

## CHURCH PROFILE FORM

### Church Information:

Name: Plymouth Heights Christian Reformed Church

Location of church [City, State/Province]: Grand Rapids, MI

Classical Church Counselor: Rev. Abma of Woodlawn CRC

### Search Committee Contact:

Name: Brad Brummel

Home Address: 632 Village Springs Drive, Ada, MI 49301

Home: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: (616) 634-4268 Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: [pastorsearch@phcrc.org](mailto:pastorsearch@phcrc.org)

### Community Setting:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Function</u>	<u>Growth</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Rural	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Growing
<input type="checkbox"/> Small Town	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> College/University	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Static
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Metropolitan	<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Declining
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Suburban	<input type="checkbox"/> Recreational	
<input type="checkbox"/> Inner City	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	
<input type="checkbox"/> Small City	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bedroom Community	

Approximate population of community: 200,117 (2024) for City of Grand Rapids

### Church Profile:

We are open to:

Male and Female pastors       Female pastors only       Male pastors only

List all staff positions:

Pastor of Preaching and Leadership - Vacant  
Pastor of Congregational Care and Life  
Children and Youth Ministries Coordinator  
Worship Coordinator (vacant, interim coverage for now)  
Administrative Assistant  
Building and Grounds Manager  
Audio/Visual Supervisor

Position Available: Pastor of Preaching and Leadership, available immediately

Date of vacancy: 1/1/2025

General position description:

**Pastor of Preaching and Leadership** (Full time)

Updated by Administrative Council on 11/10/2025 for Search Committee

Plymouth Heights strives to *equip disciples to become neighbors and invite neighbors to become disciples*. The person in this role works collaboratively as part of a ministry team to lead and engage others in worship, stewardship, education, and outreach opportunities with God's people in this place. Although our pastors and staff have unique responsibilities, we encourage collaboration among the team for idea sharing, learning, cross training, or providing some relief during vacations or the occasional Sunday off. The **Pastor of Preaching and Leadership** (PPL) position will be filled by an ordained Minister of the Word in the CRCNA (or eligible for ordination) who is especially gifted and trained in preaching, providing vision, and management to the church's ministries in the context of the full Plymouth Heights CRC's vision statement. The PPL reports to the Council.

**Responsibilities**

**Preaching and Worship**

- Preach for most services
- Provide direction to the church's worship, including providing a preaching schedule for the Worship Committee and Elders three months in advance
- Work with the Worship Coordinator and the Worship Committee to provide spiritually enriching and doctrinally sound worship experiences for the congregation

**Leadership**

- Offer guidance to the Council as it envisions and administers the ministry in keeping with the church's vision statement
- In consultation with the Pastor of Congregational Care and Life (PCCL), provide supervision of the ministry and support staff
- Perform the normal administrative activities required to ensure the efficient operation of church's office and staff, including conducting annual performance reviews of all non-ordained staff
- Assist, with appropriate staff, the ministry of elders and deacons, attending elders' and/or deacons' meetings as agreed on with the PCCL
- Attend Administrative Council meetings as a voting member
- Be involved in Classis and Denomination ministries where opportunity, time and interests allow, in coordination with the PCCL

### **Congregational Life**

- Support the work of the PCCL and household elders to provide pastoral care to those in special need – sickness, grief, marital difficulty, divorce, parenting challenges, etc.
- In partnership with the PCCL, provide pastoral counseling ministries, directly if qualified, or referring to appropriate agencies as needed
- With the PCCL, share agreed upon visitation and pastoral care duties
- Encourage congregational participation in Congregational Life opportunities
- As gifted, work with the Children and Youth Ministry Coordinator to promote and facilitate faith formation for young people; also promote and facilitate faith formation for adults
- Work with council and staff to provide welcoming and enfolding opportunities for the congregation

### **Outreach**

- Work with the Missions Committee (Local and Global) as staff liaison, providing support and assistance to the teams
- Follow up with visitors to the worship services
- Act as PHCRC's contact person with community organizations and initiatives; these involvements to include coordinated efforts with area churches and schools

Full-time  Part-time

Bi-vocational position?

Yes  No

Number of years preferred of ministry experience of potential candidate:

Experience preferred

Required languages:

English

Church Demographics:

Average Sunday attendance Average 150, in-person and virtual

Active adult professing members 205

Profile of church members:

Age:

14% 0-11	3% 12-18	2.5% 19-24
11% 25-34	14% 35-49	14.5% 50-64
41% 65+		

Occupation:

10% Business	25% Professional	2% Trades
1% Stay-at-home Parent	1% Agriculture	40% Retired
20% Student	1% Other	

Percentage of members belonging to the congregation:

Less than 5 years	= 10%
5-10 years	= 15%
10 or more years	= 75%

Racial/Ethnic composition of congregation and surrounding community:

- PHCRC: 91% White, 2.5% Black, 2% Latino, 3% Asian, 1.5% Other
- Grand Rapids: 67% White, 19% Black, 16% Latino, 2% Asian, .5% Other
- The area of Grand Rapids surrounding the church (zip 49506) is more White than Grand Rapids as a whole, with proportionately fewer Black, Latino, and Asian residents.

Composition of congregation:

Mono-Cultural	[ ]
Multi-Cultural	[X]
Specific Ethnicity (specify: _____)	[ ]

List the last three persons in this position:

1. Rev. Ben Van Arragon
2. Rev. Steve De Vries
3. Dr. Russell Palsrok

## Worship:

How are members involved in planning and participation in the liturgy/worship?

Worship planning is currently led by our Interim Worship Coordinator. With the recent retirement of a long-serving Minister of Music, the church is looking to reexamine our worship planning process and participants. Many members of our congregation participate by leading the liturgy, offering prayers, reading Scripture, and playing instruments or leading singing.

Participants come from all generations, backgrounds, and talents. Several members handle Audio/Video responsibilities for the worship service. Their contributions are vital as we have added livestreaming worship on the PHCRC YouTube channel since the pandemic.

The new pastor should be prepared to help us strike a good balance between the participation of all members and the need to conduct worship services with appropriate skill levels for the various elements involved.

The new pastor should be prepared to guide the worship planners to prepare worship services that are engaging, relevant, cohesive, meaningful and promote church vitality with all ages – especially young people and families.

Describe the worship services in your church:

Plymouth Heights CRC worship services are liturgical, doctrinal, sacramental and generally well-planned around a theme. We experience worship together as the body of Christ. Worship is a time to praise and honor God for his presence in our lives and grow our personal relationships with him. The services intentionally include adults and children. Members of our Friendship group participate on occasion.

Technology is increasingly utilized to enhance sermons and music. Music incorporates pipe organ, piano, and additional brass, strings, woodwinds, and percussion instruments. Typically, the services have used a traditional style of music; however, we are working to incorporate more contemporary music with guitars, keyboards, drums, etc.

Members particularly appreciate: biblical preaching, musical variety, liturgical depth, and intergenerational presence.

Describe the discipleship practices in your church for all ages of members and attenders:

For our younger members, on Sundays we have nursery (birth thru age 3), Choristers and Children's Worship (age 4 thru 1st grade), Kingdom Seekers (grades 2 thru 4), Youth Choir (grades 2 thru 4), and Middle School Youth Group (grades 5 thru 8).

We do not currently have a High School group as we currently have no members in that age group. There will be a group next year as current middle schoolers age into high school.

On Wednesday evenings, we have the Dwell program (preschool thru 1st grade), GEMS and Cadets (2nd thru 8th grade). One Wednesday night per month in the summer is devoted to Community Events.

Friendship Ministries meets twice per month and allows people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and other members of the church to praise and socialize together.

There are a variety of small groups (e.g. book clubs, prayer time, and Bible study groups) for adults which are a time to come together, intergenerationally, to build faith and relationships throughout the congregation.

The new pastor is welcomed to attend but is not expected to lead the small groups.

#### Building/Financial:

Present annual budget:	\$665,045 for FY2026
Last year's annual budget:	\$685,336 for FY2025

Percentage of financial obligations met (last complete year reported):

Budget	100%
Denominational Ministry Shares	100%
Classical Ministry Shares	100%

Amount contributed above budget and ministry shares: \$1,500

Specify (optional):

#### Facilities:

##### Describe facilities:

We have a sanctuary with a 550-seat capacity. Several of the pews have been shortened to accommodate wheelchairs rather than expecting wheelchair bound members to sit at the back of the sanctuary or in the main aisle. The building is ADA compliant with an elevator to access the upper and lower levels. The church building includes a nursery and community room on the upper level and a fellowship room on the lower level. We have a library and media room along with several classrooms. We have dedicated spaces for the Strings N' Things outreach program, for our middle school groups, and a craft/workshop room for GEMS and Cadets. Each level of the building is supported by a kitchen. The parking lot is used effectively for Community Events and offers ample spaces for people with disabilities and seniors.

Are your buildings adequate for your ministries?

Yes [X]      No [ ]

Is a building program projected?

Yes [ ]      No [X]

Does the church own a parsonage?

Yes [X]      No [ ]

Location of office or study:

Parsonage is occupied by the Pastor of Congregational Care and Life and her family. An office for each pastor's use is part of the main church office.

Compensation:

The salary range we are prepared to offer our new pastor is based on the CRC Minister Compensation Survey for our area: [X]

If other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

The average annual increase for this position over the past three years is:

\$ Annual COLA increase or \_\_\_\_\_ %

Housing:

- [X] Housing allowance
- [ ] Parsonage only
- [ ] Either of the above

Benefits and expenses:

- [X] Pension
- [X] Medical insurance
- [X] Life insurance
- [X] Social Security or Canada Pension
- [X] Travel/mileage
- [X] Continuing Education funds
- [X] Continuing Education time allotted
- [X] Sabbatical policy in place
- [X] Annual vacation (# weeks): 4
- [X] Other (please specify): Health Savings Account (HSA)

## Church Characteristics:

[Check which one(s) are closest to your church's characteristics]

Presently, the FOCUS OF OUR CHURCH'S MINISTRY is:

- Community exclusively
- Community primarily
- Community & current members/participants equally
- Current members/participants primarily
- Current members/participants exclusively

In our church, the worship service is designed for:

- Designed for the unchurched
- Emphasis on the unchurched
- Unchurched and believers
- Emphasis on believers
- Designed for believers

In our church, the style of music in the worship service is:

- Contemporary
- Mostly contemporary
- Blended - aspiring
- Mostly traditional
- Traditional

In our church, leadership is generally provided by the:

- Predominantly lay leaders
- Frequently lay leader
- Lay leaders & pastors staff share leadership
- Lay leaders function under pastoral staff
- Predominantly pastoral staff

Our church seeks to encourage spiritual growth through:

- No specific ministries
- Ministries for a few groups
- Ministries for selected groups
- Ministries for most groups
- Ministries for all groups

In our church, evangelism strategies and methods are:

- Predominantly unplanned
- Generally unplanned
- Equal emphasis
- Generally planned - balanced by personal/relational emphasis
- Predominantly planned

Our church is representative of the economic diversity of our community:

- Strongly representative
- Mostly representative
- Moderately representative
- Mildly representative
- Weakly representative

Our church is representative of the ethnic diversity of our community:

- Strongly representative
- Mostly representative
- Moderately representative
- Mildly representative
- Weakly representative

Our church's response to compassion, mercy, and justice needs is:

- Commitment to church-based action
- Encouragement of church-based action
- Church-based and personal action
- Encouragement of personal action
- Commitment to personal action

Our church's missional focus is:

- All local
- Mostly local
- Equally local and global
- Mostly global
- All global

**Narrative:**

In what ways does your church participate in ecumenical activities?

Plymouth Heights as a church body is not regularly involved in ecumenical activity, but we are richly impacted by ecumenical liturgy and hymns. We use songs from various Christian traditions in worship while maintaining our distinctly reformed character. Our pastors and worship staff attend conferences or participate in ecumenical peer groups and continuing education opportunities in ways that enrich and diversify our ministry. We do share our building with Falam Baptist Church, a Burmese Refugee congregation and on occasion share services with them and we also promote ecumenical activities and worship services in the community when they are available.

Reflect on your strengths/gifts as a church:

**Welcoming:** Plymouth Heights is experienced as a welcoming community. It is open, friendly, and caring, with strong interpersonal relationships and a family-like atmosphere.

**Engagement:** We have a committed core of regular volunteers who fill a variety of ministries in our church, and many serve their respective areas of ministry with energy, consistency and passion.

**Diversity:** We value traditional diversity – ethnicity and culture – and diversity in the forms of age, gifts, talents, and viewpoints. The church is diverse in membership and leadership and attendance. We are respectful of differing opinions while remaining committed to loving all God's children. It is an area where we can always improve, but we are fortunate to have a strong foundation.

**Outreach & Inclusion:** We operate a Mobile Food Pantry, participate with Mulick Park Collaborative (elementary school mentoring), and host Community Events. We offer Strings N' Things, GEMS, Cadets and Dwell that includes many community members. These programs are celebrated for their impact and inclusion.

**Friendship Ministry:** A distinctive ministry is our long-standing involvement and leadership of an inclusive ministry to and with people who are differently abled. Through Friendship Ministries, many individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and their friends gather twice per month for a time of singing and Biblical education. We assist in providing transportation to and from services and events. "Friends" serve as greeters, integrate for seating with other members, and are known by name and know congregation members' names.

**Worship & Music:** Meaningful worship services, diverse music styles, and dedicated volunteers are highlighted as strengths.

**Support & Care:** Members appreciate the church's support during personal and collective hardships, and its commitment to loving and serving others.

## Reflect on your passions as a church

Worship Services – It is important to say that preaching is the centerpiece of worship. Attendees come to worship with a deep desire to be fed through thought-provoking relevant sermons that connect to daily living. The service also involves equally important elements of worship and praise, most notably through music. The congregation has a strong attraction to music and PHCRC dedicates a lot of effort to uplift and engage the congregation through many varieties of music. We continue to use the organ quite prominently, but not always. Sometimes it is accompanied by other instruments – strings, guitars, piano, brass, and percussion. Services generally follow the thematic structure of the church calendar. As noted above, we have recently experienced the retirement of a long-time director of worship.

Welcoming – Members are typically involved in one or more ministries (as time permits). Those who visit find that they are quickly recognized and welcomed and, importantly, helped to find opportunities for engagement. Engagement increases the sense of belonging and familiarity with existing members. Coffee time after each morning worship service helps members mingle and increase their knowledge and awareness of one another, including new visitors and members.

Next Generation Ministry – PHCRC strives to offer opportunities for involvement for youth at every age level and stage of life. While the purpose of every group or ministry focuses on the goal of nurturing and deepening faith, the means by which that happens varies by group and the kinds of interests for each. Ministries are often intergenerational.

Friendship Ministry – Members are vibrant greeters. Volunteers are passionate about leading the groups.

Mobile Food Pantry – PHCRC has a long-standing relationship with the Meijer grocery store. The ministry draws some members from its recipients. We serve approximately 200 families once per month.

List specific problems with which your congregation struggles:

Areas of perceived struggle are:

1. After a period of membership loss, PHCRC has been successful in maintaining a steady level of membership, however, we have the desire and capacity to grow and are seeking leadership to help us do that.
2. While we have a committed core of regular volunteers, we have faced challenges in recruiting volunteers to serve on council, and gathering volunteers for weekly children's ministries can be cumbersome.
3. Some of the operational processes of the church are poised for improvement; ranging from role definition and training for incoming office-bearers, incorporation and engagement of new members/regular visitors, etc.
4. We are working on how to meet and balance the worship needs of everyone.

What has been the most interesting and challenging event in the life of your church in the last three years?

The largely unanticipated departure of our prior pastor Ben VanArragon after 1.5 years of service caught many off-guard. The Council accepted Ben's decision to leave so he could join the CRCNA's administration. Many in the congregation expressed dissatisfaction, betrayal, and even anger about Ben's decision. The Council responded by engaging a transitional pastor, Rev. Stan Sturing, whose consistent presence and available style has promoted healing.

Early on, Pastor Stan conducted "listening circles" to hear the thoughts and sentiments of those from the congregation who wished to share them. He shared a lengthy "transcript" of those meetings with the Council and, eventually, with the entire congregation. Perhaps the best way of describing our most challenging event from the last three years is to provide an AI-assisted summary of Pastor Stan's document – items 1-5 and "Key Takeaways" listed here:

#### 1. Hardships Faced (Past 1-2 Years)

- Loss of Leadership: The departure of Pastor Ben was deeply felt, described as deflating, shocking, and painful. Many felt a loss of momentum and hope for the church's future.
- Denominational Struggles: Ongoing debates and decisions around LGBTQ issues (HSR) within the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) have caused division, anxiety, and sadness.
- Declining Membership: Concerns about a reduction in attendance, especially among young people and families, and the impact on church vitality.

#### 2. Plymouth Heights' Strengths & Successes

- Welcoming Community: The church is widely seen as open, friendly, and caring, with strong interpersonal relationships and a family-like atmosphere.
- Outreach & Inclusion: Programs like the Food Pantry, Friendship Ministry, Kids' Hope, and community events are celebrated for their impact and inclusivity.
- Worship & Music: Meaningful worship services, diverse music styles, and dedicated volunteers are highlighted as strengths.
- Support & Care: Members appreciate the church's support during personal and collective hardships, and its commitment to loving and serving others.

### 3. God at Work & Sources of Joy

- Resilience: Despite challenges, members see God's hand in the church's ability to weather storms and remain united.
- Relationships: Deep connections, small groups, and intergenerational friendships bring joy and a sense of belonging.
- Children & Youth: The presence of young families and children are seen as signs of hope.
- Service & Prayer: Outreach ministries and a commitment to prayer are central to the church's mission and vitality.

### 4. Hopes, Dreams, and Future Focus

- Youth & Families: There is a strong desire to attract and retain young families, children, and youth, recognizing them as the future of the church.
- Community Engagement: Members hope for continued and expanded outreach, deeper involvement in the neighborhood, and creative ways to connect.
- Leadership & Communication: Calls for strong, visionary leadership, improved communication, and possibly new staff roles (e.g., church administrator).
- Adaptation & Growth: Suggestions include updating worship styles, revisiting the church's mission statement, and considering mergers or partnerships with other churches.
- Unity & Faithfulness: Emphasis on remaining faithful to God's Word, fostering unity despite differences, and supporting each other through change.

### 5. Spirit/Soul of Plymouth Heights CRC

- Described as: Welcoming, loving, caring, resilient, hopeful, sincere, dedicated, and mission-oriented.
- Challenges: Some caution about comfort and reluctance to change, but overall a strong sense of community and commitment to serving others.

## Key Takeaways

- Plymouth Heights CRC is a church in transition, facing challenges but also demonstrating resilience, care, and hope.
- The congregation values community, outreach, worship, and inclusion, and is eager to move forward with renewed energy and vision.
- There is a collective desire to embrace change, invest in youth and families, and remain united in faith and purpose.

List major goals that this congregation has set for itself or opportunities the congregation anticipates:

1. Worship has always been central to our experience as a congregation. The recent retirement of our Minister of Music and the selection of a new pastor will allow Plymouth Heights to recast our worship style in a direction that helps us to achieve all of our other goals.
2. Expand and grow our kids and youth programs, with increased emphasis on faith formation, for our young members
3. Work on expanding our diversity and enfolding different kinds of people into Plymouth Heights. We are in a diverse neighborhood and want to reflect that.
4. We want to continue to grow our community outreach through programs and interacting with the people around us.

Describe what being Christians of Reformed accent means to you:

First and foremost, God is in charge; consequently, this gives us assurance and comfort in all circumstances. God's sovereignty and compassion give us confidence in our salvation and motivate us to be agents of renewal in the world. Being Christians of a reformed accent means a commitment to Christian discipleship at all times.

We understand Christian discipleship through Scripture, which is God's Word and the only final rule for what to believe and what to do. We read the Bible guided by the Reformed Confessions, and celebrate the sacraments. We are committed to the education of our children as disciples of Jesus. We are led in ministries of service by deacons and are governed by elders who lead in Christ's name.

Describe your understanding of the relationship between the local church and the Christian Reformed denomination:

PHCRC has been and still is supportive of the denomination, which is evident from the consistent payment of full ministry shares, not only classical but denominational. We are fortunate to have a number of members who work for the denomination, either in "headquarter" positions or at the CRC educational institutions (Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary).

PHCRC regularly participates in Classis Grand Rapids East meetings as well as some leadership positions in the past. We acknowledge that many churches in Classis Grand Rapids East have left the denomination. We rely upon the denomination for resources for church education, Safe Church, Pastor Relations, etc. We support denominational causes such as World Renew, and missionaries through Resonate.

The Council adopted the following position statement: "We are committed to remaining in the CRC denomination while maintaining a pastoral, grace-filled approach to those who see things differently. We value our Reformed identity and seek to be a healthy, missional CRC congregation that can hold together diverse perspectives under the lordship of Christ."

Plymouth Heights will support its next pastor being involved in denominational matters but will not expect that to be her/his priority.

What have been the three most important events in the history of your church?

1. Mission movement: An increasing commitment to lean into our mission statement in recent years has given us purposeful passion in reaching out to our local community. Some of our neighborhood engagements include providing food through monthly food truck distributions and meeting our neighbors at parking lot events.
2. Friendship program development for people with disabilities: Not only has this provided resources for faith formation and given opportunities for meaningful relationships, but our friends' inclusion in our worship services and life of the church has brought immeasurable blessings for all of us.
3. Building addition of the community room: This expansive, versatile space has provided a place for community events, church meals and fellowship, service opportunities, celebrations, sports, and more.

Leadership:

How many council members does your church have? 9 elders and 9 deacons

What is the length of term for council members? 3 years

How often does the full council meet? 10 times per year

What subgroups of council exist, how do they function and how often do they meet?

Administrative Council 10 times per year

Elders meet monthly 10 times per year

Deacons meet monthly 10 times per year

Committees generally meet 3-4 times a year, sometimes alternatively by email:

- Worship Committee
- Youth & Education
- Global Missions
- Congregational Life
- Endowment
- Finance
- Properties
- Personnel
- Safe Church Team