

Sunday Forum: Governing at Plymouth

February 24, 2018

Presenters Today

- Lani Bennett, member of original Governance team and Transitional Policy Board
- Catherine Shreves, current Deacon, member of Transitional Policy Board
- Nancy Siska, member of original Governance team and Transitional Policy Board
- Chad Freeburg, Leadership Council Chair

Original Governance Team Members, 2011-2013

- Lani Bennett
- David Buran
- Betsy Cussler
- Jim Gertmenien
- Claire Kolmodin
- Nancy Siska
- Dobson West
- Moderator – Mike Monten
- Later additions – Pat Born, Lynn Moline

What is Governance?*

- The way we organize ourselves and our resources to do the work of our congregation.
- The way we make decisions.
- An expression of our values and how we work with trust and respect and serve one another.
- Helps us fulfill our mission and live our lives together in this faith community.

* from Governance Team update, 3/2013

Why Transform Governance?*

- Responsibility, authority, and decision-making are often unclear.
- Some important tasks have no “home.”
- Boards tend to focus on immediate issues at the expense of strategic goals.
- Only a limited number of people can serve today.
- Staff members are stretched thin.
- Our goals include developing a more congregational, more participatory form of governance.

* from Governance Team update, 3/2013

Goals of Transforming Governance*

- Simplify and clarify our structure, while retaining our Congregational tradition, to increase the effectiveness of our ministries and better nurture our spiritual lives.
- Clearly define decision-making power and authority and create two-way communication lines to move issues and decisions to the appropriate level of governance.
- Involve more members in Plymouth's ministries to unleash the creativity and compassion of this congregation.

* from Governance Team update, 3/2013

Transitional Policy Board 2013-2015

- Elected June, 2013
- Tasked with:
 - Amplifying the governance model
 - Developing initial policies
 - Proposing alignment with the Articles and Bylaws
- Members: Lani Bennett, John Breitinger, Ed Curtiss, Katie Dailey Dillon, Dan Dressen, Kathleen Laurila, Catherine Shreves, Jeff Sartain, Nancy Siska

New Governance Model Accepted by the Congregation, 4/2013

- Governing body = Deacons
- Operational body = Leadership Council
- Six boards – Community Life, Finance & Administration, Fine Arts, Outreach, Spiritual Formation, Worship

Congregational Vote, 12/14/14

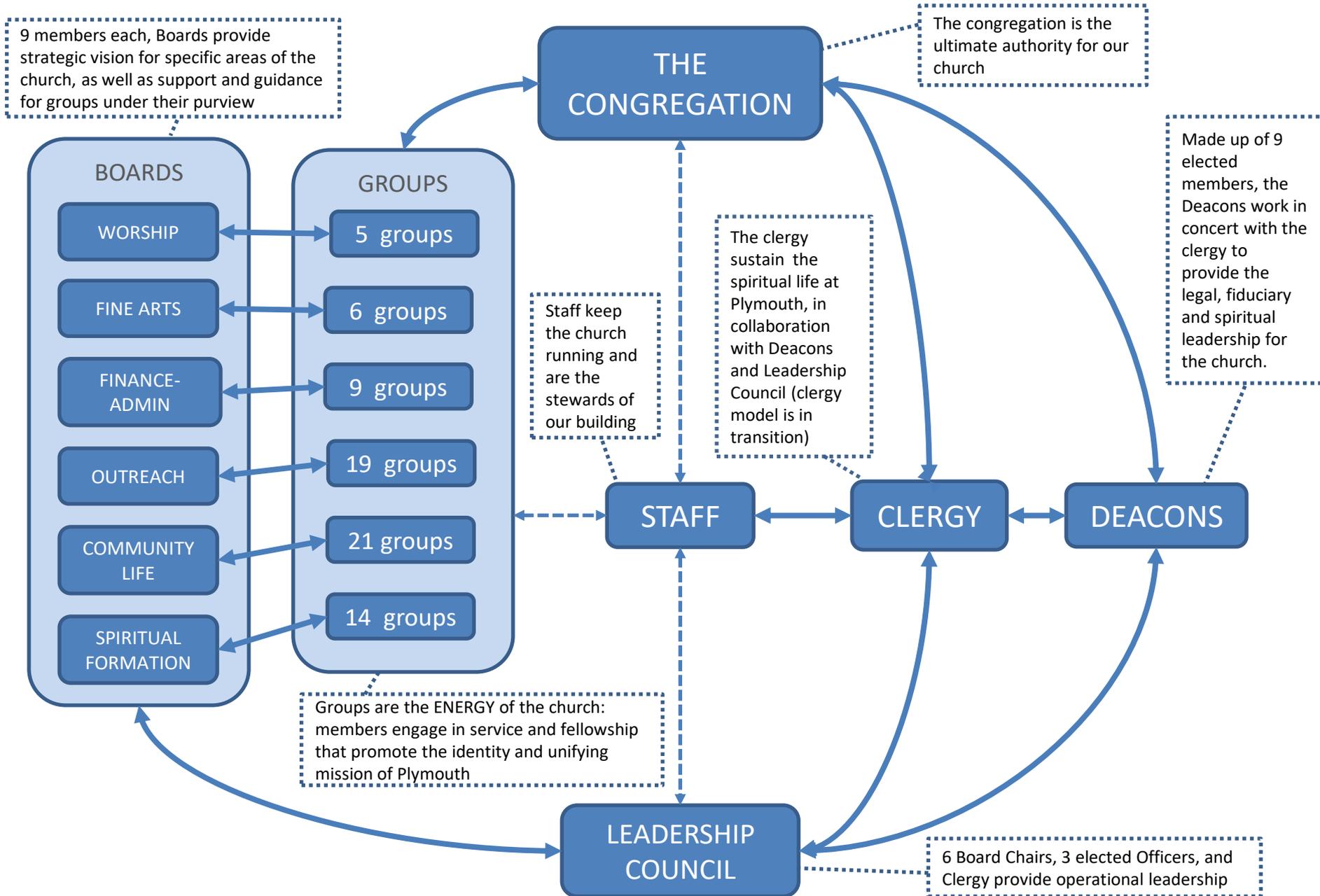
- Amended Bylaws approved.
- Restated Articles of Incorporation approved.
- Nine Deacons and Leadership Officers elected.
- Final report accepted.

FIVE KEY COMPONENTS TO OUR GOVERNANCE

- The way we do things should reflect what we value and want to accomplish, our “Purposes”. Plymouth’s Purposes are to “humbly seek and serve God within, among, and beyond ourselves.”*
- The way our church is organized should support the congregation to accomplish those “Purposes” with energy and spirit. Two distinct bodies with different functions were created: The Deacons focus on strategic planning, visioning, future orientation and the Leadership Council focuses on operations of the church, present orientation.
- We intend our governance to increase transparency. To accomplish our Purposes of serving God in a clear manner, we have written policies to clarify how decisions are made and how we work together.
- By widening the circle of authority, the new governance creates more opportunities for members to serve God and be accountable with one another.
- The congregation is the ultimate authority for our church. In the new governance structure, the congregation owns responsibilities that are included in the By-Laws. Routine conversations with the Deacons and congregation are specified in the policies and keep communication open.

*Full statement of “The Purposes of the Church” found on page 4 of the Plymouth Church Governing Policies, found on our website under Governance.

The New Governance Model



The New Governance Model

THE CONGREGATION

The Congregation is the ultimate authority for our church. In the new governance structure, the congregation owns the following responsibilities:

- Live in all relationships according to the teachings of Jesus
- Share in the fellowship of the wider church
- Attend worship faithfully
- Contribute toward the financial support of the church
- Approve Officers, Deacons, Leadership Council Officers and Board Chairs, who are the members
- Calling and releasing ministers
- Approving denominational affiliation
- Approving church merger or changes in church legal structure, changes in church name, selling church property

The New Governance Model



DEACONS

Made up of 9 elected members, the Deacons work in concert with the clergy to provide the legal, fiduciary and spiritual leadership for the church. The Deacons engage in regular conversation with the Congregation to serve and represent their views. The Deacons ensure the church fulfills its mission and ministry with effective use of resources

Comparison: Previous vs. New Governance

Previous Governance Structure



New Governance Structure



The New Governance Model

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Made up of the Board Chairs, three officers (Chair, Chair-Elect, and Secretary) and clergy, the Leadership Council fulfills the following functions:

- Collaborate to address priorities identified by the Deacons
- Guide operational work and address operational issues of the church
- Establish specific task forces and cross-functional groups to address operational issues, concerns or new activities (e.g. Transition Planning Task Force, Racial Justice Task Force).
- Through the various Boards, deepen connections between individuals within the church by developing groups that explore opportunities for service and fellowship. Some of the groups established through the Boards include:
 - One More Chair
 - Camp Plymouth (Pilgrim Point)
 - Great River Landing Task Force
 - Groveland Food Shelf Volunteers
 - Whittier School Volunteers
 - Plymouth Community Fund
 - Cuba Connect
 - Meals on Wheels
 - Literary Witness
 - Plymouth Film Club
 - Memorial Committee
 - Worship Hosts
 - Caring for Creation
 - Families Moving Forward
 - Anti Gun Violence Initiative
 - Library Committee
 - Mortality Project
 - Sunday Forum

Comparison: Previous vs. New Governance

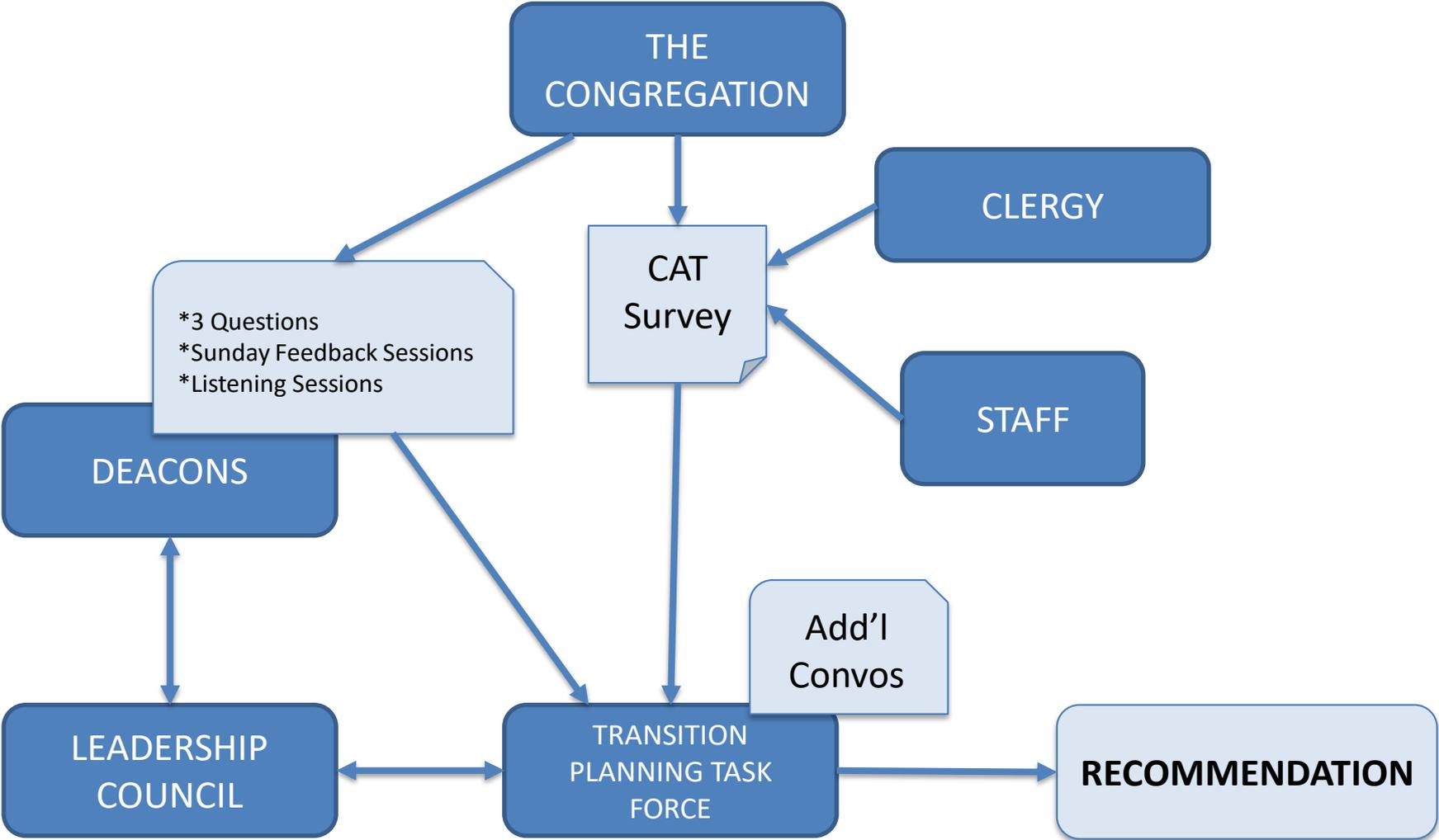
Previous Governance Structure



New Governance Structure



Case Study: A Time of Transition



Living into Governance

- Usually takes 3-5 years for complete transition from one governance system to another. We're in year 3.
- Many co-existing transitions – ministers, council and board members.
- Plymouth evolving as a spiritual, loving, relevant, and transforming community.