



The Case of the Missing Messiah | Rev. Dr. Matt Wooster

**First Sunday After Christmas
December 29, 2024**

"My house is a house of prayer for all people." (Isaiah 56:7)
Plymouth is A Just Peace Church and An Open and Affirming Congregation

WELCOME!

Here we believe that God is love;
and that love is for everyone.

God's extravagant love changes the world
and moves us to respond in gratitude.

Whoever you are, and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here,
and you are invited to shape this community with your God-given gifts.

Open and Affirming Statement

Plymouth Church is an Open and Affirming congregation. We celebrate and find strength in our diversity and view it as a way to understand the inclusiveness of God. We welcome people of any age, color, ability, sexual orientation or gender expression. We embrace those of varying theological and political beliefs, and differing ethnic, socio-economic, and educational backgrounds. Our congregation joyfully welcomes all to join in worship, ministry, fellowship, leadership, sacraments and blessings. With God's guidance, Jesus' example and the Spirit's inspiration, we commit ourselves to ongoing study, prayer, conversation and action, so that it may truly be said of Plymouth Church, "My house is a house of prayer for ALL people." (Isaiah 56:7)

Families with Children

Children of all ages are always welcome at Plymouth! We offer many programs and events throughout the year to foster faith development in children and fellowship among our families. We strive to make worship family-friendly and to provide support to families while attending church by offering Busy Bags, Children's Worship Bulletins, a comfort room with toys and a changing table, and a Children's Worship Space with quiet activities. Professionally-staffed childcare for kids 4 and under is available every Sunday from 9am-12pm on the second floor. Sunday School for kids Pre-K to 8th grade takes place during worship, except for on the first Sunday of the month when there is no Sunday School to encourage families to worship together and receive communion.

Large print bulletins and hearing enhancement devices are available.
Please ask an usher.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

Our Approach to God

Music calls us to worship so we may listen for God speaking to us. When the service begins with preparation music, please silence your voices and devices.

**All are invited to rise in body or spirit*

Preparation Music The Holy Boy..... John Ireland
George A. Sargeant, organ

Welcome

***Call to Worship**

One: True light is entering our world through Jesus Christ.
Sing of joy and praise to God!

All: God's Word sets the stars to dancing.

One: Receive the word. Hear the good news.
Know that you are children of God.

**All: The Word became flesh to dwell with humanity.
Grace and wisdom are lavished upon us.**

One: Be radiant with the goodness of God.

All: Hear the Word of God and declare it to others.

***Carol** Angels We Have Heard on High *Gloria*

Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains.

Refrain

Gloria in excelsis Deo, gloria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heavn'ly song? (refrain)

Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing.
Come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn King. (refrain)

See him in a manger laid, Whom the choirs of angels praise.
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid, While our hearts in love we raise. (Refrain)

Prayer of Confession

O God, we have reached for your power without accepting responsibility. We have exploited the resources entrusted to our stewardship. We have claimed to be Christian without following Christ. We profess to be people of faith without exploring what that means. O God, silence the enemies within us, that we may respond to you. Send us the spirit of your own child, that we may grow in wisdom. Amen.

Silent Reflection

Words of Assurance

ONE: Lift up your hearts!

ALL: **We lift them up to God!**

***Carol** Good Christian Friends, Rejoice *In dulci júbilo*

Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice.
Give ye heed to what we say: "Jesus Christ is born today."
Ox and ass before him bow, and He is in the manger now.
Christ is born today, Christ is born today!

***Passing of the Peace**

ONE: The peace of Christ be with you!

ALL: And also with you!

Children are welcome to remain in worship today. Sunday school will resume on January 12. The Nursery is open for ages 5 and younger.

The Proclamation of God's Word

***Carol** O Little Town of Bethlehem*St. Louis*

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie.
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth.

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is giv'n.
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His Heav'n.
No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray.
Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell.
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!

Scripture Reading

Luke 2:41-52

Sermon

The Case of the Missing Messiah

Rev. Dr. Matt Wooster

***Carol** The First Nowell *The First Nowell*

The first Nowell the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay,
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Refrain

Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell, born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a star
shining in the east beyond them far
and to the earth it gave great light,
and so it continued both day and night. (refrain)

And by the light of that same star
three wise men came from country far.
To seek for a king was their intent,
And to follow the star wherever it went. (refrain)

This star drew nigh to the northwest.
O'er Bethlehem it took its rest.
And there it did both stop and stay,
Right over the place where Jesus lay. (refrain)

Then entered in those wise men three,
Full reverently upon their knee,
And offered there in his presence
Their gold, and myrrh, and frankincense. (refrain)

Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord,
That hath made heaven and earth of nought,
And with his life humankind has bought. (refrain)

Prayers of the People & the Lord’s Prayer (debts/debtors)

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 debts as we forgive our debtors; 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 What Child is This..... *Greensleeves*

What Child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping,
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ, the King, Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud, The Babe, the Son of Mary!

Living Out the Word of God

Announcements of Church Life

Call to Offering

Offertory Jesus Christ the Apple Tree Dorothy J. Papadakos
Diane Julin Menges, soprano

The tree of life my soul hath seen, laden with fruit, and always green:
The trees of nature fruitless be compared with Christ the apple tree.

His beauty doth all things excel, by faith I know, but ne’er can tell
The glory which I now can see in Jesus Christ the apple tree.

For happiness I long have sought, and pleasure dearly I have bought.
I missed of all: but now I see, ’tis found in Christ the apple tree.

I’m weary with my former toil, here I will sit and rest awhile.
Under the shadow I will be of Jesus Christ the apple tree.

This fruit doth make my soul to thrive, it keeps my dying faith alive,
Which makes my soul in haste to be with Jesus Christ the apple tree.

***Doxology.....Cranham**

What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.
If I were a wise one, I would do my part.
Yet what I can I give him, give my heart.

***Prayer of Dedication**

Glorious God, we give you thanks for all that we have inherited from your hand. No gift or service could discharge our debt to you. We can only pour out our gratitude and give our best, to your glory. Amen.

***Carol Joy to the World.....Antioch**

Joy to the world, the Lord is come, let Earth receive its king;
Let ev'ry Heart prepare Him room, and Heav'n and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns, let all their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness, and wonders of his love.

***Commission and Benediction**

***Congregational Response Go, Tell it on the Mountain.....Go Tell It**

REFRAIN

Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills, and ev'rywhere;
go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.

While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. (refrain)

Voluntary O Love How Deep, How Broad, How High John Eggert
George A. Sargeant, organ

Many in the congregation wish to remain seated for the Voluntary. If you choose to leave, please be aware of those still participating in this part of the service. The Voluntary is music for worship and we ask that all be respectful of one another's worship practices, including those participating via livestream. Following the Voluntary, you may greet the ministers.

MUSIC NOTES

The Holy Boy is probably the best-known piece by English composer John Ireland (yes, he was English, not Irish!) and was originally written in 1913 as a piano solo. Six years later, it was arranged for organ by the composer's friend Eric Rowley, perhaps to encourage its use during church services. Since then, it has been adapted for use by other solo instruments as well as ensembles. In 1938 poet Herbert Brown wrote words for it.

Dorothy J. Papadakos was the first woman to be appointed organist at the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York, the largest Gothic cathedral in the world, and held the position from 1990 through 2003. Since leaving the Cathedral she has pursued a career as a silent film accompanist, composer, playwright, and author.

The text of *Jesus Christ the Apple Tree* is of anonymous 18th-century English origins and possibly an allusion to Song of Solomon 2:3, which is sometimes treated as a metaphor of Jesus' life. Its use at Christmastime comes from an English custom of wassailing, or wishing good health, to apple trees on Christmas Eve. Papadako's setting takes the melody from a choral setting by English composer Elizabeth Poston and adds to it an original organ accompaniment.

John Eggert is Emeritus Professor of Music at Concordia University in St. Paul, MN, where he taught organ, music theory, and composition. Among his many works for organ are six sets of six chorale preludes. His brief organ setting of *The Agincourt Hymn*, sometimes sung to the Epiphany text *O Love How Deep, How Broad, How High*, is a toccata in the French Romantic style. The melody is heard in the pedal and is accompanied by carillon-like figurations in the manuals. The melody itself was written by John Dunstable and was inspired by the English victory over the French at the battle of Agincourt in 1415.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today

Ushers: Team 4

Greeter: Linda Sempliner

This Week at Plymouth

Thank you to Danny DeMarco for his worship leadership today. Danny is a member of Plymouth Church and a Member in Discernment for ordination in the United Church of Christ. He completed his Master's Degree in Biblical and Theological Studies, and is currently pursuing clinical pastoral education.

Office Hours – The church office will be closed this Wednesday in celebration of the new year.

Holiday Pastoral Hours – December 30-January 3, both Pastors Matt and Dillon will be out of the office. There will be on-call availability for those experiencing a pastoral care emergency.

Upcoming Events

Baptism Forum – Wondering about baptism for you or your child? You are invited to a forum after worship on February 2 to learn about the history and practice of baptism in preparation for a Baptism Sunday on February 23. Questions and RSVP welcome to Rev. Matt at mwooster@plymouthchurchucc.org.

Lead with Humility – On Saturday, February 1, Plymouth ARE has invited Dr. James Knight to speak in Fellowship Hall from 10am-12pm. He is a speaker/teacher, equity and inclusion strategist, and coach/mentor. His primary goal is to assist others in building safe environments where everyone can thrive and bring their best selves. You can learn more about him on his site: leadwithhumility.org. Mark your calendars!

Community Life

Pastoral Care – If you have a Pastoral Care need or have an emergency, please contact Rev. Dr. Matthew Wooster at 330-714-9471.

Little Free Pantry – Shelf stable food is available 24/7 from our Little Free Pantry, located in the north end of the parking lot, near the Children's Garden.

Financial Assistance – Do you need help paying a bill, rent, or buying food and other essentials? Through the loving support of this community, funds are available. If you are in need of assistance, please do not hesitate to email Rev. Matt Wooster at mwooster@plymouthchurchucc.org (this is confidential) with your needs.

Plymouth Family

Happy Anniversary to: Craig Martin & Mary Rouse, Ed & Debbie Dudley, and Warren McClelland & Val Arbie-McClelland

Happy Birthday to: John Markt, Tracy Williams, Lillie Baum, Pam Markt, Peter Siska, Dick Brubaker, Anders Beckman, Christina Wood, and Pat Schinabeck

This Week's Calendar

Sunday, December 29

10:30 am Worship @ Sanct

11:00 am HCC Worship @ Chapel

Monday, December 30

No events scheduled

Tuesday, December 31

No events scheduled

Wednesday, January 1

Church Office Closed

Thursday, January 2

6:30 Plymouth Ringers @ Bell Room

7:00 pm Boy Scouts Meeting @ FH

7:30 pm Plymouth Choir @ Choir Room

Friday, January 3

1:00 pm Women's AA Meeting @ Parlor

Saturday, January 4

No events scheduled

Sunday, January 5

10:30 am Worship @ Sanct

11:00 am HCC Worship @ Chapel

11:30 am Coffee Hour @ FH

5:00 pm High School OWL @ KR



Give Online

Use this QR Code to give online. If you would like to make recurring online gifts, please use your REALM login. If you don't have an account, please email

kkundrat@plymouthchurchucc.org to request access.



HAPPY NEW YEAR

Wishing you a blessed
year to come

Ministers of Plymouth Church

The Congregation of Plymouth Church

Senior Minister, Rev. Dr. Matthew Wooster

Designated Associate Minister, Pastor Dillon Shipman

Director of Music & the Arts, George Sargeant

Director of Christian Education, Leslie Szalay

Facility Manager, Paul Holter

Office & Communications Administrator, Brenna Threatt

Finance Administrator, Kathryn Kundrat

Church Sexton, Derrick Williams

Organ Scholar, Lynna Bao



2860 Coventry Road
Shaker Heights, OH 44120

216.921.3510 | office@plymouthchurchucc.org