

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**DRAFT**

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Plymouth Congregational Church

Other names/site number: Plymouth-Union Congregational Church

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

Street & number: 1014 Broad Street

City or town: Providence State: Rhode Island County: Providence

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this x nomination      request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

     national      statewide   X   local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

     A      B   X   C      D

<p><b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b> <u>Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission</u> <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	<p><b>Date</b></p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property <u>    </u> meets <u>    </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p><b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p>	<p><b>Date</b></p>
<p><b>Title :</b></p>	<p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>          </u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS: Late Gothic Revival

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, stone, slate, concrete, glass

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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#### Summary Paragraph

Plymouth Congregational Church (currently Iglesia Visión Evangélica), built in 1915–1919, is an English Gothic Revival-style, two-and-one-half-story, buff brick building with limestone trim and a slate-shingled, cross-gable roof. The building has a rectangular footprint and a cruciform plan, and an imposing entrance and bell tower marks its northwest corner. It was designed by Boston-based architect George F. Newton. The church occupies a corner lot at 1014 Broad Street, on the east side of Broad Street and the south side of Pennsylvania Avenue in Providence, Rhode Island. The building, which faces west, is set back about 40 feet from Broad Street and about 10 feet from Pennsylvania Avenue. Plymouth Congregational Church retains a high level of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

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#### Narrative Description

##### *Setting*

Plymouth Congregational Church is located at 1014 Broad Street in South Providence, on a busy road that connects the center of Providence with the city of Cranston to the south. The surrounding neighborhood has a mix of residential and commercial buildings, with single-family houses built primarily in the nineteenth through mid-twentieth centuries standing alongside stores and restaurants. The nominated

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property is generally bounded by Pennsylvania Avenue on the north, a residential property on the east, a commercial property in a former dwelling on the south, and Broad Street on the west. A simple wrought iron fence, approximately 36 inches tall and set atop a granite curb, runs along most of the west (front) and north property boundaries. Concrete walks lead to the principal entrance in the west side of the tower and to secondary entrances on the north elevation of the building. The remainder of the lot is grassed.

### *Exterior*

The church is rectangular in shape, approximately 64 feet wide by 98 feet deep, and faces west onto Broad Street. The building has a modified cruciform plan. The two-and-one-half-story, front-gable nave, which contains worship and classroom space, terminates at the chancel, which contains the pulpit, in the eastern end of the building. A two-and-one-half-story, square-plan organ room projects from the center of the east elevation, behind the pulpit. A cross-gable, two-and-one-half-story transept crosses the nave towards its east end. A cross-gable, two-and-one-half-story ell extends off the nave near the southwest corner of the building. A four-story, square tower containing the main entrance and belfry is located at the northwest corner of the church. Architectural drawings for the church specify that the east end of the nave and the transept comprised the auditorium, that the ell near the southwest corner comprised the church parlor, and that the Sunday school was located in the west end of the nave.<sup>1</sup> The building rests upon a concrete foundation, has a raised basement level,<sup>2</sup> and walls are clad in various tones of buff brick laid in running bond with every eighth course laid in Flemish bond. Trim is limestone, set flush with the brick wall, and molded. The gable roofs are clad in green slate shingles with copper flashing and detailing; two gabled dormers pierce the north and south slopes. A small, louvered, metal and wood cupola rises from the ridgeline of the organ chamber. Large, two-story, pointed-arch window groupings dominate the west, north and south elevations of the church; on the west and north elevations, these are filled with leaded, diamond-shaped, stained glass in a simple yellow and white pattern while those on the south elevation contain decorative stained-glass depicting religious scenes and symbols. Otherwise, fenestration consists largely of rectangular window openings filled with one-over-one, double-hung, wood sash with leaded, diamond-pane, yellow and white glass.

The west façade is composed of three sections: the bell tower (north), the front-gable nave (center), and the cross-gable ell (south). The four-story, castellated bell tower has corner buttresses that step back and terminate at the flat roof. The main entrance is located in the west elevation of the tower and consists of paired wood doors with ornate wrought iron strap hinges. The entrance is set within a wide, limestone Gothic-arch surround with quoins, a molded double-architrave, and a two-light, arched transom. Semi-circular, concrete stairs with wrought iron handrails lead to the main entrance. The bell tower contains paired square windows at the second story and a slender trefoil-arch window opening at the third story. The fourth story, which is stepped back from the lower part of the tower, has a large pointed-arch window opening with limestone quoins, which contains paired pointed-arch openings filled with wood louvers. The openings on the second and fourth stories feature limestone crowns with eared architraves, as does the first-floor entry. On the northwest corner of the tower, the cornerstone (inscribed "1878" and "1915")<sup>3</sup> is placed directly above a limestone water table, which wraps around the bell tower. The tower is accented with several limestone bands: four between the first and second stories, one at the bottom of the third-story window opening, and two at the fourth story. The tower is identical on all four sides on the third and fourth

<sup>1</sup> The functions of the rooms dictate the architecture of the church; the functions are included in the description for clarity.

<sup>2</sup> Because the basement is raised, it is included when counting the stories of the different components of the building.

<sup>3</sup> Plymouth Congregational Church was founded in 1878 and construction of this building began in 1915.

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stories. There are no windows at the second story on the south and east elevations of the tower. The first and second stories of the north elevation of the tower are described below.

The large central nave section of the west elevation is slightly set back from the tower and is two-and-one-half stories tall and three-bays wide within a broad front gable. Brick buttresses divide the wide center bay from the narrower side bays and terminate at a limestone capped parapet. A limestone cross sits atop the gable's peak. The center bay is dominated by a grouping of windows set within a two-story, pointed-arch opening framed by corbeled soldier bricks with a limestone keystone and limestone sills. The upper window sash feature simple wood tracery. Brick pilasters that simulate buttresses separate the two center windows from those to either side. At the ground level, the center bay contains four windows with simple limestone lintels and sills: a central pair with brick mullions and a single window to either side. The outer bays contain a single window at the first and second stories, also with simple limestone lintels and sills. The cross-gabled ell at the southwest corner of the building is two stories tall and is set back slightly from the nave section. A single window is at the ground level, and two windows are in the first and second stories. The windows have simple limestone lintels and sills. A brick buttress marks the southwest corner of the building.

The church's north elevation, which faces Pennsylvania Avenue, is composed, from west to east, of the bell tower; a two-story lobby; the north end of the transept; a two-story vestibule; and the organ room, which is set back considerably from the main elevation plane. The detailing on the north elevation of the bell tower matches that of the west elevation, with the exception of the first story, which has a pointed-arch window opening with a limestone window cap. The lobby section has three bays divided by brick buttresses. The east bay contains a one-story, one-bay-by-one-bay, enclosed entry porch with buff brick knee walls, ornamental trefoil windows, and wood columns and brackets that support a slightly flared, front-gable roof. A pair of modern metal doors with cross-shaped lights comprise the entrance. The first floor of the center bay contains a single window, while the west bay has a single window as well as an entrance consisting of a metal door topped by a transom with three, cross-shaped lights. At the second story, each bay has two windows, located directly below the roofline. The window and door openings all have limestone lintels and sills. A gabled dormer with paired windows pierces the roof of this section. The dormer is clad in green slate shingle. The transept is three bays wide and has a front facing cross-gable with a brick parapet capped with limestone. The outer bays each contain a window at the ground level. The center bay is flanked by brick buttresses and contains a grouping of windows set within a two-story, pointed-arch opening, detailed to match the large window grouping on the west elevation of the nave. The ground level contains four windows with simple limestone lintels and sills: a central pair with brick mullions and a single window to either side. A vestibule containing stairs to the basement level is east of the transept. This one-bay-wide section contains an entrance, consisting of a flush metal door, a single window in the second story at the cornice line, and a gabled roof dormer with a single window. The north elevation of the organ room contains no openings.

The church's three-bays-wide east (rear) elevation, which faces the driveway, is dominated by the front-gable organ chamber, which projects east from the center bay and has corner buttresses. The east elevation walls are mostly blank, with the exception of the basement windows in all bays and one second-story window in each of the side bays. Windows have flat limestone lintels and rectangular limestone sills. Molded copper wraps around the roofline and simulates a fascia or rake-board.

The south elevation of the church is composed, from west to east, of the cross-gable ell; a two-story stair hall; the south end of the transept; and a two-story stair hall. The cross-gable ell contains three windows in the ground and first stories and four in the second story. Windows have flat limestone lintels and limestone sills. The west stair hall has an entrance in the first story and a basement level window to the east; three

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windows are located below the roofline in the second story. The entrance consists of a flush metal door with a single light and a metal panel. The transept is three bays wide and has the same architectural detailing as the transept in the north elevation, except that the window sash in the two-story, pointed-arch opening are filled with highly decorative stained glass (described below). The east stairwell is one bay wide and contains a former entrance opening at the first floor that has been infilled with concrete block. A single gabled dormer pierces the roof's slope. It is sided in green slate shingles and has a wide wood rake-board supported by wood brackets. Molded copper wraps around the roofline of the entire south elevation, simulating a fascia or rake-board.

### *Interior*

The church was designed to accommodate worshipping, teaching, and social gatherings, which is reflected in the floor plan and finishes. Architectural plans for the first floor of the church (Figure 1), prepared by George F. Newton, depict a modified cruciform plan, with an entry vestibule in the northwest tower, leading to a lobby to its east; the Sunday school, including individual classrooms, located in the west end of the nave; the church parlor occupying the ell; and a secondary stair hall and vestibule to the east of the parlor. The remainder of the nave and the transept contain the auditorium, while the pulpit and choir occupy the chancel, at the east end of the nave, with an organ chamber to their east. Additional stairwells, as well as a choir room and pastor's room, are at the northeast and southeast corners of the building. A second floor plate occupies the west end and western corner of the south side of the building. The basement consists primarily of a secondary auditorium, which was used for social gatherings, performances, and Sunday school.

The main entrance doors lead to a shallow vestibule at the ground level, with steps leading up to the lobby at the first floor. The vestibule has a high ceiling, plastered walls, and modern stone tile floors. A Gothic Revival-style pendant lamp lights the space. Recessed coves are located on both sides of the entrance. Wood stairs with tiled risers lead to the lobby, accessed through a pair of full-light, wood doors. On either side of these doors are openings with four-panel wood doors. The north opening leads to the bell tower stairwell; the south opening leads to a coat closet. The lobby has a low ceiling, laminate wood flooring and plaster walls with stained wood baseboards, chair rail, and picture rail. An enclosed staircase to the basement is along the north wall. The lobby has Gothic Revival-style, semi-flush ceiling light fixtures. Several doors – two single doors, two pairs of doors – lead from the lobby to the former Sunday school and the auditorium. Doors are set within molded wood surrounds and are either stained six-panel wood doors or painted four-panel wood doors.

The former Sunday school is located in the west end of the nave and was originally organized in a modified Akron Plan, a scheme that gained favor among Protestant churches in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and which allowed students to hear the beginning of worship and then attend Sunday school in separate classrooms, typically located on two levels (White 1964:126–127). At Plymouth Congregational Church, the Sunday school originally consisted of a large gathering space that opened to the auditorium to its east via a series of glazed pocket doors. Five classrooms, each measuring seven feet by nine feet, were located along the west wall; though not shown on the plan, they likely could be closed off from the main space with curtains or possibly doors. Architectural investigation indicates that there was a similar layout of rooms above the first-floor classrooms; this space is now an open balcony. The original pocket doors that separated the Sunday school from the auditorium have been removed and a drywall wall with wood wainscot has been installed in their place. A pair of full-light doors is centered on the wall and a grouping of twelve, two-light, wood windows with frosted glass is located just below the roof braces and collar-tie. The first-floor

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classrooms have been removed and the space built out to accommodate bathrooms and a conference room. These rooms have vinyl flooring, drywall walls with stained wood wainscot and windows with molded wood surrounds.

The two-story gathering space in the Sunday school retains a large amount of original material, including wood floors, plaster walls with stained wood wainscot, and an exposed wood ceiling. The hammer-beam ceiling consists of exposed rafters, purlins, trusses, and paneled decking. Hammer-beams and hammer-braces extend from the north and south walls and support collar ties. The ceiling is constructed of pine and stained in a "Flemish oak tint" (*Providence Journal* 1919). Paired windows in the dormers on the north and south roof slopes flood the room with light and Gothic Revival-style chandeliers hang from the collar ties. Open stairs against the north and south walls lead to the balcony over the former first-floor classrooms. The paired staircases are wood with square wood balustrades and square newel posts. The balcony railing matches the stair balustrade. The balcony is currently open except for a closet in the southwest corner.

The former church parlor, now an office, is located in the southwest ell. It measures 24 feet by 15 feet and has wood floors, plaster walls and ceilings, wood baseboards, picture rail, and chair rail. A small closet with a paneled wood door is in the southeast corner of the room. The door to the church parlor consists of a stained, six-panel, wood door with a small light. The second floor of the church parlor has the same features as the first floor, with the exception of the door, which is constructed of dark stained wood with three lower panels, and three vertical, glazed upper panels, the middle of which contains yellow and white stained glass.

The south stairwell, which leads to the basement, is located immediately to the east of the former parlor. It is accessible from the church parlor, the Sunday school, and the auditorium, via six-panel wood doors. The enclosed double-L wood stair has a square wood balustrade with square newel posts and carpeted stairs. The stairwell walls are either plaster or partially exposed masonry.

Plymouth Congregational Church's worship space, or auditorium, occupies the transept and may be accessed via the Sunday school, lobby, and stairwells. The two-story auditorium has wood flooring, plaster walls, and a vaulted ceiling with exposed rafters, purlins, trusses and paneled decking. Four, two-story, fluted, Doric engaged columns are located at the corners of the stairwells and lobby; each supports three hammer-beams and hammer-braces, which support collar ties. One set of trusses extends from each column and converge at the center of the roof. Like in the former Sunday school, the ceiling is constructed of pine and stained to resemble oak. The walls are painted in light blue and cream, with gold and brick red accents. Moveable, curved pews are laid out in three sections, in a theater-style arrangement that creates a semi-circular seating area. The ends of the pews, which are dark-stained oak, are decoratively carved in the Gothic Revival style. Dormers with single windows light the chancel on the north and south sides and Gothic Revival-style wrought-iron chandeliers hang from the collar ties.

The auditorium contains two large, pointed-arch window groupings in the north and south walls of the transept. The windows on the north wall feature stained glass in a diamond pattern in clear and yellow glass. The windows on the south wall are filled with striking, representational stained-glass. The two central windows, which are divided by a wood mullion, depict Mary Magdalene witnessing Jesus Christ's resurrection. Above this scene are four windows, each of which contains an angel holding a Greek symbol; these include: alpha, chi rho, "ihs," and omega. Below are two windows that contain a dedication, reading "In Loving Memory of Frank Eugene Farnham." The windows to either side of the central grouping depict flora, scrollwork, and symbols such as an anchor, wheat, a pomegranate, grapes, a fleur-de-lis, and a

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phoenix. The window was added in 1944 and designed by Hiemer & Company of New Jersey.<sup>4</sup> It most likely replaced a simple yellow and white leaded glass window, as seen throughout the rest of the church.

The chancel is located at the east end of the church and is separated from the nave by four wood steps with stone tile risers and, to either side of the steps, wood balustrades with molded handrails and trefoil arch balusters. The chancel has plaster walls and wood flooring. The pulpit was originally located at the front center, but has been moved to the north side; a modern lectern stands in its place. The wood pulpit is shaped as a half-decagon with paneled sides and buttresses at the corners. Behind the pulpit is the organ, which is set within a two-story Gothic arch opening with pilasters and molded trim. The organ is a 2-manual, 11-stop pipe organ (Opus #769) manufactured by the Austin Organ Company of Hartford, Connecticut. It has a paneled wood case with trefoil arch molding. Brass organ pipes rise above the case to the second floor.

To the south of the chancel is an enclosed stairwell that leads to the basement and a small area that was designated on the architectural drawings as the “choir room.” To the north of the chancel, a few steps down, is a small room that was designated as the “pastor’s room.” This leads to a vestibule with exterior access and a stairwell that leads to the basement.

The basement contains a large, open, secondary auditorium in the center of the building, with raised platforms at the north and south ends. The room has a mix of wood floors and linoleum flooring, ceilings are low and coffered, and metal posts support the floor above. The walls are plaster with wood wainscot. The central room is flanked by the stairwells and several small rooms, some outfitted for classroom use. These contain stained wood floors or laminate wood floors, plaster walls with wood wainscot capped by a wood chair rail, and plaster ceilings that are covered by acoustic tile drop ceilings. Windows, located just below the ceiling, have wood sills and molded aprons and doors are typically wood with four panels.

### **Statement of Integrity**

Plymouth Congregational Church retains overall integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The property’s setting on Broad Street remains intact, and the property clearly conveys its original English Gothic Revival-style architectural design. The coherent vision, design, and execution of the building constructed in 1915–1919 as overseen by the Plymouth Congregational Vestry, with the building designed by architect George F. Newton, are readily apparent today. The Church’s exterior of buff brick rising to the cross-gable green slate roof, along with the associated bell tower, are unaltered. The building’s extensive architectural stained glass and interior decoration including the pews, organ, and light fixtures are essentially unaltered. Minor changes to the building that have occurred since its construction in 1919 do not materially detract from the overall integrity of the building and landscape.

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<sup>4</sup> RIHPHC, “Survey of Stained-Glass Windows: Providence, Plymouth Congregational Church, 1014 Broad Street,” 1995.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1915–1944  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1915 – Cornerstone of Plymouth Congregational Church laid  
1919 – Dedication of building  
1944 – Stained-glass window added to south elevation

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

George F. Newton, Architect  
Hiemer & Company, Stained Glass Designers  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Plymouth Congregational Church in Providence, Rhode Island is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as a fine example of a late English Gothic Revival-style church. The building, designed by prominent Boston architect George F. Newton (1857–1947) and constructed in 1915–1919, was built for a congregation that dated back to 1878. Newton had a productive career that spanned over 40 years in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He designed many religious buildings, as well as public buildings and private residences across New England and the Mid-Atlantic states. The congregation expanded in the late nineteenth century and set about to build a new church, though it took almost 25 years for construction to commence. The growth of the congregation and the paradigm shifts within the Protestant faith in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are evident in the design of this church. The congregation’s commitment to religious education is also expressed in the church design, which employed a variation of the Akron Plan for Sunday school instruction. Over the course of the twentieth century, the membership of the congregation expanded and declined partly in response to changes in city and neighborhood demographic trends. The period of significance for Plymouth Congregational Church begins in 1915 with the beginning of construction and ends in 1944, when a large, decorative stained-glass window was installed in the south elevation of the transept, the last major architectural change to the building.

#### ***Criteria Consideration A***

Criteria Consideration A applies to the Plymouth Congregational Church property, which is owned by a religious organization and used for religious purposes. However, the property derives its primary significance from its architectural qualities; it is a handsome example of the English Gothic Revival style designed by George F. Newton, a prominent architect noted for his ecclesiastical designs.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Plymouth Congregational Church lies on the eastern boundary of the Elmwood neighborhood. Elmwood was originally an agricultural subsection of Providence centered around Broad Street, Elmwood Avenue, Cranston Street, and Potters Avenue. The Elmwood neighborhood mostly consists of residential buildings constructed between about 1865 and 1930 during the city’s greatest period of population, economic, and physical growth. The main thoroughfares, including Broad Street, were residential but became more commercial in nature in the mid-twentieth century (Christensen 1980).

#### **The Formation and Early Years of the Plymouth Congregation**

On March 6, 1878, the Plymouth Congregational Society formed with 30 members under the leadership of Reverend Henry B. Roberts. The congregation originally worshipped at the small Union Congregation Chapel on Prairie Avenue (*Providence Journal* 1919; Greene 1886:149; Bayles 1891:489). In 1880-81, the congregation constructed its own church building on Richardson Street (now Pennsylvania Avenue), near

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Broad Street (Greene 1886:149).<sup>5</sup> While the surrounding land had been subdivided, much of it remained undeveloped; for example, the City of Providence owned the entire empty block bound by Broad Street, Pennsylvania Avenue (then Richardson Street), Elma Avenue (then Kelley Street), and Prairie Avenue (Hopkins 1882).

By 1886, the Plymouth Congregational Society membership included approximately 188 people (Greene 1886) and by 1891 membership had increased to 250 with an average of 250 students attending Sunday school (Bayles 1891). With a growing congregation and Sunday school, the Plymouth Congregational Society began to plan for the construction of a new building (*Providence Journal* 1919). Under the leadership of Reverend Thornton A. Mills, the congregation purchased the lot at the corner of Broad Street and Pennsylvania Avenue in 1891 and planned to work with a Mr. Jennings<sup>6</sup> to design a new building. In 1897, a building committee was established. The following year, the Plymouth Congregational Society changed its name to the Plymouth Congregational Church.

In 1899, the congregation passed a motion instructing the Board to negotiate with Mr. Jennings to finalize plans for the new church (RIHS MSS 139, Book 49); later that same year, however, planning stalled and the congregation explored the possibility of moving the existing church building to the corner lot on Broad Street. This suggestion was problematic, however, as existing laws restricted the height and size of buildings to be moved and the idea was abandoned in 1900. In 1902, discussions about a new building resumed but the building committee reported unfavorably due to financial stress. Then-pastor Reverend McCord sought out donations; despite receiving some assistance – including \$500 from Senator Nelson W. Aldrich, a prominent Republican politician – the fundraising overall was inconsistent (RIHS MSS 139, Book 49).

### **Construction of a New Church Building**

In 1907, Reverend E.L. Marsh became the pastor of Plymouth Congregational Church and started an ambitious fundraising campaign for a new church building. According to a 1909 article in the *Providence Journal*, the new church was to be laid out in a Greek Cross plan in the Lombardian Gothic Revival style and was to be constructed of brick. It included seating for 750 people with extensions for up to 1,200 people. This plan was designed by architects Hill and Fairbrother of New York City<sup>7</sup> and was estimated to cost \$75,000. The congregation hoped to break ground in the spring of 1910 (*Providence Journal* 1909).

The 1909 design was never constructed, however, due to the congregation's financial difficulties. Between 1909 and 1915, Hill and Fairbrother's design was abandoned, and the congregation adopted a new, more modest plan. The new design was produced by George F. Newton of Boston and featured a "huge square tower on the outermost corner of Broad street and Pennsylvania avenue" (*Providence Journal*, 4 May 1915).

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<sup>5</sup> This building was diagonally across from the Plymouth Congregational Church to the northeast. It was a wood-frame building with a cruciform-plan and an 80-foot tower at the center of its facade (Sanborn 1920). It was demolished by 1956 (Sanborn 1956).

<sup>6</sup> Church records do not provide Mr. Jennings' full name. It is possible this was Arthur Bates Jennings (1849-1927), a New York City-based architect who designed the Cranston Street Baptist Church (now Ebenezer Baptist Church) in Providence, built in 1892-93.

<sup>7</sup> The architect Frederic Arthur Fairbrother was born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1878 and was educated at the Rhode Island School of Design. Church records show his family were active members of Plymouth Congregational Church. His father, for whom he was named, served on the Building Committee in 1909 and the Board of Trustees in 1912. The Fairbrothers lived at 61 Ocean Street, less than a mile from the church. (AIA, *American Architects Directory*, 1956; RIHS MSS 139, Book 45, Book 48, Box 4)

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The new design was estimated to cost much less than the former; the cost of the building decreased by \$30,000 from \$75,000 to \$45,000.

The two designs differed substantially, in their exterior appearance and internal layout. The 1909 plan featured a central dome full of windows, which was to light the entire church (*Providence Journal* 1909). This concept was abandoned, and a gable-roof plan with a vaulted ceiling was adopted. Still, the new design incorporated some of the ideas from the 1909 plan. Carry-over elements included a Sunday school and church parlor next to an auditorium and a social hall in the basement. Even though the chosen plan was simpler and less expensive, the congregation did not have the funds needed to complete the building in one phase. A contract for the construction of the outside shell of the building was awarded in 1915, and ground was broken on May 4 of that year (RIHS MSS 139, Box 4; *Providence Journal*, 5 May 1915). As of June 21, 1915, however, the congregation had secured pledges for just \$21,000 of the required \$45,000 (*Providence Journal*, 21 June 1915). The shell of the church was completed that year, but construction on the interior was delayed until 1918 because of a shortage of building materials and labor, presumably due to World War I, but also financial difficulties (*Providence Journal* 1919). The congregation borrowed money from the Congregational Church Building Society and the Rhode Island Congregational Church Conference, and took out a \$10,000 mortgage to fund the construction (RIHS MSS 139, Book 45). On March 1, 1918, the congregation voted to sell their old church building on Pennsylvania Avenue<sup>8</sup> for \$5,000 to the Norwegian and Danish Methodist Episcopal Church, holding their last service there on Christmas Day (*Providence Journal* 1918).

The new Plymouth Congregational Church building was dedicated on March 2, 1919. It was described in a newspaper article as follows: “The auditorium is severely plain, but rich in its simplicity, the ceiling being sealed with pine, which, like the rafters, is stained in Flemish oak tint. The pews, built on circular lines, and the finish of the wainscoting [sic] are in stained oak. Sliding doors make the senior Sunday school department a part of the main room” (*Providence Journal* 1919). Some of these design choices were probably made in an effort to save money, given the congregation’s financial difficulties. While oak was used for woodwork that could be viewed closely, such as wainscoting and the pews, the large vaulted ceiling was constructed of pine, stained to resemble oak. The large, pointed-arch windows do not feature stone tracery but, rather, wood that mimics stone. Perhaps most significant was the decision to construct the building out of brick rather than stone, which most likely reduced construction costs. Despite the relative simplicity of the building, the final cost, at \$70,000, far exceeded the initial budget. At this time, the membership included 450 people and 300 students attended the Sunday school.

In 1922, Reverend Marsh resigned after 15 years of service with the Plymouth Congregational Church, the congregation’s longest serving pastor up to that time. During his tenure, he raised the capital necessary to construct the church and he increased church membership by 280 people. He was prominent within the community, serving as president of the Rhode Island State Conference of Congregational Churches from 1919–1920 and as a member of the executive committee of the Rhode Island State Sunday School Association. He left to serve as pastor for the Federated Church in Sandwich, Massachusetts. Reverend Hugh Penney became the new pastor in 1923 and served until 1928 (*Providence Journal* 1922).

### **Merger with the Union Congregational Church**

The Plymouth Congregational Church and the Union Congregational Church merged in February 1927 and became the Plymouth-Union Congregational Church (P-UCC). Union Congregational Church, established

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<sup>8</sup> This building is no longer extant, having been razed sometime before 1956 (Sanborn 1956).

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in 1871, worshipped at a building on Broad Street near Stewart Street in addition to running a Sunday school and a chapel at the corner of Prairie Avenue and Ocean Street (formerly Colwell Street); its original church building is no longer extant. The merger created a congregation of nearly 1,200 members who would worship at the recently constructed building at 1014 Broad Street. An article observed that the merger was “in line with recent trends away from small churches to the idea of cathedral building” (*Providence Journal* 1927). The neighborhood in South Providence was also mentioned as an “important residential section of the city” (*Providence Journal* 1927). In January 1928, Reverend Penney and Reverend Theodore Bachelor (formerly of the Union Congregational Church) both resigned (*Providence Journal*, 8 January 1928). In September of that year, Reverend Dr. Samuel Clifton became the pastor of P-UCC.

The united congregation continued to worship at 1014 Broad Street under the leadership of Reverend Clifton until 1941, when he resigned due to ill health. During an interview, Clifton stated that one of his goals at P-UCC was to unite the two congregations. He found that in recent years, “the shifting population in the South Providence area created special problems for him” (*Providence Journal* 1941). Reverend Richard K. Morton, religious editor for the *Providence Journal and Evening Bulletin*, became pastor at P-UCC in March 1942, succeeded by Reverend J. Wesley Prince in October 1946.

A significant alteration to the church occurred during this period: the 1944 addition of the large, representational stained-glass window grouping in the south wall of the transept. The window, which depicts the resurrection of Christ, was designed by Hiemer & Co. of New Jersey and was donated by Nellie Florence Bunker Farnham (1870–1947) in memory of her husband, Frank E. Farnham (1855–1928). Frank Farnham, a jeweler or jewelry designer who patented at least two designs relating to pins,<sup>9</sup> had been chairman of the Plymouth Congregational Church Building Committee. He, Nellie, and their two children, Ethel and Gladys, resided on Ontario Street approximately one-half mile from the church (U.S. Census 1930).

### **Decline of the Plymouth-Union Congregation**

Membership in the Plymouth-Union Congregational Church decreased in the mid-twentieth century, and two new congregations began to use the building for worship: the Central Christian Church from Warwick and the South Baptist Church of Providence, the latter of which contemplated merging with the P-UCC in 1968 (*Providence Journal* 1966; *Providence Journal* 1968). In 1969, Reverend J. Wesley Prince resigned, writing in his resignation letter that when he took the position in 1946 he “was told by brother officers of the Rhode Island Congregational Conference and the Rhode Island Council of Churches” that the P-UCC “was expected to go out of existence.” He cited the following statistics that demonstrate the challenges that faced the P-UCC in 1969: the average age of the members was 64; the composition of the neighborhood had changed, meaning few people who grew up in the church still resided there; and fewer than 6 of the 182 couples who married in the church in the last 10 years lived in the city (*Providence Journal* 1969). The congregation had dwindled to 190 people in 1968, with 140 active members (*Providence Journal* 1968).

In 1971, by which time membership had declined to approximately 110 people, the P-UCC transferred the building at 1014 Broad Street to the Rhode Island Conference of the United Church of Christ. Title was then transferred to the Holy Cross Church of God in Christ, a 260-member “black congregation, which has been firebombed and otherwise harassed at 93 Knight St., where it was located in 1966” (*Providence Journal* 1971). Reverend Prince of the P-UCC, Reverend Frederick C. Gilbert of the Central Christian

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<sup>9</sup> The jewelry industry became prominent in Providence in the late nineteenth century, and by 1880 it was the leading location for the industry (Woodward and Sanderson 1986:19).

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Church, and Reverend Clarence E. Farrow, leader of the Holy Cross Church, commemorated the transfer on December 26, 1971:

The transfer took place at a joint service of the Plymouth-Union Congregational Church and the black Holy Cross Church of God in Christ in the Plymouth-Union building at 1014 Broad St....

The church, which seats 275 to 300 persons, was a little more than half filled for the service, with the congregation nearly divided between blacks and whites.

One or two Plymouth-Union members expressed surprise that there was not a larger congregation.

A noticeable difference in the two congregations was in the age of the two groups. There were few white youngsters present, the white half of the congregation generally being in their 60s or older.

The black half of the congregation was much younger and included two dozen or more children (*Providence Journal* 1971).

The newspaper article also suggested that the P-UCC Church would be a safer place for the black congregation to worship because their former church was in an “all-white neighborhood,” whereas “the Broad Street church is adjacent to South Providence.” These observations summarize the demographic changes that occurred within the congregation and the larger neighborhood, in the mid-twentieth century. The congregation of the P-UCC was aging and had not be able to attract new, younger members. Additionally, the members of the P-UCC had relocated out of the neighborhood and into the suburbs.

In 2015, after 44 years on Broad Street, the Holy Cross Church of God in Christ closed. In 2016, Iglesia Visión Evangélica, a Latinx congregation, took title to the property, reflecting the continued evolution of South Providence.

### **Architectural Significance of Plymouth Congregational Church**

Plymouth Congregational Church represents an excellent example of the English Gothic Revival style with its square bell tower, cruciform plan, pointed-arch door and window openings, and intact stained-glass windows. Designed by George F. Newton, the interior of the church contains a large nave that occupies the center (east-west) of the building. The nave was divided into two spaces: the auditorium and the Sunday school. Sliding glazed doors separated these spaces and allowed for Sunday school classes to participate in the worship. Both the auditorium and the placement of the Sunday school reflect changing attitudes of the Protestant church towards worshiping and religious education.

#### *The Auditorium and the Sunday School*

The Congregational Church in America traces its origins to the Puritan settlers of New England. Well into the nineteenth century, Congregational churches featured a prominent pulpit as the primary focal point, reflecting the primacy of the sermon:

The Puritan liturgical centers included a tall pulpit with the congregation gathered about it on the main floor and in an encircling gallery. Directly in front of the pulpit was usually a pew occupied by the elders or deacons. Before this stood the altar table upon which a

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baptismal basin could be placed. And that was all. It was the simplest and most direct arrangement possible for Puritan worship (White 1964:106).

Congregational church ideals shifted in the mid-nineteenth century, with the introduction of choirs and organs as well as a new style of preaching, with the congregation taking a less active role in worship (White 1964:110, 120, 125). Church architecture followed suit. Congregational churches began to include chancels, which held the minister, choir, organist, and organ and were typically on a raised stage that created separation between the congregation and the leaders of worship. The space holding the congregation “was designed as an audience chamber much like that of a theater,” and came to be called the auditorium (White 1964:125-126). Plymouth Congregational Church, with its auditorium, raised chancel, choir area and organ chamber, embodies these changes.

Similarly, Protestant perceptions of Sunday schools changed in the late nineteenth century, with implications for church architecture. Once seen as secondary institutions that provided a place for children during mass, they came to be seen as primary institutions crucial to the congregation’s future success:

When it was finally learned that congregations drew their main support in point of converts and additions – eighty per cent or more, I believe – directly from the ranks of the Sunday School, while only twenty-five per cent of the budget appropriations were granted for its support, the realization of the true scope of this phase of church work prompted a close study of the conditions of the problem in hand (Bach 1916:223).

Churches began to understand that the success of congregations depended on cultivating young members and converting school attendees, and ecclesiastical architecture was increasingly designed to accommodate minors and programs directed at younger audiences. This was achieved through the construction of classrooms and social halls, often designed by professional architects. One challenge that arose was the desire for the children to have a “spiritual and physical connection with the main body of the congregation, its audience hall and pulpit,” while also providing a space for learning (Bach 1916:223).

In 1867, Lewis Miller, a Sunday school instructor in Akron, Ohio, worked with architects Jacob Snyder and Walter Blythe to address this challenge in the design of the First Methodist Sunday School of Akron (Evans 1914:155). Their design solution would come to be known as the Akron Plan, and was implemented at churches across the country. The goal of the Akron Plan was to provide a space where students could be brought together to partake in worship with the adults and later be separated in order to attend lessons. To that end, the original plan incorporated a semi-circular auditorium with a balcony. Wedge-shaped classrooms were located in the balcony as well as beneath it; they could either be open to or separated from the auditorium through the use of movable screens or walls.

The Plymouth Congregational Church utilized a modified Akron Plan, with rectangular classrooms located in and below a balcony that could be open to or closed off from the auditorium, with its semi-circular seating. The design and use of the building also reflected more current thinking about Sunday school teaching. In 1908, the International Sunday School Association authorized the “preparation of graded lesson outlines” for different age groups, or departments (Evans 1914:158). Many Sunday schools adopted the graded system and found the Akron Plan “to be unsuited to the new lessons...” which require space for departments to assemble as well as separate rooms for grades within each department (Evans 1914:158). The Plymouth Congregational Church had three departments: senior, junior, and kindergarten.

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In a 1914 article in *The Biblical World*, entitled “The Sunday-School Building and its Equipment,” Herbert Francis Evans, a professor at Grinnell College, provided recommendations for the organization of architectural spaces for religious education. He stated that the kindergarten room should be located on the ground floor with plenty of light, and that it should take inspiration from kindergarten classrooms in public schools (Evans 1914:167). Evans believed the junior department required its own room that could be divided into smaller rooms by removable partitions. The ground floor of the Plymouth Congregational Church housed the kindergarten Sunday-school class, as well as a large assembly room for the junior department; accordion doors set off the kindergarten department from the junior department. The ground floor had a stage, which could be used for entertainment, as well as a kitchen, banquet hall, space for the Secretary of the Sunday school and a Sunday school library (*Providence Journal* 1919).

Evans recommended “the use of the church auditorium for the worship of the Intermediate, Senior, and Adult departments...where the school is not too large” (Evans 1914:171). At the Plymouth Congregational Church, the senior department had an assembly space on the first floor so that they could listen to the mass, lined with classrooms on the first floor and on the balcony for smaller group lessons. Partitions or curtains likely separated the classrooms from the assembly space, which in turn could be separated from the auditorium with sliding doors.

The design for Plymouth Congregational Church was consistent with ecclesiastical building trends of the time. The inclusion of an auditorium with a raised chancel, choir area and organ chamber reflected the movement away from the Puritan pulpit. The design of the Sunday school spaces on the first floor showed the enduring influence of the Akron Plan, while the separation of Sunday school departments, with young students on the ground floor, reflected more contemporary approaches to religious education.

#### *English Gothic Revival Style Church Architecture*

The Plymouth Congregational Church is an excellent and intact example of an English Gothic Revival-style church designed by prominent Boston architect, George F. Newton. The Gothic Revival movement began as a literary movement in Europe and was realized architecturally in Europe in the mid-eighteenth century as the Medieval style by Sir Horace Walpole (McAlester 2015:270). It featured steeply pitched gables, pointed-arches, battlements, buttresses, and stone or masonry construction. This picturesque romantic style became popular in ecclesiastical construction from the latter half of the nineteenth century until World War II (White 1964:138). One of the first Gothic Revival-style churches in America is the Trinity Episcopal Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania built in 1823 by Rector John Henry Hopkins. The church was well received and led Hopkins to publish his *Essay on Gothic Architecture* in 1836 in which he traces the history of Gothic architecture, provides drawings, and gives advice to other clergy members. He found the Gothic style more suitable for ecclesiastical structures than the Grecian style because “The Gothic, breaking the horizontal line, and leading the eye upwards till its pinnacles vanish in the sky, seems adapted, by an easy correspondence, to the offices of that blessed religion, which takes the heart from the contemplation of earth, and directs it to its heavenly inheritance” (Hopkins 1836). According to Hopkins, tall and long lines of the Gothic style evoked visions of heaven and God’s kingdom.

The Gothic style was further extolled a decade later by the Cambridge Camden Society, a group of male undergraduate students at Cambridge University in England, who studied ecclesiastical architecture, restored medieval churches, and promoted the Gothic style and the form of medieval churches (Drummond 1934: 67; White 1964). The group published pamphlets and a periodical, the *Ecclesiologist*. The medieval form stressed the separation of the chancel and nave. They also organized the style into three periods,

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including the Decorated Gothic Style, which was characterized by wider arches and tracery work in the windows (Hoffecker 1973:221).

In the United States, beginning in the 1890s, the “second gothic revival” was led in part by architect Ralph Adams Cram (1863–1942) of Cram, Goodhue, & Ferguson. Cram believed that the Gothic style best expressed the Christian, albeit the Catholic, religion. He also believed in the sanctity of the medieval arrangement of the separation of the nave and chancel. Cram’s designs sought to heighten spiritual emotions through architecture and art. One of his well-known buildings is the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in New York City, which was in the process of being constructed when he took over and redesigned the building in 1907. Due in part to Cram, the English Gothic Revival style became accepted as a style for all ecclesiastical religious groups, not just those of the High Church Anglicans or Catholic faiths (White 1964:138).

Plymouth Congregational Church embodies the English Gothic Revival style, with its cruciform plan; steeply pitched, cross-gable roof; castellated corner tower; pointed-arch door and window openings; as well as interior details, such as the organ case. Plymouth Congregational Church retains a high degree of integrity, with exterior alterations limited to the replacement of secondary doors and only modest interior changes, such as new flooring in some spaces and the removal of the Sunday school classroom partitions.

### **George F. Newton**

Plymouth Congregational Church was designed by the Boston-based architect George F. Newton (1857–1947). Newton began studying architecture in 1880 and completed his training at the Atelier Daumet, École des Beaux Arts, Paris after winning the Rotch Traveling Scholarship (AIA Archives 1900; Withey & Withey 1956). Newton was the third to win the award, which aimed to advance the interest of the profession by providing scholarships for study abroad (Walkowski 2010). Upon the completion of his studies, Newton secured a position as a draftsman at the highly regarded firm of Peabody and Stearns in Boston and was later promoted to a head designer position (Withey & Withey 1956). Newton stayed with the firm until he opened his own practice in 1893 (AIA Archives 1900). Newton was a member of AIA from 1900–1947 (Withey & Withey 1956).

Newton’s tenure with Peabody and Stearns came at a critical moment for the firm, when “they found themselves vacillating in the vanguard of an influential stylistic swing from Queen Anne to the Colonial and the Renaissance” (Holden 1973:115). The firm began to gain more attention in the greater Boston area and for a few years rivaled McKim, Mead and White from New York City (Holden 1973:115). Peabody and Stearns designed museums, religious buildings, public institutional buildings, and residences. At least 17 churches have been attributed to the firm (Holden 1973). Peabody is credited with the dissemination of a “more archaeological-type church” constructed in the English Gothic Revival Style and based upon medieval churches that he encountered during his visit to England in 1882 (Holden 1973: 119). This building style featured rectangular forms with towers, and some had Tudor-style decorative half-timbering.

Newton left the firm of Peabody and Stearns in 1893 to start his own practice, but just one year later partnered with Clarence Howard Blackall (1853–1942) to establish the firm Blackall and Newton. That same year, Newton became the chief assistant to Mr. H. Langford Warren, the head of the newly incorporated architecture department at Harvard University. Based upon a recommendation from Peabody, Newton also taught design and drawing classes for the department, which he did for ten years (Harvard University 1895:62).

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Blackall and Newton was dissolved in 1896, and George Newton established his own firm. He undertook a wide variety of projects, including public buildings, campuses, and hospitals during his prolific career. However, ecclesiastical structures appear to have been his most prevalent commissions. In 1900, he submitted three church designs as part of the requirements for an AIA application: the Unitarian Church in Winchester, Massachusetts, which was a stone Gothic Revival-style church; the Congregational Church in Weymouth, Massachusetts, which was a wood Gothic Revival-style church; and the interior design for Tremont Temple in Boston, which he designed while at Blackall and Newton (AIA Archives).

Newton was comfortable with the English Gothic Revival style and designed many buildings in Massachusetts and in the Northeast in this style. An obituary written by Emil Lorch and published in the *National Architect* stated, “New England is dotted with charming churches of his design in the English, rural tradition while the Tremont Temple in Boston involved a bold use of color on the exterior.” His designs were largely “marked by restraint and refinement” (Lorch 1947). Three of his designs were featured in *The Architectural Review* in 1905: the Congregational Church in Newton Highlands, Massachusetts (1905) (Shea 1981); the North Presbyterian Church in Buffalo, New York (ca. 1907); and the First Congregational Church in Wellesley, Massachusetts (1901) (Fitzpatrick and Price 1987). The latter church, built 14 years before the Plymouth Congregational Church, has many nearly identical features including the floor plan, arrangement of pews, and wood hammer beams and hammer braces (Figure 3) (*The Architectural Review* 1905). In 1902, Newton designed the Second Congregational Church in Attleboro, Massachusetts, a red brick English Gothic Revival-style church with a Sunday school in a side ell. He designed the Congregational Church in Newton Highlands, Massachusetts, which is a granite English Gothic-style church with a Sunday school ell, in 1905–1906 (NRIS#16001747). In 1907, he was the architect for the Melrose First Baptist Church in Melrose, Massachusetts. This building was also a granite English Gothic-style church with a side ell. Outside of Massachusetts, Newton was the architect for the Buffalo Homeopathic Hospital in Buffalo, New York in 1911 and the Buffalo Seminary in 1909.

### **Hiemer & Company**

The large, figurative stained-glass window grouping in the south wall of the nave at Plymouth Congregational Church was designed, manufactured and installed by Hiemer & Co. in 1944. The company was founded in 1931 by Georg Hiemer and his son Edward. Georg was born in Germany and apprenticed in Munich until 1890. Edward Hiemer studied with his father in Munich and in Paris and Dresden. He later settled in Columbus, Ohio, where he worked as a designer for Von Gerichten Art Glass Company from 1925–1930. Georg left Europe in 1929 and joined Edward in Columbus; two years later, the father and son founded Hiemer & Company Stained Glass Studio. Edward Hiemer moved the company to Paterson, New Jersey in 1933, and then to Clifton, New Jersey, in 1949. During the height of its production between the 1930s and 1950s, the company employed 25 people. Edward apprenticed his son, Gerhard Hiemer, in the art of stained glass. Gerhard’s daughter Judith Hiemer Van Wie and her husband James Van Wie currently operate the company. During an interview in 2018, Judith stated that the family-owned company had created stained glass windows for 1,131 churches. Their current work focuses on stained glass restoration; they employed six people in 2018 (Hiemer & Company Stained Glass Studio 2020; Maag 2018).

### **Austin Organs, Inc.**

The pipe organ in the Plymouth Congregational Church is a 2-manual, 11-stop pipe organ (Opus #769) manufactured by the Austin Organ Company of Hartford, Connecticut. John T. and Basil G. Austin incorporated the Austin Organ Company in 1898. John Austin emigrated from England to the United States in 1889. He had learned organ building from his father and became employed by Farrand and Votey Organ

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Company in Detroit, Michigan. John Austin developed the Universal Air Chest system, which was patented in 1893. The Universal Air Chest gives “absolute and uniform pressure to each and every pipe under all conditions of use.” He sold the idea to the Clough & Warren Company in Detroit. The first machine based upon his patent was built in 1893 (Austin Organs 2020b). Basil G. Austin immigrated to the United States in 1893. When Basil and John Austin incorporated their new company in 1898, they first rented space in Boston, then moved to Hartford in 1899 and leased a space at the Watson H. Bliss mills. The Universal Air Chest system became famous as Austin Organ Company sponsored the tour of English organist and composer Edwin H. Lemare in 1902. Lemare’s success brought increased business and awareness to the company. The company prospered between 1915 and 1931 and produced 1,200 pipe organs during those years, among them the organ at Plymouth Congregational Church.<sup>10</sup> The Austin Organ Company disbanded in 1935 and was incorporated under Austin Organs Inc., which was operated by John Austin’s nephews, Frederic B. and Basil F. Austin. The company is still in operation today (Austin Organs 2020b).

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<sup>10</sup> At least 37 organs were manufactured by Austin Organs for use in Rhode Island, including at the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in Providence (Austin Organs 2020a).

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- 1910 "New Church Planned by Plymouth Congregation," October 26, p. 3.
- 1915 "Work on New Church to Begin To-Day," May 4, p. 4.
- 1915 "Ground is Broken for New Church," May 5, p. 3.
- 1915 "Plymouth Church Cornerstone Laid," June 21, p. 12.
- 1918 "Providence Congregation to Occupy New Edifice," December 24, p. 14.
- 1919 "Plymouth Congregational Church Dedicates New Building," March 2, p. 41.
- 1922 "Plymouth Church Pastor to Resign," September 11, p. 20.
- 1927 "Churches Unite at Love Feast," February 5, p. 17.
- 1928 "3 Congregational Clergymen to Quit," January 8, p. 5.
- 1928 "Church Will Let Both Pastors Go," January 18, pp. 1, 2.
- 1936 "Congregational Church on Broad Street is Sold," January 21, p. 24.
- 1936 "Old Church Used as Mill Has Fire," September 15, p. 2.
- 1941 "Rev. Samuel T. Clifton to Leave Church Oct. 1," September 15, p. 6.
- 1966 "Central Church Moves to Prov.," December 10, p. 17.
- 1968 "South Baptist Members OK Plymouth-Union Merger," July 25, p. 41.
- 1969 "Plymouth-Union Church Chooses Merger Group," January 20, p. 6.
- 1971 "Blacks Take Title to White Church," December 27, pp. 1, 8.
- 1972 "The Face of Religion," January 1, p. 5.

Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission

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Name of Property

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence RI; Congregational Library & Archives, Boston MA

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** # \_\_\_\_\_

Plymouth Congregational Church  
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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreege of Property** 0.3 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 41.797447 | Longitude: -71.413490 |
| 2. Latitude: 41.797571 | Longitude: -71.412861 |
| 3. Latitude: 41.797342 | Longitude: -71.412844 |
| 4. Latitude: 41.797260 | Longitude: -71.413277 |

**Or**

### UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or

NAD 1983

- |          |          |           |
|----------|----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |

### Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of the nominated property conforms to the City of Providence Assessor's plat 53, lot 17, now owned by the Iglesia Visión Evangélica.

### Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary of the nominated property was selected to include the entire parcel that was historically associated with the Plymouth Congregational Church, as purchased by the Plymouth Congregational Society in 1891.

Plymouth Congregational Church  
Name of Property

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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Virginia H. Adams, Senior Architectural Historian; Elizabeth Totten, Preservation Planner; Tracy Jonsson, Assistant Architectural Historian

organization: The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. (PAL)

street & number: 26 Main Street

city or town: Pawtucket state: Rhode Island zip code: 02860

e-mail: vadams@palinc.com

telephone: (401) 728-8780

date: August 2020

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## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

## Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

## Photo Log

Name of Property:	Plymouth Congregational Church
City or Vicinity:	Providence
County:	Providence County
State:	Rhode Island
Name of Photographers:	Elizabeth Totten and Tracy Jonsson
Date of Photographs:	March 9, 2020
Location of Original Digital Files:	Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission, 150 Benefit Street, Providence, RI 02903
Number of Photographs:	17

Plymouth Congregational Church  
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- Photo #1: Plymouth Congregational Church exterior, view southeast
- Photo #2: Plymouth Congregational Church west elevation, view east
- Photo #3: Plymouth Congregational Church west elevation, entrance, view east
- Photo #4: Plymouth Congregational Church exterior, view southwest
- Photo #5: Plymouth Congregational Church south elevation, view northeast
- Photo #6: Plymouth Congregational Church south elevation, view northwest
- Photo #7: Plymouth Congregational Church vestibule and lobby, view east
- Photo #8: Plymouth Congregational Church Sunday school, view southwest
- Photo #9: Plymouth Congregational Church Sunday school, view north
- Photo #10: Plymouth Congregational Church Sunday school, view northeast
- Photo #11: Plymouth Congregational Church parlor, view southwest
- Photo #12: Plymouth Congregational Church auditorium, view east
- Photo #13: Plymouth Congregational Church auditorium, view south
- Photo #14: Plymouth Congregational Church auditorium, stained glass window, view southeast
- Photo #15: Plymouth Congregational Church pulpit, view southeast
- Photo #16: Plymouth Congregational Church ground floor, view east
- Photo #17: Plymouth Congregational Church ground floor, classroom

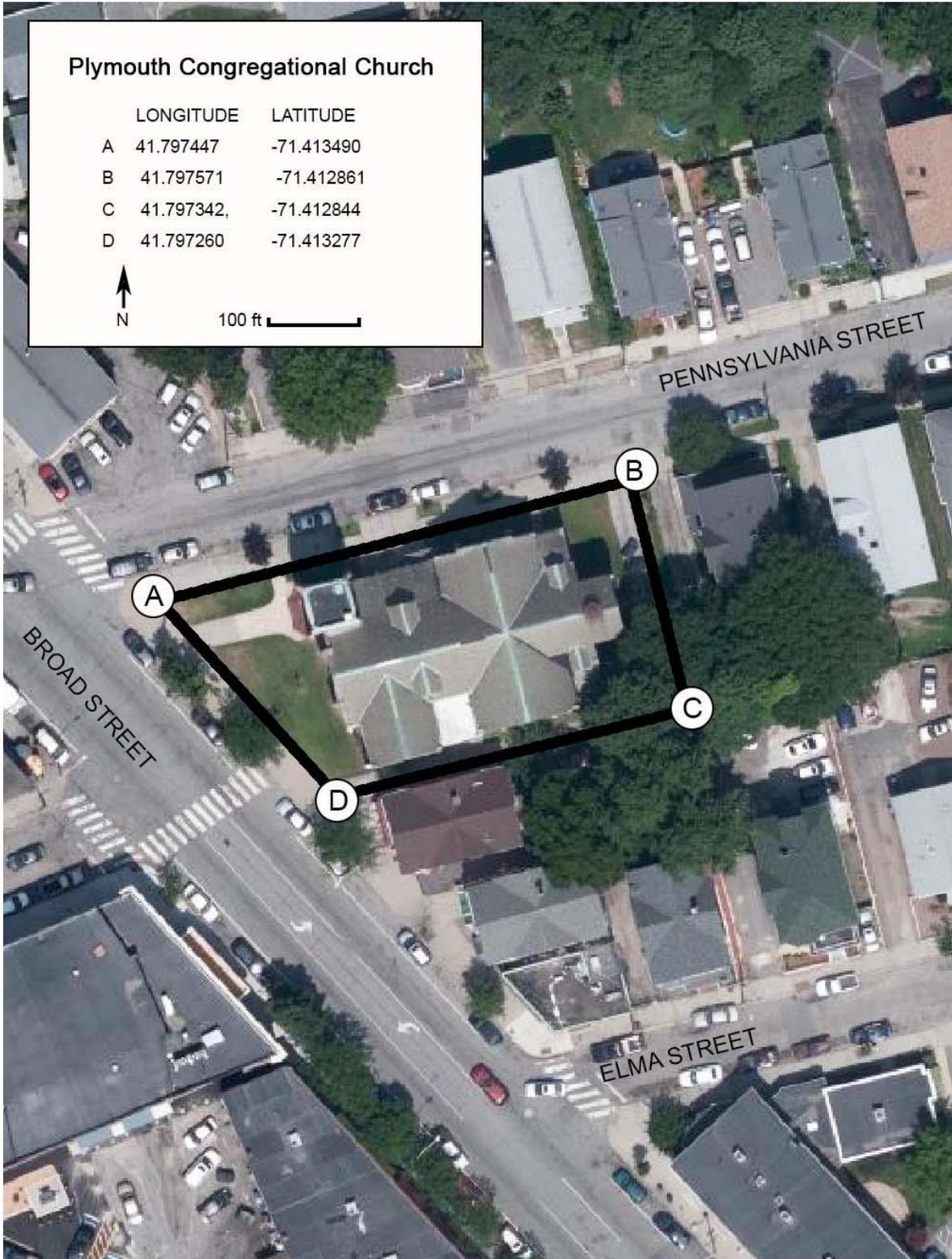
### List of Figures

1. First Floor Plan, Plymouth Congregational Church, ca. 1915 drawing by George F. Newton  
Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, RI  
\*Awaiting permission for reproduction
2. Plymouth Congregational Church, ca. 1925-1965  
John Hutchins Cady Research Scrapbooks Collection, Rhode Island Collection  
Providence Public Library, Providence, RI
3. First Congregational Church, Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts, 1905  
*The Architectural Review*, Volume XII, January to December (digitized by Google).

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Plymouth Congregational Church Coordinate Map

Plymouth Congregational Church  
Name of Property

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Plymouth Congregational Church, shown on City of Providence Assessor's Map 53, Lot 17

Plymouth Congregational Church  
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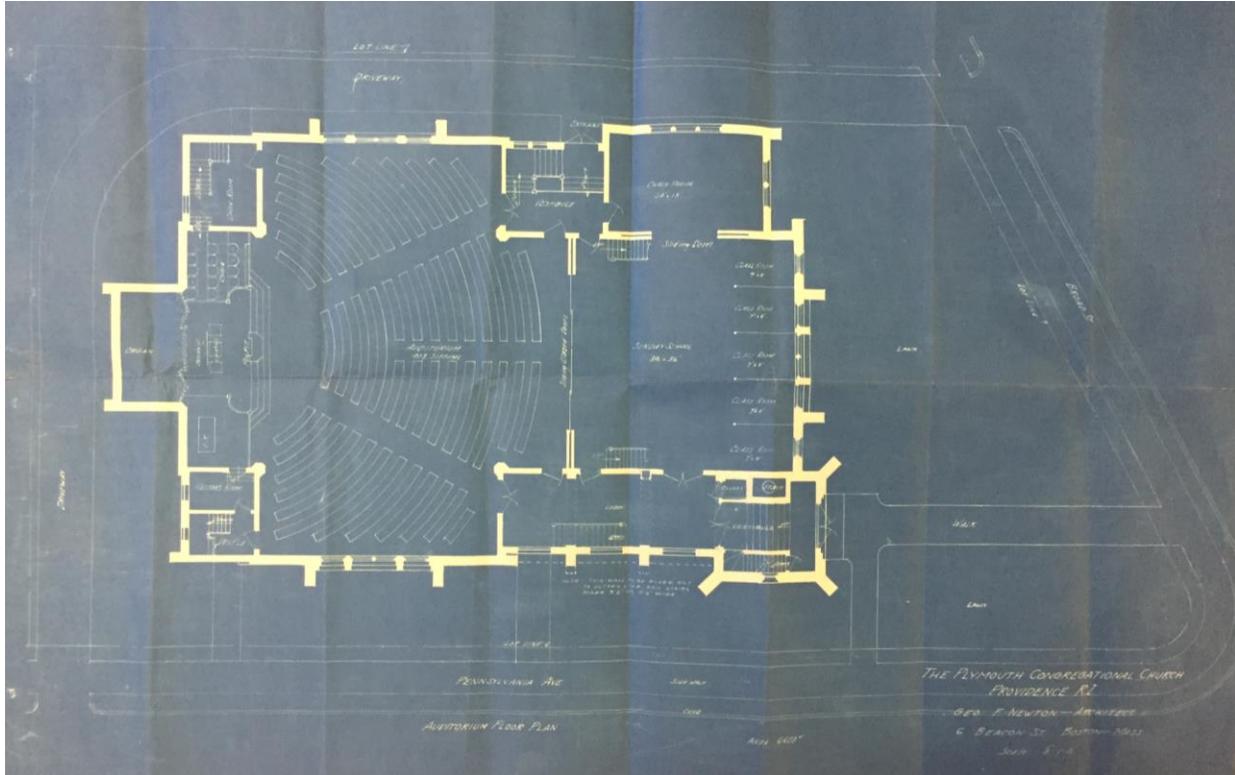


Figure 1 First Floor Plan, Plymouth Congregational Church, ca. 1915 drawing by George F. Newton  
Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, RI  
\*Awaiting permission for reproduction.

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Figure 2 Plymouth Congregational Church, ca. 1925-1965  
John Hutchins Cady Research Scrapbooks Collection, Rhode Island Collection  
Providence Public Library, Providence, RI

Plymouth Congregational Church  
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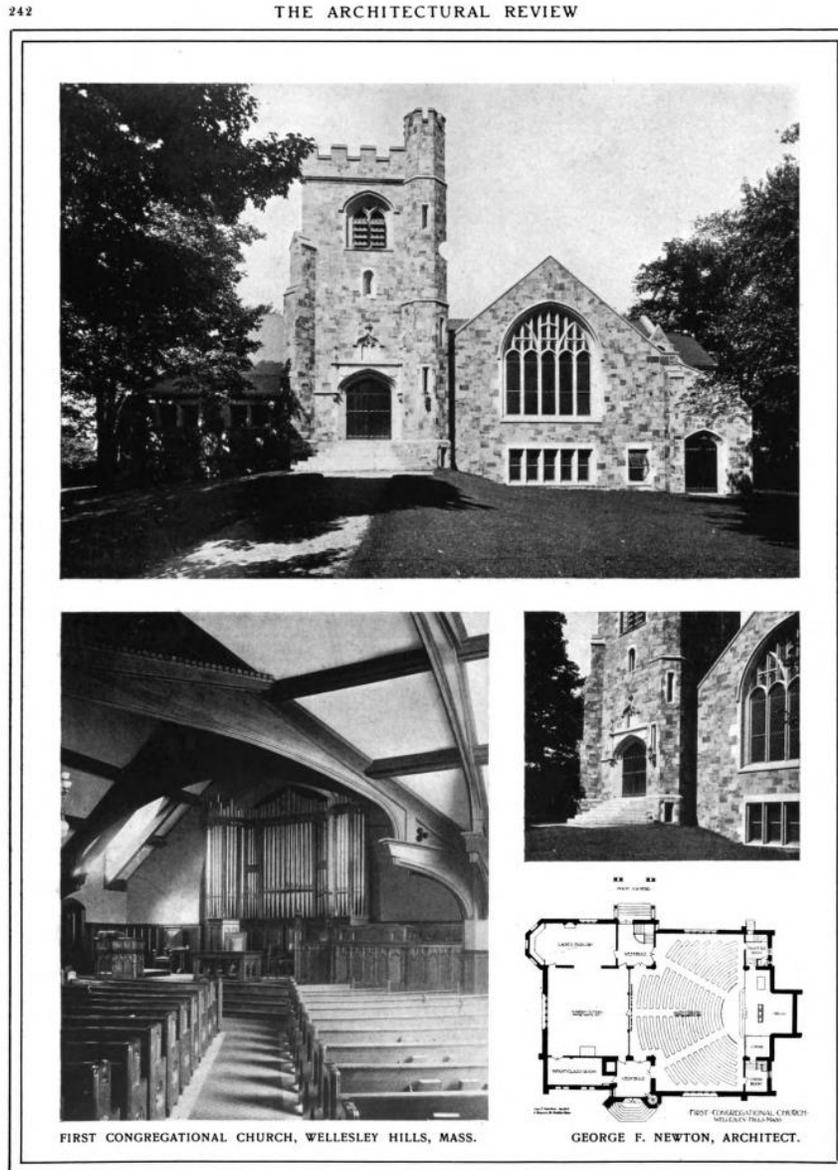


Figure 3: First Congregational Church, Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts, 1905  
*The Architectural Review*, Volume XII, (digitized by Google)

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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PAL Project No. 3925  
National Register Photographs  
March 2020



Photo 1. Plymouth Congregational Church exterior, view southeast.



Photo 2. Plymouth Congregational Church west elevation, view east.

Plymouth Congregational Church  
National Register Documentation  
PAL Project No. 3925  
National Register Photographs  
March 2020

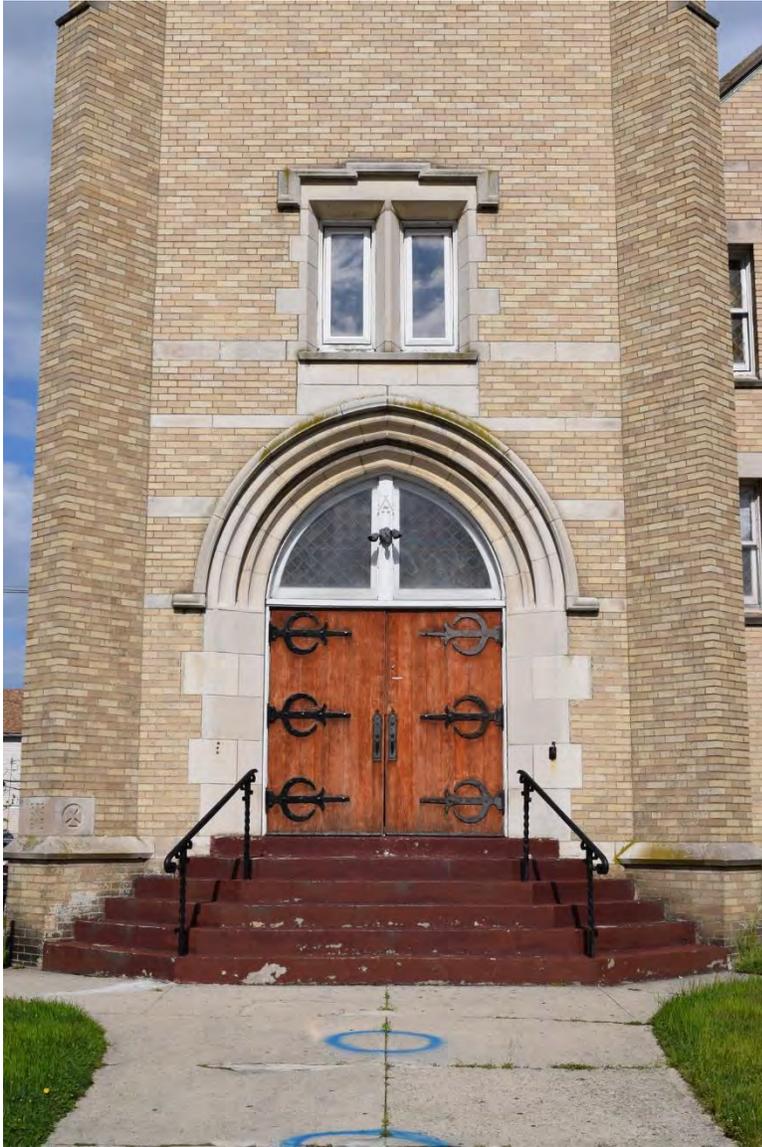


Photo 3. Plymouth Congregational Church west elevation, entrance, view east.

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PAL Project No. 3925  
National Register Photographs  
March 2020



Photo 4. Plymouth Congregational Church exterior, view southwest

Plymouth Congregational Church  
National Register Documentation  
PAL Project No. 3925  
National Register Photographs  
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Photo 5. Plymouth Congregational Church south elevation, view northeast.

Plymouth Congregational Church  
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PAL Project No. 3925  
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March 2020



Photo 6. Plymouth Congregational Church south elevation, view northwest.

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Photo 7. Plymouth Congregational Church vestibule and lobby, view east.

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Photo 8. Plymouth Congregational Church Sunday school, view southwest.



Photo 9. Plymouth Congregational Church Sunday school, view north.

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Photo 10. Plymouth Congregational Church Sunday school, view northeast.

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Photo 11. Plymouth Congregational Church church parlor, view southwest.

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Photo 12. Plymouth Congregational Church auditorium, view east.

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Photo 13. Plymouth Congregational Church auditorium, view south.

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Photo 14. Plymouth Congregational Church auditorium, stained glass window, view southeast.

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Photo 15. Plymouth Congregational Church pulpit.

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Photo 16. Plymouth Congregational Church ground floor, view east.



Photo 17. Plymouth Congregational Church ground floor, classroom.