

Council Minutes for May 2023
Plymouth Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
Tuesday, May 23rd at 6:30

1. Call to Order—Scott Morgan, Moderator
Call to order at 6:30 pm

Members Present:

Scott Morgan, Moderator
Sonia Jordan, Moderator Elect
Devon Kim, Past Moderator
Rich Bireta, Deputy Treasurer
Brand Erzen, Mission & Service
Korey Kaul, Christian Education
Valerie Miller-Coleman
Becky Eason, At-Large Member
Dick Orchard, Endowment
Doni Mooberry Slough, Treasurer
David Ambler, At-Large Member
Debbie Schmidt, Stewardship
Susan McCarthy, Historian
Caroline Dean Lawson
Kathy Bowen, Music and Fine Arts
Sue Denning, Deacons
Linda Thompson, Fellowship
Kelley Stillings, Membership

Members Not Present:

Larissa Long, Clerk
Susan Osborn, At-Large Member
Annas Boyer, Personnel

Others Present

John Lord

2. Invocation—Valerie Miller-Coleman
3. Approve Agenda
Amended by Scott Morgan to list time for John Lord to address Council for five minutes in item 5.2.

Motion to approve by Dave Ambler. Seconded by Debbie Schmidt. Passed by voice vote.

4. Consent Agenda
Includes the following items:
 - a. Approve April 2023 minutes
 - b. Receive financial reports
 - c. Approve contract for Russell Ware, Communications Director
 - d. Approve Rachel Goosen to replace Lori Herpich on the Mission and Service Board until the next Annual Meeting.

Motion to approve by Debbie Schmidt. Seconded by Sue Denning. Passed by voice vote.

5. Treasurer's Report—Doni Mooberry Slough, Treasurer

1. Presentation of Financial Reports:

Plymouth UCC is in a good financial position at this point in the year.

Talking with Intrust Bank regarding two issues:

- i. Protecting money under FDIC;
- ii. Getting additional interest, which will allow us the ability to surpass our interest goals for the year.

Fun Fact!

6. Old Business:

1. Financial Goal & Strategy Introduction—Valerie Miller-Coleman

Excellence in finance: Defined as high standards, gratitude towards God, practice of generosity, and our mission of service towards all is reflected in the budget.

Strategies & Timeline outlined in attachment.

Other Opportunities: Informed by causal giving philosophy

Question: What is planned giving? It's end of life giving, a major gift generally included in estate planning.

Question: New financial platform? They are currently researching a variety of platforms; we don't have to make a big change, but there could be a lot of advantages to switching platforms.

Comment: The history committee has done a number of testimonials and they could be a useful resource.

2. Bylaws & Policy Review—Scott Morgan, Moderator

Scott Morgan provided context on the history of why the bylaws have been worked on and updated over the past few years. The Bylaws Task Force set a goal for approval in May '23, which is why the timeline has been what it has been. Thank you to everyone on Council for their work on this, for being prepared, for asking smart questions, and for raising hard issues. It has all been appreciated.

2.1. Address to Council on Bylaws—John Lord, Member Plymouth
Comments attached in full.

2.2. Overview, Revisions, and General Questions

The Mission name is changed to Service and Justice (Brandy and Caroline will confirm with the Mission Board).

Addition of **Planning and Coordinating Sessions**, which are 3 meetings set for the current boards to meet with Council to review and share updates, needs, challenges, etc.

Question: Will they be planned by the Moderator and will people know what they need to be prepared for? Yes, it is written purposefully broad, but there will be an agenda and it will be run by the moderator.

Comment: You could start the whole session with an outline of what each group does so there can be an overview to look for opportunities and avoid redundancies. Everyone agreed it's a great idea.

(Policy Book) **Membership Board**: The maintenance of the membership rolls should be removed, because someone on the membership board is not going to have this level of knowledge about the congregation. This will be removed.

(Policy Book) **Deacons Board**: Add something similar to the language of "services of public worship" because nurture the spiritual growth is very vague. It doesn't need removed, but it needs to be more specific. This change will occur.

Question: Who creates the Ministry Teams? Who do they report to? This probably needs to be more explicit in the policy book.

The staff member should probably be written as coordinator or contact and remove leader. The word "leader" will be removed.

Question: Does someone have to approve the **Team Formation Agreement**? Yes, it is subject to approval by Council. The TFA is where it would define how the group is formed; allow it to be dissolved or merged, or other changes. It will be a literal form.

Scott Morgan to Council: Are we calling the groups **Standing Ministries or Boards**? We need to make a decision.

Question: Has there a preference by the congregation? It has been a source of confusion and in some sense it would be easier to keep it as Boards.

Consensus check-in vote for moving forward: Standing Ministry: 8; Board: 5

Comment: We need to figure out how we are going to educate people on the new system, because there will likely be a lot of confusion.

In the interest of building consensus, Council voted to use the name "Board".

Pastors & Staff:

Review changes regarding **Associate Pastor** language: Candidate can be someone ordained in UCC, a candidate for ordination, or someone eligible for ordination in the UCC.

Comment: Change eligibility to a listing of the 3 items and move out of the oxford comma structure. Will be updated.

Assistant Pastor Comment: Add language on who is eligible for Assistant Pastor to make it similar to what is in the Associate Pastor List. Will be updated.

Scott returned to **Article 5: Composition** for a full discussion of 10 voting members to assure consensus to move forward to a motion and vote.

Question: Is the concern regarding a reduction of the size of council or is it the limitation of voting for the boards? There seems to be a stratification between Council making the rules and the groups that do the work and Kathy Bowen wants to assure the voice of the people is louder.

Comment: If the At-large members came from the previous Board chairs, could that be an option for addressing concern? The group voiced concerns that this would make the term too long.

Question: Can we take stock yearly of the bylaws to learn from them and adjust without waiting 35 years? Yes, it would be better to be constant with them rather than wait a long period of time to update them.

Comment: Sue Denning appreciated the adjustment for the At-large members to interact with the boards through the Planning and Coordinating Session. Not everyone on the Boards is going to pay attention to what is happening at the council.

Comment: However, the members At-large are not required to attend the board meetings. This could be adjusted in policy as needed. For example, each of the At-large Members could attend each of the Board meetings regularly, as needed, or as requested.

Comment: In the past all the boards would give an active report, so that has been reduced over the years.

Comment: Brandy Erzen shares there is a disconnect between her role on her board and her role on Council and she doesn't feel strongly that one necessarily informs the other.

Comment: This structure is a new philosophy and the more we can keep as many as At-large Members as possible the better chance it has of working and if one of the boards has an issue, then have trust that it'll reach Council.

Comment: Agreement to the above comment. The new structure provides better continuity and long-range planning options.

Comment: It's really important to understand how the nominating committee works and it is critical to fully flesh that out and assure everyone understands it in a better way.

Question: When would the new Bylaws become effective? That would technically be a part of a motion but is envisioning the end of the 2024 Annual Meeting.

Motion by Kelley Stillings to approve the **Constitution** as currently written. Seconded by Brandy Ernzen. No further discussion. Motion passed unanimously with 13 Yays, 0 Nays, and 2 in Abstention (pastors).

Motion by David Ambler to approve the proposed **Bylaws**. Seconded by Devon Kim. No further discussion. Motion passed unanimously with 13 Yays, 0 Nays, and 2 in Abstention (pastors).

Motion by Becky Eason for the effective date of the new Constitution and Bylaws to be at the conclusion of the 2024 Annual Meeting. Seconded by Sue Denning. No further discussion. Motion passed unanimously with 13 Yays, 0 Nays, and 2 in Abstention (pastors).

Motion by Devon Kim to approve the Policy Book as it currently exists and to allow for modifications to occur as needed to become effective at the same time as the Bylaws. Seconded by Becky Eason. No further discussion. Motion passed unanimously with 13 Yays, 0 Nays, and 2 in Abstention (pastors).

Scott Morgan suggested that the three possible dates for a called congregational meeting would be June 4th, June 11th, or September 10th. There is a 10-day requirement for notice for a called meeting and June 4th would be the earliest. June 11th was thought to be as late into the summer as we should go. September 10th is the first Sunday after Labor Day.

Motion by Kelley Stillings for a Called Congregational Meeting on June 11th for a vote on the Bylaws. Failed for lack of a second.

Motion by Korey Kaul for a Called Congregational Meeting on September 10th. Seconded by Becky Eason.

Discussion:

It is important that the congregation have plenty of time to make an informed decision about the bylaws. A June 4th meeting would be too soon and a June 11th meeting might compete with the Church Pride event. It is unwise to do it over summer, because attendance is generally lower and more sporadic. September is a risk, because it could cause timing issues in the fall with running into Annual Appeal and Nominating Committee. There is no easy answer.

Motion passed with 10 Yays, 3 Nays, and 2 in Abstention (pastors).

7. New Business

8. Moderator Report—Scott Morgan, Moderator

Scott informed Council that its Personnel Committee was starting the process for the Senior Pastor evaluation process.

9. Associate Pastor—Caroline Dean Lawson, Associate Pastor

Youth Retreat

One recent confirmation student was confirmed through art instead of a faith statement. It was a beautiful sentiment and in the future art will be considered as an option in supplementing faith statements for confirmation.

Hosted a Pre-K/K BBQ at her house with about 40 attendees.

10. Pastor's Report—Valerie, Miller-Coleman, Senior Pastor

We have hired Matt Delvecchio to be the new Facilities Manager and he is doing great!

11. Open Forum

Sue Denning had question regarding whether Boards should continue with their MAPS process and the answer is Yes.

Caroline Dean Lawson expressed gratitude towards Scott and the Bylaws Task Force for their immense amount of work.

12. Adjournment and Lord's Prayer

Brandy Ernzen move to adjourn. Seconded by Devon Kim. Motion passed unanimously and meeting was adjourned at 9:00.

Submitted by Sonia Jordan, Moderator Elect