

Council Minutes, December 2024  
Plymouth Congregational Church – United Church of Christ  
Tuesday, December 17, 2024

1. Call to Order – Sonia Jordan, Moderator  
Sonia called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

Voting Members Present:

Sonia Jordan – Moderator  
Rich Bireta – Moderator Elect  
Scott Morgan – Immediate Past Moderator  
Stephen Carttar – Treasurer  
Doug Eason – At Large Member  
David Trevino – At Large Member  
Norine Spears – At Large Member  
Christi Houston – At Large Member  
Debbie Schmidt – At Large Member  
Jeff Eriksen – At Large Member

Ex Officio Members Present:

Valerie Miller-Coleman – Senior Pastor

Ex Officio Members Not Present:

Caroline Lawson Dean – Associate Pastor

Non-Voting Members Present

Larissa Long – Clerk  
Mark Reedy – Deputy Treasurer

Others Present

Terry Schmidt – Director of Sanctuary and Organ Project Management Committee  
Kim Manz – Minister of Music & Fine Arts

2. Invocation – Valerie Miller-Coleman  
Valerie led attendees in prayer.
3. Consent Agenda
  - 3.1 Approve Agenda
  - 3.2 Approve Minutes from November 19, 2024 Council Meeting
  - 3.3 Receive Financial Reports
  - 3.4 Approval for ChrisWorx for Rose Window Refurbishment

Doug moved to approve the consent agenda. Jeff asked that the minutes be amended to reflect his attendance. Stephen asked that the minutes be amended so Item 4.2 states a \$20,000 transfer to Operating Reserves, if needed, will be made at year-end 2024. Norine seconded the motion as amended; motion approved unanimously.

4. Church Treasurer’s Report – Stephen Carttar, Treasurer
  - 4.1 Financial Update
    - Council Financial Summary highlights as of November 30, 2024
      - 91.7% of the way through the year (11 of 12 months)

- 89.3% of pledges received
- 88.1% of expenses paid
- Thus revenue is mildly slipping, but not necessarily a concern.

## 5. Old Business

### 5.1 Annual Budget Update – Stephen Carttar, Treasurer

Stephen met with Melissa and based on new information, 2025 income at this time is forecast to be \$179,000 short of what is needed to balance the proposed budget. He said he and others will contact those who pledged in 2024 but haven't yet returned pledge cards. Valerie said she is willing to contact new members who haven't yet responded.

Doug asked if 2024 reserves for activities covered by fundraising have been expended. Stephen said they have been spent.

Doug then asked what the plan is to finalize and present a budget for the congregation's consideration and where does Council fit in the process. After discussion, the following timeline was developed:

**January 8** - The Finance Committee will meet to review final 2024 financial results and discuss the proposed 2025 budget.

**January 9** – Stephen will send Sonia the Finance Committee minutes, which will include suggested options for developing a balanced budget.

**January 12** – Public meeting of the congregation at which time options that Council will be considering for a balanced budget will be presented to the congregation for their input. The presentation will include a 5-year projection, as in prior years.

**January 28** - Council Meeting at which time a proposed 2025 budget will be developed for consideration at the Annual meeting.

**February 9** – Annual Congregational Meeting, including a final vote by the congregation on the proposed budget.

Doug asked about the new budget item of \$72,000 for personnel enhancements, as Council hasn't received information regarding use of the funds. Because it's a significant increase, a Personnel meeting will be held in early January to outline the purpose of the fund and consider options if a reduction is needed.

### 5.2 Project Management Committee (PMC) Update – Terry Schmidt, PMC Chair

Terry said the PMC is meeting every two weeks and continues to remain focused on accessibility, acoustics (choir & congregants), aesthetics and historical significance.

Although a firm timeline is not in place, he said it is apparent that Plymouth may be without an organ for up to 26 months, (as early as August 2025 or as late as January 2026, depending upon when the blower and pipes are sent for refurbishment).

Consideration was given to renting a temporary electronic organ, but when Kim checked on rental options, he found the cost to be prohibitive. He also found some used organs for sale, but again, the cost was high, the warranty was only for a year and resale value would be low as it is already a used organ.

The PMC recommends purchasing the Johannus Studio 380 Three Manual Digital Organ from Rankin Organs, Ellsworth, KS, at a total installed price of \$9,060. Kim traveled to Manhattan to play a small

Rankin Organ and said the sound will not be what the congregation is accustomed to hearing, but it will be much better than going without an organ for such a long period.

Kim said if approved, we are purchasing the organ at cost, but a decision is needed immediately, as the owner is retiring, and the order must be completed by December 20. He also said the owner feels that when no longer needed, the organ could potentially be sold for what it cost.

General questions/responses about the proposed purchase followed:

- Where will services take place during construction? Not yet determined, but hopefully within the church, perhaps in larger venues for special services.
- Where will the organ be stored until needed? Not yet determined.
- How difficult will it be to move from one location to another? A brief look at the organ on the website indicates it shouldn't be a problem as it weighs about 375 lbs.
- Could recordings of pipe organ music be provided utilizing the sound system? It wouldn't be the same as live music and a challenge to timely respond or connect with the choir or congregation.
- Usage timeline? Maybe starting in August, but even after construction is complete, the pipe organ will be gone for a year or so.
- What about the organ in the Chapel? It isn't feasible, microphones would be needed to convey the sound and it doesn't stay in tune.
- Could we just use a piano in the interim? Yes, that would work although probably not optimal.

Christi said that with so much uncertainty everywhere, providing consistency in the music program would be beneficial.

Sonia added that we have a growing congregation, and changes may be difficult for some congregants. She feels it's a benefit to have an organ, even if electronic. Kim says he feels an organ does make a difference to the congregation.

Scott moved to approve the purchase of an electronic organ for \$9,060 contingent upon approval of organ functionality from Kim Manz, with funds to come from the "Enter In" campaign. Doug seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

#### 5.3 Disaster Response Planning Update – David Trevino, Director of Security

David said a DUNS number is required to submit the grant application and he's working to acquire the number. Norine has successfully applied for a DUNS number and will assist him in completing the filing. David added that the self-assessment is done. Doug will give David a list of items that could be submitted for grant consideration.

#### 5.4 Christian Education Board Size – Sonia Jordan, Moderator

Sonia reminded members that the item was on the November agenda but deferred to meet publication requirements.

Scott explained the proposed change will provide the default number of board members from 6 to 9. With this change, all boards will have 9 members, except Deacons, which has 12.

Scott then moved to approve the policy as provided in the attached language; Doug seconded; motion unanimously approved.

6. New Business  
No new business.
7. Moderator's Report – Sonia Jordan  
Sonia reminded Council of the public meeting on January 12 and the Annual Congregation Meeting on February 9 and encouraged attendance at both.
8. Associate Pastor's Report – Caroline Lawson Dean  
No report.
9. Pastor's Report – Valerie Miller-Coleman
  - Reminder of Pastors' sabbaticals
    - Caroline – May, June and July 2025
    - Valerie – September, October and November 2025Valerie will cover for Caroline  
Pulpit supply funds are available during Valerie's absence
  - Advent devotionals still available
  - Volunteers still needed for Christmas Eve

Doug said that additional volunteers would have been helpful for "Hanging of the Greens" and suggested that a bit more thoughtfulness when recruiting volunteers for such activities would be helpful.

10. Board Chair Comments  
Scott said the Annual Appeal and Fundraising Committee is to coordinate with different boards and that the Special Christmas Mission offering should have gone through Fundraising, then Council. A reminder for the coming year.
11. Open Forum
12. Adjournment and Lord's Prayer  
*Doug moved to adjourn the meeting; Sonia seconded; motion unanimously approved.*
13. Important Future Dates:  
Next Council Meeting: January 28, 2025 at 6:30 pm

Respectfully submitted by  
Larissa Long, Clerk