

West Philadelphia Mennonite Fellowship

Church Council Meeting Minutes

April 09, 2019

Attendance: Elaine Shenk (HRC), Ethan Tan (Elder), Lorie Hershey (Pastor), Amanda Esh Bouwman (Elder), Rebecca Weber (Deacon), Tim Martin Johnson (HRC, Council Chair), Matt MacNeill (HRC), Jeff Knightly (Deacon), Sheldon Rich (Elder)

1) Opening and Prayer - Tim

- Tim began meeting at 7:05 p.m. with a reading from Deuteronomy, chapter 2, a short reflection of our recent year, and prayer
- Approved last meeting's minutes

2) Committee Reports

a) HRC

- HRC is looking for an Elder to replace Laurie. Nomination form has been circulated and will be collected the next two Sundays. Amanda is renewing her term as Elder.
- Jeff Knightly has agreed to renew his term as deacon
- Tim Martin Johnson's term concludes in May and HRC will work on finding a replacement
- HRC will find someone to replace Linda Esh as co-Sunday school coordinator, Sarah Rody is continuing
- HRC will find someone to fill the adult education coordinator position
- Sarah, Nathan, and Kathie are continuing as youth leaders, Rosa is not
- In addition to these roles, there are a number of others that will need to be filled; HRC will circulate a list of open positions later this spring

b) Deacons

Update on finances

- 12% more giving than this time last year, we still have a small loss which is typical of this time of year

Update on meeting space research

- Going to The Common Place for service this Sunday
- Wharton Wesley UMC evening service is planned for May
- Calvary C. C. C. will submit a proposal for Partners Sacred Spaces to look at their finances, structure, and other items

- Task force for sustainability representative, Andrew shared with WPMF task force that Kol Tzedek is interested in exploring the possibility of co-purchasing and co-owning the building

Next steps regarding the building

- We are currently in the data collection process and will know more after the service visits and Calvary C. C. C. taskforce updates
- People also want to be heard – getting together and talking in a meeting gives people the opportunity to be heard
- We will have a congregational meeting in June and survey right after services
- Dorianna will draft a survey and send it to council to approve to be ready for Sunday
- Upcoming congregational meetings: building, budget/mid-year, affirmation, conference – We will have the congregational meeting in May for Elder, Mid-year in July, and conference meeting soon
- Congregational meeting in mid-June with the goal to hear people's thoughts and give chance to process together and hear from WPMF building taskforce
- The next Council meeting will be Tuesday, May 28th at 7:00 p.m.
- Dorianna will print the comments and data from the surveys for the May 28th council meeting. Hopefully there will be more updates from the WPMF Calvary ccc taskforce
- Combined Affirmation and conference congregation meeting will be June 2nd at 10:45 a.m. Dorianna will check with Calvary C. C. C. to secure meeting space

c) Elders/Pastoral Team

sexual ethics conversation

- Pastoral team decided to wait on the sexual ethics conversation because the topic felt too heavy with the other focuses such as building and conference.
- Additionally, the team is considering more healthy sexuality as a worship or Sunday school series.

- accessibility needs

- Pastoral team reviewed materials regarding accessibility and discussed way to be more inclusive.
- Amanda will fill the new pastoral team position as Accessibility Advocate.
- Some accessibility needs include wider chairs, sensory bags for worship services, creating a list for elders of those who have self-identified accessibility needs, and working with Sunday school teams on ways to be more inclusive.

- An announcement will be made informing congregation of new pastoral position and encourage individuals to let Amanda know of any needs.

3) Conference affiliation

Council members shared their thoughts regarding the conference visits. A brief summary is as follows:

- Important to consider Pastor Lorie's thoughts because it directly applies to her. Neither option has significant downfalls. Leaning toward Atlantic Coast Conference because they have family members who attend a church who is a part of that conference. Atlantic coast is geographically closer which may make it easier to connect, grow, and thrive. It is also a larger conference which may be able to provide more resources and stability.
- Does not have an opinion toward either conference because they were not here for either visit. It may be that other congregants are in a similar position.
- Did not grow up in the Mennonite church so all experience with the Mennonite church has been external. Both presentations seem like good options, but Atlantic Coast Conference may still have some differences to work out and Allegheny can accept us for who we are right now.
- In favor of Allegheny, sermon really emphasized a focus on drawing people in. they seemed clear of their stance of support of marrying someone. They are smaller and farther away which may make it harder to connect. After meeting with Atlantic Coast Conference there was some unclarity about their stance on welcoming and affirming congregations.
- In favor of Allegheny. Uncomfortable with the unclarity from Atlantic Coast Conference, it seems that they may be welcoming but not affirming. Allegheny seems welcoming and affirming, it may be further and smaller but feels more consistent with who we are.
- Feels confident that Pastor's credentials will not be taken from either conference. Concerned that we may face conflict at Atlantic Coast Conference if we call someone into leadership who may identify as a part of the LGBTQ+ community.
- Agree with much of what has been shared and said and is in favor of Allegheny Conference. Liked that Atlantic coast is closer and has more resources.
- In favor of Allegheny and am sad that they are so small and so white and hope that perhaps we can support more diversity.
- In favor of Allegheny. The sermon focused on the center being Jesus Christ and we are all moving toward Jesus without drawing boundaries.

Tim handed out comments from survey and allowed a few minutes for council to review.

- More than half of respondents are in favor of Allegheny Mennonite Conference. It is possible that some may not have taken the survey because they don't have an opinion. From what we have here, we should propose in favor of Allegheny

- May be valuable to address some of the respondents' comments when the proposal is brought to congregation
- We propose to join Allegheny conference, share some history/timeline, share the questions, list of strengths from Allegheny conference. Atlantic coast had strengths also but Allegheny's strengths outweighed those of Atlantic. We will share some re reasoning, have a time for discussion and then reach consensus
- This Sunday council will have a written proposal to circulate then approve by Friday then distribute this Sunday. Then have a congregational meeting on April 28th after Sunday school
- All council members are in support of this plan. Dorianna will check with Calvary C. C. C. about a council meeting on April 28th
- The weekly announcements will note that there will be a proposal on Sunday. Tim will chair the next Council meeting

Council Chair

- Council discussed if the Council chair positions needs to be formalized
- Amanda will be council chair with Ethan and Matt as co-chairs
- Council chair will be a one-year term and decided by council members

Tim adjourned meeting at 9:03 p.m.