

Council Minutes: February 2024  
Plymouth Congregational Church, United Church of Christ  
Tuesday, February 27, 6:30 pm

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

*Voting Members Present:*

Sonia Jordan – Moderator  
Rich Bireta – Moderator Elect  
Scott Morgan – Immediate-Past Moderator  
Stephen Carttar – Treasurer  
David Trevino – 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:*

Doug Eason – At Large Member

*Ex Officio Members Present:*

Valerie Miller-Coleman – Senior Pastor  
Caroline Lawson Dean – Association Pastor

*Others Present:*

Larissa Long – Clerk

2. Get to Know You – What’s in a Name – Sonia Jordan, Moderator  
Members shared the background of their names and nicknames.
3. Invocation – Valerie Miller-Coleman  
Valerie led the members in prayer.

Sonia said the agenda had two modifications. Under the Consent Agenda, 4.5 was added for the approval of James Jordan to serve on the Fellowship Board until the next annual meeting, at which time he would be approved by the congregation. A new item number 11 was added to the Meeting Agenda to provide time for board chairs to address Council and will also be on future agendas.

4. Consent Agenda
  - 4.1 Approve Agenda
  - 4.2 Approve Minutes from January 2024 Council Meeting
  - 4.3 Receive Financial Reports
  - 4.4 Approval of Committee Members
  - 4.5 Appointment of James Jordan to the Fellowship Board – Elected until next Annual Meeting, then will be approved by the congregation.
  - 4.6 Corporate Resolution

Scott asked that item 4.6 - Corporate Resolution, be pulled from the Consent Agenda as it has been modified.

Debbie moved to approve the Consent Agenda as modified and to consider the Corporate Resolution as a separate item; Rich seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Church Treasurer’s Report
  - 5.1 Brief Financial Orientation – Rich Bireta, Moderator Elect

Rich provided an overview of the three financial reports, concentrating on questions the reports can answer.

#### Statement of Revenue and Expense, or Budget vs Actual (Profit & Loss in Private Sector)

- 1) Compares actual income and expense to the budget passed at Annual Meeting.
- 2) Shows financial performance over a specific period of time – this calendar year through end of previous month.
- 3) Budget is a plan that shows how we expect to raise income to fund church operations and how it is spent. This report compares the plan to reality.
- 4) Report organization:
  - a. Income
  - b. Expenses by Board
    - i. Stewardship – for expenses not attributable to a specific board (building, utilities, some staff)
    - ii. Pastoral Expenses are shown separately.

#### *Questions to consider when looking at the Budget vs. Actual report:*

- 1) How are we doing this year? As of January 31, 2024
  - a. We are 1/12 or 8% of the way through the year.
  - b. Income – We have spent 8% of budgeted income.
  - c. Expenses – We have spent 7% of budgeted expenses.
- 2) Have we received more or less money than we've spent?
- 3) Is there any area of the budget where we're spending more than planned?

He added that boards have flexibility in how they spend their budgets, except for staff expenses attributed to the board.

#### Statement of Financial Position (Balance Sheet in private sector)

- 1) Point-in-time assessment of finances.
- 2) Assets = Liability + Equity
  - a. Assets: What we have (cash in bank, CDs, buildings, ...)
  - b. Liability: What we owe (bills due)
  - c. Equity: What we own
    - i. Each board has a section, which carries over year to year.

#### *Questions to consider when looking at the Statement of Financial Position:*

- 1) What is our overall financial health? (Are we solvent?)
- 2) Where can we find funds for \_\_\_\_\_? (Look in Activity Funds)
- 3) What is our operating reserve? Is it above or below the target?
- 4) Where is the money for hearing loop, Mayflower Room furniture, etc.?

#### Revenue and Expense by Class Report

- 1) Reports all income and expense of the Church.
  - a. Budget covers pledges and contributions; does not include fundraising funds or activity fund spending.
  - b. Capital Campaign income and expense will be reported here.

#### *Question to consider when looking at the Revenue and Expense by Class Report:*

- 1) What is the total cost to run the Church?

Scott reminded Council that it is now responsible for fiduciary oversight, including endowed funds. A finance committee is in place and will evaluate and provide the financial reports.

Debbie asked about fundraising activities. Scott said the Annual Appeal and Fundraising Committee, chaired by Doni Mooberry Slough, will be responsible for the Annual Appeal, planned giving and

fundraisers. He also explained that all council committees have been designed to do the “micro” work in their specific areas and will bring their recommendations to Council for consideration and decisions.

## 5.2 Financial Update – Stephen Carttar, Treasurer

Stephen explained the following accounts:

- 1) #3801120 - Solar Panel Fund – Rice Foundation \$22,000 gift less \$500 filing fee for tax credits
- 2) #3806000 – Capital Campaign Fund – Spent \$5,000 for consulting; no revenue to offset expense as of this date

He then presented two financial report options for Councils consideration. The first includes all financial details and the second is a compressed version for ease of understanding. The second version has three columns – Budget, Activity, Capital Campaign and reflects all activities of the church. The Council’s preference was Option 2.

Responding to David Trevino’s request to have total income reflected closer to total expenses, Stephen said that was possible. Scott suggested the possibility of a dashboard, which Stephen agreed would be helpful.

David then asked who made the decision to sell the tax credits for solar panels at \$.90 on the dollar. Rich said they looked at market rates and based on what was available, presented the option to Stewardship for approval. In the future such decisions would be made by Council.

Stephen said that Mark Reedy, Deputy Treasurer, is not permitted to be a signatory on banking accounts due to employer requirements. Rich, the former Deputy Treasurer, has agreed to be an authorized signatory, as reflected on the revised Corporate Resolution. If approved, prior signatories that are no longer needed will be removed.

Scott moved to approve the revised Corporate Resolution as presented; Jeff seconded.

David questioned the resolution’s terminology and asked if authority is provided in the bylaws. Scott said the bylaws provide the authority and the language is unchanged from prior bylaws. Stephen said he drafted the language and had no problem having it rewritten. David agreed to draft new language for consideration; Scott and Jeff pulled their motion. The revised Corporate Resolution will be considered in March.

## 6. Old Business

### 6.1 Goals and Strategy Overview and Update – Valerie Miller-Coleman, Sr. Pastor

Valerie provided the following information regarding the goals of Membership, Finance and Facilities, which were presented to Council in 2023:

- 1) Membership
  - a. Sunday morning welcome teams established.
  - b. Small group opportunities developed.
    - i. Cookies and coffee provided.
    - ii. Forums as often as possible.
    - iii. Covenant groups – new and maintaining established.
    - iv. Flower delivery to home bound members.
- 2) Finances
  - a. Annual Appeal and Fundraising
    - i. Invitations to give from the pulpit.
    - ii. Testimonials

- iii. New online giving platform investigated; using current platform in updated capacity as currently about 30% contribute online (probably generational in nature)
  - b. Doni Mooberry Slough wants to give a personal finance course at some point in time.
- 3) Facilities
  - a. Progress in most areas of Phase One – still working on carpet but getting close.
  - b. AV for Mayflower Room still being investigated.
  - c. Phase II – Capital Campaign is underway.
    - i. Sanctuary; organ; stained glass; accessibility

Matt Del Vecchio, Facilities Manager, has discovered hail damage to the roof, resulting in some water damage. The insurance company has been contacted.

Sonia said that as Moderator Elect, Rich will be the leader of “refreshed” goals in the fall.

- 6.2 Capital Campaign Update – Devon Kim, Executive Director Capital Campaign  
 Devon said the campaign kicked off with a stakeholder event on February 13. Eighty-seven members participated in the 2 ½ hour event, which included breakfast, campaign information, a Q&A session and an introduction to the campaign’s slogan “Enter In”. The same event, called a Generosity Roundtable, will be held the evening of April 3 or 10 and the morning of April 13 for those who were unable to attend the February 13 event. The public campaign will begin after Easter.

Devon said the committee is working on the campaign each day, with website links to multiple documents, including events, communications, and video.

In response to David’s question regarding marketing expenses, Devon said most of the printed materials were done in house, but there will be some external costs in the future.

## 7. New Business

### 7.1 Assign Council Members as Liaisons to Boards

At Large Council members are liaisons to Council boards – will establish communication channels with them.

The following liaisons were established:

- Music & Fine Arts – Jeff Eriksen
- Christian Education – Doug Eason
- Fellowship – Debbie Schmidt
- Membership – Christi Houston
- Service & Justice – Norine Spears
- Deacons – David Trevino

### 7.2 Set Dates for Planning & Coordinating Sessions

Sonia said the first planning and coordinating session will begin at 6:30 on March 26, preceding Council meeting. A schedule for three meetings will be established at that time. She will contact board and committee chairs and suggest some topics they might share in five minutes such as MAPS; what is coming up; what support is needed from Council.

## 8. Moderator’s Report – Sonia Jordan

Sonia had no report.

## 9. Associate Pastor’s Report – Caroline Lawson Dean

- Students are involved in Lent!

- One student giving up junk food.
- Received a parent's text regarding journal for Lent.

10. Pastor's Report – Valerie Miller-Coleman

- The enrollment in Plymouth Academy is good.
- Two OWL classes.
- The first Ash Wednesday potluck went well.
- Will be gone over Spring break.

11. Board Chair Comments

12. Open Forum

13. Adjournment and Lord's Prayer

Scott moved to adjourn the meeting; Debbie seconded; motion carried unanimously.

14. Important Future Dates

Next Council Meeting – March 26, 2024 at 6:30 pm (following the planning and coordinating session) – this meeting will be in person

Tentative 2024-25 Council Dates (fourth Tuesday except third in November and December):

April 23, 2024; May 28, 2024; June 25, 2024; August 27, 2024; September 24, 2024; October 22, 2024; November 19, 2024; December 17, 2024; January 28, 2025.