

Council Minutes: March 2023
Plymouth Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
Tuesday, March 28, 6:30 pm

1. Call to Order – Scott Morgan, Moderator
Scott called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm

Members present:

Scott Morgan – Moderator
Sonia Jordan – Moderator Elect
Devon Kim – Past Moderator
Larissa Long – Clerk
Doni Mooberry Slough – Treasurer
Rich Bireta – Deputy Treasurer
David Ambler – At Large Member
Susan Osborn – At Large Member
Becky Eason – At Large Member
Valerie Miller-Coleman
Caroline Lawson Dean
Debbie Schmidt – Stewardship
Korey Kaul – Christian Education
Tess Tallman – Deacons
Linda Thompson - Fellowship
Kelley Stillings – Membership
Brandy Erzen– Mission & Service
Kathy Bowen – Music & Fine Arts
Dick Orchard – Endowment
Susan McCarthy - History

Members not present:

Annas Boyer – Personnel

2. Invocation – Valerie Miller-Coleman - She said UCC ministers were asked to send notes of encouragement to trans youth on Friday, March 31 which is National Transgender Day. As she reflected on what to write, she thought of what she might say to her daughter and then wrote a letter expressing feelings and love for who she is, a precious child of God. Valerie then read her letter to Council.

Beloved Child,

You are more precious than gold. You are loved by God just the way you are, no matter what. Nothing can ever change that. In fact, there's nothing you say or do, no doubt or fear or shame so strong that it can keep you from God's love. It's just here for you, free and bigger than the sky.

If people try to plant seeds of doubt or fear or shame in you, they are wrong. They are not telling you the truth. The truth and light of God's love are more powerful than the shadows of ignorance and hate. I hope there are people close to you who show that light in your life. I hope you hear the truth every day: you are loved, loved, so very loved. If I were there with you right now, I would offer you a huge hug and tell you all of this face to face. Maybe you can imagine me doing that right now. Here's a giant hug just for you.

Precious one, you are worthy of every good thing. May you know your own beauty, shining like the sun.

Love,
Pastor Valerie
Plymouth Church
Lawrence, Kansas

3. Consent Agenda

Scott gave a brief explanation of the consent agenda, which included the following items:

- 3.1. Approve Agenda
- 3.2. Approve Minutes from February 28, 2023
- 3.3. Receive Financial Reports
- 3.4. Corporate Resolution: Richard Bireta, Deputy Treasurer of Plymouth Church, is hereby authorized to sell shares of Exxon Mobil stock on behalf of Plymouth Church.

Devon Kim moved to approve the consent agenda; Susan Osborn seconded; motion carried unanimously.

4. Treasurer's Report – Doni Mooberry Slough, Treasurer

- 4.1. Financial Update – Through February 28, we are 17% of the way through the year; have received 16% of projected annual income and have spent 14% of projected annual expenses.
- 4.2. Basic Board Financial Literacy – Doni distributed a "Council Guide to Monthly Financial Statement Review" (attached) and the February 28, 2023 Statements of Financial Position and Revenue & Expenses. She described the budget making process; explained what members should look for when receiving financial reports and encouraged members to ask questions.

Doni explained that Melissa Praderio, staff accountant, prepares the monthly financial reports, which are reviewed by the financial team, then sent to Stewardship.

5. Old Business

- 5.1. Add \$2,040 plus \$156 FICA for the Handbell Director to the 2023 Mission Spending Plan (MSP). Current Bylaws allow Council to adjust the adopted MSP by amounts of 3% or less. The \$2,196 adjustment represents roughly 0.2% of the MSP. Council approved this at its February meeting, but the Bylaws require three weeks' notice be given to the Congregation. This motion requires "a two-thirds vote of the Council membership." This would be 12 of the 17 voting members.

Kathy Bowen moved to approve the adjustment as presented; Debbie Schmidt seconded; motion carried unanimously.

- 5.2. Issue Position Statement on Trans Youth – Devon Kim

Devon said the guidelines and process developed to formalize position statements were explicitly followed and then moved to adopt the statement which she read:

"Plymouth Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, affirms that members of the transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming community share with all others the worth associated with being unique individuals created by God. Considering the struggles they currently face, we especially welcome and affirm the transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming youth community. This congregation joyfully and unequivocally welcomes the transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming community to share in the life, leadership and blessings of participation in our community of faith. We also commit ourselves to the work of creating not only a world in which transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming people are safe but also a world in which they thrive."

Brandy Ernzen seconded the motion; motion carried unanimously.

Council members expressed appreciation for the work of all participating in the development and approval of the statement, which the church can now use to express its support for the trans youth community.

- 5.3. Goals for coming year: Overview of strategy for facilities goal - Valerie Miller-Coleman
Valerie presented a slide presentation of 2023 Growth strategies (attached), which are:

- A. Evaluate Facilities Manager role and fill it well
 - Review job description, interview, hire and train by May

- B. Implement Phase One of Facilities Master Plan (FMP)
 - Now through Summer
 - Define scope, obtain estimates
 - Paint refresh/carpet replacement or installation throughout building to FMP design standards
 - Mayflower Room
 - Audio visual technology update
 - Sanctuary
 - Portable hearing aid support
 - Solar panel feasibility assessment
 - Funding - Existing budget for all but solar panels, which would require additional funding
- C. Plan for Phase Two of FMP
 - Ongoing – Continue to review needs and priorities
 - Summer/Early Fall – Capital Campaign Feasibility Study

6. New Business

- 6.1 Deacons will present for approval a candidate for Discernment. Phillip Kroh is seeking to partner with a Discernment Committee.

Tess Tallman explained the discernment process provides an opportunity for individuals seeking religious service to determine the path appropriate for them. The individual, working with a pastor, assembles a discernment committee and meets with them at least once a year. Plymouth currently is supporting three individuals in the discernment process – Liz Smith, Julia Gaughan and Jennifer Parson. Deacons have approved Phillip’s request.

Tess then moved to allow Phillip to form a discernment committee; Becky Eason seconded; motion carried unanimously.

- 6.2 Bylaws Review – Scott Morgan

6.2.1. Overview and general questions

Scott reminded members that the goal is to have Bylaws approved no later than October. He said the Bylaws session between services on Sunday brought up several questions regarding the term “staff led”. The intent is for staff/standing ministries (now called boards) to be collaborative.

6.2.2. Article-by-article consideration

Constitution

Scott said most changes to the Constitution were stylistic. The governing authority is the congregation. The governing body is the Council. The word “Trustee” is used to designate the Council’s fiduciary responsibilities.

Article III. Polity. Following discussion, members agreed to change the third sentence, second paragraph to read “Council shall insure implementation of the decisions of the membership.”

ByLaws

Article I. Mission – This article in the current Bylaws repeats what is in the Constitution (name of the organization). The Task Force felt that was redundant, but that Plymouth’s mission should be included and added it here. No changes suggested.

Article II. Membership – Scott explained the changes were made to provide clarity of membership classifications, which are (1) current and (2) inactive or former members. Members must be baptized and accept the Covenant. If they accept the covenant, but are not baptized, they cannot hold office or sit on boards, but can be friends of Plymouth. No changes suggested.

Article III. Worship – Following discussion regarding the word “impractical”, members agreed it appropriately reflected the intent. No changes suggested.

Article IV. Congregational Meetings – The timeframe for the annual meeting is extended from 10 to the first 15 days of February. The term “appropriate organizations” in Section 2. (2) (d) includes Standing Ministries (currently known as boards). Council has the option to determine what parliamentary procedures to follow. The word “budget” replaces the Mission Spending Plan (MSP).
No changes suggested.

Council will discuss the remaining draft Bylaws Articles during the April meeting.

7. Moderator’s Report – Scott said the bylaws review was his report.
8. Associate Pastor’s Report – Caroline Lawson Dean (provided by Valerie)
An outstanding confirmation class retreat was held.
Reminder to attend the Chili Cookoff on Friday, March 31
9. Pastor’s Report – Valerie Miller-Coleman
Holy week – all services are in person!
Wednesday – Coffee & Silence (new – please sign in so attendance can be tracked)
Maundy Thursday
Good Friday
Phil Friedeman service on Friday, March 31 – you are encouraged to attend.
Average March attendance is 454.
Heather has new member class in April.
New front entrance banner “Everyone is Welcome Here”
10. Open Forum
Susan Osborn – wanted to know how to respond to questions about Bylaws changes.
 - Ask them to write their questions and send to Bylaws task force members.
 - Direct them to the website and ask them to read the explainers and draft documents.
 - Remind them that the congregation has the final say.Kelley asked if names of the Bylaws Task Force members could be placed on the website.
11. Adjournment and Lord’s Prayer
Devon moved to adjourn the meeting; Brandy seconded. Motion carried unanimously.
The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Important Future Dates

- Next Council Meeting: April 25, 2023 @ 6:30 pm – This meeting will be in person.
- Tentative 2023 Council Dates (4th Tuesday except 3rd in November and December)
 - May 23, June 27, (no July), August 22, September 26, October 24, November 21, December 19

Respectfully submitted by
Larissa Long, Clerk

