

West Philadelphia Mennonite Fellowship
Congregational Meeting
December 17, 2017

Lenny Thompson began the meeting at 11:45 am, asking Pastor Lorie Hershey to lead the group in prayer.

1. **Agenda and Announcements.** Lenny outlined the agenda and invited WPMFers to contact him with questions about Everence services since he is the designated representative.
2. **New HRC member – Matt MacNeill**
 - Tim Martin Johnson explained that Betsy Sneller resigned her position (term ending May 2018).
 - HRC invited Matt MacNeill to complete that term in addition to a new 3-year term (until May 2021), at which point he would be eligible to renew one time.
 - Matt has an undergraduate degree in Human Resources, which he has not used in a professional capacity.
 - Lenny and Tim outlined HRC responsibilities and clarified that this position is part of Church Council (pastor, Elders, HRC, Deacons).
 - Lenny opened the floor for questions.
 - Matt left the room, and the congregation broke into CDMs to discuss.
 - Consensus was reached, and Matt MacNeill was accepted as a new member of HRC.
 - WPMF and HRC would like to thank Betsy Sneller for her work on HRC.
3. **Deacons – Budget meeting**
 - Tim Martin Johnson presided over this part of the meeting.
 - Rebecca Weber reviewed the proposed budget document that had been previously distributed.
 - A deficit of \$2,000 is estimated for 2017 unless year-end contributions are stronger than anticipated.
 - Rebecca explained increases/decreases for 2018, including:
 - Increase in pastor salary/benefits is based on Mennonite Church USA guidelines related to level of experience and a cost-of-living increase;
 - Administrative costs include a replacement computer;
 - No one participated in *Walk the Walk* this year; costs were scaled back for 2018;
 - Missions giving is typically set at 10% of total income;
 - Occupancy costs are going up in April.
 - Offerings would need to increase by 3.6% to meet the 2018 budget.
 - One member asked about the sabbatical line; we had made a decision to include this every year so it is not a huge increase for the year when the pastor is on sabbatical.
 - Rebecca explained the Summary Balance Sheet information and clarified that WPMF no longer holds any CDs. Assets are in checking/savings.
 - Rebecca outlined a proposal for Missions giving:
 - WPMF gives approximately \$9-10K each year to various Mennonite-related organizations.
 - The balance of Missions is split among our “Core Missions” and discretionary gifts that are unanticipated. In 2017, Redemption Housing and Power each received \$3,200, with \$1,600 left over for discretionary gifts.
 - For 2018, the Deacons propose the inclusion of Crossroads Community Center as one of the Core Missions. Fred Kauffman was present and explained that Crossroads operates in Fairhill, one of the poorest zip codes of Philadelphia. Crossroads is taking on an ‘indigenous character’ with local leadership, including Pastor Juan Marrero from Christ-Centered Church. One challenge when outside “missionaries” give way to local leadership is that this is often accompanied by a loss of financial support from outside suburban churches. Crossroads includes a music recording program, youth ministry, ex-offenders ministry, and Kingdom Builders. It operates on a budget of \$140,000 that comes primarily from churches, the board, foundations, individuals, and other sources. WPMF can contribute through WPMF budget, individual giving, or a cash flow loan.

- Tim invited questions for Deacons related to the budget, including:
 - *Increase in custodian costs?* This has been \$25/week for years; it will now be \$30/week.
 - *Are the building discussions still happening? Will there be continuing rent increases?* Bryan Geib explained that Calvary had decided to raise occupancy costs 5% every year for 5 years to make it more sustainable. That arrangement expires this year, so the situation will be assessed in April. It's unclear whether it will go up again the following year.
 - *How would the Missions giving decision impact Redemption Housing?* The three organizations (Redemption Housing, Power, Crossroads) would all receive \$2,000.
 - *Do deacons feel the budget is realistic?* Communicating clearly to the congregation about the deficit has helped to increase giving.
 - *How much are we taking out of our non-restricted funds to cover deficits each year?* Over the past couple years, we have taken out a couple thousand dollars each year, partly due to increased programming (mentor program, Walking the Walk, etc.). This is not sustainable on a continuing basis. Tim pointed out that we always underspend the budget because we budget generously; however, the issue is the difference between spending and income.
- Budget progress reports could be made earlier in the year rather than wait until July—perhaps budget meetings in December and July, with updates given on the 'off quarters'.
- Drick Boyd suggested more of a focus on stewardship. Lorie Hershey mentioned Randy Nyce's visit (Everence) with this focus this past year. Many people do not give only to the church, which is a change from past generations who gave primarily to the church.
- The congregation broke into CDMs to discuss, and consensus was reached in support of the budget proposal.
- Tim encouraged the Deacons to take note of the recommendations to report quarterly, and thanked them for their work.

4. Franconia Conference letter (Tim Martin Johnson)

- Tim distributed and discussed a letter from the Franconia Mennonite Conference in response to WPMF's letter indicating that the congregation was supportive of Pastor Lorie Hershey making the decision to perform a same-sex marriage, if asked to do so.
- The conference response indicates that an unwillingness to prejudge the outcome. If Lorie were to marry a same-sex couple, her credentials would be reviewed. It seems fairly clear to us that they would be revoked, which is not what we had hoped to hear, but at least we have clear communication.
- The question for Church Council is whether we wait until this happens or whether we look at other options for conference membership? Church Council will discuss this in January.
- Tim asked those present to refrain from sharing the letter on social media. It will be announced next Sunday but is not really intended for a wider social media audience.

5. Building report (Bryan Geib)

- Bryan reported that Calvary is applying for a national grant "Partners for Sacred Places" up to \$250K, as well as state funding possibilities. Both options involve Calvary's needing to raise matching funds. Deacons are thinking about how to respond, especially given the challenges we are currently facing in the building that have not been adequately addressed.
- Bathrooms have been designated as *all-gender*, which has received some pushback by some building users. How does Calvary accommodate the wide landscape of people in the building? There is no clear way forward. Plans have been in the works to make the building ADA-accessible which was going to include rehabbing the bathrooms, so this is part of that conversation.
- The heating issues continue. There is a storage tank/reservoir in front of the steam heat boiler that lasts approximately 2-3 hours, at which point a handle needs to be manually turned to fill it again. Thus, there is no heat overnight. To fix the issues, the building would need to go without heat for 1-1½ weeks, which is not ideal. At the moment, there is heat on Sunday am, but it is difficult for staff during the week.

6. Drick Boyd reported that a survey about POWER will be sent out in January to identify an area of focus for each congregation (i.e., education, economic dignity, fair wages, criminal justice system) to collaborate with other congregations.

Tim Martin Johnson closed the meeting with prayer.

Minutes recorded by Elaine Shenk, representative from HRC.

26 people were in attendance.