

## **Congregational Meeting Minutes March 19, 2017**

In attendance: Tim A., Ron L., Rob and Wendy S, Aaron and Rachel S., Kathy K, Billy D, Anthony and Gail R. Kathy and Mark S, Terry and Lisa Zehr, Jen and Bob C, Melissa C, Nancy P, Amy D

Started meeting with prayer and a hymn

### **Finance Ministry Budget Surplus Proposal –**

Finance Ministry reports that we have a surplus of \$11,617.80

Surplus entirely due to giving of members and others outside the community

• After carefully considering the many options for how to allocate our surplus, we propose the following:

1. Give \$800 to each of these 5 organizations- Beaver Camp, Christian Peacemaker Teams, MennoMedia, Partners in Restorative Initiatives (PiRI), and Mennonite World Conference for a total \$ 4,000.
2. Increase our Capital fund by \$6,000.
3. Make an additional payment of \$ 2000 of Mortgage principal.
4. Float down our general fund balance by \$382.20, leaving a general fund balance of \$ 4,008.91.

• We as a finance ministry are confident this reflects the broader values of the congregation and balances both our current and inevitable future needs.

• Finance ministry is seeking affirmation from the congregation for this proposal.

A question was raised about whether it would make more sense to pay down the mortgage further rather than allocate so much to the capital fund. Aaron said that, at 10 years into the building, the stewards are aware that this is when capital items will start needing to be addressed. Increasing the capital fund at this time makes a lot of sense.

The proposal was unanimously affirmed

### **Ministry Reports**

#### Finance ministry report -

MVS Fund will be renamed the Outreach Fund for this fiscal year

April Special Offering: Camp Deerpark – outside NYC, which provides camp experience to inner city kids

#### Stewards –

Several lightbulbs out in foyer and sanctuary. Will be addressed on spring cleanup day, since replacement involves using a ladder.

#### Pastoral –

Thank you to everyone for your generous contributions to the Sharing Fund during the recent special offering. The Sharing Fund is used to address needs of those in the faith community.

2 save-the-date reminders:

Monday, May 15 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm: Drop in wedding celebration for MVS members Deanna and Arturo

Sunday, June 25 after Sunday School hour: Farewell potluck for the Kurtz family

With regard to the party for Kurtz'. Kathy S and Teresa would love help. Please contact them if you'd like to be involved.

#### Education –

We are 2 weeks into the Love is a Verb series from I John, and it seems to be going well. The series is 6 weeks total. After that, we have a person from CPT visiting, followed by a visit from Muhammad Shafiq, the Executive Director of the Hickey Center for Interfaith Studies and Dialogue. In May and June will be talking about Israel/Palestine and preparing our delegate to represent us in Orlando. We are always looking for people to help lead and also for suggestions/ideas.

#### Sunday School –

Wendy put in a plug for more teachers for next year, so that the current teachers can have a chance to participate in Adult Hour. We have been short-staffed this year. She also talked briefly about how fun and fulfilling it is. The kids are great!

#### Worship –

All Sundays are covered through Easter. Thank you! We will be using the Narrative Lectionary\*, instead of the Revised Common Lectionary, between Easter and Pentecost. Resource materials in the worship sign-up folder reflect this. Of course, individual worship leaders can choose to do whatever they want on those Sundays. We'd just like to give the Narrative Lectionary a try and see how it goes. We will celebrate the 10 year anniversary of the building on May 21. Dorothy and Milton Zehr are attending. The Siegrists have been invited but have not yet replied. Feel free to invite others for whom you think it would be meaningful.

\*The [Narrative Lectionary](#) is a four-year cycle of readings. On the Sundays from September through May each year the texts follow the sweep of the biblical story, from Creation through the early Christian church.

The texts show the breadth and variety of voices within Scripture. They invite people to hear the stories of Abraham and Sarah, Moses and the prophets, Jesus, and Paul. Listening to the many different voices within Scripture enriches preaching and the life of faith.

#### Outreach –

Melissa shared an encouraging story about Bobby and Deborah calling her just to say hi this past week. Melisa said, "Very nice to know that she misses us! And affirming that we do make a difference!" Melissa gets the impression they'd like a car. Perhaps we could help with that at some point.

Other outreach news: The Cobbs Hill folks had a meeting in our building last week without any of us present, so we don't know who came beyond the 4 I met, or the discussion, but they left the building locked up as requested. PIRI cancelled a training because of the winds.

#### Leadership Team –

Kathy shared about the Leadership Seminar at Sojourners the weekend of March 12. The speaker was talking about revitalizing congregations. Several of us came away with a desire to dive deeper into this – to look at our history, where are we now, and where we want to go. There's an opportunity to be part of a cohort of churches looking at church renewal through a

program called "Revive." Conference is supportive of this and willing to help financially. Kathy will be bringing specific thoughts to LT tomorrow night. More information is attached to these minutes. Starts in April. Year-long program. Wondering who in our congregation might want to participate. \$1800/year and Terry says conference will pay for ½. 2-4 people/congregation that will work with other congregations and also have individual consults with the two resource people. We have been asked to decide by April 9, but sooner would be better. Congregational assessment is first stage. Leadership Team will be discussing further tomorrow night.

Wendy asks whether we have the energy for it. A few people are affirming that they have the energy. Rob asks where the \$900 would come from. Jen says it easily fits within our budget. Rachel S. thinks it's timely and a good framework for having the discussions we've already been having. Aaron wonders if this will help us to address issues with regard to the decrease in attendance.

Overall, there was a sense that the congregation trusts Leadership Team to make the decision with regard to going forward with this or not.

Other items on which LT is currently focusing: Gift Pledge Tim and Leadership Team nominations for next year.

#### NY Mennonite Women's retreat yesterday-

Almost 30 women attended. We had a local speaker. Topic was *Living Courageously*. Women from Lowville, Clarence Center-Akron, Corning, Sojourners, and RMF. Wonderful day together. Grateful that we have this beautiful building in which to host.

#### **Proposal to Amend Bylaws:**

##### **Article IX. Fiscal Policies**

1. The fiscal year of Rochester Mennonite Fellowship shall be February 1 to January 31.
2. The budget of Rochester Mennonite Fellowship shall be developed by the Treasurer and the Finance Committee, in light of the church's vision, mission, and/or values, and be presented to the congregation for affirmation at the January congregational meeting.
3. If, by the time of the January congregational meeting, there is projected to be a surplus, the Finance Committee shall prepare a plan to disburse it and present that plan for approval at that meeting.
4. Rochester Mennonite Fellowship shall not require dues from its members.
5. Rent payments for use of the church building should be set to more or less cover congregational expenses, as of utilities and cleaning, and not to generate profit.

#### Proposed changes:

2. The budget of Rochester Mennonite Fellowship shall be developed by the Treasurer and the Finance Committee, in light of the church's vision, mission, and/or values, and be presented to the congregation for affirmation at a congregational meeting prior to the beginning of the next fiscal year.
3. If, at the close of the fiscal year, there is a surplus, the Finance Committee shall prepare a plan to disburse the surplus and will present that plan for congregational approval.

Both proposed changes were approved.

After a brief break, we began our second session on leadership with Terry Zehr.

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**Session Two – Anxiety and Our Awareness**

The purpose today is to present us with tools to help us in our process

*See handout attached what follows below are Terry's comments on the material on the handout.*

Review of last session

Polarity management is a way to look at things – a framework. Not a decision-making tool. Helps us engage in non-dual thinking as we address tensions.

Terry suggests we pull up the model we worked with last time and work more with it. Thinks there's a lot more for us to do with that. Model. Flesh it out.

Effect of Anxiety in Decision Making process

Each of us needs to understand and address anxiety in ourselves. Not possible to address communal anxiety without each of us doing our work as well.

The minute a conversation escalates due to anxiety, you stop. Address the escalation before continuing the conversation. Nothing constructive can be accomplished while still in grip of anxiety.

Terry discussed his study of the schism in late 1930s/early 1940s in NYMC and the role anxiety played. Sees how it continues to play out today.

Goal: Stay in constructive phase as much as possible (i.e., in Level One of Speed Leas' Levels of Conflict)

At Level 2 – we need to be aware of both the communal shift and also our internal shift

Has your idea or position now become attached to your personhood?

He pointed out the shift in language at this stage among Mennonites: often shift to passive aggressive language (e.g. "the leadership is" instead of naming the person; or to using the "Mennonite blank stare?")

This stage is the beginning of dualistic thinking.

Level 3: Contest

He notes that those in the middle feeling the pressure to align with a "side." Nuance leaves the conversation.

We get hooked because we love and want to please and include, but if the difference is an identity issue, we just have to lovingly let those people go.

If start to hear language that indicates that someone is defining another's motive, you know this is where you are: at the point of contest.

Level 4: Fight/flight

Terry notes that, at this point, *everyone* is feeling hurt.

In conclusion:

Terry notes that Americans are accustomed to being in level 2 or 3 all the time – our culture, Madison Avenue, politicians and media outlets generally want to keep us in this zone because it prevents us from thinking clearly. We are much more easily controlled/fooled.

NO matter what level we are at the time, we can chose to consciously de-escalate  
By naming where we are and deciding what the strategy is to bring us back down. Possibly we need quiet, or prayer, or a break

e.g.) “I notice our language is shifting. Are some of us getting anxious? What are we afraid of?”

pay attention to language shifts, shifts in body language  
possibly even build in check-in times – “are we staying at level 1 or ramping up?”  
possibly singing a song that re-centers us

We ended in prayer

### **Attachment**

More Information from NYMC re: the REVIVE program:

The invitation includes some of the following:

- 2-4 persons from within a congregation willing to take this opportunity and give it focused energy
- Howard and Cathy giving leadership, guidance and coaching
- Resource reading from other practitioners.
- Interaction along three levels... with Howard and Cathy... among participating congregations... within congregational teams
- Cost: \$145 per month or \$1800 per year

**The Coordinating Council of NY Mennonite Conference is offering to underwrite 50% of this cost for each congregation that signs up with the REViVe cohort!**

NYMC believes that this type of ongoing focus with specific, skilled, discerning leadership and guidance is *exactly* how our Congregational Renewal Fund is to be

utilized. Howard is a practitioner who brings a wealth of experience and creativity to assisting congregations find ways to reach into their communities with the Good News.