

Council Minutes: November 2023
Plymouth Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
Tuesday, November 28, 2023

1. Call to Order – Scott Morgan, Moderator
Scott called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm

Members Present:

Scott Morgan - Moderator
Sonia Jordan – Moderator Elect
Devon Kim – Immediate Past Moderator
Larissa Long – Clerk
Doni Mooberry Slough – Treasurer
David Ambler – At Large Member
Susan Osborn – At Large Member
Doug Eason – At Large Member
Valerie Miller-Coleman
Caroline Lawson Dean
Debbie Schmidt – Stewardship
Korey Kaul- Christian Education
Brandy Erzen – Mission & Service
Kathy Bowen – Music & Fine Arts
Susan McCarthy – History+

Members Not Present:

Rich Bireta – Deputy Treasurer
Sue Denning – Deacons
Linda Thompson – Fellowship
Kelley Stillings – Membership
Annas Boyer – Personnel+
Dick Orchard - Endowment

2. Invocation – Valerie Miller-Coleman
Valerie read a passage from “Glow”, a guide for personal devotional reflections during Advent.
Copies of the guide will be available for Plymouth members to pick up on Sunday, December 3.
3. Consent Agenda
 - 3.1 Approve Agenda
 - 3.2 Approve Minutes from October 24, 2023
 - 3.3 Receive Financial Report

Devon moved to approve the consent agenda; Doug seconded; motion unanimously approved.

4. Church Treasurer’s Report – Doni Mooberry, Treasurer
 - 4.1 Financial Update and Fun Fact
Through October 31 we are 83% of the way through the year, we’ve received income to

cover 85% of our annual expenses and spent 81% of our budgeted annual expenses. While this appears that we are heading for ending the year with a substantial surplus, caution is advised. There are a lot of expenses remaining to be spent including \$27,000 from the Stewardship ordinary maintenance and repair line. However, Doni said she expects to have a small surplus at the end of the year. Doug added that the \$27,000 will be spent before December 31.

Fun Fact – A bald eagle took residence at the Philadelphia Mint around 1830 and became an unofficial mascot named Peter. Unfortunately, in 1836 he was in an accident and died. The employees hired the services of a taxidermist and placed Peter in the lobby, where he remains today. His stuffed body became the model for the soaring eagle of coins.

5. Old Business

- 5.1 Goals and Strategy Update Facilities, next steps for possible capital campaign. Possible approval of contract with Generis contingent on the congregation approving moving forward with a capital campaign at a called Congregational Meeting. This will require more information on costs including the organ. – Valerie Miller-Coleman and Debbie Schmidt

Debbie said the contract was reviewed by Stewardship and acceptable except for the arbitration and mediation language. Generis sent revised language, which Stewardship has approved. The cost of the contract will be funded from reserves and paid back from campaign funds.

Scott said Council could approve the Generis contract based on Stewardship's recommendation, contingent upon congregational approval.

He then referenced the consultant's report which indicates we could conduct a campaign based on 2-3 times our annual budget, or \$2-3 million. However, we currently don't have concrete numbers to give the congregation. We have general estimates for work in the sanctuary, but no estimates for the organ which by itself could be anywhere from \$700,000 up. Kathy said Quinby Pipe Organ, Warrensburg, MO looked at the organ two weeks ago and a report is expected in the next week or so. Kim is talking to other organ representatives as well. Valerie said the architects would like to bring in some engineers and woodworking representatives to provide more detailed cost estimates by mid-January.

Susan Osborn said she recently visited with a member who wasn't aware of the organ cost and thought council was voting on the capital campaign this evening. Susan suggested we give serious thought to how the proposed campaign is communicated.

David had a conversation with a member on another matter and discovered they weren't even aware of the possibility of a capital campaign. Valerie agreed that a thoughtful and professional communication plan will be required.

Valerie feels a campaign starting around Easter and ending in late May offers the highest chance of success. To meet that timeframe, stakeholder meetings should be held 10-16

weeks before May 31. Six weeks of campaign preparation (campaign chairs, leads, etc.) will also be required with the intent of being prepared if a campaign is approved by the congregation. The latest the congregation could approve a campaign and meet that timeline would be the end of February or early March.

Scott said no action will be taken this evening. Debbie was asked to contact Generis and request that they work with us until we have better cost estimates.

- 5.2 Policy Update and Review – Scott Morgan. Reviewing updates in Policy Book approved by Council in May. Final consideration to be at December meeting.

Scott said Council has approved the Policy Book which will be effective when the bylaws and constitution become effective (annual meeting). Since Council's approval there have been changes that Council needs to review. Scott then referenced the following:

200. Membership

- Kelley found a typo which Scott will correct.

510.6.4 Section 2. Gift Funds

- Includes language from Stewardship policies with intent to define what a gift is, where it goes and how it's utilized.
- Endowment is under Council's finance committee, as endowed funds are managed by UCF.
- Expenditures of \$1,000 or more from board restricted funds require Council approval unless the expense is included in the current annual budget.

520.4.1 Contract approval

- Requires Council review and approval by majority of voting members attending a Council meeting with a quorum if \$5,000 or more.

520.5 Council Committees

- All are listed and all have membership numbers listed, except Governance.

Susan Osborn asked if all Council Committees' fundraising efforts require Council approval. Scott responded that Council approval is needed. Debbie said the Fundraising Committee will work with boards to lay out the year's fundraising activities and bring to Council for approval. Annual collections for UCC will be included in the annual plan.

520.5.2 D. Pledge Confidentiality

- Added to protect donor information pledged and given to Plymouth.

530.2.1 Adoption, Amendment and Repeal of Policies

- Policy changes require two readings and approval by a majority of voting members attending a Council meeting with a quorum, unless approved unanimously at first reading.

540.07 Safe Church Guidelines

- To be reviewed at the December meeting.

5.3 Update on Annual Appeal and our budget process – Debbie Schmidt, Chair of Stewardship and Doni Mooberry Slough, Treasurer

Doni said an overview of the 2023 financials and Annual Appeal update will be provided to the congregation on Dec. 3 between services. Stephan Carttar will also give a brief review of the five-year plan. She's happy to report that new members have committed approximately \$20,000. The treasurers want to add a new budget line of \$14,000 for new member pledges to the proposed 2024 budget but will continue to consider budget shrinkage for individuals leaving the church.

Doni noted that an analysis of pledging units indicates that a core group of individuals over 60 are currently providing 40% of annual income. And pledging units have declined from 338 in 2018 to 294 in 2023. This information is helpful when planning for the future. As of today, 250 pledge cards have been received and the online giving process has been well received.

A review of board budgets indicates some over-budgeting. Doni plans to meet with boards, explain the concern and ask that they either spend what they've requested or give it back.

6. New Business

6.1 Nomination update – Sonia Jordan

Sonia said that David Ambler, Sarah Whitten and the moderators have met twice to plan the nominating process and determine what we value and how to represent diversity. They are currently contacting members.

6.2 Proposed amendment to Personnel Policy regarding providing full-time employees who do not accept Plymouth-provided health insurance a monthly health stipend. - Devon Kim

Devon said the Personnel Committee is proposing a slight change to the policy for health coverage for full time employees. There are currently three full time employees – the pastors and Kim. The monthly health stipend of \$300 is taxable and would be retroactive to June 1, 2023.

Doug asked why the change was needed. Devon said it lets individuals utilize the marketplace for coverage. It allows Plymouth to offer coverage but provides flexibility.

Scott said Personnel will continue to review the policy as the health coverage market changes.

Doug moved to approve amending Personnel Policy Section VII, Leave, Paragraph C to provide a monthly health stipend of \$300 to any full-time employee who does not accept Plymouth-provided health insurance, with a friendly amendment by Kathy that the effective date is June 1, 2023. David seconded the motion. Motion unanimously approved.

- 6.3. Information from History Committee regarding possible placement of informational sign.
- Susan McCarthy

Susan asked how many presidents have visited Lawrence while in office? Susan Osborn had the correct response – six.

President Obama visited Head Start at Plymouth in 2015 (the only sitting president to be in the church). The History Committee would like to place a sign or plaque outside a Head Start room to commemorate his visit. She currently has no estimate of the cost and will need to meet with Head Start staff, but Council members agreed she should move forward.

- 6.4 Update on Senior Pastor Review – Devon Kim
The personnel committee ran a survey from September 28 to October 15 and invited 32 individuals to provide feedback. Twenty-four responded (75%). The individuals were selected from a variety of Plymouth affiliations to ensure a cross-section of experiences and a diversity of responses. Some members fit more than one category; a member's primary affiliation was counted.

- 3 Council members (board chairs and other ex-officio)
- 0 Deacons
- 6 Staff
- 1 Adult Ed (Plymouth Academy, Bible Study, Covenant Groups)
- 2 Children's Programming
- 1 New Member (since 2022)
- 2 First Service
- 1 Second Service (Gathering of Grace listed as primary service)
- 0 Finance volunteer
- 3 Music Fine Arts Ministry volunteers
- 3 Justice Matters Ministry volunteers
- 3 other volunteers

Devon said the responses were positive and included constructive suggestions. The responses were shared with Valerie in a meeting with Personnel representatives and the moderators.

7. Moderator's Report – Scott Morgan
Scott said the policy review was his report.
8. Associate Pastor's Report – Caroline Lawson Dean
- Lots happening in December!
 - Christmas event planning for youth and families
 - Caroling with youth on December 10 (let her know if someone would appreciate a stop by the carolers)
9. Pastor's Report – Valerie Miller-Coleman
- Attendance (Online and in person)

YTD Average 467
November - 386

- Attendance trends – rebalancing towards in person, but some concern regarding a drop in on-line, as that’s often the “front door” to members coming to Plymouth.
- There will be a strong media push through Advent using social media vehicles and direct mail to high density postal codes in Lawrence and some surrounding communities.

10. Open Forum

11. Adjournment and Lord’s Prayer

Devon moved to adjourn the meeting; Brandy seconded; motion unanimously approved.

12. Important Future Dates:

Next Council Meeting: December 19, 2023 at 6:30 pm – **This meeting will be in person.**

Tentative 2024 Council Dates (fourth Tuesday except third in December): January 23;
February 27