PLYMOUTH CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Church Council Minutes, March 24, 2020, Zoom Online Meeting
Sally Pederson, Moderator; David Johnson, Moderator-Elect

Voting Members Present: Julie Carroll, Franklin Codel, Fritz Craiger, Judy Diedrichs, Pam Duffy, Irene Hardisty, David Johnson, Linda Knodle, John McCormally, Jon Merkle, Rocky Morton, Eliza Ovrom, Sid Ramsey, Terri Sterk, Bonnie Sunderland, Elizabeth Talbert, Lorna Truck,

Voting Members Absent: Jodi Gruening, Alex Moon, Jon Reinders, Linda Wilker

Others Present: Mary Ann Beard, Reverend Lindsey Braun, Reverend Mary Kate Buchanan, Cindy Eaton-Eklund, Christopher Goodson, Reverend Nikira Hernandez-Evans, Shana Johnson, Reverend Doctor Matthew Mardis-LeCroy, Sally Pederson, Reverend LeAnn Stubbs, Emily Tripp, Susan Waller

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

Devotions: Terri Sterk shared a poem by John O'Donahue.

Minutes: February 25, 2020—Motion to approve, Rocky Morton; second, Pam Duffy. Minutes approved as corrected.

SPECIAL REPORTS AND OLD BUSINESS
Subject: Board of Music and Fine Arts Nomination
• Judy Diedrichs nominated Chloe Bodenhammer to the board. Motion approved.
Subject: Board of Christian Stewardship Nomination
• Pam Duffy nominated Courtney Rife to the board. Motion approved.
Subject: Solar Panel Grant Presentation, David Johnson
• Reviewed grant request. Copy attached.
• Amy Elbert shared an executive summary of the solar panel grant request. The grant is sponsored by the Plymouth House and Space Committee and the Creation Care and Justice Committee.
• A full grant request will be emailed to Church Council members prior to the next council meeting. Moderator Sally Pederson encouraged all Church Council members to carefully review the document and be prepared to discuss and consider a motion to approve at the April meeting.

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

Christian Education: No report.

Christian Social Action: Report submitted by Jon Reinders is attached.

Christian Stewardship: No report.

Deacons: No report.

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

Spiritual Growth: No report.

Trustees: Report submitted by Lorna Truck is attached.

COMMITTEE REPORTS
Arts, Memorials & Architectural Changes: Submitted report is attached.

Personnel: No report.

Plymouth Foundation: Report submitted by Mary Ann Beard is attached.
  • Reminder that April 1 is the deadline for submitting Competitive Grant requests to the Plymouth Foundation. Please use the form online.

Plymouth Women: No report.

Stephen Ministry: No report.

Transition into Ministry (TiM): No report.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

Member at Large: Rocky Morton
  • Church website has blossomed in the last couple of months.
  • Online services have also been very good.
  • By-Laws Committee continues to meet. Waiting for additional information from the Strategic Planning Committee.

STAFF REPORTS: No staff reports.

BOARDS’ NOMINATING PROCESS CONVENED: Rev. Matt Mardis-LeCroy
  • Explained items to include in the telephone contact with potential board members. Return information to Kathy Sohn by April 15. Slate of new members ready to vote on by second week in May.
    o Describe board responsibilities to potential member.
    o If a “yes,” get name, year joined church and a personal comment.
    o Invite them to annual meeting. Names are put into nomination at annual meeting.
  • Members engaged in new-member selection process.

CLOSING PRAYER: Rev. Mardis-LeCroy

NEXT MEETING: April 28, 2020, 7:00 p.m., Zoom Online.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Knodle, Secretary
March 2020 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, shawnalode@gmail.com, Special Offering chair. Easter April 12, 2020.
• One Great Hour of Sharing special offering collection will be March 21 and 22. All funds pass through to the greater UCC. “Invest in Futures” is this Lenten offering which supports the disaster, refugee and development ministries of the UCC.
• Pursuant to her request, Irene Hardisty met with Kassi Bailey, Director of Philanthropy and Donor Engagement for Iowa International Center, to discuss Special Offering gifts. Irene also alerted Kassi to other opportunities at Plymouth Church where this group may possibly partner. The primary role of this group is interpreter assistance and, when possible, they “hire” local refugees/immigrants to translate.
• The board hosted “engagement” tables March 7 and 8 in times adjacent to church services. The participating committees were Food Buddies, Shelter Meals, Food Pantry, Special Offering, Family Promise and Career Closet. Both Family Promise and Career Closet initiatives take many, many volunteers to conduct and maintain their initiative/service. Additionally, at the March 7 service, Robin Maharry presented information about Food Buddies backpacking which occurs a couple times per month prior to the Saturday night service.
• DMARC (Food Pantry) held a Hunger Stimulation at Plymouth Church, hosted by WOW/Grey Matters, on February 27. DMARC’s delegate assembly was held March 10 at Sacred Heart and Irene Hardisty participated. (Plymouth Church as two voting privileges, one clergy and one lay person.) DMARC is planning a special Delegate Assembly on April 20 to vote for a change their by-laws in order to allow its Board of Directors to make changes to the by-laws. It is hopeful this will make DMARC more nimble as it responds to the rapid increase of people experiencing food insecurity.
• The board is encouraging Plymouth Church members to participate in wider UCC ministries and with the 2020 Budget has some funds to help with any expenses. These activities could be for adults or youth. Irene Hardisty met with the Care and Creation Committee to discuss some opportunities and is willing to meet with other church committees if there is an interest in sending their committee members/participants to UCC activities.
• The Central Association spring meeting will be held March 28 in Oskaloosa. The board has been encouraging Plymouth Church member participation. Rev. Lindsay Braun and Shona Deranleau, both from Plymouth Church, hold board terms ending in year 2022.
• The Shelter Meal team will be soliciting volunteers for the May 26 meal. The board has some funds to help off-set the cost of this meal. Any interest should be directed to Susan Pohl at susanapohl@gmail.com.
• The Board of Benevolences is down two board members but anticipates filling these positions with the annual board nomination process.

Board of Christian Social Action, Jon Reinders

• Discussed issues connected with the COVID-19 pandemic.
  o How shall we care for those who are most vulnerable among us? Social inequity, layoffs, closed schools, shut in’s and financial inequities.
  o What does it mean to be the church right now? Care for one another, not stopping our work, live stream/record services.
  o Proposed actions. Easter fund allocations, community support projects.
  o Suggested actions: Meals at schools; support for dependents; delivery of food, medicines cleaning supplies; child care; Facetime; social interactions with children; provide rides for errands; wellness checks; advocate at local/state level to urge for helpful government policies.
• Committee Updates
o Cuba Partnership Team. Invited speaker was expected April 14, 2020, and this remains tenuous.
o Peace Committee. Palm Sunday procession event in Des Moines cancelled.
o AMOS will have a call and further opportunities may be identified.
o Welcoming Migrants Committee. WMC book study for late April will likely be postponed. Reverend Nikira Hernandez-Evans suggested an alternative is to have the book study take place using a teleconference.
o Plymouth Grounds is in conversation with Easter Seals regarding a change to its management. Since Melinda Collins is transitioning from her role at PG, it is likely Easter Seals will have an increased roll in operational management of PG, including a role with the personnel. A vote within a few months is expected. If approved then the time for the transition will be summer 2020.

Board of Membership, Terri Sterk

- A query totaled 1,862 active members who have not attended a service in more than two years. A review found 233 had contributed within the last two years. Letters were sent to 1,629 people asking if they wish to stay on the church roles.
- Implementation is in progress and staff training has begun for 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.
- After the Shelby membership database cleanup 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.
- The board selected five items to offer for purchase in the initial kickoff of Plymouth SWAG: short sleeve t-shirt, long sleeve t-shirt, quarter zip, reusable bag and hot/cold travel mug. Items will be stored and the launch of sales is set to begin April 18/19 with a “pop up” store. A treasurer role will be added to the board to oversee the sales and inventory.
- The Board of Membership served the Homeless Shelter dinner on February 29. It was proposed that an industrial can opener be purchased by the church to be used by all boards when serving at the shelter. Plastic silverware and beverage cups are also needed, and suggested be donated by each board.
- The Board of Membership presented a list of nominations to be considered to fill the four vacancies for the 2020-2021 program year. Leadership roles are needed for ongoing coverage for Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer.
- The Maundy Thursday dinner is being facilitated by the Connection Committee and scheduled for April 9. The Maundy Thursday dinner is April 9.
- The next Plymouth Discovery class will be offered for any potential new members in the Greenwood Room, June 7, 1-4 p.m. 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

- With the new budget year, we are now able to support a director for a handbell choir for students in grades 7-12 starting this fall. Bloyce Johnson will move up from Hand Chimes to direct this new choir and a new director will start with Hand Chimes.
- The Video Support Team has posted more than 200 videos now on YouTube.
- New Chancel Choir section leaders have been hired for Tenor and Soprano.
- Ushering has gone smoothly since our last meeting. The Nordic Choir from Luther College and Zachary James on Broadway, sponsored by the Des Moines Metro Opera, were both well-attended. BMFA members supported the ushering for the Nordic Choir and Deacons supported the ushering for Zachary James.
- 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.
• Children’s music season is winding down. Only four more Sundays will feature children’s music.
• Board voted to approve a Strategic Grant Application request for Platform Risers which will make space more flexible.

Board of Trustees, Lorna Truck
• The Board of Trustees did not meet for the March meeting. Instead, documents were distributed by email. February YTD financial results were reviewed and no material variances were noted.
• We reviewed documents which recorded the recent changes in cash management. Excess funds were transferred from our checking account to interest-earning accounts in the Des Moines Community Foundation and the UCC Cornerstone Fund.
• Our other email business included suggesting names for the nominating committee, reviewing draft documents for a new fundraising policy for the church, and planning for our shelter meal donation this month.

Plymouth Church Foundation, Mary Ann Beard
• At the February 26 meeting, the board approved the calculation for the funds available for strategic and competitive grants for 2020-2021 program period as follows:
  o  **Strategic grant pool:** $459,281
  o  **Competitive grant pool:** $150,000

  The Competitive grant pool was doubled this year compared to the last couple of years. Below is a chart of the two previous years for comparison.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grant Type</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>$459,281</td>
<td>$289,374</td>
<td>$517,443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• We’ve been visiting all of the boards this month to create awareness of the Plymouth Foundation’s mission as well as the available funds and the upcoming grant deadline.
• The board also approved the strategic grant request for the new software and hardware which takes the strategic grant pool to $400,000 for the remainder of the year. The board is finalizing a “final report form” which will be available on the website for grant recipients to complete at the end of their grant as required by the board’s Grant Policy.

Arts, Memorials and Architectural Changes
• Working on the recruiting of new members.
• Art piece donated by the Dahls Trust.
• Donation of two stained glass replicas, mounted and lit.
• Styx piece donated in memory of Kendra Williams.
• Looking for ideas to add to our wish list.
Strategic Grant Application to the Plymouth
Foundation for Presentation to Church Council,
March 24, 2020

The Plymouth Creation Care & Justice Coalition and the Plymouth House & Space Committee wish to apply for a Strategic Grant from the Plymouth Foundation in the amount of $50,000 to install solar modules on the south roof of the 2003 addition of Plymouth Church.

Shifting from fossil fuels to clean energy for our 90,000-square-foot church building is an important step toward reducing our carbon emissions. Buildings produce more than one quarter of all greenhouse gas emissions, according to the Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction. Solar energy provides a vast and renewable energy source with significantly less environmental impact than coal, oil, or natural gas. Installing solar would reduce our church’s carbon emissions by 2,000 tons of CO2 per year.

Solar panels would generate clean energy that would reduce our current $42,000 annual electrical bill by about $3,000 or enough power to offset the cost of operating all our lighting.

While the cost savings are laudable, this request is inspired by more than money. Solar panels would be a visible and dramatic statement that Plymouth UCC recognizes that climate change is a real and urgent threat to God’s creation and the well-being of future generations, and that we are called to act.

This moral imperative is one that our pastoral leadership has embraced as witnessed in Plymouth’s 2019 summer sermon series, “Rooted in Creation.” As Rev. LeAnn Stubbs said, “The fate of the earth is our fate. And the fate of the earth is in our hands.”

We believe solar panels are the most effective means of showing Plymouth Church is committed to ensuring God’s creation is protected for all living creatures for generations to come. This has been the message from our pulpit. Let us now act on those words.

Purpose of the grant

The purpose is to fund the installation of about 82 non-glare, black, solar panels that would span the 126- x 11-foot length of the roof that parallels the driveway between Plymouth and St. Augustin’s Catholic Church (see attached drawings). The panels would not be visible from the north or east sides of the church and would be seen primarily from the west (south of our circle drive) and the south (Grand Avenue and St. Augustin’s parking lot). We believe this installation would not impinge on the historic fabric of our church and that view is supported by the State Historic Preservation Office of Iowa, and Doug Wells, principal architect at Wells + Associates, the firm that designed the 2003 church addition.

This installation would provide optimum southern exposure, significant energy savings, and showcase Plymouth’s commitment to addressing climate change.

Goals and Anticipated Outcomes
Lower our carbon footprint and reduce utility costs
Installing the proposed number of solar collectors would reduce the church’s carbon emissions by 2,000 tons of CO2 per year and reduce our current annual electrical bills by about $3,000, enough to offset the cost of operating all our lighting.

Plymouth has already initiated many sustainability and energy-efficiency improvements, including adding attic insulation, installing LED lighting and motion sensors, updating HVAC systems. Solar panels would be a dramatic step forward in those efforts and serve as an example of how institutions and individuals must recognize the impacts of climate change.

Be a Creation Care and Justice Leader
Solar panels would be a tangible example to those who pass Plymouth that we believe what we preach: God calls us to take bold action to protect each other and God’s sacred creation. As Iowa Interfaith Power & Light states on its web site: “Congregations serving as models for energy efficiency and renewable energy can provide hope to the community, spur others to make sustainable choices and help ensure we will have a safe, healthy, and inhabitable planet for future generations.”

Address Priorities of a Younger Generation
Young people recognize the threat climate change poses to the future and they are frustrated with the lack of action by elders who hold positions of power and influence. If Plymouth leaders agree to install solar panels, it would be a powerful acknowledgment of the younger generation’s concerns and demonstrate we are ready to address these issues.

Stand with the UCC and Other People of Faith
The Rev. Brooks Berndt, UCC Minister for Environmental Justices, with the support of the General Synod, has continually urged congregations to act on behalf of the environment. In 2020, he announced a 10-week “Kairos Call to Action” which was an “all-out mobilization for our churches to address climate and inequality.”

In February 2017, the UCC Thirty-second General Synod passed a resolution stating that the Synod: “...Recognizes the scale and immediacy of the climate crisis, the urgent need to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, and the moral obligation to embrace the unprecedented socio-economic changes that we must effect and engage as opportunities to create fair paying jobs, secure clean air and water, redress manifestation of environmental racism and pursue a just transition to clean and renewable energy.”

The Urbandale UCC is now installing solar panels, and more than a dozen Iowa churches have already done so. Plymouth’s highly successful Climate Revival Conference with the Rev. Jim Antal and recent well-attended climate workshops have demonstrated that Plymouth Church and the UCC denomination are poised to take a leadership role on creation care issues.

Live our Just Peace Covenant
The UCC’s Just Peace Covenant is a promise to protect God’s creation and seek justice for all life. The covenant reads in part: “We seek Just Peace in the community—
so that all may live free from fear. And with the earth so that all life is sustained.” This is a covenant our congregation has embraced and now we are called to act upon it.

**Who will be served by this grant?**

Taking steps to reduce carbon emissions is a demonstration of love for God and neighbor, and it is a Christian social justice issue. Changes in the air and ocean’s temperature and water levels are resulting in a greater number and increased intensity of hurricanes, floods, and other devastating natural disasters. The most vulnerable people — children, elderly, the poor and those already living on the edges — bear the greatest brunt. Climate changes and weather events lead to droughts, food shortages, and lack of clean water that wreak havoc on low-income and struggling communities, as well as wildlife.

In 2018, scientists reported that if the current levels of increasing CO2 emissions continue, our planet could reach a point of no return in 10 years. While one installation at Plymouth Church won’t reverse climate change, it can encourage a shift to clean energy—an action that will benefit all living creatures.

As parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles, our faith calls us to leave a healthful, safe, and vibrant world that will allow future generations to thrive. It is the role of religion to speak truthfully about this environmental and moral crisis, and, just as critically, to ignite and sustain the hope we need to deal with it justly and with love.

**Total itemized expense budget:**

The $50,000 grant request is based on more than two years of research and discussions with at least four solar contractors. 1Source Solar of Ankeny, our preferred contractor, estimated the cost for a Plymouth installation at $49,300. We also anticipate needing about $700 for city permit fees and to have required architectural drawings professionally rendered.

**Timetable for use of the funds**

Timing is contingent upon completion of city PUD permitting processes and a solar contractor’s schedule. Once permits are issued and a contract signed with solar contractor, installation could occur within 30 days. Installation will hopefully occur in summer of 2020. Full payment of the contract would be required at completion.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Elbert, Plymouth Creation Care & Justice Coalition

__________________________________________

Dave Miller, Plymouth House & Space Committee
July 29, 2019

Mr. David Miller  
% Plymouth Congregational Church  
4126 Ingersoll Avenue  
Des Moines, Iowa 50312

Regarding  
Solar Panels South Facing Roof

Dear Dave,

Upon reviewing the proposal to install solar panels on the south facing roof near the south property line, I find the improvement to the building to be not detrimental to the architecture of the building.

As the roof plane is in a high in elevation it should always have a great solar exposure within the landscape of the neighborhood. Also, the message that Plymouth Church is participating in finding solutions to our current climate changes and environmental challenges is very appealing.

The panel selection, the low-height installation, and following the current roof slope all will contribute to the success of this concept.

Thank you for your inquiry and I look forward to this improvement.

Best regards,

Douglas Wells, AIA

520 42ND STREET SUITE 400 DES MOINES, IOWA 50312
515.327.0007