

Council Minutes, August 2024  
Plymouth Congregational Church – United Church of Christ  
Tuesday, August 27, 2024

1. Call to Order – Sonia Jordan, Moderator  
Sonia called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

*Voting Members Present:*

Sonia Jordan – Moderator  
Scott Morgan – Immediate-Past Moderator  
Stephen Carttar – Treasurer  
David Treviño – At Large Member  
Norine Spears – At Large Member  
Christi Houston – At Large Member  
Debbie Schmidt – At Large Member  
Jeff Eriksen – At Large Member

*Voting Members Not Present:*

Rich Bireta – Moderator Elect  
Doug Eason – At Large Member

*Ex Officio Members Present:*

Caroline Lawson Dean – Associate Pastor

*Ex Officio Members Not Present*

Valerie Miller-Coleman – Senior Pastor  
Mark Reedy – Deputy Treasurer

*Others Present:*

Larissa Long – Clerk  
Terry Schmidt – Director of Sanctuary and Organ Project Management Committee  
Kathy Bowen – Music & Fine Arts

2. Invocation – Caroline Lawson Dean  
Caroline led the attendees in prayer.
3. Consent Agenda
  - 3.1 Approve Agenda.
  - 3.2 Approve Minutes from June 25, 2024 Council Meeting.
  - 3.3 Receive Financial Reports.
  - 3.4 Authorize Stephan Carttar, Treasurer of Plymouth Church, to sell shares of Exxon Mobil stock on behalf of Plymouth Church.

- 3.5 Authorize parties for Charles Schwab (adding Valerie Miller-Coleman and Stephen Carttar, leaving Rich Bireta; removing Janet Riley, Barbara Holland and Becky Foster).
- 3.6 Approve Continuation of Endowment Withdrawal Strategy (Calculation of 4% of average last 3 years of Endowment balances as of 9/30).

Norine moved to approve the consent agenda; Jeff seconded; motion carried unanimously.

#### 4. Church Treasurer's Report – Stephen Carttar, Treasurer

##### 4.1 Financial Update

The financial performance of Plymouth Church for the seven months ended July 31, 2024 was generally in line with expectations. The dashboard set of reports provide an overview of activity.

- The vitals as of July 31, 2024 follow:
  - 58.33% of the year has passed; 7 of 12 months.
  - 61.83% of revenue has been received (44.70% of pledged collections).
  - 56.11% of expenses have been paid.
  - In summary, the July financial performance was slightly favorable to expectations with Year-to-Date Net Revenue (Income) of \$50,324.
- Capital Campaign
  - All monies associated with the organ and sanctuary refurbishing were transferred to the Enter-In Fund. This included This Sacred Place Organ Fund and the Organ Fund totaling ~\$72k, the Hearing Loop Fund of ~\$8k and the Capital Campaign Fund held in Endowment of ~\$11k.
  - All related transactions were reconciled and balances transferred to Silver Lake Bank.
  - As of July 31, 2024, revenue including transfers totaled \$430,632 with expenses of \$63,560 for net revenue of \$367,073.

Jeff asked if the contract with Generis had ended. Stephen said yes and that the final \$5,000 payment will be made in August.

- Charles Schwab – The Church uses the account to receive and transact financial gifts of stock, bonds and similar items. The Finance Committee approved adding the Treasurer and Senior Pastor to accompany the former Deputy Treasurer (Rich Bireta) as authorized parties. A Council Certificate of Authority and Resolution is required.

Stephen added that such gifts are sold immediately, utilizing the Schwab account.

- IntraFI – The Church is expanding its cash management options with the establishment of IntraFI arrangements at both InTrust and Silver Lake banks. The arrangements allow the Church to work with these financial institutions in purchasing CDs and using money market accounts through the IntraFI network (third party FDIC institutions) to stay within the FDIC guidelines of \$250,000.

David asked if there is a list of participating banks with whom the Church can choose to invest. Stephen said there isn't, but all are FDIC insured. He added that we do tell them not to invest with banks we work with. Debbie asked if there are administrative fees. Stephen responded yes, with InTrust (minimal), but not with Silver Lake, which is very Church friendly as they allow CDs to be cashed out without penalty.

- The Finance Committee approved the 2025 Endowment distribution to be computed in a manner consistent with prior years; 4% on the three year average balance as of September 30, 2024.

## 5. Old Business

### 5.1 Project Management Committee Update – Terry Schmidt, Director of Sanctuary and Organ Project Management Committee

#### 5.1.1 Review of Draft Sanctuary & Organ Budget – Stephen Carttar, Treasurer

Stephen referenced the draft budget, (attached) noting that it is basically a shell to work from going forward. Draft revenue is \$3,391,137 and includes estimated interest of \$20,000 but does not include tax credits or grants.

Expenses to date are \$63,560. Estimated construction expenses of \$4,507,268 are based on early conversations with the architects and a placeholder of \$10,000 for removal of the old organ. The draft budget shows an estimated deficit of \$1,216,450.

Terry said they are not asking Council for budget approval this evening. The committee is still negotiating with the architects, but he feels they are close to finalizing a contract that can be brought to Council for consideration. He said there could be an additional \$20,000+ for consulting services regarding tax credits applicable to buildings with historical designations. The consultants would be a subcontractor to the architects.

Terry said he participated in a meeting today that included the organ committee, the Moderator, Past Moderator and the President and Tonal Director of Schoenstein & Sons, a pipe organ company based in California. He felt the meeting was quite positive. Kathy said the organ committee felt the same way and that the company will have a proposal for consideration the first week in September.

Jeff asked how many organ companies the committee has met with. Kathy said they've met with several and that Kim has traveled to several sites to observe and listen to various organs. She added that Kim seemed very happy with today's meeting.

Sonia said she thought the company seemed to want to provide an instrument that would fit the space and congregation's needs.

The attendees learned from the company representatives that organ installation may not occur until 2027. If installation doesn't happen until then, what about other construction work? Terry said there is a lot that can be done prior to installing the organ and the architects would work with Schoenstein.

Therefore, if Schoenstein is selected, getting on the company's building schedule is imperative. Plymouth could be next in line, but it's unknown. However, if the company has some assurance they will be selected, Plymouth can provide 2.5% of the total organ cost as a place keeper, which would put Plymouth on their production timeline. The 2.5% is in lieu of a signed contract and would accompany a letter of intent.

David asked how long this organ would last and is there a maintenance contract? Kathy said they will maintain it for 10 years and recommend that 1% of the total organ cost be set aside for maintenance and part replacements. Inspections should occur semi-annually, and the company will recommend someone in this area to do the work. They want organs that are serviceable, last, and don't need to be replaced every 50 years.

Terry added that information regarding the project timeline will be conveyed to the congregation, as the intent is to be open and transparent.

#### 5.1.2 Generation of FAQ for Website – Council

Terry said the website FAQ will be online soon. There have been various questions regarding the timing of campaign pledges, perhaps because construction hasn't begun. Scott reminded everyone that campaign pledges can be paid anytime over the next three years, but early payment will be helpful. Communications with the congregation regarding campaign pledges and timing should be initiated soon.

Terry said the congregation also needs to know that if approved, tax credits will not be available until the project is complete, as they are credits given for payments actually made.

## 5.2 Review of Dept of Homeland Security Feedback – Sonia Jordan, Moderator

Sonia thanked David for organizing the session, which was very intense and provided a lot to think about. She said they walked through the entire facility and received recommendations for each area. Some recommendations would be quite expensive, some easy to accomplish. Annual grants of \$150,000 are available, which would be helpful, but how should we proceed?

David agreed the presentation was overwhelming, but thorough. For example, how do we communicate within the church if action is needed? How do we coordinate with first responders? He suggested a committee be formed to take on the work of filtering and prioritizing actions. Jeff said there are some items that could be accomplished now such as exit signs and replacing old smoke and carbon dioxide detectors. Following further discussion, Scott agreed to work with David on a policy regarding safety and security.

*Scott then moved to have David serve as Director of Security for purposes of drafting a motion for Council's consideration of steps forward, including a possible permanent safety & security structure. Jeff seconded.*

Debbie then asked if David was willing to accept this position. He said yes.  
*Motion carried unanimously.*

## 6. New Business

6.1 Policy Updates for Approval – Scott Morgan, Immediate Past Moderator  
Scott reminded Council that they make policy and approve changes. He then reviewed the proposed changes to the policies (attached).

- 6.1.1 Finance Committee Duties, Financial Institutions (Establish new banking relationships)
- 6.1.2 Governance Committee Membership (Establish committee structure)
- 6.1.3 Project Budget Approval (Review and approval of project with cost of \$5,000 or more, not included in current operating budget)
- 6.1.4 Council Committee Chairs (Clarifies there are committee chairs, named by Council)

Stephen asked why does Council determine committee chairs? Scott said this would only occur if a chair has not already been named in the Bylaws. If not named, this would ensure that Council has someone in

place to serve as the chair before the first meeting and ready to move forward. This also reflects what Council did in appointing committee members for this year.

Debbie moved to approve the amendments for the Finance Committee Duties, Financial Institutions; Governance Committee Membership; Project Budget Approval and Council Committee Chairs. David seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

7. Moderator's Report – Sonia Jordan  
Sonia had nothing further to report.

8. Associate Pastor's Report – Caroline Lawson Dean

Plymouth Language Program – Midland has managed the program, but will no longer do so, although it will continue to provide funding. Somos Lawrence is an organization which currently partners with Ballard Center and plans to provide a proposal for PLP, to include budget and programming. If acceptable, Somos Lawrence would take over next fall. Caroline is hopeful it will work out.

The Director of Faith Formation position has been posted on Plymouth's social media and Caroline asked that members share the post on their social media. The consultant met with Plymouth focus groups and feels the Church is aligned as a community and has a vision of where it wants to go. The consultant will get applicant references and do the initial screenings. She knows some applications have been received.

In the interim, Kara is providing administrative duties remotely, working as an hourly employee for 8 to 10 hours a week. The volunteers are adapting to increased participation in Sunday School sessions and all has gone well the first two Sundays! The level of volunteer engagement is healthy but we will need to continue that high level of engagement even after a director is hired.

Thirty students signed up for confirmation.

9. Pastor's Report – Valerie Miller-Coleman  
Due to illness, Valerie was unable to attend the meeting.

10. Board Chair Comments

11. Open Forum

Scott would like the Governance, Annual Appeal/Fundraising and Facilities Chairs to provide minutes, which would be included in Council packets.

Debbie asked if a plan was in place to provide additional funds for OCWM. Caroline said funds in reserve will cover OCWM and the virtual auction will not be held this year. A bake sale will take place in December.

Caroline said Service and Justice wants to work towards funding OCWM through the annual budget and reduce dependency on special fundraising activities.

Sonia said there may be interest in making sure obligations are met before the special Christmas offering.

#### 12. Adjournment and Lord's Prayer

Scott moved to adjourn; Norine seconded. Motion unanimously approved.

#### 13. Important Future Dates

Next Council Meeting: September 24, 2024 at 6:30 pm