

Rochester Mennonite Fellowship
Congregational Meeting – Minutes
Sunday, March 20, 2016

Present: Rob Shelly, Walt Nickeson, Dan Giles (facilitator), Chrissie Walls, Anthony Ricciuti, Rachel Stuckey, Mark Shelly, Jeffrey Weaver, Jen Carter, Kathy Shelly, Gail Ricciuti, Amy Durkee, Judy Bernhart, Melissa Carlson, Nancy Price, Aaron Stuckey, Tim Armstrong, Juli Armstrong, Wendy Shelly, Bob Carter, Roger Kurtz (notes)

Opening devotional

Anthony related a passage about the story of Dirk Willems, from the book *Amish Grace* (Stephen Nolt et al., eds.), with some accompanying thoughts about forgiveness. He reminded us to be mindful of opportunities for forgiveness as we move through this meeting.

Evaluation of tutoring program

For the past three months, Tsegaye has been using our building to run a Saturday tutoring program for children from Rochester's Ethiopian community. At the moment, the following RMFers have helped to provide tutoring: Rob, Wendy, Judy, Nancy, and Melissa. Amy asked for responses about how we think it is going:

- Melissa noted that some of the children were not aware that it is a church building.
- Judy noted that it's not always the same children each week. A lot of the kids don't necessarily need tutoring *per se*, but they enjoy coming here. Up to twelve children participate each week.
- Gail wondered how the program affects the cleaning rotation. Melissa said the cleaning can happen any time (even while the kids are here).
- Wendy said that Tsegaye is grateful for the use of the space.
- Melissa noted that homework seems to be less of a focus than play.
- As the weather gets nicer, going outdoors can be a good and new activity.
- Tsegaye will be gone during the month of May, but the program will continue.
- Some concern was expressed about supervision of the kids while they are in the building; some wonder if there should be tighter control and some wonder if there are cross-cultural issues at play that would be good for us to take into consideration when evaluating supervision
- Wendy suggested that the RMFers who have participated might get together with Tsegaye to discuss the activities.

Results of congregational conversation on outreach

Amy reported on recent conversations and a survey about our congregation's involvement in outreach. Based on those responses, the leadership team developed a mission statement for the outreach ministry, in the hopes that this ministry will be revived this next year:

The mission of Rochester Mennonite Fellowship's Outreach Ministry is to engage the congregation in service in our community that uses our gifts and talents to meet the felt needs of those we serve. The ministry seeks and supports service opportunities that foster relationships between RMF members and others in the community and that align with our values of peace and justice.

Amy noted that the outreach ministry also serves to support existing outreach and to pray regularly for current involvements and activities in the future. All are asked to consider serving on the outreach ministry when we do our gift pledge process later this year.

Call for nominations for vacant Leadership Team slot

Wendy reported that there will be one opening on Leadership Team starting this summer, to replace her. There is a nomination form in mailboxes and it will also be sent electronically via the midweek email. Please turn it in by April 10. (Continuing members are Dan, Anthony, Aaron, and Amy.)

Request for delegates

Dan reported that he represented our church at the NYMC district meeting at Clarence Mennonite Fellowship yesterday. There is an upcoming delegate meeting on April 16 in Auburn NY, to which Nancy has agreed to serve as a delegate. (Our church is eligible to send as many as 3 delegates.) Rachel will also be there as part of the coordinating council. She will not be representing us as a delegate.

Ministry reports

The PASTORAL CARE MINISTRY has not met this month, so has nothing new to report.

The EDUCATION MINISTRY notes that there will be a hymn sing during adult hour on Easter Sunday. Subsequent Sundays will involve finishing the *Toxic Charity* book study. Beginning May 1, we will be discussing the meaning and practice of prayer; Gail is looking for people to join her in planning. Also in the plans are a meeting to hear about the work of PiRI, and reprises of congregation conversation and "getting to know you" events. Sunday School ends either 6/12 or 6/19. Also, *"Looking ahead, the Education Ministry would be blessed if another of you would join to share this work in Christian formation."*

The WORSHIP MINISTRY reports that no-one has yet signed up to lead after Easter, at which point we will be returning to lectionary texts. There are more complete materials available for Pentecost Sunday. Also, there is a plan to do a series of services on prayer in conjunction with the adult hour sessions on that topic. Nancy reminded us that there is a list of individuals who are willing to help with parts of the

worship (e.g., the meditation, children’s story, drama, reading, etc.); signing up to lead worship does not require doing everything by yourself.

The STEWARDS report that the sanctuary door has been oiled and no longer squeaks, and they have noted the missing light bulbs in the sanctuary. There will be a Spring work day, with the date yet to be determined.

The FINANCE COMMITTEE distributed a revised budget, containing final numbers for Fiscal Year 2015 and an updated (“stretch”) budget for 2016.

They also reported that special offerings in 2015 totaled \$6289:

February:	Shelter 44 (Ministry of Fort Drum)	\$ 591
April:	St. Josephs’ House of Hospitality	\$ 614
July:	Beaver Camp Campership Fund	\$ 1400
September	Salvation Army Rebuilding Saipan	\$ 82
October	Rochester City School District books	\$ 972
November	Open Door Mission	\$ 208
December	Immigrant Education Fund	<u>\$ 2962</u>
	Total	\$ 6829

In May, we will review our status in relation to the “stretch” budget that we passed for this year.

Discussion of financial priorities and values

Tim opened with a time to share about how households make giving decisions (To the church? How much? Special versus regular offerings? Outside of church? Time versus money? Amount to church versus other priorities?) A variety of responses were offered.

Aaron led us in a prioritizing exercise, in which everyone was given 9 stickers to distribute across 17 budget categories. (Appending one or more stickers indicates support of the category as a priority.)

Discussion prior to the exercise included the following observations:

- The question was raised as to whether the category for the mortgage is appropriate alongside the other categories. The mortgage is held with Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM), which uses the interest payments to fund its mission work, and the principal is returned to the fund that gets loaned out to other churches like ours. We currently pay slightly more than the minimum repayment amount. The loan is slated to be paid off in 7-9 years, depending on the level of payment we maintain. In the end, it was decided to remove this category from the exercise.
- It was noted that the 17 categories only include existing budget lines, and do not offer the option for new initiatives. A category was added for “Other,” and individuals were encouraged to specify what kinds of initiatives these might be.

- It was noted that the majority of categories, because they are mostly denominational agencies, represent non-local giving.
- It was noted that the Corinthian Plan asks for a fixed amount (\$830).

The number of stickers appended to each category was as follows:

- 26 – Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)
- 23 – Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS)
- 17 – Other (specific suggestions: “Rochester-based ministries” and “Addressing poverty and violence in Rochester”)
- 16 – Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT)
- 16 – Partners in Restorative Initiatives (PiRI)
- 13 – New York Mennonite Conference (NYMC)
- 13 – Mennonite Mission Network (MMN)
- 11 – Mennonite Church USA (MCUSA)
- 11 – Join Hands
- 8 – Corinthian Plan
- 8 – Mennonite Education Agency (MEA) Racial/Ethnic Leadership Fund
- 7 – Mennonite Education Agency (MEA)
- 7 – Mennonite Colleges
- 5 – Mennonite Seminaries
- 5 – Mennonite Women
- 3 – Mennonite Voluntary Service (MVS)

Discussion that followed included the following points:

- We may wish to have a discussion about balancing local versus non-local initiatives.
- If we did come up with a specific outreach activity (under the concept of “other,” above) the congregation could likely find the funds for it. The larger issue might be defining the vision and the actual initiative, along with having the time to institute it.
- We may wish to add special offerings as a budget line item.
- The finance committee had also hoped to discuss several additional questions (“What are our church’s financial goals?” “Why do we have a budget?” “Who owns the money donated to RMF?”), but these were postponed due to time constraints.