BYLAWS

Plymouth Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Des Moines, Iowa

Adopted at the May 11, 2021, Annual Meeting
Effective June 1, 2021

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BYLAWS

Plymouth Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Des Moines, Iowa

Article I. WHO WE ARE

Section 1. Name
Plymouth Congregational Church of the United Church of Christ, Des Moines, Iowa, is referred to as “Plymouth” in these bylaws. The body of Plymouth members may be referred to as the “Congregation” in these bylaws.

Plymouth is in communion with all churches that follow the teaching of Jesus Christ. Plymouth acknowledges special obligation to other congregations that are a part of the United Church of Christ (UCC) and pledges itself to share in their common religious and educational work, especially as represented by the Central Association of the Iowa Conference, Iowa Conference of the UCC, and the General Synod of the UCC.

Section 2. Mission, Guiding Principles, and Motto
The purpose of Plymouth Church is to bind together followers of Jesus Christ to share in the worship of God.

Plymouth’s mission is to grow in love of God and neighbor.

Inclusiveness and acceptance are guiding principles of Plymouth. Whoever you are, wherever you are on life’s journey, you are always welcome at Plymouth.

Plymouth’s motto, as expressed by former Senior Pastor Stoddard Lane (1929 – 1943):
“We agree to differ. We resolve to love. We unite to serve.”

Section 3. Plymouth Covenant
The following Covenant binds members together:

In the presence of God and these witnesses, I give myself unreservedly to God’s service, and take this to be my Church. Ever mindful of the welfare of all members, I promise to walk with them in faithfulness and Christian love. And I promise that, so far as able, I will attend the services of this Church, observe its sacraments, share in its work, support its benevolences, and endeavor to make it a fruitful body of Christians.

Section 4. Services
Public worship services will be held, and the sacraments of baptism and communion will be celebrated, as determined jointly by the Senior Pastor and the Board of Deacons. Other worship services may be held as determined by the other boards with approval by the Senior Pastor.

Weddings, funerals and other services will be held as determined by the pastors.
Section 5. Congregational Governance

Plymouth is an Iowa non-profit corporation with governance vested in its members. Members approve and carry out Plymouth’s mission, strategic plan, and programs. Members serve on Church Council, Executive Committee, boards, and committees. Members retain all authority not specifically delegated in these bylaws.

Section 6. Membership

A. Members

The members of Plymouth will make a public commitment of faith in Jesus Christ. Plymouth will receive members on presentation of letters of transfer from other churches, by reaffirmation of faith, or on confession of faith and baptism.

B. Reception of Members

The Board of Membership and the pastors will present new members to be received in a public worship service. The Congregation may receive new members unable to attend in person.

C. Duties

Members will agree to Plymouth’s Covenant and will endeavor to fulfill those promises and support the spiritual welfare of Plymouth and its community.

D. Associate Members

Associate members are Plymouth members who have church membership elsewhere which they do not desire to sever, and who desire to share in the faith and covenant of worship and services of Plymouth. Associate members will have the same rights and duties as active members.

E. Inactive Members

Members who have not communicated with Plymouth, attended services, or contributed to its support, for a period of three years or more will be designated inactive by the Board of Membership. Prior to such designation, the board will make reasonable efforts to contact and inform the member what is needed to retain active status. If the member cannot be located or does not wish to remain active or does not act to restore active membership within a reasonable period of time, as determined by the board, the board may declare the member inactive without further notice.

Inactive members, who request to become active members again, may do so by resuming attendance at Plymouth worship services and activities, or by financial contributions to Plymouth.

Inactive members will not be counted as members, including for the purpose of assessment or contribution to the various local, regional, state, or national organizations of the UCC or other religious organizations with which Plymouth affiliates.
F. Change of Membership Designation
Members may request a letter of transfer to any church, be dismissed from membership, or designated inactive. When a change in membership designation occurs, the Board of Membership will provide the appropriate letter of confirmation.

G. Membership Rolls
The Senior Pastor, on behalf of the Congregation, will keep and maintain in the church office, membership information (to be known as the Book of Life), and access will be determined by church policy:

1. membership, showing the name of the member, date and manner of admission, date of birth and date of death, transfer of membership, dismissal, or inactive status;
2. baptisms of children, showing the name of the parent(s) or legal guardian(s), date of baptism, and date and place of the child’s birth;
3. baptisms of adults, showing the name of the person, date of baptism, and date and place of the person’s birth;
4. marriages, showing the names, date of the marriage, and dates of birth of the parties;
5. names and dates of birth of children of member-families;
6. confirmation class members and other information requested by the Senior Pastor or the Executive Committee.

Article II. GOVERNANCE

Section 1. Church Council

A. Church Council Members
The Church Council (Council) will be chaired by the Moderator and consists of Moderator, Moderator-Elect, chairpersons of Council boards, president of Plymouth Women’s Fellowship, two members-at-large, and the Senior Pastor.

Two members-at-large will be elected to serve staggered two-year terms. During the first year of a two-year term, the member-at-large will serve as the Church Council Secretary. During the second year of a two-year term, the member-at-large will serve as a voting member of the Church Council’s Executive Committee.

Church Council members represent the interests of Plymouth’s full congregation including those expressed in Plymouth’s mission and strategic plan.

B. Church Council Duties
The Council will carry out the mission, guiding principles, motto and strategic plan by engaging Plymouth members in visioning for Plymouth’s future, and by requesting and reviewing annual plans and programs from Council boards and committees. The Council will advise its Executive Committee of their recommendations and provide a progress report on all Council programs at the congregation’s annual meeting.
Council will prepare and maintain a current list of Council members, boards, and board committees with their contact information and members’ terms of office, which will be available electronically and in the church office, and provided to the Church Secretary (see Article IV. Section 3. C.).

Upon a vacancy of an at-large-member position, the Council will appoint a Plymouth member to fill the unexpired term.

C. Church Council Meetings and Minutes
The Council will meet at least quarterly at times and places it decides, with 10 days’ advance notice of the time, place of the meeting, and the agenda, and will be available to Plymouth members electronically and in the church office.

A majority of the Council constitutes a quorum. The Council will act by majority vote of members present.

The Church Council Secretary will, with staff assistance, prepare minutes of Church Council meetings. The minutes will be submitted to and preserved by the Church Secretary (see Article IV. Section 3. C.).

Open-meeting minutes will be available to Plymouth members electronically and in the church office. Closed-session minutes will be available only to Council members or others as determined by the Church Council, Moderator or Senior Pastor.

If the Council goes into closed session, the minutes of the open meeting will state the reason for the closed session, the time and duration of the closed session, the general topic addressed, and any action taken in the closed session. Confidential information shall remain confidential.

The Church Council Secretary, with staff assistance, will keep an updated roster, naming Church Council members, Executive Committee members, their terms, and contact information, which shall be provided to the Church Secretary (see Article IV. Section 3. C.), and available to Plymouth members electronically and in the church office.

Section 2. General Provisions for Church Council Boards
A. Board Leadership
At its first meeting following the annual meeting, each board will elect from its members an executive committee consisting of a chair, vice chair, and secretary. The vice chair will act for the chair in the chair’s absence. (Chair of the Board of Deacons will be known as the Senior Deacon and the vice chair as the Junior Deacon.)
The board’s executive committee will have general supervision of the board’s activities and may act in the name of the board in emergencies or minor matters. Actions taken by a board’s executive committee will be submitted for ratification by the full board at the next board meeting. A board may appoint other board members to its executive committee. A board can remove its chair, vice chair, or secretary with presence of a quorum and majority vote of members present.

B. Board Duties
Boards shall annually conduct a board orientation to, and evaluation of, their work. The duties of each Church Council Board are defined in Article II. Section 3.

C. Board Meetings and Minutes
Boards will meet at times and places they decide, with at least three days’ advance notice of the time, place, and agenda, and will be available to Plymouth members electronically and in the church office.

Each board secretary will prepare written minutes of board meetings and each board’s executive committee meetings. The minutes will be provided to board members and submitted to and preserved by the Church Secretary (see Article IV. Section 3.C.).

If the board goes into closed session, the minutes of the open meeting will state the reason for the closed session, the time and duration of the closed session, the general topic addressed, and any action taken in the closed session. Confidential information shall remain confidential.

Written minutes of a board’s executive committee meetings will be provided to board members and will describe the facts and circumstances of the emergency or matter, action taken, and the basis and rationale for executive committee action.

Open-meeting minutes of a board and its executive committee will be available to Plymouth members electronically and in the church office. Closed-session minutes will be available only to members of that board and others as determined by that board or the Moderator or Senior Pastor.

Each board secretary will keep an updated roster, naming board members, their terms, and contact information, which will be given to the Church Secretary and available to Plymouth members electronically and in the church office.

D. Board Vacancy
A board will fill a vacancy by recommending a candidate for the Church Council to approve.
E. Board Committees
A board may form and dissolve its committees to assist in performing its work, with prior written notice to both the Church Council and its Executive Committee.

The board forming a committee will document, in the minutes of the meeting at which that committee was formed, the purpose of the committee and how the committee will assist in implementing that board’s work.

Annually, the existence of a committee will be reviewed by the board forming it to decide whether the committee’s work is completed.

F. Board Expenditures
Boards and committees will not obligate Plymouth for any expenditure except as provided in Plymouth’s budget, without prior approval from the Council’s Executive Committee.

G. Board Fundraising
Any fundraising activity by boards and board committees requires prior approval from the Board of Trustees and will follow any directions given by the Board of Trustees regarding fundraising.

H. Board Public Statements
Boards and board committees will not speak or act on behalf of Plymouth Church as a whole without prior authorization from the Council’s Executive Committee or its designee (e.g. Senior Pastor).

I. Board Reports
By September 30, each Council board will report its plans to the Council’s Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will review and present recommendations to the Council for approval.

By April 30, each Council board will report to the Council on its activities during the previous 12 months for inclusion in Plymouth’s annual report. The board reports will include performance measurements and progress toward program goals, and which committees should be continued into the next year.

J. Board Liaisons
Liaisons are board members selected by a board to encourage and facilitate communication with another Plymouth board or group on that group’s activities which might impact the activities of the liaison’s board. Board liaisons not listed in these bylaws may be appointed upon approval of the two boards and the Council.
Section 3. Church Council Boards

A. Board of Benevolences
The Board of Benevolences is a twelve (12)-member board, with four members elected annually to serve three-year terms. The board will supervise, promote, and interpret Plymouth’s benevolence activities; promote representation of Plymouth members in decision-making bodies of the denominational and ecumenical agencies to which Plymouth contributes; and periodically advise the Board of Trustees in the most effective use of benevolence resources.

B. Board of Christian Education for Youth and Families
The Board of Christian Education for Youth and Families is a fifteen (15)-member board, with five members elected annually to serve three-year terms. The board will assist in recruiting, training, and placing Christian Education volunteer staff. The board, with pastoral and staff assistance, will plan and implement all programs including, but not limited to, Church School and Vacation Bible School. The board will approve choice or design of curriculum for children up through sixth grade, Confirmation Classes for middle-school students, and programs and activities for high-school students and families. The board will procure necessary materials and equipment for this programming, and maintain the children’s library. The board will have a liaison to the Plymouth Nursery School Board of Directors.

C. Board of Christian Social Action
The Board of Christian Social Action is a fifteen (15)-member board, with five members elected annually to serve three-year terms. The board will help Plymouth explore the relationship between Christian faith and contemporary social issues by identifying issues and stimulating dialogue. By inviting action on any issue, the board shall make clear that its opinions or actions bind neither Plymouth nor any member.

D. Board of Christian Stewardship
The Board of Christian Stewardship is a twelve (12)-member board, with four members elected annually to serve three-year terms. The board will assist Plymouth members and friends to understand and commit to principles of Christian stewardship; develop ongoing programs to obtain statements of intention to provide financial support for Plymouth’s mission and ministry; periodically review and evaluate the effectiveness of all means of providing financial support to Plymouth; develop awareness and provide learning opportunities for Plymouth members of alternate ways to give to Plymouth; and communicate with other boards and committees.

E. Board of Deacons
The Board of Deacons is a thirty (30)-member board, with 10 members elected annually to serve three-year terms. The board will assist the pastors in performing services and Plymouth’s spiritual activities for Plymouth and the community, including assisting in preparing and administering the sacraments; receiving and depositing open collections; appointing ushers; leading the Congregation in caring...
for the poor, the sick, the sorrowing, and the stranger; and performing other duties requested by the Senior Pastor.

F. Board of Membership
The Board of Membership is a twelve (12)-member board, with four members elected annually to serve three-year terms. The board will promote the welcoming nature of Plymouth Church in the community; encourage, recruit, integrate, and instruct prospective and new members on the life and opportunities provided by membership and to encourage participation in church activities; assist in the growth of Plymouth membership by facilitating, initiating, and supporting opportunities for all persons who wish to join Plymouth; to provide opportunities for caring and support of members and the community. The Board of Membership, under the supervision of the Senior Pastor, shall carry out the duties outlined in Article I. Section 6, to ensure the integrity and accuracy of membership rolls.

G. Board of Music and Fine Arts
The Board of Music and Fine Arts is a twelve (12)-member board, with four members elected annually to serve three-year terms. The board will oversee a comprehensive music and arts program to complement Plymouth’s mission; oversee Plymouth’s children, youth, and adult choirs; provide music and art for Plymouth’s services; and foster growth and enrichment of Plymouth members, of all ages, through music and the arts.

H. Board of Spiritual Growth and Adult Education
The Board of Spiritual Growth and Adult Education is a nine (9)-member board, with three members elected annually to serve three-year terms. The board will plan, implement, and encourage diverse opportunities for spiritual growth, enrichment, and faith formation for adults and maintain the library in the Center for Spiritual Growth.

I. Board of Trustees
The Board of Trustees is a twelve (12)-member board, with three members elected annually to serve four-year terms. The board will oversee and provide recommendations to the Executive Committee of the Church Council on Plymouth’s property, finances, business, contractual affairs (including operating reserve policy), designated funds and other program areas outside the general operating budget; supervise insurance; in December of each year, recommend the annual budget to the Council’s Executive Committee for final approval by the Council; develop policies regarding budget variances; recommend, in concert with the Human Resources Committee, employee compensation and benefits; review the annual financial audit and implement audit recommendations; designate the depository for funds; and act on fundraising requests made by other boards and committees.
Section 4. General Provisions for Board Committees and Other Groups

A. Committee Definition
Every committee, task force, program, or other group formed by or associated with a Council board is referred to in these bylaws as a committee, regardless of the name by which it is formed or called.

For any Plymouth committee or group not linked to a Council board, the Executive Committee and the Church Council will determine the Council board with which that committee or group will be linked.

B. Committee Formation and Duration
A committee may form and dissolve a subcommittee with prior written notice to its board and the Church Council. The notice of formation or dissolution will state the committee to which that subcommittee will be or has been linked.

The committee forming a subcommittee will document, in the minutes of the meeting at which that committee was formed, the purpose of the subcommittee and how the subcommittee will assist in implementing that board’s work.

Annually, the existence of a subcommittee will be reviewed by the committee and board forming it to decide whether the subcommittee’s work is completed and whether its continued existence is necessary.

C. Committee Members
Any Plymouth member or active Plymouth participant is eligible for membership on any committee.

Committee vacancies may be filled by the committee.

D. Committee Meetings and Minutes
At its first meeting following its formation, each committee will elect a chair, a secretary, and other officers determined by the committee.

A majority of committee members constitutes a quorum. Committees will act by majority vote of the members present.

Committees will meet at times and places they decide, with at least three days’ advance notice of the time, place, and agenda, available to Plymouth members electronically and in the church office.

Each committee secretary will prepare written minutes of committee meetings. The minutes of each meeting will be submitted to and preserved by the Church Secretary (see Article IV. Section 3.C.).
Committee meeting minutes will be available to Plymouth members electronically and in the church office. Committees of Church Council boards will not have closed sessions. Each committee secretary will keep an updated roster, naming committee members, their terms, and contact information, which will be given to the Church Secretary and available to Plymouth members electronically and in the church office.

E. Committee Expenditures
Committees will not obligate Plymouth for any expenditure except as provided in Plymouth’s budget, without prior approval from their board and the Church Council’s Executive Committee.

F. Committee Fundraising
Committees will not engage in fundraising activity without prior approval from their supervising board and the Board of Trustees.

G. Committee Public Statements
Boards and board committees will not speak or act on behalf of Plymouth Church as a whole without prior authorization from the Council’s Executive Committee or its designee (e.g. Senior Pastor).

Section 5. Executive Committee of Church Council

A. Executive Committee Members
The Executive Committee, chaired by the Moderator, consists of the Moderator, Immediate-Past Moderator, and chairpersons of the boards of Deacons, Trustees, and Membership; a member-at-large, and the Senior Pastor. The Moderator-Elect is a non-voting member. The Director of Operations and Finance is the staff representative.

Executive Committee members represent the interests of Plymouth’s full congregation as expressed in its mission and strategic plan.

B. Executive Committee Duties
The Executive Committee will establish overall policies affecting Plymouth’s operations, property, finances, and personnel, and will resolve time-sensitive matters. All decisions will be made to carry out the mission, guiding principles, motto and goals of the strategic plan. The Executive Committee will review Plymouth’s annual budget upon recommendation of the Board of Trustees, and refer to Church Council for approval; determine whether to incur expenses or debt not included in the budget; approve the Board of Trustees’ operational reserve policy recommendation; approve the annual audit; recommend to the Congregation the mortgage or sale of property; approve salary and other compensation for pastors and staff after reviewing recommendations by the Human Resources Committee; create, maintain and update a manual on governance policies and procedures; complete an
annual performance review of the Senior Pastor, in consultation with the Human
Resources Committee; provide for timely reviews of Plymouth’s bylaws; provide a
progress report to the congregation’s annual meeting on its activities and future
plans; and establish ad hoc committees for specific projects or personnel searches.

The Executive Committee will have access to all Plymouth’s records and confidential
personnel files and will act on recommendations from the Human Resources
Committee for revisions to the Plymouth Employee Handbook. Confidential
information shall not be disclosed by the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee or Church Council may form, modify, and dissolve any
board with approval of the other.

The Executive Committee will name representatives or delegates to denominational
and inter-denominational organizations of which Plymouth is a member.

The Executive Committee will consider and decide upon requests from any non-
Plymouth organization wanting Plymouth representation in that organization.
Approvals of requests will be reviewed at least annually prior to June 1.

C. Executive Committee Meetings and Minutes
The Executive Committee will meet at least monthly at times and places they
decide, with at least three days’ advance notice of the time, place, and agenda, and
will be available to Plymouth members electronically and in the church office.
Five Executive Committee members constitutes a quorum.

The Executive Committee will act by an affirmative vote of at least five members.
The Church Council Executive Committee has the powers of the Church Council
between meetings of the Church Council, and will inform the Church Council at its
next meeting of any actions taken on behalf of the Church Council. The Executive
Committee cannot modify or nullify any actions taken by the Church Council.

Plymouth members and staff may attend Executive Committee meetings; however,
the Executive Committee may go into closed session to discuss confidential or
sensitive matters, including personnel matters.

An Executive Committee member will be elected as Executive Committee Secretary
and be responsible, with staff assistance, for written minutes of each meeting. The
minutes of Executive Committee meetings will be provided to Executive
Committee members, Church Council members, and submitted to and preserved
by the Church Secretary (see Article IV. Section 3. C.).

If the Executive Committee goes into closed session, the minutes of the open
meeting will state the reason for the closed session, the time and duration of the
closed session, the general topic addressed, and any action taken in the closed
session. Confidential information shall remain confidential.

Open-meeting minutes of the Executive Committee will be available to Plymouth
members electronically and in the church office. Closed-session minutes will be
available only to Executive Committee members or others as determined by the
Executive Committee, Moderator or Senior Pastor.

Section 6. Standing Committees of Church Council Executive Committee
A. Advisory Committee
   1. Members
      Plymouth’s Advisory Committee consists of the second through sixth
      immediate-past moderators. Any vacancy on the committee will be filled by
      the next-most-recent past moderator available, beginning with the seventh.

   2. Duties
      From time to time, matters can arise for which additional study, historical
      perspective, or counsel might be useful to current Plymouth leadership. The
      committee will meet when requested by the Executive Committee,
      Moderator, or Senior Pastor and engage in such work and will provide its
      information and counsel to the Moderator, Senior Pastor, Executive
      Committee, or Church Council.

   3. Meetings and Minutes
      The committee will appoint a secretary to prepare written minutes of
      committee meetings. The minutes of each meeting will be submitted to and
      preserved by the Church Secretary (see Article IV. Section 3.C.).

B. Audit Committee
   1. Members
      Annually, the Board of Trustees, in consultation with the Director of
      Operations and Finance, will appoint a five-member audit committee
      consisting of three Plymouth members, one of whom is a Certified Public
      Accountant or a person with financial expertise relevant to financial audits,
      one member from the Board of Trustees, and one member from the
      Plymouth Foundation Board. The Board of Trustees will appoint a
      committee chair from the three at-large members. Upon a vacancy, the Board
      of Trustees will appoint a person to fill the unexpired term.

      The at-large members will serve staggered three-year terms. At least one year
      must intervene before an at-large member having completed a term is eligible
      for reappointment to the committee. However, a person appointed to serve
      an unexpired term with less than half a term remaining is eligible for
      appointment to an immediately succeeding term.
2. Duties

The committee will select the audit firm for Plymouth’s annual audit, after consultation with the Board of Trustees; meet with the audit firm; provide to the Board of Trustees a copy of the audit report and the committee’s report on it; and determine whether Plymouth has complied with the auditor’s recommendations.

The committee chair will sign the engagement letter between Plymouth and the audit firm, for a fee not to exceed the amount included in Plymouth’s budget. The auditor will report directly to the committee. The audit report will be presented to the Executive Committee and Church Council by the Board of Trustees.

A copy of the audit report will be maintained in Plymouth’s office and be electronically accessible to Plymouth members.

3. Meeting and Minutes

The committee will appoint a secretary to prepare written minutes of committee meetings. The minutes of each meeting will be submitted to and preserved by the Church Secretary (see Article IV. Section 3.C.).

C. Human Resources Committee

1. Members

The Human Resources Committee will consist of the Moderator-Elect, one member of the Board of Trustees appointed annually by that board, and three members of Plymouth appointed by the Executive Committee serving staggered three-year terms. The committee will elect a chair who has at least one year of experience on the Human Resources Committee.

2. Duties

The committee will conduct the annual performance review of the Senior Pastor in collaboration with the Church Council’s Executive Committee; will ensure annual performance reviews are conducted for Plymouth pastors and staff; and will meet regularly with the Senior Pastor to make recommendations to the Church Council’s Executive Committee regarding human resource issues, including staff evaluations, compensation, benefits, and other matters covered in Plymouth’s Employee Handbook.

The committee may request input from Plymouth employees or members and will have access to Plymouth’s records, including personnel records, when performing its responsibilities.

The committee will ensure exit interviews are conducted with staff members regarding their experiences at Plymouth.
3. Meetings and Minutes

The committee will appoint a secretary to prepare written minutes of committee meetings. The minutes of each meeting will be submitted to and preserved by the Church Secretary (see Article IV. Section 3.C.).

Article III. FISCAL AND PROGRAM YEARS; TERMS OF OFFICE; CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

Section 1. Fiscal and Program Years
A. Plymouth’s fiscal year begins January 1.
B. Plymouth’s program year begins June 1.

Section 2. Terms of Office
Terms of officers, Church Council, Executive Committee, board, and committee members begin on June 1.

Section 3. Congregational Meetings
A. Meeting Procedures
1. Manner of Notice
   Notice of any congregational meeting will be posted in Plymouth’s office, at other locations in the church, and on the Plymouth website; included in the weekly Plymouth bulletin, mailings, or electronic mailings; emailed to addresses in Plymouth’s member list; and given from the pulpit at all worship services occurring between the date of the notice and the meeting.

2. Quorum, Chair and Church Secretary
   Fifty members present in person or electronically constitute a quorum. The Moderator will chair the meeting. The Church Secretary will record meeting minutes. Congregational meetings shall be conducted according to Robert’s Rules of Order and these bylaws.

3. Voting
   Prior to any voting, the Moderator will appoint three tellers to verify the vote count and report the results of the election.

4. Action
   Members will act by majority vote of members present, in person or electronically. However, action to call a Senior Pastor, or dismiss a Senior Pastor, or action on any plan or basis of union or withdrawal from any other church or denomination of churches will require a two-thirds majority vote of members present.
B. Annual Meetings

1. Date

The annual meeting of Plymouth members will be held in the month of May on a date determined by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will determine the manner of meeting, in person or electronically or both.

2. Notice

Notice of an annual meeting will be given at least three weeks before the meeting and will include the agenda for the meeting, and the methods by which members may attend and vote in person or electronically.

3. Agenda

The business of the annual meeting will include a presentation of the annual report by the Senior Pastor, the election of officers, the members-at-large, and the new members of Church Council boards; annual reports of the officers, Church Council and its Executive Committee, boards, and committees for the current program year; proposed plans for the next program year; and other appropriate business.

Any member may raise any issue affecting the religious, financial, or social welfare of Plymouth, provided the member delivers a description of the issue and the substance of the information to be presented at the meeting to Plymouth’s office at least seven days before the meeting. The meeting agenda will be amended to include such requests.

4. Eligibility for Election

Any Plymouth member is eligible for election to any Church Council board, or office, including members-at-large, except as otherwise provided in these bylaws.

A person and a person’s spouse or domestic partner can serve, at any one time, in only one position as a member of any Church Council board or as a member-at-large or Moderator-Elect, Moderator or Immediate-Past Moderator except in the case of the Board of Deacons. The spouse of a member of the Board of Deacons can serve as a member of any Church Council board other than the Deacons or as member at large, Moderator-Elect, Moderator or Immediate-Past Moderator. An employee of the church cannot serve in any of these capacities.

A person appointed or elected to fill an unexpired board term with less than half the term remaining, is eligible for election to an immediately succeeding term. At least one year must intervene before a board member, having completed a term, is eligible for reelection to the same board.
5. Nominations

The Executive Committee will nominate the Moderator-Elect to be on the ballot at the annual meeting. The Church Council will nominate the members-at-large, nominees for council boards, a representative to the Plymouth Foundation Board, and officers to be on the ballot at the annual meeting.

Before March 1, a list of vacant positions to be filled by election at the annual meeting will be compiled by the church staff, and notification will be made to the Church Council and members of the congregation.

By March 15, Plymouth members may propose names for any vacant position. Proposals must be made in writing and addressed to Plymouth’s office.

The Church Council and its Executive Committee will prepare a slate of nominees, listed in alphabetical order and provided to members in writing and electronically, with all written or electronic notices for the annual meeting.

After notice of the annual meeting is given, additional nominations may be made by written request of at least 10 Plymouth members, with the consent of the additional nominee(s), submitted to Plymouth’s office not less than two weeks before the annual meeting date. Plymouth staff will compile an alphabetic listing of all eligible nominees for the ballot.

6. Installation

The Senior Pastor will ensure the acknowledgement of the elected officers and board members at the first weekend worship services of the program year.

C. Special Meetings

1. Call for Meeting

The Moderator will call a special meeting of Plymouth members when requested by the Church Council or its Executive Committee, the Board of Deacons, the Board of Trustees, or the Board of Membership, or by written request of 25 Plymouth members, addressed to the Moderator and identifying the issue for the meeting.

2. Notice of Meeting

Notice of a special congregational meeting will be given at least 10 days before the meeting and will include the agenda for the meeting, and methods by which members may attend and vote in person or electronically. The notice will comply with the Manner of Notice.
procedures for annual congregational meetings as stated in Article III.
Section 3.A.1 to the extent applicable.

Article IV. PASTORS, STAFF, AND LAY OFFICERS

Section 1. Ordained Pastors

A. General Provisions

For each ordained pastor called by Plymouth, the Moderator will appoint a
care and concern group, including at least one member of the search
committee recommending that pastor, to informally provide support and
care for that pastor through their first year at Plymouth. The Human
Resources Committee will serve as a resource for the care and concern group
and will receive a final, written summary of the group’s activities with the
pastor.

Consistent with the faith and practice of the UCC, every ordained pastor of
the Word and Sacrament may, among other things,

- Preach the gospel.
- Administer the sacraments.
- Conduct public worship.
- Provide pastoral care.
- Impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through available
  channels of effective communication.
- Offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury
  the dead.
- Speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed,
calling for justice, and proclaiming God’s love for the world.

B. Senior Pastor

1. Term

The Senior Pastor will be called for an indefinite term.

2. Duties

The Senior Pastor is Plymouth’s senior spiritual leader. The Senior Pastor
will recruit others to become Plymouth members and followers of Christ, will
provide for the spiritual welfare and growth of Plymouth and those whom it
serves, and will have charge of Plymouth services.

The Senior Pastor is Plymouth’s senior executive. The Senior Pastor will
administer and manage Plymouth’s activities, financial stewardship, property,
and personnel, in consultation with the Executive Committee and Church
Council. All decisions made by the Senior Pastor will further Plymouth’s
mission, guiding principles, church motto and the goals of the strategic plan.
The Senior Pastor, working with the Board of Membership, will ensure that the rolls of Plymouth members are accurate and up to date, including a formal Book of Life that records important dates for members around birth, baptisms, marriage, death, confirmation, and other significant life events.

The Senior Pastor, in consultation with the Church Council and its Executive Committee, pastors, and staff, will assign at least one pastor or program staff to work with each board and other groups of the Church Council, the Plymouth Foundation Board, and other board committees, as needed.

The Senior Pastor will assign the duties of other pastors.

The Senior Pastor may delegate supervisory responsibilities but is accountable for that delegation.

The Senior Pastor will ensure that annual performance reviews are conducted for all pastors and staff.

The Senior Pastor will ensure a current employee organizational chart of Plymouth staff and duties is maintained, including the pastor(s) who are authorized to act for the Senior Pastor in the Senior Pastor’s absence. The organizational chart will be located and maintained in Plymouth’s office and electronically accessible to all members.

The Senior Pastor will ensure a current roster is maintained by the Church Secretary with names, contact information, and terms of office for members serving on the Church Council, its Executive Committee and standing committees, Church Council boards and board committees. This roster will be located in Plymouth’s office and electronically accessible to all members.

Before each annual congregational meeting, the Senior Pastor will ensure a written and digital annual report is prepared, with summaries of Plymouth’s work in the prior 12 months, including measurements on progress toward goals in Plymouth’s strategic plan; financial statements for the past year including actual performance compared to budget; Plymouth membership data for the past 10 years; and average and median attendance at church services for the past 10 years. The annual report will be kept in Plymouth’s office and electronically accessible to all members.

3. Vacancy
   a. Resignation
      A Senior Pastor who plans to resign will notify the Church Council and its Executive Committee in writing. The Church Council will notify theCongregation of the Senior Pastor’s plan to resign. The
resignation will be effective on the date stated in the notice, unless the pastor and the Executive Committee agree to a different date. The Executive Committee will call a congregational meeting to receive the resignation.

b. Termination
If two-thirds of the Executive Committee and two-thirds of the Church Council recommend that a Senior Pastor’s call be terminated, the Moderator will call a special congregational meeting for a vote on that recommendation. A Senior Pastor will be terminated by a two-thirds affirmative vote of members present.

c. Interim Senior Pastor
When a vacancy occurs, the Executive Committee, in consultation with the Church Council, may determine that an Interim Senior Pastor is needed. If so, the Executive Committee will appoint an Interim Senior Pastor Search Committee. The committee will consist of the three most recent Immediate-Past Moderators available to serve when the committee is formed with additional members as determined by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee, with concurrence of the Church Council, will hire the Interim Senior Pastor recommended by the committee upon terms the Executive Committee decides.

d. Senior Pastor Search Committee
Vacancies will be filled with the assistance of a Senior Pastor Search Committee, and in accordance with the policies of the United Church of Christ.

Prior to the formation of this committee, the Church Council’s Executive Committee will provide at least 14-days’ notice to the Congregation, advising members that nominations for this committee may be made by any Church Council board or by any Plymouth member, in writing or electronically, addressed to the Moderator. Nominations must be received in Plymouth’s office by the deadline stated in the notice.

Notice will be posted in Plymouth’s office, at other locations in the church, and on the Plymouth website; published in the weekly Plymouth bulletin, mailings, or electronic mailings; emailed to addresses in Plymouth’s member list; and given from the pulpit at all worship services occurring within 14 days of the date of the notice.
The Executive Committee will select the search committee with seven voting members. The Moderator or the Moderator’s designee will chair the search committee and serve as a non-voting member. The search committee will undertake a comprehensive search that may include both internal and external candidates. The search committee may retain an external firm to assist in the recruitment process.

e. Recommendation and Election
Prior to making a recommendation, the Senior Pastor Search Committee will seek counsel from the Iowa Conference of the UCC.

Concurrence of at least five voting members of the search committee is necessary to recommend a candidate with proposed terms of employment to the Church Council’s Executive Committee. If approved by the Executive Committee, the Senior Pastor candidate will be considered at a congregational meeting. A Senior Pastor candidate will be elected by a two-thirds affirmative vote of members present.

f. Installation
When a Senior Pastor candidate accepts the call, Plymouth will invite the Association of the UCC to which Plymouth belongs to install the new Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor will promptly become a member of Plymouth and of the UCC associations to which Plymouth belongs.

C. Other Ordained or Eligible-to-be-Ordained Pastors
1. Term
All pastors will be called for an indefinite term, except interim pastors and Transition into Ministry program (TiM) pastors, who may or may not yet be ordained.

2. Pastoral Vacancies
Vacancies will be filled with the assistance of a pastor search committee, and in accordance with the bylaws of the UCC.

When there is a pastoral vacancy, other than the Senior Pastor or a TiM pastor, a pastor search committee will be appointed. The committee members will be the Senior Pastor and three members appointed by the Church Council and three by its Executive Committee. This committee will be chaired by the Moderator or designee by the Executive Committee.

The committee will seek counsel of the Iowa Conference of the UCC. The search committee will interview candidates and recommend a candidate, and the terms of employment, to the Church Council. If approved by the Church
Council, the candidate will be considered at an annual or special congregational meeting. A candidate will be elected by a majority vote of members present, electronically or in person.

When a pastoral candidate accepts the call, Plymouth will invite the Association of the UCC to which Plymouth belongs to install the new pastor. The pastor will promptly become a member of Plymouth and of the UCC associations to which Plymouth belongs.

3. Termination
The Senior Pastor may terminate a non-senior pastor’s pastorate with advice from the Human Resources Committee and with concurrence of a majority of Church Council members present.

4. Interim Non-Senior Pastor
An interim search committee may be formed by the Church Council’s Executive Committee when there is a pastoral vacancy, other than for the Senior Pastor. The interim search committee with five voting members will include the Senior Pastor, two members from the Church Council’s Executive Committee and two members from the Church Council, named respectively by those bodies. The Moderator-Elect will chair the committee and will only vote to break a tie. The committee will interview candidates for the interim vacancy and recommend a candidate to fill the vacancy. The terms of that employment will be approved by the Executive Committee and the hiring decision will require a majority vote by the Church Council members present.

5. Transition into Ministry Pastoral Vacancies
TiM pastors are residents appointed for terms up to 27 months through the Transition into Ministry program. When there is a TiM pastoral vacancy, the TiM Committee will serve as the search committee. The chair of the TiM Committee will serve as the chair for the search and the committee will make its recommendation to the Senior Pastor for final approval in consultation with the Human Resources Committee and in accordance with the policies in Plymouth’s Employee Handbook.

Section 2. Plymouth Staff
All staff, except pastors, may be hired and released by the Senior Pastor in consultation with the Human Resources Committee, and in accordance with the policies in Plymouth’s Employee Handbook.

Section 3. Lay Officers
A. Moderator and Moderator-Elect
1. Moderator
The Moderator is Plymouth’s senior lay leader. The Moderator is the person who was Moderator-Elect for the previous program year, unless another person is elected as Moderator at a congregational annual meeting. The Moderator serves a one-year term, and presides at congregational meetings and as chair of the Church Council’s Executive Committee.

2. Moderator-Elect

The Moderator-Elect will be elected at the annual meeting for a term of one year and will perform the duties of the Moderator in the Moderator’s absence.

3. Vacancy

Upon a vacancy in either the office of Moderator or Moderator-Elect, the Church Council’s Executive Committee will propose a nominee for election by the Church Council to fill the unexpired term.

B. Immediate-Past Moderator

The Immediate-Past Moderator will serve a one-year term as a voting member of the Executive Committee, and the Interim Senior Pastor search committee.

C. Church Secretary

The Church Secretary will serve as Secretary of Plymouth Corporation.

A Plymouth member who is not a member of either the Church Council or its Executive Committee will be elected at the congregation’s annual meeting to serve a three-year term as Church Secretary.

At least one year must intervene after the Church Secretary’s term ends before that person is eligible to be elected to another term. In case of a vacancy in this office, the Church Council’s Executive Committee will appoint a person to fill the unexpired term. A person appointed to fill an unexpired term with less than half the term remaining is eligible for election to an immediately succeeding term.

The Church Secretary will, with staff assistance, prepare minutes of the congregation’s annual meetings or special congregational meetings. The Church Secretary will receive and preserve minutes from the Church Council, its Executive Committee, boards and committees. The minutes will be located in Plymouth’s office and electronically accessible to Plymouth members.

The chair of a congregational meeting will appoint a person to serve as Church Secretary for that meeting if Plymouth’s Church Secretary is unavailable.
D. Other Officers

Other officers may be elected at congregational meetings.

Article V. OTHER PROVISIONS

Section 1. Parliamentary Authority

The rules contained in the current edition of Robert’s Rules of Order will be the parliamentary authority for matters of procedure not specifically covered by these bylaws and any special rules of order Plymouth may adopt which are not in conflict with local, state, or federal laws. Boards and Committees will conduct business pursuant to small board provisions.

Section 2. Manner of Meetings

Plymouth congregation, Church Council, Church Council’s Executive Committee, boards, and committees may meet for open regular or special meetings in person or by means of an electronic communications technology, provided members have the ability to read or hear and be heard substantially concurrent with the proceedings, to vote on matters submitted to the members, pose questions, and make comments.

Section 3. Amendments

These bylaws may be amended at a congregational meeting by a two-thirds vote of members present.

Section 4. Effective Date of Bylaws

These bylaws are effective on June 1, 2021, and supersede all previous Plymouth bylaws.
BYLAWS

Plymouth Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Des Moines, Iowa

Adopted at the May 11, 2021, Annual Meeting
Effective June 1, 2021

Signature Page

_________________________________      _________________________________
David Johnson, Moderator   Rev. Sarai Rice, Interim Sr. Pastor
(Signature, Date)     (Signature, Date)

_________________________________
Jodi Gruening, Moderator-Elec
(Signature, Date)