

Plymouth Church of Shaker Heights

Church Council Meeting

Minutes of the September 23, 2009 meeting

Present:

Robb Forward, Carol Skoglund, Shawnthea Monroe, Michael Kimmel, Sharon Mendelsohn, Dick Pogue, Christine Bretz, Adam Hange, Jim Riggs, Rachel Perry, Pam Markt, Lois Annich, Bill Green, Neil Mueller, Pam Beck, Gillian Graham, Sharon Midura, Debbie White, Noel Nilson

Robb Forward called the meeting to order at 7:02pm. Rev. Dr. Shawnthea Monroe opened the meeting with prayer.

Council meeting minutes from August were reviewed, and Gillian Graham forwarded a motion to approve the minutes. Sharon Mendelsohn requested that the minutes reflect that it was Jennifer Prater-Cleary that wrote the press release about Adam. That section of the minutes can be found on page 2. Neil Mueller seconded that motion, and the motion was unanimously carried.

Administrative and Financial Matters

- Robb introduced Pam Plott and Ellen from the audit firm of SS&G to go over the agreed upon procedures. At that time, Pam passed around a booklet containing the Agreed Upon Procedures that SS&G, in cooperation with the Finance Committee had written. It was also at this time that Pam reminded Council that the Agreed Upon Procedures were not an audit, but were procedures that Plymouth had requested SS&G to perform outside of an audit cycle. Pam and Ellen read through the document procedures by procedures to ensure that Council understood what their findings had been. Upon finishing, Pam took a few moments to compliment Rachel, and Plymouth in general, as she felt they had been very easy to work with, and had given them good turnarounds on all requested information and documentation.

When she opened to the floor for questions, Dick Pogue noted that Procedure 16 made note that volatility of the fund was greater than what had been used as a benchmark. After several minutes of discussion to clarify, the result that was finally understood was that these were simply benchmarks that had been used to gage volatility, and did not mean that Plymouth's funds were any more or less safe where currently invested. No further questions were asked.

As a side note, Pam said that Plymouth has a very good set of safeguards to protect its funding.

Dick Pogue put forth the motion to accept the Agreed Upon Procedures. Beth Karr seconded the motion, and the motion was unanimously approved.

- **Finance Committee report on The Harriett Dively Youth Fund**
Carol Skoglund distributed a motion regarding The Harriet Dively Youth Fund. Upon assuming her role in the Finance Committee, Carol discovered that the

Dively Fund was not being fully utilized. Established in 1984, the Dively family set up a scholarship fund to award to high school seniors.

Early stipulations allowed Plymouth to change how the money is used if Plymouth approached the donors. This was done in 2001, and new conditions were put into affect. The 2001 change new conditions replaced the original use of the scholarship money. From 2001 until the present, the fund may be used for book awards, and the balance may be used for the enhancement of the youth program. At all times when funds are used from the fund, Harriet Dively name is to be lifted up. Currently, more than \$70,000 is available in the fund. Prior to the 2001 changes, the fund stipulated that unused income was to be reinvested and become part of the endowment principal. Working with Michael Dively, Rachel came up with a motion for a policy change that would reinstate the previous policy. That means that, as of this year, \$46,000 would be transferred back to the fund. The way the leftover funds are determined is that Plymouth looks back two years for every year that has transpired. The resulting average of the two years equals the overage.

The motion put together by Rachel states, in summary, that on December 31st of each year any unused income more than 24 months prior to the year's end will be transferred back to the endowment. Dick Pogue asked if the unused funds have been invested during the time from 2001 until now, and Rachel said that it has been invested in a Vanguard money market account.

Pam Markt asked why the money was not spent during the last 8 years. Carol explained that the awards only amounted to a few hundred dollars per year, and that didn't use up the available funds. Those leftover funds were simply never spent.

Dick asked why were transferring it out only to transfer it back in. Why not only transfer out what was being used. The answer is essentially that it's easier to manage the funds by withdrawing what we think we will use, and putting back the leftovers.

Carol raises the motion as written. Debbie White seconds. Shawnthea thanked Carol and finance committee for the legwork. The motion is unanimously passed

- **Report on current financials**

Christine Bretz handed out the August pledge fulfillment report.

She then gave a report on the 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% fulfilled 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 over last year due to the changes in staffing that have occurred. The overall standing is that we are on par with last year at this time.

Department & Standing Committee Updates

- **Witnessing** – Pam Beck reports nothing new from minutes that had been distributed.
- **Caring** – Debbie White only wishes to add to their previously distributed minutes by saying that the food prep day today netted more than 20 containers of soups and things for people to distribute. They are also preparing for the 50 year member celebration on November 15th. Cake will be served.
- **Building and Grounds** – Pam Markt highlighted that the Conference Room grand opening is this Sunday. Praises Jack for his work on the archives. Church tours are being planned for the spring to show people all the nooks and crannies of the building.
- **Evangelism and Growth** – Sharon reports that E&G has not officially met for a while, but the DVD is very close to completion. Weekly press releases continue to be released to the religious calendars and the media. Two things other things being pushed to media, the conference room, and its green initiative, and the Bereavement seminar, are being worked on. Adam's article has been published in The Connection.
- **Stewardship** – Dick Pogue reports that Stewardship has met every month since March. Last month it was reported that the top 50 leaders and the 15 members of cabinet were being targeted for pledges before the 28th. As of today, 63 of the 65 have pledged. They pledged a combined total of \$451,277. Dick expresses thanks to everyone.

The average pledge from the 63 is \$7,163.00. This is slight increase over last year. 0.1% increase, to be exact.

Dick introduced Bill Green to discuss what the Campaign committee is up to. The 63 of 65 only leaves 140 pledge givers left from last year. Those people have not yet been asked.

Shawnthea is drafting a letter for sending out next Tuesday to accompany the pledge form. The next letter after that will go out on October 12th. The first piece is motivational, and the second is more dollars and cents.

The Campaign kicks off October 11th with the debate. Pam Beck is doing the publicity for them.

- 6 witnesses this year. The first to speak at the kickoff Sunday
 - Shawnthea is training the witnesses this Sunday
- Congregational Dinner will be held on November 4th
- The stewardship devotional that Bill Green wrote will be available to the congregation beginning October 12th.

Special report from Partnership and Service, and Children and Youth

- Neil from C&Y begins by distributing a Proposal for the Renovation of the Krumbine Room for Youth. The Krumbine room is a great space that is in need of renovation in order to help improve the ministry to youth. After explaining, briefly, the proposal, Neil turned it over to Adam Hange. Adam would like to take advantage of his newness to the church and to grow the youth group, and he feels that it is necessary to create a "home" for them here at the church beginning with the renovation of the Krumbine room. Currently, junior and senior high students meet in the Krumbine room, and the hope is to get better utilization of the space

by making some key renovations to the main room and the kitchen to include a renovated fireplace, the addition of a flat screen TV and connections to the Internet to allow for presentations and research.

- Neil moves that we accept the proposal as written. Christine seconds the motion.

Dick wanted clarification that the Dively funds were able to be used for this purpose. Rachel noted that the 2001 change to the gift states that it could be used for the purpose of enhancing the youth program. It was used in 2003 for updates to the Krumbine room, so this would simply be a further enhancement of the room. Dick would like the proposal to be amended to include a cursory view of the proposal by Michael Dively. Motion carried unanimously.

- **Partnership and Service** – Beth Karr referenced an email that she sent out detailing where the extra funds given to P&S to distribute to local charities were distributed. She is proud of how the funds were processed. Beth and Rachel met with Deborah Vesey, President and CEO of Deaconess to help determine the most appropriate distribution of funds. Beth and Cindi Chapman made decisions about awarding of the gifts based upon this discussion.

The entire \$60,024 amount was distributed. Check requisitions were made today. Some were fully funded, and some were amended.

It was at this time that Dick Pogue requested, on behalf of the Stewardship Committee, to delay any publicity of these gifts to prevent misunderstanding by potential pledges. A Perspective article has been written, and Dick is requesting that the article be held for now.

Shawnthea feels that both sides have valid reasons for the timing of the publicity, but feels that simply delaying the publicity is the best idea.

Debbie White feels that it is appropriate to publicize it immediately because the nature of the church is that we give back to the community.

Dick Pogue asked Bill Green his opinion, and Bill agrees with Shawnthea's perspective that the announcement of the gifts be delayed.

Mike Kimmel expressed concern that word would get out to the congregation from outside of the church, and that that may cause a backlash.

After several minutes of discussion, Shawnthea modified her opinion and feels that we may be able to leave the article, but to proof the article to ensure that it is worded sensitively. On that note, Pam Beck says that it should never be said that Plymouth had money leftover - especially since the church has outstanding debt.

Rachel wanted to note for the record that a third of the \$90,000 surplus was rolled back into operating funds.

Bill feels that it could be worded in such a way that would diminish any negative effects, and mitigate potential issues.

Dick states that Stewardship feels that this will have a "chilling effect" on giving during the Annual Campaign that is about to kick off.

Shawnthea feels that it is noteworthy that council chose to be so generous with the funds, but wants to be careful of how it is publicized.

Beth volunteered to pull the article, but would not like to rewrite it.

The discussion concluded without an agreed upon consensus, but appeared to be leaning towards softening the announcement of the distribution of the funds and to not publish the article at this time.

Old Business

- **Slogan/Branding update** – Shawnthea Monroe
Shawnthea handed out a list of branding and logo suggestions that included some suggestions for items that could be branded. She noted that the handout should not drive a vote this evening, but to stimulate thinking.
She is not on a timeline, but would like to have the issue of the slogan decided for the new year, but notes that feelings are strong, and wants to assure that people are heard if they wish to be heard.
Dick asked if this would go on the letterhead. Shawnthea responded that it would not, but would be used on coffee mugs, bumper stickers, etc...
- **Declaration of Interest Form update**
Carol Skoglund reported that the Finance Committee was appointed, at the last meeting, to undertake the writing of the Declaration of Interest form. Although it is not ready now, Rachel and Carol approached Jeff Pollack who drafted a declaration as a starting point for discussion in the October meeting to be discussed in Council in November. As a reminder this came from an audit recommendation.

New Business –

- **Budget reporting issues for departments**
Rachel Perry handed out a budget planning workbook to appropriate individuals on the Council. The cover page contains a budget timeline, and the remaining pages contain a worksheet and other information to help departments plan their budgets. Pam Markt requested an Excel version of the worksheet. Rachel said she could do that, and will distribute the worksheet electronically to the appropriate individuals.
- **Appointment of Nominating Committee member to fulfill term of the late Sue Rowan**
According to Plymouth's Constitution, a replacement is to be appointed. Shawnthea and Robb approached Dee Burt to be the replacement, and requests a motion to approve Dee as the new member of the Nominating Committee.
Dick brings the motion to approve, Sharon seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.
- **Motion to approve agenda for the Annual Meeting**
An agenda must be approved for use in the Annual Meeting on November 15th. Robb says that the agenda will closely match last year's agenda. He has not had a chance to create the agenda prior to this Council Meeting, but had planned to send it the following week. Since the agenda is normally included in the Perspectives each year, Shawnthea left the Council Meeting for a few minutes to create one based upon last years. Upon returning with copies that were distributed for review, Pam Markt brought forth the motion to approve, and Gillian seconded the motion. The motion to approve the agenda was unanimously approved.

Lead Staff Reports

- Lois is working on the Prayer Retreat and the Bereavement seminar. Signups for Prayer Retreat have been underwhelming thus far. At the suggestion of a couple of Council members, Lois will move the signups sheets to the area outside the Parlor for better visibility.
Speaking of the Bereavement Seminar, Lois expressed excitement in the program due to the very strong lineup of speakers. When asked by Christine about whether people needed to attend all of the bereavement dates for the full benefit of the program, Lois said that she recommends that all dates be attended because each session builds upon the last. This will be an annual event.
Gillian asked that a PDF of the seminar be emailed around, and Lois said that she would do that the next day.
- Jim shared a handout that will be included in the Perspective that lists and describes, from Arts Plymouth, all of the events in the area for the year.
Starting this year Plymouth, under Jim's direction, will begin hosting an artist in residence that will begin giving concerts as soon as February.
Arts Plymouth and Music Ministry Facebook pages have been launched. These Facebook pages will be used as publicity for Arts Plymouth events and other events of interest.
The Cleveland Art Museum is again coming around as a part of Viva and Gala Around Town series.
- Adam shared that the youth groups are up and running, and planning their schedule of activities. Among those activities will be a hayride teaming up with Heights Christian. They will also be participating in a Shaker Heights event called Serving Shaker to help rake leaves and clean yards on November 7th.
Adam has also begun planning for the mission trip for next year.
- Rachel shared that Plymouth will be profiled in Properties Magazine. And that tomorrow, September 24, from 9:30-12 Plymouth will host an entrepreneurs group to discuss green initiatives. At this point, Rachel passed around a brochure put together to help people with their own greening initiatives, and reminds that this Sunday, during coffee hour, tours of the conference room will be held with the architects present to discuss the project with the congregation. Recycling is being collected and placed outside every Sunday, and people are encouraged to take recycling to Dave's or CVS in Shaker Square. Plymouth will partner with, and be profiled by the COSE Green Plus Initiative to help promote sustainability.
- Shawnthea shared that summer attendance was up 30% over last year's summer attendance! Now that summer has ended, she is hoping to build numbers back up for non-summer worship. On behalf of Betsy Steuber and the Worship Department, Shawnthea reports that Worship is trying to put together the Chancel Team, a group of at least 12 people, that would be responsible for Chancel work. The team would be split into pairs that would perform Chancel duties for one month at a time.
Evangelism and Growth is also busy with DVD, and Shawnthea looks forward to the release, scheduled for sometime in November as of this meeting.
She is also busy working with nominating committee, and asks Council members to prayerfully consider coming back, and not to simply return to council because you do not think anyone else would do it.

Shawnthea is continues working with Adam and his In Care process. Shawnthea's book study group has begun with the book "The Shack", and will meet monthly.

Finally, Shawnthea is getting ready to go to Israel, and will be gone October 13th-27th.

As this date approaches, Plymouth staff will continue to work with Shawnthea to establish a protocol for how to manage issues while she will is gone.

Mark Joseph, of Shaker One, approached Plymouth to host and/or sponsor a candidates forum for the Shaker school board. Under consultation with lead staff, Shawnthea would like to host the event, but not sponsor the event to ensure that no one feels Plymouth, as a community, is endorsing the forum, and it's message. She asks for Council's opinion. Dick doesn't see an issue with it, but Sharon Midura, who is familiar with the group, says that there are people that have their own agenda in this group, and Plymouth should be careful about how this event is perceived. The consensus is that the Council is comfortable with hosting, but not sponsoring, and Shawnthea will respond to Mark Joseph. Sharon Mendelsohn requested the right to view press releases before they are made public to ensure their press denotes Plymouth's host status and not sponsorship.

Next Meeting

- The next Council meeting will be held November 18th and December 16th. There is no meeting during October.

For the Good of the Order

- Christine reports that more progressive dinners for adults are being planned.

Concluding Prayer

Given by Shawnthea

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Kimmel
Clerk of Council