

**UMC Congregational Meeting (Quarterly)**  
**In person and on Zoom**

**Sunday, February 25, 2024**

**11:15 am to 12:15 pm**

**Present in Sanctuary (32):**

Joel Weidner (Chair); Krista Weidner;  
Tim Groff (Assistant Chair); Carmen Groff;  
Pastor Kate Heinzl;  
Ken Litwiller (Secretary; Minutes); Laura Litwiller;  
Jim Rosenberger (Treasurer); Gloria Rosenberger  
Mike Bratt; Cathy Bresee; Carolyn Brubaker; Hope Brubaker;  
Rodney Brubaker; Mary Derstein; Lex Fogleman;  
Becky Kephart; Dale Kephart; Faith King; Ruth Kitchin Tillman; Hal Kunkel;  
Paul McCormick; Doug McPherson; Mark Minnich; Sally Minnich;  
Karen Rath; Matt Rooke; Rick Stehouwer;  
Leslie Webb; Ben Wideman; Leah Witzig;  
Doug Yoder;

**Present on Zoom (6):**

Evelyn Bartsch; Karl Bartsch;  
Fidele Lumeya; Leah Lumeya;  
Evelyn Stauffer; Kathleen Stehouwer;

**Opening**

Joel called the meeting to order. He noted that the agenda is shown on the big screen and reports are available on the web site at <https://universitymennonite.org/congregation-meeting-2024-02-25/>. [Links to those reports are also retained in these minutes, underlined.]

Tim Groff read from Isaiah 56:4-8 and a prayer from Voices Together 953.

[Review & Approval of Minutes from November Meeting](#)

Moved, seconded, approved.

[Congregational chair report & updates](#)

Joel Weidner presented a proposal to share some of our Allegheny Mennonite Conference (AMC) Hospitality funds with the conference's newest member, the exchange congregation in Winchester, VA. These funds were generated by the sale of the International Guest House (IGH) in Washington, DC. UMC's share was \$31,000; we have earned about \$2,000 in interest since we received those funds. Joel recommended that we share \$2,000 with the exchange. This motion was seconded; there was no discussion; approved.

Joel noted that we need more people to assist with fellowship time: coffee, snacks, fellowship meal. We appreciate the service of Ankit Saxena who will be leaving State College in June 2024. We could consider a sign-up sheet for specific coffee and fellowship meal events rather than serving all of the time.

Joel also drew our attention to the following items in his report:

- ❖ Service beginning time; leadership has decided to maintain the 1000 am starting time.
- ❖ Sunday school space.
- ❖ Acoustic brew concert series; both AB and UMC affirm that these have gone well.
- ❖ Building signage; being welcoming; includes both outside and inside.
- ❖ Elders and Leadership Team group email addresses.

### [Pastor's Report](#)

Pastor Kate Heinzl drew attention to her contributions to worship, the worship committee, education committees, and visitation, among other activities. She noted that she has earned a sabbatical after four years of service at UMC. The sabbatical is to be taken in August and September 2024 and proposed details are shown in her report. She welcomes questions.

A Turkish Islamic group would like to hold an Iftar meal at UMC in March and teach us about their beliefs and practices.

### **Visioning Team Update**

The UMC Visioning Team plans to meet with Tom Beers on March 9, 2024; after that the team will meet again with the congregation. Pastor Kate reminded us of the three questions that the team is pursuing:

- ❖ Who are we?
- ❖ Where are we?
- ❖ Who is our neighbor?

Related questions include: How do we relate to the community?; What is out there? What is exciting about our church? We are in a sticky note phase. Tom Beers encouraged us to celebrate; we have much to celebrate.

### [Creation Care Report & Proposal](#)

Jim Rosenberger reported that our solar panels have been working well since installation in May 2023. [Ruth KT added affirmation for the work of the committee in improving insulation to the UMC attic, saving energy.] We are now turning our attention to how we use electricity. We only heat the sanctuary one day a week, so our focus is on the lower level of the building.

Jim presented a proposal from the Creation Care committee for installing four heat pumps in the lower level: fellowship hall; library; two classrooms. The other rooms (restrooms, smaller classrooms) will be heated by existing resistance heat; the spaces are too small to justify separate heat pump units.

Questions were raised concerning use of the heating system by visitors. The heat pumps will be controlled by remotes, with temperatures maintained by thermostats. The remotes are easy to use. We do not need to raise our rates for visitors; their payment includes cost of heating and heating costs will be reduced by the solar panels and heat pumps.

Matt Rooke reported that from 2015 to 2020, UMC paid about \$5000/year for electricity. Even though prices for electricity went up in 2020, we paid only \$3500 during the past year. After our heat pumps are installed, our aim is to reach net zero energy costs with the solar panels and the heat pumps. We could seek recognition for our energy savings and perhaps get a plaque to display. One suggestion was to install a monitor to show how much we are producing and saving.

There was a motion to proceed with heat pump project which was seconded and approved.

### **Peace & justice Committee (PJC)**

Pastor Kate Heinzl presented this as a new idea. She noted that as a congregation, we get involved in the community through initiatives by individuals. Could we start a group to lead us in how to live in the world and in the community with focus on peace and justice issues? Pastor Kate, Joel, Jim, Ruth and Mary have recently participated in Mennonite Action (MA). This is one example of where having a PJC would allow for more coordination and involvement of both our church and the larger community. She requested meeting participants to give feedback to her or Joel if there is interest.

Several questions and suggestions were raised by UMC meeting participants:

- ❖ How would such a committee represent the diversity of thoughts and views within UMC? By encouraging participation and dialogue?
- ❖ Could this role be taken by the Leadership Team?
- ❖ We need a more specific proposal to which to respond.
- ❖ The committee would need a clear vision; otherwise it could drag on.

### [Ten Thousand Villages Update/Discussion](#)

Joel Weidner reported that the local store is nearing crisis mode, not doing well financially. The Executive Director is leaving for another position; this represents both a threat and an opportunity. No matter what happens in the future, we can celebrate what has been accomplished since the beginning.

Joel presented two ideas for improving the situation at TTV, State College:

- ❖ Place an MCC IVEP volunteer for ten months from September to June. For this we would need a host family.
- ❖ Welcoming volunteers for four hour shifts at opening and closing times.

### **UMC Finance Report**

Jim reported that at about halfway through the year, UMC finance are in good shape. For details, see the report.

### [Meetinghouse Committee](#) Report

Gloria reported that the two bathrooms below the office are in need of renovation. They are functional but not aesthetic.

For idea of the cost, renovation of the two bathrooms near the kitchen cost \$12,000. Gloria welcomed the formation of an ad hoc committee to work on this project. We need to think creatively.

#### [Library Committee](#) Report

Mary welcomes feedback by email or in person.

#### **Closing**

Joel noted that the next UMC congregational meeting is scheduled for May 2024; we need to begin to line up volunteers for September 2024.

Jim and Krista led us in singing verses 1 and 4 of VT 386, One is the Body.