I was going to my daughter Philippa's college graduation a common comment was, "Is she graduating early?" The question was asked because those folks knew that Philippa started college the same year I started here in this church as Senior Minister. "No," I answered, "she is right on schedule, finishing her fourth/

senior year." "That means you have been here four years!?! It seems like you just got here!" I was actually encouraged by this comment. After all, they could have said, "You've been here only four years? It seems like forever!"

Four years now, and starting my fifth. Considering the fact that, if we include Stuart Haskins and all the interim ministers, I was the ninth Senior Minister in twelve years, it is a rather long stint.

The fifth year is a crucial one in the tenure of a minister at a given church, both for the minister and the church. The nearly invariable pattern when a new minister arrives at a church (any minister in any church) is for there to be a honeymoon period when everyone is largely starry-eyed happy (done) and then a period of unrest when the minister and the church really take a hard look at each other deciding whether or not they like what they see (done) and then a settling in period when we begin to understand and accept each other's measure (nearly done). It is at this point that some church experts believe that ministry actually *begins*. (This point also marks the average length of a pastorate, with the minister leaving at the nadir, and so the pattern starts all over again.)

To mark this occasion of mature beginning, I would like to invite you all to come to a series of sermons on September 13, 20, and 27. In these three sermons I will try to lay out as clearly as possible 1) a 30,000 foot overview of my basic theology, 2) my foundational understanding of ecclesiology (the structure, purpose and functioning of the church), and 3) some thoughts on where we may go from here. I plan to be quite straight-forward in these sermons. I plan also to speak within the context of worship, holding in mind that our main purpose at any worship service is to help us grow into the image of God.

To say that leading a church like First Plymouth is like herding cats is a bit of an understatement. Therefore, may I invite you to share in a bowl of milk on those Sundays? Catnip? I hope to see you in church.

Blessings,
George

September 2009

Volume 71, Issue 3

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Worship Opportunities Lectionary Texts Rwanda Moderator's Corner Hearing Impaired Ministry	2-3
Children's CE Little Red Wagon Adult CE Inclusivity/ONA	4-5
Goddess Retreat Women's Cancer Support Group Thursday Afternoon Circle Healing Touch Needlework Group MARS Chancel Choir Men's Retreat The Group All-Church Picnic Altar Flowers Kentucky Circle Village Alternative Gift Mkt	6-7
Note from Frank Perko Travel Club Can Do Sunday Customer Service in Churches Softball Report	8-9
The Church Together Contact Information	10-11
Volunteer Thanks Newsletter Deadline Library Notes Flu Shot Clinic September Birthdays	12
Inserts: September Calendar Youth News Women's Retreat Registration	



W
o
r
s
h
i
p

O
p
p
o
r
t
u
n
i
t
i
e
s

Sunday Morning at First Plymouth

- 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. First Service and Children’s Sunday School
- 10:10 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. Christian Education for Adults, Youth, & Children
Children’s Choir Rehearsals
- 11:11 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. Second Service

All Morning:
Fellowship in
Plymouth Hall and
Nursery Care in B09

September 6
The Rev. Eric Smith
Matthew 13:1-9
Seeds

Join us as the High School Mission Trip team that traveled to New Orleans in July reports and reflects on their experiences. We'll consider the ways our youth and our church have sown seeds of recovery and hope in the midst of hardship and despair, and the ways our church sows the seeds of its own future in the lives of our young people.



September 13
The Rev. George Anastos
Psalms 19

Who knows why certain passages of scripture speak to us in the ways that they do? This psalm is one that I have recited many, many times as I begin my morning prayer. There is a spiritual fullness to it that calls me back to its words and wisdom. This psalm, assigned by the lectionary for today, will be the basis of my sermon. As noted in the meditation on page one, today will be the first of the sermon series and I will speak in broad brush strokes about the overall shape of my personal theology. Yes, those of you who hear me preach week after week already have a very good idea of its contours. Yet as we begin our fifth year together it may be helpful to see the more foundational aspects of this theology. Seeing how any systematic look at theology takes a minimum of three volumes, I will have to give a very high level overview indeed.

September 20
The Rev. George Anastos
Mark 9:30-37

On this second Sunday in my sermon series, I will focus on ecclesiology: the study of the Church. Going to church means a lot of different things to many different people. If we asked leaders of different Christian communions about their understanding of the Church and its purpose, we would get strikingly similar, yet astoundingly different answers.

In our own tradition of Congregationalism it is always good for everyone to look hard at this question and to come to an internal understanding of the Church and its mission. Since we are a communion that embraces the *priesthood of all believers* then a solid ecclesiology is essential for understanding our separate and communal roles within the congregation. Today is a day when my role of "pastor and teacher" will have the teacher portion very much at the fore.

September 27
The Rev. George Anastos
Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-19

In this the third of the trinity of sermons I am preaching, I will explore the ways in which we as a community can move forward to faithfully meet the challenges of our day. This is extremely important because, in its deepest sense, this is precisely what "tradition" is: the faithful engagement of the people of God, with the Spirit and Word of God, *in this people's particular time and context*. Building on the previous two sermons we will try to put flesh on what it means to be the body of Christ, on what it means to be a covenanted people, on what it means to live and love and work and play in the Way of God, right here, right now. Rose colored glasses will not be allowed today. The church is called to move forward, ever forward, no looking back.

September Lectionary Texts

Sept. 6	Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23 or Isaiah 35:4-7a	Psalms 125 or Psalm 146	James 2:1-10, 14-17	Mark 7:24-37
Sept. 13	Proverbs 1:20-33 or Isaiah 50:4-9a	Psalm 19 or Psalm 116:1-9 or Wisdom of Solomon 7:26-8:1	James 3:1-12	Mark 8:27-38
Sept. 20	Proverbs 31:10-31 or Wisdom of Solomon 1:16-2:1, 12-22	Psalms 1 or Psalm 54	James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a	Mark 9:30-37
Sept. 27	Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-22 or Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-29	Psalms 124 or Psalm 19:7-14	James 5:13-20	Mark 9:38-50

Is Rwanda on Your Mind?

Mark your calendars for the following events supporting the Rwanda Outreach Project that helps needy families of Kanambe Village. Education is the avenue out of poverty for these children, all victims of the genocide. They cannot attend school without fees, uniforms, and books—which your sponsorships provide. Bring your families, neighbors, and friends and see for yourself:



Sunday, October 4: World Communion Day—“Reconciliation”

Our Rwanda Outreach Project will be highlighted at the 9:00 and 11:11 a.m. services. We welcome guest minister Dr. Edward P. Antonio, Associate Professor of Theology and Social Theory, at Iliff School of Theology. Dr. Antonio, a native of Zimbabwe, has worked in reconciliation in both South Africa and Rwanda.

Friday, October 16: Reaching Out In Rwanda

PowerPoint presentation by Margo Sargent and the Rwanda Outreach Project (similar to the program presented at Community Day Camp on August 29) in the Odeon. Bring family and friends.

Want to get involved? There are many ways you can support the Rwanda Outreach Project. Set up a Rwanda program in your home, your child’s school, or with your social, church, work group, or friends. Contact: Margo Sargent at 303-753-1335 or margoesargent@comcast.net.



Moderator’s Corner

A question came up in Council’s orientation that might be a good topic for the Moderator’s Corner this month. As we transition to Policy Governance, what you will hear me speak about and what you will read in the Council’s minutes might be puzzling without a bit of explanation. The question is: what is the difference between Ends and goals, or Ends and objectives? Are they the same, and if they aren’t, how are they different?

They are not the same and here’s why: “Ends” is a very specific term that we use in Policy Governance. It refers to the written policy statements we make describing the difference we aspire to make as a church. At this time, our Ends center on becoming Beloved Community—a place for us and others to be and belong that is very different from the secular and often toxic world around us. We might think of our Ends as our church’s particular take on “thy kingdom come” in the Lord’s Prayer, or our answer to “Who is our neighbor, and how shall we love her/him?” As the church identifies ways to accomplish its

Ends, goals and objectives can be set to define a strategy and measure performance, but those goals and objectives will be the means, not Ends. The distinction we make between means and Ends is critical, for it allows us to evaluate strategy and assess progress in light of our highest aspirations. I invite your comments and questions.

Blessings, Nancy (moderator@firstplymouthchurch.org)

Council Update July: Council is engaged in a transition to Policy Governance. We expanded our meeting time in July and August, holding an Orientation workshop prior to our regular, slightly shorter Council meeting in these two months. Our main topic in the July Council meeting was a review of the 2008 Statement of Ends and Strategic Direction and transfer of its strategy component to our Senior Minister and Chief Mission Officer, his staff and the Mission Team, Ministries and Committees of First Plymouth. Council minutes are on the wiki at: firstplymouth.wikispaces.com/Church+Council

Ministry for the Hearing Impaired

FPCC is considering starting a ministry for the hearing impaired. Yes, this would mean that we would have someone signing using American Sign Language (ASL) every Sunday. We would like to know if anyone is interested in serving on a Startup Committee (yes, that means a clear end date). If you know ASL and/or are interested in participation, please contact George Anastos at ganastos@firstplymouthchurch.org.

Children's Christian Education

A New Year Has Begun!

By the time you get this newsletter we will be approaching the fourth week of our new year in Sunday School. It is exciting to see children and adults working to learn more about God and their faith. Even though I said "working," you would be surprised about how much fun and enthusiasm there is downstairs on Sunday mornings.

This year we are using a new curriculum in the Doves and Fish classes called "Rock Solid." In the teacher's guides it says: "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise one who built a house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock (Matthew 7:24-25). A person might easily build a house in a sandy wadi. But when the rainy season came, water would gush down the wadi and carry the house away because it did not have a substantial foundation. A stone foundation required time and effort. But the house that stood atop it would resist the rains of winter. This is the kind of faith we want to build in the children so that when they run up against the rains and storm of life, their house of faith will stand strong and give them strength and shelter."

This verse and statement reflect First Plymouth's hopes and dreams for Children's Ministries. We hope that our children will not just learn spiritual information, but that we are also helping families begin the process of spiritual formation in the lives of their children.

This fall the Doves (3 and 4-year-olds) and Fish (Kindergarteners for 2009 and 2010) will learn about Joseph, Moses, and Joshua. Their teachers will be Robin Leander, Kim Guy, Michael and Angela Ajamie, Kim Wooldridge and Claire Montgomery, Hayley Cochran, Jerry and Betty Arca, Gini and Bill Blunden, Nancy Joe Shaw and Pat Gunckel, and Randy and Charron Feuerstein. Please pray for these folks as they serve God on your behalf in the Early Childhood Department of our Sunday School.

In addition we have a very active Lambs Class. The Lambs are our children who are outgrowing the Nursery and are ready for a short teaching time. They play, sing, and hear stories together. They share a snack and continue learning that the church building is a safe place to be and that there other "big people" besides Mommy and Daddy who will help take of them.

We have Janeen and Alli Stubbs and Jessa Decker-Smith sharing their love and gifts with our 2 year olds. Pray for them as they serve God and our congregation.

Next month I will share with you more information on the Cornerstone Kids (1st – 5th grades) and what they will be learning throughout 2009 – 2010.

Youth Learn About Our Children's Ministries

On Sunday night, September 20, the church building will be filled with sounds of our youth. Together we will play games and through simulations, learn about ministry with children.

Many of our youth already have a strong and active presence in our Children's Ministries. Many have been through Boundary Training. Serving children as a youth is an important way to begin to develop leadership for many teenagers. All teenagers and situations are different. I began teaching Sunday School for 2-year-olds when I was a young teenager and received my call to professional ministry through that experience. Today my first Sunday School class is all married, having children, and one "little girl" is beginning her seminary work this fall.

As a congregation that is committed to welcoming all persons into our midst, this youth night will be an active expression of our welcoming all people into our midst.

October Creator's Club Sunday October 11 at 10:10 in Plymouth Hall

One of the new Children's Ministries we began last year after Rev. Karen arrived was Creator's Club, a time when children and adults are invited to come and be "creative" with different activities around a theme. We are excited to offer this ministry program again this year. Creator's Club is often scheduled for Sundays when Children's Choirs sing because we don't have Sunday School for the Cornerstone Kids on those Sundays.

Our first Creator's Club will be Sunday October 11. We will celebrate the season of fall and the beauty and majesty of God's creation. We will be creative with leaves and apples. We will celebrate fall's cool air and quiet atmosphere. Creator's Club Sundays are a great chance to invite friends to come to church with you. We hope to see you then when we will enjoy creating together!

Our Wagon Runneth Over!

Thanks to all FP folks who donated school supplies to the Outreach little red wagon. We collected enough for Family HomeStead to supply an entire classroom of students and more! These young scholars will get off to a good start, with backpacks, pencils, pens, notebooks, and all the other items we all used to be thrilled to take to school at the beginning of the school year.

The generosity of First Plymouth folks resulted in a total contribution of \$947 in school supplies to Family HomeStead. Outreach thanks all of you for coming through for the families that Family HomeStead helps!



Adult Christian Education Opportunities

Sunday Morning Classes

Bible Basics and Beyond will start the new classes on Sept 13 in Room 212. This year we will use the Kerygma guide *Discovering the Bible*. While this is a year long course, each unit is self-contained so you can show up as the spirit moves you. *Discovering the Bible* is an introduction to the bible as a whole. Inviting adults into a new adventure of learning, the course explores biblical people, events, ideas and places, through reading, reflection, discussion, creative expression and discovery.

You do not need to be a Bible scholar to come to Bible Basics & Beyond. Come with a willingness to learn and to join our lively discussions. For information call Fletcher Brown at 303-619-8486 or brownsinco@q.com.

Finding Grace in Chaos—Amazing Grace will meet in the Commons Room on September 13, 20, and 27. Our Interim Associate Minister, Jenny Morgan, will lead this discussion around the Council's theme for this year.

"Let Your Life Speak" Book Study will meet September 13 through October 18 at 10:10 in the Covenant Room. A book study of Parker Palmer's *Let Your Life Speak*, a brief but profound book that guides us on a pilgrimage to find "deeper and truer life," that unique path to which each of us is our own life's vocation. The study will cover one chapter each week and will be co-taught by three leaders, each of whom will bring their own perspectives and approaches to the material. The class (like the book) will be structured in a way that anyone can attend any or all of the sessions. Those who are interested should buy their own copy of the book.

Inclusivity/ONA Opportunity

Inclusivity/ONA will sponsor FPCC participation in Aids Walk 2009 on September 13. Look for sign-up tables and participation options around the church.

Weekday Classes

Bible Study

What does the Bible really say? What does it *not* say? What's in it, who put it there, how does it get used, and what does it mean? If you've ever wanted to know more about the Bible, this is your chance to find out. Rev. Eric Smith, a PhD candidate in Biblical Interpretation and early Christianity at Iliff School of Theology and the University of Denver and First Plymouth staff member, will lead a long-term, intensive study of the Bible (cover to cover).

We'll meet on Tuesday nights from 6:00-8:00, starting September 8 and continue until May (taking off for holidays). You should be able to commit to being present at 80% of the sessions and doing the reading on a regular basis. The cost is \$15 for a study manual. You should also have a decent study Bible (the Oxford, NIB, and Harper-Collins editions of the NRSV are great; avoid paraphrases). The group will be limited to twelve people. The study is designed for adults, but mature youth are welcome. If you think you'd like to participate, or for more information, call or e-mail Eric Smith. The group will fill first-come, first-served.

New Spirit Group

What (or who) is the Holy Spirit? What are the Spirit's effects in our lives? What do the answers to these questions mean for our lives in community? We will gather a group of folks interested in exploring these questions. This will not be a class taught by an expert, but a dialogue group for deep and open-ended discussion, listening, and growing. Each monthly session will be led by a different person in the group, focusing on perspectives, questions, or readings brought in by the leader for that month and will include both an experiential (prayer, meditation, music, movement) component and a reflective (discussion, sharing) component. Anyone interested should contact Anne Kleinkopf at 303-791-4743 or annekleinkopf@msn.com.

Light of Christ Meditation Series

Tuesdays, September 8, 15, 29, and October 6 from 7:00-8:30 p.m.

In meditation we are invited to *experience* God rather than *think about* God, to encounter God's presence through the breath of our bodies and the stilling of our minds. Join Dr. Ron Minson, friend of Rev. Jane Anne Ferguson and of First Plymouth, in a four-week series that can deepen the experience of God's presence in your life. This workshop is for those who are beginning or are experienced in meditation.

Dr. Minson has been meditating for 37 years and has studied with many master teachers representing both Western and Eastern traditions. He wishes to share the benefits with others through the direct experience of meditation. This four-week workshop will teach meditation using the Light of the Christ images, breath, and sound. The outcome will be to have a more direct experience of the Divine within ourselves supporting our ability to serve humanity more directly.

Dr. Minson received his medical degree from UCLA School of Medicine and is board-certified in Psychiatry and Neurology. He served as Chief of Psychiatry for Presbyterian Medical Center and Director of Behavioral Sciences at Mercy Hospital in Denver.

THE GODDESS RETREAT “Awakening the Wisdom”

First Plymouth’s Annual Women’s Retreat: September 18-20 at La Foret

Q: I’ve never been to the Women’s Retreat. What can I expect?

A: The Women’s Retreat is generally the third weekend in September at the La Foret Conference & Retreat Center in the Black Forest of Colorado Springs. Attendance is usually around 40-50 women. It’s an opportunity for relaxation, renewal, and fellowship for women of all ages—recent college grads, young moms, grandmothers, and several mother-daughter pairs attend the Women’s Retreat.

Q: I’ve heard of La Foret but never been there. How far away is it? Is it hard to find? What are the cabins like?

A: La Foret is about an hour’s drive from the church. It’s a 400-acre campus with a dining hall, meeting rooms, and cabins nestled in a Ponderosa pine forest with a stunning view of Pike’s Peak. The Women’s Retreat uses some of the nine cabins, which have a main room with a fireplace, several bedrooms with twin and bunk beds, and full bathrooms. You can see for yourself by visiting the La Foret web site at lafort.org.

Q: I don’t think I can commit to the whole weekend. Is it worth coming down for Saturday only?

A: Absolutely! Each year around a dozen women come down on Saturday for the program and meals.

Q: But I have children, and soccer games, and gymnastics, and laundry. I don’t know how I could get away even for the day!

A: There you go again! Always taking care of others. Maybe you need this opportunity for renewal and relaxation more than you think! Maybe Dad or another family member or friend can handle those responsibilities for the day, or even the whole weekend.

Q: It seems like the same group of women go every year. I know and like these women, but I am a little worried that it will feel cliquish, or that I might not fit in.

A: While it’s true that many women do attend year after year, there are always “first-timers”, and the social times, small groups, and program activities encourage getting to know new people.

Q: If this is partly about relaxing in a beautiful setting, but there are all these activities and speakers, when do I relax and just breathe the pine-scented air?

A: While we’re excited about our program this year (Awakening the Wisdom: Seeking the Divine Feminine), there is free time built into the schedule. You can hike, visit the Chapel, walk the labyrinth, or read a book. You don’t have to participate in all the planned activities – the choice is yours!

Q: Well this sounds pretty cool actually. Can I bring a friend or do you have to be a member of the church?

A: We encourage you to bring a friend or two! Every year we welcome new faces and friends to the Women’s Retreat. So yes, absolutely, invite a friend! Check the registration materials for details and deadlines.

Women’s Cancer Support Group

Women's Cancer Support Group will meet Tuesday, September 15, 12:00-2:00 pm, in the Bride's Room. If you are a survivor or have recently been diagnosed with cancer you are invited to join us for fellowship and support.

Thursday Afternoon Circle

The officers of the Thursday Afternoon Circle will hold a “Friendship Tea” on September 10 at 1:00 p.m., with program at 1:30.

You are invited to come for cake and sandwiches and to bring a friend or neighbor to hear about our exciting programs and activities for the 2009/2010 season. Call Martha Edwards at 303-744-9402 to reserve a seat.

The Healing Touch Group

To begin the new year, the Healing Touch Group will gather Thursday, September 17. We will practice the basic *Healing Touch Body Balance* for people and their specific needs. Bring your ideas for topics for future meetings. We will meet at 7:00 p.m. in the Columbine Room. Come and join us. Info: Dianne Hornbrook, 303-757-6996.

Needlework Group

The Needlework Group will meet Thursday, September 17 from 2:00 to 4:00 pm, in the Commons Room. Please join us for knitting or any other needlework you enjoy or would like to learn about.

The Material Aids Recycling Society (MARS) Could Use Your Help!

MARS will meet on the third Thursday of the month starting in September. The oldest group here at First Plymouth, MARS makes stuffed dolls, bears, elephants, and cats for local children’s hospitals. This is a small friendly group who welcomes anyone who would like to stuff and put the finishing touches on these crafts.

Join us at 9:30 a.m. on Sept. 17 in the Covenant Room. Info: Margaret Sensel, 303-771-1489 or Dorothy Eckert, 303-923-3028.



Chancel Choir Invitation

The First Plymouth Chancel Choir invites anyone who would enjoy the experience of a choir rehearsal to join us for an evening OPEN HOUSE rehearsal on Thursday, September 17, at 6:45 p.m. Those who are considering joining the choir, and those who have simply wondered what happens at a rehearsal are encouraged to join the fun in an evening of making and creating music. Refreshments will be provided! We will all be looking forward to having an evening of fun and music with YOU!

Save the Date: Men's Retreat October 23-25

This year's retreat topic is "Ethics and Religion". Our discussion leader, Buie Seawell, is Professor of Business Law and Ethics at DU's Daniels College. He has a degree in theology, has practiced law, and has also been in politics with Gary Hart and public policy, all of which contribute to his unique perspective on our topic. The retreat is at Messiah Mountain Retreat Center in Indian Hills, 30 minutes from the church. Contact Fletcher Brown for more information: 303-619-8486 or brownsinco@q.com.

The Group

The Group will meet for an open house at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, September 12, at the home of Janet and Berkeley Rich, 15 Lindenwood Drive, Littleton. No reservation needed. Bring the usual: hearty hors d'oeuvres, wine, dessert, or your favorite dish.

Directions: South on Broadway past Arapahoe to Ridge Road and turn right. Turn left on Elati, then right on Lindenwood. Their house, #15, is on the right. Park on the street. 303-794-3345.

The Annual All Church Picnic September 13

Fellowship and Parish Life will host the All Church Picnic on September 13 from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m.. We will provide hot dogs with toppings, condiments, chips, lemonade, and water. You just bring a dish to share. We will have games for everyone and bubbles for the little guys.

We will gather in picnic area #2 at Mamie Eisenhower Park, just blocks from the church. Maps will be available at church. In case of bad weather, we'll be in Plymouth Hall. Join us for fun, food, and fellowship.

Altar Flower Donations Needed

Our altar flowers are made possible by donations of both time and money. Members of the congregation donate \$60 to purchase the materials for the altar flowers. Volunteer arrangers create the beautiful bouquets. Finally, after the service, volunteers deliver the flowers to members of the church who are ill or are going through hard times. If you are interested in supporting the worship of the church in any of these ways, the process is very simple. Donors sign up on the schedule on the marble wall across from the entrance to the church office, pay the office \$60 and tell them the wording you would like in the bulletin. Flower arrangers, please contact Lynn Bliss Replinger at 303-680-5515 or lynn@replinger.com. New arrangers can jump right in or they can have a mentor for their first few arrangements. If you can help deliver the flowers, please contact either Nanette or Terri, our Pastoral Care Coordinators. Without the cash donations to get the process going, there are no live flowers on the altar (and none to deliver to shut-ins), so please sign up now.

From Kentucky Circle Village

Rejoice with us! As co-owners of Kentucky Circle Village, we invite you to celebrate the success of an investment made 50 years ago by the American Baptist Association, First Plymouth Congregational Church, and Green Mountain Presbyterian Church. This investment has paid off in a half-century of low-cost senior housing that has provided both a home and community for over 7,000 seniors.

KCV's 50th Anniversary Celebration will be October 24 from 2:00-5:00 p.m. at Kentucky Circle Village, 4901 East Kentucky Circle, Denver. Please join us!

2009 Alternative Gift Market Is Coming!

Would you like to simplify your holiday gift giving and help others at the same time? Plan to attend First Plymouth's Alternative Gift Market on November 21 and 22, sponsored by Whole Earth and the Outreach Ministry. Don't miss this opportunity to shop for fair trade and earth-friendly gifts while supporting artisans from around the world. Bring your family and friends. Be part of the excitement by volunteering to join the planning committee to brainstorm ideas for organizing this event and making it even more successful than last year. Call Pam Schmidt for information: 303-986-9988.

AGM Planning Meeting September 13 at 10:00 a.m.

A Note from Frank Perko: Can You Hear the Voice of God?

The voice or call of God can come in many different ways. God finds me when I am on a camping trip in the mountains and in the sounds of nature. It is amazing that I can find comfort through so many different types of sounds. The sounds of nature make me feel peaceful, philosophical, deep, and in touch with my God-given inner soulful life. I am aware that God is always there in my living and in my sleeping.

I am a musician. Music and sound have always touched me in a way that nothing else can. Music can excite me beyond belief or move me to tears in an instant. There is no particular style of music that affects me more than another. I simply experience intense moments of tragedy, bliss, peace, excitement, happiness, seriousness, prayer, and meditation through music. As a child and teenager, I was a pop, secular musician. I worked for a restaurant that many of you probably know and remember in Denver, called the Organ Grinder. I first experienced God's calling as a church musician when I went to college and I fell in love with the music of the church. I am thankful that I can hear God's voice in many styles and experiences of music. God's voice through music is universal. First Plymouth Congregational Church has a great ability to reach people and their spirits through music. We have an incredible music staff and many excellent ensembles that allow us to experience many styles, media, and musical messages, allowing all of us to hear God's muse-filled voice.

"First Plymouth has a great ability to reach people and their spirits through music."

Some are inspired by a majestic hymn with choir and organ. Others will clap with drums during a Gospel anthem led by the Youth Choir. Some will meditate during a prayerful choir anthem. A tearful song sung by the children can soothe us with God's innocent voice. And the flutes and handbells can shimmer through our ears with brilliant delight.

I came to First Plymouth in 2006 with a strong vision to involve as many people as possible in the music of this church – to be a part of, or simply to experience through active listening, the many voices of God through music. It is my hope that First Plymouth will rise to great strength in the Denver area, as a presence for beauty, integrity, diversity, and power within its potential for great sacred music making. There is absolutely no reason why our Chancel Choir should not have 100 voices, moving listeners with great spiritual power and depth. The Children's Choirs should flourish, feeding children the gift of God's musical voice, along with memories of music-making in church that will follow their Christian formation into adulthood. The Youth Choir has the potential to create vibrant vigor and sonic energy. The point is, there is no limit on age or musical ability (or inability) in the music program. Everyone in this church has a musical gift to offer. God's voice is ready to speak. But we can't afford to wait to hear it from the person next to you in the pews. We offer a rich, fun, spirit-filled, and exciting way for each of you to experience God's voice in this church. All you have to do is show up for a rehearsal! Let us help you find the resonance that is yours in the musical voice of God. Help us all in expanding the voice of God in this church, and its music.



Travel Club

Travel Club launches its 2009-2010 season on Saturday, September 12. Bruce and Adrienne Glenn will present a summary of their self-designed high adventure travel including such far-flung destinations as the Yukon, Switzerland, Scotland, the American Southwest and the Yellowstone area. The potluck/fellowship begins at 6:00 and the program starts at 7:00.

If your last name begins A-F, bring dessert; G-P, main dish; Q-Z, salad. Please bring your own table service; and coffee, tea, and ice water will be provided. To reserve your place, please call Berwyn or Gail Davies at 303-663-1350, or e-mail berwyngail@comcast.net by Thursday, September 10.

We look forward to this start of our new season, and you'll want to be there to experience Bruce and Adrienne's "on our own" travel adventures. See you on the 12th.



Can-Do—We Can

The impact of simple event like Can-Do Sunday on the lives of those less fortunate is amazing. From January through July, you, the people of FP, have contributed nearly 4,000 pounds of canned goods, toiletries, and other necessities to the clients of Metro CareRing. Thank you. Remember, Can-Do is the 3rd Sunday of each month. If you'd like to help or host the cart one Sunday, please contact Jane Hall, 303-771-6527, jane3hall@comcast.net.

Customer Service: Can Churches Get It Right?

by Tom Ehrich

I was in a hotel 500 miles from home when my Apple iPhone refused to recharge. I felt strangely stranded, unable to manage my business, to communicate with family, or to negotiate the scheduling intricacies of the trip. I went to a nearby AT&T store, the carrier that handles iPhones. "Can't help," said the clerk. "Try the Apple store." I drove 20 minutes to an outlying mall, found the Apple store. "Can't help," said one clerk. "I'm a trainer. Try the concierge." "Can't help," said the concierge. "Make an appointment with the 'Genius Bar.'" (Don't ask.) I drove across the street to another AT&T store, steaming and prepared to abandon Apple technology. "Sure, glad to help," said the clerk. He pushed some buttons and fixed the problem. I immediately felt better about my iPhone and confident about the trip.

Lesson learned: every enterprise ultimately depends on customer service. Good technology can't run faster than poor customer service. Clever marketing can't erase a bad shopping experience. Customer loyalty won't survive surly clerks, endless telephone trees, unanswered e-mails, and return and warranty procedures that favor the vendor.

Customers have too many other choices. They don't need to endure clueless systems and irritable staff. Just consider the reputation U.S.

automakers got for slick sales staff, bait-and-switch "closers" and point-of-sale pressure to tack on unwanted extras. In my consulting work with churches, time and again I see the cumulative impact of poor customer service:

- Uninterested ushers
- Parishioners who form tight circles
- More attention paid to setting the table than to greeting guests
- Fussy liturgy designed for insiders
- Facilities with poor signage (or websites)
- Congregants who fight with each other
- Music that pleases only the trained musician
- Clergy who don't call

The list is long. When I ask former congregants why they worship elsewhere or stay home on Sunday, that's the list they recite, detail by detail. Some were hurt, some were offended. Some said, "Who needs this?" It wasn't doctrine or change that drove them away. In a world of many choices, the quest for faith simply won't tolerate poor customer service. People stay where they are treated well - and leave where they aren't.

Pay attention to details, I tell church leaders. Look at how you respond to visitors, for example. Reconsider the maze you impose on

anyone asking for care. Watch people's faces sag as they sit through worship. Don't let the prickly long-timer force you to stick with methods that clearly aren't working. Be customer-driven, not provider-driven, I tell them. Visit a successful church and see lively gathering spaces, helpful signage, friendly greeters, cheerful atmosphere, worship designed to help people worship, leaders who are excited and not dodging bullets — that list is long, too.

This is more than advice for institutional leaders. I think it applies to us as individual believers, as well. It is good to tolerate difficult people and to place ourselves in challenging situations. But we don't have to tolerate institutions that thwart us and clearly are serving only themselves. Enabling isn't the same as loyalty. No faith community will be motivated to serve effectively as long as its constituents excuse mediocrity. In order to expect more, of course, we ourselves have to give more. For we play both parts: "customer" and "provider." We cannot receive what we aren't willing to give.

The Rev. Tom Ehrich is a writer, consultant and Episcopal priest based in New York. This article is reprinted from the June-July 2009 issue of United Church News.

Softball Season Report by Dave Kroll

The 2009 First Plymouth softball season is history. We consider our 4 wins and 6 losses a respectable record. Though we struggled to have enough players to avoid a forfeit, a surprisingly large number of people played in one or more of the games. Participation included 5 church members older than 30, 8 young adults, 7 youth and 16 who had no connection at all with FPCC.

We began the year vowing to show up in our team colors—green shirts with our names and numbers stenciled across the front and back. In typical Congregational fashion, by the middle of the season, we would sport three or four green shirts among a mix of others. Otherwise, we were one of the more handsome appearing teams in the league. We also seemed to be a little faster running the bases.

Our pitching was steady and our ability to hit singles was impressive. Unfortunately, our good looks did not help us to hit deep nor did they seem to improve our fielding. Nonetheless, we were at .500 until the last day of the season when we dropped a double header. We were the only team that was never rained out. Thank God for small favors.

By far our most energetic and successful recruiter was Laura Eley, who accounted for 90% of that large group of unaffiliated players. Not only did Laura entice, cajole, and browbeat a wide circle of friends and acquaintances into playing, she also managed to get hits and even scored in a couple games (a 100% increase over her experience last year). Since Laura is headed for Honduras to teach for awhile, next year's season, as always, will be up in the air.

We Are the Church Together

Drivers Needed

If you like to drive and meet new people, we have a ministry for you. We are compiling a list of members who would be available to take a member to an appointment, or perhaps to a meeting here at church. If you can help, please contact Nanette or Terry.

Meal Preparation

Do you like to cook and help others? The Pastoral Care office is recruiting members who can occasionally prepare a meal for a single person or family after an illness or hospitalization. If you can feed your soul by feeding others, please contact Nanette or Terry in Pastoral Care.

New Member Class

Interested in becoming a member of First Plymouth? Do you have questions about the UCC or our church? If so, join our next New Member Class beginning Sunday, October 18, and concluding with reception of new members on Sunday, December 6. We meet each Sunday from 10:10 – 11:00 a.m. Contact Terry or Nanette.

Hospitality Opportunities

The Pastoral Care Office offers support to members and organizations of the First Plymouth Community including our Hospitality Teams, which fall under Fellowship and Parish Life. If you want to participate in welcoming members and guests, please contact Nanette and Terry.

Prayer Chain

First Plymouth has a history of supporting members in a variety of ways, including prayer chains. We need to establish an additional prayer chain. If you are interested in participating in this important ministry, contact Nanette or Terry.

New Picture Directory

Due to overwhelming picture directory sign up requests, Olan Mills, our directory provider, has added two more days for us. Photos will be taken September 8 and 9 during the day and evening. Olan Mills does not charge the church or members for their service. Please come have your photo taken for our directory. For an appointment please call Terry or Nanette in the Pastoral Care office at 303-762-0616, or Olan Mills at 800-866-2263, contract number 42191.

Pastoral Care and Name Tags

The nametag reorganization project will be finished at the end of September. More information about the new system of organization will follow.

Parish Joys

Happy grandparents **John** and **Alice Weeda** announce the birth of Ruby Ilana Almond on July 4. Rachel, Jeff, and 2-year-old Naomi are home with the new baby. All is well.

Marilyn Miller has returned from her mission trip to the village of Miririni, Tanzania. The project website is: africaschoolassistanceproject.org.

Welcome home to our youth and chaperons who returned from the mission trip to New Orleans on July 16. Along with three other youth groups, they cleaned, scraped, fellowshiped, ate, worshiped, sweated, and spread the joy of restoration in New Orleans for 11 days.

Denver Downtown Partnership named **Jerry Arca** Volunteer of the Year for his tireless efforts chairing the “Downtown Host” program during the Democratic National Convention.

Bill and **Gini Blunden** are excited new grandparents. **Melissa**, **Bobby**, and three year old **Sophie Mangiameli** welcomed Mason Gehrig on July 19.

Shirley Brozowski was in New York July 23-27 with her family to watch the production of her granddaughter, Molly McQuilkin’s, musical **Four**. **Four** is being produced at NYU, and was selected from a group of 30 graduate theses.

Claudia Merthan visited First Plymouth this summer. Her address is on the Newsworthies bulletin board.

Barbara Hosanna moved into her new home in July.

Chuck Snyder and **Judith Clausen** have moved to a new home. Their address is on the Newsworthies bulletin board.

Phyllis Stare’s seventh grandchild, Damien Stare, was born July 14 to Greg and Adrian Stare. Phyllis is on the “grand grandchildren tour.”

Gary Bryant, former interim pastor had another scan on August 7 and there were no signs of his cancer.

Thank You from Marilou Taggart

Dear, dear Friends,

Your cards, phone calls, visits, flowers, meals and goodies, and prayers have meant so much to me during my long recovery. You have lifted my spirits and warmed my heart. Many thanks and God bless you all.

Healing and Comfort

Braxton Griffith is at Brighton Gardens and enjoys cards and visitors. Brighton Gardens, 2500 S. Roslyn St., Room #167, Denver, CO 80231.

Sophie Griffith died peacefully July 23. Her service was July 27. Keep Braxton and their children in your prayers.

Ed “Ski” Brozowski died July 30. A memorial service is planned for September 20 at 1:00 in the sanctuary. Remember **Shirley** and her family in your prayers. The family thanks the church for its caring and kindness during Ski’s long illness.

Chuck Snyder fell and broke his hip. **Judith** shares her time between unpacking in their new home and being with Chuck at the hospital. Your prayers and assistance would be much appreciated.

Diane Rhyee, former member now in Holden, MA, had brain surgery in July. Her address is on the bulletin board.

Gates Roe’s uncle, John H. Roe III, died July 13, in St. Paul, MN. Please keep Gates and Jessica in your prayers.

Carolyn Dunbar’s father, James M. Dunbar, died peacefully July 10 after a long illness. Remember Carolyn, brother Neil, and sister Patricia in your prayers.

Brad and Rita Berglund, friends of First Plymouth, lost their 24-year-old son Brandon on July 13 after a long illness. Brad is a worship consultant, and has presented workshops at FPCC. Rita was a speaker at the FPCC women’s retreat a few years ago.

Bob Bushey fell at their summer residence in Minnesota and broke his hip. His address is on the bulletin board.

Members of our First Plymouth family serving in conflict overseas:

Ginnie Heddens’ grandson, Brian Ballard, serves as a civilian technologist in Iraq. **Marilyn Mattson’s** son David Johnsten has been deployed to Iraq. **Army Specialist Trevor Davis** was deployed to Afghanistan in July. He welcomes cards and letters, address on bulletin board.

Steve Calhoun is stationed in Stuttgart, Germany, after service in Iraq and Africa. His family, **Renee Liebnow**, **Cassandra** and **Cameron**, will be joining him soon.

We have several members continuing in treatment for cancer or other chronic illnesses, including **Jo Cattell**, who is receiving visitors. Please call first.

Sharon Tebow is receiving Hospice Care at home. Cards are welcome.

Who Are You Going to Call? Contacts for Church Council, Committees, Ministries, and Fellowship Groups

COUNCIL & COMMITTEES

Moderator Nancy Fogg
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Vice Moderator Troy Greenwood
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PPRC Ken Hoagland
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Whole Earth Aaron & Adrienne Ruhnow
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Endowment Harry Adair
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MINISTRIES

Christian Education

Chair: Phil Thompson
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Chair: Pam Schmidt
pschmidt24@comcast.net 986-9988

Fellowship & Parish Life

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ndgeis@msn.com 220-7550

Stewardship

Co-Chair: Kit Cowperthwaite
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Co-Chair: Annie Nestor
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Families With Younger Children
 Kim Wooldridge 691-0716

MARS
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 Corinne Lude 758-7125

Men's Fellowship Fletcher Brown
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Serendipity TBA

The Group Barbara Lahey
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Thursday Afternoon Circle
 Barbara Kessler 750-3334

Travel Club Berwyn & Gail Davies
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Yacht & Donut Norm Kautsky
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Parish Visitor

Carole Westphal
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Dulci Stewart
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Don McLean
Facilities Manager

Ralph Basquez, **Custodian**
 Robert Basquez, **Custodian**

First Plymouth Learning Center

Karrie Gleason

Director

303-762-9355

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Unless otherwise noted, e-mail us
 using first initial and last name
 @firstplymouthchurch.org

Thanks to Our Volunteers ...We Couldn't Do It Without You!

To Karleen Gagnon, Glen Pray, Jerre Wilson, Claire Yetter, Ellyn Domnik, Martha Edwards, Ginny Galloway, Glenn Jacobs, Myra Kolditz, Barbara Lahey, Corrine Lude, and Dan Porter. for **assembling the August Newsletter.**

To **flower arrangers** The Visuals Committee, Andrea Anastos, Peggy O-Brien, Lu Schroeder, Jan Spomer, and Ann Lane who created the beautiful arrangements for the August worship services.

To the **August weekday church office volunteers:** Dalyce Due, Cindy Eley, Myra Kolditz, Nancy Cole, Marilyn Mattson, Jane

Hall, Janeen Stubbs, Linda Glenn, Carolyn Weaver, Betsy Lewis, Kari Collins, and Sue Armour.

To our **Sunday Morning Office Volunteers:** Elaine Hoss, Margaret Sensel, Dottie Herbertson, Barbara Kessler, and Myra Kolditz. This has been a most faithful and dedicated group!

To Gary Burianek, who is **painting the church offices** in their newly approved accent colors.

And to another faithful group, the small army of elves who have been taking care of the **church gardens** all summer, under the able and dedicated coordination of Harry Adair. In August, particular thanks to Dean and Sally Lund, Howard

and Steve Brand, and Bill James. Plus another round of thanks to Jim Vandermiller, who faithfully helps the staff tend the lawns each week.

Next Newsletter Deadline

Thursday, September 10
for the October issue

The NEWSLETTER box is located in the Church Office, **or e-mail your articles to:**

news@firstplymouthchurch.org

Late submissions may not make it into the newsletter!

Library Notes

Three new titles have been added to the Library. These acquisitions were made possible by donations given in memory of Carolyn Wuthrich from her book club.

Strong at the Broken Places by Richard Cohen
A Hell of Mercy by Tim Farrington
Walking Nature Home by Susan Tweit

All are found in the BIOGRAPHY section of the Library.

Flu Shot Clinic

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that inoculations for the seasonal flu begin earlier this year. The Pastoral Care Office's annual Flu Shot Clinic will be Sunday, September 25. This clinic is for the seasonal flu only. Look for information about procedures and guidelines for H1N1 (swine flu) to follow.

A Happy September Birthday...

...to Our Seniors

9/3 Alice Ellis
9/3 Merry Low
9/3 Oren Moore
9/7 Irene Guanella
9/8 Jane Nielsen
9/12 David Choate
9/12 Dorothy Rupel
9/16 Warren White
9/17 Malcolm Stevenson
9/20 Lillian Bloesch
9/25 Jean Smock
9/27 Vesta Giltner
9/30 Peggy LaTourrette

...and to Our Children

9/2 Ian Spillman
9/2 Elizabeth Early
9/5 Kate Serio
9/7 Alexis Ruhnow
9/11 Lex Graham
9/12 Inga Erickson
9/12 Zachary Parker
9/13 Ben Asphaug
9/15 Joel Hollyman
9/15 Zachary Robinson
9/22 Cameron Calhoun
9/24 Peter Hovland
9/24 Madeline Harding



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