

DOCUMENT ID:

DOCUMENT TITLE

Plymouth Congregational UCC CONSTITUTION

Change History

Date:	Change:	Made by:
01/27/2013	As approved by the Congregation.	Congregation
09/30/2013	As recommended by Darryl Knoblock and Jen Lowry	Governance Team
10/12/2013	As recommended by the nominating committee	Terri Schulz
10/29/2013	Following meeting with Daryl Knoblock	Terri Schulz
12/09/2013	As recommended and voted on by Leadership Council to modify definition of young adult member of council	Terri Schulz
03/10/2014	Included more inviting language around board chairs in XVI. A. III.	Leadership Council/HC
04/14/2014	Refined notice of nominations as recommended by Daryl Knoblock and the Governance Team	Leadership Council/HC
09/10/2017	Changed terms of Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Treasurer, added Past Moderator, Assistant Treasurer, and Past Treasurer, decreased At-Large LC members by one XII.B. – approved at Congregational Meeting 9-10-17	Leadership Council/Congregational Meeting
01/14/2018	Added Immigrant Welcoming Congregation Declaration XVII – approved at Congregational Meeting 01-14-18	Leadership Council/Congregational Meeting

CONSTITUTION

PLYMOUTH CONGREGATIONAL

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

FORT COLLINS, COLORADO

Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ

Fort Collins, Colorado

CONSTITUTION

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PLYMOUTH CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Fort Collins, Colorado

CONSTITUTION

Article I. Name

The name of this church shall be Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ, Fort Collins, Colorado.

Article II. Purpose

The purpose of this church shall be to worship God and to make God's realm visible in the lives of people, individually and collectively, especially as it is made known through the life, teachings, death and living presence of Jesus Christ.

Article III. Polity

This church is in communion with all churches that follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. It acknowledges special obligation to other congregations that are part of the United Church of Christ and pledges itself to share in their communion, religious and educational work, especially as represented by the Platte Valley Association, the Rocky Mountain Conference and the General Synod of The United Church of Christ. The government of this church is vested exclusively in its members.

Article IV. Faith and Covenant

A. Faith:

This church recognizes the Holy Bible as the sufficient rule of faith and practice and holds that living in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ is the true test of Christian character. Members shall have the undisturbed right to follow the Word of God according to the dictates of their own conscience, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The most recent Statement of Faith adopted by the General Synod of the United Church of Christ shall serve as a guide to faith and worship for the members of this church.

B. Covenant:

The covenant of this church shall be recited by new members upon the occasion of their entrance into the faith community:

In the presence of God and these witnesses, I give myself unreservedly to God's service and take this to be my church. Ever mindful of the welfare of my brother and sister members, I promise to walk with them in faithfulness and Christian love. I promise, so far as I am able, to attend the services of this church, observe its sacraments, support it financially, and endeavor to make it a fruitful body of Christian people.

Article V. Open and Affirming Declaration

The members of Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ, Fort Collins, Colorado, affirm their belief that all persons are created by God and are equal in worth and dignity. We recognize, celebrate and give thanks for the many diverse gifts of God among us. We declare ourselves to be an Open and Affirming congregation, welcoming into full membership and participation in the Body of Christ persons of every race, language, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnic origin, physical and mental ability, economic status and nationality. We joyously pledge ourselves to be an Open and Affirming congregation, providing a safe welcome for a diverse people.

Article VI. Peace with Justice Declaration

The members of Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ, Fort Collins, Colorado, believe Jesus' teachings call us to enact shalom, to live in wholeness, harmony, community well-being and with equal justice. We affirm a process of justice-making and peace-making which encourages open dialogue, reconciliation, constructive change and nonviolence. Therefore, we are called and committed to being a Peace with Justice Church in our worship, education, community life and outreach.

Article VII. Immigrant Welcoming Congregation Declaration

The members of Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ, Fort Collins, Colorado hear God's Call to care for and welcome with compassion and justice the widowed, the orphaned and the alienated who are living in our community. We follow Jesus, the Christ, who lives among the "least of these" in our communities. We affirm that each and every person is a Child of God welcome in the Realm of God's Love. Our refugee-immigrant ancestors fled persecution; upon arriving in Colorado they established the German Evangelical Congregational Church that laid the foundation for Plymouth Congregational UCC. Therefore, Plymouth Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Fort Collins, CO declares itself an "*Immigrant Welcoming Congregation*" to encourage the development of policies and activities within Plymouth UCC dedicated to facilitating respectful, compassionate welcome and inclusion of immigrants in our midst.

Article VIII. Membership

Membership in this church is open to all who acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, who wish to journey in faith with others of this fellowship, and who are willing to share in the work of the church and contribute to its support in proportion to their means.

Persons shall be received as members in one of the following ways:

- The rite of confirmation
- Presentation of satisfactory letters of transfer from other churches
- Reaffirmation of faith
- Confession of faith

Persons desiring to join the church shall meet with a minister for one or more periods of instruction. An appropriate ceremony recognizing their affiliation with the church shall be conducted during a worship service.

A. Classes of Membership

The membership of the church shall be classified in three ways: (1) Active, (2) Associate and (3) Inactive.

1. Active Membership

An active member is one who covenants with the congregation to attend the services of the church, cooperates in its work and contributes to its support. All active members are eligible to vote in congregational meetings and to engage in the ministry, mission and governance of the church. Plymouth's congregational polity relies centrally upon those persons who have covenanted together to be the church; therefore those participating in church government (Leadership Council or boards), shall hold active or associate membership in the congregation.

2. Associate Membership

Upon application to and upon recommendation by the Board of Deacons, a person who holds membership in another Christian body may be received as an associate member. An associate member shall be considered equivalent to an active member, with the same privileges and responsibilities. A letter of transfer will not be requested from the other congregation or ecclesiastical body in which the person holds membership.

3. Inactivity

A member who, for a period of two years, has not communicated with the church, attended worship or contributed to the church's support is considered inactive. At the recommendation of the Board of Deacons, after consultation with the Clerk and the Senior Minister, persons may be removed from the roll of active or associate members. An effort shall be made to make personal contact with members prior to action on membership status. Persons designated as inactive may, upon renewal of their membership obligations, be reinstated as active or associate members.

B. Termination of Membership or Change of Status

1. Active members may, at their own request
 - a. Be granted a letter of transfer to another Christian church
 - b. Be declared inactive
 - c. Be released from church membership
2. Active and associate members may be released from membership by action of Leadership Council for the well-being of the congregation. This is a serious step and is intended to be rarely used, yet for the well-being of the congregation it may occasionally be necessary. In order for this step to be taken, the following conditions must be met:
 - a. The release of any active or associate member must be approved by at least 60% of the members of the Leadership Council.
 - b. No more than four members may be released during any four-week period.

Article IX. Worship and Christian Formation

- A. Worship: The primary purpose of Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ is to worship God. Services of worship shall be held each Sunday. The sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion shall be celebrated.
- B. Christian Formation: The church shall conduct and support a program of Christian Formation to equip and enable persons of all ages to make the Christian faith their own and to participate in God's continuing activity in the world. This program shall include faith development opportunities, such as Sunday morning classes, confirmation classes, and other programs as determined by the Board of Christian Formation.

Article X. Congregational Meetings

A. Meetings

1. Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the congregation shall be held each year on a date determined by Leadership Council. Prior to this meeting, the ministers, all church boards, and committees of Leadership Council, as requested, shall submit their annual reports in writing. Church officers, At-Large members of Leadership Council, and members of boards and the Nominating Committee shall be elected at this meeting, and the budget for the ensuing year shall be submitted to the congregation for its approval. The election results shall be announced in the next newsletter of the church. Any other matter affecting the religious, financial or social welfare of the church may also be addressed at the annual meeting.

2. Special Meetings

Special meetings of the congregation may be called by Leadership Council, at the request of a minister, at the request of the Moderator, or by petition to Leadership Council. A valid petition must be signed by not less than ten percent (10%) of the active and associate members of the church. Leadership Council must call a special meeting within three weeks of receipt of a valid request.

B. Requirements

1. Notice of Congregational Meetings

Congregational meetings shall be announced at worship services on two successive Sundays prior to the meeting and by written notice to all members at least one full week in advance of the meeting. Such written notice shall be by direct mailing or by placement in the church newsletter. Notice of special meetings shall be the responsibility of the Clerk of the church and must include a statement of the purpose of the meeting.

2. Quorum

The membership present at a duly-called meeting shall have full authority to transact business.

3. Rules of Order

In congregational meetings and where applicable, *Robert's Rules of Order* is authoritative.

Article XI. Ministers

A. Senior Minister

The Senior Minister shall have charge of the spiritual welfare of the church. It shall be the Senior Minister's responsibility to enlist persons as followers of Jesus Christ by preaching the gospel, administering the sacraments, and having under his or her care all services of worship. The Senior Minister shall serve as the head of staff and be an ex-officio member, with voice and vote, of Leadership Council and its committees, boards, ministry teams and all other groups and organizations within the church. He or she shall administer the activities of the church in cooperation with Leadership Council and the various boards of the church. The Senior Minister shall make an annual report to the congregation. These areas of responsibility and any others shall be defined by a job description developed by the Personnel Committee and approved by Leadership Council. Full authority and control of the pulpit is vested in the Senior Minister. In his or her absence, it is vested in an associate minister designated by Leadership Council. In the absence of all ordained and called ministers, the authority and control of the pulpit shall be vested in Leadership Council.

B. Associate Minister(s)

Associate minister(s) shall work under the supervision of the Senior Minister and in cooperation with Leadership Council. Each associate minister's areas of responsibility shall be defined initially by a job description and shall be subject to modification by the Personnel Committee in consultation with the Senior Minister and approval by Leadership Council. Each associate minister shall be an ex-officio member, with voice and vote, of all boards, ministry teams, groups and organizations she or he staffs and shall make an annual report to the congregation.

C. Duration of Ministry

All ministers of Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ shall be called for an indefinite period. The relationship between the church and a minister may be dissolved by either party through written notice of intent sixty days prior to the effective date. Notification of such action shall be sent by the Moderator to the Conference Minister and to the chair of the Church and Ministry Committee of the Platte Valley Association.

D. Pastoral Search Committee

In the event of a pastoral vacancy, a Pastoral Search Committee of nine (9) persons shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee and presented by Leadership Council to the congregation for election. In filling the vacancy, the committee shall seek the counsel of the Church and Ministry Committee of the Platte Valley Association and the Conference Minister of the Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Church of Christ. Working closely with Leadership Council, the committee shall select one candidate to be presented to the congregation and formulate the terms of call. Further responsibilities of a Pastoral Search Committee are detailed in a policy of Leadership Council.

E. Interim Ministry During a Pastoral Vacancy

1. Senior Minister Position Vacancy

In the event of a vacancy in the senior minister position, an interim minister may be called for a period of time to be determined by Leadership Council in consultation with the Conference Minister. The duties of the interim minister shall be defined by Leadership Council in consultation with the Personnel Committee. Nominations for an Interim Minister Search Committee shall be presented by Leadership Council to the congregation for election.

2. Associate Minister Position Vacancy

In the event of a vacancy in an associate minister position, Leadership Council has discretion to meet temporary staffing needs in the manner deemed most appropriate. If an Interim Associate Minister is to be called, an Interim Associate Minister Search Committee will be formed through a process similar to that for an Interim Senior Minister Search Committee.

3. Further detail regarding Interim Minister/Associate Minister Search Committees and their responsibilities will be outlined in a policy of Leadership Council.

XII. Additional Staff

The church shall employ additional staff members as needed. Their areas of responsibility shall be defined by job descriptions developed by the Personnel Committee in consultation with the Senior Minister and approved by Leadership Council.

A. Program Staff

1. Program staff are staff members who have areas of responsibility relating to worship, congregational nurture and Christian Formation. They include but are not limited to such positions as choir director, organist and director of Christian Formation for youth or adults.
2. The hiring of program staff shall be the task of Leadership Council, working closely with the Senior Minister and the Personnel Committee. Ad hoc committees may be appointed by Leadership Council to aid in the hiring.
3. Program staff may be terminated by majority vote of Leadership Council upon recommendation of the Personnel Committee and/or the Senior Minister.

B. Administrative and Building Staff

1. Administrative and building staff are staff members who assist the ministers and the program staff or who maintain the church building and grounds. They include but are not limited to such positions as administrative support staff and custodian.
2. Administrative and building staff shall be hired by the Senior Minister in consultation with the Leadership Council. It shall be the Senior Minister's responsibility to keep the council informed when positions need to be filled.
3. Termination of administrative and building staff shall be done by the Senior Minister after consultation with Leadership Council. If an administrative or building staff member disagrees with a termination decision, he or she may appeal to Leadership Council.

Article XIII. Leadership Council

A. Duties of Leadership Council

1. The Leadership Council shall be the executive body of Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ, with fiduciary, legal, personnel, and strategic planning responsibilities. Leadership Council is responsible for setting church policy. The Leadership Council can create and appoint permanent or ad hoc committees to develop and carry out elements of its work, such as planned giving, personnel, and budget and finance.

2. It shall be the duty of Leadership Council to visualize the mission of the church and to advise and support the ministers and boards in incarnating that vision in the life and ministry of the church. Leadership Council is responsible for filling board vacancies and for the removal or replacement of sitting board members when they are deemed to be acting outside the church mission or policies, or when a board is not being accountable to its mission.
3. Each year, Leadership Council shall present to the congregation, for election at the annual meeting, a slate of three persons to fill open positions on the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee will be made up of the six persons herein identified, each serving two-year terms plus the Senior Minister.
4. Between annual meetings of the congregation, Leadership Council has the authority to establish or reorganize boards, including adjusting the number of board members that will be voted on at the next congregational meeting.
5. Leadership Council shall transact the business of the church. It shall arrange the program for all congregational meetings, shall present a comprehensive annual report, and shall present recommendations to the congregation aimed at fostering effective church programming and administration in the coming year(s).
6. Leadership Council shall oversee the budget planning process and present a budget to the congregation at the annual meeting. It shall also recognize the church's responsibility for support of Our Church's Wider Mission and other benevolences.
7. Leadership Council shall provide for the adequate support of all church staff and shall accept and complete all other duties as provided throughout this constitution.
8. Leadership Council shall keep accurate minutes of all its meetings.
9. Leadership Council shall meet at least once each calendar quarter. Special meetings may be called at the request of a minister, the Moderator, or a minimum of five Leadership Council members. Leadership Council members shall be individually notified of special meetings.
10. Meetings of Leadership Council shall be open to all church members, although only members of the council shall be entitled to vote. Allowance of comments by church members at Leadership Council meetings shall be at the discretion of the Moderator.
11. Leadership Council shall select lay representative(s) to attend meetings and conferences of the United Church of Christ on behalf of the congregation.
12. All acts and deliberations of the Leadership Council are subject to revision by the congregation.

B. Composition of Leadership Council

1. Members of the Leadership Council shall include:
 - a. Officers of the Leadership Council
 - Moderator
 - Vice Moderator
 - Clerk
 - Treasurer

- b. The Senior Minister
- c. Past Moderator
- d. Assistant Treasurer
- e. Four At-Large members, at least one of whom must be a young adult as defined in the Leadership Council Operating Policy, to be elected from the congregation.

2. Terms of Service

- a. Moderator: The Moderator shall serve for a term of one year as Moderator and one year as Past Moderator and a member of Leadership Council. The office of Moderator shall be assumed by the past Vice Moderator at the first Leadership Council meeting following the election of new officers.
- b. Vice-Moderator: The Vice Moderator shall serve for a term of one year before assuming the office of Moderator. However, in the event of a vacancy, the Vice Moderator shall assume the office of Moderator regardless of time served as Vice Moderator. A new Vice Moderator shall be nominated and elected at the next congregational meeting.
- c. Clerk: The Clerk shall be elected for a one-year term and may be re-elected for up to three consecutive terms.
- d. Treasurer: The Treasurer function shall be composed of three positions: Assistant Treasurer, Treasurer, and Past Treasurer. Each year the congregation shall elect an Assistant Treasurer who shall serve one year in each of these positions over a three-year term. The Assistant Treasurer and Treasurer shall serve as members of the Leadership Council. The Past Treasurer shall serve as mentor to the Treasurer but will no longer serve on the Leadership Council during the year served as Past Treasurer.
- e. All officers shall be ineligible to serve on the Council for two years after their stated terms of service on the Council.
- f. At-Large members of the Leadership Council: The four At Large members of the Leadership Council shall be elected for two-year terms and may not serve on Leadership Council for a period longer than two full consecutive terms. After a second consecutive term, one year must transpire before a person is eligible to be re-elected to Leadership Council unless he or she is nominated to a named office. Vacancies that occur between annual meetings of the congregation will be filled by Leadership Council. The terms of the At-Large members of Leadership Council shall be staggered so that two members are elected each year.

- C. Duties of church officers are detailed in job descriptions, which are policies of Leadership Council.
1. The Moderator shall be the chair of Leadership Council and shall conduct all meetings of the congregation.
 2. The Vice Moderator shall preside in the absence of the Moderator.
 3. The Clerk shall keep an accurate record of all proceedings of Leadership Council as well as annual and special meetings of the congregation.
 4. The Treasurer shall keep an accurate record of all receipts and disbursements and give a detailed financial report to Leadership Council monthly and to the congregation annually.
 5. At-Large members of Leadership Council shall represent the congregation and may be assigned by the council to particular liaison roles to staff, Leadership Council committees, boards or ministry teams to aid in communication and understanding.

Article XIV. Nominating Committee

1. The Nominating Committee shall be made up of the Senior Minister and six persons, each serving a two-year term. These terms shall be staggered so that three full-term members of the Nominating Committee are elected at each annual meeting. The Nominating Committee shall elect a chair, which cannot be the Senior Minister, whose responsibility it will be to convene the committee at least four months before the annual meeting.
2. The primary role of the Nominating Committee is to develop, each year, a slate of persons to fill the open positions of Moderator, Vice Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, At-Large members of the Leadership Council, and members of boards. This slate shall be presented to the congregation at the annual meeting as the basis for the election to fill those positions.
3. The Nominating Committee shall also be responsible for nominating a Pastoral Search Committee as described the Ministry Article of this Constitution.

Article XV. Election Process

As described in their duties, the Nominating Committee shall present a slate of nominations to fill all open elected positions on the Leadership Council and boards. The Leadership Council shall present a slate of nominations to fill all open elected positions on the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee shall utilize the following steps in the development of its yearly slate:

- At least two weeks prior to the Annual Meeting, notices shall be provided to the congregation which identify the open positions and invite church members to come forward to make their interest known for any open elected position in writing to the Leadership Council or Nominating Committee as specified within each notice.
- The final slate will include those recommended by the Nominating Committee as well as any additional names of those who expressed interest in the position.

Additional nominations for any office may be made from the floor, provided that the person nominated has given consent to serve if elected.

Those receiving the most votes of the members present for each position shall be declared elected. All active and associate members shall be eligible for election, even if not present at the meeting. At-Large member, Treasurer or Clerk vacancies on Leadership Council which shall occur between annual meetings shall be filled through appointment by Leadership Council. In the event of a vacancy in the office of Moderator, the Vice Moderator shall assume the position of Moderator. Appointees shall serve until the next annual meeting of the congregation and shall not be precluded from nomination to the same office.

Article XVI. Boards and Ministry Teams

A. Boards

1. Board terms: No person may serve on a board for a period longer than two consecutive terms of two years. After a second consecutive term, one year must transpire before he or she is eligible to be re-elected to the same board.
2. Duties of board members and chairs are detailed in job descriptions that are policies of Leadership Council.
3. Meetings of elected boards shall be open to all church members, although only board members shall be entitled to vote. The board chair may extend voice without vote to any person present.

B. Ministry Teams

1. Ministry teams are created by the development of a covenant between a board of the church and the person(s) who wish to be part of the proposed team. When the covenant is agreed to, the ministry team will be supervised by the board, which reports to the congregation on behalf of all ministry teams related to it.
2. The governing rules for all ministry teams shall be maintained as a policy of Leadership Council.

C. Both boards and ministry teams may be redefined and adjusted by Leadership Council.

Article XVII. Pastoral Relations Committee

A. An ongoing Pastoral Relations Committee will operate to support the pastoral staff and to facilitate communication and understanding among the pastors and between the pastors and the congregation.

B. The Pastoral Relations Committee will consist of at least four members, two appointed each year, serving for two-year terms that are renewable by renomination. Nominations to the committee, which require approval by vote of Leadership Council, shall be provided by the following stakeholders so that, during each year, there is a committee member nominated by each of them:

The Senior Minister
Associate Minister(s)
Church Officers (Moderator, Vice Moderator, Clerk, and Treasurer), and
The collective pastoral staff, if required to obtain at least four members

- C. The Pastoral Relations Committee is not a part of church government. To this end:
- It is not represented on Leadership Council
 - It makes no decisions involving pastoral staff members, and
 - Any committee member who is also a member of a church government (board or Leadership Council) must abstain from voting on motions that uniquely pertain to pastoral staff members
- D. Pastoral staff members will be invited to all meetings of the Pastoral Relations Committee. Participation by others will be by invitation only. Although it is expected that meeting dialogue will be shared with pastoral staff members who are not present, comments made at the meeting will otherwise be held in confidence.

XVIII. Accountability

Leadership Council has authority over all groups and employees operating in Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ and shall be accountable to the congregation. Leadership Council shall maintain a list of job descriptions or charters for all boards, committees and positions. Boards shall maintain covenants with each of the ministry teams to which they relate. It shall be the responsibility of Leadership Council to determine the form and frequency of each group's reporting to it.

Article XIX. Church Policies

While this document covers essential elements of church governance, it is intended that Leadership Council will maintain a collection of policies as necessary to fully cover the needs of the church. This collection will be maintained and kept up-to-date by the Clerk. All such policies shall require the approval of Leadership Council.

Article XX. Amendments and Revisions

Amendments to this constitution may be made at any duly-called congregational meeting or at the annual meeting by the affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of the members present. The proposed amendments must be made known and discussed at a previous congregational meeting and then again be made known at the calling of a congregational meeting for their final adoption.