

Plymouth Church of Shaker Heights

Church Council Meeting

Minutes of the May 27, 2009 meeting

Present:

Rev. Lois Annich, Rev. Shawnthea Monroe, Rachel Perry, Pam Beck, Christine Bretz, Jim Bright, Robb Forward, Gillian Graham, Beth Karr, Heidi Makela, Pam Markt, Sharon Mendelsohn, Tim Mendelsohn, Sharon Midura, Neil Mueller, Nikki Niehoff, Dick Pogue, Carol Skoglund

Opening Prayer

The meeting was called to order by Robb Forward at 7:05PM. The opening Prayer was given by Rev. Shawnthea Monroe.

Administrative and Financial Matters

Dick Pogue moved that the minutes from the April meeting be approved. Heidi Makela seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Christine Bretz gave her report on current financial matters. She reported a position similar to last year where we are now at 52% of our pledge revenue goal. We have somewhat lower revenue for building use, but that will pick up later in the year. This year we have had a higher loose offering, and lower interest expensesearnings. Departmental spending is similar to last year.

Department and Standing Committee Updates

Beth Karr of Partnership and Service reported that members pledged 1346 hours (revised) of service as a result of the Service Fair that was held last month. They have learned much about the service drive and are looking forward to doing it next year. They have emailed lists of people who have signed up for activities and Beth requests that department chairs please contact them. The next P&S meeting is June 14 and they will discuss distribution of funds. The next IHN will be July 12 to 18. Rev. Monroe suggests that we submit a report on our activities to the Western Reserve Association and also to the state office so we can show all we are doing. Beth said the volunteer tree was not as popular as they had hoped.

Sharon Mendelsohn of Evangelism and Growth announced that 15 people are expected to join this coming Sunday. Sharon gave special thanks to Jim and Mary Bright for hosting prospective members for a dinner at their home. Rev. Monroe notes that the prospective members are younger – many in their 20's and 30's. Marisue Besse will try to fit new members to volunteer functions.

Pam Beck, chair of the Witnessing Department, said that the Sunday forums are coming to an end this Sunday. The department will meet in two weeks to plan next season's programming. They will be coordinating with Rev. Lois Annich with a series on Death and Dying. Pam has a survey for us to complete where we can indicate what we are interested in. Rachel Perry has a link on our website to the Survey.

Debbie White, chair of the Caring Department, said the department will have a cooking day in fall to provide a supply of food gifts for ministerial calls. Pam Beck has been coordinating the flower delivery, but wants someone new to take over this responsibility; possibly one of the newer members might assume the role.

Pam Markt of the Building and Grounds committee reported that parking lot repairs have been approved. Our HVAC maintenance contract has been extended for one year.

Jim Bright, chair of the Plymouth Foundation, gave an update of activities. They will be distributing a planned \$500,000 to Plymouth Church. This will be distributed through January and will include payment for the building renovation project. The final distribution was to have been made in the January through March time frame, but they didn't do a distribution at that time because of poor market performance. The Foundation has raised \$125,000 from fixed income investments so that the funds are available as the church needs the money. Jim felt that now was a good time for this partial distribution. The other topic Jim discussed was that of asset allocation, where redistribution of investments in the portfolio would be considered. Investment categories include foreign and US stocks, large cap to mid and small cap stocks. The Foundation will stay with the current mix they now have, but at the next meeting in August they will be looking at how they might change the investment mix. Currently the majority of investments are in mutual funds. They will be examining whether the foundation should use ETF's (index funds) or a possibly a different model. Resources like the Cleveland Foundation offer financial advice. The market value of the portfolio is \$3.79 million as of 14 May. On February 20 the value was a low of \$3.31 million. The annual distribution to Plymouth Church is a 5% of rolling average of the last 3 years. Jim said that the peak valuation of the fund was slightly over \$6 million.

Gillian Graham of the Personnel Committee gave special thanks to Harry Mercer and Rachel Perry for putting together the job offer to our new associate minister, Adam Hange.

Dick Pogue, head of the ~~Finance Committee~~ Stewardship Department, said that they are meeting this Friday. Dick said that Bill Green is an excellent head of Stewardship Annual Campaign. Bill has literally written the book on stewardship campaigns.

Neil Mueller, chair of the Children and Youth Department, said he is excited about Adam Hange coming on board. They look forward to the change will happen as the committee reexamines its role, looking at activities such as youth groups. Neil welcomes input from everyone for this process. Mission trips are coming up and there is still time to donate items for the silent auction on Sunday, June 7. So far they have about 30 items. Some ideas for auction donations include sports events, orchestra tickets, pies, service items,

dinner for six, donations of books, Shawnthea may offer a choice of a sermon topic. They also have 1 or 2 openings on the trips because of cancellations. Prayer sponsors are also needed– they want as many as those on the mission trip. Neil passed a list around to sign-up as Prayer Sponsors. Neil said that Adam Hange will be on both trips, and will be a driver for the West Virginia trip. They are also considering moving the Sunday school schedule to coincide with the start of the church service. Rev. Monroe is looking for feedback on this. If this change is implemented there may be daycare available during the adult education period. Send email to Shawnthea or Neil with comments and suggestions. The next C&Y meeting will be on June 8th.

Tim Mendelsohn, representing the Worship Department, said that the next Worship department meeting will be on June 14th after church.

Building and Grounds Presentation

Pam Markt of the Building and Grounds committee gave an in-depth report on the department. The official mission statement is as follows:

The Buildings and Grounds Department shall assure that the church building and grounds, one of the key resources of the congregation, are maintained in a way that makes the building and grounds available for the mission of the church as identified by the congregation through its elected leadership and staff, and are in keeping with the health, safety and aesthetic standards of the community.

Rachel Perry is staff liaison. The annual budget is almost \$200,000. Of that, \$48,000 is for administrative fees, such as office equipment and web hosting. Utilities run about \$58,000 (including \$40,000 for gas). Facility operations are about \$91,000; annual insurance costs about \$16,000, and repairs are around \$15,000. The emphasis this year has been on the exterior upgrades to the building. Plymouth Church has recently won 2 awards for the renovation project.

We have a focus on continuing to protect the building and the new conference room renovation is underway. This is a green project. Slates removed from the steeple are being used for the back splash for the sink; marble used by the candy circle will be installed for the counter top. This illustrates the reuse of materials. The conference room should be completed by ~~July 31~~ **late July to mid-August** and has been entirely funded by money raised by the Candy Circle. The B&G Department is planning to perform a building-use assessment with support of the Fossil Fuel group. This will be done on Saturday mornings and will explore every nook and cranny. This will be done with the goals of the Green Initiative in mind.

Another area that is being considered is improvements the grounds. The Plymouth Archives Committee is active under the able direction of Jack Doxsey. However, Jack wants to step down as archivist and is looking for replacement anxiously. Karen Nordstrom is heading up the Green Initiative committee. Plymouth is an active E4S

member, and is buying greener supplies. Guidelines for recycling ~~will appear~~appeared in the Perspective. They had two volunteers sign up as a result of the service fair.

Repairs from the water damage will be done within 2 weeks. This is a result of the broken pipes that affected the corridor between the chapel and the sanctuary. Elevator will not be available to upper floor, but will be available for use this Sunday.

Elevator repair or replacement is on horizon. We must consider current code requirements but hopefully not for 2 years. The elevator is well maintained now.

The committee wants to replace the sign in front of the church. There is landmark consideration that has to be factored in. Dale ~~Cerny-Serne~~ has done nice drawings for a replacement. We will have Parking spaces reserved for visitors per Sharon Mendelsohn's request.

Old Business – Slogan / Branding

Rev. Shawnthea Monroe spoke on the issues of slogan and branding. She wants T shirts, bumper stickers and coffee mugs. She requested our input on this. She said the original motto was shot down and wants new ideas. Rev. Monroe will make a worksheet to assist us to make suggestions in June meeting. She wants lots of minds involved. This will also come as an email attachment next week. Please bring it to department meetings and discuss ideas.

New Business – Conflict of Interest Forms

Conflict of interest forms were brought up by Robb Forward. There should be an opportunity for someone to recuse themselves if there is a potential conflict of interest. By signing this form, we will be more aware of potential conflicts. Robb will pass around very simple form that all council members would sign. This is a single 2-sided form. Robb will accept comments on it. He noted that our auditors want us to do this. Dick Pogue says many volunteers with Non-Profits find this offensive. He suggests that we have "a kinder-gentler" form. Do we need to write a formal policy? Dick Pogue suggests we call this a Declaration of Interest form.

Lead Staff Reports

Rachel Perry said that the capital campaign project is nearly complete. The window wells are just about done and then foundation waterproofing will be undertaken.

Rachel said that 2009 capital campaign pledges are 38%, last year they were 64% at this time. They have borrowed \$120k from bank but it is low interest money.

The Green Initiative Committee did a dumpster dive project as part of their involvement with E4S. They found that 70% of what we throwaway is recyclable or compostable.

They are having a meeting tomorrow. Rachel gave a presentation on our Green Initiative to St. Paul's Church that was well received.

The PDO playground will be completely renovated. This is required by state – even though we had expanded it two years ago. Privet hedges around the playground will be sold at \$15 per hedge – retail price is usually \$35 to \$40. We are getting new mikes for the chapel. Rachel is closely monitoring our cash position. Health Insurance going up 18% in the next contract- we will review options. We are getting Adam's paperwork going and are excited about him.

Photos for a new church directory will be taken in late September and early October with the work being done by Moto Photo.

We are sponsoring a tool drive for Habitat for Humanity and have a box in the hallway. This is a great opportunity to clear out old tools; even large tools will be picked up at your house.

Rev. Lois Annich said she is visiting lots of folks. There has been an increase of people requesting office visits. Now we are on the map. Lois announced that Betsy Schrader died suddenly yesterday. She is working with Pam Beck with coordinating with the Witnessing Department. Lois wants to have a Prayer Circle retreat in the fall.

Rev. Annich is also planning a 6-week Bereavement series in the fall. There are many people who have been touched. Format will involve lectures and breakout sessions with a lot of resources. This is a real need and will be working with other churches.

Rev. Shawnthea Monroe announced that new members including Adam Hange will be joining this Sunday and be sure to welcome Adam this Sunday. There is a banner in fellowship hall. It will take Adam a while to settle in, we need to spread the word about him.

Worship has been planned through December. We need to around staffing issues. Adam is not ordained yet – it takes 1 full year – and must be in-care of a congregation. He will be licensed but can't perform weddings yet. Shawnthea is planning a series this summer – Characters of Faith – David and Yael and Debra , Samson and Delilah. Other series topics to be addressed from the pulpit include: “in praise of money”, infidelity/adultery, baseball as metaphor for faith – Shawnthea is open for additional topics. Adam will be in the worship schedule and will be preaching a couple of times. She mentioned the DVD that E&G is making. Much energy and talent is involved in this.

Confirmation is over – whew! Thanks to Gloria and Jeannie who did a wonderful job. One student didn't join, which is perfectly acceptable. Dick Pogue said it was handled very well.

The Western Reserve Association meeting is at Imani UCC location. With drums and organs it rocked which showed how diverse the UCC is. The Ohio Conference is in July Delegate Ken Kangas is going as our representative. At the end of June General Synod is being held in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Shawnthea accepted the preservation award for

Plymouth Church. She also went to the Plymouth Church Bowling League banquet. She said it was an enjoyable and memorable experience.

Shawnthea attended the orientation for Deaconess Community Foundation new board members. She has met with an ecumenical pastors group in Shaker Heights. They will have a service on the Sunday before Thanksgiving at 4pm at Plymouth. Shawnthea will be teaching a four week class for the Cleveland Ecumenical Institute on the theology of Clint Eastwood Westerns!

Wrap Up

The next Church Council meeting will be June 24, 2009 at 7PM

There will be no July meeting

At 8:45PM, Rev. Shawnthea Monroe gave the closing prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Mendelsohn
Acting Clerk of Council