Senior Pastor Transition

During a Congregational Meeting Sunday, October 17, 2021, at 1:00 p.m., in the Sanctuary and via Zoom, the membership will be called for the purpose of addressing one item of business:

Acceptance of the recommendation to call Rev. Dr. Jared Wortman to the position of Senior Pastor of Plymouth Church.

Zoom Link (also available on the Plymouth website calendar):
https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84805643868?pwd=UjNYUINiRFA4VjNpOXY-5aFJ0TWd1dz09

PASTORAL SUCCESSION:
Some Questions & Answers Regarding the Senior Pastor Transition Process from the Senior Pastor Search Committee

October 4, 2021

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE SENIOR PASTOR TRANSITION PROCESS?

On September 12, 2021, the Search Committee submitted to Jodi Gruening, Moderator, its recommendation to call Rev. Dr. Jared Wortman as Plymouth’s next Senior Pastor. Per the Bylaws, on September 20, 2021, the Church Council’s Executive Committee reviewed and voted to accept the Search Committee’s recommendation. Also, on September 20, 2021, Church Council held a special, closed meeting for voting members only wherein the recommendation and associated matters were discussed. Following these meetings, Dr. Wortman was presented with an offer, subject to the congregational vote, which he gladly accepted. On Monday, October 4, 2021, the recommendation was shared with the Congregation. The next step in the process will be for Dr. Wortman to lead our congregation in worship at all services on October 16 & 17, 2021. Thereafter, a special congregational meeting will be held on October 17, 2021, at 1:00 p.m., for the membership to vote on extending a call to Dr. Wortman. Plymouth’s Bylaws require a two-thirds affirmative vote of members present to extend a call.

HOW DOES A SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING WORK?

Article III, Section 3 of the Bylaws establishes the procedures for congregational meetings, including special meetings. The applicable language reads:

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.

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.

WHERE WILL THE SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING TAKE PLACE?

The Bylaws permit for both in-person and electronic participation in a Congregational Meeting. The in-person meeting will take place in the Sanctuary and the electronic meeting will take place via Zoom at the same time. The Zoom link is on the first page of this document and will also be sent via e-mail and also posted on the website’s Senior Pastor Transition Page.

HOW WILL WE VOTE DURING THE CONGREGATIONAL MEETING?

The process for voting in-person will be via written ballot. The process for voting virtually will be via the “poll” feature on Zoom, like we used for the bylaws vote in May. This is an easy way to capture yes/no votes anonymously. If there is more than one person using your device, one person may complete the vote via the Zoom poll, but the others need to text 515-249-6149 or call 515-255-3149.

CAN MEMBERS VOTE ABSENTEE AND IF NO, WHY NOT?

No. According to Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised, our parliamentary authority, the use of absentee ballots must be explicitly specified in an organization’s bylaws. Plymouth’s Bylaws do not allow for absentee ballots.

WHAT HAPPENS IF LESS THAN TWO-THIRDS OF MEMBERS PRESENT VOTE TO EXTEND A CALL TO DR. WORTMAN?

A new search committee would be formed pursuant to the newly revised and adopted Bylaws.

WHO ARE THE MEMBERS OF THE SENIOR PASTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE AND HOW WERE THEY SELECTED?

A representative from each of Plymouth’s nine boards was selected to serve on the Search Committee. Those nine representatives selected three at-large members to serve on the committee. (This selection process was part of Plymouth’s former Bylaws.) The Search Committee elected its own officers. The Search Committee members are:

Caroline Valentine, Chair
Emily Chafa, Vice-Chair
Tony Stoik, Secretary
Mark Busch
Bryan Fiala
Hayley Harvey
David Nelson
Erin Netteland-Sandvig
Doug Rumple
Kait Scanlon
Carol Stratemeyer
Joy Wilhelm

The Search Committee was staffed by Rev. Sarai Rice, Interim Senior Pastor. Jodi Gruening, Former-Moderator Elect and now Moderator, participated as a non-voting member.
WHAT WAS THE SEARCH COMMITTEE’S PROCESS?

The Search Committee was formed late November 2020. Following the selection of the committee members representing the nine church boards, the group gathered in December to select three at-large members. In January 2021, it was decided to hire an executive search firm to help facilitate the search process. Numerous requests for proposals were sent to firms across the country. In February, three firms were interviewed via Zoom and ultimately the Slingshot Group and consultant Mike Goldsworthy were selected.

Following that selection, starting in March, an extensive discovery process began with Mike so that he could obtain an understanding of Plymouth, our values, and our congregation. Around the same time, the Search Committee began preparing Plymouth’s UCC profile. The 41-page profile was an extensive look at Plymouth’s values, beliefs, strategic plan, and current numbers. A separate Slingshot profile was also utilized. Both the UCC profile and the Slingshot profile were circulated to the congregation on June 21, 2021. While the creation of these two profiles was a large undertaking, the drafting was made much easier by the hundreds of responses we received from the congregational survey that was sent out in March 2021. These responses helped guide the entire drafting process, and subsequently much of the search process.

After the UCC and Slingshot profiles went live in early May, the Search Committee set out to determine what initial candidate interviews would look like and what information was needed about each candidate. In late June, Mike Goldsworthy presented four candidates to the Search Committee. Of the broader pool of applicants who expressed interest in the position and were reviewed by and spoke with Mike, the four candidates were the persons he felt possessed the skills and talents necessary to fill our Senior Pastor role.

The Search Committee agreed. In early July, 90-minute Zoom interviews were held with each of these four candidates. The initial interviews went extremely well, and the Search Committee concluded the first round of interviews feeling inspired and hopeful. The candidates were narrowed from four to three. Second round Zoom interviews were held with those three candidates.

In early August, the Committee narrowed down the candidates from three to the final top two. Both of the top two candidates came to Des Moines and participated in four days of in-person meetings, meals, meet and greets, tours, and Bible studies. The in-person visits were extensive and comprehensive. The Search Committee viewed the in-person visits as critical to both the candidates and our Pastors, staff, lay-leaders, and Search Committee. It was also important for the candidates to see the historical significance of Plymouth Church.

Following these in-person visits, the Search Committee requested and received valuable comments from our settled pastors, various staff members, and lay-leaders regarding their interactions with the candidates. Thereafter, the Search Committee met and ultimately sent its recommendation to call Dr. Wortman to Jodi Gruening and the Executive Committee.

Prior updates can be found at: https://www.plymouthchurch.com/sr-min-transition/

WAS THE CONFERENCE INVOLVED IN THE SEARCH PROCESS?

Yes. The Search Committee was in communication with the Conference throughout this process and spoke with Conference leaders on several occasions. The Conference was also updated on our progress between communications. The Search Committee sought their guidance and input as various questions arose.

WHY IS NOW THE APPROPRIATE TIME TO CALL A NEW SENIOR PASTOR?

Plymouth has been without a permanent Senior Pastor for approximately 14 months. During her time as Interim Senior Pastor, Rev. Sarai Rice has helped our congregation understand that we cannot grow under the leadership of an interim.

The Search Committee has been mindful of timing throughout this process. We are confident we took the appropriate amount of time to conduct a diligent nationwide search, while also trying to avoid unnecessary downtime throughout the course of our work.

Given all these factors, plus Plymouth’s desire to grow and live into its Strategic Plan, the Search Committee believes now is the appropriate time to call a new Senior Pastor.
WHAT CRITERIA DID THE SEARCH COMMITTEE USE TO MAKE THEIR RECOMMENDATION OF DR. WORTMAN FOR PLYMOUTH’S SENIOR PASTOR?

The Search Committee did considerable “homework” prior to beginning its search. It reviewed the survey results submitted by the congregation, the goals of the Strategic Plan, the work of the individual boards, Rev. Sarai Rice’s impressions as our Interim Senior Pastor, feedback from the Conference, as well as our own individual experiences.

Based on all of that, the Committee was in search of a pastor with strong leadership skills, vision, the ability to help us build strong youth and family programming, a focus on strategic planning, the ability to help members with their own faith formation, a focus on leadership development, the ability to deliver inspiring sermons, a commitment to operational excellence, and contagious optimism. The Search Committee is confident Dr. Wortman excels in many of these areas, while also being able to see the gifts and talents that other Pastors, staff, and lay-leaders at Plymouth have in many of these areas, too.

IF DR. WORTMAN’S CANDIDACY IS APPROVED, WHEN DOES HE BECOME SENIOR PASTOR?

If Dr. Wortman’s candidacy is approved, his first day as Senior Pastor will be November 22, 2021.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

We want to answer them! The Search Committee will be hosting a live Q&A forum Sunday, October 10, 2021 from 12:15 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. in Greenwood and via Zoom.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

Participate in the process between now and the congregational vote. Consider the Search Committee’s recommendation, knowing that it put extensive time, effort, thought, and prayer into this process. Ask questions. Pray. Most importantly, attend the congregational meeting on October 17, 2021 at 1:00 p.m.