

Rochester Mennonite Fellowship Congregational Meeting Minutes
November 19, 2017

Attending: Ron Lugbill, Melissa Carlson, Amy Durkee, Kathy Shelly, Mark Shelly, Kathleen Kern, Jen Carter, Nancy Price, Gail Ricciuti, Anthony Ricciuti, Dan Giles, Rob Shelly, Wendy Shelly, Gavin Paolucci-Kleinow, Rachel Paolucci-Kleinow, Walt Nickeson, Teresa Nickeson, Judy Bernhart, Eloise Schrag, Tammy Pedersen.

Discussion of Proposed 2018 Budget

Finance ministry again brought a conservative budget to the congregation for approval for the 2018 fiscal year. Jen reviewed the figures for year to date (as of 31 October) as compared to our current budget and reviewed categories with significant changes proposed in our new budget. Stewards want to continue to pursue a solution to acoustics problem in the sanctuary, and are expecting to replace the chairs for the conference room. Additional funds are budgeted for Menno Media this coming year, to support development of new hymnal and the SHINE curriculum. 5 organizations to which we already give will have \$800 more than we budgeted for last November in their YTD column, since we decided together at our March 2017 congregational meeting to give additional monies out of our excess from last fiscal year. Questions were answered; clarification was given about the amount remaining for our mortgage (\$106 K) and appreciation was given for the work of the finance ministry. A show of hands indicated approval of the proposed 2018 budget without amendment. Passed by consensus.

Ministry Report Highlights

REVIVE: Saturday, Nov 11th ~35 people from around NY state attended. See attached report.

NYMC Delegate report (Mark and Kathy)

There is some struggle meeting all the requests for funding. Tadelech was affirmed by delegates as Assistant Moderator and is a member of Coordinating Council. Rachel Stuckey began a 2nd term (4 yr) on Coordinating Council. Terry Zehr is now Conference Minister and our District Minister. State of the Conference: There are more Hispanic and Chin people coming to conference gatherings. It is hard to find people for leadership roles in the conference. Alden Mennonite Church is stepping back from Mennonite Church USA, but still is in NY Conference.

EDUCATION:

They plan to try having Adult Hour in the conference room again, hoping to create more space by removing the tables. They had moved Adult Hour to the sanctuary to accommodate more people, but apparently that has not worked well for some. See written report end of minutes.

Children's Sunday School is covered, but we need more adults to be with Lydia and Joseph during worship so that teachers get to participate in worship. See Wendy if you're willing to be in the rotation for this.

STEWARDS: Nothing to report.

LEADERSHIP TEAM:

The gift from the Estate of Chris Passoneau will be used to purchase a tree and bench for our church back yard, and several small donations to 3 recipients: RCommunity Bikes, Rachel and Gavin's adoption costs, Beaver Camp.

Ben & Hannah will be organizing a fundraiser meal for Rachel and Gavin's adoption costs.

FINANCE: Fund Balances as of 31 October 2017 (Approved budget attached)

General fund	\$15,201.72	(Estate gift of \$ 3K not included)
Sharing fund	\$ 829.88	
Mennonite Education fund	\$ 6081.00	
Immigrant Education fund	\$ 526.19	
Savings	\$ 9135.70	
Outreach Savings	\$ 3293.52	
(2) CDs Capital	\$ 11,343.51	
Sharing Fund disbursements for 2017	\$ 1,992	
Mortgage Balance	\$ 106,971	

PASTORAL:

We need people to sign up for a month to be responsible for coffee/potluck clean-up. (list was passed around and filled in).

The nature of our work is confidential. In general, we try to look for ways to help those in need within our Fellowship and to facilitate the spiritual, physical, and emotional growth of the congregation through prayer, fellowship and encouragement of each member. We also make decisions concerning dispersing some of the Sharing Fund to members in need, and to answer requests for help from the outside world.

WORSHIP:

The REVIVE team has been leading worship for the month of November. They have been challenging us to see how we can be better followers of Jesus in our church family and our community.

We will be using the Mennonite materials in the Leader Magazine, entitled *Yes! Let it be!* for the season of Advent through Epiphany (Dec 3 through Jan 7). Wendy is making the Advent wreath the worship table, Aaron will be the woodworker for the children's time, and we have characters for the weekly drama called "wisdom and wonder." Tammy and Teresa are making a banner that will be evolving each week.

When you sign up, you can always ask someone else to do the meditation (Dan, Gail, Jason, Kathy K., Mark, Chrissie, Tammy, Anthony, and Billy have all expressed interest in doing this). For those who have never led worship, if you would help getting the service ready, feel free to ask any member of the worship committee- Nancy, Gail, Tami Billy, or Kathy S.

If you have an idea for a single service or a short series, let members of the worship committee know. Check the church website for supplements to some of the worship materials.

Billy wants to make invitations in the neighborhood for Christmas Eve service.

Congregational check-in

The agenda listed this as a time to share our questions, concerns, and/or frustrations about things pertaining to RMF. Questions could be related to worship, faith formation, organizational structure, decision-making, leadership, stewardship, or any other issue. Leadership team proposed doing this check-in in 3 small groups, using the circle process. A request was made to keep everyone in one large group and this was eventually decided.

LT would like us to have a known process for sharing questions and concerns. Peace Circles are a way of listening to each other and connecting with each other. Some prefer one large circle so that concerns are heard by all. Some prefer small groups so that the total time is shorter. We need to focus on content and not process- that can take much time. Once we get used to the process, we won't have to talk about it anymore and can get to content quickly.

Concerns or questions on the slips of paper shared at the Peace Circle

- What is our church's stance on LGBTQ+ issues? Are we affirming and "Side A", and if so, can we be open and public about this? (Gavin)
- I wish the church had more diversity ?
- I think it is very important that our church prioritize becoming a more racially diverse congregation. (Rachel P-K)
- I'm concerned about our leadership structure. It seems we have a few people overworking and yet no one clearly on the point to hold us accountable to vision. I wish we could talk about this. (Amy)
- Is our model of shared ministry and leadership sustainable? Sees burnout. (Rob)
- I would like our church to address our leadership model in next 4-6 months. (Kathy S)
- "Community" feeling is not equal all around. Many people I don't know. ?
- In our attempt to listen we aren't hearing someone's need. (Teresa)
- With few layers and formal rules about how we interact, we are flexible and connected but we're also at the mercy of individual whim's and concerns. (Jen)
- With limited time and energy, I wonder about some of the ways we choose to spend our time. For example, we could use more time/ energy going into children's care and formation. Would "giving up" a few tasks like doing our own cleaning and mowing free us for this? (Wendy)
- Why are congregational meetings on Sunday after worship? I would prefer a separate time. (Eloise)
- This circle process still feels tedious for a congregational meeting. It seems better for actual conflict resolution. (Nancy)
- "What I want, I want even if you aren't with me." I'm concerned this attitude threatens our community without full engagement. (Mark)

- Sometimes I feel that worship themes/ series are “imposed” on us (or we accept them) from on high --- so that we’re kind of locked into a theme someone else has determined. (Gail)
- Sometimes I feel frustrated at my lack of ability to have time to do more than I do. As I see all the jobs some people do as we have no “staff”, I feel like some should be paid/ stipend positions -Kathy, Jen, etc. (Tammy)
- Item 4 on written agenda?

Additional comments:

Anthony: Concerned the transition between worship and education hour is too short and interrupts quality conversation. He would like us to agree to finish at 12:15, giving 10 extra minutes to the break. Also suggests dividing adult hour group into 2 groups if too many for conference room.

Nancy: Comment to Anthony’s suggestion: It’s hard to keep the children past 12 noon

Dan G: Would like us to have a paid youth/ children’s coordinator position

Jen: As we take things off our plate, there’s no guarantee that we put right things in their place.

Ron: Many administrative things on Leadership Team’s plate

Gail: Even after 23 years of training others to be pastors, she prizes shared responsibility in our church.

ATTACHMENTS

REVIVE Seminar Report

On November 11, Brad Brisco was our speaker for a day-long seminar for the Revive cohort. There were ~35 people here from NY Mennonite conference who have participated in the cohort, as well as other people from their congregations who wanted to learn more about what Revive is doing. Many, many thanks to Jen, Anna, and Amy for organizing/preparing such a great meal/snacks, etc.

Brad highlighted 3 paradigm shifts that he believes the church needs to make in terms of its understanding of God, church, and mission.

1) The missionary nature of God and the church: God is a missionary God, and the church is a called and sent people to carry out the work of God.

2) Incarnational presence: Incarnation is the manner in which we are sent. We must allow the incarnation of Jesus to inform the way we think about our lives/context. It involves proximity (being close) and presence (being with people; doing ministry WITH rather than ministry to/for people)

3) Participation in the mission Dei (mission of God). The church doesn't have a mission; God's mission has a church! Mission should form, guide, and shape all aspects of what the church is doing (as opposed to being a side "project"). The role of the church is to pay attention to what God is already doing in the community, discern how God wants us to participate in light of our gifts and resources, take action, and then debrief about the experience.

Brad also talked about "neighboring" and radical hospitality. In the Old Testament, Biblical hospitality was centered around the poor, widow, stranger, and foreigner. In the New Testament, the emphasis is "love of stranger"--those who cannot reciprocate. Brad defined strangers as people who have disconnected from basic relationships. Hospitality is not just about creating physical environments, but about a mindset we have toward others--turning our lives toward those who are isolated, listening to those who often don't have a voice.

Barriers to Biblical hospitality:

* Fear

* Lack of margin: We need margins in our life in order to have relational spontaneity, to even be interested in opportunities to serve, and to allow time to think and plan time with others. One way to address margin is alignment not addition: Align the rhythms of your life with the rhythms of other people. What are the things you're already doing on a regular basis (eating, going to the gym, coffee shop, farmer's market, etc) that you could invite someone else into? (As opposed to just adding more and more things onto your schedule.)

Education Ministry Report for 2017 Nov 19 Congregational Meeting

The Education Ministry strives to offer avenues for spiritual formation, and seeks to know and address areas you see as needed. We are continuing with plans to have two groups for adults. One group will have an unscripted informal discussion in response to the preceding worship service and other issues brought up by life and current events. The study group is finishing up a study of the passages in the Gospel of Luke that parallel our worship series, and before that studied "Trouble I've Seen", the book on racism by Drew Hart.

Our next studies include:

- "Anabaptist Essentials" by Palmer Becker (December and January)
- Sabbath as spiritual discipline and resistance to culture (February)
- Upside Down Kingdom (40th anniversary)
- Future Church Summit (MC USA document)
- Bible Study from the Adult Bible Study guide, on Justice in the New Testament
- Bystander training: response to oppressive or violent situations consistent with our understanding of Jesus.

We will also be having at least two "Getting to Know You" Sundays, where we build community by sharing life stories of 2 to 3 people, interviewed on how we see God working in our lives. Volunteers should talk to Mark Shelly.