

Council Minutes: October, 2023
Plymouth Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
Tuesday, October 24, 2023

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

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
Dave Barker – Deacons
Kelley Stillings – Membership
Beth Chambers – Mission & Service
Kathy Bowen – Music & Fine Arts
Dick Orchard – Endowment

Members not present:

Rich Bireta – Deputy Treasurer
Linda Thompson – Fellowship
Annas Boyer – Personnel
Susan McCarthy - History

2. Invocation – Valerie Miller-Coleman
Valerie read passages on living a generous life from “Giving to God” by Mark Allan Powell. In ancient Israel one may have seen worshipers placing offerings on the Tabernacle altar, which were then destroyed by fire. If offerings were destroyed today rather than put to good use many would be appalled. But it isn’t what happens after an offering is made. We give to God as an act of worship.
3. Consent Agenda
 - 3.1 Approve Agenda
 - 3.2 Approve Minutes from September 26, 2023
 - 3.3 Receive Financial Reports

Debbie moved to approve the consent agenda; Korey seconded; motion unanimously approved.

4. Church Treasurer’s Report – Doni Mooberry Slough, Treasurer
 - 4.1. Financial Update and Fun Fact

Through September we are 75% of the way through the year, have received income covering 78% of our budgeted expenses and spent 74% of our expense budget.

Doni said the November financial update will include an estimate of year-end balances, and will also be provided to the congregation in early December. In addition, a Certificate of Deposit which comes due before the next council meeting will be renewed.

Council members then participated in a trivia game about government and church, with prizes for all!

5. Old Business

5.1 Goals and Strategy Update Facilities, next steps for possible capital campaign – Valerie Miller-Coleman and Debbie Schmidt

Debbie provided highlights from the Listening Sessions (presentation attached)

- 140 participated in 4 sessions
- Top reasons for attraction to Plymouth
 - Welcoming to all (open and affirming)
 - Music & Worship services
 - Social Justice activities
- Plymouth ministries strength ranking
 - Worship Services
 - Music Ministry
 - Church Staff
- Ministries needing improvement ranking
 - Building and Facilities
 - Senior Adult Ministries
 - Fellowship and New Member Assimilation
- 82 households completed pre-capital campaign survey
 - Want prioritized list of projects with funding plan
 - Need clear congregational communication
 - 68% support vision and plan for capital campaign
 - 80% would consider giving through a 3-year commitment

Valerie added that comments were primarily positive, but more information is needed regarding scope and cost. She also said the consultant feels we're ready to consider a campaign.

Generis has proposed a consulting agreement for a capital campaign, which Stewardship will discuss and bring to Council in November. The suggested time frame is December 1, 2023 through June 1, 2024. The consulting fees are \$40,000 and do not include expenses such as travel, airfare, meals and lodging.

General questions/discussion followed:

David Ambler asked where Plymouth would be at the end of the contract. Valerie said the campaign would be completed. If all information is available by January or early February, the campaign would be finished before Easter and the outcome celebrated before Pentecost.

She added that the architects can provide a detailed cost analysis specific to an agreed-upon plan. The time crunch is the organ. Kim and the organ committee are working to pull that information together, as Reuter's is no longer an option.

Korey asked if the dates could be pushed back 3-4 months. Valerie said if that happened the campaign would run into next year's Annual Appeal which we want to avoid.

Susan feels we're asking a lot from the congregation, especially since a number of members expressed their lack of support for the bylaws revisions.

David said he isn't sure how the consultant arrived at the range of support, based on comments he heard during the listening session. He didn't see a congregational wealth assessment, either. Valerie explained a decision was made to not share those analytics.

David said you shouldn't conduct a campaign if you don't have a goal and significant commitments in place before launching. He added that past campaigns included individual interviews which provided some idea of what members might commit to a campaign.

Doni understands the quiet and public campaign phases David referenced and began an analysis in 2019. At that time, she felt there were potentially 2-3 major gifts that might cover a significant portion of the organ repair/purchase. However, all work on the analysis stopped when the pandemic arrived.

Scott said there won't be a decision tonight, but Council will have to determine next steps. There are reasons for both moving ahead or deferring. And if we commit to the proposal, we are committed to the \$40,000 fee. Additionally, who approves a capital campaign – Council or the congregation?

Devon was surprised to find that listening session attendees asked questions about the master plan as there was a robust amount of work done on it. She looks forward to sharing that information with the congregation.

Valerie added that having asked the congregation for feedback and observing the organ committee's work, we don't want to miss an opportunity. We have focused energy and attention and she feels that with the right communication something positive could result.

Caroline asked if the contract could start on Jan 1. Valerie said yes, if we have a clear plan and can begin congregation communications no later than early February.

Can the Generis contract be divided into modules? Scott asked Stewardship to inquire about contract segmentation and to provide options for payment of the contract fee.

Debbie will send copies of the Generis proposal to Council members and Scott will have it placed on the website. Dick suggested providing the listening session results to the congregation through a variety of communication channels.

Scott distributed the Policy Book Table of Contents to Council members, reminding them that the revised Bylaws and Constitution become effective at the next annual meeting. Council has adopted a version of the Policy Book, but it was passed with the understanding there would be changes. Christian Ed has already updated the Safe Church policy.

He asked Council to specifically review the following areas:

- Membership
- Governance – Includes an extensive gift policy/utilization, which is a work in progress
- Planning & Coordinating Sessions – Located under Council
- Council committees – Created in May, but not completed. Name/functions to be determined.
- Finance and fund-raising – who does what? Need to systematize and make a formal part of policy
- Boards need to review the total number of members
 - Total is to be divisible by 3
 - Dave Barker said Deacons will have 12 members
- Boards should consider how ministry teams could be useful
- Need to determine appropriate level of authority for contracts

Scott will send a pdf. file of the Policy Book to Council before the November meeting. He wants to pass the revised Policy Book in December, but added it won't be final as policies will continue to be revised going forward.

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

Council will have to approve the budget before sending to the congregation for consideration. Doni said the brunch went well and commitment cards were picked up or mailed. The draft 2024 budget reflects a 13% increase from last year based on board requests. The amount of commitments received by mid-November will determine what, if any budget adjustments will have to be made prior to the annual meeting.

6. New Business

6.1 Four-way Ministry Covenant request, Valerie Miller-Coleman

Valerie introduced Amy Fishburn, Chaplain for Midland Care Connection. She is also a UCC Minister and new Plymouth member. She said the Four-Way Ministry Covenant is between Plymouth Congregational United Church, The Kansas-Oklahoma Conference, Midland Care Connection and Amy Fishburn. Each covenant together to meet obligations.

Amy gave a brief summary of her background and the journey that led her to one-on-one ministry at Midland Care Connection.

Doug moved to approve the Four-Way Ministry Covenant; Doni seconded; motion approved unanimously.

6.2 Nomination Committee – Sonia Jordan

The nomination committee is chaired by Sonia and includes the current Moderator and Immediate Past Moderator. Sarah Whitten and David Ambler have agreed to serve as at-large committee members. Heather provides staff support.

Sonia is working to provide a diverse nomination slate. Scott said all current members of boards will be re-elected if they have 1 or 2 years left on their term. If any board members meeting that criteria have left, Sonia will need to know. He also asked boards to provide names to the nominating committee, as has been done in the past.

Doug moved to approve David Ambler and Sarah Whitten as at-large members of the Nomination Committee; Devon seconded; motion carried unanimously.

7. Moderator’s Report – Scott Morgan

Completed under Bylaws and Policy Update

8. Associate Pastor’s Report – Caroline Lawson Dean

- Enjoyed personal time on a retreat
- Whole middle school participating in an upcoming confirmation retreat
- Third grade students will receive Bibles on Sunday
- Attended the “Orange Conference” in Kansas City with three lay leaders and Kara

9. Pastor’s Report – Valerie Miller-Coleman

- Jaron Asher is the new Director of Operations, replacing Nikki Richardson who recently resigned.
- Worship is planned through Pentecost
- The Faith Foundations Class ends soon. Sixteen participants will complete the course.
- All is well

10. Open Forum

No one spoke during the open forum.

11. Adjournment and Lord’s Prayer

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

12. Important Future Dates:

Next Council Meeting – November 28, 2023 at 6:30 – this meeting will be in person.

Tentative 2023 Council Dates (fourth Tuesday except third in December): December 19, January 23.