PLYMOUTH CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Church Council Minutes, November 26, 2019, Greenwood Room
Sally Pederson, Moderator; David Johnson, Moderator-Elect

Voting Members Present: Wendy Bellus, Franklin Codel, Irene Hardisty, David Johnson, Linda Knodle, Jon Merkle, Alex Moon, Rocky Morton, Sid Ramsey, Jon Reinders, Terri Sterk, Bonnie Sunderlund, Elizabeth Talbert, Lorna Truck

Voting Members Absent: Judy Diedrichs, Jason Dreckman, Pam Duffy, Jodi Gruening, Eliza Ovrom, Linda Wilker

Others Present: Reverend Lindsey Braun, Bev Burns, Cindy Eaton-Eklund, Karen Jeske, Reverend Doctor Matthew Mardis-LeCroy, Sally Pederson, Shelly Soorholtz, Reverend LeAnn Stubbs, Noelle Trevillyan, Emily Tripp

Introductions & Welcome: Sally Pederson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Devotions: Irene Hardisty read from the book, Dakota, by Kathleen Norris.

Minutes: October 22, 2019—Motion to approve, David Johnson; second, Elizabeth Talbert. Minutes approved as submitted.

SPECIAL REPORTS AND OLD BUSINESS
Subject: Introducing Emily Tripp, Director of Operations and Finance, Rev. Matt Mardis-LeCroy
   • Emily introduced herself to the board and shared her background.
Subject: Director of Child and Family Ministries Search Committee Update, Rev. Mardis-LeCroy
   • Search committee is in hiatus until next year.
   • Rev. Lindsey Braun and Marisa Hernandez-Evans continue to stretch in order to direct the efforts of the ministries.
Subject: Update of the Strategic Plan 2020, Rev. Mardis-LeCroy and Sid Ramsey
   • Committee continues to meet on Sundays with the continued goal of understanding the relevant issues currently facing the church.
   • Have had discussions with other congregations and with Plymouth Church staff.
   • Sid discussed the process of establishing numerous communication channels.
   • Rev. Mardis-LeCroy requested organization charts for each of the boards.
Subject: By-Laws Committee Update, Rocky Morton
   • Committee was charged with reviewing Plymouth Church by-laws.
   • Rocky submitted a report (attached) to the Church Council for review.
Subject: Board of Membership MAP Presentation, Terri Sterk
   • Welcome Center: It’s buzzing, and we strive to cover the welcome desk for all services. Board members are equipped to answer questions or to make referrals.
   • Discover Plymouth classes: Held twice a year. Follow-up thank you notes are written. This year, approximately 70 attendees have joined the church. Would like to have representatives from other boards/committees attend and interact with new members. January 26 is a new member class, 1-4 p.m., with February 8/9 the joining weekend. Following each class, a survey is sent to attendees.
   • Annual New Member Potluck: This has been very successful. February 9 is next one, and we plan to invite board/committee members to potluck.
   • Member Engagement and Connection: There is a long list of activities. These bring people from all sections of the church together.

For 2020:
• Increase church membership. Become aware of recruitment efforts and assist with those.
• Purchase and make available Plymouth swag. Currently researching vendors and items.
• Continue staffing Welcome Center.
• Hosting Discover Plymouth classes and call prospective members. Helping integrate new members to the church.
• Assist Connections Coordinator.
• Initiate yearly meeting with the Boards of Trustees and Stewardship.
• Report changes in membership status to Church Council. During the past month, we have approximately 3,000 members.
• Complete review of membership rolls. Looking at new software to assist with this.
• Making connections.
  o Program guide for each season of church. This goal was met.
  o Extending invitation and welcome to new members.
  o Passport program. Help folks get better involved in opportunities at church.

BOARD REPORTS
Benevolences: Report submitted by Irene Hardisty is attached.

Christian Education: Report submitted by Jon Merkle is attached.

Christian Social Action: Report submitted by Jon Reinders is attached.
  • Moved the name of John Mathe to a 11/2 years term on the board. Motion approved.
  • Board also has a six-month term open.

Christian Stewardship: Report submitted by Pam Duffy is attached.
  • On behalf of the board, David Johnson moved the following: The Board of Christian Stewardship moves that the Plymouth Church Council approved Courtney Rife for a one-year vacancy appointment to the Board of Christian Stewardship, term ending in 2020.
  • Motion approved.

Deacons: Report submitted by Jodi Gruening is attached.

Membership: Report submitted by Terri Sterk is attached.

Music and Fine Arts: Wendy Bellus
  • Thanksgiving play is being presented.
  • December 7, the Messiah will be presented in the sanctuary.

Spiritual Growth: Report submitted by Linda Knodle is attached.

Trustees: Report submitted by Franklin Codel is attached.

COMMITTEE REPORTS
Arts, Memorials & Architectural Changes: No report.

Personnel: No report.

Plymouth Foundation: Report submitted by Mary Ann Beard is attached.

Plymouth Women: Bonnie Sunderlund
  • Next Lunch & Learn is December 19, 12:15 p.m. in Waveland Hall, with seasonal music to follow in the sanctuary.

Stephen Ministry: Bev Burns
  • New training class scheduled for January 2020.
• Requested we think about, and encourage, folks we think might be good candidates.
• Deb Brookhart is offering classes on feelings and boundaries December 4 and 11.
• Longest Night Service is Monday, December 16.

Transition into Ministry (TiM): No report.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

Member at Large: Rocky Morton
• Significant updates are needed on our web site.
• Suggests having youth assist older members set up their computers to capture the church services offered online.

STAFF REPORTS
Rev. Lindsey Braun
• Busy wearing different hats during the last few months.
• Rev. LeAnn Stubbs helped with the baptism presentation.
• Church school classes are going well.
• Ad hoc committee finished researching data bases for new system.
• Professional development time spent learning how to do story telling better, and helped coaching others.

Cindy Eaton-Eklund
• Elsie Wunn, Communications Assistant, is settling in.
• Has volunteer help printing bulletins.
• Wrapping up the stewardship campaign.
• Web site ideas for general communication approaches.

Karen Jeske
• Have had 10 weeks of Wednesday night dinners. We’re going to pause and try something new next year.
• New program guides are out.
• Transition into Ministry (TiM) recruiting season is ongoing. Applications are due January 3, 2020.

Rev. LeAnn Stubbs
• Has been a “workaday” month.
• So grateful for our members.

Emily Tripp
• Working on the budget.

Rev. Matt Mardis-LeCroy
• Two weeks ago was on a recruiting trip to Princeton University.
• Pleased with the Stewardship campaign pie weekend kick off.
• Thanksgiving services Wednesday evening and Thursday morning.
• Advent starts Saturday at 5:30 p.m.

CLOSING PRAYER: Rev. Matt Mardis-LeCroy
NEXT MEETING: January 28, 2020, 7:00 p.m., Greenwood Room

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Knodle, Secretary
October Plymouth Church Council Boards Reports

Board of Benevolences, Irene Hardisty
- Special Offering Gifts. Recipients for the Thanksgiving gifts are 10% to the Pastor’s Discretionary Fund and 45% each to Family Promise of Greater Des Moines and Plymouth’s Food Buddies’ partnership with Hubbell School. The application for the Christmas Special Offering gifts is now available and the link is posted on Plymouth Church’s website. Current Happenings and Contact articles have been submitted. The application will be in electronic format and the deadline is November 22. For more information contact Shawna Lode at shawnalode@gmail.com.
- Family Promise. Training for volunteers will be held December 12, 2019 at noon.
- Food Buddies. Pursuant to Hubbell School’s request, backpack food has been increased from 35 students to 40 students.
- Shelter Meals. Thanks to Current Happenings and Contact announcements, volunteers for up-coming shelter meals are needed only for December 27. May 26 is still an open date. For more information, please contact susanpohl@gmail.com.
- Bread for the World Letter. Approximately 300 postcards were signed and delivered to Polk County Federal elected officials. This initiative was supported by the Peace, Food Buddies and Food Pantry committees.
- UCC Relationship. The next Central Association meeting is March 28. For more information, please contact Gene Bryant, iamolc@outlook.com.

Board of Christian Education, Jon Merkle
- The board is working on a satisfaction survey for the ministries our board provides in order to get a baseline read of how well we are serving the congregation, and to see what areas we may need to improve. The questions have been defined. We are now working on format and dispersal strategies.

Board of Christian Social Action, Esther Burgett
- Anti-Racism Committee (ARC). Portraits of slaves are being painted in more dignified way. 1619 Project moderated by staff on Wednesday nights for small groups. Great turn out for jazz performance by Dr. Phillips.
- Peace Committee. Becoming more involved with the Middle East. Sending a representative to the Iowa for Gun Safety.
- Cuba Partnership. Delegation visited Cuba November 5-13, 2019. Their gifts included a keyboard, two projectors, over-the-counter meds and vitamins, clothing, monetary donations, etc. and were very appreciated. The delegation will share their "life changing” experiences with Plymouth Church in January.
- Welcoming migrants. Hosted local sanctuary with volunteers. January 12, 2020, Maria Van Der Maaten will speak at Forum. Working on an action network
- Pam Duffy came to our meeting last month and had us sign a card with our intentions to pledge. Jon passed out these cards to members who missed last month’s meeting. Sunday was Pie Sunday and we’re all encouraged to pledge.
- BCSA only has 13 members and normally there are 15 members. We are two short because of confusion on the number of new members needed in the fall. Joy made a motion to recruit two more members, one for 16 months and one for 18 months. Stephanie seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Janet will call John Mathes and invite him to become a member.
- Jon Reinders is working on creating BCSA board space. Only members and committees would have access to this site. This would be internal and help us organize our committees. Other boards are interested in this and Rev. Matt Mardis-LeCroy approved it. Jon would need each liaison to send their committee members’ names and email addresses to enter on this site. Hopefully, this space will be constructed by January for us to use at our board level.
- Technology is a concern on many committees. Podcasts and other information need to be updated. Stephanie is going to contact Karen Jeske to see if the new transition is causing this issue.
- Rocky Morton, Member at Large, is working on revising the By-laws. This affects how to add or end a committee because the by-laws have missing information. There are two versions of the by-laws because some have been updated.
- Janet Rosenbury shared a proposed framework for a Plymouth Justice and Peace Action Network (P-JPAN). We will vote on this in December since we did not have a quorum today.
• Discussed gun violence and strategies to address gun safety. Several committees want to do something to address this issue. Janet shared that the Interfaith Alliance have three actions: decreasing access to guns, including pressuring businesses, influencing elected officials and candidates and addressing anti-hate/bigotry and stopping gun violence.

**Board of Christian Stewardship**, Pam Duffy
• Promotion and launch of 2020 stewardship campaign on Pie Weekend, November 16-17, 2019.
• Additional member testimonials planned for November 23-24, December 7-8, and December 21-22, 2019.
• Thank you to all boards, Plymouth Church Foundation, YEC for participating in the Pledge-to-Pledge pre-campaign.
• Thank you to Cindy Eaton-Eklund, Elsie Wunn and Nancy Bassett for communications, materials and packets.
• Planning further campaign communications and reporting of results.

**Board of Deacons**, Jodi Gruening
• Thanksgiving decorating and service. Jerry will check with Dan Olson to make sure the decorating supplies and offering plates are available when needed. Please check your email for assignments and other details! Governor Kim Reynolds is unable to join us so Kay Lozier will substitute.
• Pie Weekend is November 16 and 17
• Financial Peace University. Classes are taught by Jennifer Gelner and meet Sunday evenings 6-8 pm starting in January. Anna is a FP alum and substitutes for Jennifer when needed. She encouraged all to attend!
• A House United Workshop on October 12. Takeaway—Where do we go from here? First is a programmatic response. We want to keep things moving (classes, discussions) likely to start January 2020. Second is updating the strategic plan by inviting members to determine our renewed sense of who we are. The kick-off will be the weekend of January 25 and 26. Sid is on the committee and added the process will be designed so all can participate. Takeaway from deacons attending the workshop:
  o No more difficult time to be a pastor than right now.
  o More important to be together than to be right.
  o When we come together, we are at our best (a chorus rehearses their parts separately, but makes the best music together).

**Board of Membership**, Terri Sterk
• Currently 4,411 active members are listed in the membership role in the Shelby database. This count does not align with the Book of Life count of approximately 3,000 members. Approximately 230 additional names of inactive members were mailed letters to request their interest in continuing membership at Plymouth Church. A group of inactive members have sent contributions and will be moved back to active status even if they have not attended.
• Another query totaled 1,862 active members who have not attended a service in more than two years. Nancy Bassett is cross referencing this group to determine if any of the 1,862 have contributed. The remaining will receive letters. Many are adult children who were confirmed here, but do not regularly attend. Others are over 70 years old and will receive a special letter to determine their status. Three members have moved from active status to inactive due to death.
• The next New Member Class is January 26 and members will join on February 8 and 9. The BoM will host a new-member potluck on February 9 for all those who joined in the past year.
• The BoM Swag Committee continues to research options for Plymouth Church swag to be sold at church during services and special events. Our proposed budget of $10,000 would use the proceeds over the next year in smaller increments. The plan is to place an initial order of merchandise for approximately $3,500. Our first offer will be insulated coffee mugs to be sold for $8-10. We are planning to offer sweatshirts, l-shirts, cups, hats, scarves and other options.
• The BoM still needs to confirm a Vice Chair.

**Board of Spiritual Growth**, Linda Knodle
• Class led by Beth Stelle Jones and Dr. Rocky Morton is scheduled for first half of 2020.
• Thanksgiving Eve Service of Gratitude is scheduled for 6 p.m. Thanksgiving Eve and led by the Reverend Doctor Matt Mardis-LeCroy and the Reverend Mary Beth Mardis-LeCroy.
• Library Committee is wrapping up its work in the Inspiration Lounge Library.
• Sunday Cookie Duty for the board is scheduled for December 15.
• There will not be a board meeting in December.
Board of Trustees, Franklin Codel

- October Financial Notes: For the month of October, pledge income was substantially below trend and about $45,000 below budget. Positive expense trends from prior months continued with personnel expenses running $30,000 better than budget, Building and Operations trending better than budget and the rest of expenses consistent with budget. Year to date, personnel costs are $155,000 better than budget and Building and Operations are running about $70,000 better than budget. These lower expenses are offsetting a $105,000 negative variant in pledge income (in non-pledge gifts). Current projections have reserve usage coming in at $35,000 vs the budget of $86,000.

- Additionally, Trustees has been reviewing the bequest policy. The current bequest policy expires in 2019 and needs to be reviewed, updated and renewed for the next three years. The policy that has been in place for the last three years requires undesignated bequests in excess of $10,000 per gift and $30,000 cumulatively in a calendar year be redirected to the Plymouth Foundation. Over the last couple of months, Trustees has been discussing, and intends to formally vote on in December, an updated bequest and reserve usage policy which allows for all undesignated bequests to Plymouth Church to be received and brought into income while managing the reserves through a floor and ceiling as a percent of annual expenses. Trustees believes that such a policy change would allow for the intention of the estate making the bequest to be honored and manage the financial flows of Plymouth Church with a broader view. Plymouth Church did receive a large bequest in November and Trustees voted to hold that bequest in Plymouth Church pending formal approval of the new policy.