

# LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE



Plymouth Church United Church of Christ  
Shaker Heights, Ohio

Associate Minister

Ohio Conference, Western Reserve Association

[Validation Date]

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*"God is able to provide you with every blessing, so that  
having all sufficiency in all things at all times,  
you may abound in every good work."  
(2 Corinthians 9:8)*

## INSTRUCTIONS

The new Local Church Profile supports the calling and discernment of United Church of Christ congregations with their current or future pastoral leadership.

For many congregations, the interim time between ministers is an intentional season that is guided in part by the work of preparing a Local Church Profile. Through the Profile, the congregation can discover its data and express its story for the reliable discernment of a search committee and the beginning of a new pastorate. Searching ministers will want to see this document in its entirety.

The interim season is not the only time to give attention to questions and exploration of a congregation's vocation, however. Three sections of the Local Church Profile – WHO ARE WE NOW, WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR, and WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BECOME – are meant to be updated every 3-5 years. Known as the "Discovery Document," these three sections can be completed by a visioning group, a governing body, a transition team, or other entity in the church – not just by a search committee – in order to draw forward the gifts and imaginative possibilities of a congregation. The more participants, the better!

Some questions are easy to answer. Some are not so easy. Prompts are provided to stimulate narrative response if needed; these *italicized* prompts are merely examples from which to choose or to inspire your own. Efforts to answer the questions will prompt conversations and explorations and storytellings and many prayers, and as the Spirit moves throughout the process, congregations will shape a collective articulation of Christ's leading (WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BECOME). This last question to be answered becomes the first section to be read by searching ministers in the Local Church Profile, and it is boldest and most actionable piece for faithful leadership into the future.

Your conference can provide materials referenced in the Local Church Profile, such as the 11-Year Report containing data as reported by your congregation annually to the UCC Data Hub and MissionInsite reports containing demographic information on your community. More information on types of pastorate in the United Church of Christ can be found in the *Call Agreement Workbook*. Be sure to use the *Call Agreement Workbook's* Scope of Work to describe in this Local Church Profile the position being sought.

When it is time for ministerial search, the conference can counsel you on posting the Local Church Profile together with your public listing at UCC Ministry Opportunities (<http://oppsearch.ucc.org>).

The last page of the Local Church Profile contains a statement that parallels the consent statement signed by ministers in the UCC Ministerial Profile. In keeping with the covenantal relationship between a church and those it seeks to call, this statement encourages an open, honest exchange of information. On behalf of the United Church of Christ, and on the basis of the best knowledge available to them, your conference staff will validate your completed Local Church Profile when it is ready to be shared in relationship with prospective new leaders.

## POSITION POSTING

LISTING INFORMATION

SCOPE OF WORK

COMPENSATION & SUPPORT

WHO IS GOD CALLING TO MINISTER WITH US?

### LISTING INFORMATION

Church name: Plymouth Church United Church of Christ

Street address: 2860 Coventry Road, Shaker Heights, Ohio 44120

Supplemental web links: [www.plymouthchurchucc.org](http://www.plymouthchurchucc.org)

Additional ecumenical affiliations:

Conference Ohio Conference

Association Western Reserve Association

UCC Conference or Association Staff Contact Person

Name: Rev. Dr. Bonnie Bates

Title: Associations Associate for Congregational Vitality  
and Development

Phone: 330-940-2220 x104

Email: [bonnie@eoawraucc.org](mailto:bonnie@eoawraucc.org)

### **Summary Ministry Description:**

Plymouth Church United Church of Christ is looking for a new **Associate Minister**, someone with a heart for parish ministry and an ability to connect with people of all ages. The Associate Minister will be involved in all aspects of church life, with an emphasis on visitation and care for our youth. We are a vibrant suburban congregation in a unique urban setting. Located in beautiful Shaker Heights, Plymouth Church has many gifts: a diverse and high-functioning congregation, a well-maintained building with flexible space, a talented and cohesive staff, and a sound financial position. We are proud to be a Just Peace Church and an Open and Affirming Congregation. We recently marked our centennial by celebrating Plymouth's first 100 years. Now we are beginning to envision the shape and trajectory of the next 100 years. In an age where people are hungry to be known, Plymouth Church is called to be an authentic Christian community where people are united in faith, in fellowship and in service.

Photographs:

*Insert 1 - 3 images of your church, its people, its parsonage or building or gathering space, etc.*

**Plymouth is more than a beautifully maintained building...**



**Plymouth is a vibrant community of faithful people seeking to make a difference in God's world.**



What we value about living in our area (2 – 3 sentences):

Shaker Heights is known for great schools, racial and ethnic diversity, and beautiful green spaces. The greater Cleveland area offers world class cultural institutions, an extensive and well-maintained Metroparks system, and internationally recognized healthcare.

Current size of membership: 620

Languages used in ministry (*other than English*):

Position Title: Associate Minister

Position Duration:

Settled – a called position intended for longer-term ministry in which the minister moves church membership to the congregation and moves standing to related association

Compensation Level (*choose one, delete the other options listed*):

Full Time

Does the total support package meet conference compensation guidelines?

Meets or exceeds conference guidelines

**SCOPE OF WORK** (*add here the Scope of Work developed by your church using the Call Agreement Workbook*)

**See Job Description (Attached)**

**Core Competencies:**

Plymouth Church seeks an Associate Minister who is dynamic, organized and adventuresome.

## COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT

**Salary Basis:** \$45,000, with opportunity for advancement (no parsonage)

**Benefits (*choose one*):**

Salary plus Benefits\* (Estimated total package of \$70,000+)

\*Specifically:

- Social Security Offset
- Professional Development Fund of \$2,500
- Health Insurance (with optional dental/optical)
- Retirement - UCC Pension contribution of 14%
- UCC Life and Disability Insurance
- Parental Leave
- Sabbatical Leave after 5 years
- Flex-spending pre-tax option for medical and dependent care
- Vacation (4 weeks), Study Leave (1 week)
- 11 paid holidays

**What is the expected living situation for your next minister:**

We expect the Associate Minister to live close enough to participate fully in the life of the community.

**Describe peer and professional supports available for ministers in your association/conference:**

The WRA offers Communities of Practice as well as support groups for New Ministers.

## WHO IS GOD CALLING TO MINISTER WITH US?

**Describe the ministry goals you envision your next minister co-collaborating with the congregation to achieve.**

We have three goals for the next Associate Minister:

1. We want our next Associate Minister to provide continuity of care for the homebound and help the congregation minister to those in need.
2. We want our next Associate Minister to have a talent for and interest in leading worship and preaching the Gospel.
3. We want this person to bring new energy to our youth ministry by providing consistent programming and nurturing relationships with and among our students.

**Describe how your vision of the minister you are now seeking will assist the congregation in making an impact beyond its walls.**

Plymouth Church literally stands at a crossroad. We recognize that God is calling us to build relationships with people who live in the economically stressed parts of Cleveland and to collaborate with those communities to seek the common good. The right Associate Minister will be able to integrate these opportunities into her or his specific work.

**Specify language requirements or culturally-specific capacities preferred in a next ministerial leader, and why those matter to the congregation's sense of calling.**

We have no specific language requirement or culturally-specific capacities. What we need is someone who is able to connect with the whole spectrum of people who call Plymouth their church home.

**Based on what you have learned about who your church is, who your church's neighbor is, and who God is calling the church to become, describe four areas of excellence from *The Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministry* that your next minister will display to further equip the congregation's ministry in these areas.**

We have identified four marks that are particularly relevant to the work our next Associate Minister will do.

- Demonstrating excellent communication skills
- Leading faith formation effectively across generations
- Bringing life to sacred stories and traditions in worship, proclamation and witness
- Loving God, following Jesus Christ, and being guided by the Holy Spirit; living a life of discipleship

## **WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BECOME?**

### **Who is God calling you to become as a congregation?**

Over the last ten years, Plymouth Church has become surprisingly diverse. We are Republicans and Democrats, white people and people of color, young and old, straight and LGBTQ. We have learned to live with the divisions in our midst and embrace what we have in common: we are all God's children, each an important part of the body of Christ, and we are called to lives of faith and service.

In a country that has become so divided, where people cannot even speak to one another, we see Plymouth Church as a place of respite and reflection, a place where people can learn to bridge differences and come together for the common good. That is who God is calling us to be.

### **Describe how God is calling you to reach out to address the emerging challenges and opportunities of your community and congregation.**

At Plymouth Church, we recognize that racial diversity is both a challenge and an opportunity. As our congregation, has become more racially diverse, we've experienced tension around issues of worship styles and musical preferences. We've had serious conversations about clapping during worship and how different communities respond to the movement of the Holy Spirit. Our goal is to strengthen our community by honoring our diversity - no small thing to achieve.

As we grow into this new identity, we have intentionally tried to educate ourselves. In 2016, our Lenten program was a facilitated study of race and racism. Some people did not like the program, but generally it was well-received. The program led to a renewed focus on issues of racism and the importance of Plymouth Church standing with communities of color.

Another way we've engaged the issue of racial diversity is to make sure our pulpit reflects the congregation. Because our Senior Minister is a white woman, while she was away on sabbatical, we made a commitment to have African American preachers fill the pulpit. It was a deeply meaningful experience and as

a result, we continue to seek racial diversity when looking for preachers and leaders. That is also why we welcome candidates with the ability to contribute to fostering diversity in the church community, its worship, and its outreach to the community.

## **WHO ARE WE NOW?**

CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS

11-YEAR REPORT

CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING

CHURCH FINANCES

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### **CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS**

#### **Describe your congregation's life of faith.**

The best way to describe Plymouth's life of faith is to use Paul's body metaphor. Our worship engages the heart and the head. We are known for our excellent music program and preaching that is both intellectual and practical. Our faith life engages all the senses: there is the smell of shared meals on a Wednesday night, the sound of children singing, the sight of art on the walls, the touch of hands at the passing of the peace, and the taste of the host at communion. With our hands and feet, we serve others, whether by swinging a hammer on a Habitat project or marching in the Pride parade. Our life of faith is a whole body experience: we weep with those who weep, laugh with those who rejoice, and stand with those who are oppressed.

#### **Describe several strengths or positive qualities of your congregation.**

Besides our robust diversity, Plymouth Church has a number of strengths. We have an exceptional music program that encompasses a variety of genres led by an outstanding Minister of Music and the Arts. We are blessed with strong lay leaders who bring a wide variety of skills and gifts to the work of church leadership. Plymouth Church is financially stable and believes in sharing our gifts: we give away over 10% of our pledged income each year. We are known as a welcoming and hospitable community. Finally, Plymouth Church has a flexible, strengths-based staffing model that allows for growth and collaboration.

### **Describe what worship is like when your congregation gathers.**

We worship on Sunday mornings and on Wednesday nights during Lent. We have two worship spaces: the traditional main sanctuary and the more flexible Herr Chapel. The two center pieces of worship are the music and the preaching. The congregation is theologically smart and generally well-educated; words we might use to describe good preaching are “thoughtful” and “moving.” One person said, “I love it when I feel like I’ve learned something AND can apply it to my life.”

When we gather around the font (a commissioned piece of sculpture) we use the traditional Baptismal formula: “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” adding “One God, Mother of us all.”

Generally, Plymouth Church enjoys a more traditional form of worship, but we have integrated folk and gospel music into our Sunday services.

### **Describe the educational program and/or faith formation vision of your church.**

Our goal is to offer opportunities for Christian education and spiritual formation for every age. Our Sunday school uses a blended curriculum focused on the lectionary readings for the day. Children stay in worship the first Sunday of every month and for all intergenerational Sundays. Our Adult Faith and Life department offers programs and classes on everything from Biblical Studies to Environmental Justice. Currently, we have an emphasis on peace and peace keeping.

### **Describe how your congregation is organized for ministry and mission.**

Plymouth Church is organized into Departments, each with its own authority and responsibility. **The Worship Department** oversees all aspects of worship, from greeters to ushers to preaching. **The Evangelism and Growth Department** focuses on welcoming new members and spreading the news about Plymouth Church. **The Faith and Life Department** focuses on the spiritual development of adults. **The Children and Youth Department** cares for our youngest people, making sure that our children and youth are growing in faith and active in service. **The Buildings and Grounds Department** makes sure our facility is in good working order. **The Giving Department** runs the annual campaign and planned giving. **The Partnership and Service Department** is responsible for creating opportunities for service and our benevolence giving. **The Caring Department** is responsible for ministry

activities within the community, including our knitting ministry, flower delivery, and lay visitation.

The overall governing and decision-making is done by the Church Council, which has a representative from each department, a Council President and Vice-President, the Treasurer, the Secretary, and three members-at-large.

Communication is done through Council reports, Annual meetings, and bi-months newsletters.

Our main struggle is to find ways to get departments to collaborate on projects. There are times when it feels very much like each department is operating independently from the others. This has been an on-going challenge for at least the last ten years.

- **When it comes to decision-making, how many hours are spent in meetings per month?** Council meets for 90 minutes each month; Departments meet at least quarterly and usually each month for 60 minutes. In preparation for meetings, the staff and lay leadership may meet at other times.
- **Think of a time when action had to be taken quickly, for example when a crisis or disaster occurred. How was that accomplished?** Right before Christmas of 2012, our elevator broke down. We immediately called an emergency meeting of the Buildings and Grounds Department to brain-storm solutions. We then called a special meeting of Council to discuss what could be done, what our long-term goals were, and how we were going to maintain our commitment to inclusion without an elevator. In the short-run, we installed a ramp and stopped having any church-wide events in the now inaccessible Fellowship Hall. In the long-run, we used this event as a catalyst for a major accessibility campaign that resulted in a new entrance, a new elevator that reached all floors, and a building that was fully handicapped accessible.
- **Can you provide the next minister with a copy of an organization structure, bylaws and/or annual report to further explain the patterns of the church's activity and governance?** Yes.

## 11-YEAR REPORT

## CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Describe those who participate in your church.

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Number of active members:	300	x
Number of active non-members:	40	x
Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above):	340	x

Percentage of total participants who have been in the church:

		<i>Is this percentage an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
More than 10 years:	25%	x
Less than 10, more than 5 years:	40%	x
Less than 5 years:	35%	x

Number of total participants by age:

0-11	12-17	18-24	25-34	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	<i>Are these numbers an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
30	30	20	30	85	75	45	30	x

Percentage of adults in various household types:

		<i>Is this percentage an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Single adults under 35:	5%	x
Joint household with minors:	40%	x
Single adults age 35-65:	7%	x
Joint household with no minors:	40%	x
Single adults over 65:	8%	x

Education level of adult participants by percentage:

		<i>Is this percentage an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
High school:	3%	x
College:	40%	x
Graduate School:	55%	x
Specialty Training:	2%	x
Other (please specify):	--	x

Percentage of adults in various employment types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Adults who are employed:	75%	x
Adults who are retired:	20%	x
Adults who are not fully employed:	5%	x

**Describe the range of occupations of working adults in the congregation:**

The majority of employed, active adults at Plymouth are professionals, with an over-representation of those in law, medicine and education.

**Describe the mix of ethnic heritages in your congregation, and the overall racial make-up. Most UCC congregations tend to describe themselves as “diverse.” Yet, the vast majority of UCC congregations are mono-cultural. What does diversity mean in your context?**

Plymouth Church actually is diverse. On any Sunday, between 10-20% of the worshipping congregation is people of color, and more than 30% of our Sunday school would be characterized as “non-white.” This has been a growing trend over the last ten years.

**List the date your congregation has had or will have a conversation using a resource such as the Welcoming Diversity Inventory. Comment on the results.**

Plymouth has had and will continue to have conversations around diversity.

## PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING

Complete the following chart. Please leave blank any fields that are not applicable to your congregation.

Ways of Gathering	Estimated number of people involved in attendance	Who plans each of the listed gatherings? <i>(list any and all worship planners, such as various lay leaders, pastors, musicians, other staff)</i>
Adult Groups or Classes	200	Adult Faith & Life organizes these in consultation with the ministers
Baptisms <i>(number last year)</i>	6	Senior Minister
Children's Groups or Classes	45	Director of Christian Education
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	750	All Ministers and the Worship Department
Church-wide Meals	400	Various Departments organize church-wide meals. Usually lay led. We had four last year
Choirs and Music Groups	45	Minister of Music and the Arts
Church-based Bible Study	25	There are two - one is lay led, the other is led by the Senior Minister
Communion <i>(served how often?)</i>	14	Worship Department and Ministers
Community Meals		
Confirmation <i>(number confirmed last year)</i>	7	Associate Minister
Drama or Dance Program		
Funerals <i>(number last year)</i>	14	Senior Minister, Minister of Music and the Arts, Facilities Manager, Memorial Serving Committee
Intergenerational Groups		
Outdoor Worship		

Prayer or Meditation Groups	15	Volunteer minister
Public Advocacy Work	100	Adult Faith & Life, Partnership & Service, Senior Minister
Retreats		
Theology or Bible Programs in the Community	12	Senior Minister
Weddings ( <i>number last year</i> )	2	Senior Minister
Worship (time slot: 10:30)		Senior Minister, Associate Minister, Minister of Music and the Arts in consultation with the Worship department
Worship (time slot: _____)		
Young Adult Groups or Classes		
Youth Groups or Classes	30	Associate Minister and Lay Volunteers
Other: Chamber Music Concerts	5,000+	Minister of Music and the Arts coordinates with the various groups and the Facilities Manager

**Additional comments:**

This chart doesn't capture the complexity of planning events at a church our size. The whole staff is often involved in planning funerals and sometimes in planning worship programs. And since Plymouth Church was chartered as a community church, we host a variety of groups including two AA meetings, Tai Chi, two nursery school programs, Cleveland Institute of Music classes, an ESL class, and Tango class.

List all members or regular participants in your congregation who are ordained, licensed, or commissioned ministers. Indicate those with current United Church of Christ Three-Way Covenants (i.e. serving in a congregation) or Four-Way Covenants (i.e. serving in a ministry beyond a congregation).

Name	Three-Way or Four-Way Covenant? (3 or 4 or No)	Ministry Setting	Type of Ministry Role	Retired? (Y or N)
Robb Forward	4	Commissioned Prison Chaplain	Visitation with inmates	No
Mendle Adams	No	Ordained Minister	Currently our Interim for Visitation	Yes
Cynthia Barnard-Shelton	No	Ordained Minister in Disciples Church	Volunteer	Yes
Brian Shields	No	Cleveland Clinic	Chaplain	No
Bill Green	No	Ordained Minister who served in National Setting	Volunteer	Yes
Jim Moos	No	Ordained, serves in National setting	Executive Minister, Wider Church Ministries	No
Brooks Berndt	No	Ordained, serves in national setting	Minister for Environmental Justice	No
Molly Bolton	No	MID in WRA, Cleveland Clinic	Chaplain	No
Ruth Garwood	No	Ordained, not currently serving a church.	Intentional Interim	No

**If one or more previous pastors or retired ministers currently hold membership in the church, describe their role(s) in the life of the**

**congregation:** We have a couple of retired ministers who volunteer to help with visitation or are asked to serve as pulpit supply.

List all current staff, including ministers. Exclude the position you are seeking to fill. Indicate which staff person serves as head of staff.

Staff Position	Head of Staff?	Compensation (full time, part time, volunteer)	Supervised by	Length of Tenure for current person in this position
Senior Minister	Head of Staff	Full time	Council	9 years
Director of Finance		Full time	Senior Minister	10 years
Minister of Music and the Arts		Full time	Senior Minister	18 years
Interim Minister of Visitation		Part time	Senior Minister	7 months
Facilities Director		Full time	Senior Minister	1 year
Administrator of Communications and Development		Full time	Senior Minister	6 months
Director of Christian Education		Half time	Senior Minister	2 years
Housekeeper		Half time	Facilities Manager	6 years
Janitor		Full time	Facilities Manager	9 years
Director of Parents' Day Out		Half time	PDO Board	10 years
Organ Scholar		Part time	Minister of Music and the Arts	4 years

#### REFLECTION

**Reflection:** After reviewing the congregational demographics and activities above, what does this information reflect about your congregation's overall ministry?

We are an active congregation with a busy building.

## CHURCH FINANCES

Current annual income (dollars used during most recent fiscal year)

Source	Amount
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	\$686,188
Endowment Proceeds ( <i>as permitted within spending policy, such as a cap of typically 4.5%-5% on total return</i> )	\$211,878
Endowment Draw ( <i>beyond what is permitted by spending policy, "drawing down the principal"</i> )	\$--
Fundraising Events	\$12,014
Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose	\$27,778
Grants	\$--
Rentals of Church Building	\$66,758
Rentals of Church Parsonage	\$--
Support from Related Organizations ( <i>e.g. Women's Group</i> )	\$--
Transfers from Special Accounts	\$10,000
Other (specify): Foundation Investment Income	\$161,861
Other (specify):	\$
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,176,477</b>

Current annual expenses (dollars budgeted for most recent fiscal year):

\$997,408

*Attach most recent church budget, spending plan, operating statement, or annual treasurer's report as shared publicly with the congregation, or - if your church does not pass an annual budget - list current budgeted expenses here.*

Considering total budgeted expenses for the year, compare total ministerial support. What is the percentage? 29%

Has the church ever failed to pay its financial obligations to a minister of the church? No

Is your church 5-for-5, i.e. does it include each of the following contributions during the church year? (*indicate those included during the most recent fiscal year*)

- Our Church’s Wider Mission (OCWM – Basic Support)
- One Great Hour of Sharing
- Strengthen the Church
- Neighbors in Need
- Christmas Fund

In what way is OCWM (Basic Support) gathered? If calculated as a percentage of operating budget, what is that percentage? (*recommended 10%*)

OCWM is part of our annual budget.

What is the church’s current indebtedness? 0

If a building program is projected or underway, describe it, including the projected start/end date of the building project and the total project budget.  
N/A

If the church has had capital campaigns in the last ten years, describe:

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
2007	Repair and Preserve the Building	\$1.25M	\$1.33 M	We won an award for Historic Preservation
2013	Open Doors: Accessibility Project	\$730,000	\$689,504	The building is fully accessible and there is an attractive and inviting entrance.

If a capital campaign is underway or anticipated, describe:

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
		\$	\$	
		\$	\$	

**Describe the prominent mission component(s) involved in the most recent (or current) capital campaign.** Our church is a place of welcome for all people  
- Open Doors Campaign of 2013

Our last capital campaign was for the purpose of replacing our elevator and making the building fully accessible, with an emphasis on accessible bathrooms, automatic doors, and space in the sanctuary for wheelchairs.

Does your church have an endowment? Yes

What is the market value of the assets? \$5.155 million

Are funds drawn as needed, regularly, or under certain circumstances?  
Regular annual 5% draw based on a three year rolling average

What is the percentage rate of draw (last year, compared to 5 years ago)?

Describe draw on endowment, if any, to meet operating budget expenses for the most recent year and the past five years:

At the current rate of draw, how long might the endowment last? Under current market performance, indefinitely.

Please comment on the above calculations or estimates: We have a strong Foundation board who ensures we are investing wisely to safeguard principal and support the church.

Other Assets

Reserves (savings): \$17,000

Investments (other than endowment): \$0

Does your church have a parsonage? No.

**Describe all buildings owned by the church:**

50,000 sq. ft. building including main sanctuary, chapel, fellowship hall, education wing, school rooms and main building with offices.

**Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs?**

Since the 2013 Open Doors project, the church is fully accessible with the exception of the balcony and the chancel area.

**Reflection: After reviewing the church's finances and assets described above, what does this information reflect about your congregation's mission and ministry?**

Plymouth Church strives to be a careful steward of financial resources. We are committed to sharing what we have, but we do tend to be conservative when it comes to investing and budgeting.

## HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Name one to three significant happenings in the history of your church that have shaped the identity of your congregation. Add the most important event in the life of your church in the past 10 years.

- The decision to reform Plymouth Church in 1916 as Plymouth Church of Shaker Heights, a community church.
- 2005: the culmination of the lengthy process to become Open and Affirming.
- 2007: Plymouth Church calls its first female Senior Minister, head of staff
- 2016: Plymouth Church declares itself a Just Peace congregation.

**Describe a specific change your church has managed in the recent past.**

Within this document, you will find reference to two significant changes – the redesign of the building to accommodate a new elevator and the increasing diversity of the congregation. Both of these changes have been managed with care, faith, and consensus.

**Every church has conflict, some minor, some larger. “Where two or three are gathered, there will be disagreement...” Describe your congregation’s values and practices when it comes to conflict.**

Plymouth has had relatively minor episodes of conflict. We value clear communication and expect everyone to behave in a spirit of faith and charity. Generally, we work out our differences before there is full-blown conflict. As one person put it: “Plymouth is remarkably drama free.”

Ministerial History *(include all previous ministerial staff for the past 30 years)*

Staff member's name	Years of service	UCC Standing (Y/No)
Rev. Dr. Shawnthea Monroe, Senior Minister	2008 to present	Yes
Rev. Adam Hange, Associate Minister	2009 to 2016	Yes
Rev. Lois Annich, PT Associate Minister	2008 to 2012	No (PCUSA)
Rev. Stephen Adams, Designated Associate (FT)	2007 to 2008	Yes
Rev. Dr. David Powers, Interim Senior Minister	2007	Yes
Rev. Dr. Jim Antal, Senior Minister	1996-2006	Yes
Rev. Matt Brown, Associate Minister	1999 - 2006	Yes
Rev. Patty Walker, PT Associate Minister	1996 - 2005	Yes
Rev. Sally Wile, PT Associate Minister	1996 - 2005	Yes
Rev. Dr. Skip Holliday	1984-1994	Yes
Rev. Will Green, Associate Minister	1989-1995	Yes

**Comment on what your church has learned about itself and its relationship with persons who provided ministerial leadership:**

Plymouth Church has a history of strong relationships with our ministers. We work with them, support them, and respect them.

**Has any past leader left under pressure or by involuntary termination?**

There was one in the 1970s.

**Has your church been involved in a Situational Support Consultation?**

No

**Has a past pastor been the subject of a Fitness Review while at your church?** No

## WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR?

COMMUNITY VISION  
MISSION INSITE

### COMMUNITY VISION

#### **How do the relationships and activities of your congregation extend outward in service and advocacy?**

Plymouth Church is known for its service to the wider community. Our five target issues are: Homelessness (we volunteer at shelters and raise money for the Interfaith Hospitality Network), Hunger (last year, we had over 75 volunteers who worked at the Food Bank and Shaker Food pantry), Education for at-risk children (we serve as reading tutors and provide back packs and school supplies for two Cleveland schools), Environmental Justice (we participate in the weekly Stream Sweep and give money to the Green Core), and LGBTQ issues (besides marching in the Pride parade, we are active with the HRC, and the UCC Coalition program).

#### **Describe your congregation's participation in meetings, relationships and activities connecting the wider United Church of Christ (association / conference / national setting).**

Plymouth Church includes members of the National Staff, who keep us engaged in the work of the national setting. Our Senior Minister is the chair of the Discernment of Call Working group for the WRA Committee on Ministry. Plymouth has hosted the WRA annual meeting and was instrumental in supporting the 2015 General Synod meeting in Cleveland.

Plymouth Church has withdrawn funding and is not active with the Ohio Conference because of poor oversight and management.

Check all of the following "statements of witness" that apply to your UCC faith community. (Find more information on these statements at [ucc.org](http://ucc.org).)

- Accessible to All (A2A)
- Creation Justice

- Economic Justice
- Faithful and Welcoming
- God Is Still Speaking (GISS)
- Immigrant Welcoming
- Inter-cultural/Multi-racial (I'M)
- Just Peace
- Global Mission Church
- Open and Affirming (ONA)
- WISE Congregation for Mental Health
- Other UCC designations:
- Other similar designations in affiliated denominations
- None

**Reflect on what the above statement(s) mean(s) to your community. Is your congregation interested in working toward any of the above statements of witness in the near future?**

Plymouth has an active “Green Initiative” and multiple programs aimed at supporting people with the least economic resources and opportunities. Our 2013 Capital Project made our building fully accessible. As mentioned earlier, our five areas of emphasis for volunteer work and monetary support are: Homelessness, Education of Inner City Students, Hunger, LGBTQ issues, and Environmental Justice. We are less concerned with labels than we are with the quality of the work we do.

**Describe your congregation’s participation in ecumenical and interfaith activities (with other denominations and religious groups, local and regional).**

Plymouth has a history of doing interfaith service activities in the Shaker Heights area. Also, the 2018 Interfaith Trip to the Holy Land is an example of our connection with our Jewish neighbors.

**If your congregation has a mission statement, how does that mission statement compare to the actual time spent engaging in different activities? Think of the range of activities from time spent gathering, to governance, to time spent going out.**

Our only mission statement is to take seriously the words of Jesus found in Luke 10:27: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul

and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, Love your neighbor as yourself. This belief is woven through everything we do in worship, in service and in fellowship.

**Reflect on the scope of work assigned to your pastor(s). How is their community ministry and their ministry in and on behalf of the wider church accounted for in the congregation's expectations on their time?**

We have always allowed our ministers to determine how involved they will be in community and denominational activities. Currently, our Senior Minister is the chair of the Discernment of Call working group for the Committee on Ministry and we feel she is serving Plymouth when she serves in that role.

For any pastor, there are certain things that must be done. Care for the local congregation is paramount. But beyond those essential tasks, we encourage our ministers to live out their particular sense of call to the wider community as they see fit.

## MissionInSite

### **Comment on your congregation's MissionInSite report with data for your neighborhood(s) or area. What trends and opportunities are shown?**

We were encouraged to see that the views and values of our neighbors (3 and 5 miles from the church) are in line with the values of the church. People are searching for programming for children, places to engage in service to others, and programs that deal with environmental issues. There was also an expressed need for more family-friendly activities. This report convinced us that we need to do a better job marketing our programs - and expand the existing offerings.

### **How do your congregation's internal demographics compare or contrast to a) the neighborhoods adjacent to your church, and b) other neighborhoods with which your church connects?**

As a church, we are wealthier and whiter than the surrounding neighborhoods. This speaks to the need for us to continue to reach out to our neighbors, remove barriers to participation, and extend a consistent welcome to all. We aim not to be a welcoming church but an inviting church.

### **How are the demographics of the community currently shaping ministry, or not?**

Our outreach and welcome are definitely shaped by the demographics. Of course we need to do more.

### **What do you hear when you talk to community leaders and ask them what your church is known for?**

- Plymouth is a church that welcomes everyone
- Plymouth is more than a church; it is like a community center
- Plymouth cares about the issues of the inner-city

### **What do new people in the church say when asked what got them involved?**

- They were specifically welcomed by other people in worship
- They found like-minded people in the pews
- There was excellent adult education and Sunday school

- Plymouth is a group of people who live out their values – i.e. Sunday morning is connected to Monday morning.

## REFERENCES

Name up to three people who have agreed to serve as phone and written references. Make sure they are not members of your church but are persons who know your church well enough to be helpful to candidates seeking more information. Request a letter from each reference in answer to the four prompts below. Attach the letters (up to three) as desired.

### REFERENCE 1

The Rev. David Hill, Pastor, First Church, Oberlin, Ohio  
404.935.3398, [pastor@firstchurchoberlin.org](mailto:pastor@firstchurchoberlin.org)  
David Hill knows Plymouth Church and the Senior Minister

### REFERENCE 2

Rev. Adam Hange  
Pastor, First Congregational UCC, Hillsboro, Oregon  
216.372.7129, [hfcucc.pastor@gmail.com](mailto:hfcucc.pastor@gmail.com)  
Adam Hange was the last Associate Minister at Plymouth Church

### REFERENCE 3

Rev. Shaundra Cunningham  
Staff Chaplain at the Swedish Hospital in Seattle, Washington  
803.206.1790, [shaundrac@gmail.com](mailto:shaundrac@gmail.com)  
Shaundra Cunningham was a member of Plymouth Church and served as an interim visitation minister

### PROMPTS FOR REFERENCES

Describe some areas of strength in this church's ministry.  
Describe some areas for improvement in this church's ministry.  
Describe a significant experience you have had of this church's ministry.  
Anything else you wish to share.

## **CLOSING THOUGHTS**

CLOSING PRAYER

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION VALIDATION

### CLOSING PRAYER

Our search committee has offered many prayers over these weeks and months, each one a unique expression of the person who offers the prayer. What it all comes down to is that we are placing our trust in God to draw near to us the right person for this position. We are keeping our hearts, our minds, and our eyes open so we don't miss God's presence in this process – and when we find the right person, we will rejoice!

## STATEMENT OF CONSENT

The covenantal relationship between a church and those called by that church to serve as pastors and teachers and in other ministerial positions is strengthened when vital information is openly shared by covenantal partners. To that end, we attest that, to the best of our abilities, we have provided information in this profile that accurately represents our church. We have not knowingly withheld any information that would be helpful to candidates.

As the committee charged with the responsibility for identifying and recommending suitable new minister for our church, we have been authorized to share the information herein with potential candidates. We understand that a candidate may wish to secure further knowledge, information, and opinions about our church. We encourage a candidate to do so, recognizing that an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for continuing and healthy relationships between calling bodies and persons seeking a ministry position.

1. Which individuals and groups in the church contributed to the contents of this Local Church Profile? (*for example, church council or consistory, transition team, etc.*) This church profile was compiled by members of the search committee and members of the staff with help and insight offered by members of Church Council.
2. Additional comments for interpreting the profile:

Signed:

Shawnthea Monroe, Senior Minister, Date:

## VALIDATION BY CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION

The congregation is currently in good standing with the association / conference named.

Staff Comment: Plymouth United Church of Christ is active in the wider church through their participation in association activities and support for both the association and national settings of the church. They are generous with time, talent and treasure.


To the best of my knowledge, ministerial history information is complete.

Staff Comment: It is complete.

To the best of my knowledge, available church financial information is presented thoroughly.

Staff Comment: It is complete and accurate.

My signature below attests to the above three items.

Signature: 

Name / Title: Associations Associate Minister for Congregational Vitality and Development

Email: [bonnie@eoawraucc.org](mailto:bonnie@eoawraucc.org)

Phone: 330-940-2220 x 104

Date: March 28, 2017

This document is created through support to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) and is only possible through the covenantal relationships of all settings of the United Church of Christ.

*"Jesus answered them, 'Have faith in God!'" - Mark 11:22*

## **JOB DESCRIPTION – Plymouth Church of Shaker Heights**

**Title: Associate Minister**

**Status: Full-Time Exempt (salaried)**

**Reports to: Senior Minister**

**Revised: January 12, 2017**

### **PURPOSE**

To plan, support, and coordinate worship, education, and fellowship opportunities for adults and youth in a theologically and culturally diverse congregation of 600 members in an affluent suburb of Cleveland, Ohio. To assist the Senior Minister in worship leadership, pastoral care, and the coordination of other congregational programs and events.

### **ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Listed below are the essential duties of this job. Other duties may be assigned. To successfully perform this job, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily.

#### ***Responsibilities by Department***

##### **Caring**

- Collaborate with the Senior Minister to create a consistent program of pastoral care and visitation, as well as keeping the Senior Minister apprised of pastoral situations
- Provide pastoral care, visitation & presence to people of all ages
- Provide consistent visitation and pastoral care for permanently and temporarily home-bound members, keeping them connected with Plymouth Church United Church of Christ
- Serve as staff liaison to and work with the Caring Department to meet the needs of members through programs such as Flower Delivery, Prayer Shawl Ministry, and Meals Ministry,
- In collaboration with Senior Minister, provide crisis visitation to those in area hospitals, nursing homes, and rehab facilities
- Plan and facilitate monthly Plymouth Lunch Club program, including arranging topics and speakers as well as coordinating with caterers
- With Senior Minister, Staff and Lay Leaders, develop opportunities for fellowship and community building among church members.

##### **Worship**

- Share in planning and leadership of worship with Senior Minister and Minister of Music and the Arts
- Plan, lead and participate in special worship events as needed
- Preach a minimum of 9 times per year
- Attend Worship Department meetings as requested
- Conduct memorial services as requested
- Perform weddings as requested (counseling, rehearsal, ceremony)

## Youth & Children

- *Confirmation*
  - Develop and lead the confirmation program with assistance from Senior Minister and lay volunteers
- *Youth Groups and Service Trips*
  - Design and lead Senior High youth program with assistance from lay leaders
  - Support the lay leaders in their work with the Junior High youth program
  - Plan and coordinate, with adult volunteers, service opportunities that will enhance the overall spiritual community of the youth, the neighborhood, and the congregation at large

## Administration

- Strategize with the Children and Youth, Caring, and Adult Faith and Life Departments to develop goals (short and long range), identify priorities, and set programming objectives and guidelines
- Maintain necessary records.

## Adult Faith and Life

- Serve as staff liaison to the Adult Faith and Life Department
- Support the Adult Faith and Life Department in meeting the spiritual and education needs of the congregation
- Work with the Administrator of Communications and Development to publicize Adult Faith and Life programs across all social media platforms and traditional print media
- Set up and maintain effective systems for gathering information on individuals and families

## Communication and Collaboration

- Attend, participate, and report regularly at meetings of Staff, Children and Youth Department, Caring Department, and Adult Faith and Life Department
- Attend other meetings as necessary to promote the smooth functioning of programs under supervision
- Attend Church Council meetings and Church Council functions as requested
- Communicate regularly with families of participating youth, including follow-up and consultation when appropriate
- Collaborate with the ministerial staff in planning of Youth programs
- In coordination with the Administrator of Communication and Development, publicize and interpret the church's educational mission to the congregation and enlist their participation and support
- Coordinate regular electronic and print communications with key departments on a regular basis
- Contribute to Perspective as requested
- Prepare an annual report

## *Other duties as assigned*

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

Listed below are the qualifications required for this position and indicative of the knowledge, skills and abilities required to be successful in this position.

- Master's degree [M.Div.]
- Passion and gifts for ministering to people of all ages
- Theologically-trained
- Demonstrated leadership skills
- Well organized
- Excellent oral and written communication skills
- Relevant work/life experience with youth and adults
- Experience with visitation and pastoral care
- Ordained (or pending call)

## **PERSONAL SKILLS AND ABILITIES**

- Working with people of all ages
- Organizing and planning programs
- Preaching and worship leadership
- Leading and nurturing the development of leadership skills in others
- Inspiring commitment and enthusiasm in volunteers
- Working well in a team-based environment that values honest communication and dedication to the overall mission of the church
- Performing in a cooperative, effective and professional manner with church officers, staff and congregants
- Willing to work flexible hours, including holidays and weekends as necessary
- Enthusiasm toward educational ministry
- Recognition of the calling of all Christians to do God's work

## **COMPENSATION EXCEEDS CONFERENCE GUIDELINES**

## STATEMENT OF CONSENT

The covenantal relationship between a church and those called by that church to serve as pastors and teachers and in other ministerial positions is strengthened when vital information is openly shared by covenantal partners. To that end, we attest that, to the best of our abilities, we have provided information in this profile that accurately represents our church. We have not knowingly withheld any information that would be helpful to candidates.

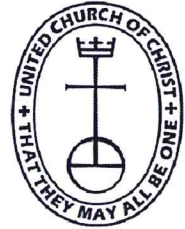
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2. Additional comments for interpreting the profile:

Signed:   
Shawnthea Monroe, Senior Minister, Date: 3/26/17



**THE FIRST CHURCH IN OBERLIN**  
United Church of Christ  
Rev. David T. Hill, Pastor  
Brandy Bring, Commissioned Minister  
for Faith Formation and Youth



March 9, 2017

Plymouth Church  
2860 Coventry Road  
Shaker Heights, OH 44120

RE: Letter of Reference

To whom it may concern:

Plymouth Church continues to be one of the strongest churches in the Western Reserve Association (WRA) with a well-earned reputation for engaging its immediate community as well as the wider church. It has played host to association gatherings and has welcomed notable outside speakers to its pulpit. During my time on the WRA Committee on Ministry I worked with Plymouth's Senior Minister, Shawnthea Monroe. Throughout our time together on the Discernment of Call working group I witnessed Shawnthea's exceptional giftedness as teacher and mentor as she interacted with and coached various Members in Discernment. As a vibrant, strong and capable leader herself, Shawnthea, brings out and nurtures these same qualities in others through a collegial approach to ministry. Together, Plymouth Church and Shawnthea Monroe offer an outstanding opportunity for development and growth in the practice of authorized ministry.

Sincerely,

David T. Hill

March 14, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

I am thrilled to write this letter on behalf of Plymouth Church. I was an active member and minister for almost four years before moving to Seattle a year ago. As a hospital chaplain, when my own spirit grew weary and tired, I found refuge, renewal, and sanctuary—in every sense of the term—at Plymouth.

Among the church's vast array of strengths, get ready for phenomenal preaching that plumbs the depths, never proffering superficial platitudes or easy answers. The Rev. Dr. Shawnthea Monroe is quite simply one of the best preachers in the country. She embodies James Cone's five-fold typology of a theologian as "exegete, prophet, teacher, preacher, and philosopher." Week after week, I marveled as she kneaded the text like dough and made the lectionary come alive. This mastery and standard of excellence extends to the arts and music ministry where the maestro himself, Jim Riggs, oversees robust programming including concerts, plays, recitals, bell choirs, dinner musicals, and more.

Plymouth takes seriously the mandate in Micah 6:8 "to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God." This is evident in its LGBTQ open and affirming commitment, Empowering Youth Exploring Justice, the food bank, and engagement with the *zeitgeist* of the local, national, and global context. Many churches talk a good game but what I love about the disciples at Plymouth is - they show up! At Pride marches, at Women's movement marches, at Black Lives Matter marches, at Standing Rock protests, at city council, in the courtroom, in the classroom, in hospitals, on the street - they bear witness. But the magic really happens during adult education offerings, weekly bible study, and small group gatherings. Time and again, I've heard other members chime in about the kinship and friendships developed during such intimate gatherings, which isn't surprising; there's no better litmus test of *ekklesia* than discussing which snacks and cookies make the cut for coffee hour. Gluten free pretzels versus chocolate dipped strawberries reveal a lot about a person's faith - but I digress.

In terms of improvement, I think Plymouth could use a bit of a face lift concerning its marketing, social media, and outreach strategies. The church is situated in a historic neighborhood, renowned for its diversity, cultural offerings, and proximity to parks and recreation. There's room to get creative and innovative as the church interfaces with the community. I'd imagine dexterity of messaging would be key in order to galvanize four generations - from baby boomers to millennials - and keep them engaged.

Given recent shifts in the demographics of the Skaker Square vicinity, with an influx of more African American and Latino families, Plymouth could expand or shift some of its offerings to better serve and appeal to the spiritual needs of said groups. Roughly 20% of the congregation is comprised of people of color, and/or LGBTQ persons, and/or persons

at varying degrees of able-bodied-ness. This is a key strength; however, navigating the interstices of how this “beloved community” ebbs and flows while inviting safe and “powerful vulnerability,” as Brené Brown put it, will likely remain a constant negotiation. Another growing edge concerns the youth and young adult ministries. As I recall, there’s a very vibrant and dedicated group of volunteers, teachers, and chaperones on rotation; however, with the time lapse since the former minister’s departure, this is an area that likely needs a boost as well.

Shifting gears, a significant experience was during the summer of 2014, when Shawnthea took a sabbatical, and I had the privilege of serving as the primary interim minister. One can tell a tree by the fruit it bears and, even in her absence, the administrative structure and safeguards allowed me to step up to the plate without a hitch. The people fed me while I attempted to pinch hit and feed them. Therein lies the true gift of Plymouth: the people. And what a glorious bunch they are – super smart, incredibly joyful, particular and exacting, openhearted and loving, prayerful and committed. As a black queer minister, I recall inviting friends to church – many of whom endure[d] spiritual violence and shun organized religion – who later told me how much they felt “at home,” “seen,” and “welcome” by the radical hospitality and atmosphere at Plymouth. And I’m a witness to that reality too.

Therefore, I beseech you, dear comrade, by the mercies of God with a sincere question: *So You Think You Can Dance* [?] One needs a nimble disposition; ever ready to attempt new choreography (classical, contemporary, jazz, hip hop, ballroom) in such a dynamic ministry. Gwendolyn Brooks once said, “truth-tellers are not always palpable. There is a preference for candy bars.” While the macro implications of her dictum ring true, I’m convinced that one of the unique gifts of The Rev. Dr. Shawnthea Monroe and the members of Plymouth Church is their ability to both prove and disprove this declaration at the same time. They proclaim and live out a gospel where the dance of truth is scandalously sweet. Peace and blessings in your discernment process.

Sincerely,

*Shaundra Cunningham*

Rev. Shaundra Cunningham  
Staff Chaplain  
Swedish Hospital  
747 Broadway  
Seattle, WA 98122

March 14, 2017

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