



4980 Gordon Avenue N.W. Cedar Rapids, IA 52405 | www.peoplesuu.org | 319.362.9827

PCUU Board of Trustees Monthly Meeting Minutes

April 19, 2017

Called to order at 6:15 PM.

Present: Robyn Miessler-Kubanek, President; Scott Gay, Vice-President, Kathy Juba, Secretary; Scott Mansfield; Geoff Johnson; Kathleen Watson; Gary McGraw, Treasurer; Rev. Rebecca Hinds

Chalice Lighting: Rev. Rebecca lit the chalice to illuminate our time together.

Regular Agenda items:

I. **March Minutes:**

Approved: Scott M. Second: Scott G. Accepted.

II. **Regular Agenda**

Treasurer's Report: Gary reported that no news is good news. The balance sheet shows we have reasonable savings. We received a special gift of \$2335 that is documented on the balance sheet for the minister's discretionary fund. The endowment fund balance is \$637,000. We had a \$3600 negative cash flow for the month, but are \$1100 ahead for quarter because of prepaid pledges. Things are looking good for the first quarter. The Finance Committee will do a report for the Annual Meeting. Gary wants to put forward a proposal for the endowment fund at that meeting. Robyn said we will talk about that at the next Board meeting. We need a specific plan. We will must figure out if the congregation needs to vote on it.

III. **Zoom Meeting**

At 6:30 PM, the Board entered into a Zoom meeting with Rev. Mark Stringer of Des Moines, with Robyn leading Rev. Stringer and the Board through questions developed by the Board and shared ahead of time with Rev. Stringer.

RMS= Robyn Miessler-Kubanek

MS=Rev. Mark Stringer

1. **RMS: What does "membership" mean in your church?**

MS: That is an ever evolving answer. At first, it was if the person made a pledge. Then, for too much time people worried about membership rather than making sure people



4980 Gordon Avenue N.W. Cedar Rapids, IA 52405 | www.peoplesuu.org | 319.362.9827

were integrated and feeling connected. Now, when a person makes a decision to be a member, they are told that there are 4 Ps of membership: presence, participation, pledge (best you are able), and pass it on. We set it up as an expectation, but don't hold people to it. We contact people we haven't seen for awhile. We have waivers for people who struggle economically. We focus on the health of the church. We don't spend time chasing down the people who aren't going to give anyway, building up what is good. We still have that stuff in the by-laws as a safety valve. It is hard to notice when specific people have not been around for an extended period of time. We've had a membership staff person and regular program staff try to notice. We're not great at that, I'll be honest. Members do tell us it is important.

2. RMS: How critical was the membership coordinator to the overall success of the growth initiative?

MS: It was pretty critical, especially in the early stages. In my estimation, there needs to be a staff person to nurture new people, starting with a 1:1 meeting with them regarding their interests and where they might fit in. The staff person followed the visitor from time they entered the door through the first 6 months. Our membership coordinator started at 10 hours per week. At the end of 6 months, she was up to 30 hrs. It is a 20 hour per week position now, because we farmed out some of the tasks to other positions. It is a vital position. It is a very relational position that shepherds people into the congregation. However, it is better to have no person in the position than the wrong person. You need to hire well. Ours was a new member, a young mom, who had a skill set that matched up well with what we needed. Ours was Laurie Emerson Claire who participated in founding the Association of Membership Professionals. There are all kinds of suggestions on their website. We did a lot of things like a cocktail hour with visitors/new members and leaders. Those events pay off. Our success is because of connecting, not explaining, just getting people talking. Congregations don't always prioritize this. We are not always excited about taking the risk. The church that prioritized that is a church that is growing.

3. RMS: How does RE fit into religious life of the church?

MS: We had our best success when we had teaching teams with people who had kids and those who didn't. It has worked best when adults who worked with one age group recruited for that age group. This is a small group ministry opportunity! It created the relationships that are hard to say no to and then everything gets integrated. The best way to recruit is to build community. Meaningful connections 10 people at a time! The



4980 Gordon Avenue N.W. Cedar Rapids, IA 52405 | www.peoplesuu.org | 319.362.9827

magic takes care of itself. This helped us grow all aspects of the congregation. We used the Soul Matters curriculum. When I arrived, I was enthusiastic about small group ministry. The first thing I did was create a small group implementation team. We tried different models. Our goal was just to get people to meet each other and build relationships. It was a 6 month program that straddled the summer. People enrolled in March, started in April. The facilitators chose times, e.g. first and third Mondays 3-5 PM, then people formed groups based on their availability for the different meeting times. After 6 months, everyone regrouped. There were no strict guidelines. I created a list of 130 discussion topics but groups could decide what topic. After a while, we shifted to the Soul Matters curriculum. There was a format for the meetings. For the first 30 min. there was a check in. Each person had 3-4 min. to talk with some opportunity to follow up. After one hour, conversation shifted to a specific topic area. There was an opening reading and/or a song with the last 5 min. being what did you like/not like/what would you change. These were 2 hr. sessions that always started and ended on time. Once a month, facilitators met with me. There was training for the facilitators. I trained by modeling, with guidelines. I encouraged facilitators to get feedback. When I met with facilitators right before the first meeting, we talked about their "nightmare" scenarios.

4. RMK: What did transition to policy board look like on the ground?

MS: Most confusion was caused by not knowing we were moving into policy governance when we did it. Do an appreciative inquiry process: what do you like about the place? What do you want to do more of? I don't think policy governance is good if you are not big enough. I saw that on my sabbatical. We brought in a consultant "Unity Consulting" in St. Paul. I'd recommend them. What is the magic number for having a policy board? 350-400 members. Then you have enough staff to truly delegate. You can't be successful until you can delegate and hold people to it. It can work in a small church if you have lay people who will become volunteer staff. There might be a webinar for the district, "Staffing for Growth" that I did that talks about a church in Fairfax VA. It was lay people who made it work, each assigned to an area. We have a council of 7 counselors to be my eyes and ears on the ground, like former board members. We didn't have committees; we have task forces. That's another whole topic!

5. RMK: What do you think were the most effective ways to foster change?

MS: The biggest change for this church was the decision to grow that predates me. We have added some programming, such as creating some opportunities to engage on



4980 Gordon Avenue N.W. Cedar Rapids, IA 52405 | www.peoplesuu.org | 319.362.9827

Wed. nights. You need people in the congregation to support it, such as leaders writing articles, talking about it, etc. Invite members to sell what is good.

6. RMK: What sorts of red flags helped identify problems or areas of friction?

MS: Mostly it's obvious when people are feeling confused. Some people are "barometers" of the church. Have open agenda meetings. Have people show up and then ask what they want to talk about. Early on were gripe sessions. We did ask what people wanted to do to solve the problems. Red flags are your friend. They tell you where you are not aligned with your mission. The meetings were open but I sent specific invitations. I would also invite new people. I looked for talent, people with a skill set. It shows to the newcomer that we care about new people's ideas and it helps build relationships.

7. Rebecca: We are renewing our mission in the next 6 months. Any advice?

MS: Ours was everything but the kitchen sink. That's fine but the most beneficial thing is when they got really explicit about a long range plan. E.g. Hire a fulltime DRE in year one, in year two.... etc. It was clear and they knew it was going to happen. I don't think the mission drove the church until we became a policy governance church. Now I am evaluated on how the church is doing.

Board Reflection on Meeting with Rev. Mark Stringer

Board members shared their main takeaway: Gary: the emphasis he put on the membership coordinator. Small group covenant groups with a facilitator and a plan. Kathleen: intentionality and commitment to relationships. Geoff: was excited when Rev. Stringer was talking about others being excited about goals that are specified. Scott M.: liked when he talked about the 4 Ps...and having ways for people to connect with each other. Scott G.: Red flag idea of doing an open space technology platform is a good way to get people to discuss what is bothering them. Gives the minister a chance before it blows up. Puts more work on minister. (Could be a forum...maybe the ones run by the Board.) It would be a good idea to experiment with. I didn't realize the importance of the membership coordinator when we had one. Kathy: Success comes from being relational. We are not large enough to be a policy governance board. Need to have a specific mission to grow towards.

Robyn requested that Board members email any takeaway and any questions so she can pull together a summary.



4980 Gordon Avenue N.W. Cedar Rapids, IA 52405 | www.peoplesuu.org | 319.362.9827

IV. Regular Agenda Items, Part 2

DRE Report: Reviewed.

In Jamie's (excused) absence, Robyn said there is some confusion on Youth/RE fundraising numbers on the treasurer's spreadsheet. Gary will talk with Jamie.

Minister's Report: Reviewed.

There is no Board Strategy meeting scheduled in May or June. Robyn may do a Board retreat instead.

Operations Coordinator's report:

In response to a question, Rebecca explained the "service music log": Cathy is keeping log of music used during service so Rebecca makes sure she varies the hymns.

Scott G. noticed that church attendance is noticeably higher on the third Sunday of the month. It was noted that that is the intergenerational service so children and youth are in the service that day, making the counts higher than other Sundays.

V. Pledge Campaign Update

The goal for the 2018 pledge campaign is \$171,600 which is for 4% growth. It is aspirational to not have a deficit budget. This is \$25,000 more than last year. The theme for the 2018 campaign is Renew Our Mission. The No Hassle portion will be done again this year. Kathleen is so impressed with the enthusiasm of this group and how early they are getting going. Rebecca commented that it's a fantastic group. Members are Brian Davis, Sue Davis, Charlie Cizio, Judy Price, Bob Butikofer, and Rev. Rebecca.

VI. Mission Team Update

Scott G. reported that the Mission Team will be offering three opportunities for members of the congregation to give input: (1) a forum on April 30th, (2) a meeting on May 10, and (3) a meeting on May 18. The purpose of these meetings is to collect data using the activity that the Board used at the last Board Strategy Meeting. The activity will focus on identifying the main values of the church community.

VII. Congregational Meeting Agenda

The Board discussed potential agenda items for the Congregational Meeting in May.



4980 Gordon Avenue N.W. Cedar Rapids, IA 52405 | www.peoplesuu.org | 319.362.9827

VIII. Stained Glass Window Team

The Board reviewed the Window Project Planning Team Overview document that Robyn drafted and supported its use in recruiting team members.

For the May 7 Forum, Robyn will facilitate. At the end of the forum, Robyn wants to empower the people who attend to take on the task. Gary asked that it be included that a capital campaign may be necessary. Any additional thoughts, email Robyn.

IX. Other

Endowment Fund

At our next meeting, we will talk about setting up an endowment fund with the Greater Cedar Rapids Foundation for the church.

Adjourned at 8:49 PM: Motion made by Scott M. Second: Scott G. Passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Juba

Secretary