

# New pastor has high hopes for Plymouth Presbyterian

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## St. Helens church welcomed David Hutchinson in December



by: SPOTLIGHT PHOTO: MARK MILLER - Pastor David Hutchinson in his new office at Plymouth Presbyterian Church in St. Helens on Tuesday, Feb. 11. Hutchinson said he was attracted to the church because he believes it shares his focus on mission work and outreach.

Plymouth Presbyterian Church in St. Helens welcomed a new pastor this winter.

David Hutchinson, who took the reins at the church on Sykes Road Dec. 15, said he was attracted to the position at Plymouth Presbyterian because he was impressed with its reputation and ready for a change from his previous church in Portland.

“Where I was, I loved the church,” Hutchinson said of Westminster Presbyterian Church in northeast Portland, where he served as associate pastor for 11 years. But after that time, he said, it was “time to do something different.”

At Westminster Presbyterian, Hutchinson led the children’s ministry and adult education programs.

“I had a very programmatic job,” Hutchinson recounted. “I liked that part of my job, and I liked the preaching, but I only preached eight times a year. And this job is less administrative and programmatic, and more about preaching and being with the people. And I just wanted a change, basically. After 11 years, I wanted to get back to doing preaching more, which — I love to preach.”

Hutchinson said he believes the church’s two main functions should be mission work — educating people about church teachings and working to bring them into the church — and

counseling people on mortality, a subject on which he teaches a class at the University of Portland.

“If the church could help people really walk through their own sense of their mortality and end-of-life issues and do mission, those would be the best things. Mission and mortality. Those would be the best two things we could do for people,” Hutchinson said with a chuckle.

He continued, “I think the church sometimes spends a lot of time arguing about morality, when what we really could do is be guiding people through their own mortality issues and through being involved in mission and outreach in the world.”

Hutchinson spoke positively of his predecessor, the Rev. Marilyn Allen, and said he sees opportunity in Plymouth Presbyterian.

“I think this church can grow,” said Hutchinson. “I think it’s a really strong, vital church. There are churches of similar size and smaller that don’t, I think, have as many signs of health as Plymouth Church does, in terms of a strong core of people actively involved in the community.”

Plymouth Presbyterian has been hosting the Columbia County Warming Center, a place for people seeking a safe, warm space to sleep to come between 6:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. to spend the night, since Sunday, Feb. 2. Hutchinson mentioned the center as part of the church’s efforts to be what he called a “good neighbor.”

“Everybody’s welcome here, no matter who you are,” Hutchinson said of Plymouth Presbyterian. “And we love to talk about faith — faith’s really important to us — but we don’t want that to be a barrier to anybody. We want that to be an invitation.”