

Council Minutes, April 2025

Plymouth Congregational Church – United Church of Christ

Tuesday, April 22, 2025

1. Call to Order – Rich Bireta, Moderator

Rich called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

Voting Members Present:

Rich Bireta – Moderator

Jenny O'Brien – Moderator Elect

Sonia Jordan – Immediate-Past Moderator

Stephen Carttar - Treasurer

Doug Eason – At Large Member

David Treviño – At Large Member

Norine Spears – At Large Member

Christi Houston – At Large Member

Jeanne Fridell – At Large Member

Jeff Eriksen – At Large Member

Ex Officio Members Present:

Valerie Miller-Coleman – Senior Pastor

Caroline Lawson Dean – Associate Pastor

Non-Voting Members Present:

Larissa Long – Clerk

Katy Anderson – Deputy Treasurer

Others Present:

Araceli Masterson-Algar

Lourdes Gouveia

Devon Kim

2. Invocation – Valerie Miller-Coleman

Valerie led attendees in prayer.

3. Consent Agenda

Rich asked members to note the following changes to the agenda:

- Additional investment in IT will be included in the financial report
- Proposed Job description review and approval will be moved to the first item of new business

3.1 Approve Agenda

3.2 Approve Minutes from March Council Meeting

3.3 Receive Financial Reports

Doug moved to approve the agenda as modified; Jeff seconded; motion approved unanimously.

4. Somos-Lawrence Presentation and Q&A

Caroline introduced Araceli Masterson-Algar and Lourdes Gouveia, representatives of Somos Lawrence, who gave a presentation on the proposed Somos-Plymouth Language Program.

Araceli said the priority is to work with non-English speaking individuals having limited or interrupted formal education to improve communicative and language skills, while building connections with the broader Lawrence community. There will be two Spanish and two English as a Second Language classes. Staff will include four teachers (two also in coordinating roles), a consultant, a web developer and a social media person.

Curriculum development will be intentional. They plan to look for collaborative opportunities for shared experiences for English and Spanish learners as well as opportunities for extended learning in areas such as GED, driver licenses, English tests and advanced Spanish. The budget covers personnel, teaching materials, technology and supplies.

Caroline gave a summary of the Plymouth Language Program and how the proposal with Somos Lawrence developed following Midland's decision to discontinue focusing in this area. She added that Midland is providing financial support this year.

David suggested adding civics classes as preparation for citizenship tests. Norine asked how social media would be utilized/monitored. Lourdes said they are aware of external challenges and social media would focus exclusively on the language program. Stephen said he was happy with the possibility of this relationship.

5. Treasurer's Report – Stephen Carttar, Treasurer

5.1 Financial Update

We are 25% of the way through the year; have received 36% of our projected annual income and have spent 26% of our projected annual expenses. The CD at Silver Lake Bank has been reinvested. A bequest of \$39,650 from Howard Petefish was received, which is believed to be unrestricted.

Stephen said the Church is in good shape financially, with about \$960,000 cash on hand.

Rich asked for clarification regarding the amount of cash on hand. Stephen said we have \$960,00 in accounts through InTrust, but due to utilization of CDARs (Certificate of Deposit Account Registry Service), we have no exposure exceeding \$250,000 at any institution. When asked if building maintenance and campaign expenditures are being monitored, Stephen said yes and that no significant expenses are pending at this time.

5.2 IT System

Stephen said the IT system is weak and although no crisis has occurred changes are needed. He referenced the M Cubed proposal which the Financial Committee recommends for approval. The 2025 cost is \$9,500 more than budgeted, with the bulk of the increase due to one-time expenditures. However, in future years the impact is less and upgrading now provides the opportunity to share files and prevent data loss.

Stephen then moved to approve the M Cubed proposal; Doug seconded.

Doug asked if the \$9,500 is in addition to the \$12,000 budgeted in 2025. Stephen said it is and although a revenue source to cover the additional expense hasn't yet been identified the Finance Committee feels the revenue can be found. The expenditure in 2026 is about \$15,000. If approved, the upgrade will begin soon.

There being no further discussion, the motion was approved unanimously.

6. Old Business

None

7. New Business

7.1 Job Description Review and Approval – Devon Kim, Personnel Committee

Devon said the proposed job description is accounted for in the budget. The intent is to eliminate outsourcing of janitorial work and have the work provided internally. Valerie said Matt Del Vecchio, Facilities Manager, is spending much of his time setting up rooms, grounds keeping, etc., but his talents could be utilized in much better ways. With contractors in the building next year, having a person on site will be helpful.

Doug asked if the agreement with the current company has been terminated. Valerie said no, as an employee has not been hired.

Doug moved to approve the job description; Jenny seconded.

Norine then asked about the amount of dust in the Church, which will only increase when construction commences. Valerie said because the janitorial crew works after hours, we can't observe their work which is sometimes good, but sometimes not so great.

Doug asked if the Business Manager position had been filled. Devon said Brittani Anderson started on April 14th. Her experience includes working 16 years as a district manager for First Management, so she's accustomed to working with contractors and managing various business challenges. Regarding the personnel budget, there was a one week overlap with Jaron, but after that week he dropped to the new position of 20 hours. Jaron's office is now upstairs, and Brittani is located downstairs. Door locks are being changed as needed to adequately secure records/files.

Motion approved unanimously.

7.2 Agreement with Somos for conducting Plymouth Language Program.

Caroline reviewed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Doug said the term in Section 1: Term of Agreement should be changed to correctly reflect a period of 12 months, from September 2025 to September 2026.

Sonia asked if they were aware that the Mayflower Room may not be readily available during construction in the Sanctuary (Section 3: Facilities – 2nd paragraph). Caroline said they did know that and realize they may be utilizing space elsewhere in the church.

David said the last line of paragraph 1 in Section 3: f. should state "Intentional acts of omissions of **SPLP**" not Plymouth.

Jeanne asked if it would be advantageous to say anything about private space in the MOU. David said yes and provided language for insertion in paragraph 4 of Section 3: Facilities. The words “**designated as private spaces**” are to immediately follow “Room 202N and 205N, all in the North Church and 208S and 209S all in the South Church”.

Jeff moved to approve the MOU with the date change in Section 1; name correction in Section 3. f. and addition of language in Section 3: paragraph 4. Doug seconded; motion approved unanimously.

- 7.3 Motion (on behalf of Service and Justice Board) that Robin Wood be appointed to serve on the Service and Justice Board, replacing Mark Maltese.

Jenny moved to appoint Robin Wood to serve on the Service and Justice Board, replacing Mark Maltese; Doug seconded; motion approved unanimously.

- 7.4 Facilities Update/Chili Cookoff Results – Doug Eason

Doug provided an update on facilities maintenance. Jeff said he was asked about conditions in the kitchen, as some have expressed their concerns to him. Doug suggested they reach out to him or Matt Del Vecchio, as he wasn’t aware of any problems.

Doug then reviewed the budget for the Youth Service trip to Tulsa and said funds needed for the trip are available and that the chili cookoff was a huge success, raising \$5,000! This year’s focus is on race and reconciliation, because of the Tulsa Massacre in the 1921. He added they will stop in Silver Dollar City on their way home.

- 7.5 History Committee – Request for Council to name members and establish rotating terms of membership, as exists with other boards and committees.
Susan McCarthy made this request, and Rich will contact Malissa for names.

- 7.6 Additional Investment in IT
Moved to financial report.

8. Open Forum – No comments

9. Executive Session – Not required

10. Moderator’s Report – Rich Bireta

Organ/Sanctuary Update – Rich feels consensus is coalescing around a design presented by architects on April 7, following the March 30 congregation review. Council may be asked to approve a design in June, but he feels a “green light” from the Kansas Historical Society, the Lawrence Historic Resources Commission and the congregation will be needed before proceeding. Another design review with the congregation is tentatively scheduled for May 4.

Rich finally received acknowledgement of the Op-Ed submissions to the Lawrence Times and an apology, but the Op-Ed page has not been updated. Perhaps future submissions of this type should be placed in the fall, before the legislature convenes.

Worship alternatives during construction - Board chairs will attend the June Council meeting. He plans to ask a representative from each board to form a committee to address issues and concerns relative to the renovation.

And he wishes Caroline a good sabbatical and looks forward to her return in August!

11. Associate Pastor's Report – Caroline Lawson Dean
 - Seven confirmation students on Sunday; five are sharing faith statements and two will be baptized.
 - Emails will be sent on April 30 and May 1 regarding her sabbatical.
 - Colton can be contacted regarding Christian Education; Valerie can be contacted regarding Service and Justice.
 - While on sabbatical, she's happy to visit with all, but not about the church – she's taking a break!
12. Pastor's Report – Valerie Miller-Coleman
 - Beautiful Holy Week.
 - Project Management Committee work continues.
 - April 30 – Generosity round table for individuals who came after the Enter-In campaign closed.
 - May 11 – Major Choral Work.
 - May 18 – Youth and Children's Musical.
13. Open Forum – No comments
14. Adjournment and Lord's Prayer
Doug moved to adjourn the meeting; Jeff seconded; motion approved unanimously.
15. Important Future Dates:
Next Council meeting - May 27, 2025 @ 6:30 pm