

2/26/2023

Draft Plymouth Bylaws Task Force Report 2023

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Executive Summary Draft 2022-2023 Plymouth Bylaws Task Force Report

Our task force was charged by Council with reviewing Plymouth's Bylaws. We always kept in mind the language of the Constitution, "The governing authority of the Church is in its members, who exercise the right of control in all its affairs...." (Article III. Polity)

Our process was to explore where Plymouth governance currently is, both in structure and in practice. We would then review the history of Plymouth governance to look for clues as to how we got to where we are. We would then discuss issues and possible improvements.

To explore where we are, we surveyed almost every current Plymouth member who had been a Moderator, member of Council, or a chair of a board or committee in past 10 to 15 years. All of the task force members have been one of these things, but we needed more insight and were lucky with the quantity and quality of the responses we received.

We found that we have a vibrant church. But we also found issues that warranted consideration:

- Bylaws are not easily accessible so rarely consulted;
- Policy is neither defined nor collected;
- There is confusion on the roles of Council, boards, committees, and staff;
- There are a lot of meetings;
- There is a lack of goal setting;
- We are heavily dependent on a few individuals who have stepped up.

Our review of Plymouth's history showed:

- An evolution through the decades of moving from a church overseen, managed, and operated by members to one where gradually more and more staff were added to take over much of the management and some of the operations.
- Council had been – but no longer is – a large "planning and coordinating" body with the decisions made by Deacons, Trustees, and a Christian Education body.
- Beginning in 1976 an additional semi-independent board was added with more added through the 80s and 90s. These boards also evolved from running things to becoming more of an advisory group helping with implementation of staff efforts.
- The Trustees were renamed Stewardship in 1988 but retained the financial and facility areas.
- Council members were named the trustees in 1988 with final say over boards but not designated as the governing body. It remained designed as a large coordinating body without in-depth knowledge of church finances. Goal setting is infrequent. Annual turnover is high.

Based on these finding, the task force drafted bylaws and policies that:

1. Reduce Council from 17 or 18 voting members to 10 members. Reduce Council turnover each year from more than 50% to 33%.
2. Blend Council and Stewardship into one true governing body with the duties and fiduciary responsibilities of trustees, combining the oversight of the church program and the secular functions.
3. Provide a clearer goal setting and strategy process.
4. Transform remaining semi-independent boards into Standing Ministries that continue to provide advice, feedback, and energy.
5. Create new Ministry Teams to encourage members to find ways to live their faith. Fewer meetings and more doing.
6. Develop a policy process and move many details to flexible policy.

Draft 2022-2023 Plymouth Bylaws Task Force Report to Council

Introduction

When Council made the decision to create a task force to study Plymouth's Bylaws, those of us "fortunate few" who were selected to undertake that task knew we were embarking on a bit of an odyssey.

We wrote in our initial memo in October of 2021:

It is, to put it mildly, a daunting task to approach. There are many landmines waiting for any group that has the conceit to think it knows best how Plymouth should be governed and the best way to implement that chosen system. Yet, it is also a task with powerful possibilities for strengthening and invigorating an already dynamic church.

To keep us tethered to reality, we identified our guiding principle in recognizing that which our Constitution puts so simply: "The governing authority of the Church is in its members, who exercise the right of control in all its affairs...." (Article III. Polity).

While the Constitution goes on to state that "The Church Council functions as the trustees of the Church..." it quickly clarifies that "All acts of the Council are subject to the will of the membership."

Nothing we would propose as a task force would attempt to modify this foundation of Congregationalism in general and Plymouth in particular. We trust that our fellow members understand our intentions even if they may be troubled by our proposals.

Process

The lay leadership of Plymouth has had serious discussions about reviewing our Bylaws since at least 2017. The roles of Council, Stewardship, other boards, Treasurer, Pastor, and staff were muddled and lacked clarity. Who was in charge of what? Leadership was diffused to the point of confusion. We had become heavily dependent on individuals instead of a system. Policies were not defined but often came up preceded by something like "I think there is a policy...."

As different events occurred that upset the balance, some of this confusion was exposed. People rallied and worked to patch different problems but we, as a membership, needed to review our governing documents and see how we could systematize these patches and strengthen other areas that would help us to grow, better serve our mission, and provide the flexibility needed to adapt to changing circumstances.

However, any plans to review the Bylaws were put on hold by the change in pastors and then Covid. After her arrival, Valerie was hesitant when the idea resurfaced. It is a basic rule of incoming leadership to not make drastic changes until people get to know you and you get to know them. Alas for poor Valerie, this is a congregational church with a congregation that has its own ideas. She has been a good sport about it and extremely helpful as a resource. Nonetheless, this is a project of the congregation, not the pastors.

The reality is that Plymouth has a lot of strengths. Our task force was not given the assignment to try to revive a failing patient. Accordingly, we also needed to take care to do no harm. If something is working,

don't mess it up. We are building on a foundation built by decades of amazing volunteers who cared and care deeply about Plymouth.

So we began the process.

Our first task was research. Before trying to decide on any changes, we wanted to fully understand the current state of Plymouth governance and how it got there.

Current State of Plymouth Governance

To help understand the current state, we decided to survey everyone who in the past 10 to 15 years had been a Moderator, a member of Council, or a chair of a board or a committee. Various members of the task force met with some, and for all, we sent out a questionnaire. We were extremely pleased with the quantity and quality of responses. Most of us on the task force have been in at least one of these positions, but the insights from others very much expanded our views and understanding. This included the very popular responses of "I don't remember ever looking at the Bylaws" and "I could never find a copy of the Bylaws." Even these answers told us something about our Bylaws.

Among the helpful insights we received, one of note came from the Plymouth Continuity and Operations Planning (or PCOP) Committee, whose work of systematizing operations had been tremendous:

One focus of PCOP was to clarify our governance structure, particularly as it pertained to the roles of boards and committees and how they work together. We also developed a governance summary to be shared with congregants so they could better understand these roles and responsibilities. In creating an org chart based on the Bylaws, we encountered some confusion on reporting relationships that we felt needed to be addressed when the Bylaws were next revised.

My experience was that some policies were unclear, or in some cases, non-existent. I remember some frustration that we didn't have a Policy Manual.

Just a sampling of other responses provides a helpful overview of some of the thoughts and concerns of a diverse group of leaders:

- It seems to me that term [policy] was used rather loosely to explain or justify continuing to do things the way they were currently being done. Sometimes it was church office policy, sometimes a Church Council policy, sometimes a Senior Pastor policy.
- The Bylaws provide direction and structure to how to govern... however, the Bylaws are specific at a level that it is sometimes hard to understand who is responsible for what and creates a siloed environment.
- Many times in recent years I have asked to see the policies for Plymouth and have never been given a list or seen all the documents.... I would like to see all the policies collated and filed in one location that is able to be accessed by church members.
- The thing that was seared in my brain during my time as Moderator is that process is very important at Plymouth. As a congregational church, the people run the church and the Bylaws were there to ensure that a process was followed to make decisions and give everyone an opportunity to voice their opinion.

- Council is responsible for long-range plans. I would like to see more explicit wording in this item so that we are always working from a current strategic plan developed and approved by the congregation.
- I recently recognized that current Bylaws do not match expectations and functions of the Endowment Committee.... The Endowment Committee continues to keep the best interests of Plymouth in mind even though Bylaws and committee actions don't totally jibe. And the role and title of "committee" and "board" needs to be consistent.
- "Policy" is often used as a way of saying "It's not written down anywhere, but that's how we've always done it."
- Bylaws helpful at times when looking for information such as governance requirements, board responsibilities, requirements for annual meeting. Other decisions were hindered due to ambiguous language or outdated information. Would like to see digital and accessible hard copy... Needs to be clear distinction between policies and Bylaws.

Three responses from different people give a good example of how members of boards other than Stewardship view their role:

- Mainly support Kim and all of the things that he accomplishes at Church.
- We assist Kim in a broad range of areas.
- Work with Kim to plan music and fine arts programs and budgets.

Out of these and the other responses as well as the task force members' own experiences, several issues arose that warranted further study. In addition, two additional issues clearly needed to be addressed: the Bylaws need to be easily accessible and policies must be defined and collected.

The other issues are a little foggier, but there is a shared experience of confusion and frustration at times with a lack of clarity in the roles and relationship of Council, Stewardship, other Boards, Committees, Officers, and staff. Part of that is just the nature of a larger church with a lot of volunteer workers. But the task force came to believe the confusion and frustration was based in something about the structure of the Bylaws.

Yet we also knew and learned that there are many good things happening within Plymouth. Beyond the vibrancy of the life of the church, even with Covid, individuals and groups stepped up and made some important improvements in things such as budgeting and the presentation of the budget, the elimination of the debt, PCOP, and a number of others.

To better understand the structure of the Bylaws and search for more clarification of the "foggy" issues, we wanted to learn and better understand the history of governance at Plymouth to understand how we got to this point.

History

To learn the history, we reviewed Council minutes and did a deep dive into former Bylaws.

We reviewed Council minutes from 2001, 2010, and 2019 in an effort to see how the actions of Council were affected by governance in general and Bylaws in particular. We learned of policies passed that we could not find, but we primarily learned that confusion regarding Bylaws was not something new.

With regard to Bylaws, we chose to look at the Bylaws of 1913, 1936, 1944, 1954, 1961, 1968, 1976, 1984, and 1988. Kudos to our amazing Historian Susan McCarthy and her predecessors including Al Sellen, who made this seemingly impossible task much easier.

We ended our Bylaws review with 1988 because, although there have been amendments, there has not been a thorough “what would we write now if we were starting over” sort of look since 1988. We were fortunate to have an extensive style review in 2014 that helped clean up a number of stylistic inconsistencies and language confusion. Yet the framework of the Bylaws was left intact.

The first thing that jumps out from our history is that our governing documents have, not surprisingly, evolved over the past 170 years or so. Decent records are available from the 1880s on. Skimming through these is both an exercise in humility (no work stands unaltered for long) and in appreciation (for the many before us who put so much into making our church ever stronger).

The base of our current Bylaws is found in the revision of 1988, amended at least 11 times since. This followed major revisions in 1961, 1968, and 1976. All of these versions were amended throughout their existence. Reading through these (as well as the versions that preceded them) helps the reader appreciate that change is inevitable and not much is unchangeable. One should never accept “we’ve always done it this way” as any kind of meaningful argument against change. The only thing we have always done is to change the language almost constantly. That is until after 1988.

This review of Plymouth’s history revealed a gradual evolution as Plymouth adapted to the changing environment. This evolving “structure” was not rebuilt from the ground up but rather by adding rooms, then floors, then a shop out back but still built around the basic structural concept of boards running everything but slowly having more paid staff come aboard to manage.

Initially Plymouth, like many such churches of the time, had one paid minister and a fleet of active volunteers running everything. The unified governing body was the membership in called meetings. While this is still true, the membership then viewed it as hands-on governing. They met more often and exercised their governing authority directly. The 1913 Bylaws called for business meetings of the membership to be held every “Wednesday evening next preceding the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.”

In these 1913 Bylaws, Plymouth had a Pastor, a Board of Deacons, a Board of Trustees, and a Bible School. The Pastor preached, the Deacons ran the church program or spiritual affairs, the Trustees ran all secular affairs, and the Bible School taught the children. There was a Prudential Board that contained all Deacons, all Trustees, the Pastor, all church-school officers, and others. Its job was to coordinate. The boards ran everything, all under the regular business meetings of the membership.

Gradually, committees were formed under Deacons to handle certain areas but still controlled by Deacons. First was Music, then a forerunner of Mission, and then various others but all still answering to the Deacons or Trustees. These two boards were independent other than coordinating through the Prudential Board and answering to the membership.

This independence was a necessity in a church where the boards were actually the “staff” running things. Deacons, Trustees (think Stewardship), and Christian Education made day-to-day decisions on everything from worship to Sunday School to music selection to building use to hirings. The Prudential Board was where the leaders of all these groups and others would meet to discuss general functions and goals with the pastor. Prudential was always large to ensure coordination.

In 1961, the Prudential Board was renamed Council and called the “governing board,” but its duties remained to plan and coordinate. Deacons, Trustees, and Christian Education still ran things with operational help from committees. The next big rewrite in 1968 dropped “governing board” language. We don’t know why, but we can guess it was because it wasn’t true.

Even in 1976, in an effort to expand Council’s role, language was added to Council’s description stating: “In conjunction with the Senior Pastor, Council shall recommend both the hiring and termination of employees to the Board of Trustees.” The Senior Pastor and Council were involved with employment decisions, but these decisions were the job of the Board of Trustees.

From a governance standpoint, we have been in a multi-decade transition from lay volunteers running operations to a professional staff running operations overseen by lay volunteers. All along it has been lay volunteers doing much of the work of implementing our mission no matter who planned the activity.

Plymouth has slowly changed to reflect how Americans in general have changed their involvement with community organizations. Our personal time became more splintered. We were more interested in doing things than in meeting about things when it came to our volunteer efforts. This is particularly the case with educated women after they were, finally and slowly, able to enter the workforce in meaningful ways. Great for women, hard on a church dependent on smart women to organize everything (granted they still disproportionately organize everything).

By the mid-1980s, this change was beginning to be felt. The 1988 rewrite of the Bylaws had the stated intention to make Council the trustees of the church and, in effect, the governing body. As mentioned before, Council had been a planning and advisory body of all the various pockets of authority. In 1988, it was to be a true governing body. However, the 1988 Bylaws left the fundamental financial affairs normally assigned to trustees with the newly renamed Trustees, now known as the Stewardship Board. Further, Council was not specifically named as the governing body and was left with a membership of a large group of people with a high yearly turnover rather than the more typical, smaller, governing body.

While the Trustees became Stewardship, their duties stayed the same. Deacons, which had initially been charged with a broad set of responsibilities, had slowly been carved up into committees that themselves became boards starting in 1976. Mission in 1976, Membership and Music and Fine Arts in 1988, and Fellowship in 1991. Yet Deacons and the new boards still retained their independence from Council.

So where are we now? Our membership has not and has not wanted to meet in the frequent business meetings that would be necessary to be the original unified governing body. The membership is in charge, but it delegates most operational decisions always subject to its direction and review. We have a large Council designed as a planning and coordinating body with a large annual turnover but named the governing body. The formerly broadly responsible Deacons have been split into several semi-independent boards dealing with a specific narrow area with most members viewing their role as providing advice and support to a staff member. Board of Trustees still operates very much as it has for decades on secular issues but is called Stewardship and with a large Council layered over it.

Drafting Current Practice into Bylaws and Policies

An overarching concept to keep in mind is that the task force has worked to draft language that reflects the way Plymouth has already evolved in how it operates. While the proposed changes may appear

significant, we believe we can show that while the changes may be significant, those changes have already occurred. We are just trying to recognize those changes in the written structure.

An example of changing structure to meet practice may be helpful to show what we mean. Because some of us are a certain age, when we attended KU not all of today's sidewalks were in place. KU's enrollment more than doubled from 1960 to 15 years later in 1975, growing from around 9,300 to almost 22,000. That's a lot more feet walking around Mount Oread. Paths would develop and eventually the university would recognize those paths as where students wanted to walk and would put in a paved sidewalk.

This recognition of existing practices is what we believe we are trying to do in drafting our Bylaws. It is not so much that we are proposing restructuring Plymouth as it is that we are recognizing how Plymouth has restructured itself already in its practices.

So now that you have all been enthralled by Plymouth history and our current practices – what are we proposing?

While the details are in a Detailed Explanation by Article and other accompanying documents, the task force drafted Bylaws and policies that:

1. Reduce Council from 17 or 18 voting members to 10 members. Reduce Council turnover each year from more than 50% to 33%.
2. Blend Council and Stewardship into one true governing body with the duties and fiduciary responsibilities of trustees, combining the oversight of the church program and the secular functions.
3. Provide a clearer goal setting and strategy process.
4. Transform remaining semi-independent boards into Standing Ministries that continue to provide advice, feedback, and energy.
5. Create new Ministry Teams to encourage members to find ways to live their faith. Fewer meetings and more doing.
6. Develop a policy process and moving many details to flexible policy.

Respectfully Submitted

Bylaws Task Force

Scott Morgan, Chair Rich Bireta Erika Dvorske Doug Eason Larissa Long
Elinor Schroeder Valerie Miller-Coleman Liz Smith

The Constitution of Plymouth Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Lawrence, Kansas

~~Approved by Vote of the Membership on November 13, 1988~~

Article I. Name

The name of this Church shall be Plymouth Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Lawrence, Kansas, commonly known since its organization in 1854 as "Plymouth Church" or "Plymouth."

Article II. Purpose

~~It shall be the~~ purpose of this Plymouth Church is "to support the worship of God and the work of the Gospel." (Charter of Plymouth Congregational Church, December 14, 1882).

Article III. Polity

The ~~GOVERNING AUTHORITY~~ governing authority of ~~the Plymouth~~ Church is vested in its members, who exercise the right of control in all its affairs, subject in legal matters to such regulations and obligations as may be required by reason of its incorporation under the laws of the State of Kansas. The membership assembled in a Called Congregational Meeting shall elect officers; ~~and~~ approve the annual budget, call the Senior Pastor, and authorize acquisition, disposition and mortgaging of real property. These membership responsibilities shall not be delegated.

~~The governing body of Plymouth Church is Council. The voting members of The Church~~ Council functions as are the trustees of the Church; ~~Council and~~ shall implement the decisions of the membership. The membership may delegate responsibilities other than responsibilities of the membership to the ~~Church~~ Council. All acts of ~~the~~ Council are subject to the will of the membership.

Plymouth Church is part of the United Church of Christ, and its relationship to that denomination shall be sustained in accordance with those portions of the Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ relating to local churches, originally adopted July 4, 1961, or as later amended.

Article IV. Covenant of Faith

The members of this Plymouth Church are united by the acceptance of a mutual covenant, which is as follows:

In the love of truth and in the spirit of Jesus, we unite for the worship of God and the service of all. We seek to know the will of God and to walk in God's ways, made known or to be made known to us; to love one another; to proclaim the Gospel to all the world; to work and pray for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of justice, the reign of peace, and the realization of our shared humanity. And we look with faith for the triumph of righteousness and the gift of life eternal. Amen.

Article V. Members

The members of ~~the Plymouth~~ Church are those persons who have ~~subscribed to~~made public acceptance of the polity and covenant, have been received by ~~the Plymouth~~ Church as prescribed in the Bylaws, and participate actively in the life of ~~the Plymouth~~ Church.

Article VI. Bylaws

The work of ~~the Plymouth~~ Church shall be conducted in accordance with ~~the Bylaws appended to this Constitution~~ approved or amended by a majority of the members present and voting at a Called Congregational Meeting having a quorum of 10% of the membership as reported at the most recent Annual Meeting.

Article VII Amendments

Amendments to the Constitution shall be by two-thirds of the members present and voting at a Called Congregational Meeting having a quorum of ~~ten percent~~10% of the membership as reported at the ~~last~~ most recent Annual Meeting.

Article VIII. Adoption

This Constitution is adopted and is effective as of this ~~13th day of November, 1988~~ _____.

Plymouth Congregational Church Draft Bylaws

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The Bylaws of Plymouth Congregational Church

Article I. Mission

Consistent with the Purpose of Plymouth from our Constitution, the mission of Plymouth from our covenant is "In the love of truth and in the spirit of Jesus, we unite for the worship of God and the service of all."

Article II. Membership

Section 1. Membership Rolls

(1) The Senior Pastor or designee shall oversee maintenance of two Plymouth membership rolls:

- (a) Members Roll for current members, and an
- (b) Archival Roll for inactive and former members.

(2) The Senior Pastor or designee shall report the current membership count annually at the Annual Meeting.

Section 2. Members

Plymouth recognizes every person as part of the family of God and every Christian as part of the community of faith. In this community of faith, we include any child who has not yet owned the covenant and every member who through death has entered into the communion of saints.

A. Member

(1) A member is any baptized person who has made public acceptance of the polity and covenant of Plymouth and participates actively in the life of Plymouth. Persons do not need to sever membership in another church to be a member of Plymouth.

(2) Persons may be received into Plymouth membership by the Pastors through:

- (a) Profession of Faith (baptism and confirmation);
- (b) Presentation of a letter of transfer from another Christian church; or
- (c) Reaffirmation of Faith if a letter of transfer is not available.

(3) Any former member of Plymouth who has been issued a letter of transfer or withdrawn from membership may be received again into membership by letter of transfer or reaffirmation.

(4) Participating actively in the life of Plymouth as a member includes, to the extent to which the member is able:

- (a) Attending public worship and sharing in the sacraments, fellowship, and programs of Plymouth;
- (b) Contributing to the financial support of Plymouth;
- (c) Participating in the affairs of Plymouth by contributing time and talent; and
- (d) Attending the Annual Meeting and Called Congregational Meetings.

(5) The rights of members include:

- (a) Eligibility to hold elective positions of Plymouth and to vote in Annual and Called Congregational Meetings; and

1 (b) Access to meetings and minutes of Council and organizations of the Congregation
2 unless otherwise restricted by these Bylaws.

3 (6) Length of membership is determined from the date of first being received as a member,
4 regardless of any interruptions in membership.

5 B. Inactive Status

6 (1) A member on inactive status is someone who:

7 (a) Has not requested to withdraw their membership;

8 (b) Does not participate actively in the life of Plymouth for a period of two or more years;
9 and

10 (c) Does not indicate they would like to remain as a member.

11 (2) A member on inactive status does not share the responsibilities and rights of a member.

12 (3) A member on inactive status is not considered in determining quorum requirements.

13 (4) Council shall develop and maintain a process to annually determine members who should
14 be moved to and from inactive status. The process shall include attempting to contact such
15 members.

16 Section 3. Termination of Membership

17 A. Methods of Termination of Membership

18 Membership may be terminated by any of the following steps:

19 (1) Letter of Transfer

20 A letter of transfer to another church shall be prepared for any member upon written request to
21 the Senior Pastor or designee. Upon such notice, the Senior Pastor or designee shall promptly
22 issue such letter of transfer and remove the person's name from the Membership Roll and place it
23 on the Archival Roll.

24 (2) Withdrawal

25 Any member who desires to withdraw membership from Plymouth may do so by written request
26 to the Senior Pastor or designee. Upon such notice, the Senior Pastor or designee shall ensure the
27 removal of the person's name from the Membership Roll and have it placed on the Archival Roll.
28 That person shall then have no privileges of transfer unless the person requests reinstatement by
29 reaffirmation of faith.

30 (3) Removal of Membership

31 Council may develop and maintain a process to remove the membership of a member on inactive
32 status for more than two years and place their name on the Archival Roll of former members
33 unless the member requests to remain on inactive status.

34 B. Archival Roll

35 (1) The Senior Pastor or designee shall oversee maintenance of an Archival Roll that shall
36 include the names of all inactive and former members of Plymouth.

37 (2) A former member includes any member who has:

38 (a) Died;

39 (b) Terminated their membership; or

- 1 (c) Had their membership terminated by Council following the process outlined in policy
2 for those on inactive status.

3 Article III. Worship

4 Public services of worship are held each Sunday except when determined by the Senior Pastor to be
5 impractical. The sacraments of Baptism and Communion are celebrated, and other services of worship
6 may be held, as determined by the Senior Pastor in consultation with the Deacons.

7 Article IV. Congregational Meetings

8 As used in these Bylaws, a Called Congregational Meeting is a meeting of the membership of Plymouth
9 assembled, which has been properly called and has a sufficient quorum to exercise its governing
10 authority.

11 Section 1. Called Congregational Meeting

12 A Called Congregational Meeting of Plymouth shall be held by one of the following:

- 13 (1) On call of the Moderator;
14 (2) On call of Council; or
15 (3) On delivery to the Moderator or Clerk of a written petition signed by at least 5% of
16 Plymouth membership reported at the previous Annual Meeting. Such petition shall state
17 the purpose of the called meeting, including any proposed language to be adopted.

18 Section 2. Annual Meeting

- 19 (1) A Called Congregational Meeting known as the Annual Meeting shall be held during the
20 month of January or within the first 15 days of February.
21 (2) The Annual Meeting of Plymouth shall:
22 (a) Elect members to fill all vacancies in elective offices and positions;
23 (b) Adopt a budget for the year;
24 (c) Receive an annual report of the current membership count;
25 (d) Receive annual reports of the Officers, Pastors, and appropriate organizations; and
26 (e) Transact such other business as may come before it.
27 (3) The Moderator shall develop the agenda with the advice of Council, except that:
28 (a) An agenda item shall be added upon receipt of a written petition delivered to the
29 Moderator or Clerk. The petition shall:
30 (i) State the item requested to be added to the agenda and include a brief
31 explanation of the item, including any proposed language to be adopted;
32 (ii) Be signed by at least 5% of Plymouth's membership reported at the previous
33 Annual Meeting; and
34 (iii) Be delivered with sufficient time for proper notice to be given to the
35 Congregation.
36 (4) The organizational year of Plymouth shall begin following the adjournment of the Annual
37 Meeting. All newly elected officers and other holders of elected positions shall assume their
38 duties at that time and continue in office until the following Annual Meeting or a successor
39 has been selected.

Section 3. Notice of a Called Congregational Meeting

Notice of an Annual or a Called Congregational Meeting shall:

- (1) State the subject and objective of the meeting;
- (2) Be given by:
 - (a) Best reasonable method available to reach as many members as possible at least 10 days prior to the meeting date;
 - (b) Announcement during worship for a minimum of two Sundays prior to such meeting; and
 - (c) Include, if the meeting is for a proposal to amend the Constitution or Bylaws, the language proposed for deletion or addition, and a brief explanation.

Section 4. Procedures of a Called Congregational Meeting

- (1) The Moderator shall preside at all meetings of the Congregation, and the Clerk shall act as secretary.
- (2) A quorum is 10% of the Plymouth's membership as reported at the previous Annual Meeting. If a quorum is not present, the members may adjourn such meeting to the same day and hour of the following week, at which time the members present shall constitute a quorum for any purposes stated in the original call, except for amendment of the Constitution.
- (3) Each member has the right to act and vote at any Annual or Called Congregational Meeting. A majority vote of those present and voting is decisive, except as otherwise required by the Constitution or Bylaws.
- (4) In addition to nominees made by the Nominating Committee, or if a nominee is not named for a position, nominations may be made by any member with the agreement of the nominee and one second.
- (5) If no more than one person is nominated for an elective office, election may be by acclamation. A written ballot is required if more than one person is nominated for an office.
- (6) The rules of parliamentary procedure compiled in the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order shall govern all Called Congregational Meetings unless otherwise provided by Council. The Moderator shall appoint and announce a Parliamentarian at each Called Congregational Meeting. Whatever the rules may be, the intent of the rules is to provide a civil and courteous meeting where members can be heard, the rights of the minority are respected, the majority decides, and action is facilitated.

Article V. Governance

Section 1. Officers

The Officers of Plymouth are the Moderator, Moderator-Elect, Immediate Past Moderator, Clerk, and Treasurer. In addition to the listed duties, all Officers serve in such capacities as provided by Bylaws and Policies. The Moderator, Moderator-Elect, and Immediate Past Moderator are collectively the Moderator Team.

1 **A. Moderator**

- 2 (1) Is the lay leader of Plymouth and principal spokesperson for the Congregation on church
3 matters;
- 4 (2) Presides over all meetings of the Congregation and meetings of Council and performs
5 such other duties as provided by Bylaws or policy;
- 6 (3) Oversees an annual report to the Congregation consisting of reports from the Moderator,
7 the Senior Pastor, and such others as appropriate. The annual report shall provide
8 members with an overview of the past year's activities and the current status of Plymouth.
9 The report shall be made available to the Congregation each year at a time chosen by
10 Council in consultation with staff; and
- 11 (4) Serves as President for corporate filings and other purposes.

12 **B. Moderator-Elect**

- 13 (1) Serves in such capacities as the Moderator may request;
- 14 (2) Serves as Chair of the Nominating Committee; and
- 15 (3) Prepares to serve as the next Moderator.

16 **C. Immediate Past Moderator**

- 17 (1) Fulfills the duties of the Moderator in the absence of the Moderator; and
- 18 (2) Serves in such other capacities as the Moderator may request.

19 **D. Clerk**

- 20 (1) Serves as secretary of meetings of the Congregation and meetings of Council;
- 21 (2) Oversees staff maintenance of the membership rolls; and
- 22 (3) Serves as Secretary for corporate filings and other purposes.

23 **E. Treasurer**

- 24 (1) Supervises the receiving of money and the making of payments consistent with the
25 budget and as otherwise authorized by Council;
- 26 (2) Oversees deposits of all money and other valuables in the name and to the credit of
27 Plymouth with such financial institutions as may be designated by Council;
- 28 (3) Is responsible for development and overview of financial accounting and reporting
29 systems;
- 30 (4) Shall be bonded for such amount as required by policy; and
- 31 (5) Serves as Treasurer for corporate filings and other purposes.

32 **F. Terms and Limitations**

- 33 (1) The Moderator-Elect is elected for a three-year term of one year as Moderator-Elect,
34 followed by a one-year term as Moderator, and then a one-year term as Immediate Past
35 Moderator.
- 36 (2) If the Moderator-Elect is unable to assume the office of Moderator, a Moderator shall be
37 elected at the Annual or other Called Congregational Meeting for a term of one year,
38 followed by a one-year term as Immediate Past Moderator.

1 (3) If the Moderator position becomes vacant, the post shall be filled with the Immediate
2 Past Moderator. Council shall appoint a former Moderator to serve the remainder of the
3 Immediate Past Moderator's term. If the Immediate Past Moderator cannot serve as
4 Moderator, Council shall appoint a member to serve as Moderator until the next Annual
5 Meeting.

6 (4) The Clerk and the Treasurer are each elected to one-year terms with no more than six
7 consecutive terms before a break of at least one year.

8 (5) If any office becomes vacant and is not filled by steps in these Bylaws, Council shall
9 appoint a replacement to serve until the next Annual Meeting.

10 Section 2. Council

11 A. Purpose

12 Council is the governing, planning, evaluating, and coordinating body of Plymouth. Unless
13 otherwise stated in the Constitution or these Bylaws, Council is the final decision-making body of
14 Plymouth, subject to the will of the Congregation acting in a Called Congregational Meeting.
15 Voting members of Council are the trustees of Plymouth.

16 B. Composition

17 (1) The 10 voting members of Council are the:

- 18 (a) Moderator;
- 19 (b) Moderator-Elect;
- 20 (c) Immediate Past Moderator;
- 21 (d) Treasurer; and
- 22 (e) Six at-large members.

23 (2) The ex officio members, who are without vote, are the:

- 24 (a) Senior Pastor; and
- 25 (b) Associate Pastor(s).

26 (3) The Clerk shall serve as secretary and keep minutes.

27 (4) The six at-large members shall be elected at the Annual Meeting. Two shall be elected
28 each year to serve a three-year term, except in the first year of the approval of these
29 Bylaws when two shall be elected for a three-year term, two shall be elected for a two-
30 year term, and two shall be elected for a one-year term. At-large members may serve two
31 consecutive three-year terms. Those serving a partial term of one year or less may serve
32 two additional three-year terms. Members may be reelected following a break of at least
33 one year.

34 (5) If a vacancy occurs, Council shall appoint a member to serve until the next Annual
35 Meeting.

36 C. Operation

37 (1) Council shall meet at least nine times per year.

38 (2) A special meeting may be called by the Moderator, the Senior Pastor, or three members
39 of Council upon two days notice to all members of Council.

- 1 (3) Any Council meeting is open to each member of Plymouth except as otherwise provided
2 in these Bylaws.
- 3 (4) The agenda and minutes of all open Council meetings shall be available to the
4 membership of Plymouth in an easily accessible manner.
- 5 (5) The agenda for any regular meeting shall include an open forum period to allow any
6 member a reasonable opportunity to address Council on any Plymouth-related matter.
- 7 (6) Council may, by a majority vote, go into a closed executive session.
- 8 (a) The motion will declare the justification for the executive session. Justification
9 includes, but is not limited to, personnel matters, privileged discussions with an
10 attorney, a real estate transaction, or other sensitive matter requiring privacy.
- 11 (b) Only voting members of Council and anyone named in the motion to enter into
12 executive session may attend.
- 13 (c) The motion will state the time at which the open meeting is expected to resume.
14 Executive sessions may be shortened or extended.
- 15 (d) While consensus may be reached in executive session, any decision of Council shall be
16 made in an open meeting and recorded in the minutes.
- 17 (7) If any member of Council fails to attend three consecutive meetings of Council without
18 acceptable reason, the position shall be declared vacant. Remaining Council members will
19 determine acceptability of reason.
- 20 (8) A vacancy in an elected position on Council or other position that reports to Council may
21 be filled by Council appointment for the unexpired term, subject to confirmation at the
22 Annual Meeting if the unexpired term exceeds one year.
- 23 (9) A simple majority of the voting members of Council shall constitute a quorum. When a
24 quorum is present at any meeting of Council, the vote of a majority of those voting
25 members present shall decide any question considered at the meeting unless otherwise
26 stated in Bylaws or policy.

27 D. Duties

- 28 (1) Council shall:
- 29 (a) Implement the decisions of the membership;
- 30 (b) Exercise general powers authorized by the laws of the State of Kansas and by the
31 Annual and Called Congregational Meetings;
- 32 (c) Conduct, manage, and control the business and affairs of Plymouth consistent with the
33 Charter of Incorporation, Constitution, Bylaws, and the actions of Called
34 Congregational Meetings;
- 35 (d) Oversee the fiscal year of Plymouth;
- 36 (e) Oversee the management and development of a Plymouth Congregational Church
37 Endowment Fund;
- 38 (f) Assure that the ministry of Plymouth is accomplished through the development of
39 appropriate policies, annual goals, and long-range plans;
- 40 (g) Hold sessions for the Congregation to explain a proposed budget and solicit feedback
41 on that budget prior to approval by Council; and

- 1 (h) Approve a proposed budget to present to the Congregation for its consideration at the
2 Annual Meeting.
- 3 (2) Council may adjust the budget approved by the Congregation at the Annual Meeting
4 within the following constraints:
- 5 (a) Council may not increase or decrease the budget more than 3% without approval of a
6 Called Congregational Meeting;
- 7 (b) Council may increase or decrease the budget 3% or less with a positive vote of at least
8 two-thirds of voting Council membership; and
- 9 (c) Council shall notify the Congregation at least three weeks in advance of a Council
10 meeting at which Council intends to vote on a motion to increase or decrease the
11 annual budget approved by the Congregation at the Annual Meeting.
- 12 (3) Council is responsible for establishing all staff positions, funding all paid positions, and
13 working with the Senior Pastor to ensure that employment policies and contractual
14 obligations with employees are properly administered.

15 E. Council Committees

16 Council may create and dissolve standing and ad-hoc committees as needed to assist in carrying
17 out its fiduciary responsibilities and other duties. Unless otherwise stated, committee
18 membership shall be determined by Council.

19 F. Emergency Powers

- 20 (1) In an emergency the Moderator, Moderator-Elect, Immediate Past Moderator, and
21 Treasurer, by majority vote of those able to take part and, in consultation with the Senior
22 Pastor, may make decisions normally requiring Council approval.
- 23 (2) "Emergency" means a major national or local emergency caused by a natural disaster,
24 fire, pandemic, terrorist act, or other significant event resulting in serious disruption.
- 25 (3) Any action taken by these emergency powers is subject to review and ratification by
26 Council at its next meeting.

27 Section 3. Governing and Operating Documents

28 A. Overview

29 Plymouth is governed by:

- 30 (1) Constitution and Bylaws approved and amended by the Congregation;
- 31 (2) Policies approved and amended by Council. These are details for implementing the
32 Constitution and Bylaws;
- 33 (3) Resolutions approved by the Congregation or Council. These are statements of Plymouth
34 beliefs;
- 35 (4) Memoranda of Understanding approved by Council. These are for operations of a
36 temporary nature; and
- 37 (5) Procedures created and approved by staff. These are operational details.

38 B. Policies

- 39 (1) Policies are details for implementing the Constitution and Bylaws.

- 1 (2) Council may adopt, repeal, or amend such policies as it views necessary consistent with
- 2 the Plymouth Constitution and Bylaws.
- 3 (3) Council shall consolidate adopted policies into a Policy Book. The Policy Book shall be
- 4 available to the membership. Council shall ensure the maintenance of the Policy Book and
- 5 include dates of adoption or amendment.
- 6 (4) Proposed policy language shall be published as part of the agenda for the Council meeting
- 7 at which it is to be considered for final approval. This shall be accompanied by an
- 8 explanation of why it is being considered and stating the authority from the Bylaws for the
- 9 policy.
- 10 (5) Adopted language shall be part of Council minutes and shall include explanatory
- 11 language.

12 **C. Resolutions**

- 13 (1) Resolutions are statements of opinion, concern, celebration, or such other statements as
- 14 the Congregation or Council believes appropriate.
- 15 (2) The membership at a Called Congregational Meeting may adopt, repeal, or amend such
- 16 Resolutions as it views appropriate, consistent with the Plymouth Constitution and Bylaws.
- 17 (3) Council may also adopt, repeal, or amend such Resolutions not previously adopted by the
- 18 membership as it views necessary, consistent with the Plymouth Constitution and Bylaws.
- 19 (4) Council may request the membership, at a Called Congregational Meeting, to discuss and
- 20 determine any Resolution or potential Resolution that Council believes needs a broader
- 21 Church discussion.

22 **D. Memoranda of Understanding**

23 Council may adopt, repeal, or amend Memoranda of Understanding for matters not requiring a
24 permanent policy.

25 **E. Procedures**

26 The Senior Pastor, as Head of Staff, may adopt, repeal, or amend Procedures for staff and
27 volunteers to follow in performing their duties.

28 **Section 4. General Governance**

29 In addition to the following areas, Council may, consistent with the Constitution and these Bylaws,
30 adopt such policies as appropriate to ensure good governance of Plymouth.

31 **A. History and Heritage**

32 Maintaining the history of Plymouth is critical to the health of Plymouth. Council shall ensure the
33 preservation, appreciation, understanding, and utilization of the heritage of Plymouth.

34 **B. Meetings and Voting**

35 Meetings, voting, and attendance may be in person, electronically, or a combination of the two
36 unless changed by Bylaws or Policy. If a written ballot is required, reasonable effort shall be made
37 to ensure that votes of members casting electronic votes are as confidential as possible.

38 **C. Nominating Committee**

- 39 (1) Membership

1 Annually, the Moderator-Elect shall form a Nominating Committee that shall include three
2 additional members chosen to reflect the diversity of Plymouth.

3 (2) Duties

4 The Nominating Committee shall:

- 5 (a) Consult with members of the Congregation and the Senior Pastor concerning
6 candidates for nomination;
7 (b) Nominate at least one eligible member of Plymouth as a candidate for each elected
8 position in Plymouth and publish the list of nominees at least 10 days prior to the
9 Annual Meeting;
10 (c) Seek nominees that reflect the diversity of Plymouth; and
11 (d) Assist Council in selecting members for appointment by Council to appointed
12 positions.

13 **D. Pastor-Parish Committee**

14 (1) Membership

15 The Pastor-Parish Committee shall consist of the Moderator, Immediate Past Moderator,
16 Moderator-Elect, Senior Pastor, and Associate Pastor(s). Council may choose to have separate
17 Pastor-Parish Committees for each Pastor and may change the membership. The meetings are
18 not open to the general membership.

19 (2) Purpose

20 The purpose of this Committee is to facilitate informal communications between the lay
21 leadership and the Pastors. Topics may include concerns of the Congregation, nurture of the
22 Pastors, prevention and resolution of conflict and misunderstanding, and such other matters
23 as may come before the Committee. A meeting may be called by any of its members.

24 **E. Limits on Elected and Appointed Positions**

25 Unless otherwise stated in these Bylaws, any person holding a position listed in these Bylaws may:

- 26 (1) Not serve more than seven consecutive years in that position;
27 (2) Be removed from that position by a majority vote of a Called Congregational Meeting or,
28 if holding an appointed position, be removed from that position by a majority vote of
29 Council.

30 **F. Speaking in the Name of Plymouth**

31 Any statement made in the name of Plymouth must be approved in advance by a majority of the
32 membership at a Called Congregational Meeting or Council.

33 **Article VI. Ministries**

34 **Section 1. Purpose and Operation**

35 (1) Standing Ministries and Ministry Teams:

- 36 (a) Assist staff in developing and implementing the purpose, mission, and goals of
37 Plymouth and the activities in their specified area; and

1 (b) Provide energy, ideas, feedback, and help in implementing the services needed to
2 fulfil their ministry in their specified area.

3 (2) Council shall create policies to develop and support Standing Ministries and Ministry
4 Teams.

5 **Section 2. Standing Ministries**

6 (1) Standing Ministries are advisory groups that work with staff to help consider, develop,
7 and design programs within their area to fulfill the purpose, mission, and goals of
8 Plymouth.

9 (2) Standing Ministries may be created, changed, or dissolved by Council as it determines
10 how best to meet the purpose, mission, and goals of Plymouth.

11 (3) Membership of Standing Ministries and its purpose shall be determined by Council in
12 Policy it shall create to establish each Standing Ministry.

13 **Section 3. Ministry Teams**

14 (1) Ministry Teams are action groups that work with staff to implement the purpose, mission,
15 and goals of Plymouth.

16 (2) Ministry Teams may be created or approved by staff in response to the interests and
17 needs of the congregation, and in accordance with applicable Bylaws and Policies.

18 (3) Ministry Teams are encouraged to operate collaboratively and creatively, seeking to
19 engage the passions and interests of individual team members.

20 (4) A Ministry Team may be a subgroup of a Standing Ministry.

21 **Article VII. Pastors and Staff**

22 **Section 1. Senior Pastor**

23 The Senior Pastor shall be an ordained minister with full standing in the United Church of Christ.

24 **A. Senior Pastor Search Committee**

25 A Senior Pastor Search Committee shall be established by the Moderator whenever a vacancy
26 occurs in the Office of Senior Pastor.

27 (1) Membership

28 (a) The Moderator shall consult with the Kansas-Oklahoma Conference concerning United
29 Church of Christ recommendations for conducting a search;

30 (b) The Search Committee shall have at least nine and no more than 12 voting members.
31 The Moderator, Moderator-Elect, and Immediate Past Moderator are three of the
32 voting members, plus an additional six to nine voting members nominated by the
33 Moderator;

34 (c) Nominees shall be members of Plymouth and reflect the diversity of Plymouth;

35 (d) The names of the nominees shall be published to the Congregation and presented to
36 Council for consideration. Additional nominations may be made by members of the
37 Congregation at that time; and

38 (e) The membership of the Search Committee, beyond the three members of the
39 Moderator Team, must be approved by a majority vote of Council.

1 (2) Organization and Operation

- 2 (a) At the first meeting of the Committee, the Committee shall elect a chair, vice-chair,
- 3 and secretary. The Committee shall propose a budget for Council approval;
- 4 (b) The Committee shall meet with sufficient frequency to accomplish its responsibilities
- 5 expeditiously;
- 6 (c) Minutes of all meetings shall be submitted by the secretary and approved by the
- 7 Committee;
- 8 (d) Meetings of the Committee are closed and confidential unless the Committee by
- 9 majority vote opens a meeting to the Congregation;
- 10 (e) Persons may be invited to attend for advice and consultation; and
- 11 (f) Minutes of the meetings may be disposed of as decided by the Committee once a
- 12 Senior Pastor is called by the Congregation.

13 (3) Recommendation

- 14 (a) When the search is completed, the Committee shall report its recommendation to
- 15 Council for its consideration; and
- 16 (b) Approval by at least a three-quarters vote of Council is required before submitting the
- 17 name of the candidate to the Congregation.

18 **B. Call**

19 The Senior Pastor is called by a vote of at least three-fourths of the membership present and
20 voting at a Called Congregational Meeting. Votes shall be by written ballot. The Senior Pastor is
21 called for an indefinite term.

22 **C. Duties**

23 The Senior Pastor:

- 24 (1) Serves with professional freedom and responsibility as the spiritual leader of the
- 25 Congregation;
- 26 (2) Seeks to enlist persons as followers of Christ, preaches the gospel, administers the
- 27 sacraments, and has care of all services of public worship in consultation with the
- 28 Deacons;
- 29 (3) Is the Chief Executive Officer and administers the activities of Plymouth in cooperation
- 30 with the membership;
- 31 (4) Is head of staff and all staff, including other Pastors employed by Plymouth, answer to the
- 32 Senior Pastor in the execution of their duties; and
- 33 (5) Performs other duties required by these Bylaws or by Policy.

34 **D. Resignation**

35 A Senior Pastor may resign by written notice submitted to the Moderator. Resignation of services
36 is effective not earlier than 60 days after written notice has been given unless a different period
37 was agreed upon in writing at the time of call or by mutual agreement of the Senior Pastor and
38 Council.

1 **E. Termination**

2 The Senior Pastor's call is terminated by a vote of at least three-fourths of the membership
3 present and voting at a Called Congregational Meeting. Votes shall be by written ballot.
4 Termination is effective immediately after the end of the Congregational Meeting at which the
5 vote for termination is passed unless a different period is agreed upon in writing during that
6 meeting.

7 **Section 2. Associate Pastor**

8 An Associate Pastor is an ordained minister with full standing in the United Church of Christ.

9 **A. Associate Pastor Search Committee**

10 An Associate Pastor Search Committee shall be established by the Moderator when there is a
11 need to call an Associate Pastor.

12 (1) Membership

13 (a) The Moderator shall consult with the Kansas-Oklahoma Conference concerning United
14 Church of Christ recommendations for conducting a search;

15 (b) The Search Committee shall have at least nine and no more than 12 voting members.
16 The Moderator, Moderator-Elect, Immediate Past Moderator, and Senior Pastor are
17 four of the voting members plus an additional five to eight voting members nominated
18 by the Moderator;

19 (c) Nominees shall be members of Plymouth and reflect the diversity of Plymouth;

20 (d) The names of the nominees shall be published to the Congregation and presented to
21 Council for consideration. Additional nominations may be made by members of the
22 Congregation at that time; and

23 (e) The membership of the Search Committee beyond the four members of the
24 Moderator Team and the Senior Pastor must be approved by a majority vote of
25 Council.

26 (2) Organization and Operation

27 (a) At the first meeting of the Committee, the Committee shall elect a chair, vice-chair,
28 and secretary. The Committee shall propose a budget for Council approval;

29 (b) The Committee shall meet with sufficient frequency to accomplish its responsibilities
30 expeditiously;

31 (c) Minutes of all meetings shall be submitted by the secretary and approved by the
32 Committee;

33 (d) Meetings of the Committee are closed and confidential unless the Committee by
34 majority vote opens a meeting to the Congregation;

35 (e) Persons may be invited to attend for advice and consultation; and

36 (f) Minutes of the meetings may be disposed of as decided by the Committee once an
37 Associate Pastor is called by the Congregation.

38 (3) Recommendation

39 (a) When the search is completed, the Committee shall report its recommendation to
40 Council its consideration.

1 (b) Approval by at least a three-quarters vote of Council is required before submitting the
2 name of the candidate to the Congregation.

3 **B. Call**

4 An Associate Pastor is called by a vote of at least three-fourths of the membership present and
5 voting at a Called Congregational Meeting. Votes shall be by written ballot. An Associate Pastor is
6 called for an indefinite term.

7 **C. Duties**

8 An Associate Pastor:

9 (1) Serves with professional freedom to supplement and complement the spiritual leadership
10 of the Senior Pastor; and

11 (2) Shall carry out duties assigned by the Senior Pastor including the duties of the Senior
12 Pastor in the Senior Pastor’s absence.

13 **D. Resignation**

14 An Associate Pastor may resign by written notice submitted to the Moderator and Senior Pastor.
15 Resignation is effective not earlier than 60 days after written notice has been given unless a
16 different period was agreed upon in writing at the time of call or by mutual agreement of the
17 Associate Pastor, Council, and Senior Pastor.

18 **E. Termination**

19 An Associate Pastor’s call is terminated by a vote of at least three-fourths of Council. Termination
20 is effective immediately after a sufficient vote is announced at the Council meeting at which the
21 vote for termination is passed unless a different period is agreed upon in writing during that
22 meeting.

23 **Section 3. Assistant Pastor**

24 One or more Assistant Pastors who are ordained ministers with full standing in the United Church
25 of Christ or another denomination may be hired by the Senior Pastor who shall consult with the
26 Kansas-Oklahoma Conference. Such a position requires approval by Council by a majority vote of
27 Council voting members present.

28 **Section 4. Interim Pastor**

29 One or more Interim Pastors who are ordained ministers with full standing in the United Church
30 of Christ or another denomination may be hired by Council by a majority vote of Council voting
31 members present. An Interim Pastor is to temporarily fill a Senior or Associate Pastor position.
32 Council shall consult the Kansas-Oklahoma Conference. Such a hire will be for no more than six
33 months but may be renewed by Council by a majority vote of Council voting members present.

34 **Section 5. Other Staff**

35 Other staff may be employed as needed to carry out the activities of Plymouth.

36 **Article VIII. Amendment of Bylaws**

37 These Bylaws may be amended as provided in the Plymouth Constitution.

38 Adopted _____ Signed _____ (Clerk)