

UMC Congregational Meeting

Sunday, September 12, 2022, 6:30 to 8:00 pm

Present: Cathy Bresee (Congregational Chair); Terry Yoder (Assistant Chair); Pastor Kate Heinzl; Ken Litwiller (Secretary; Minutes); Laura Litwiller; Jim Rosenberger (Treasurer); Gloria Horst Rosenberger; Meredith Wideman; Ben Wideman; Leah Witzig; Doug Yoder; Vonda Yoder; Karl Bartsch; Evelyn Bartsch; Ruth Kitchen Tillman; Amy Sattler; Paulette McClane; Nel Kopp; Elaine Mercer; Mary Derstein; Rick Stehouwer; Kathleen Stehouwer; Carolyn Brubaker; Joyce Hall; Marvin Hall; Krista Weidner; Joel Weidner; Sam Yoder; Leslie Webb; Becky Kephart; Rebekah Saxena; Evelyn Stauffer;

Opening: Cathy Bresee welcomed the participants and led in prayer.

Affirm Slate of Volunteers for September 2022 to August 2023

The most up to date list was provided in advance by email attachment. Leslie Webb and Hope Brubaker were added to the Adult Education Committee.

Leah moved that we affirm the slate; Elaine seconded; there was unanimous affirmation

Presentation and Approval of Annual Budget for September 2022 to August 2023

Treasurer Jim Rosenberger provided a one page summary for the quarter of the year which ended on August 31, 2022. He then walked us through the annual budgets for the year just ended (2021-2022) and the year that has started (2022-2023). He noted that there was a recent flurry of activity on pledges for the new year; some people do not regularly pledge but do support. Based on these pledges, the finance committee prepared a 2022-2023 budget based on \$200K plus the \$8K that we receive from PSU for classes held in our meeting house. Jim noted that we have also received above budget pledges for the solar system and heat pump: \$17K for 2022 and \$15K for 2023 for a total of \$32K.

Some highlights from the budget:

- A. Leadership support: Pastor Kate remains at 1.0 FTE and Ben has moved from 0.2 FTE to 0.25 FTE. MCUSA has recommended a 4.5 % increase in cost of living. There will also be increases for experience. A note was made that the increase in cost of living seems to be on the low side.
- B. The funds from the International Guest House sale by AMC are encouraging us to be involved in various forms of hospitality in our community.
- C. UMC has been awarded two grant for our solar project: the first is \$4K and the second is for an unknown amount.
- D. We have met all our external commitments for 2021-2022. For 2022-2023, the finance committee plans to conduct a survey about congregational interest; for now we have budgeted like 2021-2022.
- E. The UMC Retreat (at Camp Hebron) remains in the budget although no retreat has been planned for fall 2022. The retreat has served us well in the past so we want to keep it on the agenda.

There was lively discussion on the budget including:

Support for Micheline at AMBS was accounted to the Education Fund line. However, the Education fund is intended for Members or Children of Members to attend Mennonite Schools. We agreed to the support for Micheline was a special one-time contribution and will be removed from the EF line.

Could the EF be used to support UMC students at schools other than Mennonite schools? We noted that there may be tax implications since we are a Mennonite non-profit and cannot serve as a channel for paying for non-Mennonite education. The Mennonite Education Association also matches the support from congregations at 1 to 1 for the first \$1K.

Suggestion that budget be sent out in advance of the meeting for review by members. Agreed.

Terry suggested that the Treasurer become a paid position. The position requires regular attention and high seasonal demands. People in other positions also put in significant time and effort.

Marvin Hall moved that we affirm the budget with the agreed changes; seconded by Ben Wideman; the motion passed.

Review and Affirm Pastoral Sabbatical Proposal

The Leadership Team presented a proposal to modify sabbatical leave guidelines to enable the pastor to take earned sabbatical time in smaller blocks of time, such as three weeks annually, rather than only as a three-month interval for every four years. This would not increase the amount of accumulated time; rather how it is used; the total allocation would remain 3 months (12 weeks) per 4 years which is equivalent to 3 weeks per year.

Pastor Kate suggested that she take three weeks of sabbatical this year in combination with a week of continuing education. We could evaluate how that goes in order to plan for future years.

The shorter, more frequent absences, would preclude engaging an interim and would put more burden on the elders. There are now three elders rather than four. Would a longer break enhance disengagement from the responsibilities to the congregation.

Discussion continued on whether the clergy needs to have a specific approved plan for use of sabbatical in advance of the event. We agreed to continue to ask for a plan for the sabbatical in advance. There was discussion concerning the purpose of a pastoral sabbatical: however, the vote was on creating more flexibility in how the time earned is used. Pastor Kate clarified that there would be no change in the current covenant – a plan will be submitted to leadership team.

Marvin moved to affirm the proposal; Rick seconded; the motion passed.

Discussion Regarding Purchase of New Mennonite Hymnal, Voices Together

Shall we purchase the new hymnal, and if so, how might we pay for them? We have already purchased several copies for use by worship leaders and speakers. We currently have about 100 copies of the blue Hymnal: A Worship Book; that has been sufficient for four per pew. How many new ones would we need?

Joyce described the use of the hymnal at the MCUSA assembly and at AMC meetings and hearing from other congregations. The new hymnal includes the voices of the younger generation. We are lagging behind other congregations. She proposed that we move ahead with this. Gloria expressed similar sentiments.

Most of our congregational favorites are in the new hymnal along with wonderful new hymns. Leah has had very good experience with the worship resources in the back of the hymnal. Many hymns from the Sing the Story and Sing the Journey are also in the new hymnal.

Ben sees the move to the new hymnal as an inevitable trajectory that we will make at some point. The blue hymnals are working just fine, but the red ones were working just fine also. One advantage of the new hymnal is the use of gender neutral terms for deity.

According to the MennoMedia website, individual copies of Voices Together are priced at \$28.99 which includes shipping. For bulk orders of at least one case of 12 hymnals, the price is \$23.99. Another discount may be available specifically for the Voices Together projection edition, which includes a promotional including the accompaniment hymnal and the worship leader edition. Leah requested that UMC members be allowed to order personal copies along with the congregational order at the discounted price.

Joel suggested that we buy 60 new hymnals; they could be placed at the back of the sanctuary for people to collect as they enter the sanctuary. Rick moved to purchase the hymnal in a quantity to be determined by the Leadership Committee with consultation with song leaders; seconded by Jim; the motion passed.

Discussion on USE of IGH Funds

We discussed how to move forward with plans to use funds received from AMC (approximately \$30,000) related to the sale of the International Guest House. The Leadership Team recommends creation of an ad hoc committee to invite suggestions and develop recommendations.

Terry asked whether to allocate to one impactful way or for several causes. Kate encouraged us to consider the privilege we have and to include a lot of education and conversation within the congregation.

Kathleen has received many requests for support in her role in the Inter-Faith group in State College. Pastor Kate encouraged Kathleen to be on the committee; Kathleen agreed. Kate encouraged other people to join the committee. Ben would like to work on the committee; he sees this as an opportunity for us to review our congregational mission statement.

The new interim pastor at University Baptist and Brethren is a consultant for determining congregational vision. He has done this work at UBB.

The congregation affirmed to form the ad hoc committee to work at best use for the IGH funds.

Closing

Cathy closed the meeting by thanking all for the lively discussion and for devoting more time than usual for the meeting. She then led a closing prayer.