

Plymouth Members & Friends,

The Moderators and the Open & Affirming Team from Plymouth Congregational Church are convening gatherings during February to gather feedback from the congregation about a proposed issue position statement advocating for transgender/nonbinary youth. Council will consider this feedback in their discernment process in February & March 2023.

Sunday morning Fellowship Forums will be dedicated to discussing the details and purpose of this position statement on **February 12th and February 26th from 10:30 am-11:20 am** in the Heritage Room between worship services.

There will also be an opportunity to gather on ZOOM on Wednesday **February 15th from 7:00pm-8:00pm**. Join the meeting at this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88499627214>

Feedback is also welcome via email to Devon Kim and Gretchen Meyer (gretchenmeyer6@gmail.com & devonhkim@gmail.com).

Save your preferred date and give us your feedback. As a part of a congregational church, your participation is vital.

The position statement & “frequently asked questions” are below.

Sincerely,

Plymouth’s Moderator Team (Devon Kim, Scott Morgan, & Derrick Hurst)

Plymouth’s O&A Team (Gretchen Meyer, Jen Parson, Becky Eason)

Plymouth's Open & Affirming Team
Transgender/Nonbinary Youth Position Statement
January 2023

“Frequently Asked Questions”

1) Does a position statement (in the name of Plymouth) allow lobbying on Plymouth's behalf about a proposed bill or to a legislative body?

No. There is a separate process for potential lobbying outlined in the Advocacy Process Document (which was approved by Council in 2022).

2) Why is the Open & Affirming Team proposing this position statement if the transgender/non binary youth statement is so close to the language of Plymouth's Open & Affirming Statement?

There are a few additional phrases that specifically support the trans/nonbinary youth community within Plymouth and outside of our congregation.

3) How will this position statement impact our Open & Affirming Statement?

Our Open & Affirming Statement is a position statement in its own right (by congregational vote). The nonbinary/transgender youth position statement is offered in collaboration with the Open & Affirming statement.

4) Why are transgender/nonbinary youth at such risk?

“A 2020 peer-reviewed study by The Trevor Project's researchers, published in the Journal of Adolescent Health, found that

transgender and nonbinary youth were 2 to 2.5 times as likely to experience depressive symptoms, seriously consider suicide, and attempt suicide compared to their cisgender LGBTQ peers.

In particular, Black transgender and nonbinary youth report disproportionate rates of suicide risk — with 59% seriously considering suicide and more than 1 in 4 (26%) attempting suicide in the past year.”

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/article/facts-about-lgbt-q-youth-suicide/>

5) In what settings could this statement be used?

A few examples might include: internal use in our church communications, at our pride party community event, in a local newspaper, at prayer vigils with other non profit mission partners (e.g. KIFA), on social media etc.

6) What does “nonbinary” mean?

Non-binary is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity doesn't sit comfortably with 'man' or 'woman.' Non-binary identities are varied and can include people who identify with some aspects of binary identities, while others reject them entirely.

7) What does “transgender” mean?

A transgender person is someone whose gender identity or gender expression does not correspond with their sex assigned at birth.

8) What happens next?

Council will determine the next steps in this process after the congregation has had ample time to give its feedback (in accordance with the Advocacy Process Document's direction).

O&A Position Statement
on Transgender & Nonbinary Youth
Draft January 2023

“Plymouth Congregational Church, United Church of Christ affirms that members of **the transgender & nonbinary community** share with all others the worth associated with being unique individuals created by God. **We especially welcome & affirm the transgender & nonbinary youth community considering the struggles which they currently face.** This congregation joyfully and unequivocally welcomes **the transgender and nonbinary community** to share in the life, leadership and blessings of participation in our community of faith. **We also commit ourselves to the work of creating a world in which transgender and nonbinary people are not only safe, but a world in which they thrive.”**

The portions in black are from Plymouth’s Open & Affirming Statement.

The portions in blue are additions or edits.

Advocacy Process Discernment Policy (Excerpt)

D. Issue Position Statements in the Name of Plymouth

- 1.) As used in this policy, “in the name of Plymouth” includes:
 - (a) Stating explicitly that an opinion reflects that of Plymouth Church.
 - (b) Using Plymouth communication channels to issue a statement without noting that the statement does not necessarily reflect the views of Plymouth.
 - (c) Using the name “Plymouth,” the Plymouth logo, or part of the Plymouth logo in such a way that a reasonable person would assume Plymouth Church supports a communication.
 - (d) Using a church-provided banner at a rally, march, or other gathering in such a way that a reasonable person would assume Plymouth supports the message of the gathering.
- 2.) Issue position statements given in the name of Plymouth must have the prior approval of the Church Council.
- 3.) The draft issue position statement shall be submitted to the Clerk of the Council.
- 4.) Council shall publish the draft issue position statement at least two weeks before the meeting at which it will consider the request.
- 5.) Council shall provide a process to allow Plymouth members to ask questions and provide input for any issue position statement request prior to its consideration.

E. Council Considerations

Factors used by Council in evaluating a draft issue position statement shall include the following:

- 1) Any relevant existing, broader declaration or statement agreed to by Council or the Congregation at a called meeting.
- 2) Resolutions and statements adopted by the national UCC or the Kansas Oklahoma Conference.
- 3) The mission and goals of Plymouth.
- 4) Mission and Service Board’s list of priorities for social justice issues.
- 5) The diverse views held by Plymouth members.
- 6) Whether the request warrants consideration by the full Congregation at a called meeting.