

*Plymouth Church, United Church of Christ
1217 6th Ave
Seattle WA 98101
www.plymouthchurchseattle.org*

CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL Meeting Minutes
Meeting Date: September 9, 2017

ATTENDANCE:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Al Wallace | <input type="checkbox"/> Kathleen Wilson | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff: |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lori Kaid | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kyna Shilling | Rev. Steve Davis |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dan Landes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Madeline Beery | Rev. Kelle Brown |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bing Tso | <input type="checkbox"/> Paul Ford | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Doug James | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jane Dunkel | <input type="checkbox"/> Guests: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Margot Page | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Katherine Guthrie | |

AGENDA ITEMS:

1) Calling Council to Order & Noting of June 10, 2017 Meeting Minutes as Approved

- Al Wallace called the meeting to order at 9:43 am, and Rev. Kelle started with a prayer.
- Council received a written notice memorializing the Council decision to forgive the balance of the loan to former pastor Brigitta Remole for \$10K, as part of her departure settlement. The church auditing firm had previously asked to have a formal record of this decision, which Council had discussed and agreed to in a meeting earlier this year.

2) Current / Projected Budget Shortfall / Financial Oversight

- Expenses are tracking the budget well, but revenues are falling short, leading to a projected shortfall for the year of \$60-75K. Main reasons include a \$49K shortfall in pledges, Betts Fund money falling outside of the budget, and lower than expected garage/rental income. Possible cost savings include reducing new initiative spending and/or contributions to the building rainy day fund. Facilities and personnel are the biggest expenses. There are \$53K in uncollected capital campaign funds—can we tap this? If so, we must do so with sensitivity. Some on Council suggested listing shortfalls on each individual giving statement, so individuals were more aware when they were behind in their giving. Consider communicating to congregation where we stand with our overall deficit to make everyone aware, though this must be carefully messaged. Suggestion that ministers and financial committee consider how to do this in the months to come. Council consensus is to control spending and watch budget status carefully for the rest of the year.
- We are starting to move into a new ministry model. Since Wendy left, it is harder to track financial details. Dan floated the idea of bringing former Plymouth administrator Marcia

Almquist back on a volunteer basis to serve in a role like a controller to provide detailed projections. Make sure that we document what she does well from a process perspective, so that this is transparent and repeatable should Marcia move on. Council agreed by consensus with this action.

3) Budget / Stewardship 2018 Team

- a) Working on forming a stewardship committee; Lori heading budget committee, which is falling into place. November 19 is the stewardship wrap-up date. Last year, we had a successful stewardship meeting on the top floor of Horizon House, which we should do again.

4) Potential Donation for an Annual Organ Festival

- a) The church has been approached by an individual/family long associated with Plymouth, offering a total gift of \$200K for an annual multiday festival to further his mother's love of music. Steve is drafting initial agreement for Council approval next month. Inclusion and diversity is important, especially around the organ. Council concurs with proceeding with accepting this donation.

5) HR – New Personnel Manual

- a) The need to revisit Plymouth's personnel manual became apparent last year, when an EEOC complaint occurred during the hiring of our executive minister (EDCO). This complaint was dealt with by Susan Berry, a retired employment attorney and church member. The Human Resources Committee has been operating on an ad hoc basis—i.e., it is not mandated by the church by-laws--and Susan suggested it be dissolved, except as needed to assist with specific hiring tasks. In addition, the employee manual was recently edited for a much needed review and to incorporate our recent change to collaborative ministry. The Council discussed the Plymouth employee manual, which was handed out as a revised version (by Susan, with input from ministers and some council members) of the previous HR policy manual. The language has been updated to reflect the new ministry model, clarify complaint resolution and work hours, modify tax standing for ministers, and loosen up certain employee benefits (e.g., parking and bus passes). Some concerns arose about the process, in particular the lack of input from employees during this revision. To that end, the Council consensus was for Al and Lori to share the revised employee manual with staff prior to formal Council approval to allow them a chance to ask questions and make suggestions. This meeting can also be an opportunity for Council and staff to build important communication channels, set expectations, and demonstrate that Council has considered past personnel challenges and is working to avoid those in the future.
- b) Council will revisit and recovenant confidentiality expectations for members at the next meeting.

6) Music Fund “Friends of Music” Donations

- a) Steve shared Wanda's intention to invite donations to the Music Fund, from those who were inclined, so as to underwrite concert expenses and allow proceeds from these events to benefit various causes and justice opportunities (e.g, Mary's Place, Recovery Café, and our own YF Mission Trip to the South). The fund is currently running a deficit, but those working on these activities are on their way to turning this around. Council should expect to hear more on this in October.

7) Music Director – Process to Change Wanda's status from “Transitional”

- a) The May 21, 2017 amendments to the by-laws did not address the fact that the music director is a currently called position. Council wants to change this so we don't have to go through a formal search committee process to hire a music director, and to clarify that the music director serves at the pleasure of the ministers (not Council). We acknowledge that these issues could be contentious. Council discussed the pros and cons of creating an option (with permissive language) in the by-laws for something other than the search process, versus making a clear break so ministers fully control employee staffing, including the music director. We want to deal carefully with deep cultural implications of this issue. **MSP to amend the by-laws to strike Section 10.5 requiring a search committee for the music director, at the January 2018 annual meeting.** Council will set up meetings prior to annual meeting to explain to the congregation why we are recommending this change.

8) Plymouth Facilities and Vision Casting

- a) This is the start of a conversation. Ministers have received a number of unsolicited ideas from congregants with common themes—there is wisdom in these ideas. We are in a 60-year-old facility, so we have choices to make about who uses this facility and how we maintain/renovate it. What is our master plan and our vision further down the road? How does this tie in with the Action Plan? We want to have some intentional conversations around these themes, start gathering information, spurred by faith and the talents, creativity, and imagination of our congregation. Who are we called to be? This is a long-term conversation. Courtney Hashimoto would like to present more on this at future meetings. Council was cautioned to be careful not to get distracted by too many things, and balance against immediate needs. Strive for “both/and” short-term and long-term. Our property presents a huge opportunity for our long-term future, given the city's needs (e.g., affordable housing). Rev. Steve and Rev. Kelle met with First Congregational Church of Bellevue to discuss their re-visioning and relocating process. Need to be realistic about opening up a Pandora's Box with this process (and losing focus on Action Plan) vs. risk aversion and conservativeness—again both/and, guided by faith. Change management will be key.

9) Accessibility Need for the Chapel

- a) Agreed that it is not realistic to address this in 2017, so include this in 2018 budget.

10) Fall Schedule / Worship / Faith Formation – Action Plan and Priorities for Plymouth

- a) Brief mention of changes here per Herald announcements, coupled with priorities.

11) Call Agreements for the Clergy Team / Installation

- a) Steve is gathering information from other churches for AI to get these written. Want to have more covenantal language in it. Council will receive drafts by the next meeting in October.

12) Donene Blair on Pastoral Care Team

- a) Want Council to be aware this is underway.

13) Ministers' Reports

- a) Tabled.

14) Future meeting

- a) Council moved their next meeting to Saturday October 21 to maximize attendance. The originally scheduled prior week meeting would have resulted in too many Councilmembers being absent to reach a quorum.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 12:30 pm, and concluded with a prayer.

Minutes submitted by Bing Tso, Council Secretary, to Council by email for review and approval on September 10, 2017. Approved by Council via e-mail with minor editorial revisions on September 19, 2017.