

**Rochester Mennonite
Congregational Meeting October 17, 2008**

Present: Mark S., Jeffery W., Nancy P., Thom M. (facilitator), Kathy S., Eileen S., Jen C., Victor K., Chrissie W., Sue K., Bob C. (devotions), Roger K. (notes)

Bob opened with a reminder that even in difficult economic times such as the world is in now, we turn God. Readings from Psalm 23 and a poem from Denise Levertov.

Business:

1. Piano in Sanctuary

Having used Shelly's piano in our sanctuary for a number of months, we discussed and evaluated that experience. The response was positive with no strong negative feelings expressed.

We affirmed the Leadership Team's proposal to purchase a piano. The piano committee is charged with the job of buying a piano, with a budget of up to \$2500. The money for the piano will come from our existing budget or resources; there will not be an additional fundraising campaign for this. The budget committee will identify an appropriate place in the budget for this sum to come from.

2. Report from Safe Ministries Committee

Roger reported on the work of a committee that is drawing up policies regarding working with children and youth in our church. The policy is designed to prevent and deal with potential sexual abuse. A finalized policy will be presented at the January congregational meeting for final approval with the hope of being implemented in September 2009. It includes the following features:

- All Sunday School teachers must worship with us for 6 months before teaching; youth mentors must be with us for 1 year
- All SS and youth works will undergo a yearly training on sexual abuse and how to recognize it, what our church's policies are, and how to respond to it.
- SS classes may have a single adult teacher in the room, but there will also be an additional "roamer" adult who will be checking in with all classes.
- Overnight events and other special events may have a higher bar for adult participation, e.g., there should be two adults of each gender on any overnight activity involving children.
- All teachers and youth workers will go through a screening process that may include criminal background checks and fingerprinting. The committee is recommending that ALL teachers (both new and continuing) be required to go through this.
- A Safe Sanctuary Committee consisting of the Leadership Team plus the SS Superintendent will be in charge of maintaining and enforcing this policy.

Discussion of this policy affirmed its importance and overall direction. There was discussion of whether or not fingerprinting is necessary or even meaningful. We were

reminded that this sort of policy is reassuring for visitors and newcomers who have children.

The committee will continue its work on the policy and will finalize it for congregational approval in January.

3. Website

The Church website has been updated; all affirmed Walt's fine work on this. The value of pictures featuring real people was also affirmed. It was agreed that it is a good guideline not to identify children by name if their picture appears on the site. If anyone in the congregation does not wish their picture to appear on the site, they should tell Walt.

4. Input for Next Year's Budget

The group was asked to suggest ways to deal with any excess funds we might have in our church budget at the end of this fiscal year. The purpose of having this discussion now is to avoid discussion of it at the January meeting. The Treasurer (Kathy S.) noted that while we are likely to have some excess, it will probably not be nearly as large as last year's.

We discussed the merits of a number of options for using any excess funds:

- Use it all to pay down the mortgage
- Use it all to contribute to worthy places outside our church
- Use half for the mortgage, half outside
- Use half inside (not necessarily mortgage), half outside
- Maintain an inside/outside ratio based on the proportions of that ratio in our present budget

Having heard our discussion and suggestions, the budget committee is now charged with making a decision on this matter.

5. Hospitality Committee

There are a number of hospitality-related responsibilities that are currently not clearly assigned. These include organizing potlucks, supervising the kitchen, organizing meals for special events, and facilitating the cookies and coffee each Sunday. We affirmed the idea of establishing a Hospitality Committee. This committee should not, we decided, include a representative on the Leadership Team. The Leadership Team will set up this committee.

We walked out into the fall night ...