

University Mennonite Church Business Meeting

February 23, 2020 Meeting, 11:00 am

Pending Congregational Approval

Attendance: Karl & Evelyn Bartsch, Dave Beppler, Karen Brandes, Carolyn Brubaker, Hope Brubaker, Rodney Brubaker, Kris Charles, Mary Derstein, Rosita Derstine, Rebekah Douglas, Joyce & Marvin Hall, Kate Heinzl, Gloria Horst-Rosenberger, Nel Kopp, Jean Landis, Doug Miller, Fran and Osseo Asare, Mark and Susan Peachey, Karen Rath, Jim Rosenberger, Tom Spicher, Evelyn Stauffer, Joel Weidner, Etayehu Zenebe

Opening

Kate introduced and read the printed prayer of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ that was distributed to congregants.

Doug Miller offered an opening prayer.

Introduction

Doug indicated that the bulk of meeting will be dedicated to the discussions around the 3rd Way Collective ministry.

3rd Way Collective: Background and History – Joyce Hall presented a summary of the history that included UMC's discernment process for beginning the ministry; the hiring of Ben Wideman; the proposed funding plan; statistics on events and student participation; the attempt to create an intentional living community (that ultimately failed to take hold); Ben's visibility in the community; attempts to raise funds and partner with other churches (University Baptist and Brethren Church ended up being a partner); Ben's decision to resign at the end of the spring 2020 academic term.

Congregational Discussion and Reflection – Doug Miller

- Doug reviewed the results of campus ministry survey (detailed survey results posted on web site).
- Doug then opened the meeting up for discussion and comments
 - Kate Heinzl noted that no one stepped up specifically that they would take on a leadership role in the ministry.
 - Fran Osseo-Asare expressed that she found it difficult to respond to the survey.
 - Jim Rosenberger noted that giving to the church is on schedule; giving to 3WC is down a bit, but reserves are present to cover a deficit if needed.
 - Joyce Hall shared that the advisory committee has realized that “bringing students in to us” is an old model and that it is important that “we go to them.”
 - Tom Spicher shared that there are more conservative churches with a lot of ministries and that our church is viewed as being too liberal and that may be why Mennonite students who attend PSU do not want to be involved. Perhaps these students are involved in more traditional student ministries.
 - Mark Peachey shared his experience at Scottdale Mennonite where they found it very difficult to bring in new people to the church and tried some different things.
 - Invited local first responders in for a breakfast and service which didn't go that well

- Then we went to them at the firehouse and that seemed to go better
- Jesus' example was touching the outcasts, poor, and those in need. How do we as a church reach out to those folks?

Other Comments

- I have three children that grew up in this church. Some of the rhetoric from the religious right and right leaning evangelicals keeps young people away from organized religion.
- My concern is that if Ben is not there we lose the potential if young Anabaptist students want to connect with us.
- When we moved to this church we had such a big group from Penn State. We had like 20. It seems like it takes a student, one of them, to get other students involved. I wonder what happened that is no longer happening.
- Other student ministries, like Intervarsity and other mainstream denominations that are right downtown have numbers are dropping as well.

UMC Leadership Team Recommendations Review

Doug read the statement and asked for comments feedback

The UMC Leadership has reviewed responses to the recent survey undertaken to discern the congregations' collective thoughts on UMC-sponsored campus ministry. After discussion and dialogue, along with Ben Wideman's decision to step down from his position with 3rd Way Collective at the end of this semester, we are recommending that UMC give pause to our sponsorship of campus ministries/3rd Way, and spend time in deeper discernment about our larger role as followers of Jesus in both the State College and University community.

Comments recorded included:

- We all like success and have different definitions of success. In this culture we all like numbers and become uncomfortable if numbers are not increasing. We are asking ourselves several questions.
 - We could consider asking questions of how we could create a ministry that would reach out to Mennonite students
 - It's not just students that are not coming – our congregation is shrinking and getting older
 - When we are gone, will this place become emptier?
- Suggestion that we would use the money that we were spending on 3WC to focus on how we might grow our congregation
- Ben has been around for several years and has raised the level of visibility and if we pause and stop that, I'm concerned that we are going to lose all that ground we made up.
- Concern about our congregation in general and the attendance numbers.
- As a student, PSU has a lot of Christian student ministries. If I had not gone to this church, I would not have known 3WC was a thing.
- I sense somewhat of a weariness in the congregation.
- I believe it's ok to take a break from things, to evaluate, to not assume that if I'm not out there, God's not doing anything, if we take a break, and rest. Maybe gray-haired old

ladies are not the best at reaching college students, but we have other ways to make a difference.

- We can continue to invite students for meals and to be in our homes. I feel like we have not done as much of this as we used to do.
- Ben has done far more than we could have possibly asked.
- It's the sense of community that people need to feel
- Only two students came to the Foxdale gathering
- Being welcomed into our homes is more important
- Kate suggested taking Lent as a rest. Leadership would continue to work and look at this much bigger picture about who we are as church.
- We should continue to hope. Back in 1975 there was a meeting where the fellowship talked about the possibility of disbanding.
- We should not be discouraged by the process of taking a pause. This should not be looked at as a negative thing and not a turning and walking away.

Congregational Discernment on Campus Ministry

Doug Miller asked how the congregation would like to proceed on the recommendation of the leadership team.

Joyce Hall asked if there are more details on the plan from leadership. Doug responded that no, at this time, there are not more details.

Marvin Hall seconded the recommendation brought forward by the leadership team

Kate asked if we need to vote or simply affirm.

Jim mentioned that we also need to see if the student organization would like to continue. Kate indicated that three of four of the student leaders are seniors and will be graduating.

There was general affirmation to accept the recommendation of the leadership team.

Committee Reports

Doug Miller indicated that all the committee reports and financial reports are on the web site. He asked for individuals review the reports and opened the meeting to committee chairs who have issues that need to be addressed.

Jim Rosenberger reported that we have paid out most of all ministry commitments to local and church wide agencies.

The meeting was closed by singing HWB 421 Bless'd be the tie that binds

Meeting adjourned at 12:23 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Joel Weidner, Secretary