

The Center for
Spiritual
growth



presents
program offerings for
Spring 2010

Plymouth
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST





From the Minister of Spiritual Growth

It is one of my greatest obstacles to personal spiritual growth: I have a problem with procrastination.

I long to do a lot of things: to pray more often, to become more aware, to connect to the people around me. But it is hard to find the time. I have a demanding schedule, filled with urgent things that always threaten to squeeze out the important things. There is always another meeting to attend, another errand to run, another reason to put off the things I most deeply yearn to do.

Maybe you are the same way. If so, please consider this brochure an invitation to make some time for the things that matter most. Here you will read about classes, Bible study, small groups, retreats –opportunities to go deeper in the life of the spirit. You probably don't have the time to do all of it –but could you find one thing? And if you did, how might it change your life?

Wouldn't you like to find out?

Grace and Peace,

Matthew Mardis-LeCroy

Purpose, Mission & Values

Purpose: The Plymouth Center for Spiritual Growth provides diverse opportunities for spiritual growth and development. The Center seeks to help persons grow in understanding their spiritual nature, including their relationship with each other and their relationship with God.

Mission: The Center, as part of the ministry of Plymouth Church, develops and implements spiritual growth programming including educational classes, retreats, renewal offerings and a resource center.

Values: This ministry is open to seekers of all denominations and religious and non-religious backgrounds. It provides a safe and confidential space for honest and open discussion for all.

Goals

- To support persons in exploring and developing their relationship to God, others and themselves within the whole of creation.
- To encourage lifelong spiritual growth and learning.
- To prepare persons to celebrate and live their ministry in everyday life.

A Place Apart...

In addition to scheduled program opportunities, the Plymouth Center for Spiritual Growth provides quiet space and spiritual resources for all people. The Center maintains a fully stocked library with a wide range of materials on spirituality, religion and biblical studies. Rooms at the center are available for individuals or groups to use. Whether you want to schedule a retreat, start a prayer and meditation group or just set aside some time for yourself, the Plymouth Center for Spiritual Growth is an ideal setting. Contact Matt Mardis-LeCroy or Marta Hawkins at 255-3149 to learn how the Center is here for you.

Board of Spiritual Growth

2009-2010

Michelle Casper Barker
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Marsha Hines
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2011-2012

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Spiritual Direction

Celebrate growth.

Treasure awe.

Embrace humility.

Proceed prayerfully.

--Gerald May (adapted)

All of life - our relationships, our circumstances, our life state-is used by God. Indeed, nothing is wasted. The ministry of spiritual direction invites us to a growing awareness of God's presence and activity in our life, and then to respond. Although not well-known or well-developed in the Protestant and Reformed Christian traditions, spiritual direction has a rich part in the early history of Christian spirituality. Recently, increasing interest among people seeking a time and space for discerning God's presence has led to a re-discovery of this ministry.

Unique among helping relationships, whether in a group or individual setting, the focus of spiritual direction is on the seeker's relationship with God. Trained directors accompany those seeking to open themselves to God's invitation in all of life, to exploring a sense of God's presence as well as absence, to finding expression for experiences of God, and to broadening prayer life. Spiritual direction is also sought by people trying to make sense of life from a deeper place and by those wondering how their spirituality fits with their beliefs.

In keeping with our progressive heritage and mission, and thanks to the generosity of the Plymouth Foundation, a grant has been received to expand the services available through the Center for Spiritual Growth. Two spiritual directors are now available to provide spiritual direction to the greater Plymouth community.

After initial meetings to discern whether spiritual direction is what you seek at this time, sessions of approximately an hour in length are scheduled on a monthly or semi-monthly basis. Payment is accepted, based on a sliding scale. Call the Center for Spiritual Growth at 255-3149 for more information or to arrange a direction session.

Sunday Morning Adult Education Programs

IGNITING YOUR DIVINE SPARK
Sundays, Starting February 21
10:10-10:50 AM
Inspiration Lounge
Moderated by Marsha Hines

Consider this your invitation to living a more profound, deeper, simpler, MORE FUN life. This series will feature brief presentations from a variety of presenters and topics, allowing plenty of time for spontaneous insights and inspiration. Consider it meat to sustain your every day reality.

Sample Topics may include:

1. Gratitude and Love - opening your heart
2. Movement - Tai Chi to The Irish Blessing
3. Thought, Consciousness and Mind
4. Unorthodox approaches to meditation and connection to the divine
5. Intention setting - your energy, the electrical charge, the awareness you bring to every aspect of your life
6. Fueling your Inner Tank.....

All are welcome!

FELLOWSHIP FORUM
Sundays, 10:10-10:50 AM
Greenwood Room
Led by: Matt Mardis-LeCroy

This group is open to all for the study of scripture and to discuss current events/topics as they relate to our Christian faith.

Weekly Groups

WEEKLY CENTERING PRAYER
Mondays, 6:00-7:00 PM
Center for Spiritual Growth
Inspiration Lounge
Led by: Lay Leaders

Centering Prayer is a prayer of quiet, a form of meditation grounded in scripture and the Christian contemplative tradition. It is intended to deepen our relationship with the God who is at the center of our being. All are welcome at these times of prayer, and are encouraged to take the *Introduction to the Practice of Centering Prayer* workshop, which is offered yearly through the Center for Spiritual Growth.

MEN'S SPIRITUALITY
(AMENS: ALL MEN EXPERIENCING
NURTURING SPIRITUALITY)
Tuesdays, 6:45-7:45 AM
Burling Room

All men are invited to meet for the purpose of spiritual growth. The statement of purpose for AMENS group reads: *The main purpose of this fellowship of men of all ages is spiritual growth. Centered within the beloved community of Plymouth Church, we seek to improve our understanding of ourselves, our relationship with God and our connectedness with one another, our families and our work. Meeting weekly, we hope to create a spiritual vision of what we can be as men in our various roles as fathers, husbands, brothers, sons and friends. We welcome all men who share in this vision.*

SHAWL KNITTING MINISTRIES

Tuesdays, 5:00-6:30 PM

Center for Spiritual Growth

Welcome Lounge

Led by: Jean Walker and Janet Jennings

People of all ages who are interested in knitting or learning to knit shawls of comfort are invited to attend. Over 400 shawls have been given to people undergoing surgery, suffering a loss, facing a long-term illness, celebrating a marriage or welcoming a new baby. New shawls are blessed the first Tuesday of the month.

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

Wednesdays, 9:30-11:00 AM

Center for Spiritual Growth

Coffee Shop

Led by: Matt Mardis-LeCroy

An opportunity to enrich the experience of Sunday worship by going deeper with the texts for the week. We will continue studying *Seasons of the Spirit*, which follows the lectionary. Everyone is welcome and no preparation is required.

WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY

**(WISE: WOMEN IN SPIRITUAL
EXPLORATION)**

Thursdays, 7:00-8:00 AM

Burling Room

All women are invited to meet for the purpose of spiritual growth. The WISE statement of purpose reads: *To focus on and grow through the experience of Our Spirit, in a community of love, friendship and spiritual intimacy. To support, nurture and exercise Our Spirit through meditation, prayer, study, work and play...and by being together.*

Monthly Groups

PLYMOUTH BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP
1st Sunday of the month, 10:10-10:45 AM
Center for Spiritual Growth
Harmony Conference Room
Led by: Lay Leaders

This group discusses a variety of books (classics, biographies, novels, plays, etc.). All are welcome.

SOMETHING'S BREWING
1st Tuesday of each month, 6:00 PM
Raccoon River Brewing Company
Hosted by: Matt Mardis-LeCroy
No fee (Food and drink will be available for purchase.)

Join us on the first Tuesday of each month at Raccoon River Brewing Company (200 10th Street, downtown Des Moines) for informal conversations about God, life and whatever else happens to come up. No prior knowledge of the Bible or theology will be expected and all are welcome!

THE COMMON THREAD GROUP
1st Thursday of each month 7:00-9:00 p.m.
Greenwood Room
Facilitated by Beverly Stone – 554-3089

Common Thread is a God-centered study group of spiritual/metaphysical topics. Speakers present on subjects pertaining to: Angels and Spirits, Alternative Healing, Manifestation, Past Lives, Spirituality, Psychic Ability/Intuition, Crystal Energy, Meditation, Astrology, Spiritual Communication, Earth and Universal Changes...and more.

Join us the first Thursday of every month for open, free meetings. You need no special knowledge to participate. Just bring your curiosity, or share your expertise in the subjects. All are welcome.

Adult Education Classes

WRITING AS A SPIRITUAL QUEST
Mondays, January 11 to February 22
(No class on January 18)
6:30- 8:00 PM
Burling Room
Presenter: Vicki Goldsmith
Fee: \$45

The class will use various kinds of writing, both prose and poetry, to examine our natures, purposes, experiences, directions. We will use writing as a means to pay attention to how we live. We will write brief pieces in class, expand them out of class, read to each other, attempt to develop the habit of writing and rewriting as a way of living with more deliberation and attention. Basic drawing and brief meditation will enrich our practice.

Vicki Goldsmith was born in Ohio and received two degrees from Bowling Green State University. She has taught English in six secondary schools and six universities. Her experience includes teaching Native American students, maximum security prisoners, and students in an Army Post and Air Force base. She taught American Literature in universities in Taipei, Taiwan and in Warsaw, Poland.

TAKING PAUSE: A Midwinter Retreat
Monday, February 8th, 6:00 PM
through Tuesday, February 9th, 3:00 PM
Pilgrim Heights Retreat Center, Montour, IA
Presenter: Kathy Reardon, RN, MS
Fee: \$95 (includes lodging, meals and programming)

Registration is required.

Register online at www.pilgrimheights.org or contact Ann at Pilgrim Heights Retreat Center at 641-492-6165.

Stillness is the winter name for God. Savor a time of stillness and solitude for yourself while in the prayerful company of other seekers. Our time together will be framed by a meditation allowing for personal reflection upon the year that has passed and opening and welcoming the new that is to come with this new year.

Individual spiritual direction, mini Reiki sessions, and daily meditation included for those who desire.

Kathy Reardon, RN, MS, is a Plymouth member and a spiritual director at the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center. She is a founding member of Contemplative Outreach of Central Iowa, a network of individuals and small faith communities that support the teaching and practice of Centering Prayer in the Ames/Des Moines area.

**DISCOVERING OUR FAITH II:
Taking the Bible Seriously, Not Literally
Continuing Our Study of *Reading the Bible
Again for the First Time*
by Marcus Borg.
Wednesdays, February 10- April 7
(No class on February 17 or March 31)
7:00-8:00 PM
Greenwood Room
Presenter: Matt Mardis-LeCroy
No fee. (Books will be available for
purchase)**

We all have our reasons for *not* reading the Bible. It is a baffling book - written thousands of years ago, halfway around the world, in three dead languages. And Scripture is so often abused by conservative Christians that many of us have learned to leave it alone.

But the Bible remains the basis of our faith and our single greatest resource for personal spiritual growth. We just need a little help getting reacquainted with it. Marcus Borg - bestselling author, member of the Jesus Seminar, friend of Plymouth Church - wrote *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time* to help people re-connect to the richness of Scripture. Through close reading and conversation about Borg's book, participants in this class will be equipped to study Scripture on their own and to take the Bible seriously as a resource for personal spiritual growth.

Matt Mardis-LeCroy is Minister for Spiritual Growth at Plymouth Church.

**GROUP SPIRITUAL DIRECTION
Wednesdays, February 17-March 10
9:00-11:00 AM
Inspiration Lounge
Presenter: Linda Nies
Fee: Sliding Scale
Group size is limited to 7. Registration is required. Register online or contact Marta Hawkins mhawkins@plymouthchurch.com or 255-3149.**

Group spiritual companionship is a process in which a small group of seekers gathers to support one another as we explore our spiritual natures. We will learn the art of spiritual

listening to “the still small voice within” as we share the ground where we meet the sacred – everyday life. Together, we will open to experiences of quieting the body and mind, learning to listen with “the ear of the heart,” discerning the will of God from our own, and strengthening our relationship with the Divine through the practices of being with and listening to each other.

Linda Nies is a trained spiritual director and member of Plymouth Church.

BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD: An Introduction to Centering Prayer
Saturday, February 20
9:00 AM-1:00 PM (Registration 8:30-9:00 AM)
Inspiration Lounge
Presenter: Kathy Reardon, RN, MS
Fee: \$35
Class limit: 18. Registration is required by February 4.
Register online or contact Marta Hawkins
mhawkins@plymouthchurch.com
or 255-3149.

Do you feel drawn to deepen your relationship with God? Are you distressed by life’s seemingly endless demands upon your time and energy? Do you long for peace within? A time during the day to simply rest? Do you desire guidance and support in exploring and developing a practice of meditation? Centering Prayer addresses all of these...and more.

This retreat morning offers an introduction to Centering Prayer, an updated method of praying that has been practiced by ordinary Christians for centuries. It is a way to open ourselves in silence to God’s presence and loving action within us. Centering prayer encourages a growing intimacy with God and can have a profound effect on how we feel about our selves and how we relate to others. In addition to learning about the basic elements of Centering Prayer, there will be time for discussion and the practice of this contemplative prayer form.

Kathy Reardon, RN, MS, is a Plymouth member and a spiritual director at the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center. She is a founding member of Contemplative Outreach of Central Iowa, a network of individuals and small faith communities that support the teaching and practice of Centering Prayer in the Ames/Des Moines area.

**FAITHFULLY FACING DYING AND DEATH:
Conversations About the End of Life
Sundays, February 21-March 14
10:10-10:50 AM
Greenwood Room
Presenters: Jeanette Brodersen, Stephanie
Haskins, Norma Hirsch, and Mark Iles
No fee.**

We live in a death-averse culture. Cosmetics and surgeries help us hide the aging process, and complicated medical language and euphemisms mask the inevitability of death and its processes. Yet, ultimately, we cannot deny our mortality.

Dying and death are important topics that we can engage with regardless of our age, the stage of our lives, or the state of our health. As people of faith, we believe that God is present in our living and in our dying; and exploring and discussing the dying and death process allows us to ensure that the transitions of life and death are as peaceful as possible for both the dying and their loved ones.

This four-week series will engage some of the issues surrounding dying and death. With the help of Dr. Norma Hirsch, we'll consider the physiological process of death and the concepts of "good death." We'll also spend time looking at the funeral planning process with Mark Iles and engage in theological and ethical reflection about dying and death.

Jeanette Brodersen is an Associate Minister at Plymouth Church

Stephanie Haskins is an Associate Minister at Plymouth Church

Norma Hirsch, MD is Medical Director at Hospice of Central Iowa and serves on the faculty of Des Moines University

Mark Iles is President of Iles Funeral Homes in Des Moines

**REMEMBERING SOUL: A Woman's Journey
into Midlife....and Beyond**
Wednesdays, March 17-May 26
(No class on April 7)
6:00-8:30 PM
Inspiration Lounge
Presenter: Kathy Reardon, RN, MS
Fee: \$180 (includes cost of book)
Class limit: 10. Registration is required.
Register online or contact Marta Hawkins
mhawkins@plymouthchurch.com
or 255-3149.

Sue Monk Kidd, author of "The Secret Life of Bees" and "When the Heart Waits," writes: "The art of soulmaking is taking our lives in our hands and – with all the love and discernment we can muster – gently whittling away the parts that don't resemble the True Self."

ReMembering Soul is a 10 week class that is open to women in midlife...and beyond...who wish to open to and prepare for the richness that this stage of life offers. Topics to be explored are: our changing roles and identities; authenticity; relationships; nonattachment and letting go; facing new experiences; spirituality and grace; and creating gifts and legacies for our families and communities.

Kathy Reardon, RN, MS, is a Plymouth member and a spiritual director at the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center. She is a founding member of Contemplative Outreach of Central Iowa, a network of individuals and small faith communities that support the teaching and practice of Centering Prayer in the Ames/Des Moines area.

WALK A LABYRINTH DURING HOLY WEEK
Good Friday, April 2 4:00-7:00 PM
Holy Saturday, April 3 9:00 AM-3:00 PM
Waveland Hall
Presenters: Mary Riche and Jennie Allbee
No fee.

Come walk a canvas labyrinth---a faithful re-creation of the original design in the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Chartres outside of Paris and crafted to replicate the original proportions and sacred geometric principles. Walking the labyrinth can enhance your Holy Week experience, and also activate one's creativity, intuition and imagination. It can induce or enhance a contemplative or

meditative state of mind. It is a tool that can clear the mind, calm anxieties during periods of transition and stress, guide healing, deepen self knowledge, enhance creativity, allow for reconciliation, restore feelings of belonging of community and lead to personal and spiritual growth.

**THE ASSAULT ON THE JUDICIARY:
Judicial Retention and Iowa Politics in 2010
(Co-sponsored by the Board of Christian
Social Action)
Sundays, April 18 and 25
10:10-10:50 AM
Greenwood Room**

In Iowa's increasingly contentious politics, the issue of judicial retention has come to the fore, as critics of court decisions argue that judges are "legislating from the bench" and ought to be removed from office for making unpopular decisions. This two-week offering seeks to bring more light and less heat to this conversation. We will explore the proper role of the judicial branch in state government, its relationship to the voters and to other branches of government. Plenty of time will be allowed for discussion and all are welcome!

**ZEN BUDDHISM AND MEDITATION
Dates and Times To Be Announced
(Watch the *Contact*, bulletins and website
for more information)
Presenter: Vicki Goldsmith
Fee To be Announced**

The class will be an introduction to Zen meditation and a brief survey of Buddhism. We will practice meditation in class, look at readings from *Tricycle* and various books, work in discussion groups, and talk about Buddhist practices in America.

Vicki Goldsmith was born in Ohio and received two degrees from Bowling Green State University. She has taught English in six secondary schools and six universities. Her experience includes teaching Native American students, maximum security prisoners, and students in an Army Post and Air Force base. She taught American Literature in universities in Taipei, Taiwan and in Warsaw, Poland. In 1995 she received a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to study Greek religion and mythology. She was Iowa teacher of the Year in 2005 and a finalist for national Teacher of the Year. Until her retirement in 2006, she taught at Roosevelt High School in Des Moines.

**PRAIRIEFIRE: A Program of Spiritual
Renewal and Formation
3rd Monday of each month (September
through June)
September 2010 through June 2012
8:30 AM-4:00 PM
Presenter: Kathy Reardon, RN, MS**

**Registration is required. Contact Dr. Jeff
Means at the Des Moines Pastoral
Counseling Center, 274-4006.**

PrairieFire is a two year program in spiritual deepening offered by the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center with monthly meetings held at Plymouth Church. Co-Directors are Kathy Reardon and Kay Riley, both spiritual directors and Plymouth members.

PrairieFire is designed for people who desire to live prayerfully with intention and to respond authentically to God's direction in every day life. The program is grounded in the rich history of the Christian contemplative tradition as well as practices that teach spiritual listening, discernment, and prayer. All who seek companionship in their spiritual journeying are encouraged to apply.

A one year Spiritual Direction Practicum is available to graduates of the PrairieFire program who wish to pursue a certificate in spiritual direction.

The next class begins in September of 2010 and will meet the third Monday of the month from 8:30 AM—4PM (September through June), concluding in June of 2012. Application is required by June 30th. For more information, contact Dr. Jeff Means at the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center, 274-4006.

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**All groups are open to new
participants.**

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**For more information, call
Plymouth Congregational
United Church of Christ at
(515) 255-3149**

or

www.plymouthchurch.com

