

RAMF Congregational Meeting minutes
May 2, 2010

CORE VALUES

Summary of responses congregation turned in. Sonya and Thom looking for volunteers to ponder these values and create vision for future. Do we want to create document that we could look at a year from now? Would cover “This is who we were a year ago.”

ONE YEAR REVIEW OF SONYA’S MINISTRY

- A RAMF team—Bob, Chrissie, Sue, Jason, and Mark—has been meeting with Sonya.
- Bob gave brief intro into what “licensing” and “ordination” mean
- Licensing done at request of congregation, and is only valid, in Sonya’s case, in NY Mennonite Conference.
- Conferences authorize ordination, which is semi permanent and travels
- Do we want to move toward ordination? If she is ordained how would that change RAMF’s Leadership structure?

SONYA’S RECAP OF YEAR

- Has known for 20 years that she wanted to go to seminary. She used to preach to her dolls at home.
- In 2003, noted that she needed more time and training to do well the things she was already doing in the congregation. “Someone needs to have more time to tend to these things.” Thought RAMF needed some sort of licensed minister to attend to things not specifically covered in LT structure and then thought, “it might as well be me.”
- Call to ministry confirmed in seminary, by UCC church she did her internship and by NYMC calling her to be on leadership conference, where she got to see other licensing interviews.
- Things learned: loves to prepare for preaching, loves dead languages because “they hold still long enough to be analyzed”; needs balance between scripture, faith and real life—endlessly fascinated by these things.
- Understood she would not be pastor in RAMF, so took courses that would make her eligible for denominations with more rigorous requirements, but knows way that she relates to people, leadership style “quintessentially Mennonite.”
- Discernment group has been helpful.
- Thinks maybe she needs a job description: “Freelance Minister; part-time minister”
- Does having a licensed minister in RAMF make a difference? Marriage is only thing she can do that others cannot.
- Work distribution: 11 hrs/wk NYMC, 11 hrs/wk RAMF. Wouldn’t want more than 22 hours.

WHAT SONYA DOES

- RAMF
 - On Leadership Team and Worship Committee
 - Views herself as available for Coffee and conversation
 - On MVS planning team (thought initially this would be her “thing,” but others have taken lead.)
 - Leads worship and preaches
 - Connects with other local Christians
- NYMC
 - Administrator Stuff
 - Represents NYMC on Constituent Leadership Council

- Strategy committee for Bethsaida
- Church planting for Buffalo area
- Walks conference minister through difficult situations, conflicts
- “moved from footnotes and academic papers to bullet points and agendas.
- JOYS
 - Danny and Becky’s wedding
 - Effects of preaching institute
 - Energetic worship
 - Becoming congregation that people want to attend
 - VS unit taking shape
 - Positive reaction to ministry outside of RAMF (at JCC, Orchestra parent things)
 - Becoming role model for younger women
- CHALLENGES
 - Not sure when she’s on or off duty.
 - Not sure of Congregation’s and society’s expectations
 - Not sure if congregation takes her seriously
 - Not sure if “real” pasturing can be so part-time
 - Given that she’s “tri-vocational” i.e., RAMF/Moderator/Parent, when to connect as a pastor

QUESTION:

What is the difference between Conference Minister and Moderator? She is “boss” of Gene Miller, but he will decide on her ordination.

QUESTION for Circle response: “How are you and RAMF doing in relationship to Sonya’s licensing? Sue reviewed Circle rules.

Some responses:

- models nonthreatening leadership
- hasn’t had lot of impact on how we do things.
- terrible loss if she pursued pastorate at other church
- stronger connection to conference
- Sonya sometimes restrains gifts.
- “Are we pretending we have a minister? Are we just doing it because Sonya wants it?”
- Maybe a “social contract” would be better term for what’s needed than job description.
- noted that Sonya tries not to be too “leady”

~submitted by Kathleen Kern

Addendum (These 2 paragraphs added by KS)

TRUSTEE ELECTION:

Nancy’s term has expired. Walt Nickeson was nominated for a 3 year term, through May 2013. Terms for Bob Carter (May 2011) and Kathy Shelly (May 2012) continue as noted.

MVS UPDATE: Roger shared that applications are coming in for volunteers for our unit. The general orientation for MVS will be finished on August 13, so our volunteers will be arriving very soon after. Look for more info in the coming weeks and months.