

**PLYMOUTH CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING, JANUARY 27, 2019**

Moderator and Facilitator: Dianne Stober

Time and Location – 12:40 p.m., following potluck lunch in the Fellowship Hall

1. Jake Joseph, Associate Minister, opened the meeting with prayer.
2. **Approval of January 28, 2018 Congregational Meeting Minutes:** Nancy DeLap moved to approve the minutes. Doug Fox seconded. Motion passed.
3. **Celebrating Ordinary Miracles at Plymouth:** Dianne referred to the celebration ritual during worship of those who volunteer in a myriad of ways. She then shared an “Ordinary Miracles” video that Marilu Theodore had produced, which was greeted with warm applause. Dianne said that, arising from discussion at Leadership Council, Marilu and Bob Sturtevant had created a way in which anyone in the church can share an “ordinary miracle” that they have witnessed or experienced by writing it on a card and putting the card in an envelope on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall. The Leadership Council will collect these and communicate them back to the congregation throughout the year.
4. **Senior Minister’s Report:** Plymouth is experiencing an attendance plateau right now. Hal asked the question, “What can we do?” Several answers were offered: Invite friends. Create a “newcomer to the community” group. Come to church more frequently. Talk more in the community about Plymouth and what it has to offer. Bill Tucker mentioned a Japanese practice of Senpai and Kohai in which a new person is paired up with a more experienced one.

Plymouth is on a financial plateau as well. Our growing needs require more resources. We have recognized the need to expand our administrative staff by bringing on a part-time IT person in 2018 and are planning for a business manager in 2019. We have been doing well in finding new income sources, parking lot income, increased interest income, and a Lilly Grant, for example. He also thanked those who are stretching themselves in giving. However, we are stagnating in pledges and he suggested that we may have some spiritual challenges to address. Again, Hal asked, “What can we do?”

He challenged the congregation to find ways to go deeper in our faith in 2019, go deeper into joy. We need to take time to renew and rejuvenate—rebuild our relationship with God. He offered thoughts from an article by David Brooks entitled “Your loyalties are your life.” Brooks refers to the philosopher Josiah Royce, who says that a meaningful and joyful life arises out of our loyalty to a cause greater than ourselves, a “beloved community” that draws us toward our sense of ultimate unity. Hal asked us to remember Plymouth’s covenant that binds us together.

He mentioned a couple of opportunities that will be coming up soon. Mark Lee is in final negotiations with Pdraig O-Tuama, a community organizer, peacemaker, and poet from Northern Ireland. John Philip Newell will be teaching at the Shambala in 2020 and will also come to Plymouth.

He closed by thanking the gathering for the privilege of ministering to this community for the past 17 years.

5. **Nominating Committee Report and Vote: Anne Jordan.**

- Anne read the names of outgoing Leadership Council and Board members presented on a slide and thanked them for their service.
- She then presented nominees for new 2019 positions on a slide. The information is included in the 2018 Annual Report. There were a few positions that had not been filled.

Dianne asked for discussion or nominations from the floor. She noted that the Leadership Council, working with the Nominating Committee, will be tasked with filling the open slots, and she encouraged anyone interested to come forward. Anna Olsen amended the nominations to the Board of Deacons by saying that, since Judy Lane is having surgery, she will not serve until 2020. Tom Dille moved to approve the slate. Laura Nelson seconded. Motion approved.

6. **2018 Financial Review: Jim Medlock, Asst. Treasurer.**

- 1) The strong financial condition at the end of 2017 allowed a transfer of \$100,000 into a one-year CD earning higher interest.
- 2) The 2018 budgeted deficit of over \$24,000 was reduced to an actual deficit of \$1,700.
  - Pledge income, usually over budget in past years, was under budget five out of the last six months of the year, resulting in pledges underpaid by \$17,600 at year-end. Strong parking lot income helped to off-set this somewhat.
  - 2018 actual expenses were also \$24, 000 under budget. Jim offered commendation to all for diligence in keeping costs down, especially to the Trustees, who saved over \$100,000 with their work on roof repair, labyrinth and other areas.
- 3) Budgeted and non-budgeted contributions outside Plymouth totaling \$138,700 (see Annual Report for details) demonstrate Plymouth's generosity.

7. **Budget for 2019: David Petersen.** David thanked the Budget and Finance Committee and especially our Treasurers for their work. He stated that the Treasurer job is not one for amateurs, and Sharyl, Judy, and Jim are extraordinarily qualified. We are also burning them out, leading to the decision by the Leadership Council that a business manager is essential.

He stated that the 2019 budget accomplishes some goals, but also includes some things that the B&F Committee would have preferred not to recommend.

Referring to income projections, David explained the recommendation of the Leadership Council that two reserve funds be used to supplement our 2019 budget. The first comes from a business manager reserve, arising out of excess funds raised in a previous capital campaign. Since we have budgeted to hire a business manager in 2019, the use of this fund is appropriate. The second is excess funds raised in 2018 for the new signs, a project that has been completed. In approving this budget, the congregation is approving the use of the sign fund.

Questions regarding income followed:

- Is the projected increase in loose offering realistic? David said it was a reasonable estimate.
- Is the rent on the parking lot sustainable over time? Dianne said that the apartments being built are already interested in contracting for spaces. Tom Dille commented that it might take some work to

secure that income. Anne Jordan commented that we may incur more expense for parking lot maintenance as a result of more use.

- Bobbi Hargleroad asked about Funeral/Wedding Income. David said that it has not been included in the budget in prior years. A comment was made that actual Funeral/Wedding Income in 2018 was over \$6,000, as compared with the \$2,000 budgeted for 2019. Bobbi also wondered about fees paid in advance for space in the memorial garden. David answered that those fees go into a reserve account on the balance sheet.

Referring to expense projections, David pointed out that \$25,000 has been budgeted for a part-time business manager. We have been paying Rodahl around \$22,000. They will continue to handle payroll at a cost of around \$5,000. We have also budgeted for an increase in the hourly rate paid to child care workers as approved at the 2018 Annual Meeting. The B&F Committee would have liked to approve the original request of 3.3% cost of living increase in salaries. However, the current budget has been cut to 2.5%. The B&F Committee would also have preferred to act favorably on board and committee budget requests. However, the current program budgets have been essentially set at 2018 actuals. In addition, requests for additional reserves for computers and parking lot maintenance have been cut from the budget. David mentioned that the Trustees are currently doing an inventory of asset maintenance needs.

Questions regarding expenses followed:

- Meg Graham asked what line item 6055 in the Administration budget, Office Equipment purchase, was for. David responded that this was for computers, based on the recommendations of our IT person. It has been reduced from the original request by \$5,300.
- Ben Slocumb asked why there was no line item for repairs. David responded that there had been a line for parking lot repairs which was eliminated. He said that when funds are available, that line item will be returned. If repairs are needed, they will be funded from current reserves.
- Doug Fox asked about the decrease in the Stewardship Board budget. David said that this was a reduction to 2018 actual. Irene Wherrit explained that the Stewardship Board had saved money this year because they had an in-house graphic artist who designed their materials. There is no guarantee that this will be true in the future. Jane Anne said they were also able to do all of their printing in-house.
- Betsy Bedient commented that some boards do get the benefit of endowment funds to supplement their budgets.

David then offered 5 cautionary notes:

- 1) In 2018 there were 26 pledges that were at least partially unpaid. Plymouth's historical experience has been actual pledge income higher than budgeted. He said that if underpayment of pledges becomes a trend, the B&F Committee may need to budget on a percentage of the amount pledged.
- 2) Loose offering was down \$4,000. We think this is an anomaly but will be monitoring it this year.
- 3) Actual pledge income dropped from 2017 to 2018.
- 4) The 2019 budget transfer of reserves is a one-time transfer. They will not be available in the future.
- 5) The number of pledges is static from 2018 to 2019.

The B&F Committee and the Council will be thinking strategically about Plymouth's financial health as we move through 2019.

Dianne stated that the Leadership Council has moved that this budget be adopted. Therefore, a motion is not needed from the floor. She then asked for a vote by a show of hands. Hands around the room went up in favor of approval. There were no hands raised in disapproval. The motion passed unanimously.

## 8. Other items for discussion.

Kaki Woods asked if a description of the reserves is included in the Annual Report. The answer was “No”, but that information can be obtained.

Judy Lane asked what percentage of members pledge. There are 237 pledging units for the 2019 budget which is a little less than two-thirds (2/3) of the total.

Tom Guter asked for a brief overview of the evening service. Hal said that there has been some growth (generally, 20-60 in attendance) and, for some, it is a very important service, providing a place of deep meaning. The Lilly Grant is specifically focused on building that service. It can be a kind of laboratory service for trying out new things and, in some cases, a feeder service, bringing people into the church who would not initially feel comfortable in the morning services. Application is being made for a further Lilly Grant which will support development of a dinner service: stay tuned. Mark Heiskanen also responded that the service has changed quite a bit in the time he's been here. It offers an evening prayer service, like compline in some traditions.

Betsy Bedient mentioned several topics: 1) She stressed the importance of the Involvement Fair, saying that even if it does not result in a lot of new recruits, it helps to communicate all the things that are going on at Plymouth. 2) She was grateful that the Outreach and Mission Board budget had not been cut, although their new request to fund adult mission trips was not funded. 3) She referred to the vote last year to become an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation. She said that the Immigration Ministry Team will be working to help us live into that more fully in the future.

## 9. For the Good of the Order.

Hal expressed gratitude to Bob Sturtevant who is going off Council after serving as Past Moderator, and who has been in leadership since the governance change. He also thanked Judy Barth for serving as Treasurer. She has served as Moderator and Treasurer in the past. He then thanked Mary Freese, outgoing Clerk, and Dianne Stober, outgoing Moderator, with gifts.

Ross Lane gave a shout-out to Barb Gregory for all of her work keeping us on track.

Hal recognized the members of the staff.

Anne Jordan offered thanks to all those who agreed to serve and also those who considered a position but were not able to agree at this time.

10. Jane Anne expressed encouragement to go deeper, as Hal had said earlier, and announced an artist-in-residence event March 8-10 with The Rev. Dr. Linda Privatera, a person whom Jane Anne met at Ring Lake Ranch. Dr. Privatera will offer an all-church, intergenerational art experience. It will culminate with an art installation at the end of Lent around the theme of going deeper.

Jane Anne then offered the closing prayer. The meeting adjourned at 2:15pm.

Respectfully submitted, Mary Freese, Clerk