

Plymouth Congregational UCC Church Council
Meeting Minutes
June 9, 2018

The meeting was called to order at 8:50 a.m. by Plymouth Moderator Lori Kaid. In attendance: Lori Kaid, Katherine Guthrie, Bing Tso, Karen Clark, Elizabeth Gordon, Mike Pierson, Courtney Hashimoto, Madeline Beery, Rev. Kelli Browne, Rev. Steve Davis, and Kevin Bechtold. Absent: Debbie Baden, Kyna Shilling.

The meeting began with a check-in around the table. For many it is the end of the school year, with the build of up and pressures shaping us all.

1. **Resignation of the Treasurer:** Jane Dunkel has stepped down as Treasurer due to health issues, leaving the Council Officers one critical person short.
2. **Call of Kevin Bechtold:** The Council considered the Call of Kevin Bechtold, who grew up in this church. This is a part-time minister position offered at 25%-time position. Kevin discussed his interest in filling the position of Youth Ministry oversight. Youth Forum (YF) has about 12-15 members. Fortunately, the Middle School group has been growing. Council discussed the pros of supporting our young people as they move forward. Kelle sees it as a justice issue, to support our young people who are interested in ministry. Madeline made a motion that Kevin be called as a minister with the approval of Council. It was approved unanimously.
3. **Ministers Report:** Reverend Brown made the following report:
 - a. **Boundary Training:** Rev. Tara Barber offers great skills on boundary training. This could be a possible topic for involvement in retreat.
 - b. **Worship:** Rev. Kelle is no longer suggesting stopping of the 9:00 service. She feels it isn't wise to proceed with this at this time. The problem she hoped to solve is that of the time crunch in having 2 services. With two services it allows no time for Faith Formation. She is clear of the power of the 9:00 service and ability to reshape the 11:00 service. She is concerned that we need to be able to effect change, without having it result in prolonged angst.

Kelle has stepped forward to take a leadership role of the 9:00 service. Courtney proposes the coming year (2018-19) be a study time to consider how to deal with this issue
This issue will be a good issue to be discussed in August.
 - c. **Poor People's Campaign:** There are two more opportunities for involvement in the People's Campaign. This Monday's event is on Homelessness.
 - d. **Vacation Dates:** Kelle will be gone much of July. The Civil Rights Trip to the South, which is a church activity, occurs the last week of July and the first week of August.
 - e. **Getting Unstuck:** Kelle distributed a handout, "*When Churches Get Stuck: Letting the Staff Lead*" on church structure. It has some suggestions on ways to involve staff. Lori suggested that it also be something that we put on the agenda in August.

4. **Executive Minister's Report:** Reverend Davis provided the following update

- a. **Personnel Manual Update:** Susan Berry has been out of the country, and she will soon return to finalize the manual and automate the manual.
- b. **Budget/Financials:** Annual pledges have increased to near \$700,000, leaving a variance of \$21,049. The audit has been moved to the third week of July, which will be a bit altered due to the resignation of the Treasurer.
- c. **Retreat:** Will be held in August as a 1-day event on August 11. It will extend into the evening hours. The site is TBD.
- d. **Building & Facility Use:** They are working to expand use of the facility. They want to set up a committee to work on garage income and the building.
- e. **Security & Accessibility:** A ramp has been found to put in place to allow for access to the Chapel from the 2nd floor. This is necessary to meet the ADA requirements since the City of Seattle has been slow to approve the permits to make the permanent change. We have tested this system with Jon Palmason and it is functional and solves the problem.
- f. **Updates:**
 - i. **Sound System:** Oliver is looking into options to replace the big black speakers for the spoken word. The estimated costs are: \$15K for speakers and \$4-5K for installation.
 - ii. **Communications:** We are looking at website communications, bulletins and other ways to streamline. Elizabeth Gordon gave a short presentation about accessing Plymouth documents and absorbing what she has had problems with as a newcomer to Plymouth. She is creating a short PowerPoint for new members. She proposes a task force that look at communication flow and increased clarity on how the organization works.

The need to have a common understanding of what we're about as a church. How do we help others understand our assets in the 3 pillars;

Do Justice
Love & Kindness
Walk Humbly

The emphasis this year is on: prison reform & immigration.

Mike Pierson responded to Kelle's idea that we may need 1 full-church project that we as a congregation do, such as the Poor People's Campaign on Mondays. How do we do that? There is a followership problem at Plymouth. The prison project may be another example. Karen mentioned that people may want to help.

Elizabeth mentioned how effective Kelle and Steve are as spiritual leaders who spoke in her class and were able to engage students who don't "feel religious" and found what they said reached them. The need for testimonial quotes such as these was discussed on our website, the message reader and the Herald.

- g. Congregational Conversation:** Lori discussed the meeting tomorrow and the vote on Kevin's Call.

This is only the second *Conversational Conversation*: to promote communication and inform the teams for opportunity to bring ideas to grow and involve. It's important to differentiate between Kevin's Call and the subsequent Congregational Conversation.

- h. Treasurer Replacement:** The Nominating Committee has compiled a list of possible candidates, and more names have been gleaned. Marcia Almquist is a short-term help in this area while she's in Seattle.
- i. Council Membership:** The Council is down to 10 members, so it is two members down from the intended level now that we have accepted the resignation of the Treasurer. This is down from a Council with 24 members several years ago.
- j. Financial Report:** Lack of money is not Plymouth's problem according to Steve. We are down \$21,000 in pledge revenue. An increasing number of members have begun using an automated payment plan. 40% of the budget is from member pledges. Several major donors have diminished gifts over the next two years.
- k. Balance Sheet:** We are operating in the black. We do have one area of deficit resulting from the capital campaign. However, it is less than a 1% loss only, on a \$5 million project. That loss is being written off in this year. We are in a state of Abundance as a church. (See handout)
- l. Building Maintenance:** Courtney reinforced that we have to be cognizant of the life cycle of church, and our building is a 50-year-old building. The Planning cycle for a building project typically requires 5 years. He suggested it might be time to begin studying what is the happen with the facility. Madeline brought up the closure of churches of several large churches in Seattle. We need to consider and study the downward participation in churches.
- m. Immigration Ministry:** An Immigration ministry team has asked for council support. They recommend our aligning with the UCC Conference and connecting with other churches that have taken this issue forward. What is Plymouth's position on immigration as a ministry? Our ministry team is currently being maintained by the members. Discussion was made on how to move forward. This fits within the first column of our Collaborative View: **To Do Justice**. Because we aren't meeting until August, we will try to make the decision by email, asking Bing to write a motion and send to Council.

Steve and Kelle left the meeting for the Executive Session. An Executive Session was held to review personnel issues.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:20 PM.