

Rochester Area Mennonite Fellowship  
**Congregational Meeting Minutes**  
Sunday, January 30, 2011

**Present:** Anne Weaver, Sonya Stauffer, Jen Carter, Jeffrey Weaver, Drew Langdon, Kathy Kern, Chrissie Walls (minutes), Roger Kurtz, Walt Nickeson (facilitator), Bob Carter, Anthony Ricciuti, Ron Lugbill, Wendy Shelly, Rob Shelly, Aaron Stuckey, Hannah Miller, Karissa Sauder, Shannon Richmond, Jason Poole, Nancy Price, Chris Passoneau, Victor Klassen, Sue Klassen, Judy Bernhart, Kathy Shelly, Gail Ricciuti

**Opening worship** (*Sonya*):

- Song: HWB #386 *What Gift Can We Bring*
- Prayer

**BUDGET:** (*Facilitated by Jen, Kathy Shelly, & Aaron*)

- Kathy and Jen have been co-treasurers. They expect to continue in this fashion, dividing the job somehow.
- Highlights of the budget:
  - Additional money designated for conferences. RAMF pays for registration costs for conferences. Since Mennonite conference is this year in Pittsburgh, people are encouraged to attend. If that money is not spent by the end of the year, perhaps it can be given to other churches to help pay for registration.
  - The bulk of building rental income is from PIRI. The building is not being used by many other groups.
  - Some people designated their offerings to go toward the mortgage, so there were some additional payments toward the mortgage.
  - \$6,254 surplus for 2009. At the congregational meeting one year ago, the congregation asked the budget committee to determine where to spend the surplus. Much of that money went to the Sharing categories, going above the budgeted amounts. In addition, some of the money was used to make an additional mortgage payment.
  - Expecting next year to receive \$72,000 in pledged offerings. 2011 proposed budget \$74,800.
  - \$5,000 has been added to the RAMF education fund. Amount that we have been giving from our fund is less than what the colleges will match. Most colleges will match \$2,000. We value students choosing a Mennonite education, and want the budget to reflect that.
  - Speakers became “Speakers/Congregational Support” to perchance use for discernment process.
  - Roger noted that the only surprise in the 2010 budget was that people gave more money.
  - Home missions – VS unit. Last year we planned \$100/month to help pay for things that their stipends don’t cover. Karissa expressed gratitude for that. So far they spent \$300. \$900 still left. Interested in going to NYC to see the VS unit there.
  - Remaining mortgage – \$222,000 (20-year mortgage).
  - Added some giving categories that emerged as important since our discernment process many years ago. Sonya expressed excitement about the new categories and the additional money given to things like PIRI.
    - Mennonite Men/Join Hands
    - MVS (the organization, not local group)
    - NYM Women
- Proposal about how to spend the 2010 surplus (\$5,872). Budget committee proposes:
  - \$2,000 to pay additional principal on the mortgage
  - \$1,000 in Sharing Fund for use by Pastoral Ministry
  - \$2,872 given to NYMC to defray the debt incurred by supporting Tadelech/Ephraim
  - Seems to be a good balance of caring for internal needs, while also supporting external things we care about. After a brief discussion, the group approved this proposal. Sue expressed gratitude for the increased giving to PIRI, particularly as she is preparing to leave the organization. She also wants to

celebrate that during challenging economic times, we have a surplus and are able to make a difference in the things that we feel called by God to support.

- Mark noted that outside giving pre-building was 66% of budget. Some mourned that loss, since such a large percentage of money would then go to the mortgage. But looking at last year's budget: 25% of budget was giving. For the 2011 budget: 39–43% will be external giving.
- Budget committee wants to have a **congregational meeting** in the fall to look more closely at our priorities. It's been many years since we looked at how much we are putting into each category. Have our priorities shifted?
- There was consensus to adopt the budget as presented by the budget committee.

**Announcement:** We have set a date for a Klassen farewell celebration: Sunday, May 1st. NYMC will also be invited. Leadership team is looking for people to help plan the event.

### **DISCUSSION OF WORSHIP:** *(Facilitated by Anthony and Anne from the worship ministry)*

Worship Ministry posed a series of questions to the group regarding Sunday morning worship. People were invited to write down their responses to these questions on note cards so that the worship ministry can use this information to help guide worship planning. There was also time for discussion, some of which is represented below.

#### **What helps you worship? What hinders your worship?**

- Walt – lots of musical participation. Not as much special music now. Likes more instruments, for instance.
- Roger – mix of head and heart things. Wants something to ponder; something that grabs the intellect. But the musical/artistic “heart” things are important too. Balance.
- Jason – variety is important from week to week. Different types of music, messages, ways of “delivering” a message. Sometimes it's hard when there aren't familiar songs in a service. Likes to hear personal stories as part of the message; that can speak more to him than exegesis.
- Amy – really wants variety from service to service.
- Judy – likes corporate prayer time. We have done this many different ways and enjoys them.
- Karissa – likes the visual symbols. They look nice, but also help her remember the theme.
- Wendy – Scriptural theme is important. Visual art leads to that.
- Aaron – struggles with short time between when the hymn is announced and when the hymn starts.
- Gail – amount of singing helps. Likes the variety of types of songs (familiar, new). Feels sad when we go away without much music.
- Nancy – loves the light and view of the window.
- Victor – finds it distracting to face the driveway (seeing people coming and going).
- Kathy Kern – singing with brothers and sisters in Christ seems to work out all sorts of toxins inside.
- Shannon – likes alternating who sings verses, and how the verses are sung (more quietly, only women, etc.).
- Sue – hungers for hearing a new story, feeling connected to the leader because the leader is expressing a deep personal experience of God.
- Mark – variety of the personal stories; values connecting the Biblical story with the personal story.
- Roger – (referring to Marlene Kropf): Too often leaders are performing for the congregation. We are ALL performing this act of worship for God. Afraid that if I'm telling my story that it's making the service “about Roger.” How do you share story in a way that is facilitating worship rather than it becoming “about Roger.”
- Jen – helps when people involve story in a way that connects to where we are as a congregation outside of church.
- Anne – Worship is most meaningful when it is relevant not just to what is happening in this space, but also to the rest of life.
- Victor – appreciates when something goes “wrong” in worship and a person just moves on without fumbling or calling attention to it.
- Amy – very polished services don't feel as real or genuine.

### **What helps you as a worship planner? What hinders you?**

- Roger – people have been very deliberate about learning how to lead worship. Song leaders are worship leaders. This is a great congregation to lead since people are really open to try new things.
- Sonya – willing to pray with people before service. Sue and Amy affirmed this as helpful.
- Sue – appreciates being asked ahead of time to read scripture.
- Anne – appreciates being asked about music with sufficient time to prepare. This allows her to work with the music and plan how to do it.
- Aaron – likes the variety of types of materials that are provided by worship ministry as resources. Splitting up the various functions of the service is helpful (one person doing a meditation, another the children's time, etc). This helps him focus more on the one area he is responsible for.
- Kathy S. – glad to have other people who help do the visuals. Does not like when we put visitors on the spot to introduce themselves. This might be something that a greeter can do, or people who sit near the guest can do.
- Anthony – wants to encourage the free use of the lectionary, but not to be tied to it.
- Jason – likes to have materials, but wants to have the freedom to create something else. Wants to have the vision for the whole service, but then find other people to help with the parts of the service.
- Mark – perhaps we need some more grace in how we accept people's worship. If it's not our variety, then we can be critical.
- Amy – when anyone gets up there, it is a gift to me. It's not a performance to be critiqued.
- Kathy K – doesn't want to see us become a church where someone is "not allowed" to lead worship because it's not polished enough.
- Jen – doesn't like when people cut things from a cohesive service because of a perceived ending time.

### **Starting and Ending - gathering songs and ending time**

- Gail – really likes gathering songs.
- Kathy S – when we go past 11, it cuts into social time and adult hour/ children's Sunday school.
- Aaron – challenging for coffee people if things go later than 11.
- Anthony – likes the gathering time as a place to rehearse new music (facilitates the flow of the actual service).
- Wendy – it's helpful to have familiar songs during this time.
- Mark – Thinks it's important to consider whether Sunday school can end later.
- Many people expressed a desire to work at arriving early enough to have gathering songs.

### **How much structure do you prefer? Pros and cons**

- Anne – enjoys the larger arc that comes from a series.
- Jason – likes the structure around Advent and Lent. Perhaps there could be a list of topics that are explored.
- Judy – "do what you want to do" services are intimidating for her as a leader
- Ron – the lectionary can lead us to become like every other church in some ways. Can miss out on some of the passages that are really important for Mennonites. Those passages might only come around every 3 years. Hard to lead a service when you don't.
- Roger – The lectionary means that we start with Scripture. That grounds us. It can force us to explore things we wouldn't otherwise explore.
- Bob – Appreciates that the lectionary moves us through the whole Bible. Otherwise we can focus on only one thing.
- Sue – really likes "Bring Worship to Share" several times a year.
- Jeffrey – trying to find ways to keep the young ones involved. It's a big challenge. Appreciates when the children's time is really well planned. Sometimes it can be helpful to have a specific person lead the children's time (rather than just the person who is leading the rest of the service).
- Jason – what are the other ways we can try to bring out the children?
- Wendy – skits and theater can help children stay engaged.
- Victor – the structure is helpful for the sake of guests.