PLYMOUTH CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Church Council Minutes, September 22, 2020 7:00 PM
David Johnson, Moderator; Jodi Gruening, Moderator-Elect

Voting Members Present: Alex Moon, Amy Anderson, David Johnson, Doug Rumple, Eliza Ovrom, Elizabeth Talbert, Fritz Craiger, Irene Hardisty, Jeff Marks, Jodi Gruening, John McCormally, Julie Carroll, Linda Wilker, Lorna Truck, Lynn Hicks, Matt Harvey, Shari Simmons, Sid Ramsey, Wendy Bellus,

Voting Members Absent: Bonnie Sunderland, Lori Fenton, Erin Davidson-Rippey

Others Present: Emily Tripp, Artis Reis, Rev. LeAnn Stubbs, Karen Jeske, Caroline Valentine, Rev. Mary-Kate Buchanan, Christopher Goodson, Susan Waller, Rev. Rushing Kimball, Cindy Eaton-Eklund, Hallie Still-Caris, Shana Johnson, Dave Everett, Pam Kenyon, Kathy DeWald, Georgia Sheriff, Rev. Lindsey Braun, Kathleen Murren, Beth Jones, Rocky Morton, Steve Jacobs, David Nelson, Mary Riche, Linda Sullivan

Introductions & Welcome: David Johnson called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Devotions: Amy Anderson - Spoke of her sister’s passing away 25 years ago and how as a nurse, she touched so many people’s lives and how she “practiced radical love”. Amy talked about her sister’s radical profound love and the connection to the church’s new strategic plan of practicing radical love.

Minutes: August 2, 2020 - Minutes approved as corrected.
Corrections
• Minutes date changed to reflect correct date of August 25th
• Aaron Barker’s name spelling corrected
• Minutes corrected to show that Eliza Ovrom was in attendance at August meeting

SPECIAL REPORTS AND OLD BUSINESS

Subject: Health & Safety Task Force, Julie Carroll
• Task force is meeting regularly and following the guidelines of the Center for Disease Control (CDC) mitigation strategies
• In-house church services: Have not yet moved through Phase 1 and, as yet, don’t have the data to support a return
• Task Force meetings are a debate of science vs. emotion: Church leaders want to get back to in-person meetings and services but science does not support doing so
• As society starts to operationalize living with Covid, the Task Force is asking church staff to look at how Plymouth can start to operationalize business functions
Subject: Financial Update, Emily Tripp, Director of Operations and Finance

- Continuing to see a decline in pledge income: $120,000 below budget income while expenses remain on track
- Given what is known today, anticipating a budget deficit of $92,000
- Applied and received PPP loan so now in process of applying for PPP loan forgiveness
- PPP offset should cover budget shortfall
- Overall, still in very good financial shape

Subject: Stewardship Update, Linda Wilkers

- Discussed campaign goals: monetary goal set at $1.7 million, will also track # families pledging (goal of 554 families which is a 5% increase from last year), another goal is to increase the number of follow up touches (will reach out to new members from past few years who have not yet pledged)
- Discussed campaign timeline and process
- Campaign will look a lot different being virtual, will be announced the week of Oct. 18th
- Distribution of materials will be posted online instead of mailed to everyone
- Pledge card, along with a letter to every member will be mailed the week of November 5th
- Members can mail in pledge card, email it, or drive by and drop it off
- Video testimonials from staff & ministers about the benefits of pledging will be made available online

Subject: Transitional Senior Minister Search, Jodi Gruening, Moderator-Elect

- Screening search team screened 5 candidates in Round 1, moved 3 candidates forward to Round 2
- Three separate committees interviewed top candidates
- Unanimous recommendation by each committee of Sara Rice as best candidate with the skills that the church needs right now
- Members of the three committees shared thoughts on the interview process and candidate selection: Sara’s history and experience with the church as a consultant assisting with the strategic plan was viewed by interview teams as a positive
- Some Council members expressed their belief that Rev. Matt Mardis-LeCroy left the church because of the outcome of the strategic plan, which Sara was hired to facilitate, and are concerned about Sara being recommended as interim minister and the perception to members of the church
- Others voiced that while Sara may have helped guide the development of the strategic plan but the design of it came from the input of church membership
• No member of interview team was part of strategic planning committee

Motion: Sid Ramsey made a motion to approve Sara Rice as interim senior minister
Second: Eliza Ovrom
14 ayes, 2 nays, motion carries

Subject: Strategic Plan presentation, Pam Kenyon, Strategic Planning Committee
• Update on status of member communications plan for Practicing Radical Love
• A soft rollout started with the weekly Monday Moderator Minute; the plan is posted on the website, and an article is being written for the October CONTACT.
• The one-pager is serving its purpose to keep the plan top of mind while each of the 3 stakeholder groups start work to work thru their implementation and communication plans
• Those 3 groups are: (1) Staff (2) Church Council/Boards/lay leaders, and (3) Members.
• A task force will convene next week to brainstorm the tactics for implementation and communication:
  • WHAT do we want to do, and
  • HOW and WHEN do we want to provide the deliverable
• Hoping to bring to light through the SPC that being a Minister of Jesus Christ is as much the responsibility of church membership as it is for the pastoral staff.

Subject: Bylaws Update, Mary Riche
• Bylaws update going on 18 months
• Key objectives for update
  • Effectiveness
  • Transparency
  • Collaboration and consensus
  • Participation by members
• Summary report and draft document coming soon to Council for support to continue moving forward
• Then will look for support of proposed bylaws by broader Congregation in October
• Will return back to Church Council in November with Congregation recommendations & input incorporated

NEW BUSINESS
Subject: United Way “21-day Equity Challenge”
• The 21-Day Equity Challenge is an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of how inequity and racism affect our lives and our community and suggest ways to take action
• United Way has asked if Plymouth would register as a supporter of the Equity Challenge
• About 150 other churches have signed on
• 100% FREE to participate
• Receive an email every weekday Oct. 5 - Nov. 2 with links to recommended articles, videos, podcasts, and more
• Daily topics include Understanding Privilege, Housing & Redlining, Justice System Inequities, Allyship, and many more
• Content aligns with the church Strategic Plan

Motion: Amy Anderson mad a motion to have Plymouth register as a supporter of the United Way’s 21-day Equity Challenge
Second: Julie Carrol
Motion carries unanimously

MEMBER AT LARGE (Amy Anderson)
Pass

STAFF REPORTS
Rev. Leann Stubbs - pass

Rev. Lindsey Braun - High of this week and labor of love was that the Church held an extraordinary confirmation services for 25 confirmands who gathered on the upper deck of parking structure. Congratulations to all confirmands and welcome to Plymouth Church

Susan Waller - Starting small groups on parking structure upper deck tomorrow night (with masks). Also welcoming new freshman as well their parents to youth ministry

Chris Goodson - Lawn concerts on Fridays averaging 75 in attendance. More are coming up Oct 24th and 25th, setting up new equipment to improve sound quality in Waveland Hall for online services

Rev. Mary-Kate Buchanan - Getting staff acquainted with Google Docs, has joined Trustees on Wednesday nights, Ministry profile has been validated and starting to look at the Church Discernment process

Georgia Sheriff - Christian education will be off and running soon, family church school will be starting soon where families can meet one another, exploring and hope to launch a new approach to Project Memories, quilt project is wrapping up and donation will be made to John Stoddard Cancer Center
Rev. Rushing Kimball - Has taken over Wednesday night bible study and it is going well, 9 on 1 groups also going well, hoping to meet more with Church boards

Cindy Eaton-Eklund - Communications is business as usual

Karen Jeske - Grateful for this evening’s discussion. Asking us to pray for Mary-Kate as she begins her Discernment process and also asking for prayers for a future TIM minister

Emily Tripp - Endeavor to install solar panels passed through Zoning & Planning and will go before City Council in October

**CLOSING PRAYER** - Rev. Leann Stubbs

Meeting adjourned at 8:57 P.M.

**NEXT REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING:** October 20, 2020