

Plymouth Church of Shaker Heights

Church Council Meeting Minutes of the June 24, 2009 meeting

Present:

Carol Skoglund, Shawnthea Monroe, Michael Kimmel, Sharon Mendelsohn, Chris Karr, Beth Karr, Heidi Makela, Lee Makela, Brian Smith, Heidi Klein, Sharon Midura, Nikki Niehoff, Betsy Stueber, Dick Pogue, Christine Bretz

Carol Skoglund called the meeting to order at 7:05pm. Rev. Dr. Shawnthea Monroe opened the meeting with prayer.

Shawnthea took this time to formally welcome Adam Hange to Plymouth even though he was unable to attend as he was on a mission trip.

Sharon passed out a Membership Status Report to Council, and reports that membership is about 657 congregants presently.

Administrative and Financial Matters

- Christine Bretz gave report on current financials in Rachel's absence. She requests that departments confirm status of budget items to date, as some departments are getting close on certain budget items. Those getting close are being contacted by Rachel. Christine reports that Rachel has reported that we appear to be on track with spending based upon comparisons with last year's spending. Finally, Christine reminds people to get their expense checks in on a timely basis to speed reimbursement, and to keep up with approvals.
- Finance Committee report – Carol Skoglund gave a brief summary of most recent Finance Committee meeting.
 - Reporting on the 2008 budget surplus, Carol reports that 2/3 of that surplus was distributed to Partnership and Service as recommended by Council for meeting the needs of the community. It was also agreed upon that distribution of the remaining funds be delayed until midyear to see how the year was unfolding. The meeting held about two weeks ago was used as the midyear meeting, and it was determined that we are still in a good financial situation. Therefore, it was the determination of the Finance Committee to begin distribution of the remaining funds to Partnership and Service at a sum of \$15,000.
 - Carol then reported on the status of our Agreed Upon Procedures. 2009 was the year that was agreed upon year for the selection of the Agreed Upon Procedures financial review. Pam from our accounting firm was contacted, and met with the Finance Committee to recommend a number of procedures to do for this year. Carol handed out a schedule of Agreed Upon Procedures for Council to read over. Carol reports that this year we agreed upon 20 procedures (up from 11) totaling no more than \$5,500, opposed to last years full audit which was three to four times that amount. One element of the process this year is that two Council members and two

Department or Committee Chairs will be contacted for interviews. Names were not available. SS&G, our accounting firm, will report its findings in September.

- At this point, Carol requests sign off to begin the audit

Stewardship

- Dick Poque reports that the first letters for Celebration Sunday will go out September 28th, and that Celebration Sunday is scheduled for November 1. The Campaign goal for this year will be set at \$600,000, but is not to be widely publicized in the hopes that we will attain more than this amount. Dick mentions that Bill Green wishes to speak at Dept meetings, and to have a Stewardship member greet new members well.
- Shawnthea reports that the Annual Campaign members have selected for the fall, Bill Green, Shawnthea, Erica Barnhill, David Belsh, Paul Qua, and 12 others. Shawnthea notes that \$600,000 is actually too low, but was seen as an attainable goal. To fill in the difference and avoid deep cuts. Shawnthea is looking for input into how to get more people to pledge. Shawnthea asks how else you could measure the success of an annual campaign. Increase the number of people that pledge, increase their percentage, thermometer with pictures of things that will not have to be cut from the budget, etc. Those are just creative thoughts. Bill Green is requesting 100% of the Council, and 100% of Department members rise to the annual campaign.
- Dick requests Council approval of the goal even though it may not be required.
- Dick moves that Stewardship, and Chris Karr seconds the motion. The motion is carried unanimously.

Worship Committee

- Betsy reports that Worship is settling into summer, so coffee hour will be a little more relaxed and flowers will be minimized until the fall. Kendall Cobb to be in charge of the greeters.

Partnership and Service

- Beth reports that minutes sent out late, but were distributed via email. She mentions that P&S is posting thank you notes and "Your pledge dollars at work" in the Perspective column to ensure that people can see where funds are going. In addition, we had an article accepted in the Western Reserve newspaper for the service campaign. We should receive a copy at the end of July.

Witness

- Sharon Midura reports that Pam collected a number of surveys, and that they were generally good. Those surveys are being used to map our projects for fall and spring. One thought is a series of Bible Studies taught by members with theological backgrounds; perhaps also a series on poverty, gay marriage, and the UCC, in general. Lois will give a lecture series on death and grief that she has done before. Shawnthea will also be doing an adult confirmation refresher as well as a book club.

Buildings and Grounds

- Lee reports that exterior is essentially done. Parking lot finished, and there are now more handicap spots, visitor spots, and bike racks out front. B&G will now be turning

their attention to the interior of the church and are looking for ideas of things that can be done around the inside of the church. They are looking at offering a Nooks and Crannies Tour of the church in addition to looking at just how much space is in the church, and how it is being utilized. One issue that they hope to address is that there is no central entrance to the church.

Evangelism and Growth

- Sharon Mendelsohn distributed a Membership Status Report to Council, and notes that Membership Status Reports will be distributed twice per year.
- The reports illustrates the fluctuations of the membership over the previous six months due to new memberships, transfers, etc
- For the first time the report lists how members were lost, and how it is that we lost them.
- Current membership level estimated at 657
- Shownthea notes that the new members are a good group, and will strengthen the congregation.
- As these reports will be distributed twice per year, the next report will be due in December.

Department of Evangelism and Growth presentation – mission and scope of responsibilities

- Sharon begins the presentation by introducing Brian Smith as Vice-Chair.
- E&G was created 4.5 years ago with Plymouth's new constitution. They provide support for visitors and the new member process. Provide a nourishing environment for visitors.
- Visitors are a big part of what E&G is about, and they are tracked as well as possible, and report distributed to ministers for their Tuesday staff meetings.
- E&G is happy to report that since March 1st, the average number of visitors per Sunday is now 17! (first and returning visitors) That statistic is only people that identify themselves.
- The Monday following a visit, a letter is sent and/or a phone call made to each visitor welcoming them, and signed by the minister that performed the sermon that Sunday. Visitors are not "tracked" down if they do not list their contact information. If email address is all that is provided then a welcome email is sent. One thing to note, is that visitors are not entered into the database until they are here more than once.
- Jim and Mary Bright hosted a dinner for visitors to just sort of chit chat and get to know people. Then, they were invited to Muffins with the Minister (Donuts with the Doctor was suggested as an alternative name) to help educate the prospective members. In the last group, 14 joined the church after this series.
- One change that has been made is that member sponsors are no longer used. This began as an experiment, and so far it's working well. It was noted that it looked good on paper to pair up a family with a new member, but in practice it was not well executed for a variety of reasons. E&G feels that we all have the responsibility to be sponsors. Shownthea feels that we are meeting our goals for new members as we are being more attentive to what our visitors are telling us in their visitor information forms.
- The second big area for E&G is external communications. E&G is the PR dept and advertising agency for the church by increasing awareness of programs and support public perception of Plymouth through the use of calendars, advertisements, special events, direct mail campaigns, and new neighbor materials outreach

- A new addition to E&G is Jennifer Prater-Cleary. She has marketing experience and has agreed to write the press releases.
- E&G supports membership issues internally by supplying things like nametags for members and frequent visitors. Chris Karr mentions here that he has noticed people are backsliding with wearing nametags. He feels, and the Council agreed, that everyone should be more conscious about wearing nametags.
- E&G has begun to reinstate a program to reactivate inactive members. The program was begun several years ago with limited success. Shawnthea says that she has a more hands off approach for inactive members as opposed to reaching out to inactive members. Dick feels that it may be helpful in certain situations, and Shawnthea did agree with that. The previous program only reached out to inactive members that were friends of members, so that it was less of a threatening approach. Christine asked what the criteria was to determine inactive members, and Sharon replied that it is basically, two years without an attendance.
- E&G tracks members attendance using the sign in books in the pews each week.
- Current projects include the DVD, Brochure, Press coverage for Adam, possible banners, and membership outreach programs.

Old Business

- First on the agenda is the slogan/branding process, Shawnthea took this time to temporarily adjourn the meeting to allow the Council members an opportunity to brainstorm about potential slogan directions.
- Next up is the Conflict of Interest/Declaration of Interest form
 - o Robb introduced idea of form in last council meeting to address concerns of last years audit. Specifically that some Council members are performing duties for the church that are consistent with their normal occupations. That could result in a conflict of interest, and the audit recommended that Plymouth consider implementing a Conflict of Interest form for those in such a position. Dick suggested that Declaration of Interest Form is easier to deal with, and easier to write, but still serves the ultimate purpose of what the auditors requested. Carol asks if anyone has any comments or suggestions. Chris feels a Declaration of Interest would be fine as long as Council knows to ask the question when motions are brought forward. Shawnthea feels that the auditors made the recommendation in the hopes of keeping church business transparent to the congregation. Carol notes that a draft is still needed, so this is still an ongoing piece of business.
 - o Dick feels that Finance committee would be the most appropriate Committee to manage this process since we do not have an Audit Committee.
 - o Shawnthea suggests we call it Declaration of Interest, officially, from here on out, rather than referring to it as a Conflict of Interest form. Additionally, she mentions that Plymouth has collected some sample documents, but are in need of some additional ones along with some guidance. Carol asked if Dick had any samples that we could use. He does, so we'll address this further in August

New Business

- With regard to the “In care” process for Adam, Shawnthea reports that there has been a meeting with UCC people for ordination and In Care, Margaret Mills. Joan Ishiboshi handles the licensing of ministers. Since attending seminary (Wheaton and Ashland), he is on a different path than simple licensing, so the recommendation by UCC is have Plymouth Council vote to take him “in care” meaning that Plymouth feels that Adam properly represents the church, and is fit for ministry, and that Plymouth puts him forward for ordination. More specifics will be available in August or September. The In Care process is like a shepherding process to ensure that he properly represents the church. This is about a year long process, so he would be on track for ordination in October of 2010. He will be installed along with Lois and Robb in September.
- Dick asks if Adam will be able to do weddings, baptisms, etc while he was in the In Care process, and Shawnthea commented that she and Lois could handle those things in the meantime.
- Dick brings the motion, Christine seconds, all approved.

Lead Staff reports

No lead staff report due to lack of attendance.

- Shawnthea having a good summer with sermon series, but it has been a busy summer.
- Brian asked about the microphones, and Shawnthea reports that the Britney Spears mics work well for certain things, but not for others. There have been problems with volume and positioning. Still a work in progress. Shawnthea reports that Adam needs to work on his projection, and that the assisted hearing devices aren't working in Chapel, possibly due to the master volume being turned down to prevent echoing through the empty sanctuary. It was at this point that Shawnthea mentions a need for sound and A/V people. An ad in the Perspective might be one approach.
- Shawnthea also reports that Jim is doing well on his sabbatical taking a vacation cruise and attending some conferences. She also notes that we have received great feedback for Todd Wilson, one of the top organists in the country, in his absence.
- Lois is doing great work in the church, and was particularly involved in the Schrader service and many other things.

Wrap Up

There is no July meeting, and August 19th at 7pm will be the next meeting.

For the good of the order

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Concluding Prayer

Given by Shawnthea

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Kimmel
Clerk of Council