

Plymouth Church of Shaker Heights

Church Council Meeting Minutes of the August 19, 2009 meeting

Present:

Carol Skoglund, Shawnthea Monroe, Michael Kimmel, Sharon Mendelsohn, Heidi Makela, Nikki Niehoff, Dick Pogue, Christine Bretz, Gloria Sturgill, Adam Hange, Jim Riggs, Rachel Perry, Pam Markt, Lois Annich, Jim Bright, Bill Green, Neil Mueller, Robb Forward, Pam Beck, Gillian Graham

Robb Forward called the meeting to order at 7:04pm. Rev. Dr. Shawnthea Monroe opened the meeting with prayer.

The minutes for the last Council meeting were distributed late due to a number of factors. Hard copies were made available to Council at this meeting, and were unanimously accepted after Christine Bretz moves, and Gloria Sturghill seconds.

Administrative and Financial Matters

- Christine Bretz gave report on current financials beginning with a revenue update. Through July of this year, pledge fulfillment is slightly above this time last year in both dollar amount and percentage of pledges filled. We are currently at 64% fulfill versus 62% for this time last year. Sunday loose offerings are also higher this year over last year at this time. Overall, revenue is on par with last year. Expenses to date shows that departments are spending similar to last year, or below, and that departments have spent an overall 44% of their 2009 budgets. Utilities are coming in lower than last year, so far, and salaries are up slightly. The overall standing is that we are also on par with least year at this time.

Department and Standing Committee Updates

- **Witnessing** – Pam Beck referenced the minutes distributed prior to the Council meeting, and chose to simply point out two key events from those minutes. The first is that October 11 will be A Tale of Two Stewards - a faceoff between Bill Green and Dick Pogue. The idea is that Bill Green will discuss his view of money from the pastoral perspective while Dick Pogue will provide his view from the layman's perspective. This should be a lively discussion and debate. Second, events for September have already been planned, and she expects that November and December will fall into place soon.
- **Foundation** – Jim Bright – Summarized the most recent Foundation meeting and started by briefing that market values are up from the last time they were compared in February. The value of our fund was about \$3.3mil on Feb 25, and \$4.1mil as of August 13th after pulling \$161,000 out for church expenses.
- Three things dealt with at meeting
 - o Raising money for the church. About \$100,000 would be needed for various church expenses throughout the year, and Foundation chose to raise all of the money now.

- Modify some of the investments moving some income from one type of investment to another
 - Started addressing how the funds are managed. No conclusion was attained at this initial meeting, but an understanding what could be done if we wanted to turn over day to day management of investments was made. The bottom line is that they are considering it at this time. Dick Pogue mentioned that the Cleveland Foundation, for example, charges 1% to manage a fund, and that seems very expensive. However, Jim still feels that it's worth considering due to the capabilities of these kinds of management entities. Robb points out that this conveys that Foundation is doing its due diligence.
- **Stewardship** - Dick Pogue reports that Stewardship met on August 6th, and referenced the minutes that were handed out prior to the Council meeting. Dick has an item to address under New Business, so has turned over the rest of the department update to Bill Green who is in attendance as Campaign Coordinator for the Annual Fund. Bill reports that Erica Barnhill, Paul Qua, David Welsh, and Shawnthea are working on the Campaign, and he has a lot of confidence in the team that has been assembled. Bill also reports that things look very good based upon his experience leading campaigns at other churches. Shawnthea and Robb are both very active, and things are moving along. Bill references a handout, and requests that everyone read that to save time in the Council meeting. He then references a couple of items of note that were included in the minutes. The heart of the Campaign focuses on Leadership. They wish to approach the 50 lead givers, identified by Rachel Perry, individually, and to also identify a time and place for a "recognition event".
- Stewardship challenges department chairs and committee heads to step up between now and September 20th to reach half of the goal. They wish to have that portion of the goal solidified before the pitch is made to the congregation in general.
- A congregational dinner to will be held on November 4th with Shawnthea as "Chef Extraordinaire", and will include presentations from groups led by Adam Hange and Jim Riggs. They are hoping for 150 guests.
- Coinciding with Dedication Sunday, a church picnic (tailgate party) is to be held on October 11th.
- **Evangelism and Growth** –E&G has had no meeting since previous Council meeting. The DVD project is moving along with a goal of end of November. Jennifer has written and distributed a press release about Adam.
 - **Department Presentation – Children and Youth – Presented by Neil Mueller**
 - Neil began his presentation by passing out an outline of what C&Y does at Plymouth. The department consists of six individuals, including Neil, and holds meetings once per month. One recent change that C&Y has implemented is that Sunday School will begin to be held during worship service, child care will be provided during the 9:30 hour in order to allow parents to attend adult education, choir, etc. Sunday School attendance has been low during the 9:30 hour, and this change should help. Pam asks for clarification about Sunday process. Neil reports that we have the option of providing communal time, perhaps led by Adam with songs being sung as long as it seems valuable. That gives them time with Adam, but still gives time for children to spend time in class with their

teachers. That means about 30-40 minutes in classes for children. The thinking is that C&Y wanted to provide more time for music with the children.

- As a side issue, Dick Pogue mentioned that he wanted to ensure that we were taking due diligence with regard to the use of the Dively Fund. Robb and Shawnthea confirmed that we are taking legally advised actions and keeping proper records of the way that Dively Funds are used, and that the current use is within the original parameters of the Dively Fund.
- Pam asked Sharon if we are advertising in the local Shaker paper to enlighten people to our presence. Shawnthea says that a study at her previous church showed that the ads did not work, and that new people almost always came from personal recommendation. Pam suggested hanging flyers in the groceries stores and things. Dick mentioned that his wife is the one that distributes the Welcome Baskets for Shaker, and that she would need to be careful of what she is passing out with the baskets.
- One issue that was discussed was Vacation Bible School (VBS). VBS was skipped this year for a number of reasons, and C&Y will be looking make a decision as to whether to hold it next year or not. Robb advocates bringing back VBS next year. He cites the fact that almost all churches offer them, and having VBS allows us to reach out to the community to give children a place to go in the summer since it functions similarly to a summer camp. Heidi reminded everyone that previous iterations of VBS were very successful averaging as many as 20-30 children per year. She feels that this year would be a particularly good year to reach out to people to bring them back to the church after several years of changes.

Old Business

- **Slogan/Branding Update** - Shawnthea reports that there haven't been a lot of suggestions made. Many people are simply passively telling her that what we have looks good. Shawnthea has given up on the previously planned unveiling for this September, but is renewing her efforts. She has a file folder full of suggestions, and encourages people to send her suggested slogans. She currently has 3-4 of them.
- **Declaration of Interest Form** – The previously discussed Declaration of Interest Form is to be completed and submitted next month by the Finance Committee.
- **Celebration Sunday has been rescheduled to November 15th** – Dick Pogue requests that the Annual Meeting be rescheduled from its constitutionally mandated date of the first week of November to November 15th to coincide with Celebration Sunday. The idea would be that the celebration and the annual meeting with feed each other. In addition, that is the time when we celebrate things like the 50 year members.
- There is a concern that combining the events will cause problems with people transitioning from the Sanctuary to the Fellowship Hall. People may leave instead of moving downstairs. Pam mentioned a previous year when the 50 year people were given brunch prior to the service. Lois expressed concern that the elderly congregants would not be able to get to church any earlier as they struggle to get there in time. Robb feels that this is enough of an honor that we would be able to get them here. He feels that the service could be truncated to allow us to not lengthen the church day. The question is moving the Annual Meeting date, and not the logistics.
- Robb motions to move Annual Meeting to November 15th, Heidi Seconds, and the motion was carried unanimously.

New Business

- **"In Care" process for Adam Hange** - Shawnthea reports that Adam will join UCC Western Reserve after taking class being held at Plymouth starting in September. In Care is proceeding.
- **Pledge Presentation** – Dick Pogue would like to be able to say that Church leadership has pledged at 100%. That includes church council and the top lead givers. Rachel handed out individual letters to each council member showing their past years giving pledge and what a 5% increase would consist of for next year to help people make a decision. Shawnthea points out that we have people as young as high school students making pledges, and it's not always financial. It's a promise to the church that could be monetary or deeds. Dick acknowledges that this has been a bad year, and that no one should feel bad if they are unable to improve upon their pledge. The idea is to at least be able to say that 100% of church leadership has pledged since it means a lot to congregants to see church leadership pledging during times like these.

Lead Staff Reports

- Lois reports that Pastoral care is going well. She is interacting by many different methods from personal visits to email to phone calls. She will be leading a prayer retreat October 10th with an accompanying seminar to deal with death and grieving. She is advertising within the church and is considering other forms of advertising such as PSAs.
- Rachel has a number of updates:
 - o Capital Campaign is done. Plymouth has paid 100% of the bills, in part, by borrowing a little. She is still projecting a balanced budget, and she is optimistic that we will not have to take the remainder of the \$250,000 matching grant from last year.
 - o Properties Magazine interviewed her about the building project.
 - o She continues to work with the Green Initiative.
 - o September 24th Plymouth is hosting the Entrepreneurs for Sustainability. Highlighting the new conference room that will be formally unveiled on September 27th.
 - Lots of materials have been reused from different projects.
 - All the details of the project, and its green initiatives will be published in the Perspectives. The project people and the contractors will be present on the 27th. Robb asked if there would be a posting in the conference room, sort of a key to the project, so that people can understand what went into the project. Rachel likes the idea, and says she will make sure that is done in addition to the brochure they are putting together that will help people make their own projects green.
 - Karen Nordstrom and Adam had children decorate recycling containers that will be used throughout the building.
 - They will be asking congregants to sign up to take recycling to drop off behind Dave's, or to another location, and also asking people to take coffee grounds if they can use them.

- The Cleveland Institute of Music renewed their lease agreement to hold lessons at Plymouth.
- Online donations are now possible via the Plymouth website. It can handle recurring donations or individual donations.
- Rachel reports that the last couple of months have been busy with the Agreed Upon Procedures process by the auditors. She should be ready to discuss the results at the next Council Meeting
- Plymouth joined the Employers Resource Council to help provide HR services.
- Rachel selected to the Cleveland Bridge Builders Class of 2010. It's a big honor.
- Jim thanked everyone for the opportunity to take his sabbatical. He will publish an article in the perspective about his experiences. The nutshell is that he was able to take a cruise, attend a conference, and spend time with family.
 - He reports that the last couple of weeks, since he's been back, have been busy with weddings and funerals.
 - Dana Steel is the new music intern, and she starts next week.
 - September 3rd is the fall choir kickoff party.
- Adam and Hannah really like Shaker Heights. Hannah is starting school soon, so that has them busy. He has jumped right in with the church and worked on the mission trip in West Virginia. Children and parents service day immediately followed the mission trip, and he's excited to work on this and/or VBS for next year. He followed with the second mission trip. He was happy to be part of the two mission trips this year after having just begun at Plymouth. They proved to be valuable experiences for him. The Young and the Restless group for people in their 20s and 30s began in July and he hopes to make it a monthly event.
 - He is recruiting teachers now for new children's classes. There is some concern about people having to miss the services, and they are looking for potential solutions.
 - This coming weekend is the high school whitewater rafting trip. He is trying to build a core group with these activities.
 - He is currently working on calendar of events for the next year.
 - Confirmation begins at the beginning of January. The timing has yet to be determined.
 - Adam reports that numbers are beginning to build with the youth groups, and he hopes to continue this trend with upcoming events and classes.
- Shanwthea reports that she has been accepted into a program that will enable her to take a trip to Israel with all expenses paid by the Cousins Foundation. The trip takes place in October.
 - She has begun working with the Deaconess Community Foundation after being asked to join as a trustee. It's busy, but rewarding work.
 - Summer worship series has been wonderful. The summer average has been higher than the average last year. We are just shy of 130 compared to 75 normally.
 - In coming year the focus will be worship now that everyone is on board and the transitions are complete.
 - Shanwthea will be performing annual staff reviews soon.
 - There have been lots of weddings and funerals

- Shawnthea reminds that Sue Rowan's service is to be held this Saturday. They are expecting 300-400 people.
- Shawnthea will probably be taking a short trip to Minnesota to participate in an ordination ceremony sometime in the fall.
- Finally, Shawnthea reports that her book has finally been released, and was written in conjunction with a Yale professor. The book is the culmination of six years of work, but the final push came after joining Plymouth.
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For the good of the order

The next council meeting is to be held September 23rd at 7pm. October is to be skipped. November will be on the 18th and the December on the 16th.

Concluding Prayer

Given by Shawnthea

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Kimmel
Clerk of Council