



Plymouth Congregational Church

A Congregation of the United Church of Christ

Service of the Word
September 18, 2022
Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost
10:00 am - Worship

RINGING OF THE BELL

BRINGING IN THE LIGHT

Amelia Wright

PRELUDE

“Air”

John Christopher Pepusch

*OPENING HYMN

“O Love That Will Not Let Me Go”

No. 485

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Craig French

One: Listen! Listen for the voice of God, naming us all: Holy. Beloved. Cherished. Valued.

All: We believe you delight in us!

One: Make us people who recognize and proclaim your beauty and goodness in unexpected places.

All: Surprise us. Challenge us. Transform us.

One: We trust in you, Holy One, to reveal to us the sacredness of every life, of every way of being, of every physical manifestation of your Spirit.

All: May it be so!

* PRAYER OF INVOCATION (*unison*)

God of infinite manifestations, free us of shame that confines and judgment that destroys. Bring healing to the wounds that come from placing love in a box. Ground us in the truth that sets us free. We are the work of a Divine hand – the holy lives in our flesh. Wherever we struggle to believe, meet us there. In Christ we pray. Amen.

WORDS OF WELCOME

Dr. Jackson

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

One: Peace be with you.

All: And, also with you.

Please share a sign of peace with those around you in any way you feel comfortable.

If you don't want to shake hands, indicate that to others by smiling and offering your elbow or by crossing your arms over your heart and wishing them Peace.

*SONG OF PRAISE

GLORIA PATRI

**Glory to the Creator, the Christ, the Holy Spirit Three in One;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
World without end. Amen. Amen.**

** Please rise if you are able*

THE GIFT OF THE WORD

STORY FOR ALL AGES

Sarah Cowles and Tara Sandlin

Following the story, children preschool through grade 5 will depart for Learning Community.

SCRIPTURE

Song of Songs 5:1-8

ANTHEM

“Set Me As A Seal Upon Your Heart”

René Clausen

SERMON

Dr. Jackson

*HYMN

“God Made from One Blood”

No. 427

THE MINISTRY OF PRAYER

CALL TO PRAYER

One: God be with you.
Many: And also with you.
One: Lift up your hearts.
Many: We lift our hearts to God.
One: Let us pray...

THE PASTORAL PRAYER

THE LORD’S PRAYER

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

PRAYER RESPONSE

“I Open My Mouth to the Lord”

Traditional Spiritual

Musical notation for the prayer response. The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo of quarter note = 142. It consists of two staves of music. The first staff has four measures, and the second staff has four measures. The lyrics are: "I o - pen my mouth to the Lord and I won't turn back I will go I shall go to see what the end's going to be. I".

CALL TO THE OFFERING

OFFERTORY ANTHEM “The Woods and Every Sweet Smelling Tree”

John West

*DOXOLOGY

OLD HUNDREDTH

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below!
Praise God for all that love has done!
Creator, Christ, and Spirit one. Amen.**

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

*CLOSING HYMN

“Take My Life, God, Let it Be”

No. 448

*BENEDICTION



Rev. Dr. Eric Jackson, Pastor, ejackson@plymouthsyr.org
Dr. Joseph Downing, Director of Music
Tara Sandlin, Youth and Children’s Ministries Coordinator
Kathy Ferro, Church Administrator
Mark Johnson, Sexton
plymouthsyr.org ☞ office@plymouthsyr.org

☞ Plymouth Runs On YOU ☞

USHER: Gertrude Danzy **ACOLYTE:** Amelia Wright
LITURGIST: Craig French **DEACON ON DUTY:** David Palladino-Cowdery
FLOWERS given by Bernie Peterson in memory of Franklin Delano Peterson
and Geraldine Sophia Pasternacki
COUNTERS: Susan Hawks and Keith Jakway
ONLINE WORSHIP COORDINATORS: Ben Cooper



☞ Some Things You Ought to Know ☞

Masking Optional: Effective September 11, masking is now optional EXCEPT in areas of the nursery and upstairs activity rooms for children and young people.

World Café: Plymouth’s Racial Justice Working Group invites you to a "World Café " event on **Sunday, 9/25** after worship in Memorial Hall as we unveil our hopes and dreams for three Action Teams that will deepen our church's commitment to racial justice. Each Action Team will focus on one of the following themes: Arts & Race, African American Church Music, and Reparations. Come and see what we have planned! Come and see how you can be part of it!

The Nursery is Re-opened! Children ages 6 weeks to 2 years (or until potty trained) are welcome in the nursery which is open each Sunday from 9:45am until the end of worship. Please see an usher if you need assistance locating it.

Sunday programming for children: Each Sunday children ages 3 through 5th grade may depart worship with our volunteers to participate in Chapel Time (first Sunday of the month), an age-appropriate worship experience, or Learning Community, Plymouth’s Sunday School.

Plymouth Justice Fund Thank You: Please take a moment to read the thank you notes Plymouth received from the organizations that we supported with grants from the Plymouth Justice Fund. They are posted on the bulletin board in the bell tower.

Ushers, Greeters and contributions to Community Time are needed every Sunday so that we can continue our mission of “Welcoming all.”

Greeters say hello as people arrive and help direct them to the worship space. Ushers distribute the bulletin and help collect the offering. Please sign up to greet or usher through Sign-up genius [by clicking here](#) or by clicking on the link on the *Get Involved* page on the Plymouth website (www.plymouthsyr.org). You can also sign up by contacting the church office. For Community Time, place your treats– fruit, cheese, and cookies are favorites - on the serving table in Memorial Hall before the service begins. The Deacon on Duty can assist you if you have any questions.

Individuals Seeking Assistance: If you are in need of financial assistance, we would like to help as best we can. Please see the pastor, Rev. Dr. Eric Jackson, on Sunday at noon to discuss your needs.

Plymouth likes to share its story! Photos are often taken during worship and at Plymouth events and are shared on the website, in social media and by partnering organizations. If you **DO NOT** wish your photo to be used, please contact the church office.

Food Pantry Update: The Food Pantry is requesting donations of hygiene items of DEODORANT, SOAP, MOISTURIZING SKIN LOTION, SHAMPOO & CONDITIONER. They can be placed in the basket at the back of the sanctuary. Your heart-felt provisions & prayers are always appreciated.

ACTS Book Group to Read ‘Better, Not Bitter’: The ACTS Race Matters Book Club will gather Monday, October 3, at 7 p.m. on Zoom to discuss Yusef Salaam’s book “Better, Not Bitter: Living on Purpose in the Pursuit of Racial Justice,” the memoir of one of the Exonerated Five, young men wrongfully convicted after a rape in Central Park. Salaam will speak Tuesday, October, 11 in the Civic Center, the second speaker in this year’s Friends of the Central Library Author Series. Go to <https://www.foclsyracuse.org/> for tickets. To make your registration for the October 3 gathering, email petersarverACTS@gmail.com. A Zoom link will be sent to those registered closer to the discussion date.

Want to stay informed about the news and events at Plymouth Church? Sign up for Plymouth’s weekly email newsletter and monthly *Plymouth Story* by providing your email to the church office (office@plymouthsyr.org.)

THIS WEEK AT PLYMOUTH

- Mon. September 19 Office Closed – Staff Vacation
Food Pantry, 2pm – 4pm
Deadline for October *Plymouth Story*
- Tues. September 20 Church Council*, 5:30pm, via Zoom
- Wed. September 21 Stewardship Team, 2pm, Memorial Hall
- Thur. September 22 Choir Rehearsal, 7pm, Memorial Hall
- Sat. September 24 Oneida Association Meeting, 8:30am, Trinity UCC, Rome
- Sun. September 25 Worship, 10am, in-person in the sanctuary, and
livestreamed on Facebook and YouTube
Learning Community (during worship)
“World Café,” 11:15am, Memorial Hall

* Board meetings are open to all; please contact the Church Office to be put in contact with the Chair who can receive your request for voice during the meeting and share online meeting information with you.

✧ Liturgy Notes ✧



This week we continue with *Unsolved Mysteries: Questions My Learning Community (Sunday School) Teacher Never Answered*. This week’s question is, “What Did God Say About Sex?” Traditionally, human sexuality and the Christian Faith have a relationship like oil does to water. Mainstream Christianity censors the subject or places human sexuality within the confines of a narrow box.

Our Scripture Lesson comes to us from the *Song of Songs*. The *Song of Songs* is found in the poetic literature of the Old Testament. The Harper Collins Study Bible describes this piece of writing as a rich and sensual love song. Some scholars argue that this love song is written to describe God’s love for Israel.

Some scholars argue that the Song of Songs is derived from a sacred marriage liturgy from ancient Mesopotamian religious traditions. Regardless of how we choose to theologically interpret the purpose of this book, one thing is for certain: Human sexuality is discussed boldly. What if we, as people of faith, could be able to discuss, reflect, and think about human sexuality as the writer of this text? In the very least – one gem that could be discovered is human beings coming closer to loving our neighbors as ourselves.

The opening hymn is “O Love That Will Not Let Me Go” by George Matheson. It is believed Matheson wrote this hymn either during a time of great anguish when his fiancée called off their marriage due to Matheson’s physical blindness or because he could not celebrate the marriage of his sister due to his inability to be able to travel to the wedding. This hymn is birthed by the pain of not being able to fully realize love that was hoped for. Yet, what springs forth is celebration of the greatest love of all – God’s love that endures through all things.

The hymn following the sermon, “God Made from One Blood,” is written by the recently deceased Thomas H. Troeger. The hymn was commissioned to recognize the variety of family units represented at the Yale University chapel services. So it is that family, love, and, ultimately, human sexuality are diverse but all love and its expressions are branches of God’s love.

In our Call to Worship we read and hear, “*We trust in you, Holy One, to reveal to us the sacredness of every life, of every way of being, of every physical manifestation of your Spirit.*” In the invocation we pray, “*God of infinite manifestations...we are the work of a Divine hand – the holy lives in our flesh.*” May our worship expand our faith as wide as the love and mercies of God!

☞ Music Notes for Sunday, September 18th, 2022 ☞

Johann Christoph Pepusch (1667-1752) was a German-born violist and composer who taught music lessons to Frederic I of Prussia. Frederic was a cruel man, and when Johann witnessed Frederic’s summary execution of an officer without trial, he resigned his post and moved to England where he founded what would become the Academy of Ancient Music. Our **prelude** is from his Sonata in A minor.

Our **anthem** and **offertory anthem** both draw their texts from the Song of Solomon – that one book in the bible that speaks openly of romantic love.

René Clausen (b. 1953) is professor of music at Concordia College in Minnesota. Winner of three Grammy awards, his music is widely performed by high school, college and church choirs.

*Set me as a seal upon your heart, for love is strong as death.
Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.*

No information is available about John E. West, the composer of our **offertory anthem**. Our copies of the anthem have no publication date, but the selling price per copy was 16 cents, so we can assume that this anthem dates from the early part of the twentieth century. In addition to the text from the Song of Solomon, it also uses verses from the apocryphal book of Baruch:

The woods and every sweet-smelling tree shall overshadow Israel by the commandment of God.

I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.

For God shall lead Israel with joy in the light of his glory,

with the mercy and righteousness that cometh from him. Alleluia.

Christa Rakich (b. 1953) is currently visiting professor of organ at Oberlin College. She is Artist-in-Residence for the Congregational Church of Somers, Massachusetts. Our **postlude** is part of a larger work for organ which she wrote for the installation of the new organ at that church in 2013 after a disastrous fire set by an arsonist.

☞ Welcome to Plymouth ☞

232 E. Onondaga Street | Syracuse, NY 13202 | 315-474-4836

We are an Open and Affirming, Just Peace, Immigrant Welcoming, Progressive Christian, and Sanctuary Congregation.

Plymouth was founded in 1853 by a group of Syracusans who wanted to create a Christian abolitionist bulwark fighting slavery. Since then, we continue to live our faith by standing against racism, white supremacy culture, poverty, and war; standing up for the rights of immigrants, indigenous people, workers, women, and LGBTQ folk; and seeking to be agents of mercy in a hurting world. We believe in beauty, laughter, the struggle for peace with justice, taking risks for building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive Beloved Community in God, and the Way of Jesus Christ which is love and compassion for ourselves and our neighbors.

Our faith is over 2,000 years old; our thinking is not!

- **Resources for Children:** Worship Activity Kits are available for children ages 3 - 5th grade on the shelves in the back of the sanctuary. We ask that your children put their names on the blank label on the box the first time they use a kit, take that kit each week, and return it at the end of worship.
- **Visiting for the First Time?** We are so glad to meet another member of our extended global family. To add your name to our mailing list so we can know how to best serve you, please fill out the card found in the pew and place it in the offering plate or email office@plymouthsyr.org.
- **Giving:** Part of worshipping God is through giving. We can only live into our mission to impact the world TOGETHER with the generosity of all! You can share your gifts during the morning offering, or by mailing a check to Plymouth Church at the address above or via PayPal to giving@plymouthsyr.org.
- **Prayer Requests:** We are excited to be worshipping together both with members of Plymouth Church and the wider world. To add a name to our Prayer List, fill out the card found in the pew and place it in the offering plate or contact office@plymouthsyr.org.