

**Congregational Meeting Minutes
Rochester Mennonite Fellowship
September 15, 2019**

Opening Prayer [Aaron]

Safe Ministry Policy

The "Safe Ministry with Children and Youth Policy" was last comprehensively revised in 2002. Carol K and Eloise S reviewed the policy and suggested some changes based on Dove's Nest recommendations for best practices, NY State definitions of abuse and neglect, and NY State required responses to suspected abuse and neglect. The changes to the policy were reviewed by Eloise, and the changes were unanimously affirmed by those present.

Update on Building Use Policy Revisions

Bob and Izzy continue to work on this, nothing new to report at present [Bob and Izzy not present today].

Retreat Committee Update

Retreat will have a "Creation Care" theme. The schedule and format will be similar to other years. Friday evening meal will be a potluck. Kids will be doing the Challenge Course Saturday morning. Saturday afternoon will have two planned activities: rock climbing and a service project. Saturday evening will include a Variety Show. Stephanie will lead yoga on Sunday morning.

Leadership Team Report

There is a LT member assigned to maintain contact with each Ministry. Otherwise it has been a quiet summer.

MCUSA Convention Delegate Report

Carol K was our delegate, and she has prepared a written report [see attached]. Next Sunday, Carol will be sharing more during worship.

Ministry Reports

Finance: Funds are adequate for Retreat expenses. Finance committee will meet to prepare proposed 2020 budget prior to the November congregational meeting. See treasurer's report, attached.

Stewards: New chairs will be obtained for the conference room in approximately 12 weeks. There has been deterioration of our roof shingles, and the roof will likely need to be replaced next year. There have apparently been problems with the type of shingles used for our roof, greatly reducing the expected 50-year lifespan. Fall work day will be scheduled.

Worship: We will be having an upcoming series on Mennonite heritage and history, followed by a series on Stewardship in November. There will be a rotation established for song leaders starting the first Sunday in October.

Children's Education: Wendy and Carol are co-coordinators of Children's Education. Additional volunteers to help teaching the children would be welcome. We are in the process of reviewing the Safe Ministry Policy with teachers.

Adult Education: We are currently doing a series based on the book “Inhabiting Eden,” on creation care. There will be some intergenerational Sunday School hours during Advent. We will have some “getting to know you” sessions.

Pastoral: The nature of most of our work is confidential. We continue 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. We need more people willing to watch young children for worship. Right now, we only have three, and two of them are Sunday School teachers, who are thus missing both Worship and Adult hour some days. It also means it is complicated for the three to sign up for worship or to agree to actively participated in worship when asked by the leader. Best case scenario would be Sunday School teachers not having to do childcare at all. Anyone willing to be added to the rotation for childcare during worship can talk to Wendy.

Attachment 1

Treasurer’s Report: I have been depositing offerings and grants and paying bills, invoices, wages, special offerings and reimbursements as received/ requested. I have ensured appropriate cash flow available to fund our Beaver Camp retreat and the deposit for next year. I have not done any bookkeeping since July so I have no specific report to offer. Finance ministry will be meeting soon to develop our budget proposal for next fiscal year. The proposal will be published for the November congregational meeting. – Jen Carter

Attachment 2

MCUSA Convention Summary Report by Carol Knieriem

It was an honor and privilege to be your delegate at the MCUSA Convention in July this year. Around 3,000 adults, youth and children gathered together for worship, fellowship/reunions, meals and service projects in Kansas City. We were inspired by a number of great speakers including Meghan Good (teaching pastor at Trinity Mennonite in Glendale AZ); Glen Guyton (executive director MCUSA) and others. Music lifted our souls in worship as we learned some new songs which will be included in the next hymnal, and of course, singing the Mennonite Anthem “Praise God From Whom” 4 part harmony together with hundreds and thousands of our brothers and sisters. I felt the theme “Come As You Are” during table talks at delegate sessions, during worship times, in seminars, in the hallways, at dining tables and during conversations and activities in the exhibit hall.

There were no very controversial topics discussed at delegate sessions but we did have opportunity to share our thoughts and suggestions, even as we may differ, while listening with our hearts to each other’s perspectives and opinions. We had the joy of learning from Tom Yoder Neufeld (professor emeritus of Religious Studies at Conrad Grebel University College) as he expanded our knowledge of Ephesians and what unity means. Because the Unity of Christ is not a state of harmony, it gives us permission to not be homogeneous. Eph. 2: 11-22 ...from once

being strangers to no longer being strangers but instead being a part of the family of God. The unity of Christ is not achieved through agreement; rather, it is missional and messy. YES the church is a MESS – thanks be to God! This was our praise throughout the week.

During the week, delegates approved a bylaw change allowing more 16 to 21-year-olds as voting delegates. Congregations may now appoint one youth in addition to their regular number of delegates. Conferences and racial-ethnic groups may appoint two. 18 youth were already serving as nonvoting delegates in the Step-Up program when this vote took place. They were called to the stage as the assembly applauded the decision. This bylaw change passed with 6 dissenting votes out of 495 delegates registered.

Also during the week, delegates submitted a resolution regarding the abuse of child migrants. Delegates were given the opportunity to read and respond to the resolution, adding and changing some of the wording. The resolution condemns “the treatment of immigrant families and children at the border, as well as around the nation, (as) a horrific violation of the Image of God and God-given human rights.” It calls the denomination to “stand alongside the undocumented members of our denomination” and to “seek connections with immigrant communities in our contexts and to support those in sanctuary and the thousands of families whose loved ones have been deported.” This resolution passed with only 2 votes “no”. It was reported that one “no” vote was because a delegate thought the resolution did not go far enough. The “Churchwide Statement on the Abuse of Child Migrants” can be found here: <http://mennoniteusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/July-6-Churchwide-Statement-on-the-Abuse-of-Child-Migrants.pdf>

Delegates were asked respond in writing whether their constituents considered it important to have “a two-year biblical discernment process, culminating in a delegate decision on the status of the MCUSA Membership Guidelines in 2021,” and whether the constituents would give time and energy to that process. A plan for a two-year discernment process is being drafted, with input from LGBTQ advocacy groups.

Dove's Nest, the non-profit organization helping faith communities to keep children and youth safe, of which I am a board member, had a meaningful presence at the convention. There were times during worship services that people were asked to embrace others. For many, this was a pleasant and meaningful time. For others, it was a nightmare. After getting feedback from, and observing participants, the Dove's Nest board and director wrote a letter to the convention planners and leaders encouraging them to allow for a variety of ways to greet one another, including options of showing love and appreciation without embracing. By the next morning, MCUSA Executive Director, Glen Guyton, and Dove's Nest Executive Director, Anna Groff, shared the letter with the whole congregation and showed the examples of ways to greet others with permission so that all are respected regarding consent as to what kind of touch, or no touch they are comfortable with. We heard a lot of positive feedback for bringing this to the attention of all.

I will be sharing more about the convention during the worship service on September 22nd.

Submitted by Carol Knieriem