

Shaping our Faith-inspired Future

Campus Task Force 2.0

Recommendations to the Deacons, August 2025

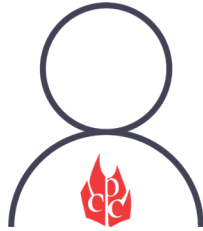


“CTF 2.0 will act as a catalyst for deep congregational discernment as we continue the highly spiritual nature of our task to love our neighbors.”

“As a product of earnest and extended reflection and process, the CTF 2.0 report is an essential part of Plymouth’s discernment of God’s call to us in 2025 and moving forward.” - JT

Smiedendorf, Acting Lead and Intentional Interim Minister.

The Purposes of the Church



Within

We find sanctuary for our spiritual journey in the Congregational tradition. We seek the sacred in ourselves and all others. We cultivate our deepest and best selves. We nurture our capacity to love. And we live in the hope of renewal and transformation.



Among

We walk together in a covenant Christian community. We care for one another. We cultivate a spirit of gratitude, love, joy, compassion and inclusion. We honor many pathways to the sacred. We deepen our understanding of our faith tradition. And we nurture a welcoming culture to all.



Beyond

God's creation benefits from our love lived out in the world. We invest our time, talent and treasure consistently with our values. We serve people in need. We advance human rights. We further social, economic, racial and environmental justice. We share our vision of progressive Christianity while respecting all faith traditions.

Our Charter

The Campus Task Force (CTF) 2.0 was chartered by the Deacons in February 2024 to:

“Continue the work of the original Campus Task Force (CTF) by advancing various aspects of the fulfillment of the three recommendations from its final report, dated January 27, 2023. CTF 2.0 will act as a catalyst for deep congregational discernment as we continue the highly spiritual nature of our task to love our neighbors.”

Our objective was to become a visible force of systemic change for those experiencing economic, environmental, social and racial injustices in the neighborhood surrounding Plymouth and beyond. Our work was to align with and be driven by Plymouth’s mission and the Purposes of our Church and to incorporate aspects of the 2020 Plymouth Growth Plan.



Our Methodology: Deep and Expansive Conversations

“Plymouth’s identity is deeply relational—formed in one-on-one conversations, small group discussions, and the support people feel during both joyful and painful times.”

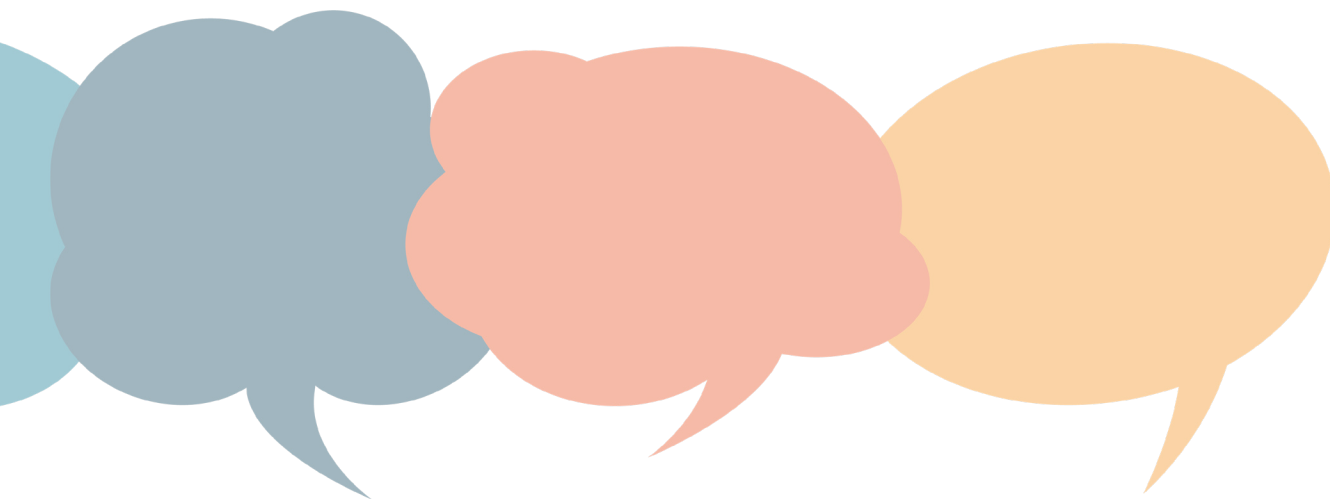
- Key Take Away from late summer 2024 conversations among Plymouth members.

After preliminary discussions with Plymouth members, we created three central questions for the congregation related to our work:

1. What is God calling Plymouth to be in this building, in this neighborhood, at this moment in time?
2. How might we live more deeply into the Purposes of the Church?
3. How can we – together and in new ways – imagine and create a bold future and a shared, actionable vision?

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Beginning in August 2024 and continuing through June 2025, CTF 2.0 gathered more than 150 Plymouth members for meaningful, spiritual conversations about the above questions, utilizing the *“Within, Among and Beyond”* framework of the Purposes of the Church. The Addendum includes detailed summaries of what we learned from participants.



***WHAT IS GOD CALLING PLYMOUTH
TO BE IN THIS BUILDING, IN THIS
NEIGHBORHOOD, AT THIS MOMENT
IN TIME?*** - One of CTF's central questions.

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Key Take-aways

1. We have a strong desire for a culture of candor, vulnerability and healing.

Members have a strong desire for openness and vulnerability. Participants spoke of the importance of being heard, seen and supported—and in holding space for honest conversations about past wounds and current tensions. This willingness to say hard things is seen as essential to healing and transformation. A community that can bear witness to grief, fear and loss, and move toward gratitude and connection can also grow stronger through conflict and uncertainty.

2. Relationships and shared experiences are the foundation of our covenant.

Plymouth's identity is deeply relational. It is formed in one-on-one conversations and in small group discussions, and in the support people feel during both joyful and painful times. Members described profound friendships in choirs, fellowship groups and spiritual travel experiences. Collective experiences -- grieving 9/11, opposing the Marriage Amendment, or gathering after a divisive election -- have shaped a community grounded in empathy, resilience, love and purpose. These experiences highlight our ability to journey together, even when we disagree, and to trust in one another's discernment and leadership.

3. Our spirituality grounds our collective impact.

Plymouth's freedom from a fixed creed gives us space to foster an evolving, authentic spiritual identity. While some members find the Salem Covenant meaningful, many appreciate the ability to explore faith without doctrinal boundaries. Members see themselves as creative, searching people of faith, asking: "What does it mean to be Christian at this time?" Worshiping together, working together and working for justice together amplifies and expands Plymouth's impact. Whether showing up in mutual support for other members, providing financial support or connecting to our neighborhood, members embody a faith that is deeply relational and outward-facing.

4. Faith guides our community actions.

Being a good neighbor, individually and as a congregation, is seen as a spiritual act by members. Many say that their faith informs how they work to promote human rights and advance social, economic, racial and environmental justice in our Plymouth neighborhood and beyond. Members shared personal stories of awakening to the needs of neighbors through early life experiences, exposure to other cultures and encounters with injustice. They also acknowledged that it's more challenging to be good neighbors in our church neighborhood than in their own backyards. Being intentional in building personal relationships with Plymouth neighbors allows them to take bold actions together to address challenges and enhance the well-being of our beloved, shared community.

5. We deeply aspire to become the church we are called to be.

Transformation takes courage and requires the church to take bold actions. We may need to accept possible discomfort and acknowledge that we may not see success in the foreseeable future. As one member put it, "We must be willing to take risks that 'make our palms sweat,' just as Jesus's actions taught us." Internal self-knowledge, being open to the Spirit and manifesting our Purposes create a path for Plymouth's transformation. The invitation is clear: to listen, to walk humbly and to deepen relationships. We need to trust that God is already at work in our church and in our neighborhood, calling us to foster a community of trust, seek others with whom to align, and continue to embrace a dynamic faith identity.



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“PLYMOUTH IS ALREADY LIVING OUR TRANSFORMATION. STAND ON THE CORNER OF NICOLLET AND FRANKLIN ON A SUMMER DAY AND GET A SLICE OF THE CITY. IT’S WHERE WE LIVE. THE NEIGHBORHOOD IS HAPPENING. WE’LL CONTINUE TO ASK: ‘HOW DO WE FULLY MAXIMIZE OUR VALUES AND PURPOSES IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD?’ THE RESULTS WILL BE STUNNING. BUCKLE UP, KIDS. IT’S GOING TO BE A WILD AND WONDERFUL RIDE.”

- Plymouth Member, 2025 Annual Meeting.



Our Realization: A Sacred Opportunity for Transformation

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Plymouth stands at a crossroads in a time of change not only within our congregation but also in the neighborhood and broader world around us. As we've listened deeply in monthly conversations with members, one message is clear: This is not a time to retreat into comfort or habit. It is a time to move forward with courage, clarity and faith.

Transformation asks us to stretch, to question long-held assumptions, and to lean into the unknown with trust. Our Plymouth community has shown, again and again, that we have the spiritual depth, relational strength and moral imagination to meet this moment.

We believe this moment is a sacred opportunity to become more fully the church we are called to be. That calling requires bold action rooted in reflection, collaboration grounded in purpose and a willingness to listen—to one another, to our neighbors and to the Spirit moving among us.

***“HOW CAN WE – TOGETHER AND IN
NEW WAYS – IMAGINE AND CREATE
A BOLD FUTURE AND A SHARED,
ACTIONABLE VISION?”***

- Member CTF 2.0.

Our Assumptions and Recommendations

The assumptions and recommendations that follow emerge not from theory but from lived experience, heartfelt dialogue and a shared yearning to make Plymouth more connected, more just and more alive. This is the time to act—not perfectly, but faithfully—and to step into a future shaped by courage, relationship and hope.

Assumptions

- Plymouth Congregational Church will exist for the foreseeable future.
- The Plymouth community is committed to our present location and the city of Minneapolis.
- Plymouth strives to be a beacon of justice lived out in the world.
- That it is critical and beneficial to all that we build strong relationships with our neighbors and neighboring organizations.
- We understand and embrace a deep understanding of the composition of our neighborhood, including what we know to be a considerable immigrant population.
- Plymouth's purposes of *Within, Among, and Beyond* continue to be a framework for actions that may follow.
- Our various understandings of spirituality have grounded and guided the decisions and actions that CTF 2.0 has taken to date, plus the recommendations that follow.

Five Key Recommendations

1. Make this work the work of the whole church.

We recommend that the visioning work conducted by the Campus Task Force during the past year become the work of the whole church. We cannot delegate this work to any one group; it must be a substantial churchwide effort—to create a bold future and a shared, actionable vision. As one of our most active members said, “We know that to be of service, to work for justice and to love our neighbors gives meaning and purpose to all of us.”

2. Prioritize collaboration and neighborhood engagement.

We recommend that the Deacons “own” and oversee the vision of this report and that they task the Leadership Council (made up of Plymouth boards, committees, and task forces) to identify two to five ways that each will implement specific recommendations of this report, with timeframes for their completion. Plymouth’s mission will be strengthened when all parts of the church embrace and work together to build authentic, ongoing relationships with neighbors. We strive to be a catalyst for systemic change—particularly in areas of economic, environmental, social and racial justice.

Plymouth’s co-moderators will bridge communications between the Leadership Council and the Deacons. The Council will send its operational plan to the Deacons within eight weeks, and the Deacons will communicate to the congregation. We also recommend that the Deacons establish a neighborhood council made up of both Plymouth leaders, including its Justice Initiatives, and representatives from local organizations, businesses and community members. This group will gather feedback, promote collaboration and ensure that neighborhood engagement remains a core church priority.



“At Plymouth, we worship together, walk together in relationship and work together with our neighboring community. Together we amplify, exponentially expand and enhance what any of us can accomplish alone.” - Member of CTF 2.0.

3. Enhance Community Safety.

We recommend taking a comprehensive and proactive approach to enhancing community safety, grounded in neighborhood relationships. Broadly we know that safety is built from the ground up through investment in the health, economic stability and well-being of our Minneapolis community. Through our ongoing justice work at Plymouth, we should continue to build toward a more just and equitable community where people have what they need to thrive, including the basics of food and housing. Plymouth should continue making connections to organizations and businesses in the neighborhood, including local restaurants, health clinics and non-profits.

We recommend supporting the ongoing efforts of the Stevens Square Community Organization and engagement in the community through regular safety walks. We should work toward designation of Nicollet Avenue as a cultural corridor to bring investment in businesses that will support the walkability and vitality of the neighborhood. Our physical properties can be part of improving community safety by keeping our areas clean of litter, having appropriate lighting and sight lines, using our property for community initiatives such as gardening and a farmer's market, and having the presence of Plymouth members visible in the community. We recommend that the Deacons assign responsibility for this recommendation to the Outreach Board with support from our Safety and Custodial administrator.

4. Use the Groveland parking lot well and wisely.

We recommend that Plymouth make better long-term use of this land by exploring options that are compatible with neighborhood needs. Long-term options would be selected with oversight by Plymouth Deacons and the Board of Finance & Administration, in coordination with the Stevens Square Community Organization and other neighbors, as appropriate. Plymouth should determine the highest and best use for the land, given Plymouth's mission, vision and Purposes. Working with the Racial Justice Initiative, the church could consider options for the land that would incorporate reparations to Indigenous and African Americans (i.e., the descendants of enslaved people), demonstrating our commitment to acknowledge and atone for historic harm.

5. Support the Board of Finance & Administration with the Five-Year Plan.

We support the Five-Year Plan for financial sustainability and its commitment to clear communications with lay leadership, staff and the congregation. We encourage the Board of Finance and Administration, as it lives out its important ministry, to remember these three factors in its decision-making: 1) the Purposes of the church; 2) the learnings and recommendations from the CTF 2.0 conversations; and 3) the neighborhood lens. We view the use of our building as both a moral and financial question.

Conclusion

The CTF's conversations have laid a foundation of trust, honesty and hopeful imagination. They have affirmed that the church is not merely a physical structure or a static institution but a dynamic community of seekers and stewards. The process has revealed that transformation is not only possible but already under way—rooted in love, expressed through action, and sustained by a shared covenant to walk together into an unknown but Spirit-led future.

Campus Task Force 2.0 Members

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With Special Thanks

We gratefully acknowledge the significant contributions of Plymouth's staff, justice initiatives, Outreach Board and members who participated in programs and conversations during 2024 and 2025.



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Our Open and Affirming
Church Welcomes
Everyone.

Addendum

Summary of Member Conversations Grounded in Within Purpose August - October, 2024

Plymouth Church's Campus Task Force 2.0 (CTF 2.0) held a series of sessions aimed at engaging congregation members in discerning the church's evolving identity, mission and relationship to the surrounding community. These gatherings marked the relaunch of the CTF initiative, following earlier work by CTF 1.0, and introduced churchwide spiritual conversations organized around Plymouth's three core Purposes: *Within, Among and Beyond*.

Members gathered to reflect on major questions: What is God calling us to be in this building, in this neighborhood and in this moment in time? How can Plymouth live more deeply into its spiritual Purposes and develop a bold, actionable vision? Participants were invited to pair off and discuss how they define "neighbors" and why Plymouth should build meaningful relationships with them. Key insights included a desire to gain a broad and inclusive understanding of neighbors and an acknowledgment of both the diversity and struggles within the surrounding community. There was palpable energy and hope about future dialogues.

16 Early conversations explored challenges around welcoming the community while addressing safety concerns, how to make the church's spiritual language tangible and relevant, and how these efforts relate to budget and sustainability. Discussions emphasized the importance of building authentic, long-term relationships both within and beyond the church walls. Ideas emerged for improving communication through visuals, such as bulletin board maps and highlighting underused spaces that could serve community needs.

In September, CTF 2.0 launched its first major phase focused on the "Within" Purpose — helping members reflect on their spiritual journeys and how personal faith connects to communal renewal. Participants met in person and on Zoom and expressed deep enthusiasm for this process of honest, heartfelt dialogue. Many said they felt nourished by sharing stories and a renewed hunger to connect and build trust.

October's sessions continued this work, with members reflecting on formative experiences at Plymouth — book groups, scripture studies, active lay leadership and more — that fostered transformation, spiritual depth and hope. The discussions underscored that the congregation itself is the church, capable of navigating change together. Participants recommended regular opportunities for both spiritual and social gatherings and emphasized the importance of listening deeply and remaining open to the Spirit as the church moves forward.

Key Themes

1. **Vision and Identity:** Ongoing discernment of what Plymouth is called to be in the current moment, both spiritually and practically.
2. **Neighbor and Community Engagement:** A desire to build deeper relationships with the surrounding neighborhood, defined broadly and inclusively.
3. **Spiritual Depth and Personal Story:** Emphasis on the power of individual spiritual journeys, personal storytelling and the hunger for authentic relationships.
4. **Balance Between Welcome and Safety:** Exploring how to maintain a welcoming posture while addressing legitimate concerns about building safety.
5. **Actionable Vision:** A strong desire for tangible outcomes and visible signs of transformation, rather than abstract goals.
6. **Sustainability and Stewardship:** Connecting spiritual mission with practical concerns like staffing, space usage and budget planning.
7. **Open Dialogue and Congregational Participation:** Encouragement of transparent, Spirit-led conversations that empower lay leadership and invite all members to participate.

Summary of Member Conversations Grounded in Among Purpose November - December, 2024

Key Themes

1. **Covenant Through Relationships and Shared Experience.** Plymouth's identity is deeply relational — formed in one-to-one conversations, small group discussions, and the support people feel during both joyful and painful times. Members describe profound friendships in choirs, fellowship groups and spiritual travel experiences like Iona. This relational covenant is built not on uniform belief but on walking together in love and purpose.

Moments of collective experience — grieving 9/11, opposing the Marriage Amendment, or gathering after a divisive election — have shaped a community grounded in empathy and resilience. These experiences highlight our ability to journey together even when we disagree, and to trust in one another's discernment and leadership.

2. **A Culture of Candor, Vulnerability and Healing.** The CFT gatherings revealed a strong desire for openness and vulnerability. Participants spoke of being heard, seen, and supported — and of the importance of holding space for honest conversations about past wounds and current tensions.

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This willingness to acknowledge and state hard things is seen as essential to healing and transformation. A community that can bear witness to grief, fear, and loss — and move toward gratitude and connection — can also grow stronger through conflict and uncertainty.

3. **Inclusive Spiritual Identity Beyond Creed.** Plymouth's freedom from a fixed creed gives it space to foster an evolving, authentic spiritual identity. While some find the Salem Covenant meaningful, many appreciate the ability to explore faith without doctrinal boundaries. Members see themselves as creative, searching people of faith, asking: *What does it mean to be Christian in this time?*

Younger people express hesitation in claiming the label "Christian," and Plymouth is called to listen deeply and explore how to live our faith in ways that feel true, inclusive and relevant. As one member noted: *"Plymouth exists because of this faith — how do we nurture it?"*

4. **Spiritual Action and Collective Impact.** Worship, justice work and community life are not separate threads — they're interwoven and amplify one another. Worshiping together, working together and walking together expand Plymouth's impact exponentially. Members imagine future partnerships with neighbors and envision the church as a *living, breathing organism* that nurtures hope, invites participation and centers shared purpose.

Whether through justice groups, financial stewardship or showing up in mutual support, members embody a faith that is deeply relational and outward facing.

- 5. Intergenerational, Diverse and Growing.** Participants value the church's intergenerational mix and the deepening relationships it brings. Whether through Midweek Mingle, children's programs or new member activities, people are finding connection across differences. Some shared that they felt more fully part of Plymouth when contributing financially or volunteering for church leadership.

While some may leave during transitions, many new people are joining. Our music draws people in, but our relationships and shared values are what keep them here.

- 6. Courageous Community-Building in Transition.** Transformation takes courage. As one member put it, we must be willing to do things that "make our palms sweat," just as Jesus did. Community members are imagining creative ways to connect more deeply with neighbors — like holding meetings in restaurants or hosting shared meals in the neighborhood.

Trust is built not only by offering help, but by asking for it. Repetition of core messages, consistency of values and open-hearted action will be essential in this season of change. Plymouth is being called not just to adapt, but to *evolve with intention* — rooted in relationship, ready to renew.

Summary of Member Conversations Grounded in Beyond Purpose January - April, 2025

Plymouth's Campus Task Force hosted a series of thoughtful and often deeply personal conversations exploring how members relate to the church's Beyond purpose and its call to "neighbor" well. The community engaged in dialogue, reflection, and walks in the neighborhood, all grounded in the question: *What does it mean for Plymouth to be a good neighbor today?*

The invitation is clear: to listen, to walk humbly, to deepen relationships, and to trust that God is already at work in our neighborhood — and calling us to join in.

Key Themes

- 1. Neighboring is Spiritual Practice.** Across all months, a central insight was that neighboring — both personally and as a congregation — is a spiritual act. Members shared personal stories of awakening to the needs of neighbors through early life experiences, exposure to other cultures and encounters with injustice. Whether it was a mother feeding strangers during wartime or experiences as "the other" in a host country, these stories affirmed that love of neighbor flows from deep spiritual roots.

Participants drew few distinctions between the practice of loving neighbors in their own backyards and doing so in the wider community around Plymouth. Both require intentionality, humility and grace. As one member said: *"This IS my neighborhood. It's very diverse. If I observe fear in myself, I get a better sense of why and how I will act."* Some, however, acknowledged the need to be intentional in forming meaningful, ongoing relationships with Plymouth neighbors beyond their own individual neighborhoods.

- 2. From Charity to Partnership.** A recurring call was for Plymouth to move increasingly beyond a charity model and toward authentic, reciprocal partnerships with the neighborhood. Participants recognized that building real trust means showing up consistently — not just offering help, but being present, listening and asking: *"May we join you?"* This shift requires us to let go of control, acknowledge what we don't know and haven't experienced, and stay grounded in our values.

Many saw this as holy work: to be transformed by the relationships we form while walking alongside others. Ideas included attending neighborhood safety meetings, co-hosting events, and aligning with residents, community organizations and businesses on issues like public safety, beautification and social enterprise.

- 3. Barriers and Bridges to Engagement.** Participants acknowledged internal barriers to deeper engagement — fear of getting it wrong, a tendency toward insularity and the discomfort of moving outside familiar spaces. Still, members expressed enthusiasm and urgency. Many called this neighboring effort “the most exciting thing we have going on” at Plymouth right now.

To move forward, members suggested small, consistent actions: learning neighbors’ names, joining neighborhood walks, holding board meetings in local restaurants and showing up for community-led events. These are the building blocks of trust and transformation.

- 4. Seeing the Neighborhood with New Eyes.** In April, members were encouraged to walk in unfamiliar parts of the neighborhood. They returned with fresh observations: beautiful artwork, overlooked architecture, neglected areas and natural beauty. Some saw Plymouth from new vantage points — its stonework, trees or the understated entrance to the food shelf. These walks highlighted both beauty and inequity, and sparked curiosity about how neighbors perceive the church.

Participants also asked thoughtful questions: *What do our neighbors see when they look at Plymouth? What stories are they telling?* What does it mean to worship in other parts of our physical campus? There was strong interest in learning from neighbors and from members with deep ties to the area.

- 5. Becoming the Church, We Are Called to Be.** Throughout these months, members returned to the question: *What kind of church is God calling us to be right now, in this neighborhood?* This call to purpose includes internal self-knowledge — practicing contemplation and clarity about our identity — as well as external action. It also includes accepting that transformation may involve discomfort and outcomes we may not see in our lifetimes.

Summary of Member and Neighborhood Engagement Conversations May - June, 2025

In May and June 2025, members of CTF 2.0 held meaningful conversations with neighbors from Stevens Square Community Organization (SSCO), Groveland Food Shelf, Lydia Apartments and Old School Thrift Store.

These gatherings focused on deepening Plymouth's connection with the surrounding neighborhood and building mutual trust and engagement. Plymouth's members and neighbors are finding common ground. The work ahead involves shared leadership, radical hospitality, creative thinking and courageous presence. As one participant put it: "New things are going on in new ways. Hopeful. We're not done yet."

Key Themes

- 1. A Shared Desire for Connection and Collaboration.** Both Plymouth members and neighborhood representatives expressed a strong desire to foster lasting relationships. Neighbors appreciated Plymouth's openness and interest in being a better partner, and participants from both groups emphasized that this is only the beginning. Comments such as "We're in shared space" and "We're not done yet" captured the hopeful tone of the conversations.
- 2. Moving From Transaction to Relationship.** A major theme was the need to shift from charity-driven efforts to genuine partnership. Neighbors invited Plymouth to be more present in everyday neighborhood life — by walking the streets, supporting local businesses, showing up at events and learning residents' names. Building trust means showing up consistently and embracing mutual support: as one neighbor put it, "Have one another's back."
- 3. Concrete Ideas for Engagement.** Many practical suggestions emerged, including co-hosting events, supporting SSCO's efforts to turn Nicollet Avenue into a cultural corridor, and integrating trash pickup efforts. Participants also recommended using Plymouth's spaces — such as the Conn Theater and church grounds — for neighborhood programs, community music or a farmer's market.
- 4. A Spiritual Call to Neighboring.** The conversations affirmed that this work is not just social — it's spiritual. Participants recognized God's presence in the unfolding relationships and acknowledged that this journey is part of Plymouth's calling. Even small actions — like saying hello, smiling or picking up trash — can become sacred practices that root the church more deeply in community.



