

RAMF Congregational Meeting

October 2, 2011

Jason (facilitator), Kathy Shelly (worship leader), Drew (scribe)

What follows is largely a reconstruction by the Leadership Team of the discussion, as the original notes were lost during the drafting of these minutes.

I. Financial Priorities [Jen]

- A. Our **financial priorities** are tied to our spiritual values; likewise; priorities can shape our values. The last review of our priorities was in 2005; things have changed since then, notably our building with its mortgage.
- B. **Organizations** with solid to high support (greater than 70% as determined by the surveys posted on the Web):
 - **MCUSA** [Mennonite Church USA]
 - **MCC** [Mennonite Central Committee]
 - **MMN** [Mennonite Mission Network]
 - **JoinHands Mennonite Church Building Program** (a program of Mennonite Men)
 - This group gives money to churches building their first meeting place; it gave RAMF \$30,000
 - It receives support from individuals and congregations, and is giving money to many international and inner city congregations
 - Should this be a new budget line?
 - Supporting this Program is giving back to the wider community that we have received from
 - Do things need to be cut to make way for new? We have an abundance
 - How do we support pre-building congregations? (including the work of New York Mennonite Conference [NYMC] and MMN)
 - **MDS** [Mennonite Disaster Service]
 - **MWC** [Mennonite World Conference]
 - **Beaver Camp**
 - **CPT** [Christian Peacemaker Teams]
 - **MVS** Unit in Rochester (Jubilee North)
 - **NYMC**
 - **PiRI** [Partners in Restorative Initiatives]
 - **Colleges**
 - **Special offering**
- C. Other organizations/programs
 - **New York Mennonite Women** (Mennonite Women USA in NYMC)
 - This group will be hosting a SisterCare seminar in March at RAMF
 - NYMC is a very conservative conference, slow to act on women in leadership; supporting this group is a way RAMF can help NYMC to grow
 - **National Campaign for Peace Tax Fund**
 - This was something that former RAMFers Dennis Lehmann and Sue Klassen worked on for many years: Glaciers move mountains
 - The goal of the Fund is to support lobbying efforts in favor of enacting a bill (HR1191) that would allow taxpayers to redirect their taxes into an alternate fund promoting peace.
 - It's an ecumenical organization, including Catholics, Presbyterians, etc.

- It's a 501(c)(4) organization, contributions to which are not deductible as charitable contributions for income tax purposes; these organizations may participate in political activities. RAMF is a church, a 501(c)(3) organization, so the tax exempt status of contributions to RAMF is not the issue. But contributions to RAMF intended for such organizations introduce complexities/difficulties that would overwhelm the treasurer. Unwilling to go through IRS complexities for a small amount.
- We could conduct a letter-writing campaign and make out checks to Peace Fund instead of RAMF
- On the issue of separation of church and state:
 - MCC lobbies
 - The Gospel is political
 - There's a specific bill being lobbied for, HR 1191
 - If we remove this line item, could we forget to include?
 - We learned more just from reviewing for meeting
 - We could do something around tax time
 - We need firm commitment to making sure something happens
 - The Outreach Ministry will put this on its agenda
 - We need to have a wider conversation on the Church and politics
- MDS we wanted MDS to be included as a budgeted giving, not just special offerings
- Migrant needs (what we presently do) were supported by special offering and gift giving in November instead of adding it to the budget
- Creation care we had general support for the suggestion of adding a creation care organization to our budget but do not have enough information to want to add it to our budget—somehow we would like to try to get to know an organization and see how it goes.
- D. We skipped discussion of Everence/Corinthian Plan, MEA [Mennonite Education Agency], RELE [Racial/Ethnic Leadership Education]
- E. Current balance in the **Sharing Fund**: \$1841. This fund is not a line item in the budget. To supplement it, we have had approximately \$750 matching funds available from Everence.
- F. **Special Offerings** We haven't had a special offering every month, in an effort to keep such offerings "special." The amounts received for the special offerings of the last 2 years are posted on wall.

II. **Process & Application for Education Fund**

We have given scholarship funds to Anabaptist colleges in support of our youth for many years. These are usually matched by colleges, and sometimes are matched by Everence. A policy and procedure document has been circulated, in an attempt to clarify how this should work. Discussion included the following issues (other topics came up but have been forgotten):

- A. Is it too exclusive to say Mennonite or Anabaptist colleges? On the one hand, we want to support the values and future commitment to Mennonite churches, since it is the church giving the scholarship. From the other point of view, these values could be present in other Christian schools to a greater or lesser extent, so decisions to attend other colleges or universities could also be supported. Limiting the scholarship to a predetermined list of schools was too narrow for some.
- B. The document includes assistance for institutional and non-institutional education, including seminars.
- C. The proposal is designed to assist and simplify the administration of this process: The congregation affirmed this. It is a proposal that can be revisited and revised.

We decided to form a committee to work on the application. Applicants will be evaluated case by case. We remain open to considering in what way applications meet the stated criteria and in what way the criteria need to be revised in the future.

- III. **Building Art/Decorations** After an introduction, we broke into small groups to discuss the place of art within our building. Some notes from those discussions were kept by Rachel Stuckey.

- IV. **Minister Congregation Relations Committee report** A brief congregational meeting will be held after worship in two weeks to officially recognize our consensus to move forward on Sonya's ordination.