

**BYLAWS**  
**OF**  
**PLYMOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**  
**LANSING, MICHIGAN**

**November 2011**

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## **ARTICLE I. NAME AND LOCATION**

This Church shall be called Plymouth Congregational Church. Its location and principal place of worship shall be in the City or Township of Lansing, County of Ingham, State of Michigan.

## **ARTICLE II. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Church shall be to bind together followers of Jesus Christ for the purpose of sharing in the worship of God and in making His will dominant in the lives of all people, individually and collectively, especially as that will is set forth in the life, teachings, death and living presence of Jesus Christ.

## **ARTICLE III. COVENANT**

We are banded together as a Christian Church to maintain the worship of God; to proclaim the gospel of Christ; to develop in all people a consciousness of their relations and duties to God and to each other; and to inspire them with love for truth, passion for righteousness, and enthusiasm for service. To this end, we pledge our loyalty to Christ and covenant with each other to strive to express His spirit in our individual and corporate lives; to live together as Christians; to submit ourselves to the government of this Church, working, giving, praying for its increase, its purity, its peace; and to seek in every way to make it a power for the building of the Kingdom of God.

## **ARTICLE IV. POLITY**

The government of this Church is vested solely in its members of full legal age. The Church government recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation as commonly expressed by Congregational Christian Churches through the free fellowship or association with similarly organized churches.

## **ARTICLE V. MEMBERSHIP**

- A. The membership of this Church shall be persons who are at present, members of Plymouth Congregational Church according to the membership roster in the hands of the Clerk and those persons who are hereafter approved by the Board of Deacons and have accepted its Covenant after:
  - 1. Presentation of satisfactory letters of transfer from other churches; or

2. If letters are not available, on reaffirmation of faith; or
3. On confession of faith and baptism, if not previously baptized.
4. The Board of Deacons by a two-thirds vote, may restore to the roll any person who has previously been dismissed.

B. **DUTIES:** The duties of Church membership include:

1. Active sympathy with the purpose of the Church and acceptance of its covenant
2. Regular financial support of its parish and benevolent interests consistent with the member's ability.
3. Service in its organized work.

C. **VOTING:** Voting rights shall be given to each member aged eighteen years or over. Any member may request a ballot on any vote; the request must be approved by a majority vote of members present.

D. **TERMINATION:** Membership may be terminated in any of the following ways.

1. **Death.**
2. **Letter of transfer.** Any member may transfer membership to another church upon written request by either the member or another church, delivered to the Church office.
3. **Withdrawal.** Any member may withdraw from membership upon written notice by the member, delivered to the Church office.
4. **Dismissal.** Any member whose conduct is reprehensible or unbecoming for a Church member or who for two years or more has not participated in the life of the Church, may be dismissed from membership. A written notice of not less than ten days shall be given, by the Chairman of the Board of Deacons, to any such member, of the time and place of a meeting of such Board at which the question of dismissal will be presented, and also of the opportunity for such member to reply or to be heard at such meeting. Such notice shall be by vote of two-thirds of the members of such Board present at such meeting.

## **ARTICLE VI. RESERVATION OF POWER**

All powers not delegated by this instrument are reserved to the membership of the Church, and may be exercised by voting members in meetings of the Church, of which due notice has been given, in accordance with Article X hereof.

## **ARTICLE VII. CHURCH ORGANIZATION**

- A. **THE CHURCH COUNCIL:** The Church Council shall represent the membership and act as the executive committee of the Church between Church meetings except with regard to those powers specifically entrusted to Boards and Committees provided for in these Bylaws. It shall advise and confer with the Senior Minister in visualizing the entire task of the Church, formulating and recommending programs to the members and integrating and correlating the work of all Officers, Boards and Committees.

The chairman of the Church Council shall be the Moderator. If the Moderator is absent from a meeting, the chairman of the Board of Trustees or the Chairman of the Board of Deacons, in that order, shall preside. The secretary of the Church Council shall be the Church Clerk.

The Church Council shall appoint a Pastoral Search Committee from its own members- and other Church members to investigate and recommend to the Church Council persons to fill vacancies in the office of Senior Minister.

It shall appoint a Search Committee to investigate and recommend to the Church Council persons to fill Minister positions in offices of Associate, Assistant, or Interim Ministers as they are required. The Search Committee for such a minister shall consist of members from the Church Council and other Church members including, where applicable, at least two members of the Board whose work most closely relates to that of the minister being sought. The Church Council shall send its recommendation in writing to the Board of Trustees for the execution of financial and contractual agreements.

The Church Council shall meet regularly at least once in each calendar four months on the call of the Moderator or the Senior Minister. A special meeting of the Church Council may be called by the Moderator or the Senior Minister, or by any three Church Council members who have filed a written request with the Church Clerk.

1. **Composition:** The Church Council shall consist of the Senior Minister, the Associate Minister(s), the Assistant Minister(s) (all ministers non-voting), the Moderator, the Clerk, the Treasurer, the Historian, Members-at-Large, and the Chairman or an alternate selected respectively from the following:

- a) Board of Benevolences
- b) Board of Deacons
- c) Board of Lay Ministry
- d) Board of Music
- e) Board of Religious Education
- f) Board of Trustees
- g) Bylaws Committee
- h) Fine Arts Committee
- i) Library Committee
- j) Nominating Committee
- k) Ushers Committee
- l) Altar Guild
- m) Men's Morning Manna
- n) Plymouth Memorials Foundation
- o) Women's Fellowship
- p) Any other organization of the Church which on its application has been approved by the Church Council for representation to the Church Council.

2. **Tenure:** One-third of each Board and Committee and one Member-at-Large shall be elected at each annual meeting for a three-year term and, having served one full term, shall be ineligible for two years for re-election to the same Board or Committee or position. The representatives and alternates of the Boards and other organizations shall be selected annually after the Annual Meeting of Church members. The Members-at-Large have no officers.

3. **Waiver of ineligibility.**

- a) A position that is not filled at the Annual Meeting or that later becomes vacant may be filled by a member who has completed an *elected* term on that Board or Committee. In this case the two-year ineligibility for service between terms of office does not apply.
- b) A member who has completed an *appointment* to fill a vacancy on a Board or Committee may be elected to serve on the same Board or Committee without a two-year interim.
- c) After a member completes a term in either of the conditions listed above, the two-year ineligibility clause again applies.

B. **BOARDS AND COMMITTEES:** When a new Board or Committee is created, or a present one is enlarged, one-third of the new members shall be elected for terms for one, two and three years. When a Board or Committee is reduced in size, present serving members shall continue to serve until their terms expire and new members shall be elected or appointed based upon the new size of the Board or Committee. Minutes required of each Board and Committee to be turned in to the Church office within seven (7) days after each meeting. Each Board and Committee shall annually elect a chairman and a vice-chairman from its members. The Board or Committee may appoint a secretary who may or may not be a member of the Board or Committee and who shall serve at the pleasure of the Board or Committee.

1. The **Board of Benevolences** shall consist of nine members, three of whom shall be elected annually. The Board shall annually elect a chairman and a vice-chairman from its members. The Board may appoint a secretary who may or may not be a member of the Board and who shall serve at the pleasure of the Board.

This Board shall:

- a) Manage the benevolence plans of the Church;
  - b) Prepare the annual Benevolences budget for Board of Trustees consideration;
  - c) Recommend objectives for support by regular or special offerings;
  - d) Oversee the apportionment of all funds allocated for Benevolences;
  - e) Promote missionary interests and systematic giving to Benevolences;
  - f) Inspire understanding of Christian stewardship ideas.
2. The **Board of Deacons** shall consist of fifteen members. One-third shall be elected each year at the Annual Meeting for a term of three years. The Board shall annually elect a chairman and a vice-chairman from its members. The Board may appoint a secretary who may or may not be a member of the Board and who shall serve at the pleasure of the Board.

This Board, with the Senior Minister, shall be responsible for the worship and spiritual activities of the congregation, including baptisms and communion; for temporary supply of the pulpit, worship material, and altar supplies; for being aware of the needs of all Church members, especially the disabled, the sick, and the needy; and for providing fellowship opportunities for the Church family.



This Board shall be responsible for developing and maintaining an active membership, for approving persons for membership, and for dismissal or reinstatement of church members.

3. The **Board of Lay Ministry** shall consist of those persons Commissioned as Lay Ministers and Ministers Licensed by this Church.
  - a) Each member of the Board shall be a member of Plymouth Congregational Church and shall have
    - (1) Completed a course of study approved by the Board of Religious Education and the Senior Minister
    - (2) Received a recommendation for Commissioning by the Senior Minister
    - (3) Been granted affirmation of call and preparedness by the Board of Deacons
  - b) Under the direction of the Senior Minister (or the Board of Deacons if there is no Senior Minister) Lay Ministers may
    - (1) Participate in worship liturgy
    - (2) Take the Lord's Supper sacrament to homebound members
    - (3) Assist in teaching Confirmation Classes
    - (4) Lead classes and workshops
    - (5) Call on Church members
    - (6) Serve as specialized Church leaders
    - (7) Supply the pulpit when the ordained minister(s) are temporarily absent.
  - c) Licensure is the process through which a candidate is certified by this Church as qualified to preach the Gospel and to serve as a Christian minister. A candidate may become a Licensed Minister when approved by the Board of Deacons, the Church Council, and the Church membership.
  - d) Licensed Ministers may perform all of the duties of Lay Ministers and may also perform weddings and funeral/memorial services, as well as administer the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Lay Ministers may assist in the performance of these duties. Licensed Ministers may be commended for pastoral service to sister Congregational and other Churches.

- e) Members of the Board shall be removed at their own request, upon a majority vote of the Board of Deacons at the request of the Senior Minister, or whenever their active membership in this Church shall cease.

4. The **Board of Music** shall consist of nine members, three of whom shall be elected each year at the Annual Meeting. The Board shall annually elect from its members a chairman and a vice-chairman. The Board shall appoint a secretary who may or may not be a member of the Board and who shall serve at the pleasure of the Board. This Board, with the Director (or Minister) of Music, is responsible for the ministry of music in Church and parish life.

The Board and the Director (or Minister) of Music shall

- a) Prepare and recommend to the Board of Trustees an annual budget.
- b) Plan and schedule music events.
- c) Be responsible for providing hosts for music events.
- d) Invite, and respond to, input from members of the congregation regarding the ministry of music.
- e) Establish current policies and engage in long-term planning for the ministry of music.

The Board shall be instrumental in appointing search committees for the positions of Director (or Minister) of Music, Assistant Director of Music, and Organist and be involved in any decisions concerning dismissal of same. The Board will remain apprised of the maintenance and upkeep of musical instruments and equipment.

5. The **Board of Religious Education** shall consist of nine members, three of whom are elected each year to serve three-year terms. The Board shall annually elect a chairman and a vice-chairman from its members. The Board may appoint a secretary who may or may not be a member of the Board and who shall serve at the pleasure of the Board.

The Board shall formulate and administer, with the assistance of the ministerial staff, education programs for the children, youth, and adults. These programs include Sunday School, Pilgrim Fellowship organizations, and adult Bible studies and forums. The Board shall recommend appointment and dismissal of teachers and youth advisors to the appropriate staffing personnel, namely the Board of Trustees in the case of paid positions and the Director of Religious Education in the case of volunteer positions.

6. The **Board of Trustees** shall consist of nine Trustees, and the Treasurer. One-third of the Board shall be elected each year at the Annual Meeting for a term of three years. The Board shall annually elect a chairman and a vice-chairman from its members. The Board may appoint a recording secretary who may or may not be a member of the Board and who shall serve at the pleasure of the Board, but who must be a member of Plymouth Congregational Church.

This Board shall exercise all statutory power and duties with respect to Church property and secular business matters, including the power to borrow without security, but shall have no power to buy, sell, or mortgage real estate without specific authority by vote of the Church.

The Board shall manage and safeguard the funds of the Church, designating depositories, authorizing routines for approval and payment of bills and salaries, and shall secure an independent audit of the books of the Treasurer at least once every six years and at such other times as the Board of Trustees shall deem necessary, and an independent review, with recommendations, of the books of the Treasurer at least once every two years when there is no audit. Each audit period shall begin the timeframe for the next independent review, and each independent review period shall encompass a full fiscal year or at least 18 months. The audit and reviews shall be conducted by a Certified Public Accountant.

After a ministerial candidate has been recommended by the Pastoral Search Committee and the Church Council and approved by the Church membership, the Board shall send a written communication outlining the terms of employment to the candidate, and finalize the employment contract. The Board shall employ, discharge, and fix the compensation of all other Church employees in consultation with the Senior Minister, conveying written job descriptions, except as otherwise provided in these Bylaws.

Any action taken by the Board of Trustees in the exercise of its duties shall remain in effect until formally rescinded by that Board or a succeeding Board of Trustees.

7. The **Bylaws Committee** shall consist of six members, two of whom shall be elected each year at the Annual Meeting. The Committee shall annually elect from its members a chairman, a vice-chairman, and an alternate to Church Council. The Committee shall appoint a secretary who may or may not be a member of the Committee and who shall serve at the pleasure of the Committee. The Committee, at least once each year, shall review the Bylaws

and recommend to the Church Council and the Church Membership proposed changes in the Bylaws after consulting with any Board, Committee, Organization or individual directly affected by such changes. The Bylaws Committee shall be responsible for updating and distributing the Handbook and Organization Chart, subject to the approval of the Church Council.

8. The **Fine Arts Committee** shall consist of six members, two of whom each year shall be elected by the congregation to serve three years. Nominees for the Committee shall demonstrate to the Nominating Committee a reasonable knowledge of aesthetics. The Moderator and Chairman of the House Committee of the Board of Trustees, shall be non-voting ex officio members of the Committee. The Committee shall annually elect a chairman and vice-chairman from its members and may appoint a secretary who may or may not be a member of the Committee and who shall serve at the pleasure of the Committee.

All matters and questions of a fine arts and design nature related to the present Church structure or which shall be erected upon property owned by the Church or landscaping of said property shall be approved for acceptance by the Fine Arts Committee and recommended to the Board of Trustees for final action. All matters and questions of a fine arts and design nature shall be first referred to the Fine Arts Committee, which shall report its findings and decisions as expeditiously as possible to the Board of Trustees. No work of fine art shall be erected or placed on or upon any Church property, removed, demolished, relocated or altered in any way until the same and its proposed location have been approved by the Fine Arts Committee and recommended to the Board of Trustees for final action.

The Committee shall prepare and maintain a policy statement in accordance with directions approved by the Church covering details of procedures, factors of design which act as bases for judging, and scope of the art and design to be reviewed. For the purpose of this statement, fine art shall include, but not be limited to, the following: ceramics, drawing, fabric art, photography, painting, printmaking, and sculpture.

9. The purpose of the **Library Committee** is to promote interest in reading, to maintain the Library collection, and to promote a quiet environment for individuals who use the Library materials. The Chairman will appoint new committee members, with the approval of current committee members, based on their interest and the well-being of the Library. The Chairman will represent the Library on the Church Council. New materials will be acquired through donations and memorial gifts.

10. The **Nominating Committee** shall consist of six members, two of whom shall be elected each year at the Annual Meeting. The Committee shall annually elect a chairman and a vice-chairman from its members. The Committee may appoint a secretary who may or may not be a member of the Committee and who shall serve at the pleasure of the Committee. The Committee shall seek to discover leadership for the various phases of church life and program.
11. The **Ushers Committee** shall consist of three members, one of whom shall be elected each year at the Annual Meeting. The Committee shall recruit members from the congregation who will act as ushers for Sunday services and other services as requested. The ushers shall provide support and direction in emergency situations. The Committee shall select a Head Usher, who will organize and direct all ushering activities and represent the Committee on the Church Council. The Committee shall select a vice-chairman, who may also be the alternate representative to the Church Council.
12. The **Altar Guild** shall consist of three members, one of whom shall be elected at the Annual Meeting each year for a term of three years. The Altar Guild shall be responsible for coordinating the donation of flowers, maintenance and placement of altar effects and the delivery of the donated flowers. The Guild shall annually elect a chairman from its members.

#### C. **ORGANIZATIONS:**

1. **Men's Morning Manna** is an organization for men who meet regularly for food and fellowship and to strengthen the spiritual dimensions of each individual through presentations and discussion of issues affecting their lives. They shall annually elect a chairman and vice-chairman. The vice-chairman shall act as alternate to Church Council.
2. The **Women's Fellowship** shall include all women members of Plymouth Congregational Church. The Women's Fellowship shall annually elect a chairman and may appoint a secretary. The purpose of this organization shall be to enlist the women of the Church in a fellowship of worship, education, service, and giving, and to undergird the programs of the Church as it serves the cause of Christ in the community and throughout the world. Circles shall be organized to carry on the work of the fellowship in smaller groups; membership in the circles shall be voluntary. The Executive Board consisting of the elected officers, the presidents of Circles and chairmen of standing and special committees, shall administer the business affairs of the

Women's Fellowship and shall have general supervision of the work and programs.

D. **SENIOR MINISTER:** The Senior Minister, in conjunction with the Board of Deacons, shall be responsible for the spiritual welfare of the Church.

1. **Responsibilities:** The Senior Minister shall

- a) be in charge of all services of worship
- b) preach the gospel,
- c) administer the sacraments,
- d) be active in pastoral service to the members of the parish,
- e) seek to enlist followers of Christ,
- f) coordinate the activities of the Church in cooperation with the Church Council and the various Boards and Committees and Organizations,
- g) supervise the work of all employees of the Church
- h) be a non-voting member of the Church Council and of all Boards, Committees, and Organizations.

2. **Call:** The Senior Minister shall be called by majority vote of voting members present at a Church meeting to which, on due notice, the call is recommended by the Church Council to the Board of Trustees.

3. **Tenure:** The Senior Minister's call shall be as defined by contract. The Senior Minister's contract may be terminated at any time upon at least sixty days notice given to the Church Council by the Senior Minister, or given to the Senior Minister by the majority vote of voting members present at a special Church meeting called for the purpose.

E. **ASSOCIATE OR ASSISTANT MINISTERS:** The Church Council, with the advice and consent of the Senior Minister, may select and call Associate or Assistant Ministers, who shall be responsible to the Senior Minister. Their tenure may be terminated by the Senior Minister after consultation with the Moderator, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and the Chairman of the Board of Deacons.

F. **MINISTER EMERITUS:** The Church Council may, at its discretion, appoint a former minister of Plymouth Congregational Church to the position of Minister Emeritus.

G. **LAY OFFICERS:** Each lay officer shall be elected to a one-year term by the Church at the Annual Meeting.

1. **Moderator:** The Moderator shall be an ex officio non-voting member of all Boards and Committees. The Moderator shall preside at meetings of the Church and shall be Chairman of the Church Council. The Moderator shall appoint a Chairman of any Board or Committee that has no chairman in place within 21 days after the Annual Meeting in May. If the Moderator is absent from a meeting, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees or the Chairman of the Board of Deacons, in that order, shall preside. A Moderator who has served two consecutive terms shall for one year be ineligible for re-election.
2. **Clerk:** The Clerk shall act as secretary of the Church corporation, keep records and minutes of meetings of members, issue letters of transfer as directed by the Board of Deacons and give legal notice of meetings. During the absence or disability of the Clerk, the Moderator may name a Clerk pro tem.
3. **Treasurer:** The Treasurer shall have custody of the monies and securities of the Church, except as otherwise provided, pursuant to Article VII, paragraph B6, and keep such separate accounts as the funds require, disbursing same as authorized by the Board of Trustees. The Treasurer shall keep proper records of all receipts and disbursements, and annually give a written financial report as the Board of Trustees shall require. The written financial report shall be furnished at meetings of the Church Council and the Board of Trustees. The Treasurer shall be an ex officio voting member of the Board of Trustees.
4. **The Historian** shall have custody of the Church historical records, books, pictures, letters and other memorabilia in the Church files. The Historian shall add to these any current items which will make the records complete for future reference.

## **ARTICLE VIII. VACANCIES IN OFFICE**

Vacancies occurring during the term of office of any lay officers or member of a Board or Committee shall be filled by appointment of the Nominating Committee. Appointments are effective immediately on the date of the Nominating Committee action. Such an appointee shall serve the unexpired term.

If a Board or Committee member is absent without prior notice from three consecutive regularly scheduled meetings, the chairman of that Board or Committee may excuse the member from service and then declare a vacancy. The chairman must send a written report to the chairman of the Nominating Committee and a written notice to the Board or Committee member being dismissed.