

**Rochester Mennonite Fellowship  
Congregational Meeting Minutes  
September 17, 2017**

In attendance: Aaron and Rachel Stuckey, Nancy Price, Judy Bernhart, Amy and Jason Poole, Gail and Anthony Ricciuti, Billy Dickerson, Melissa Carlson, Walt and Teresa Nickeson, Tammy Pedersen, Dan Giles, Rob and Wendy Shelly, Mark and Kathy Shelly, Eloise Schrag, Chrissie Walls

~**Devotional** [Rachel Stuckey] Based on 1 Corinthians 12, “There are many gifts.”

~**Conversation Circles:** Kathy Shelly introduced the idea of Conversation Circles, together with guidelines. (See these at end of minutes)

~ **A Conversation Circle opening: What do you appreciate about this Community?** Shared values, mutual care, standing up for our convictions, the ability to laugh, broad participation in the life of the church, open doors, a space to explore countercultural values and lifestyles, we are willing to do things differently, the telling of stories, humility, community and friendship, feeling of family, we are willing to try.

~**Refugee Family Update/Conversation Circle:**

**What do we celebrate about our sponsorship of a refugee family?** Initial enthusiasm for the “project,” enthusiastic/energetic children in the family, Deborah’s early visit to RMF, coffee jar collection for Zytumi’s wedding, taking Bobby to basketball, seeing different parts of town and being in new environments, hearing their stories, it was a really good idea, getting to know Deborah, appreciation of Melissa’s and Chrissie’s efforts.

**What do you find personally challenging about our commitment to work with Deborah’s Family?** Finding time and energy to contribute, don’t know how I can be useful or don’t feel I have the skills, I feel disconnected from the project, no emotional energy to get involved, social interactions are not my strength, is there a mismatch between what they want from us and what we want or are able to give, feels badly that she has decreased involvement with family, the travel distance to their place is an obstacle, language barrier is an obstacle, can many of us really expect to build a relationship when if we can only engage with the family sporadically, feels like the work is hers alone and not owned by the whole Fellowship.

**“Learnings and Moving forward” of Conversation Circle:** Initial understanding of relationship with family was more limited than present understanding (e.g. just helping them with a few practical needs vs ongoing relationship), several noted that we have seen a progression from RMF community ownership of this “project” to active involvement by a few, to passing the entire work off to Melissa. Melissa shared stories of interactions with the family and neighborhood. Melissa proposed participation in sponsoring tickets

and providing transportation for kids to an upcoming Haunted Hayride, “The Refugee Family” is now about relationships rather than meeting practical needs or “having a Refugee Program.”

**~Report on Mennonite Church USA Convention in Orlando [Mark]**

A Resolution on Israel/Palestine was discussed and approved.

<http://mennoniteusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/IP-Resolution.pdf>

Future Church Summit: 98 tables of 8-10 people spent 15.5 hours discussing future direction of the Mennonite Church. There was celebration of the 100 year anniversary of Mennonite Women USA and the contribution of women to the Mennonite Church. There was much discussion of issues related to minorities in the church. LGBTQ persons seemed to have an accepted seat at the table. A summary document was created that will be used as guide for MC USA leaders going forward.

<http://mennoniteusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Future-Church-Summit-Outcomes-Report.pdf>

Kathy Shelly has recordings of the worship services at Convention for anyone interested.

**~Acoustics [Aaron]:**

Our worship space is designed to have optimal acoustics for singing. Drawbacks to this design are that small background noises are amplified, and there is an “echo” or reverberation that can make it more difficult to hear individual speaking voices, especially during potlucks or group activities. Additional factors related to seating arrangements and voice projection of individual speakers makes it difficult for some people to hear others. Potential modifications to address these concerns include amplification systems, carpeting the floor, or installing acoustical tiles. However, these modifications have financial costs, change the appearance of our space, and could adversely affect music acoustics. The Stewards ask for input from congregational members on what our priorities are for acoustics, as we seek to balance the inevitable trade-offs and costs of any modifications.

**~Community Outreach:** This agenda item was not discussed due to time constraints. Leadership Team has decided to place some ads in City Newspaper to let those in the broader community know we’re here and that we welcome visitors/new members. They would like congregational feedback on wording for these ads. Amy will get them in midweek announcements and solicit feedback at retreat.

**~Ministry Reports: See below**

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**Education Ministry** – Submitted by Kathy Shelly

Members of the Education Ministry for 2017-18 are: Mark and Kathy Shelly, Gail Ricciuti, Ron Lugbill, Judy Bernhart

As Education ministry plans for the year, we try to rotate between these 4 themes: Spirituality, Scripture, Social issues, and Anabaptist studies.

After an introduction to Adult hour by Aaron and Kathy S. on Sept. 10, we will then begin a series on anti-racism by studying the book *Trouble I've Seen* by Drew Hart in the first 4 Sundays in October. If you are interested in obtaining a copy of the book to read, please let Kathy know asap. There are 4 copies available and she will order more on Monday, Sept. 18.

Next we will be studying the gospel of Luke for 4 Sundays to run concurrently with the worship series. (There will be a break in there for a congregational meeting November 19). To round out the fall/ early winter, Ron will lead 3 weeks studying *Anabaptist Essentials: Ten Signs of a Unique Christian Faith* by Palmer Becker. Ron notes: "Interestingly, non-resistance and non-conformity are not listed among the 10 signs of Anabaptist faith - So, come and find out what are the 10 signs." Looking ahead to the rest of January, we are planning a series on Sabbath.

Due to the suggestion by Ben, the Conversation Group will be resuming as another option for Adult hour. Attendance can vary Sunday to Sunday. This group will meet in the library and will start with space for response to the worship service. Other faith discussions and questions will be explored as brought up by those in the group. Ben is willing to facilitate some of the time and will be looking for others to share that role.

We encourage everyone to try participating in adult hour. We're keeping a series usually to four weeks so it doesn't prolong a topic which people might not be as interested in– the trade-off is that we may not be able to cover this topic as in-depth as others we want to go. Some want to read the material ahead – others do not. Please let members of Education Ministry know of suggested topics for books or themes and of your willingness to lead.

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**Pastoral Ministry** - Submitted by Nancy Price

We have revised our policy regarding requests for assistance from nonmembers. We have decided we will not give rental assistance unless the person has a connection with a RMF member. Instead we will provide a grocery store gift card or bus pass depending on their situation and will provide them with a list of resources they can use for rental assistance.

Amy and Rachel Paolucci- Kleinow have provided us an extensive list of community resources.

Sunday school materials were ordered for Izzie's 3-year old son, Joseph and a class will be provided for him. Izzie would like to keep him in the worship service and she is working on

helping him be less noisy. We will be attuned to offer some babysitting during the worship service if he is out for much of the service.

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**Finance Ministry** –Submitted by Jen Carter, Treasurer

**Pledge forms/ budget building process**

The Finance Ministry will be offering pledge forms near the end of September. Forms and ministry’s budget input will be requested for early October. We will build our proposed budget and present it in the agenda for the November congregational meeting.

**2017 budget update:**

We are very comfortable financially. We are approximately . 2/3 through our fiscal year. We are on track with both income and expenditures.

**Beaver Camp**

One of the exciting things that our church budgets for is almost upon us! Retreat at Beaver Camp! It is a large item in our budget, surpassed only by our mortgage and our donation to NYMC. This meaningful time to grow together as church is completely covered by our budget.

**Chris Passonneau gift**

Chris’ sister Polly gave a \$3000 gift to our church from Chris’ estate.

**Special Offerings:**

I (Jen) know that we had a lot of special offerings on top of each other in June, July, and August and I’m aware that it might not have been easy to keep them straight. However, mostly I find myself grateful for our collective compassion and generosity.

We gave **\$1,266 to Camp Deerpark** “where needed most” and I expect much of it was used to renovate their basketball court. It is hugely popular with their campers and the old court had been closed as it was unsafe. While they were at it, they also added electrical service so they no longer need to run an extension cord out the chapel window to the court!

We gave **\$880 to the Convention offering benefitting women’s ministries in the Mennonite church.** (Mennonite Women USA, Women in Leadership, & Sexual Abuse Prevention Initiatives)

We gave **\$1426 (\$1326 special offering plus \$100 honorarium) to the Smoker family.**

We gave **\$1966 to Alvaro’s family** with Christin Babcock’s help.

We are still collecting coins for Mennonite Central Committee.

**Fund Balances:**

Our General Fund has \$18.5K, soon to be about \$6K less due to retreat expenses.

(This is up about \$8K from our opening balance although based on giving patterns I maintain that other than the sizable Chris gift, it is primarily from front-loaded giving, not an indication of excess.)

Sharing Fund:           \$2,330.

Savings: \$9,132.  
Capital Fund: \$11,339 (this includes the \$5339 CD maturing in December plus our newly opened CD for \$6000 maturing in June)  
Outreach: \$3,294.  
Immigrant Ed Fund: \$526  
Education at Mennonite Institution Fund: \$6081  
Special (Offerings) Fund: \$82, earmarked for MCC kits, will be added to coin collection through the end of September

Our mortgage balance is \$108K

[Minutes compiled by Rob Shelly, 9/17/17]

### Guidelines for Circles

Only the person hold the Talking Piece may speak in the circle and everyone else is invited to listen.

Show respect to everyone in the circle at all times.

Speak honestly.

Stay seated in the circle.

Keep everything said in the circle confidential.

Speak from the heart: your truth, your experience, your perspective.

Listen from the heart: let go of stories that make it hard to hear each other.

Trust that you know what to say: no need to rehearse.

Say just enough: Without feeling rushed, be concise, and considerate of the time of others.

Are there other things that you need to feel comfortable sharing in the circle?