

UMC Congregational Meeting (Quarterly)

Sunday, June 11, 2023, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

Present:

1 Cathy Bresee (Congregational Chair); Terry Yoder (Assistant Chair); Pastor Kate Heinzl; Ken Litwiller (Secretary; Minutes); 5 Jim Rosenberger (Treasurer); Laura Litwiller; Carolyn Brubaker; Rodney Brubaker; Carmen Groff; 10 Tim Groff; Marvin Hall; Dale Kephart; Becky Kephart; Faith King; 15 Nel Kopp; Paulette McLane; Doug McPherson; Doug Miller; Sue Miller; Amy Sattler; 20 Bethany Spicher Schonberg; Evelyn Stauffer; Rick Stehouwer; Kathleen Stehouwer; Ruth Kitchin Tillman; 25 Leslie Webb; Joel Weidner; Krista Weidner; Doug Yoder; 29 Evelyn Bartsch (zoom); Karl Bartsch; (zoom); Fidele Lumeya (zoom); Leah Lumeya (zoom) Leah Witzig (zoom); Vonda Yoder (zoom);

Welcome:

Chair Cathy welcomed the participants and opened in prayer.

Affirmation of the slate of nominees and volunteers for positions and committees

Cathy present the slate of nominees, noting places where additional volunteers are needed to fill slots. Pastor Kate encouraged others to join the Adult Education Committee to plan opportunities. Additional volunteers came forward during the meeting.

There are still slots to be filled including:

- Stewardship Representative
- Adult Education Committee members
- Children and Youth Program Committee members: Childrens Sunday School has not been revived; however, there have been children's activities once a month on the third Sunday; there was a call to add energy to Children's programming.
- Park Forest Preschool Representative
- Centre Volunteers in Medicine Representative
- Out of the Cold Board Representative

We ended with an affirmation for past and future leaders (Voices Together #968).

Cathy to send out an updated slate of nominees and volunteers for positions and committees

Reflection on the May 13 meeting with Tom Beers about our church's lifecycle

Church Life Cycles:

- A. Churches have a life cycle; we are normal church.
- B. Death is not inevitable.
- C. We are not a dying church. Some of us have experienced dying churches. There is so much life at UMC.
- D. Aspects of the original vision statement have been a thread throughout the life of UMC. Other aspects were time bound.

- E. This is a vibrant church. We have had some trouble filling positions; today, we saw key positions filled, praise God.
- F. We need to respect those who have gone before us. However, older people may resist doing things in a new and different way.
- G. We all can be open to new things, to do new things, to free ourselves to new initiatives. We need to think outside of the box;
- H. We need to move toward our passions, what we are good at, what has worked in the past few years. We need to celebrate our successes and follow our passions.
- I. In the 1970s there was a move to shut down UMC; we have been there before.

Strengths and Possibilities

- J. We appreciate the value of a smaller church. There may be a shortage of age group possibilities; however, there is great value in the relationships within a smaller church.
- K. There is much life here. People have been very welcoming to new people.
- L. We have had an impact on the PSU campus with youth who attended UMC and those who did not. A former PSU student from Belleville appreciated the ministry of UMC on the campus and maintains contact with people that she met there. The students still get together for reunions.
- M. There is much energy around the return of the UMC weekend; this time a campout at Greenwood, rather than at Camp Hebron.
- N. We can pursue radical community involvement. We can radically bring people into our lives in hospitality.
- O. MCC works in the name of Christ with everyone. UMC has that foundation and pillar as well. Many folks in UMC are doing the work of the church; reaching out to refugee families for example.
- P. We have been supporting a refugee family; Kathleen calls us to prayer for them.
- Q. People around the world depend on UMC for finances and prayers.
- R. We used to hold community cafes where we discussed big topics/issues of the church and the world. Could we revive those? Fits in with asking questions and gathering information (Beers).

Issues and Questions

- S. How welcoming are we really; we all look pretty much the same. Our circles may be narrower than we profess. There is a Lutheran congregation in CA that is over 50% queer, for example.
- T. We need to be able to question matters of faith and ask questions.
- U. There is a tension between reaching out and strengthening our congregation. In order to be effective in reaching out, we need to give attention to our own needs and spiritual grounding.
- V. Some people have been traumatized by church; it may be difficult for them to attend even a welcoming church. We can be ourselves as followers of Jesus in reaching out to hurting people whether they join UMC or not. What does it mean to be church?
- W. There is a big difference in Mennonites, UMC and Big Valley, for example. What does name Mennonite mean?

Kate and Tom have had several conversations since the May 13 session at UMC. Tom's ongoing work with us could include working on these questions in his first round of meetings:

1. Where have we been?
2. Where are we now?
3. Where are we going?

Tom could plan and conduct a series of four workshops with us. The outcome of work with him involves coming up with a compelling narrative for our future and the beginning of an action plan of how we live into that story/future.

We are in natural cycles; we seek a bridge to the future.

Financial Report

Income and expenses are on target for this fiscal year which ends August 31, 2023. Cash balances:

- Brokerage account \$109,984, which includes the \$31K from the IGH for radical hospitality in our local communities, and
- Checking account balance of \$66,080, which includes \$40K due shortly for the final payment on our Solar project.

We received 22 financial pledges toward next fiscal year, to date, with several more given after the meeting, which will provide for a ~\$200K budget similar to this year.

The Solar panels were connected to the grid on May 31, and are producing about 150-200 kwh per day, which at \$0.10/kwh earns about \$15-\$20 per day in the summer. We received most of the pledged contributions from the congregation, and grants of \$29K toward the total project cost of \$56,150.

In the next month, the finance committee will survey the congregation to solicit input on how to allocate the churchwide ministries we support (~11K) plus Allegheny Conference ((\$20K), and local ministries (~\$10K). This will provide input to the budget draft we bring to the August Business meeting.

We are financially sound and alive. Could we consider returning to passing the offering basket?

We have moved QuickBooks to online so this is good time to serve on the Finance Committee.

Closing:

Chair Cathy closed the meeting in prayer.