

Council Minutes, November 2024
Plymouth Congregational Church – United Church of Christ
Tuesday, November 19, 2024

1. Call to Order – Sonia Jordan, Moderator
Sonia called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

Voting Members Present:

Sonia Jordan – Moderator
Scott Morgan – Immediate Past Moderator
David Treviño – At Large Member
Norine Spears – At Large Member
Christi Houston – At Large Member
Debbie Schmidt – At Large Member

Voting Members Not Present:

Rich Bireta – Moderator Elect
Stephen Carttar – Treasurer
Doug Eason – At Large Member

Ex Officio Members Present:

Valerie Miller-Coleman – Senior Pastor
Caroline Lawson Dean – Associate Pastor
Mark Reedy – Deputy Treasurer

Others Present:

Larissa Long – Clerk
Terry Schmidt – Director of Sanctuary and Organ Project Management Committee
Kathy Bowen – Music & Fine Arts

2. Invocation – Valerie Miller-Coleman
Valerie led the Council in prayer.

3. Consent Agenda

- 3.1 Approve Agenda
- 3.2 Approve Minutes from October 22, 2024 Council Meeting
- 3.3 Receive Financial Reports
- 3.4 Approval of John Lord and Sarah Whitten to Nominating Committee
- 3.5 Transfer of \$77,473.06 from Plymouth Endowment Funds held with UCF to Plymouth Operating Funds in support of 2025 budget, to occur in January 2025

Jeff moved to approve the Consent Agenda; Debbie seconded: motion carried unanimously.

4. Church Treasurer's Report – Mark Reedy, Deputy Treasurer

4.1 Financial Update

Council Financial Summary highlights as of October 31, 2024

- 83.3% of the way through the year (10 of 12 months)
- 81.5% of pledges received
- 80.2% of expenses paid
- Thus we are in line with expectations

4.2 Status of Operating Reserve and Payroll reserve – Mark Reedy, Deputy Treasurer

Analyses of both Operating and Payroll reserves were conducted with the following observations and recommendations:

- Projected 2024 Operating Reserves were estimated to be in excess of the 25% (3 months) of expenses, roughly \$86,000. If required to balance the 2025 budget, the Finance Committee accepted the option of not increasing the Operating Reserves in 2025. Such entry would be recorded at 2025 year-end if necessary to offset excess expenses. The Committee unanimously opposed using accumulated, prior year Operating Reserve balances to cover 2025 budgeted expenses.

Mark said a \$20,000 transfer to Operating Reserves is planned each year, but because current reserves exceed what is required, no entry will be made until year-end 2025, in the event the \$20,000 is needed to help offset excess expenses.

- Projected 2024 Payroll reserve (formerly referred to as PPP) was calculated to be \$76,424. With roughly \$23,000 utilized each year, the reserve would expire in 2028.

4.3. Recommendation for Unrestricted Gift Use – Mark Reedy, Deputy Treasurer

Mark said the Finance Committee recommends that a \$10,000 one-time gift to Plymouth be transferred to United Church Funds (UCF) as part of the Council Restricted Fund.

Scott said UCF manages both endowed and unrestricted funds on behalf of Plymouth, pursuant to our instructions. The Council Restricted Fund is not endowed, and Council can spend the fund as it determines. Although he doesn't endorse using these funds for operating expenses, he thought it could make sense to utilize them for a specific facility capital expense. He said Council may want to consider such a one-time need in making next year's budget balance. He suggested holding off on the transfer until that discussion had taken place in January. He added that transferring the funds

now versus in January isn't significant, if they might be used next year. He also said the gift has been deposited and is earning some interest.

Valerie added that it isn't unusual to receive one-time gifts of varying amounts. A one-time gift helped pay for the solar panels.

Scott then moved to defer consideration of the \$10,000 gift until January; Norine seconded; motion carried unanimously.

5. Old Business

5.1 Annual budget update – Mark Reedy, Deputy Treasurer

Mark said it appears there may be a gap between pledges and proposed 2025 expenses. If so, Council will have to decide in January where cuts should be made. Valerie said the Annual Appeal response is on pace with past years. She added that the year-over-year giving trend is up, but this year's proposed budget reflects an increase in expenditures of 13%. The Annual Appeal campaign ends on November 26 and the congregation will have an opportunity to discuss the proposed budget in early December.

Mark said although decisions won't be made until January, it would be prudent for Council to look at line items now and consider what could be cut if needed. Caroline added that Service and Justice hoped to move OWCM funding from fundraising to the operating budget and that proposed facilities/maintenance expenses are large. Alternatives may need to be considered in January.

5.2 Project Management Committee Update – Terry Schmidt, PMC Chair

Terry provided a "place holder" for income and expenditures based on what is known at this time. He said the four PMC priorities are:

1. Accessibility in the sanctuary
2. Acoustics
3. Esthetics
4. Historical significance

He's found that some individuals do not want their names posted on the web site and works diligently to respond to congregant questions truthfully, but tactfully. The PMC will need to determine how long we can go without an organ. Should construction be delayed? Or is an earlier start better, which is the only way to control costs known at this time? Once construction is completed, we can return to the sanctuary and rent an organ. The PMC hopes to bring design concept options to the congregation in early 2025.

In response to Scott's question, Terry said it's possible the two round windows in front of the sanctuary will need to be removed but would be relocated elsewhere. Scott then

thanked Terry for his leadership of the PMC, reminding everyone that it's only been 10 months since the congregation approved the capital campaign.

5.3 Disaster Response Planning Update – David Treviño, Director of Security

David met with Matt Del Vecchio and completed the required Self-Assessment Form required for a 2025 grant. He added that a 2024 supplemental grant was announced at the end of October with a mid-December deadline. It requires three items – the Self-Assessment Form (completed), an Investment Justification Form and a Mission Statement. If he can pull the two remaining items together, he'll try to submit them by the December deadline. Council thanked him for his work on the grant submission forms.

6. New Business

6.1 Christian Education Board Size

Sonia said approval for the Christian Education board size to increase from 6 to 9 members requires a policy change, and language must be published stating what is proposed and why. The required language will be attached to the December agenda and action deferred to the December meeting.

7. Moderator's Report – Sonia Jordan

Sonia shared her thoughts about the PMC and Terry's leadership, which were all positive. She knows the committee is working diligently and asked that Council let PMC members know their efforts are appreciated. She then thanked Council members for their patience and cooperative spirit as complex contractual items were discussed during a very long October meeting.

8. Associate Pastor's Report – Caroline Lawson Dean

- Kansas Interfaith Action (KIFA) will speak during the first service's Moment for Mission and at the second service on December 8.
- Caroline is working with other faith communities on a 6:00 p.m. Interfaith Vigil on December 7, location to be announced.
- Plymouth is connecting with non-profits to provide support for Rainbow families.
- The 2025 youth service trip will be to Tulsa.
- Colton is settling in and has started his CYMT Ministry Leadership Program classes.

9. Pastor's Report – Valerie Miller-Coleman

A reminder of 2025 sabbaticals

- Valerie will be on Sabbatical leave in Sept., Oct. and Nov. 2025
- Caroline will be on Sabbatical leave in May, June and July 2025.

Both Pastors are aware that many are concerned, angry and/or worried following the election and are planning worship services to provide support. Advent (December) is a time of waiting. The January sermon series will be on the Gospel of Luke (Heralding the Sovereign). "Jesus for President" will be a study book – keeping the community of faith strong during tumultuous times.

David asked if Plymouth is a sanctuary for those who may feel afraid, as we will probably see Individuals seeking this type of help in the future. Valerie said It's something to think about moving forward but would be a congregational decision.

She said Michael Brecke, who is filling the Pastor of Care & Welcome position on a 6-month interim basis, is wonderful to work with.

10. Board Chair Comments

11. Open Forum

12. Adjournment and Lord's Prayer

Jeff moved to adjourn the meeting; David seconded; motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Larissa Long, Clerk