

## **Congregational Meeting Minutes, Rochester Area Mennonite Fellowship**

Sunday 9/22/2013 12:15

Present: Bryan Babcock, Judy Bernhart, Bob & Jen Carter, Bekah Enns, Drew Langdon, Ket Miller, Walt & Teresa Nickeson, Austin & Megan Pettigrew, Ben Price, Nancy Price, Amy & Jason Poole, Anthony Ricciuti, Mark Shelly (recorder), Roger (Facilitator) & Sonya Stauffer Kurtz, Rachel & Aaron Stuckey.

*Began with reading of Ephesians 4:1b to 6 and sang "Will you let me be your servant".*

### **Reports**

#### **Worship Ministry**

Thank you to the many worship leaders who have led meaningful and thought-provoking services over the past few months.

On October 6, part of the service will be a recovenanting, similar to the service we have in June each year. If you weren't able to attend the service in June, you will have an opportunity to sign the church covenant.

On October 13th we will begin a 6-week worship series. We will explore what it means to love our neighbors, including those who are close to home, those who have been rejected by our city and our nation, and those who live around the world. Materials will be available soon. Please consider leading. There will be a children's offering during the series to raise money for the children of Syria, so save your coins!

#### **Stewards**

Thanks for lawn mowing and shed painting.

Fall Cleanup Day will be the 2nd week of November

PiRI has a new executive director, occupying the NE room.

**Pastoral Ministry** Kathy Kern (replacing Rachel S), Teresa Nickeson, Kathy Shelly & Wendy Shelly

We believe that our purpose as a team is to facilitate the spiritual, physical, and emotional growth of the congregation through prayer, fellowship and encouragement of each member. This is done by arranging gatherings, retreat, special functions, and reaching out to those within the congregation in need.

Activities:

- The plans for retreat are on schedule....one week and counting
- Recently we focused our coordinating support for Sonya and Judy, who have had health challenges.
- A camp-out was held for the children (and Ben) at Rob and Wendy's house
- We organized an 80th birthday party which was crashed by 2 unknown women, Rogina and Briana.

We are putting together a binder of important information which will contain current gift pledges, cleaning and greeting schedules and other pertinent information (separate from the one in the kitchen).

Kathy Kern presented and Everence update and what they have to offer us. A certain percentage of our congregation must use Everence resources to continue to receive our matching grants.

This month's Special Offering will be the Spiritus Christi prison ministry that Eileen Hurley presented to the fellowship a few months ago. The special offering in November will be for the migrant farmworker families.

### **Outreach Ministry**

Church partnership has been a focus, to counter the racial division of Sunday morning. The process is process with Trinity Emanuel. Another church in the 19<sup>th</sup> ward, St. Steven's Episcopal Church, has expressed some interest.

### **MVS Unit.**

We welcomed our two new VSers, present at this meeting. The new VS house is close to the homes of Babcocks and Pettigrews. With only two stipends, the budget is tight this year.

**Leadership Team** Bob Carter, Jason Poole, Kathy Shelly, Rachel Stuckey

Since no one has been found to take Bob and Rachel's place, they are continuing on. Given the level of effort, activities and meetings are scaled back somewhat. They are hoping to discern if there is someone who is willing to join January 2014.

Recently the focus has been on the content of this meeting.

Childcare for Hazel & Jamie during the service. Consider a Sunday a month, talk to Teresa.

### **Finance**

As of 21 September 2013, we have \$23 342 in our checking account. That includes \$9 081 Education Fund—no more disbursements are expected this year. \$643 in the Sharing Fund having made one \$500 disbursement this quarter, \$5 411 collected as Special Offering for the Immigrant Scholarship Fund awaiting Arturo's tuition bill, and \$8 207 in our General Fund.

We are almost 2/3 of the way through our fiscal year (February 1), have received a bit more than 2/3 of projected offerings (\$52.5K of \$71.5K), spent a bit more than 2/3 of our projected budget (\$49.3K of \$71.5K), and have given about 3/4 of our budgeted giving. Even though our General Fund is ~\$6 500 over our "zero balance" of \$1 664, I have not yet given our budgeted donations to organizations that we usually give to in November and December. Our mortgage is paid through November; we currently owe \$184,411.

**Education Ministry** Anthony, Amy, Jason, and Mark

We would like to start the Adult Hour promptly at 11:15 AM. This year we will be having only one organized group meeting in a circle in the sanctuary. If you plan to continue

fellowship instead (that is OK), please help the group by taking your coffee and conversation into the Library, Foyer or Conference Room.

The Education Ministry plans to organize the Adult Hour into 4 areas, with the following 4 week blocks planned for the first half of the year. These areas will be repeated with different topics for the second half.

Area	Study	Organized by
<b>Bible Study</b>	Selected from Dig In, scriptures important to Anabaptists	Anthony
<b>Spiritual Formation</b>	Discerning Together	Amy
<b>Mennonite Studies</b>	The Purposeful Plan, 7 priorities of the Mennonite Church USA	Mark
<b>Contemporary Issues</b>	Dismantling Racism	Jason

Sunday School is also provided for children of all ages following the worship service.

The suggestion was made to post this on the Library bulletin board.

### **Name change discussion** Facilitated by Rachel S.

At the request of the congregation, the LT has worked on a process on how to go forward with the discussion of a new name for the church. Though forming a committee for this work was considered, there were no volunteers.

The use of **Church and/or Fellowship (C/F)** is an issue in many names, and is a separate parallel question from the other part of the name. The list of names includes Church/Fellowship as a single item to focus on the name.

To gauge the sense of preference for C/F, we stood on a line between two walls of the sanctuary, one side favoring church and the other Fellowship. The distribution went from wall-to-wall, with a median on the fellowship side but several clusters along this continuum.

A **list of names** gleaned from previous meetings and discussions was presented. If there are new suggestions, they can be written in at the bottom of the list before next Sunday.

Step 1: To narrow this list (by approximately 1/3), each person will be given 6 or 7 (set to 6 after the meeting) that they can use to tag up to that number of most acceptable names. Not all of the stickers have to be used. Each individual should place no more than one sticker on any name. This will be available over the next two weeks.

Step 2: Once this list has been shortened to a shorter list, each person will be asked to indicate their top 3 choices in rank order: First choice, second choice, third choice. This will be used to order the list.

Step 3: An open group will be formed to meet in prayer to work on discernment on these names. The end result of this process is expected to be a proposal for the congregational meeting in November 2013.

A separate (possibly overlapping) group will meet to consider the details of what is required to actually change the name, including legal, financial, and practical matters. The work of this group will extend beyond the November. The timing may become more apparent as we work through the process.

At the time of this meeting, the list included:

- Agape Mennonite Church/Fellowship
- Bethel Mennonite Church/Fellowship
- Cherry Tree Mennonite Church/Fellowship
- Cobbs Hill Mennonite Church/Fellowship
- Community Mennonite Church/Fellowship
- Covenant Mennonite Church/Fellowship
- Eden Mennonite Church/Fellowship
- Fellowship/Church of Rochester Mennonites
- Hillside Mennonite Church/Fellowship
- Living Tree Mennonite Church/Fellowship
- Peace Mennonite Church/Fellowship
- Rochester Area Mennonite Church/Fellowship
- Rochester Mennonite Church/Fellowship
- Shalom Mennonite Church/Fellowship
- Tree of Life Mennonite Church/Fellowship

**Discussion** should take place all along the process (it will be a subject at Beaver Camp).

Time for discussion, 1 minute to talk. Some of the remarks:

- There are aesthetic and ethical reasons to move forward.
- Thanks for the depth of this important discussion. All things deserve reevaluation.
- Name is for us only in part; it is largely for those outside of our group.
- Need to come up with a name that will not be replaced by an acronym, since acronyms are by definition insider language.
- Time to reconsider the initial proposal to drop the "A". It meets the questions, and has significant support in the group.
- As the person here the longest, values tradition. Likes dropping the A to meet the need.
- Name is a label to identify rather than all-encompassing description of who we are. We don't need to have all of our identity captured in the name if it is a label.
- Mennonite is the most important part of it to keep (mentioned several times). It is also a key search term for those looking for us.

- Thanks for the LT efforts on this process. It is good to tend to the process, not just the results. Process today is evidence of having listen well.
- A wonderful list of names. Hebrew word for name is the same as "to listen to". A reflexion of our willingness to listen to God.
- It would be interesting to hear where some of the names came from. The feelings others have may change how I view them.
- Thanks to everyone for being a part of a process sometimes left to a room filled only with old men. Having served as delegate, keep Mennonite for solidarity around the country and the world.
- In listening to others, I hear two conflicting desires. There is a desire to limit change, valuing what we have used for years. On the other hand, some find change desirable, and feel that the end of this long process needs to be a big change. The challenge is embracing the whole fellowship with it's differences.
- Important to BE a Mennonite church, regardless of name.
- There is already a Community Mennonite Church in NY, and several other names are frequent across the Mennonite Church USA .
- Descriptive is the way to go, as pointed out by Walt N. in the last meeting.
- Hillside is maybe too much the Children's Center or a mental health facility. Still interested. Likes Hillside, but aware of the possible confusion. Curious what other people think.
- Mennonite has been intentionally added to most names. These have been gleaned from notes; there are more possibilities.

*Worship. "Help us to help each other" #362. We were surprised and thankful to be 13 minutes ahead of schedule.*

### **Bylaws (Walt & Bob)**

Though we have a set of bylaws assembled when we filed for incorporation with NY State, these are obsolete and irrelevant. Bylaws are meant to be changed over time, to reflect rather than define our process. We could benefit from bylaws that are consistent with what we value and help us make some things clearer. We have not yet evaluated our structure formally, which should be done as we set bylaws.

A draft set of bylaws originally put together by Walt were distributed for markup. Several thanked Walt for the work he put into this document. We are still early in the process.

We divided into 4 groups to read, discuss, and suggest modifications of the draft bylaws. We were encouraged to indicate what doesn't reflect current practice, what areas reflect practice that we don't like, and where more clarity is needed. Section VIII has been identified as an area that will be rewritten., so we are not asked to critique this part. A facilitator will note the comments and share them as we come back together. The

individual markups will also be turned in for review, with optional name to help understand the suggested changes.

Highlights from groups, placed buy article.

**Article IV:**

- #1 add broader commitment.
- Believer's baptism allows participation before age 18.
- #5 up to #3
- #4 may be irrelevant given #1 & #2

**Article V.**

- Authority of congregation is subject to Christ.
- Relationship to the conference should be commented on.

**Article VI.**

- VS Unit deserves separate mention as a ministry.
- Outreach wording could be more active.
- 6C May need to be clarified. Similar to ministries.
- 1-3 year term is not clear.
- Sunday School Coordinator position.

**Article IX:**

- not always balanced (intentionally). Also need wording for the case of year end deficit.

**Article X:**

- Screening process is not adequate to define what we are doing. This should be more explicit.

**Article VIII**

1. To be addressed in next congregational meeting. This will be rewritten based on previous decision-making document.

The document will be revised, and we expect gradual ratification of the articles over next several meetings.

**Committee to oversee immigrant scholarship fund.**

Wendy joined by Kathy S. and Rob. Jen Carter

*Worship Song, "If you believe and I believe"*

Submitted by Mark Shelly in collaboration with Aaron Stuckey and Jen Carter