

Called Congregational Meeting of  
Plymouth Church  
September 10, 2023

Prior to the Call to Order, Clay Britton, the meeting parliamentarian, stated a quorum was present as 125 members were in attendance and 100 was the minimum required.

1. Scott Morgan, Moderator, called the meeting to order at 10:42.
2. Reverend Valerie Miller-Coleman gave the convocation.
3. Approval of Agenda and proposed meeting rules.

Scott provided the proposed meeting guidelines and rules:

- a) Ballots will be distributed once a motion has been made.
- b) Members may vote once they receive a ballot, but all are encouraged to listen to comments.
- c) There will be a 10-minutes introduction by the Bylaws Task Force.
- d) There will then be a period of no more than 20 minutes or until 11:10 (whichever comes first), for members to speak once each for no more than 2 minutes. To maximize the number of members who can speak, questions and comments will not be addressed by Council or the task force.
- e) We will recess by 11:10 to the Mayflower Room in time to allow the Gathering of Grace service at 11:30.
- f) All who are interested may move to the Mayflower Room and wait for the votes to be counted. The results will be announced in the Mayflower Room.
- g) The meeting will be adjourned after the results are announced.
- h) If the congregation does not approve these proposed meeting rules, the meeting will recess at 11:10 to allow set-up for the Gathering of Grace service. The meeting will then reconvene next Sunday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, to continue discussion until a motion to move to a vote is approved.

He added this is a streamlined process and the intent is to vote.

Terry Schmidt moved to approve the agenda and proposed meeting rules; David Ambler seconded; motion passed unanimously.

4. Motion for Consideration.

Jonathan Becker asked for a point of order, then stated that a motion for consideration was not needed. Clay Britton agreed a motion could be made.

Devon Kim moved for approval of the proposed Plymouth Constitution and Bylaws as approved by Council on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. There shall be a separate vote by ballot for each document.

If the proposed Plymouth Constitution is approved by two-thirds of members voting, the proposed Constitution shall become effective at the Call to Order of the next Plymouth Annual Meeting and all previous Constitutions of Plymouth Church shall be revoked.

*If the proposed Plymouth Bylaws are approved by a majority of members voting, the proposed Bylaws shall become effective at the Call to Order of the next Plymouth Annual Meeting and all previous Bylaws of Plymouth Church shall be revoked.*

*Sonia Jordan seconded the motion.*

5. Scott asked that ballots be distributed to members.
6. Scott thanked the Bylaws Task Force for their time and effort to develop the proposed Constitution and Bylaws. He also expressed appreciation for the Council's unanimous approval following three meetings of discussion and feedback regarding the proposed revisions.

He then introduced the Bylaws Task Force members – Erika Dvorske, Eleanor Schroeder, Rich Bireta, Doug Eason, Larissa Long, Liz Smith and Reverend Valerie Miller-Coleman. Some of the members offered these comments:

Erika said she felt the revisions provided a framework for faith, justice and governance.

Rich supports the council reduction from 18 to 10, as with an annual member turnover of 50% or more each year it's difficult to consider decisions strategically.

Doug is also encouraged by a smaller council membership, as goal setting is very important, and he feels we will have a stronger council. He added it probably isn't perfect, but he feels challenges can be addressed and these changes move the Church forward.

Scott said he thought it was very important to move forward. Anyone involved in recent lay leadership knows there have been bylaw challenges. He's reviewed all previous bylaws, and all had changes. This isn't a power play – he believes the congregation's voice will be strengthened.

#### 7. Member comments

John Lord said he's provided his objections in writing and is still trying to understand why changes are needed now. He'd prefer a visioning process, not an end to what is currently in place.

David Bergeron feels this is the most radical change proposed in the 150 plus years of Plymouth Church. The congregation is central to governance and now we will have smaller representation. He believes there is a disconnect between the policy book and bylaws. His concerns include no reference of boards in the bylaws; the clerk isn't a Council member and that the Sr. Pastor will be the CEO of the church.

Geraldo Sousa feels it's a coup d'etat and outrageous change.

Sue Himes said she's been on almost every board and committee over the years and that there's nothing wrong with changes. If it doesn't work, another task force can be appointed to review.

Dick Orchard feels the revisions are constructive and provide a framework for moving forward. Policies change over time. The optimal size for governance is 7-10 members. He'll vote yes.

Bob Gent is still undecided. He's concerned that the power of the church may be too concentrated and wonders if this isn't working, can it be overturned.

Genée Figuieras isn't a member, but expressed concerns based on her experience with a prior church. She thought a "pause" might be warranted.

Sarah Whitten doesn't feel it's a power grab, but it is consolidation which will place much responsibility on a small group which may result in loss of focus. She's also disappointed boards are not represented on Council. She'll vote no.

Irene Soderstrom said the bylaws have been difficult to follow and understand. They have not been functional.

Margaret Kramar – streamlining is her concern. Democracy isn't always clean and can be messy.

Megan Poindexter then called for the question. Dick Orchard seconded.

8. The meeting moved to the Mayflower Room at 11:10 for vote counting and announcement of results.

The meeting resumed at 11:25 when Scott announced the following:

- Constitution – 152 voted; a 2/3 majority was required (102); 104 voted affirmatively – motion passed.
- Bylaws – 151 voted; a simple majority was required (76) 92 voted affirmatively – motion passed.

9. Adjournment

Tim Metz moved to adjourn; Devon Kim seconded; motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30.

Respectfully submitted by  
Larissa Long, Clerk

