

## **Plymouth Church of Shaker Heights**

### **Church Council Meeting**

#### **Minutes of the November 18, 2009 meeting**

#### **Present:**

Robb Forward, Carol Skoglund, Shawnthea Monroe, Michael Kimmel, Adam Hange, Neil Mueller, Jim Bright, Roberta Gilles, Brian Smith, Nikki Niehoff, Gloria Sturghill, Bob Perkins, Betsy Stueber, Pam Markt, Debbie White, Jim Riggs, Lois Annich, Chirs Karr, Pam Beck, Rachel Perry, Heidi Makela

**Opening Prayer** – Instead of opening prayer, Rev. Dr. Shawnthea Monroe opens the meeting with an excerpt from Prayers for a Privileged People by Walter Brueggemann.

#### **Administrative & Financial Matters**

- **Review and approve the September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009 meeting minutes.** Heidi Makela moves, and Chris Karr seconds. The motion to approve the meeting minutes is carried unanimously.
- **Report on current financials** – Christine Bretz (deferred on agenda/Treas. arriving later in the meeting.) Rachel gave a combined report. October pledges were slightly lower, year to date, but as of this Sunday we are catching back up. Interest income is low, but loose offerings are up. Rachel reports no cause for concern. Expenses are slightly above this time last year, in large part because of the full staff that was not on board last year.
- **Budget presentation – Rachel Perry**
  - Bill Green begins by giving update on the annual campaign. Bill reports that as of today we are at about \$616,000 with \$620,000 projected out of a planned \$600,000. About 30 families have yet to be reached, but they are still working on making contact. Success is being attributed to personal contact that was made, including the congregational dinner. He feels that a lot of credit goes to Plymouth's tremendous spirit along with the hard work of Dick Pogue and Paul Qua for their leadership and hard work.
  - Bill turned it over to Rachel who gave a corrected projection of \$624,000 now. Rachel handed out an annual budget summary to go over. The summary shows that nearly \$33,000 in budget surplus is apparent with a deficit of about \$31,000 which means we are looking at what she feels can roughly be considered a balanced budget. Final numbers will be estimated in December when all pledges are close to being accounted for. Departmental spending is projected to be 9% below budget. Rachel's projections matched departmental projections. Her \$624,000 projection means an up to date actual of about \$608,000 with 97.5% fulfilled. Building revenue for 2010 projects will be down due to changes in the entities using the building such as Board of Elections and Museum. The Capital Campaign dept is to be retired in April.
    - Heidi asked about the stated assumption of no staff increases in the 2010 budget. Rachel confirms that no staff increase decisions have been made, but a decision will be made in December once the Personnel Committee has had a chance to discuss the issue(s), and after most of the years expenses have been accounted for. The Personnel Committee will present recommendation in December.
      - At this point, Chris Karr asks everyone to hold onto that discussion until later in the Council Meeting when other budget requests are made.
    - Heidi also asked about the apparently large cuts in budgets for 2010. Some budgets appear to have been cut by almost half. Rachel clarified that this was a decision made among the departments based upon 3 years of actual spending history, and that most departments have historically come in under budget, so this will simply help present a more accurate fiscal forecast.

- Betsy Stueber pointed out that this is not an actual balanced budget. Her point is that the presented budget was actually a deficit budget since we are, in effect, carrying an overage into next year to help balance next years budget. Chris noted that there was a precedent for financing a budget deficit. There was several minutes of discussion about this point, and all agreed that the presented budget is fine, with the understanding that it is a deficit budget, but that that fiscal 2011 and 2012 may of special concern as the financial markets and the jobs market have not yet settled down.
- **Department & Standing Committee Updates**
  - Chris Karr for Partnership & Service requests that P&S get on a future agenda for the special reports in order to clarify their giving philosophy.
  - Debbie White reports that Caring has not met in a while, but the anniversary celebration was a big success. No other news.
  - Pam Beck reported that Worship created posters highlighting what's happening at ground level with Middle East peace. She requests that everyone take a poster to hang up in public places such as libraries and grocery stores.
  - Pam Markt reports that Buildings and Grounds not met in a while.
  - Worship Committee Member at Large Betsy Stueber reminds us of upcoming holiday events.
  - Bill Green, reporting for Stewardship, mentions planned giving as an item of interest and requests an agenda item addressing the name of the Stewardship committee, from a constitutional perspective.
  - Roberta Gilles reporting for Evangelism and Growth notes that we are on target for December 13th for the DVD release, and asks everyone to remember that date, and to plan to attend.
  - Jim Bright for Foundation reports that Foundation met on Monday morning. He reports that the value of some funds have rebounded since February to about \$4.2 mill. They have made some adjustments to help protect the fund, and foster continued growth. In addition, they are looking to try to restore the Foundation to levels previous maintained. In that regard, Foundation has looked into have the funds professionally managed. He notes that most management firms have performed at about the same level that Plymouth has been performing on its own. With that in mind, and the amount typically charged for such services, they are planning to continue as they are, but will continue to look at professional management as an option on a regular basis.
  - Neil reports that Children and Youth has had more children showing up at Sunday school and youth group activities. The minutes from their last meeting have yet to be distributed because the committee just met today. They are planning workshops around advent and wreath activities. Neil will make a pitch for volunteerism on Sunday to help with preparation. He reports that the Christmas Pageant is moving right along.
  - Bob Perkins reports for Stewardship. He mentions that he missed the Stewardship meeting due to the birth of his grandchild. He discusses the idea of planned giving, and gives a short history of the Foundation fund that was created by Plymouth in 1959. By the 1970s, the fund had grown to about \$300,000, and was historically used as a form of rainy day or special needs funds. The Fund grew to about \$3.5 mill in the mid-90s. In the mid-90s it was decided that the fund would begin to contribute 5% to the annual budget instead of being used as a special fund. Historically, the fund grew at a rate of about 10%, so a 5% payout would still allow for foundation growth. As of March of 2000, the Fund stood at about \$6.1 million. We are currently down 22% over that time due to changes in market growth. Now that we are in a deficit budget, the question is what to do now because Foundation contributions from market activity have been steadily declining. There is a serious need for replenishing the fund. Foundation would like to send out communications to members on the status of the Foundation Fund, and the desire to initiate some planned giving initiatives such as Legacy Societies. They would like to begin in early 2010, and estimate a cost of about \$5,000 to fund this the planned giving effort. We must reverse this process of draining the foundation.
    - Shawnthea feels that we need to allow them to proceed. Her research shows that Stewardship at many churches slackens, and endowments suffer over time. Some schools

of thought are that the endowments should go away altogether. Shawnthea feels that is not appropriate here, but we do need to do more with planned giving. She feels there is an untapped source of people that have the ability to give upon their death, but they do not know how it happens.

- Chris Karr suggests that procedurally we should not move forward until all departments have weighed in.
- Evangelism and Growth is looking for additions to their budget. Roberta reports that some line items have no precedent, but are still needed. Things like a written brochure are needed. The department is fully staffed, and they are ready to move forward. They estimate a cost of \$750 for producing that brochure. They are also looking for \$250 for website enhancements. Specifically, they would like for the capability of hosting video sermons. Although they understand that \$250 would not cover all items related to video sermon capture, they feel that this is something we need to address. They are requesting \$500 for DVD reproduction. \$1,290 is being requested to help support the CD distribution of sermons to shut-ins. The cost is almost entirely postage. "Make Plymouth Your Rock" is E&G's suggestion for a tag line for promotional items. They are looking for \$200 for that initiative. Bottom line is that they are requesting an additional \$3,865.00 to their budget.
  - Christine asks if we should consider delivering CDs along with the flowers that we deliver. Chris Karr notes that flower delivery is problematic due to a number of factors, but that it is a good thought.
  - Rachel feels that there may need to be further discussion about the budget.
- Jim Riggs requests to add \$750 to the instrumental account that is used to pay musicians that perform on Sunday mornings and other special guest instrumentals.
  - Carol asks if special funds could be used for things like that such as Arts Plymouth.
- Robb asked about the photo album project. Shawnthea reports that the plan is to start it again. The issue was that we did not have enough volunteer support for the project at the time that it was moved forward, so it was postponed.
- Carol wanted clarification about whether the approximately \$10,000 additional requests were already built into Rachel's budget. Rachel said that it was not.
  - She also notes that every 1% increase in salary means about \$4,500 additions to the budget.
- Shawnthea wanted clarification from Rachel about how her planning was done. Rachel notes, in response, that she has made very conservative estimations, and feels that the numbers are good.
- Lots of discussion about the budget ensued with the following points being made:
  - Carol asks for some prioritization discussion from Council to help Finance committee make decisions about these increases.
  - Chris Karr notes that everything that is added will increase the deficit.
  - Jim Bright says that he wants to see a balanced budget, and is uncomfortable with a \$30,000 deficit. He feels we should try to get that down to less than \$15,000. He notes that there is no such thing as a cost of living increase for this year. Any staff increase is a raise, and he feels that it may be ill advised. He feels that 2011 could be a very scary budget, and that the successful campaign may not carry over to next year's campaign.
  - Roberta notes that E&G's requests constitute somewhat of a wishlist, and some of their items could be curtailed.
  - Shawnthea feels that we may have an obligation to the ministry that was funded by the congregation, and that she feels that an \$85,000 rainy day fund (the potential balance with the current budget configuration that rolls surpluses into the rainy day fund) is not the answer with cutbacks everywhere else.
  - Bill Green wanted to go on record that he feels that we will see growth rather than decline given the results of the campaign.
  - Heidi agrees with Shawnthea's sentiment about the rainy day fund when traditionally the fund has been held at \$25,000.

- Jim Bright feels that we really should be closer than \$30,000, and that we need to be mindful of this kind of deficit budgeting with 2011/2012 looming. He feels that we may need to consider special fund raising such as planned giving, or something like that.
    - Bill Green feels that we should not use the endowment for income, and he would prefer to have a higher campaign fund goal.
      - Jim Bright agreed
    - Christine feels that it's important to increase the foundation fund, but that planned giving is not necessarily an immediate fix, but is necessary.
  - Pam Beck requests the \$525 that they had previously removed from the budget. She notes that Witnessing is doing more than they had previously with additional programs.
- **Old Business**
  - Declaration of Interest Form presentation, for council approval – Carol Skoglund gives a 30 second review stating that the auditors recommended a Conflict of Interest form as a non-profit organization. Council instead agreed to call it a Declaration of Interest form. Jeff Pollack made the first draft with Rachel and Carol. The Finance committee worked that draft into the distributed version. It is their desire to implement a policy requiring this form in January of 2010. The intent of the form is to provide guidelines for Council and Department members that deal with Plymouth funds. Any perceived conflicts will be resolved with Shawnthea and Robb in consult with the Finance committee. The form will be completed by Council members, and signed each year beginning with the January meeting. The form is to be signed by members of council, Department Chairs and Vice-Chairs. Anyone with a fiduciary responsibilities or voting abilities. Questions about the form will be addressable in January.
    - Jim Riggs requests that the family member section be amended to read partner, and not spouse in the final document since we are an open and affirming congregation.
    - Carol makes a motion to accept the Declaration of Interest form, as written, for use beginning in January 2010. The motion is seconded by Jim Bright, and unanimously approved.
- **New Business –**
  - Constitution review committee
    - Plymouth will be establishing a constitution review committee in 2010 to satisfy a constitutional requirement for review every 5 years.
    - Rachel already knows of some additions/changes to the constitution.
    - Robb encourages anyone that is interested to serve on the committee.
  - Council Transition process
    - Robb is requesting that Department Heads document as much as possible to give to their replacement in order to address the issue of new heads walking into the committees like a deer in the headlights.
- **Lead Staff Reports**
  - Rachel passed around a copy of the articles of the Properties article written about Plymouth
    - Exciting things are happening with Green Initiative. Much of what the Green Initiative has been doing relates to the E4S Group (Endeavors for Sustainability Faith-Based Sustainability Implementation Group) that Rachel and the Green Initiative have been attending. She notes that graduation from the program occurs on December 4<sup>th</sup>, and she encourages attendance.
    - Complaints about the lack of heat are answered by the fact that the boilers do not turn on unless the temperature drops below 55 degrees in order to conserve energy. She reminds everyone to dress in layers in the meantime.
    - Wireless is on the way to Plymouth. Ashton is performing the installation of a wireless network for Internet access that will be an open network to Plymouth people but not wide open to the public. This was part of the Krumbine Room renovation that was expanded to include most areas of the church.

- Lois reports that she did really cool things in the last two months such as the Prayer Retreat. 31 people attended the retreat to great success. The bereavement retreat is wrapping up this week, and has also been a great success. She is continuing to see lots of people as the multi-week program progresses..
- Jim reports that Arts Plymouth is doing a show in the Chapel until December 13th. Chapel is secured during the week, but opens on Sundays. Get a key in the office if you stop by during the week.
- Adam grew a beard. He previously had asked Shawnthea for permission.
  - He reports that he has completed his History in Polity course.
  - The Serving Shaker event went very well with 19 Plymouth volunteers serving 70 homes.
  - 15 youth went on the Underground Railroad trip.
  - The Krumbine room renovation is underway.
- Shawnthea has been to Israel and Montreal since the last meeting.
  - She served as host of a program about Call Me Malcom over the weekend. She reports that she has had lots of speaking engagements including a standup comedy appearance.
  - Plymouth fed 125 people at the congregational dinner. Shawnthea expressed thanks to all those that participated or attended.
  - The annual meeting was full of great news. The guiding principal that Shawnthea left with the congregation was, “to pray, to worship, and to take some risks”.
  - The lead staff retreat earlier in the year has led to the concept of a leadership (Council) retreat to help with vision statements and other important concepts for the church. March 6th is the proposed date from 9am-4pm. All chairs, vice-chairs and council members should plan to attend. She would like to present a formal proposal in December.
    - Accounting folks on Council report that they will likely not be able to attend for the full day due to tax season.
  - Plymouth welcomes 8 new members in January. Shawnthea hopes to get lots more people in the pews for that service.
  - Shawnthea finishes by saying that she would like to work on a group trip to Israel for church leadership and other in May of 2011. More details of this idea to come.
- **Next Meeting** – The next two Council meeting will be December 16<sup>th</sup> and January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010

### **Concluding Prayer**

Given by Shawnthea

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Kimmel

Clerk of Council