

169<sup>th</sup> Annual Congregational Meeting  
Plymouth Congregational Church, United Church of Christ  
Annual Meeting Minutes  
Sunday, February 4, 2024

**1. Call to Order – Scott Morgan, Moderator**

Scott called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. Mark Simpson, parliamentarian, said a quorum was present.

Scott then asked that the meeting agenda be modified to include a new #9, Capital Campaign Update by Devon Kim, Chair of the Campaign Steering Committee.

*Kathy Bowen moved to approve the agenda as modified; Steve Bradt seconded.*

Jonathan Becker, on Point of Order, said that Item #4 on the Agenda and the September 10, 2023 Called Meeting Minutes were not included in the pdf version of the Annual Report. Scott then asked that the motion be amended to reflect that approval was for the Agenda in the printed report.

*Kathy and Steve accepted the friendly amendment; motion carried unanimously.*

**2. Invocation – Rev. Dr. Valerie Miller-Coleman, Senior Pastor**

Rev. Dr. Valerie Miller-Coleman led the congregation in prayer.

**3. Approval of Minutes of the February 5, 2023 Annual Meeting - Scott Morgan**

*Doug Eason moved to approve the minutes as presented; David Ambler seconded; motion carried unanimously.*

David Bergeron asked why the minutes of the January 11, 2024 Called Congregational Meeting to approve a capital campaign were not included in the agenda for approval, as the meeting took place within a year of the 2023 annual meeting. Scott said an argument could be made to include them, but based on his research, they have been included in the calendar year in which they occurred and so he decided they should be reflected in the 2024 report.

**4. Approval of Minutes from the September 10, 2023 Called Meeting - Scott Morgan**

*Erika Dvorske moved to approve the minutes as presented; Weston Milhon seconded; motion carried unanimously.*

**5. Recognition of Boards, Officers, and Committees - Scott Morgan**

Scott thanked everyone for their work on Council, committees, task forces and mission activities, but wanted to recognize two individuals in particular. Although both are leaving their current roles they are taking on new leadership responsibilities.

Devon Kim is leaving the moderator team but is Chairing the Capital Campaign Steering Committee. He said she is hard working, very smart, has a lovely sense of humor and he has really appreciated working with her.

Doni Mooberry Slough is ending her tenure as treasurer after serving in that capacity for six years, guiding us financially through pastor transitions and the Pandemic. As chair of the Fundraising Committee, Scott said she'll bring order, cohesion and an updated approach to fundraising activities. He thanked her for all she's done on behalf of Plymouth.

**6. Presentation and Approval of the 2023 Financial Report - Doni Mooberry Slough, Treasurer**

Doni said finances were strong in 2023 which led to a modest year-end surplus of \$24,926.36. Some painting and refurbishment were completed and a capital campaign feasibility study was paid for out of cash flow. Pledges totaling \$860,927.97 and one-time gifts of \$46,943.70 were received. She feels confident the 5-year financial plan that has been developed will build on Plymouth's financial strength. Plymouth is strong, active and fiscally stable.

She thanked all for their gifts of time, talent, and treasure and expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to work and serve with them. She then expressed her gratitude for Malissa Predario, Staff Accountant, and Rich Bireta and Stephen Carttar for their integral insight into the financial process of Plymouth.

*Doni moved to accept the 2023 financial statements as presented; Susan Osborn seconded; motion carried unanimously.*

**7. Approval of the 2024 Budget - Debbie Schmidt, Stewardship Board Chair**

Mark Reedy, Stewardship Board member, stepped in for Debbie who was unable to participate in the meeting. On her behalf, he thanked everyone who attended last month's budget meeting, as the Stewardship Board found their questions and comments very helpful. He expressed appreciation for the time and efforts of Doni, Rich, Stephen and Melissa in putting together a budget that meets objectives and is realistic. He also thanked the boards for providing budgets that allow the work of the church to continue in 2024.

He said the only changes made following the January 7 budget meeting were a \$4,000 reduction in the Interest Earned line item and a \$4,000 increase in the Transfer CY Operating Reserve line item, to facilitate the funding of the installation of solar panels in 2024. Council has approved the proposed budget. He then thanked the congregation for their generous pledges, which made all of this possible.

*Mark moved to approve the 2024 budget as presented; Janice Toebben seconded.*

David Trevino said he believed there was a typo on page 57, referencing the total expense shown for 2021 Actual Mission and Service. He thought the total should be \$41,913 instead of \$61,913. Doni said she would discuss the item with Rich and Stephen. Scott noted that the 2021 column was historical information and clarified that the congregation was approving the 2024 budget. He then thanked David for bringing his observation to the congregation's attention.

*There being no further discussion, the motion carried unanimously.*

**8. Nominating Committee Report and Election of Officers - Sonia Jordan, Nominating Committee**

Sonia said she grew up in another church that provided a wonderful faith foundation but is in awe of the way the congregation steps up to the plate and takes on leadership roles. She thanked David Ambler and Sarah Whitten for their participation on the nominating committee. The committee, which also included Scott, Devon and staff support from Valerie and Heather

Coates, met often to determine the best approach to broaden the slate to include a diverse set of perspectives, life cycles and church engagement. She then expressed her appreciation for all who agreed to be on the nominating slate.

*Sonia moved that the Nominating Committee Slate be accepted as outlined on page 41 of the printed agenda; James Jordan seconded the motion.*

Scott explained that the congregation is operating under the new Constitution and Bylaws approved last September, which became effective upon the Call to Order of this meeting. Council committees are approved by Council; boards and officers are approved by the congregation. This year all board members, including those with remaining terms, are being elected because the authority under which existing members were elected has been disbanded.

Valerie reminded Scott that policy requires biographies of nominees, so this year bios of Officers and Council members have been provided.

*There being no further discussion the motion was unanimously approved.*

Scott then thanked Sonia for her work on the nominating committee.

#### **9. Update on Capital Campaign, Devon Kim**

Devon said the Sanctuary and Organ Capital Campaign Steering Committee, created at the January Council meeting, held its first meeting last week. The committee structure includes Plymouth staff; Doug Eason, Project Manager; Fred Kandeler, Spiritual Awareness Director; Janice Toebben, Events Director and Devon. She asked everyone to mark Saturday, February 17 from 8:30 – 11:00 a.m. on their calendars for a Stakeholder Event Breakfast. Members will receive invitations via mail and email. Janice is building a hospitality team for the event and seeking help, so please contact her if interested in participating.

Although the official, public campaign kicks off in April and ends on May 19, this event is when more information will be provided about the campaign. She knows there are questions regarding the process, design and scope of the project and is excited to experience this transformative time at Plymouth.

#### **10. Open Forum - All**

Steve Bradt said he left the January capital campaign meeting with a little hesitation. He supports the idea of what we're trying to accomplish with a capital campaign - preserving the sanctuary and organ repair - but is uncomfortable with leadership's unwillingness to commit to a further step in terms of congregational approval. He'd like the congregation to have the opportunity to determine in some formal sense what can be achieved based on funds raised.

He also asked that when appropriate, consideration be given to abandoning the practice of the "group cattle call" communion at the front of the church. He understands why it was changed during the Pandemic but hopes we can return to the Congregational tradition of serving each other in the pews by passing the elements and speaking the words of the institution.

Scott responded that Council agrees with Steve regarding congregational involvement in the capital campaign process and discussed at length how it can be accomplished during its January

meeting. They realize a successful campaign can't be achieved without congregation buy-in, whether it's about sight lines or any other number of issues that haven't yet been resolved.

Regarding Steve's comments about communion, Scott said that would be up to the Board of Deacons.

#### **11. Presentation of the 2024 Moderator - Scott Morgan**

Scott thanked the congregation for the incredible amount of work they did during the past year, including participating in meetings on Constitution and Bylaws changes and a capital campaign. He said that although strong thoughts and opinions were voiced, which wasn't surprising for a Congregational Church, he knows they came from a shared love and affection for Plymouth and appreciated the fact that they were able to do so without rancor. It is what makes Congregationalism a sometimes difficult, but strong, vibrant, and renewing organization.

He then welcomed Sonia and thanked her for stepping into the role of Moderator. He noted her work during the Pandemic and exceptional organizational skills. He said she's profoundly faithful, continues to work in public health and that we are lucky she's going to be our new moderator.

#### **12. Response, Sonia Jordan, 2024 Moderator**

Sonia thanked the moderator team, adding that she found Devon and Scott incredibly welcoming and that they served as mentors as the year progressed. She thanked Doni for the time and effort she put into maintaining the church's financial vitality and said she always found her ready to answer questions and make something that's very complicated understandable. She added that it's very special to involve the whole church in the budget process.

She expressed her appreciation to Rich Bireta for agreeing to step into the role of Moderator-Elect.

Sonia said family and her relationship with God are most important to her. She briefly described her family, which includes her husband James and their children, Leo, George and Kate. She also thanked those sitting in pews behind them each Sunday for putting up with the chaos.

Although she doesn't know everyone, she encouraged members to say hello at coffee hour or send her an email. She has found transitions since the Pandemic challenging, but she looks forward to working with everyone and promises grace.

#### **13. Adjournment - Sonia Jordan**

*David Bergeron moved to adjourn the meeting; Geraldo Sousa seconded; motion unanimously approved.*

#### **14. Benediction - Rev. Dr. Valerie Miller-Coleman**

Valerie expressed her deep gratitude to Scott for his work the past year and said a gift in his honor will be given to the Lawrence Public Library. She then gave the Benediction.

Submitted by Larissa Long  
Plymouth Church Clerk

