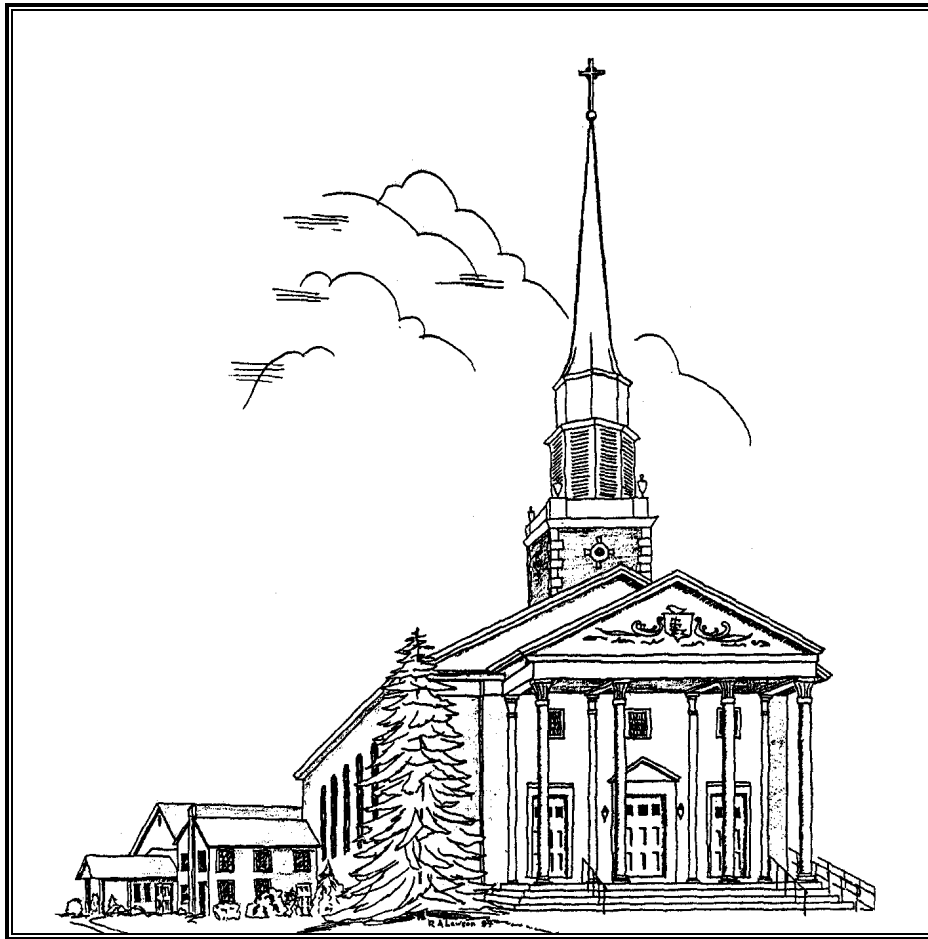


# **THE PLYMOUTH CHURCH IN FRAMINGHAM**

**United Church of Christ**

**87 Edgell Road, Framingham Centre, Massachusetts**



## **ANNUAL REPORT 2021**

Presented May 2022



ANNUAL REPORTS FROM COUNCILS  
Table of Contents

†

Clergy	3
Moderator	10
Deacons	11
Clerk	12
Social Action	14
Stewardship	15
Nominating Slate	16
Transformation Team	20
Family Coordinating Committee	21

## From Your Pastors

Gregory Morisse & William Tanner

Church is evolving. Likely, your relationship to church is also in flux. We all used to know what to expect, what to plan for, and how to respond. Not so much anymore.

Church is shifting for us, too. We may feel it differently as your pastors and from a different perspective, but we are also feeling it. Church is not just changing from one thing into another. The rapid pace of change and disruption in the world means that Church will likely remain in dynamic, evolving motion for years to come.

As your pastors, we want to share some of what we're discovering, in the hopes that you might be better equipped, prepared, and empowered to participate in this evolution. We understand that for many, change is unwelcome. It is so often the harbinger of loss and sometimes even danger. We are not afraid. As the Apostle Paul wrote: "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to God's purpose." (Romans 8:28)

### Technical Fixes & Adaptive Change

There are two kinds of solutions: *technical* fixes and *adaptive* changes. A technical fix tweaks what already exists and gets us back to "normal." An adaptive change matches up old and new puzzle pieces and gives rise to innovation and emergence.

A technical problem is a broken lightbulb that prevents the lamp from working properly. An adaptive dilemma is the lamp — no matter how bright the bulb — not providing enough light, leading you to call an electrician to install recessed lighting in the ceiling. Both responses are necessary and valuable: technical solutions repair or return us to current state and adaptive changes foster growth and progress.

In the early days of the covid pandemic, when we hoped a two week shutdown might be enough to spare us years of disruption, we did everything we could do to keep church running. We responded as though the pandemic were a *technical* problem: a short-term disruption. Remote worship and Zoom meetings were the bridge to get back to what we had.

As weeks turned into months and then years it has become clear: this is an *adaptive* moment. Technical fixes aren't going to be enough. The world has changed. The Church is no longer at the center of public life. Even the best, most creative *technical* solutions won't restore what we've lost. What the church needs now — to both survive and to thrive — is an *adaptive* response.

This is exciting work we can all do together. It's work we've done before. At some point in our history, the church decided we no longer needed stables for people's horses. In the same way the automobile prompted a bold question in the early 20th Century, the pandemic prompts us to ask a 21st Century version: *How do people get to church? And what do they expect to find when they do?*

God is faithful in every generation. Change and transformation are not ends; they are thresholds into the next chapter. This is not a time of death, so much as a season of germination, discovery, and development. This is a season of resurrection.

### **Worship**

Those early remote worship services are rough to rewatch. All we had was a laptop and a fuzzy sense of how Facebook Live worked. The sound quality was awful and not everyone knew how to sign on. While the production value increased dramatically, overall our online worship (both pre-recorded and live-streamed) was a *technical* fix. We recreated a traditional Sunday morning experience for a digital audience. And hallelujah for that!

What a blessing that folks who cannot make it to church — for health reasons or inclement weather — can worship from home. Everyone agrees this is something we should have had long ago. And it is something we intend to keep for the future.

Covid also accelerated some unfortunate trends that were already in motion. Worship has become awfully *convenient*. You can watch from home. You can catch up later in the week. The word "liturgy" means "work of the people." Good worship is a dynamic conversation among the congregation with God and each other. Worship is more than an experience that happens *to you*, like taking in a show. It matters who is in the room.

There are still *adaptive* opportunities for us to explore. How do we strengthen our connection with online worshipers? How are online and in person worshippers connecting with each other? What adaptive possibilities have we not even considered?

Every generation refashions the liturgy for their time. This moment in our generation's turn to create a new way to, as the hymn suggests, "tune our hearts to sing God's praise."

### **Pastoral Visits**

We used to carve out blocks of time in our schedules for pastoral visits. We would meet you in your home, hospital bed, or at a cafe. We miss those conversations with you. We miss *you*.

Nowadays, each visit has to be much more carefully planned — especially for those most vulnerable in our community. Every day we calculate: *When was I last in a position that may have exposed me to the virus? How certain am I that I'm not exposing the next person?*

Especially now as mask mandates are lifted, we choose to remain vigilant in order to be available when called upon. This has included more time between visits. Plans are much more frequently disrupted. If someone has a sudden serious illness and we can show up, we do. If we learn we have been potentially exposed, we isolate.

These are all *technical* fixes.

As much as we might like to have super powers and to be always on and present to you, especially in your times of need, the truth is: two years into the pandemic our capacity has diminished. We have less to give than we used to. This does not mean we love you any less. It means that, just like before the pandemic, we cannot always be the one to seek you out. It means we have even less capacity than before to intuit and anticipate your hopes and disappointments. Your best bet is to proactively reach out when you need care; that is especially true now. So, what are some *adaptive* possibilities?

Unlike the structured dialogue with a therapist, contained in an office and the 50-minute hour, a pastoral visit isn't about psychology. Pastoral care and support is where stories are placed into conversation with the biblical story. Pastoral care can be one-on-one or in a group setting. Pastoral care isn't just a visit *from your pastor*; it can be from a church friend, a neighbor or a member of our Care Team. Pastoral support is when we wonder about God and notice together where the Spirit is showing up and at work in our lives.

Our greatest fear is that you will assume because you have not seen your pastors that we do not care. Trust us, we do. Very much. We are doing the best we can. The best gift you can give is to be in touch: if you have a need, please call, email, write... And not just to us. Share your prayers in worship. Tell your story to friends. Try calling up someone you know only a little. Believe us, they will be glad you did.

### **Working from Home**

Throughout the pandemic, your church staff have worked from their homes more often than at any other time in our shared history. This *technical* change was made to help limit Covid exposures that would endanger staff health and disrupt the work of the church. Our schedules of office days and at home days have fluctuated over the last two years in response to covid numbers and individual staff and programmatic needs.

These are *technical* fixes, and, we pray, temporary ones.

As your pastors, we recognize that this may make it seem like we are less accessible to you on a day-to-day basis; you cannot just drop in on the office and count on staff being at our desks. In reality we are still only one phone call, email, or text away. We may be less *visible* but we are just as available to you as ever!

We are eager to be in touch and encourage you to reach out! It is not now, nor has it really ever been, an effective strategy to wait for your pastors to reach out to you when you are struggling. The best way to receive the care and attention you deserve is to tell us that you want and need it! During the pandemic we have learned that we need to add a social media clause to this old advice:

*We cannot promise to read what you posted on Facebook. We both have Facebook pages for church, but we're logging onto them very infrequently. We are never intentionally ignoring your updates; there's just so much to focus on at any given moment.*

Here is one *adaptive* opportunity: When you share big life news that you want us to be aware of, please call, text, or email us to share the news personally.

## Parenting

Most of the time, parenting is made easier by the simple fact that we adults have already lived through what our kids are going through. We can rely on our past experiences to guide us as we guide our kids. That is, until Covid.

None of us has lived through a global pandemic before. We might be old enough to know that we will someday move into a rhythm of life that feels more normal again but we do not know when or how it will happen. To our kids, the youngest of whom have yet to experience a “normal” school year, the pandemic feels like it will be here forever.

There is nothing more awful as a parent than to see your kid struggling and not be able to fix it. The truth is that our kids' feelings are not something we can “fix” for them. We can offer some *technical* arrangements, like masks, which may calm their anxiety temporarily, but these will not grow your child's emotional capacity.

When your child is struggling, even if they cannot put into words what is distressing them, do your best to stay in the moment with them. Without judgment or giving advice, reflect their feelings back to them: “I recognize that you are sad / frustrated / disappointed that plans have changed.” The *adaptive* challenge for you is to be still in that moment without rushing to solve or save.



If your child despairs that Covid and all the precautions will last FOREVER, consider artist Hector Janse van Rensburg's advice. Remember the long game. When your child asks: "Will we have to wear masks FOREVER?" Instead of just saying "I don't know" (because who does, really?) try this: "I don't know when the rules will change or how much longer it will be this way, but I KNOW it won't be forever."

Have you reached a point when you feel lonely and disconnected, but also reluctant to rejoin the community? When this happens, ask yourself: "What will help me grow my emotional capacity?" Then, when it happens for your child, you can guide them on an adaptive journey. Do not be surprised or ashamed if it happens in reverse. Jesus knew that sometimes we learn from our children. Perhaps because they are more courageous in trying the *adaptive* solution.

### Youth Group & Faith Workshop

Our children and youth programs have seen a lot of *technical* changes over the last two years. We reinvented and retooled at home programs several times since March 2020, all while working to keep the Youth Group together and engaged. In September 2021 we relaunched in-person faith formation programs.

The 2021-2022 program year has been a time of ups and downs and continued change. In the fall, we saw about one third of our families return to church programs in person. Within that group of young people, the majority were tweens and teens with only a small handful of younger children. In January, the omicron variant and lack of attendance led the Family Coordinators to close Faith Workshop for two months and to move Youth Group outdoors or onto *Zoom*.

Many families imagine returning to church in person at some point in the future, and hope to step back into a routine that bears strong resemblance to the pre-Covid Plymouth Church. We are ready to make that happen. We have the resources, the know-how, and the energy. What we don't have is children, youth, and family participation.

Is this a *technical* challenge or *adaptive* opportunity? In some ways, the answer depends on all of you. If every family showed up on the same Sunday, and if we had enough volunteers to lead Faith Workshop, we could probably recapture what Faith Discovery used to be for a little while. We know how to do excellence in family ministry *and*, maybe, what we remember so fondly was perhaps excellent for only its time.

Even before the pandemic, our children and youth programs faced regular *technical* challenges — not having enough volunteers was a perennial issue. Chasing excellence with ever more creative technical tweaks would likely further exhaust our volunteers and if our families' priorities and preferences truly have shifted during the pandemic as we suspect,



such technical fixes would ultimately be unsuccessful. Shifting priorities and preferences are an *adaptive challenge*, not a technical one.

To our families who have yet to return, you are loved, missed, and wanted by your church family. We are stronger and wiser as a community when you and your children are regular participants and co-creators of our shared ministry. As always, your presence and participation will guide what our family ministry becomes next.

There is so much excellent family ministry The Plymouth Church could do if we broaden our idea of what family ministry is beyond traditional Faith Workshop and Youth Group. Some adaptive questions for everyone to consider: What do families in our city need? Where are they encountering joy and growth? How can we meet them *there* instead of relying on them to come *here*? The future of our family ministry is still unwritten, and the possibilities overwhelming, but it is surely bright and rich!

### Leadership

In a stable world, leadership is about *management*. A manager needs to understand how the organization works, share that knowledge with others, with the goal of replicating past success. This style of leadership is “command & control.”

In an unfolding, developing landscape, organizations have to shift from *reproduction* (with its emphasis on knowledge transfer and compliance) to *learning* (which involves experimentation, risk-taking, creativity, and discovery). Today, leaders need to become “coaches,” offering support and guidance, because what the world needs is new ideas, greater capacity, and the ability to adapt.

The early church established a priesthood, vesting power in a top-down hierarchy. In order to communicate with God, one had to go *through* the priest. Leadership, teaching, decisions all succumbed to this directive, authoritative style. This know-it-all managerial style remains dominant — in the church and in the world. In fact, this autocratic style is ascendant. A more adaptive, coaching model is judged to be too “weak” and “slow.”

In the gospels, however, Jesus is always the coach. In three years of ministry, Jesus generated not much in the way of new *content*. The bulk of his teaching comes in the form of parables — designed not to impart information but to foment discussion and discovery. What Jesus offered was a new *way*, a process for community learning and solidarity.

This is the ancient art of praxis — action and reflection. This is the marriage of theory and application. Describing Jesus’ coaching, the Apostle Paul says: “The gifts Jesus gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.” (Eph. 4:11-12)

## Gratitude

Not a week passes that we do not give thanks for the privilege to serve this congregation. We do not take this lightly. We pray always for your support for our big ideas and your grace for our falling short.

This church has what our world needs most: Love. It is your superpower. This church, this community, each of you lives and carries God's love with an authenticity and grace that is rare and precious. You are so rare and precious, most of your neighbors cannot even imagine what you have, let alone know that it is what their soul longs for.

The Gospel is a thing in forward motion. How do we follow the One who came to live and learn among us?

### Further Reading:

["Technical and Adaptive Change,"](#) by Scott Cormode, *Fuller Seminary*

[\*Canoeing the Mountain\*](#), by Tod Bolsinger

["The Leader as Coach,"](#) by Herminia Ibarra & Anne Scoular, *Harvard Business Review*

["We Need Time to Rehabilitate from the Trauma of the Pandemic,"](#) *Harvard Business Review*

["Burnout and How to Complete the Stress Cycle,"](#) by Brené Brown, with Emily Nagoski & Amelia Nagoski, *Unlocking Us*.

Though this year was like none other before, we worked well, we worked hard, and we worked together to find new ways to share the gospel of Jesus Christ across generations and to minister with and receive ministry from our children and youth.

*Yours in Christ,  
Will*

## Moderator

In preparation for this report, I looked back at Rebecca Reiner's report from May of 2020 for inspiration. At that time we were about three months into the COVID-19 pandemic and the church building was closed. Within a week of the forced shutdown across the region our ministry staff and a group of tech-minded volunteers moved worship online. With appropriate precautions and with an online model for worship still in place, worship returned to the sanctuary in the summer of 2021. We are now well into our third year of living with COVID-19 and continue to adapt. Slowly but surely our more familiar format for worship at Plymouth Church continues to re-emerge. Easter of 2022 felt like Easter again – Flowering the cross, singing "Christ the Lord is Risen Today" and seeing you all gathered together once more to celebrate the resurrection. It filled my heart with gladness!

The work of the Church Council has continued through the past year, supporting our ministers, the Coordinating and Standing Committees (as needed), and monitoring the finances of the church.

Some of the highlights of the work of the Church Council in the last year include:

- Preparing for the paternal leave of Will Tanner, our Minister of Family Life as he awaited the joyous birth of his daughter, Harriot, in the late summer of 2021. Plymouth Church hired the Reverend Leah Rumsey on a part-time basis to cover some of the Family Life tasks in Will's absence.
- The Director of Plymouth House Nursery School (PHNS) approached Church Council requesting finances to cover important safety improvements of the playground, as well as to effect repairs/replacements of the play equipment. Church Council agreed to this expenditure given that the children's safety was considered a high priority and that this work had been deferred for some time. After the work was carried out, PHNS obtained funds (as a result of a successful grant application) which allowed the church's investment in the playground to be repaid in full.
- For several months Church Council members read and discussed the book, "Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory" by Tod Bolsinger during our regularly scheduled meetings. This exercise came at an important time. For some years now we have been aware of declining membership, increasing budgetary challenges, and a sense that if we keep doing the same things in the same ways, we will continue this downward trajectory. When the 2022 budget was prepared it was clear that there would be an unprecedented draw required from the unrestricted invested funds. Thanks to the remarkable efforts of our treasurer, Glenn Pruszinski and of the financial team in 2020 and 2021, Plymouth Church obtained two payroll protection program (PPP) loans which were forgiven in full (that is we did not need to repay them). We would not have that good fortune in 2022. It was at this point that Church Council proposed the formation of a Task

Force (now known as the "Transformation Team") to help guide the congregation through a process of clarifying the mission(s) of the church. That is, determining why we are here. If we can better understand the mission and goals of the church, we will better guide the actions of the congregation (i.e., what we do), and more effectively undertake the financial decisions of the church (how we support the mission(s)). The members of the Task Force were selected by Church Council to include thoughtful leaders as well as a diverse representation from the congregation. The team comprises: Jane Fadden (Co-Chair), Rob Schadt (Co-Chair), Nancy Miskowiec (Clerk), Meg Doucette, Al Rapoza, Laraine Snooks, Vernon Turner, and Dan Van Hook.

The Plymouth Church was first gathered in 1701, and I am certain it has seen tremendous changes and addressed a variety of significant challenges over those subsequent 321 years. I am confident our discernment, with the help of God, will chart a path forward to explore new possibilities to better serve our members, our local community, and to make a real positive difference in the world.

Respectfully submitted,  
John Tonkiss, Moderator

## Deacons

The 2021-2022 Board of Deacons have persevered in delivering transformative change to the life of Plymouth Church this year. The year started with Deacons envisioning what in person worship might look like and ended with full Deacon planning/ participation in Holy Week and Easter services. There really was not an area of Holy Week/Easter worship that Deacons were not involved with. From ordering flowers/palms, baking bread for Maundy Thursday, organizing readers and reading at services, ordering and picking up flowers for the cross, setting up communion/Easter Worship, Easter Sunrise to coffee hour, etc. Prior to Covid, many of these tasks were not Deacon responsibilities, yet Deacons have come forward this year with love and taken them on.

Other highlights from the 2021-22 year include the worship service in July 2021 that Deacons planned and led while the ministers were both away. Each Deacon assumed a part of the worship service from the call to worship, scripture readings, introduction of discussion topics, prayers for the people and benediction.

Sadly, Plymouth Church has lost many members and friends this past year and Deacons have actively assisted with memorial services and funerals through the welcoming of bereaved families, assisting with needs and concerns during the services and closing the church afterwards.

As Plymouth Church has created a Task Team to discern future paths, Deacons have also initiated discussion regarding future direction of our faith community through the reading and exploration of Two Feet Walking and the Case Study- Deep Change or Slow Death.

Deacons have continued to reach out to individuals in need of care at Plymouth Church, as a part of monthly meetings are set aside to discuss church members/friends who might be in need of prayers or special attention at that time. This past Christmas, Deacons reached out to the entire congregation through a Holiday letter consisting of collective Deacon experiences regarding the meaning of Christmas and Hope. This Easter, a group of deacons also reached out (via phone calls) to families at Plymouth Church, inviting them to Easter worship.

Being Deacons this past year reminds us of Paul's scripture in 1 Corinthians, verse 12. Deacons consists of many members. We are all different, yet our work gathers us together in one active force as we set out to do the work that Jesus calls us to do.

Respectfully submitted,  
Leigh Remington, Shivaun Pryor

**Clerk's Annual Report**  
**May 1, 2021 - April 30, 2022**

**Membership:** There are currently 328 members of The Plymouth Church in Framingham. Eight people became members on May 16, 2021. There were no membership transfers or resignations, and no baptisms or confirmations between May 1, 2021 and April 30, 2022.

<b>NEW MEMBERS MAY 16, 2021</b>	
<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>
Oscar	Agusto
Cynthia	Canavan
Leslie	Clark
Robert	Clark
Kelly	Drescher Johnson
Jamie	Klippenstein
Nate	Klippenstein
Alison	Simons

**Deaths:** Thirteen members and 5 non-members who were affiliated with Plymouth church have passed away since April 21, 2021.

<b>DEATHS APRIL 21, 2021-APRIL 2022</b>				
<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Joined</b>	<b>Died</b>	<b>Note</b>
<b>Members</b>				
Willard (Bill)	Spence	1966	5/10/2021	
Linda	Henderson	2016	6/3/2021	
Gail	Johnson	1972	6/30/2021	
Ellie	Leach	2001	10/2/2021	
Shawn	Wyatt	2007	12/30/2021	
Chris	Thayer	1985	1/5/2022	
Carol	Veum	1960	2/5/2022	
Bess	Hartley	1972	2/7/2022	
Crieghton	Nichols	1960	2/11/2022	
Joan	Nichols	1960	5/4/2020	We learned of Joan's death in 2022
Anne	Toll	1972	2/21/2022	
Len	Dalton	1969	3/5/2022	
Grace	Hammond	2016	3/13/2022	
<b>Non-Members</b>				
Cynthia	Shoemaker		4/21/2021	Former Interim Associate Minister
Robert	Cento		9/25/2021	John Cento's father
Joanne	Duncanson		10/30/2021	Wife of former pastor
Andre	Rupert		1/1/2022	Son of Tim and Danielle Fitts
Christine	Fitts Spring		3/2/2022	Daughter of Richard (Dick) and Sharon Fitts

Respectfully submitted,  
Shari Van Hook

## Social Action Report: Outreach Fund 2021

*"Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these."*

-John 14:12

The theme "Do Even Greater Things" was at the heart of our church's Social Action giving this church year. This was especially true during our new Golden Ticket initiative this fall, where five members of the congregation were randomly chosen to receive \$500 grants to fund an outreach initiative of their choosing. Initiatives funded included:

- **Elaine Lowell:** Donation to Partners in Health – Haiti Relief (including matching gifts from the grantee and the grantee's employer, as well as proceeds from a church-sponsored bake sale). <https://www.pih.org/>
- **Alison Simons:** Over 500 pounds of fresh produce donated to A Place to Turn over 12 weeks, including a matching gift from Upswing Farm's Community Supported Agriculture program. <https://www.aplacetoturn-natick.org/>  
<https://upswingfarm.com/>
- **Shari Van Hook:** Donation to Boston Area Gleaners (farm produce for families in need) – plus a potential church-wide produce gleaning field trip in the summer of 2022! <https://www.bostonareagleaners.org/>
- **Beth Marascio:** Donations to Keep Framingham Beautiful <https://sites.google.com/view/keep-framingham-beautiful/home> and Read to a Child <https://readtoachild.org/>
- **Jessica Bullerjahn:** Stop and Shop grocery cards to be distributed to families in need.

Our Social Action budget supported 11 local organizations through our grant application process, as well as an additional 11 local shelters and community programs through our gift card distribution initiative. One new organization that we're excited to be supporting is Sober Shuttle, whose mission is to provide cost-free transportation for people seeking treatment from substance abuse to hospitals, detox centers, and treatment programs, serving eastern Massachusetts (including Framingham).

In addition to these grants, Social Action awards "One-Time Allocations" throughout the year as needed. This year, the need was great, both locally and globally. From supplying basic needs such as undergarments for local women's shelters, providing support to students through the pandemic (Hoops and Homework, Resiliency for Life), to supporting the rights of immigrant workers, our dollars made an impact at the local level. Global initiatives included support of victims of Hurricane Ida in the US Gulf Coast, earthquake victims in Haiti, as well as help to our friend Aisha and her foster family in Iringa after a devastating house fire. This spring, the committee challenged the congregation by offering to match up to a total of \$2500 in donations from members to support relief efforts

stemming from the war in Ukraine. The congregation stepped up to the plate, and we exceeded our goal with over \$5000 in total giving!

Finally, the Social Action Committee successfully lobbied Church Council to dedicate 25% of 2021 Fall Fair proceeds to 2022 Social Action initiatives, with distribution of these funds to be coordinated by the Fair Committee.

## Stewardship

In the fall of 2021, as is tradition, the Stewardship Committee sent out several letters to the congregation. Both mailings included letters from our committee and were accompanied by a Narrative Budget, a Giving Brochure, a primer on Ways to Give, a Pledge Worksheet, and a Pledge Card. This was mailed 158 households of the church.

The Campaign was inspired by a passage from James (3:4): “Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs.” And we were graced by a tremendous piece of artwork, created by our own Judy Edwards. (see below)

The Committee invited our clergy to preach on three “boat passages.” Jesus’ first instruction to Simon Peter: “Put out into deep water and let down your nets!” (Luke 5:1-11). The disciples’ caught in a storm, while Jesus sleeps in the bow of the boat: “Have you still no faith? Why are you afraid?” (Mark 4:35-41). And the disciples, caught again in a storm, summoned by Jesus from the shore: “Come to me on the water. Do not be afraid.” (Matthew 14:22-34).

But the star of the show was the Social Action Golden Ticket initiative. The five recipients told their stories, inspiring us all to recommit our support for the church. Their creativity and generosity was inspiring!

As was the case for 2021, the pandemic suppressed the response. 84 households pledged a total of \$262,771. This continues a downward trend in both responses and total pledged. In 2021, 96 households pledged a total of \$312,321. And in 2020 (before the pandemic) 111 households pledged a total of \$338,267.

Not to be discouraged, those who are responding continue to increase their giving. From 2019 to 2020, pledging households increased their giving by \$22,000. From 2020 to 2021 (during the pandemic), pledging households increased \$8,000. And from 2021 to 2022, \$15,000.

Respectfully submitted,  
Judy Edwards, Joyce Miller, and Mary Whittemore



## Nominating Slate

■ - renewing a term ■ - new nominee

### Officers

*1-year terms, renewable*

Officers are the executive lay leaders, whose primary role is to guide the congregational discernment and overall functioning of the church.

Moderator Emeritus*	Rebecca Reiner	rareiner@gmail.com	22-23
Moderator	John Tonkiss	jtonkiss@gmail.com	22-23
Vice Moderator	Rob Schadt	rschadt@bu.edu	22-23
Clerk	Shari Van Hook	shari.vanhook@gmail.com	22-23
Treasurer	Glenn Pruszinski	glenn.pruszinski@gmail.com	22-23
Assistant Treasurer*	Nancy Lomas	nlomas39@gmail.com	22-23
Financial Secretary*	Jan Kubitz	finsecretary.plymouth@gmail.com	22-23

*\*Do not regularly attend Church Council*

### Church Council

*2 members-at-large, 1-year term*

Articulates the 5-year Strategic Plan, the 1-year Spending Plan, and manages the church calendar.

Member-at-Large	Steven Geiser	stevengeiser12@gmail.com	22-23
Member-at-Large	Elizabeth Tustian	tustian@gmail.com	22-23
Care Committee	Leigh Remington	leighremington@yahoo.com	22-23
Family Committee		Members Rotate	22-23
Social Action Comm.	Al Rapoza	alrapoza@yahoo.com	22-23
Deacons	Shivaun Pryor	shivaunpryor@yahoo.com	22-23
Deacons	TBD		22-23

*The Church Council is made up of four Officers, two at-large members, two Deacons, and four Coordinators (one from each Committee). As part of the Congregation's discernment, only half of the Church Council is directly elected; the Deacons and Coordinators will be discerned by the members of that group.*

**Deacons (12-15)***3-year terms, renewable*

Deacons discern the Church's Purpose, Oversee Spiritual Life & support Membership; they are also responsible for opening up the Sanctuary Sunday mornings.

Robert Clark	rclark1313@yahoo.com	22-25
Sue Tonkiss	suedtonk@aol.com	22-25
Sydney Turner	sydneyturner@aol.com	22-25
Dawn Geiser	dawn.geiser@verizon.net	22-25
Jody Comley	scusset07@gmail.com	20-23
Kathy Copson	kcop561@comcast.net	20-23
Meg Doucette	megemd@yahoo.com	20-23
Cher Hamilton	ckleine@gmail.com	20-23
Morgan Courtright	mojodika@gmail.com	21-24
Art Hague	hagueart@yahoo.com	21-24
Emily Lynch	emjenlynch@gmail.com	21-24
Shivaun Pryor**	shivaunpryor@yahoo.com	21-24

**Care Coordinating Committee (4)***2-year terms, renewable*

Coordinates efforts to care and connect the Body, including supporting members in times of need and fellowship opportunities.

Beth Marascio	elmarascio12@gmail.com	22-24
Deb Sawyer	SawyerHom@aol.com	22-24
Pat McFerrin	cpmcferrin@gmail.com	21-23
Leigh Remington**	leighremington@yahoo.com	21-23

### Family Coordinating Committee (4) *2-year terms, renewable*

Coordinates ministries to and with children and families, including Faith Workshop, Youth Groups, and Parent support.

Marybeth Costello	mbcostello3@gmail.com	22-24
Nancy de Romero	nyocom@hotmail.com	22-24
Alison Simons	alisonsimons@gmail.com	21-23
Hilary Sullivan	hasandrews@gmail.com	21-23

### Social Action Coordinating Committee (4)

*2-year terms, renewable*

Coordinates charitable and social justice efforts, including distribution of Outreach Funds and continuing our relationship with the Africa Exchange Project.

Elaine Lowell	elaine.r.lowell@gmail.com	22-24
Mattie Schadt	mattieschadt@gmail.com	22-24
Al Rapoza	alrapoza@yahoo.com	21-23
Sam Swisher	spspbs@gmail.com	21-23

### Standing Committees

Standing Committees are appointed by vote of the Church Council. Volunteers are always welcome and encouraged to step up.

### Plymouth House Nursery School

The Goal of this Board is to assure a collegial and supportive relationship between The Plymouth Church and Plymouth House Nursery School. The Senior Pastor and Assistant Treasurer are *ex-officio* members.

Eleanore Garnick (parent)	thegarnicks@gmail.com
David Gordon (parent)	david.t.gordon20@gmail.com
Marybeth Costello	mbcostello3@gmail.com
Cher Hamilton	ckleine@gmail.com
Hilary Sullivan	hasandrews@gmail.com

### Property Management Team

Identifies building maintenance and upgrades, working in partnership with Nancy McAllister and the church office.

Carole Blackman	BlackmanCarole@gmail.com
Don Copson	dcopson427@gmail.com
Beth D'Agostino	dagostino651@gmail.com
Rich Kerr	wretchedcur1@yahoo.com
Bill Merriam	themerriams@verizon.net
Nancy Spence	nbspence@rcn.com

### Stewardship

Manages and prepares the annual pledge campaign. Scheduled "Stewardship Summit" on Wednesday, May 18, at 5pm to gather current and past committee members.

Judy Edwards	jcechoe@yahoo.com
Mary Whittemore	mwhittemore@verizon.net

### Audit Committee

Annually reviews the church financial statements.

Pat McFerrin	cpmferrin@gmail.com
Chuck Willingham	chuck.willingham@gmail.com
Mary Whittemore	MWhittemore@verizon.net

### Investment Committee

Annually meets with our investment firm to track and advise on our restricted and unrestricted funds.


## Transformation Team

“What kind of church is God calling us to be?”

Church Council began wrestling with and discussing this question starting early in 2022. They used the story of the Lewis and Clark Expedition as found in the book, *Canoeing the Mountains* by Tod Bolsinger, to enrich and inspire their conversation. Lewis and Clark were given an order by then President Thomas Jefferson to find a waterway to the Pacific Ocean. The men of the Corps of Discovery were prepared, they had their canoes, which were indispensable, when rivers were available. But their well laid plans were confronted by reality. The river ended and rising majestically in front of them to the west were the very tall and formidable Rocky Mountains with no rivers in sight.

It became clear to Lewis that they needed to adapt to a new reality to overcome challenges they had not formerly understood, planned for, or were equipped for. The Lewis and Clark expedition succeeded because they were able to adapt. These transformational leaders were able to change the path of discovery to reach their goal. That is where we are right now. A historically large budget deficit is one of several equivalents of the mountains in the Lewis and Clark narrative.

As the Church Council's conversations deepened it became more clear that perhaps we have been asking the wrong question as we consider the challenges facing Plymouth Church today. Rather than “How do we balance the budget to be sure we survive”, perhaps we should ask “What's God's purpose for our church today? What is the nature of Jesus' call to us as disciples? What behaviors are important to fulfill that discipleship?”

At the 2022 Budget Hearing the Church Council recommended and the congregation voted to approve the formation of a yearlong task team that will help to facilitate a congregational wide discernment process. This 8-person leadership team including Jane Fadden and Rob Schadt as cofacilitators, Meg Doucette, Nancy Miskowiec, Al Rapoza, Laraine Snooks, Vernon Turner, and Dan Van Hook will guide us along our journey as we re-imagine the possibilities together.

As suggested by Bolsinger, *“Leadership requires shared, corporate learning expressed in new shared corporate functioning. In order to act or function differently in a changing world, all true leadership will require transformation. To that end, all true leadership will be anchored in the principles of adaptive leadership.”*(p.40)

Respectfully submitted,  
Rob Schadt

## Family Coordinating Committee

This year's general focus was trying to invite families to resume a more active life in the church as the church sought to reopen and reconnect after the extended time of separation brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021.

To this end, in the fall, from September-October, FCC worked with other leaders in the church to support the "Mending Church" initiative. All church members including families were invited to participate in a shortened worship time in the sanctuary followed by participation in one of three activities each week: a reading and discussion group, a quilting project, or outdoor games. FCC took responsibility for gathering materials and volunteers to run the outdoor activities area each week. To support families with small children during the sanctuary-based portion of the worship service, we planned and assembled "Worship Bags" for each child with a variety of art supplies and activities to try to keep children busy.

In October there was a desire by families to have a resumption of Faith Workshop. We decided not to solicit volunteers to teach as we have done in the past as we felt that there was a lot of uncertainty per what format would work going forward and we wanted to experiment before looking for assistance. Initially, we tried to do several "one room schoolhouse" style lessons in the Parish Hall and it became apparent that we had too large of an age spread. The older kids were helpful, but not being well served by this format as we had to make lessons accessible to the very young. In November we returned to the classrooms downstairs and split into two groups: PreK-5 and youth aged. The younger group adjusted well to this, though we still need to be mindful that PreK and 5th graders have different outlooks and we try to plan engaging activities to keep the older kids interested. The liturgy-based Faith Workshop style lesson + discussion still wasn't meeting the needs of the older group, however.

We hoped to transition to a Faith Workshop format based on new curriculums for children and youth with volunteer leaders in January, but the COVID surge after Christmas caused us to change plans. We put in-person Faith Workshop on hold and tried to focus on other ways to engage families while we were apart again. A program begun by Will this year, Family Dinner Church, has been a fun way to reach out to families not ready to be in-person or families with Sunday conflicts to connect with church on a different day. Each Wednesday evening, he and Leslie Dooley provide kids with prayer, stories, discussion, and song in the span of half an hour. It has been well received by families; the most difficult aspect has been finding an evening during the week that works for the most families.

Family dinner church continued even once we made a push to restart in-person Sunday morning programming in March. Mailings went out at the beginning of Lent to encourage families to attend Easter service and try to engage however they could for the rest of the church year. Deacons helped reach out to families via phone calls to check-in. Youth started working on a Sunday morning book study with Will and Greg. The younger children

took part in a Lent-based Faith Workshop curriculum prior to Easter and will work with a Peace themed curriculum through June. We are trying to engage the Junior Deacons again this Spring as well, though this will happen more in earnest in the Fall.

Youth Group has continued to be a vibrant part of family ministries. Sometimes meeting in person, sometimes virtually, the youth and their leaders carried on throughout the year. Highlights included:

- Service projects such as setting up a giving tree in December to help Mama Junior's family recover from a fire that destroyed their home in Tanzania and shopping for Timothy's Toy box at the holidays.
- Contributing to church life by baking goodies and stuffing eggs for our Easter celebration after worship.
- Fun events like snow tubing, ice skating, paint night, and online mystery games

FCC continued to support past annual events and worked on some new programs with other groups within the church.

- We worked with Women's Fellowship on restarting our Trunk-or-Treat event around Halloween that was fun for all ages.
- We held an outdoor Christmas pageant, moving around the church experiencing each scene. The evening culminated with cocoa while enjoying a mobile petting zoo.
- We hosted an intergenerational St. Patrick's Day fellowship event after church with music, games, and snacks.
- We worked with Women's Fellowship on an egg hunt after service on Easter.
- We are preparing for Children and Youth Sunday in May, focusing on the theme of Peace.
- Will continues to encourage summer campership for families with Pilgrim Lodge in Maine

We continue to try to maintain our partnership with the Africa Exchange Group to help the children engage in our relationship with Aisha and her supporters in Tanzania. We continue to collect children's offering to sponsor Aisha's education. Our cultural exchange has not been as vibrant as in past years, but the Youth Group's fundraiser in support of Mama Junior's family once their home was destroyed by fire was a success.

Contributing factors to this year's successes include:

- Leadership and support from Family Life Pastor, Senior Pastor, and Children's Music.
- Volunteers and parents who stepped up to help us with events and youth group.
- Engagement by other groups within the church to support families, youth, and children.

Ongoing challenges that remain are:

- Continuing uncertainty about if and when families will re-engage with in-person programming in light of the pandemic
- Trying to use uncertainty as an opportunity to revisit traditional events and think about how we can modify them to be more flexible under current circumstances.
- Visioning how we might engage with families in other ways outside of Sunday morning

FCC looks forward to another strong year ahead as we continue to discover how we can best support our families, youth, and children in their ministry.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ann Mehta