

## **Congregational Meeting Minutes, Rochester Area Mennonite Fellowship 27 January 2013**

Attendees: Roger & Sonya Kurtz, Kathy Kern, Andrew Buchert, Samantha Everest, Raymond Waweru, Jen & Bob (minutes) Carter, Kristin & Bryan Babcock, Austin & Megan Pettigrew, Amy Durkee, Dan & Stephanie Giles, Teresa & Walter Nickeson, Chrissie Walls (worship leader), Kathy (facilitator) & Mark Shelly, Rachel (facilitator) & Aaron Stuckey, Judy Bernhart, Nancy Price, Melissa Carlson, Ron Lugbill, Drew Langdon, Gail & Anthony Ricciuti.

Chrissie opened with a passage from Henri Nouwen and we sang "What does the Lord require of you?" from *Sing the Story*.

### **1. Review of FY2012 budget and approval of FY2013 budget.**

[ *The FY2012 data attached has been amended since the meeting to reflect final year closing amounts* ]

Jen reviewed highlights from the 2012 budget figures. 2013 budget notes: nearly everyone who donates to the church has pledged, which is helpful for Finance Committee in setting a budget. A few years ago we would sometimes get as much as \$10k of income beyond what was pledged. Now, the higher percentage of our budget being supported by pledges allows us to comfortably plan to have higher "sharing" and "home missions" as part of our proposed budget.

Ben asked about Safe Ministries line going up this year. It reflects a higher annual fee plus extra for checks.

Ron asked about the mortgage. It is held by Eastern Mennonite Missions. It is like an adjustable rate, but the rate is indexed more to their internal performance than commercial rates.

Finance Committee wishes to purchase accounting software (added \$200 to Office/Postage line item). The committee is also interested in having one more member. If they go with a server-based software package, then the cost may be more like \$30-70 per month.

Facilitator asked if there were any further question or issues on 2013 budget. We asked for a show of support from the congregation: support was unanimous.

The Finance Committee proposed that the FY2012 budget surplus be used as follows:

\$2k to Education Fund; \$2k to mortgage principle, remainder (~\$1.5k) to Mennonite Disaster Service.

Bryan asked about the history of us supporting local mission efforts. We have at times done special offerings, and sometimes if these end up recurring, they become a line item in the budget.

We asked for a show of support and the congregation was unanimous in approving the proposal.

Addendum: As of 31 January 2012, after disbursing surplus to Education Fund, mortgage, and MDS, we have \$12,889 in checking account, of which \$10,081 is Education Fund, \$1143 is Sharing Fund, the Building Fund is closed, and \$1665 is our General Fund balance. The Savings is \$9112 and our Capital Fund CD is \$5312.

### **2. Name change proposal**

Roger gave background on this. We discussed changing the church's name when we moved into the building, but decided to table issue for five years since there were making lots of changes already. The question was raised at last September's congregational meeting and an ad hoc committee (Roger, Amy, Ben, Bryan) was formed. They met to discuss it and came up with following proposal:

Because the acronyms "RAMF" and "RAMFer" are racially offensive terms that are widely known in urban African American communities, we recommend the following:

- That our church change its name to Rochester Mennonite Fellowship.
- That we educate ourselves to refrain from using the terms "RAMF" and "RAMFer."
- That we change our sign to reflect our new name, and also to make it clearer that we are a worshipping community that welcomes visitors and new members.

The committee was not unanimous in this proposal. Ben voiced his fondness of our acronym and how intertwined with our identity it is (e.g., see our Core Values Statement). Also, many other possible acronyms or

initialisms can flag similar issues in “urban dictionary”. However, if our initials don’t contain a vowel, then it’s much more difficult to articulate a word.

Some anecdotal stories:

Bryan: In course at Eastern , the professor pointed out that the use of the term RAMFer would be especially offensive. Amy asked Ethan about his awareness of the term RAMF. Ethan related his interaction with an African American classmate, where he told him he went to RAMF. The boy was rather shocked and seemed to think Ethan was somehow making fun of him.

Ron wondered how prevalent the term RAMF is used locally; he’s never heard it in his five years of working with an inner-city clientele.

Nancy: in some informal research among her acquaintances, they were not aware of the term.

Gail: doesn’t have least trouble with eliminating “Area”. She recalls apostle Paul talking about eating meat that was sacrificed to idols, then even though it is of no concern to us, we should refrain from it if it causes a bother to stumble.

Sonya: NYMC has renamed the “Overseer” role to “District Minister” to avoid use of a term that would appear pejorative to African Americans.

Ben: raised question about what administrative issues are raised like changing our incorporation name, cost of a sign, address updates.

One issue to dropping use of the acronym, is that the whole name of our church is rather cumbersome to have to utter. It seems to be unavoidable to use an acronym.

Committee was at a consensus block regarding a name change that would incorporate something like Rochester Mennonite Church, because Ben felt strongly that these represented a loss in our identity.

Chrissie voiced appreciation for the work that the committee has done and affirms the idea of changing our website name.

Melissa: has always felt that the term RAMF was aesthetically unpleasing, and has always just used “The Mennonite Church”.

Ron: Needs more information before he could make decision. Wants to research it among his acquaintances.

Teresa: She doesn’t feel that the term RAMF being offensive in other contexts should be cause for us to change our name.

Andrew: Feels that more research is needed.

The congregation is clearly not at consensus on this proposal. Some of the ad-hoc committee members expressed a certain degree of frustration regarding the questions of “how offensive is the term ‘RAMF’”. The evidence that the term is offensive in some contexts is clear. It seems that the future discussion needs to focus on determining whether we feel that this new knowledge is sufficient grounds for us to change the name of the church.

**Congregation sang “What does the Lord require of you?” from *Sing the Story*, again.**

### **3. Revision of Covenant**

The ad hoc committee (Amy, Walter, Mark) developed the following revision:

#### Rochester Area Mennonite Fellowship Covenant (*draft revision*)

Rochester Area Mennonite Fellowship is a Christian community in the Mennonite tradition whose core values include Reconciling, Affirming, Mutual participation, and Following Christ.

Because I also affirm those values, honor that tradition, and wish to be a part of this community as it lives those values, I covenant with my fellow members to:

- Grow as a disciple of Christ, learning with each other what it means to follow Jesus;
- Seek peace, within our church and without, restoring right relationships, standing with the marginalized

and oppressed, and working for reconciliation;

- Participate in the life of the community, giving of myself as I am called, helping to discern the gifts and callings of others, and accepting and affirming the participation and contributions of my fellow members;
- Care for everyone within our fellowship, offering support and nurture, sharing burdens and joys, listening and speaking in love, and giving and receiving counsel, extending grace and forgiveness; and
- Offer hospitality to guests and strangers, welcoming those who seek, and receiving with joy those who wish to join us as we seek together.

Discussion: Gail affirms the new wording and found it to be a huge improvement. Asked about the change from “we” to “I” throughout. Walter explained that in our discussion with Alan Newton, Alan suggested that we should use “I” language since it represents a commitment by individuals.

Anthony: objects to the word “value” in context of a covenant. Thinks that covenant is about things we do or are, not what we believe or value. All the wording in this revision refers to things we do. He would suggest replacing “value” with “commitment” or “practice”.

Andrew: Wonders if the “and” at the end of the forth bullet should be eliminated.

Kathy S.: suggested that all the “I’s” be changed to “we” except for phrase “Because I also affirm those values, ... fellowship members to:”

Tested consensus: Anthony would block based on his objections. All others were at four or five level. The committee will take these suggestions and work them into further revisions.

#### **4. Update from Outreach Committee**

Bryan shared a little history of their getting to know people at Trinity Emanuel Presbyterian Church. Next Sunday, they are inviting up to about ten of us to come have lunch with them.

#### **5. Volunteer Unit Update- Roger**

This year we tried an experiment of having the unit live in a house with the local leadership (Steph and Dan Giles), and the leadership also happens to be married! It turns out that this living circumstance has been too stressful on the Giles and their marriage. So, the volunteers (Arturo, Deanna, & Kriteen) are moving to a new apartment that is a couple blocks from the Giles.

#### **Leadership Team Report:**

We have been working on revising our bylaws and will be distributing a draft in the upcoming weeks. We are in need of a replacement member for Bob Carter who is going to be stepping off the LT next month.

#### **Education Ministry Report:**

The Education Ministry has planned an extension of the improving conversation series, an extension from retreat (now completed) and a 4 Sunday series on immigration led by Rob and Wendy Shelly and Bryan Babcock for February. We also plan to do a Scripture Quilt, where we share and focus on meaningful scriptures for our fellowship, with the goal of identifying 12 core scriptures. We will also continue the Life Fare series periodically, and are looking for other ideas.

The Education Ministry would still like to have 1 or 2 new members to share our planning meetings.

#### **Worship Ministry Report:**

Worship Ministry continues to coordinate people and ideas for worship services. We want to thank everyone who has contributed in so many ways over the last months – bringing music, scripture, children’s times, thoughts on the scripture. We can’t do our work well without help from many people in the congregation! There is a fancy name for what we try to do here (even a book written about it). It’s called **multi-voiced**

**worship.** To be successful, multi-voiced worship

- depends on the vitality of the spiritual life of worshippers, who are together responsible for creating corporate worship.
- equips many voices to express praise to God in many ways,
- sharing their own stories as they retell the big story of God.

(from *The Power of All: Building a Multi-Voiced Church*, Stuart and Sian Murray Williams)

So please continue to pray, read and enrich your personal spiritual life. And take a chance when we approach you for assistance to help lead worship. Consider lending your voice to our multi-voiced worship, and say “yes” when we look for people to lead, read and challenge us in worship.

Coordinating a whole service can be daunting. Worship team is very happy to help plan a service if someone is interested in leading some part of it. Please come to us with any ideas you have.

Along with regular weekly worship, we will also have an Ash Wednesday service. Lent materials are in the worship binder, and are fairly comprehensive if you would like to sign up to lead during Lent or Easter.

Again, a big THANK YOU to our many worship contributors.

**Rochester Area Mennonite Fellowship Approved 2013 Budget  
With FY 2012 Budget/Actual Expenses**

Category	2012 Budget	2012 Final	Approved 2013 budget
<b>Income</b>			
Offerings	69,100	74,960	69,100
Special Offerings		8,004	
Interest		20	
Rental Income	2,400	2,550	2,400
Designated Income		700	
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>71,500</b>	<b>86,234</b>	<b>71,500</b>
<b>Outflows</b>			
<b>Local:</b>			
Facilities			
Cleaning	1,200	1,200	1,200
Custodial & Supplies	450	180	300
Mortgage	20,500	23,160	20,500
Maintenance of Building	1,000	1,481	1,000
Maintenance of Grounds	1,100	1,086	2,400
Furnishings		1,049	100
Utilities & Refuse	3,200	2,963	3,200
City & County Fees	1,100	1,112	1,100
Insurance	2,250	3,089	2,000
Decor	150	23	150
<b>Total Facilities</b>	<b>30,950</b>	<b>35,343</b>	<b>31,950</b>
Administration			
Office/Postage	150	119	350
Leadership Team	450	81	200
Telecommunications	650	674	700
<b>Total Administration</b>	<b>1,250</b>	<b>874</b>	<b>1,250</b>
Miscellaneous Local	200	180	200
Hospitality/Gifts	750	961	850
Subscriptions	1,100	1,108	1,100
Library	300	65	150
Retreat	6,000	6,514	6,000
Seminars	1,500	1,260	1000
Congregational support/speakers	250	150	250
Sponsorships	500	500	500
Youth	75	205	300
<b>Total Local</b>	<b>42,875</b>	<b>47,160</b>	<b>43,550</b>

Category	2012 Budget	2012 Final	Approved 2013 budget
Project Capital (Shed this year)		2,008	
<b>Ministries</b>			
Education:			
Adult Hour	150	106	150
Sunday School	900	974	900
Safe Ministry for Children/Youth	100	120	220
Worship	420	371	400
Outreach	75	0	75
Pastoral Care	75	57	75
<b>Total Ministries</b>	<b>1,720</b>	<b>1,628</b>	<b>1,820</b>
<b>Sharing:</b>			
Churchwide Ministries			
Mennonite Church USA	500	500	550
Mennonite Central Committee	1,500	1,500	1,650
Mennonite Disaster Service	500	1,458	550
Mennonite Mission Network	700	700	775
Everence/Corinthian Plan	830	826	830
Mennonite Men/Join Hands	500	500	750
Mennonite Women USA (NEW)			750
Mennonite Voluntary Service	800	800	875
Mennonite World Conference	175	175	200
<b>Total Churchwide Ministries</b>	<b>5,505</b>	<b>6,459</b>	<b>6,930</b>
Education			
Mennonite Colleges (4)	1,000	1,000	1,200
Mennonite Education Agency	1,000	1,000	1,200
Minority Education	1,000	1,000	1,200
Mennonite Seminaries(2)	500	500	600
<b>Total Education</b>	<b>3,500</b>	<b>3,500</b>	<b>4,200</b>
Home Missions			
Beaver Camp	1,500	1,500	1,650
Christian Peacemaker Teams	2,250	2,250	2,500
MVS unit in Rochester	1,200	1,270	1,200
New York Mennonite Conference	6,500	6,500	7,150
New York Mennonite Women	1,500	1,500	
Partners in Restorative Initiatives	2,250	2,250	2,500
<b>Total Home Missions</b>	<b>15,200</b>	<b>15,270</b>	<b>15,000</b>
Projects			
Sharing Fund	0	1,120	0
Education Fund	2,700	4,700	0
Other Projects	0	5,985	0
<b>Total Projects</b>	<b>2,700</b>	<b>11,805</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total Sharing</b>	<b>26,905</b>	<b>37,034</b>	<b>26,130</b>
<b>Total Outflows</b>	<b>71,500</b>	<b>85,822</b>	<b>71,500</b>