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**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

9 Section 1. Name

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

13  
14 Plymouth is in communion with all churches that follow the teaching of Jesus Christ. Plymouth  
15 acknowledges special obligation to other congregations that are a part of the United Church of  
16 Christ (UCC) and pledges itself to share in their common religious and educational work, especially  
17 as represented by the Central Association of the Iowa Conference, Iowa Conference of the UCC,  
18 and the General Synod of the UCC.

19  
20 Section 2. Mission, Guiding Principles, and Motto

21 The purpose of Plymouth Church is to bind together followers of Jesus Christ to share in the worship  
22 of God.

23  
24 Plymouth’s mission is to grow in love of God and neighbor.

25  
26 Inclusiveness and acceptance are guiding principles of Plymouth. Whoever you are, wherever you  
27 are on life’s journey, you are always welcome at Plymouth.

28  
29 Plymouth’s motto, as expressed by former Senior Pastor Stoddard Lane (1929 - 1943):  
30 “We agree to differ. We resolve to love. We unite to serve.”

31  
32 Section 3. Plymouth Covenant

33 The following Covenant binds members together:

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

38  
39 Section 4. Services

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

43  
44 Weddings, funerals and other services will be held as determined by the pastors.

1 Section 5. Congregational Governance

2 Plymouth is an Iowa non-profit corporation with governance vested in its members. Members  
3 approve and carry out Plymouth's mission, strategic plan, and programs. Members serve on Church  
4 Council, Executive Committee, boards, and committees. Members retain all authority not  
5 specifically delegated in these bylaws.  
6

7 Section 6. Membership

8 A. Members

9 The members of Plymouth will make a public commitment of faith in Jesus Christ.  
10 Plymouth will receive members on presentation of letters of transfer from other  
11 churches, by reaffirmation of faith, or on confession of faith and baptism.  
12

13 B. Reception of Members

14 The Board of Membership and the pastors will present new members to be received  
15 in a public worship service. The Congregation may receive new members unable to  
16 attend in person.  
17

18 C. Duties

19 Members will agree to Plymouth's Covenant and will endeavor to fulfill those  
20 promises and support the spiritual welfare of Plymouth and its community.  
21

22 D. Associate Members

23 Associate members are Plymouth members who have church membership elsewhere  
24 which they do not desire to sever, and who desire to share in the faith and covenant  
25 of worship and services of Plymouth. Associate members will have the same rights  
26 and duties as active members.  
27

28 E. Inactive Members

29 Members who have not communicated with Plymouth, attended services, or  
30 contributed to its support, for a period of three years or more will be designated  
31 inactive by the Board of Membership. Prior to such designation, the board will make  
32 reasonable efforts to contact and inform the member what is needed to retain active  
33 status. If the member cannot be located or does not wish to remain active or does  
34 not act to restore active membership within a reasonable period of time, as  
35 determined by the board, the board may declare the member inactive without further  
36 notice.  
37

38 Inactive members, who request to become active members again, may do so by  
39 resuming attendance at Plymouth worship services and activities, or by financial  
40 contributions to Plymouth.  
41

42 Inactive members will not be counted as members, including for the purpose of  
43 assessment or contribution to the various local, regional, state, or national  
44 organizations of the UCC or other religious organizations with which Plymouth  
45 affiliates.

1 F. Change of Membership Designation  
2 Members may request a letter of transfer to any church, be dismissed from  
3 membership, or designated inactive. When a change in membership designation  
4 occurs, the Board of Membership will provide the appropriate letter of confirmation.  
5

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

- 10 1. membership, showing the name of the member, date and manner of  
11 admission, date of birth and date of death, transfer of membership,  
12 dismissal, or inactive status;
- 13 2. baptisms of children, showing the name of the parent(s) or legal  
14 guardian(s), date of baptism, and date and place of the child's birth;
- 15 3. baptisms of adults, showing the name of the person, date of baptism, and  
16 date and place of the person's birth;
- 17 4. marriages, showing the names, date of the marriage, and dates of birth of  
18 the parties;
- 19 5. names and dates of birth of children of member-families;
- 20 6. confirmation class members and other information requested by the Senior  
21 Pastor or the Executive Committee.  
22  
23

## 24 **Article II. GOVERNANCE**

### 25 Section 1. Church Council

#### 26 A. Church Council Members

27 The Church Council (Council) will be chaired by the Moderator and consists of  
28 Moderator, Moderator-Elect, chairpersons of Council boards, president of Plymouth  
29 Women's Fellowship, two members-at-large, and the Senior Pastor.  
30

31 Two members-at-large will be elected to serve staggered two-year terms. During the  
32 first year of a two-year term, the member-at-large will serve as the Church Council  
33 Secretary. During the second year of a two-year term, the member-at-large will serve  
34 as a voting member of the Church Council's Executive Committee.  
35

36 Church Council members represent the interests of Plymouth's full congregation  
37 including those expressed in Plymouth's mission and strategic plan.  
38

#### 39 B. Church Council Duties

40 The Council will carry out the mission, guiding principles, motto and strategic plan  
41 by engaging Plymouth members in visioning for Plymouth's future, and by requesting  
42 and reviewing annual plans and programs from Council boards and committees. The  
43 Council will advise its Executive Committee of their recommendations and provide  
44 a progress report on all Council programs at the congregation's annual meeting. The

1 Council will prepare and maintain a current list of Council members, boards, and  
2 board committees with their contact information and members' terms of office,  
3 which will be available electronically and in the church office, and provided to the  
4 Church Secretary (see Article IV. Section 3. C.).  
5

6 Upon a vacancy of an at-large-member position, the Council will appoint a Plymouth  
7 member to fill the unexpired term.  
8

9 C. Church Council Meetings and Minutes

10 The Council will meet at least quarterly at times and places it decides, with 10 days'  
11 advance notice of the time, place of the meeting, and the agenda, and will be  
12 available to Plymouth members electronically and in the church office.  
13

14 A majority of the Council constitutes a quorum. The Council will act by majority  
15 vote of members present.  
16

17 The Church Council Secretary will, with staff assistance, prepare minutes of  
18 Church Council meetings. The minutes will be submitted to and preserved by the  
19 Church Secretary (see Article IV. Section 3. C.).  
20

21 Open-meeting minutes will be available to Plymouth members electronically and in  
22 the church office. Closed-session minutes will be available only to Council  
23 members or others as determined by the Church Council, Moderator or Senior  
24 Pastor.  
25

26 If the Council goes into closed session, the minutes of the open meeting will state  
27 the reason for the closed session, the time and duration of the closed session, the  
28 general topic addressed, and any action taken in the closed session. Confidential  
29 information shall remain confidential.  
30

31 The Church Council Secretary, with staff assistance, will keep an updated roster,  
32 naming Church Council members, Executive Committee members, their terms,  
33 and contact information, which shall be provided to the Church Secretary (see  
34 Article IV. Section 3. C.), and available to Plymouth members electronically and in  
35 the church office.  
36

37 Section 2. General Provisions for Church Council Boards

38 A. Board Leadership

39 At its first meeting following the annual meeting, each board will elect from its  
40 members an executive committee consisting of a chair, vice chair, and secretary. The  
41 vice chair will act for the chair in the chair's absence. (Chair of the Board of Deacons  
42 will be known as the Senior Deacon and the vice chair as the Junior Deacon.)  
43

1 The board's executive committee will have general supervision of the board's  
2 activities and may act in the name of the board in emergencies or minor matters.  
3 Actions taken by a board's executive committee will be submitted for ratification by  
4 the full board at the next board meeting. A board may appoint other board members  
5 to its executive committee. A board can remove its chair, vice chair, or secretary with  
6 presence of a quorum and majority vote of members present.  
7

8 B. Board Duties

9 Boards shall annually conduct a board orientation to, and evaluation of, their work.  
10 The duties of each Church Council Board are defined in Article II. Section 3.  
11

12 C. Board Meetings and Minutes

13 Boards will meet at times and places they decide, with at least three days' advance  
14 notice of the time, place, and agenda, and will be available to Plymouth members  
15 electronically and in the church office.  
16

17 Each board secretary will prepare written minutes of board meetings and each  
18 board's executive committee meetings. The minutes will be provided to board  
19 members and submitted to and preserved by the Church Secretary (see Article IV.  
20 Section 3.C.).  
21

22 If the board goes into closed session, the minutes of the open meeting will state the  
23 reason for the closed session, the time and duration of the closed session, the  
24 general topic addressed, and any action taken in the closed session. Confidential  
25 information shall remain confidential.  
26

27 Written minutes of a board's executive committee meetings will be provided to  
28 board members and will describe the facts and circumstances of the emergency or  
29 matter, action taken, and the basis and rationale for executive committee action.  
30

31 Open-meeting minutes of a board and its executive committee will be available to  
32 Plymouth members electronically and in the church office. Closed-session minutes  
33 will be available only to members of that board and others as determined by that  
34 board or the Moderator or Senior Pastor.  
35

36 Each board secretary will keep an updated roster, naming board members, their  
37 terms, and contact information, which will be given to the Church Secretary and  
38 available to Plymouth members electronically and in the church office.  
39

40 D. Board Vacancy

41 A board will fill a vacancy by recommending a candidate for the Church Council to  
42 approve.  
43  
44

1 E. Board Committees

2 A board may form and dissolve its committees to assist in performing its work, with  
3 prior written notice to both the Church Council and its Executive Committee.  
4

5 The board forming a committee will document, in the minutes of the meeting at  
6 which that committee was formed, the purpose of the committee and how the  
7 committee will assist in implementing that board's work.  
8

9 Annually, the existence of a committee will be reviewed by the board forming it to  
10 decide whether the committee's work is completed.  
11

12 F. Board Expenditures

13 Boards and committees will not obligate Plymouth for any expenditure except as  
14 provided in Plymouth's budget, without prior approval from the Council's Executive  
15 Committee.  
16

17 G. Board Fundraising

18 Any fundraising activity by boards and board committees requires prior approval  
19 from the Board of Trustees and will follow any directions given by the Board of  
20 Trustees regarding fundraising.  
21

22 H. Board Public Statements

23 Boards and board committees will not speak or act on behalf of Plymouth Church  
24 as a whole without prior authorization from the Council's Executive Committee or  
25 its designee (e.g. Senior Pastor).  
26

27 I. Board Reports

28 By September 30, each Council board will report its plans to the Council's Executive  
29 Committee. The Executive Committee will review and present recommendations to  
30 the Council for approval.  
31

32 By April 30, each Council board will report to the Council on its activities during  
33 the previous 12 months for inclusion in Plymouth's annual report. The board reports  
34 will include performance measurements and progress toward program goals, and  
35 which committees should be continued into the next year.  
36

37 J. Board Liaisons

38 Liaisons are board members selected by a board to encourage and facilitate  
39 communication with another Plymouth board or group on that group's activities  
40 which might impact the activities of the liaison's board. Board liaisons not listed in  
41 these bylaws may be appointed upon approval of the two boards and the Council.  
42  
43  
44  
45

1 Section 3. Church Council Boards

2 A. Board of Benevolences

3 The Board of Benevolences is a twelve (12)-member board, with four members  
4 elected annually to serve three-year terms. The board will supervise, promote, and  
5 interpret Plymouth's benevolence activities; promote representation of Plymouth  
6 members in decision-making bodies of the denominational and ecumenical agencies  
7 to which Plymouth contributes; and periodically advise the Board of Trustees in the  
8 most effective use of benevolence resources.  
9

10 B. Board of Christian Education for Youth and Families

11 The Board of Christian Education for Youth and Families is a fifteen (15)-member  
12 board, with five members elected annually to serve three-year terms. The board will  
13 assist in recruiting, training, and placing Christian Education volunteer staff. The  
14 board, with pastoral and staff assistance, will plan and implement all programs  
15 including, but not limited to, Church School and Vacation Bible School. The board  
16 will approve choice or design of curriculum for children up through sixth grade,  
17 Confirmation Classes for middle-school students, and programs and activities for  
18 high-school students and families. The board will procure necessary materials and  
19 equipment for this programming, and maintain the children's library. The board will  
20 have a liaison to the Plymouth Nursery School Board of Directors.  
21

22 C. Board of Christian Social Action

23 The Board of Christian Social Action is a fifteen (15)-member board, with five  
24 members elected annually to serve three-year terms. The board will help Plymouth  
25 explore the relationship between Christian faith and contemporary social issues by  
26 identifying issues and stimulating dialogue. By inviting action on any issue, the board  
27 shall make clear that its opinions or actions bind neither Plymouth nor any member.  
28

29 D. Board of Christian Stewardship

30 The Board of Christian Stewardship is a twelve (12)-member board, with four  
31 members elected annually to serve three-year terms. The board will assist Plymouth  
32 members and friends to understand and commit to principles of Christian  
33 stewardship; develop ongoing programs to obtain statements of intention to provide  
34 financial support for Plymouth's mission and ministry; periodically review and  
35 evaluate the effectiveness of all means of providing financial support to Plymouth;  
36 develop awareness and provide learning opportunities for Plymouth members of  
37 alternate ways to give to Plymouth; and communicate with other boards and  
38 committees.  
39

40 E. Board of Deacons

41 The Board of Deacons is a thirty (30)-member board, with 10 members elected  
42 annually to serve three-year terms. The board will assist the pastors in performing  
43 services and Plymouth's spiritual activities for Plymouth and the community,  
44 including assisting in preparing and administering the sacraments; receiving and  
45 depositing open collections; appointing ushers; leading the Congregation in caring



1 for the poor, the sick, the sorrowing, and the stranger; and performing other duties  
2 requested by the Senior Pastor.

3  
4 F. Board of Membership

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

15  
16 G. Board of Music and Fine Arts

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

23  
24 H. Board of Spiritual Growth and Adult Education

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

30  
31 I. Board of Trustees

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

1 Section 4. General Provisions for Board Committees and Other Groups

2 A. Committee Definition

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

6  
7 For any Plymouth committee or group not linked to a Council board, the Executive  
8 Committee and the Church Council will determine the Council board with which  
9 that committee or group will be linked.

10  
11 B. Committee Formation and Duration

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

15  
16 The committee forming a subcommittee will document, in the minutes of the  
17 meeting at which that committee was formed, the purpose of the subcommittee and  
18 how the subcommittee will assist in implementing that board's work.

19  
20 Annually, the existence of a subcommittee will be reviewed by the committee and  
21 board forming it to decide whether the subcommittee's work is completed and  
22 whether its continued existence is necessary.

23  
24 C. Committee Members

25 Any Plymouth member or active Plymouth participant is eligible for membership on  
26 any committee.

27  
28 Committee vacancies may be filled by the committee.

29  
30 D. Committee Meetings and Minutes

31 At its first meeting following its formation, each committee will elect a chair, a  
32 secretary, and other officers determined by the committee.

33  
34 A majority of committee members constitutes a quorum. Committees will act by  
35 majority vote of the members present.

36  
37 Committees will meet at times and places they decide, with at least three days'  
38 advance notice of the time, place, and agenda, available to Plymouth members  
39 electronically and in the church office.

40  
41 Each committee secretary will prepare written minutes of committee meetings. The  
42 minutes of each meeting will be submitted to and preserved by the Church  
43 Secretary (see Article IV. Section 3.C.).

1 Committee meeting minutes will be available to Plymouth members electronically  
2 and in the church office. Committees of Church Council boards will not have  
3 closed sessions. Each committee secretary will keep an updated roster, naming  
4 committee members, their terms, and contact information, which will be given to  
5 the Church Secretary and available to Plymouth members electronically and in the  
6 church office.

7  
8 E. Committee Expenditures  
9 Committees will not obligate Plymouth for any expenditure except as provided in  
10 Plymouth's budget, without prior approval from their board and the Church  
11 Council's Executive Committee.

12  
13 F. Committee Fundraising  
14 Committees will not engage in fundraising activity without prior approval from their  
15 supervising board and the Board of Trustees.

16  
17 G. Committee Public Statements  
18 Boards and board committees will not speak or act on behalf of Plymouth Church  
19 as a whole without prior authorization from the Council's Executive Committee or  
20 its designee (e.g. Senior Pastor).

21  
22 Section 5. Executive Committee of Church Council

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

29  
30 Executive Committee members represent the interests of Plymouth's full  
31 congregation as expressed in its mission and strategic plan.

32  
33 B. Executive Committee Duties  
34 The Executive Committee will establish overall policies affecting Plymouth's  
35 operations, property, finances, and personnel, and will resolve time-sensitive matters.  
36 All decisions will be made to carry out the mission, guiding principles, motto and  
37 goals of the strategic plan. The Executive Committee will review Plymouth's annual  
38 budget upon recommendation of the Board of Trustees, and refer to Church  
39 Council for approval; determine whether to incur expenses or debt not included in  
40 the budget; approve the Board of Trustees' operational reserve policy  
41 recommendation; approve the annual audit; recommend to the Congregation the  
42 mortgage or sale of property; approve salary and other compensation for pastors and  
43 staff after reviewing recommendations by the Human Resources Committee; create,  
44 maintain and update a manual on governance policies and procedures; complete an

1 annual performance review of the Senior Pastor, in consultation with the Human  
2 Resources Committee; provide for timely reviews of Plymouth's bylaws; provide a  
3 progress report to the congregation's annual meeting on its activities and future  
4 plans; and establish ad hoc committees for specific projects or personnel searches.  
5

6 The Executive Committee will have access to all Plymouth's records and confidential  
7 personnel files and will act on recommendations from the Human Resources  
8 Committee for revisions to the Plymouth Employee Handbook. Confidential  
9 information shall not be disclosed by the Executive Committee.  
10

11 The Executive Committee or Church Council may form, modify, and dissolve any  
12 board with approval of the other.  
13

14 The Executive Committee will name representatives or delegates to denominational  
15 and inter-denominational organizations of which Plymouth is a member.  
16

17 The Executive Committee will consider and decide upon requests from any non-  
18 Plymouth organization wanting Plymouth representation in that organization.  
19 Approvals of requests will be reviewed at least annually prior to June 1.  
20

21 C. Executive Committee Meetings and Minutes

22 The Executive Committee will meet at least monthly at times and places they  
23 decide, with at least three days' advance notice of the time, place, and agenda, and  
24 will be available to Plymouth members electronically and in the church office.  
25 Five Executive Committee members constitutes a quorum.  
26

27 The Executive Committee will act by an affirmative vote of at least five members.  
28 The Church Council Executive Committee has the powers of the Church Council  
29 between meetings of the Church Council, and will inform the Church Council at its  
30 next meeting of any actions taken on behalf of the Church Council. The Executive  
31 Committee cannot modify or nullify any actions taken by the Church Council.  
32

33 Plymouth members and staff may attend Executive Committee meetings; however,  
34 the Executive Committee may go into closed session to discuss confidential or  
35 sensitive matters, including personnel matters.  
36

37 An Executive Committee member will be elected as Executive Committee Secretary  
38 and be responsible, with staff assistance, for written minutes of each meeting. The  
39 minutes of Executive Committee meetings will be provided to Executive  
40 Committee members, Church Council members, and submitted to and preserved  
41 by the Church Secretary (see Article IV. Section 3. C.).  
42

43 If the Executive Committee goes into closed session, the minutes of the open  
44 meeting will state the reason for the closed session, the time and duration of the

1 closed session, the general topic addressed, and any action taken in the closed  
2 session. Confidential information shall remain confidential.

3  
4 Open-meeting minutes of the Executive Committee will be available to Plymouth  
5 members electronically and in the church office. Closed-session minutes will be  
6 available only to Executive Committee members or others as determined by the  
7 Executive Committee, Moderator or Senior Pastor.

8  
9 Section 6. Standing Committees of Church Council Executive Committee

10 A. Advisory Committee

11 1. Members

12 Plymouth’s Advisory Committee consists of the second through sixth  
13 immediate-past moderators. Any vacancy on the committee will be filled by  
14 the next-most-recent past moderator available, beginning with the seventh.

15  
16 2. Duties

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

23  
24 3. Meetings and Minutes

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

28  
29 B. Audit Committee

30 1. Members

31 Annually, the Board of Trustees, in consultation with the Director of  
32 Operations and Finance, will appoint a five-member audit committee  
33 consisting of three Plymouth members, one of whom is a Certified Public  
34 Accountant or a person with financial expertise relevant to financial audits,  
35 one member from the Board of Trustees, and one member from the  
36 Plymouth Foundation Board. The Board of Trustees will appoint a  
37 committee chair from the three at-large members. Upon a vacancy, the Board  
38 of Trustees will appoint a person to fill the unexpired term.

39  
40 The at-large members will serve staggered three-year terms. At least one year  
41 must intervene before an at-large member having completed a term is eligible  
42 for reappointment to the committee. However, a person appointed to serve  
43 an unexpired term with less than half a term remaining is eligible for  
44 appointment to an immediately succeeding term.

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## 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.

1                   3. Meetings and Minutes

2                   The committee will appoint a secretary to prepare written minutes of  
3                   committee meetings. The minutes of each meeting will be submitted to and  
4                   preserved by the Church Secretary (see Article IV. Section 3.C.).  
5  
6

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

9                   Section 1. Fiscal and Program Years

- 10                  A.       Plymouth's fiscal year begins January 1.  
11                  B.       Plymouth's program year begins June 1.  
12

13                  Section 2. Terms of Office

14                  Terms of officers, Church Council, Executive Committee, board, and committee members begin  
15                  on June 1.  
16

17                  Section 3. Congregational Meetings

18                  A.       Meeting Procedures

19                       1. Manner of Notice

20                       Notice of any congregational meeting will be posted in Plymouth's office, at  
21                       other locations in the church, and on the Plymouth website; included in the  
22                       weekly Plymouth bulletin, mailings, or electronic mailings; emailed to  
23                       addresses in Plymouth's member list; and given from the pulpit at all worship  
24                       services occurring between the date of the notice and the meeting.  
25

26                       2. Quorum, Chair and Church Secretary

27                       Fifty members present in person or electronically constitute a quorum. The  
28                       Moderator will chair the meeting. The Church Secretary will record meeting  
29                       minutes. Congregational meetings shall be conducted according to Robert's  
30                       Rules of Order and these bylaws.  
31

32                       3. Voting

33                       Prior to any voting, the Moderator will appoint three tellers to verify the vote  
34                       count and report the results of the election.  
35

36                       4. Action

37                       Members will act by majority vote of members present, in person or  
38                       electronically. However, action to call a Senior Pastor, or dismiss a Senior  
39                       Pastor, or action on any plan or basis of union or withdrawal from any  
40                       other church or denomination of churches will require a two-thirds  
41                       majority vote of members present.  
42

1 B. Annual Meetings

2 1. Date

3 The annual meeting of Plymouth members will be held in the month of May  
4 on a date determined by the Executive Committee. The Executive  
5 Committee will determine the manner of meeting, in person or electronically  
6 or both.  
7

8 2. Notice

9 Notice of an annual meeting will be given at least three weeks before the  
10 meeting and will include the agenda for the meeting, and the methods by  
11 which members may attend and vote in person or electronically.  
12

13 3. Agenda

14 The business of the annual meeting will include a presentation of the annual  
15 report by the Senior Pastor, the election of officers, the members-at-large, and  
16 the new members of Church Council boards; annual reports of the officers,  
17 Church Council and its Executive Committee, boards, and committees for  
18 the current program year; proposed plans for the next program year; and  
19 other appropriate business.  
20

21 Any member may raise any issue affecting the religious, financial, or social  
22 welfare of Plymouth, provided the member delivers a description of the issue  
23 and the substance of the information to be presented at the meeting to  
24 Plymouth's office at least seven days before the meeting. The meeting agenda  
25 will be amended to include such requests.  
26

27 4. Eligibility for Election

28 Any Plymouth member is eligible for election to any Church Council board,  
29 or office, including members-at-large, except as otherwise provided in these  
30 bylaws.  
31

32 A person and a person's spouse or domestic partner can serve, at any one  
33 time, in only one position as a member of any Church Council board or as a  
34 member-at-large or Moderator-Elect, Moderator or Immediate-Past  
35 Moderator except in the case of the Board of Deacons. The spouse of a  
36 member of the Board of Deacons can serve as a member of any Church  
37 Council board other than the Deacons or as member at large, Moderator-  
38 Elect, Moderator or Immediate-Past Moderator. An employee of the church  
39 cannot serve in any of these capacities.  
40

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

1 procedures for annual congregational meetings as stated in Article III.  
2 Section 3.A.1 to the extent applicable.  
3  
4

## 5 **Article IV. PASTORS, STAFF, AND LAY OFFICERS**

### 6 Section 1. Ordained Pastors

#### 7 A. General Provisions

8 For each ordained pastor called by Plymouth, the Moderator will appoint a  
9 care and concern group, including at least one member of the search  
10 committee recommending that pastor, to informally provide support and  
11 care for that pastor through their first year at Plymouth. The Human  
12 Resources Committee will serve as a resource for the care and concern group  
13 and will receive a final, written summary of the group's activities with the  
14 pastor.  
15

16 Consistent with the faith and practice of the UCC, every ordained pastor of  
17 the Word and Sacrament may, among other things,  
18

- 19 • Preach the gospel.
- 20 • Administer the sacraments.
- 21 • Conduct public worship.
- 22 • Provide pastoral care.
- 23 • Impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through available  
24 channels of effective communication.
- 25 • Offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury  
26 the dead.
- 27 • Speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed,  
28 calling for justice, and proclaiming God's love for the world.  
29

#### 30 B. Senior Pastor

##### 31 1. Term

32 The Senior Pastor will be called for an indefinite term.  
33

##### 34 2. Duties

35 The Senior Pastor is Plymouth's senior spiritual leader. The Senior Pastor  
36 will recruit others to become Plymouth members and followers of Christ, will  
37 provide for the spiritual welfare and growth of Plymouth and those whom it  
38 serves, and will have charge of Plymouth services.  
39

40 The Senior Pastor is Plymouth's senior executive. The Senior Pastor will  
41 administer and manage Plymouth's activities, financial stewardship, property,  
42 and personnel, in consultation with the Executive Committee and Church  
43 Council. All decisions made by the Senior Pastor will further Plymouth's  
44 mission, guiding principles, church motto and the goals of the strategic plan.

1 The Senior Pastor, working with the Board of Membership, will ensure that  
2 the rolls of Plymouth members are accurate and up to date, including a  
3 formal Book of Life that records important dates for members around birth,  
4 baptisms, marriage, death, confirmation, and other significant life events.  
5

6 The Senior Pastor, in consultation with the Church Council and its  
7 Executive Committee, pastors, and staff, will assign at least one pastor or  
8 program staff to work with each board and other groups of the Church  
9 Council, the Plymouth Foundation Board, and other board committees, as  
10 needed.  
11

12 The Senior Pastor will assign the duties of other pastors.  
13

14 The Senior Pastor may delegate supervisory responsibilities but is accountable  
15 for that delegation.  
16

17 The Senior Pastor will ensure that annual performance reviews are conducted  
18 for all pastors and staff.  
19

20 The Senior Pastor will ensure a current employee organizational chart of  
21 Plymouth staff and duties is maintained, including the pastor(s) who are  
22 authorized to act for the Senior Pastor in the Senior Pastor's absence. The  
23 organizational chart will be located and maintained in Plymouth's office and  
24 electronically accessible to all members.  
25

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

31 Before each annual congregational meeting, the Senior Pastor will ensure a  
32 written and digital annual report is prepared, with summaries of Plymouth's  
33 work in the prior 12 months, including measurements on progress toward  
34 goals in Plymouth's strategic plan; financial statements for the past year  
35 including actual performance compared to budget; Plymouth membership  
36 data for the past 10 years; and average and median attendance at church  
37 services for the past 10 years. The annual report will be kept in Plymouth's  
38 office and electronically accessible to all members.  
39

### 40 3. Vacancy

#### 41 a. Resignation

42 A Senior Pastor who plans to resign will notify the Church Council  
43 and its Executive Committee in writing. The Church Council will  
44 notify the Congregation of the Senior Pastor's plan to resign. The

1 resignation will be effective on the date stated in the notice, unless  
2 the pastor and the Executive Committee agree to a different date. The  
3 Executive Committee will call a congregational meeting to receive the  
4 resignation.  
5

6 b. Termination

7 If two-thirds of the Executive Committee and two-thirds of the  
8 Church Council recommend that a Senior Pastor's call be  
9 terminated, the Moderator will call a special congregational meeting  
10 for a vote on that recommendation. A Senior Pastor will be  
11 terminated by a two-thirds affirmative vote of members present.  
12

13 c. Interim Senior Pastor

14 When a vacancy occurs, the Executive Committee, in consultation  
15 with the Church Council, may determine that an Interim Senior  
16 Pastor is needed. If so, the Executive Committee will appoint an  
17 Interim Senior Pastor Search Committee. The committee will consist  
18 of the three most recent Immediate-Past Moderators available to serve  
19 when the committee is formed with additional members as  
20 determined by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee,  
21 with concurrence of the Church Council, will hire the Interim Senior  
22 Pastor recommended by the committee upon terms the Executive  
23 Committee decides.  
24

25 d. Senior Pastor Search Committee

26 Vacancies will be filled with the assistance of a Senior Pastor Search  
27 Committee, and in accordance with the policies of the United  
28 Church of Christ.  
29

30 Prior to the formation of this committee, the Church Council's  
31 Executive Committee will provide at least 14-days' notice to the  
32 Congregation, advising members that nominations for this  
33 committee may be made by any Church Council board or by any  
34 Plymouth member, in writing or electronically, addressed to the  
35 Moderator. Nominations must be received in Plymouth's office by  
36 the deadline stated in the notice.  
37

38 Notice will be posted in Plymouth's office, at other locations in the  
39 church, and on the Plymouth website; published in the weekly  
40 Plymouth bulletin, mailings, or electronic mailings; emailed to  
41 addresses in Plymouth's member list; and given from the pulpit at all  
42 worship services occurring within 14 days of the date of the notice.  
43

1 The Executive Committee will select the search committee with seven  
2 voting members. The Moderator or the Moderator's designee will  
3 chair the search committee and serve as a non-voting member. The  
4 search committee will undertake a comprehensive search that may  
5 include both internal and external candidates. The search committee  
6 may retain an external firm to assist in the recruitment process.  
7

8 e. Recommendation and Election

9 Prior to making a recommendation, the Senior Pastor Search  
10 Committee will seek counsel from the Iowa Conference of the UCC.  
11

12 Concurrence of at least five voting members of the search committee  
13 is necessary to recommend a candidate with proposed terms of  
14 employment to the Church Council's Executive Committee. If  
15 approved by the Executive Committee, the Senior Pastor candidate  
16 will be considered at a congregational meeting. A Senior Pastor  
17 candidate will be elected by a two-thirds affirmative vote of members  
18 present.  
19

20 f. Installation

21 When a Senior Pastor candidate accepts the call, Plymouth will invite  
22 the Association of the UCC to which Plymouth belongs to install the  
23 new Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor will promptly become a  
24 member of Plymouth and of the UCC associations to which  
25 Plymouth belongs.  
26

27 C. Other Ordained or Eligible-to-be-Ordained Pastors

28 1. Term

29 All pastors will be called for an indefinite term, except interim pastors and  
30 Transition into Ministry program (TiM) pastors, who may or may not yet be  
31 ordained.

32 2. Pastoral Vacancies

33 Vacancies will be filled with the assistance of a pastor search committee, and  
34 in accordance with the bylaws of the UCC.  
35

36 When there is a pastoral vacancy, other than the Senior Pastor or a TiM  
37 pastor, a pastor search committee will be appointed. The committee  
38 members will be the Senior Pastor and three members appointed by the  
39 Church Council and three by its Executive Committee. This committee will  
40 be chaired by the Moderator or designee by the Executive Committee.  
41

42 The committee will seek counsel of the Iowa Conference of the UCC. The  
43 search committee will interview candidates and recommend a candidate, and  
44 the terms of employment, to the Church Council. If approved by the Church

1 Council, the candidate will be considered at an annual or special  
2 congregational meeting. A candidate will be elected by a majority vote of  
3 members present, electronically or in person.  
4

5 When a pastoral candidate accepts the call, Plymouth will invite the  
6 Association of the UCC to which Plymouth belongs to install the new pastor.  
7 The pastor will promptly become a member of Plymouth and of the UCC  
8 associations to which Plymouth belongs.  
9

### 10 3. Termination

11 The Senior Pastor may terminate a non-senior pastor's pastorate with advice  
12 from the Human Resources Committee and with concurrence of a majority  
13 of Church Council members present.  
14

### 15 4. Interim Non-Senior Pastor

16 An interim search committee may be formed by the Church Council's  
17 Executive Committee when there is a pastoral vacancy, other than for the  
18 Senior Pastor. The interim search committee with five voting members will  
19 include the Senior Pastor, two members from the Church Council's  
20 Executive Committee and two members from the Church Council, named  
21 respectively by those bodies. The Moderator-Elect will chair the committee  
22 and will only vote to break a tie. The committee will interview candidates for  
23 the interim vacancy and recommend a candidate to fill the vacancy. The  
24 terms of that employment will be approved by the Executive Committee and  
25 the hiring decision will require a majority vote by the Church Council  
26 members present.  
27

### 28 5. Transition into Ministry Pastoral Vacancies

29 TiM pastors are residents appointed for terms up to 27 months through the  
30 Transition into Ministry program. When there is a TiM pastoral vacancy, the  
31 TiM Committee will serve as the search committee. The chair of the TiM  
32 Committee will serve as the chair for the search and the committee will make  
33 its recommendation to the Senior Pastor for final approval in consultation  
34 with the Human Resources Committee and in accordance with the policies  
35 in Plymouth's Employee Handbook.  
36

## 37 Section 2. Plymouth Staff

38 All staff, except pastors, may be hired and released by the Senior Pastor in consultation with the  
39 Human Resources Committee, and in accordance with the policies in Plymouth's Employee  
40 Handbook.  
41

## 42 Section 3. Lay Officers

- 43 A. Moderator and Moderator-Elect  
44 1. Moderator

1 The Moderator is Plymouth's senior lay leader. The Moderator is the person  
2 who was Moderator-Elect for the previous program year, unless another  
3 person is elected as Moderator at a congregational annual meeting. The  
4 Moderator serves a one-year term, and presides at congregational meetings  
5 and as chair of the Church Council's Executive Committee.  
6

7 2. Moderator-Elect

8 The Moderator-Elect will be elected at the annual meeting for a term of one  
9 year and will perform the duties of the Moderator in the Moderator's  
10 absence.  
11

12 3. Vacancy

13 Upon a vacancy in either the office of Moderator or Moderator-Elect, the  
14 Church Council's Executive Committee will propose a nominee for election  
15 by the Church Council to fill the unexpired term.  
16

17 B. Immediate-Past Moderator

18 The Immediate-Past Moderator will serve a one-year term as a voting member  
19 of the Executive Committee, and the Interim Senior Pastor search  
20 committee.  
21

22 C. Church Secretary

23 The Church Secretary will serve as Secretary of Plymouth Corporation.  
24

25 A Plymouth member who is not a member of either the Church Council or  
26 its Executive Committee will be elected at the congregation's annual meeting  
27 to serve a three-year term as Church Secretary.  
28

29 At least one year must intervene after the Church Secretary's term ends  
30 before that person is eligible to be elected to another term. In case of a  
31 vacancy in this office, the Church Council's Executive Committee will  
32 appoint a person to fill the unexpired term. A person appointed to fill an  
33 unexpired term with less than half the term remaining is eligible for election  
34 to an immediately succeeding term.  
35

36 The Church Secretary will, with staff assistance, prepare minutes of the  
37 congregation's annual meetings or special congregational meetings. The  
38 Church Secretary will receive and preserve minutes from the Church  
39 Council, its Executive Committee, boards and committees. The minutes will  
40 be located in Plymouth's office and electronically accessible to Plymouth  
41 members.  
42

43 The chair of a congregational meeting will appoint a person to serve as  
44 Church Secretary for that meeting if Plymouth's Church Secretary is  
45 unavailable.

1 D. Other Officers

2 Other officers may be elected at congregational meetings.  
3  
4

5 **Article V. OTHER PROVISIONS**

6 Section 1. Parliamentary Authority

7 The rules contained in the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order will be the parliamentary  
8 authority for matters of procedure not specifically covered by these bylaws and any special rules of  
9 order Plymouth may adopt which are not in conflict with local, state, or federal laws. Boards and  
10 Committees will conduct business pursuant to small board provisions.  
11

12 Section 2. Manner of Meetings

13 Plymouth congregation, Church Council, Church Council's Executive Committee, boards, and  
14 committees may meet for open regular or special meetings in person or by means of an electronic  
15 communications technology, provided members have the ability to read or hear and be heard  
16 substantially concurrent with the proceedings, to vote on matters submitted to the members, pose  
17 questions, and make comments.  
18

19 Section 3. Amendments

20 These bylaws may be amended at a congregational meeting by a two-thirds vote of members present.  
21

22 Section 4. Effective Date of Bylaws

23 These bylaws are effective on June 1, 2021, and supersede all previous Plymouth bylaws.  
24



Signature Page

BYLAWS

Plymouth Congregational Church  
United Church of Christ  
Des Moines, Iowa

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
David Johnson, Moderator 5/13/21  
(Signature, Date)

*Sarai Rice*  
5/13/21

\_\_\_\_\_  
Rev. Sarai Rice, Interim Sr. Pastor  
(Signature, Date)

*Jodi Gruening* 5.13.21

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jodi Gruening, Moderator-Elec  
(Signature, Date)