PLYMOUTH CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Church Council Minutes, February 25, 2020, Greenwood Room
Sally Pederson, Moderator; David Johnson, Moderator-Elect

Voting Members Present: Franklin Codel, Fritz Craiger, Judy Diedrichs, Pam Duffy, Irene Hardisty, Linda Knodle, Jon Merkle, Rocky Morton, Sid Ramsey, Jon Reinders, Terri Sterk, Bonnie Sunderland, Lorna Truck, Linda Wilker

Voting Members Absent: Wendy Bellus, Jason Dreckman, Jodi Gruening, David Johnson, Alex Moon, Eliza Ovrom, Elizabeth Talbert

Others Present: Mary Ann Beard, Caroline Bettis, Reverend Lindsey Braun, Reverend Mary Kate Buchanan, Christopher Goodson, Reverend Nikira Hernandez-Evans, Karen Jeske, Shana Johnson, Reverend Doctor Matthew Mardis-LeCroy, Sally Pederson, Reverend LeAnn Stubbs, Noelle Trevillian, Emily Tripp, Susan Waller

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

Devotions: Jon Reinders shared a reading about the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr., and suggested that during Black History Month people watch the movie Selma. Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., took the hardest way to move forward.

Minutes: January 28, 2020—Motion to approve, Pam Duffy; second, Irene Hardisty. Minutes approved as corrected.

SPECIAL REPORTS AND OLD BUSINESS
Subject: Update on Strategic Planning Process, Sid Ramsey and Caroline Bettis
- Two more scheduled sessions remaining, Edgewater Retirement Community and Scottish Rite Park Retirement Community.
- Online and group responses have been very good.
- Committee is meeting next Sunday, March 1, and will read all responses. Will then map out theme and process with an intended update to the Church Council in April.
- Individual participation is close to 200.

Subject: Review of Nomination Procedures, Rev. Matthew Mardis-LeCroy
- Reviewed the rules for being able to serve on a church board.
- Names need to be to Kathy Sohn, ksohn@plymouthchurch.com, by March 16. Vetting will follow.
- Should be able to leave the March Church Council meeting with a clean list of names.

Subject: Director of Child and Family Ministries Search Committee, Rev. Mardis-LeCroy
- Responses are larger than 12 but fewer than 20 persons. Prescreening is occurring.

Subject: Transition into Ministry (TiM) Committee Report, Caroline Bettis
- Report provided to the Church Council members. Report review followed.
- Caroline moved acceptance of Rushing Kimball as our next TiM Associate Minister. Motion approved. Rev. Kimball begins at Plymouth Church June 15.

Subject: TouchPoint Presentation, Rev. Mardis-LeCroy
- Reviewed difficulties with our current software system, Shelby.
- Staff subcommittee appointed to explore options and make a recommendation.
- Board of Trustees authorized contract with TouchPoint in December.
- Rev. Mardis-LeCroy presented an online presentation. The software allows tracking of member engagement with information available to select staff and to the individual.
- Q&A followed the online presentation.

Subject: Strategic Grant Request for Technology Update, Rev. Mardis-LeCroy
- Grant request for TouchPoint Contract, Digital Stew equipment and labor, plus additional staff labor for total of $58,440.72. Attached to minutes.
- Motion to accept by Rocky Morton. Second, Judy Diedrichs. Motion accepted.
BOARD REPORTS
Benevolences: No report.

Christian Education: Report submitted by Jon Merkle is attached.

Christian Social Action: No report.

Christian Stewardship: Report submitted by Pam Duffy is attached.

Deacons: Report submitted by Jodi Gruening is attached.

Membership: Report submitted by Terri Sterk is attached.

Music and Fine Arts: Report submitted by Judy Diedrichs is attached.

Spiritual Growth: Report submitted by Linda Knodle is attached.

Trustees: No report.

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 April 16, 12 noon, in Waveland Hall.

Stephen Ministry: No report.

Transition into Ministry (TiM): Report provided in preceding Special Reports and Old Business.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

Member at Large: No report.

STAFF REPORTS
Rev. Lindsey Braun
  • Our Whole Lives (OWL) early elementary session is on Sunday mornings and includes 29 families.

Rev. Mary Kate Buchanan
  • Boundary Waters trip is full. Fourteen are participating.
  • Wednesday evening Bible study is going very well.
  • Thursday Gray Matter is going well.

Christopher Goodson
  • Every week, some 250 musicians meet to prepare for weekend worship.
  • Two concerts were held in February, Nordic Choir and Zachery James.
  • Adding a new music position creating a hand-bell option for grades 7 plus. Hiring a new children’s hand chime director.

Rev. Nikira Hernandez-Evans
• Participating in the search and call for next pastorate
• Working with groups doing community engagement projects.

Karen Jeske
• Young adults have gone to a monthly format.
• Preparing Lenten guides for individuals and families.
• Sign up for the Maundy Thursday dinner.

Rev. LeAnn Stubbs
• Just completed a month of actually serving as a pastor.

Susan Waller
• Finishing up the senior experience. Seniors were given shawls last Sunday, February 23. Will have a senior OWL experience.
• Variety show, MatinsTube, is in a week and a half.
• Garage sale is scheduled for April 3-4. Can start bringing donation March 29.
• Starting Matins Tour chaperone training this Sunday, March 1.

Rev. Matt Mardis-LeCroy
• 1619 Project adult education on Wednesday evenings is amazing.
• Re. Trustees report: The Tower Renovation collection phase was one year. All but $25,000 of pledged money is in.

CLOSING PRAYER: Rev. Matt Mardis-LeCroy
NEXT MEETING: March 24, 2020, 7:00 p.m., Greenwood Room

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

**Board of Benevolences, Irene Hardisty**
- Easter Special Offering gift applications are due March 20. A link to the electronic application may be accessed via the Plymouth Church website. Additional questions may be directed to Shawna Lode, Special Offering chair, at shawnalode@gmail.com. Easter date is April 12, 2020.
- One Great Hour of Sharing special offering collection will be March 21 and 22. All funds pass through to greater UCC’s OGHS.
- The Board of Benevolences is down two board members. Jim Osborn resigned for personal reasons in January. Marla Lamb-Wilson had resigned in December.
- BoB is moving forward with committee engagement tables before/between/after church services. No date has been set but planning to do this in March in Waveland Hall.
- Susan Pohl, liaison to CISS, and Irene Hardisty met with Melissa Gradischnig, CISS Volunteer & Donation Coordinator, to discuss shelter meals and other needs/opportunities where Plymouth Church may be of assistance.
- Alex Moon, vice chair, presented BoB information at the January Discover Plymouth Class and Irene Hardisty participated in the new member potluck dinner. Alex also presented to the Confirmation class ways to participate in service to others, citing opportunities with BoB initiatives, and shared personal and family experiences.

**Board of Christian Education, Jon Merkle**
- We will be distributing our online-program evaluation survey starting March 1. The survey will be open for approximately 40 days, and we will use the data to improve our programming.
- Jason Dreckman has resigned his position on our board and will no longer be serving as chair-elect. John McCormally has stepped up to replace his position as chair-elect.
- The board served a meal at the Homeless Shelter on January 27.

**Board of Christian Stewardship, Pam Duffy**
- BOCS met on February 4, 2020, to review the 2020 stewardship campaign as reported at the January 28, 2020, Church Council Meeting.
- Pam Duffy is recruiting to fill current vacancy.
- Rev. Matt Mardis-LeCroy asked BOCS to participate in conversation regarding future efforts to cultivate the non-pledge group of Plymouth Church donors. He also provided five copies of Not Your Parents’ Offering Plate, which were distributed to some BOCS members. More detailed discussion on this topic will occur at the March meeting.

**Board of Deacons, Jodi Gruening**
- Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper: Dean passed around the sheets with the assignments for ticket sales and the night of the event. Extra tickets are in the deacon closet if needed. Galen will make a pulpit-pitch Sunday February 16 (both services). Reminder: Tuesday, February 25, 4:30-7 pm. Committee will be here by 2:30 and all other deacons by 4:00. Wear jeans, white shirt and comfy shoes. Red bandanas provided that night!
- Sanctuary listening devices: Deacons decided to ask the Plymouth Foundation to fund new portable hearing units. Thank you to Jane for taking the lead to write the grant, due April 2020.
- New board members: Sid is asking each current deacon to provide three names of potential board members for next year. A sheet was passed around, but the names can be sent to him anytime.
- Congregational Triad Conversations: Sid asked if anyone could help facilitate the Triad Conversation at Edgewater March 12. Thanks to Galen and Denise for volunteering.

**Board of Membership, Terri Sterk**
- Membership role updates included four deactivations thus far in February, and 19 new members who joined February 8 and 9.
- A query totaled 1,862 active members who have not attended a service in more than two years is being reviewed by Nancy Bassett. She is cross referencing this group to determine if any of the 1,862 have contributed. The remaining will receive letters to assess their interest in remaining on the membership rolls.
- After the membership database clean-up is completed, the board will initiate a process for following up with members who are absent from worship. Tracking missed attendance has not been a routine, but will
be easier to manage after the new membership software is available. A query will kick off the analysis by looking at members with at least a six-month absence.

- Emily Tripp joined our February meeting to review the project plan for implementing the new membership software, TouchPoint. The goal is to have the new system in place in May and it has many features that will prove beneficial to the Board of Membership.
- The annual New Member Potluck was held February 9 and included the new members who joined in 2019, as well as the most recent class joining, February 8 and 9, 2020. The new member potluck was well attended and enjoyed by all.
- BoM Swag Committee is setting up a meeting with suppliers and will have demo items to share at our next board meeting. The goal is to have items available for sale before the end of the program year.
- Board will serve the Homeless Shelter dinner on February 29.
- The next Plymouth Discovery class will be offered for any potential new members in the Greenwood Room on June 7, 1:00-4:00. Any boards or committees who wish to participate on the panel, please send your inquiry to Terri Sterk.

**Board of Music and Fine Arts, Judy Diedrichs**

- Reviewed set up and removal of Thanksgiving and Christmas. All went smoothly. There was discussion about looking for a new way to display the Thanksgiving Proclamations because the display panel is clumsy. Perhaps a book that could be hold all the proclamations? Committee will explore options.
- The Video Support Team has posted almost 200 videos now on YouTube. The Messiah concert yielded $1,800 in offering - $5,000 was paid to support the event including the 16-piece orchestra.
- The Thanksgiving play was well attended. It was pointed out that there is no accessible seating for disabled patrons in the location where the play was staged. That will be a consideration for future performances in this space.
- New section leaders have been hired for Alto and Bass.
- There is initial planning for new LED lighting in the Gallery.
- A $40,000 renovation to parts of the organ is underway. As parts are sent out for repair, the Amazing Carl Gravander makes adjustments and plays around the missing notes.

**Plymouth Church Foundation, Mary Ann Beard**

- As of December 31, 2019, the Foundation’s total assets to date were $9,408,535.59. (This includes restricted assets for TIM totaling $1,714,995.94.) Total net income was $1,973,115.00 YTD.
- The next board meeting is tomorrow, February 26. The board will be reviewing and approving the calculation for the funds available for strategic grants for 2020-2021 program period. They will also make a recommendation and approve the pool for competitive grants for 2020-2021 program period.
1. What is the purpose and goal of this grant?

This grant application comes from Plymouth’s Church Council. It seeks a $58,440.72 Strategic grant from the Plymouth Church Foundation to implement our transition to TouchPoint, a new cloud-based church management software platform. TouchPoint has the potential to transform Plymouth in far-reaching ways, fostering far greater engagement on the part of current and prospective members.

For some time now, Plymouth Church has had a technology problem. One of our problems is immediately evident to our members; the other less so. Both require significant attention. Both present an enormous opportunity.

The church’s website, last redesigned in 2013, has been a consistent source of member complaints. It has been deemed cumbersome, difficult to navigate and in need of updating. The church’s management software (Shelby Systems) may be less visible to our members but it is no less important. Shelby’s decision to discontinue support for the version of their software that we use offers an opportunity for Plymouth to transition to a system that provides far more functionality.

Our hope is to design and implement two separate but connected platforms that will meet the needs of different audiences. An outward-facing, first-time visitor focused website will be easier to navigate and serve as a ready source of pertinent information to prospective visitors. TouchPoint, a cloud-based church membership management tool will serve Plymouth members who want to register and pay for events, seek out more in-depth information about programming and access their own giving information. TouchPoint will also provide new tools for board members to conduct their work, archive information and communicate with one another.

Taken together, the new website and the new software will constitute a game-changer for Plymouth Church. This grant application seeks funding for the TouchPoint component of this project. (A separate grant application for website redesign will be forthcoming).

2. Who will be served by this grant? *(Please be as specific as appropriate)*

This grant serves the widest possible audience, including staff, church members, lay leaders and even prospective church members. Staff will have powerful new tool to track and enhance member engagement. Members of the church will have much more access to their own information. Lay leaders will have new tools to facilitate the work of boards and committees. Because our members will be more engaged with the church, Plymouth will be more appealing to prospective members.

TouchPoint will provide church staff and lay leaders with a single database that tracks all member information—worship attendance, class or service project participation, pastoral contacts, giving and more. Because church members also have access to their information—through an online profile that can be accessed through a web browser or a Plymouth-specific app—they will be able to update their personal information, register for classes or events and get up-the-minute information on their giving to the church.

The end result? More members engaging more effectively with the life of Plymouth Church.

3. What is the anticipated outcome? How will you measure the results?

We believe that implementation of TouchPoint will result in any number of beneficial outcomes, including greater member engagement, lessened administrative burdens for the Plymouth staff, greater ease of work for board and committee members and higher-quality pastoral care. TouchPoint will give us the ability to track worship attendance, participation and giving. We can use this information to identify and reach out to members who may be in the process of dis-engaging.
TouchPoint will ease the administrative burden on Plymouth’s staff. The software automates many tasks that are currently performed manually (class registrations, generation of giving statements, etc.). Its use will free up staff time for other, more critical work. It will also provide lay leaders with new ways to store information and communicate with one another.

Moreover, by giving the pastoral staff a shared platform for tracking pastoral interactions, we can make sure that pastoral care is being provided from a context of deeper understanding.

4. What is the timetable for implementing this grant?

The TouchPoint transition has been a long time coming. About two years ago, we learned that our current church management software (Shelby systems) would no longer be supported in the spring of 2020. In the late spring of 2019, a staff committee composed of Nancy Bassett, Christopher Goodson, Diane Hayes, Sarah Masengarb and LeAnn Stubbs researched the major options in the marketplace and eventually brought a recommendation that we use TouchPoint for our new software.

**TOUCHPOINT TIMETABLE**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>2019</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May-Oct</td>
<td>Staff committee researches vendors</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/5</td>
<td>Staff committee recommends TouchPoint to full staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/12</td>
<td>TouchPoint Demo with Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/19</td>
<td>Staff consensus to move forward with TouchPoint</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/17</td>
<td>Trustee approval of TouchPoint contract</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>2020</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/13</td>
<td>Matt and Emily initial call with TouchPoint</td>
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<tr>
<td>Late January</td>
<td>Shelby data exported to TouchPoint</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/30</td>
<td>Matt and Emily Data Deep Dive meeting w/TouchPoint</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>Emily begins organizing administrative staff team to clean up data</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/25</td>
<td>Foundation Grant submitted to Church Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Staff team training (facilitated by TouchPoint)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Plymouth’s TouchPoint System Goes Live</td>
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**WEBSITE REDESIGN**

Similarly, website redesign has been under consideration for years. A process had just begun when Jennifer Hines announced her resignation as Director of Operations and Finance. The transition in that role (to Emily Tripp) caused a pause in the website redesign process. But with Emily in place, momentum has resumed on this project.

**WEBSITE TIMETABLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2019</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>Website User Survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>Development of Recommendations and Timeline</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>2020</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/7</td>
<td>Complete research into prospective vendors, write RFP</td>
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<td>2/14</td>
<td>Complete sorting of current website information</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/28</td>
<td>Secure proposals from prospective vendors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/30</td>
<td>New website and member app soft launch</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/1-5/24</td>
<td>Major communications effort to educate Plymouth on website and app use.</td>
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5. What is the total amount requested? (Please provide an itemization of what's included in the total request.)

We seek a gift of $58,440.72, which will fund both our contract with TouchPoint (including data conversation from Shelby systems) and new equipment from Digital Stew (Plymouth’s 3rd-party IT support provider). In order to fully realize TouchPoint’s potential, Plymouth needs a complete upgrade of its antiquated computers and an investment in additional hardware (such as computers to check children in and out of Church School choirs, etc.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TouchPoint Contract</td>
<td>$18,900.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>(includes setup and conversion, development of mobile app, training and support)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Digital Stew</td>
<td>$38,040.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>(new equipment and labor)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional Staff Labor</td>
<td>$1500.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL COST</td>
<td><strong>$58,440.72</strong></td>
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6. Are there other sources of income as part of this request? If yes, please elaborate.
No additional sources of income are contemplated. However, on-going support of TouchPoint will need to be built into the church’s 2021 budget.

_______________________________  _______________________
Signature of Church Council Moderator  Date

_______________________________  _______________________
Signature of Senior Minister  Date