



# Plymouth

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

## BOARD OF OUTREACH

### Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 21, 2018

Attendance:

Yes	No		Yes	No	
x		Beth Comeaux (2018), <i>Chair</i>	x		Sue Moses (2020)
x		Sally Cassellius (2019)	x		Paula Northwood, <i>Staff Liaison</i>
x		Birdie Cunningham (2019)		x	Jared Swanson (2019)
x		Peter Eichten (2020)	x		Peter Vitale (2020)
x		Loretta Menke (2018)	x		Gingie Ward (2018)

**GUESTS:** There were no guests in attendance.

### ***Actions Taken:***

Item 1. Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

### ***Agenda Items***

Gingie led the group in our meditation.

**OROMO Community:** Kathleen Seestadt and Nagesa Dube spoke on behalf of the Oromo community to educate the board on issues concerning the Oromo community in Minneapolis and gave a brief history of the community and the current situation in Ethiopia. The largest Oromo diaspora is in the Twin Cities, approximately 40,000. And, it is the largest ethnicity in Ethiopia. (40% or more).

She also explained the history of how Plymouth’s engagement with the Oromo community. In 2000, the Outreach Board hired Kathleen as Community Liaison for which she was in the position for 4 years. In 2001, Plymouth hosted a forum for the Oromo community which received good press coverage and attendance.

She spoke about Advocates for Human Rights, (AHR) which is a local NGO with strong ties to both the Oromo community *and* Plymouth. Kathleen had questions about the internship opportunity that’s been under discussion at the board level. Jeff Sartain felt an intern could act as a liaison between Plymouth and the Oromo. Recent changes in Ethiopian governance mean it is too early to know what kind of support and activism is most needed. There is currently some legislation under consideration regarding Ethiopia and human rights; House Resolution 128, Senate Resolution 168. Both are pending. One ongoing effort that continues is the Oromo women who are trying to raise funds for displaced women and children. AHR is compiling information from members of the community that will be incorporated into the report. [www.unitedoromovoices.com](http://www.unitedoromovoices.com) They will need volunteers to help interview and gather information from community members.

They are also always in need of space for large forums and gatherings. Perhaps we could have dinners with Plymouth members? Could someone from Plymouth serve as a liaison? Minnesota is closely connected to the most vocal and experienced leaders within the Oromo community. They need writers and advice on doing successful advocacy.

**Leadership Council:** Paula gave an update on the Leadership Council; they are starting a growth task force. Plymouth is no exception to the slow decline in Protestant churches across the country. 80% of all Protestant churches have less than 100 members!

Immigrant Welcoming group approached the church for funding for a worker injured on the job whose family needed money. The Board of Outreach approved \$1200 to come from the Sandbo fund. A check was released to CTUL for

disbursement. Beth expressed the desire to spend some time in the coming months to establish a procedure for responding to future requests for funding.

Peter Eichten shared about *Discussions That Encounter*. This is a group that meets for discussions about racism. They are looking for some other location than St. Olaf Catholic Church to meet on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of every month from 6:30pm to 8:30pm. They have a meal, a presentation and conversation. They would like to request funds to provide the meal which has been being paid for each month by one of their attendees. It was agreed that the Board of Outreach could fund February's dinner with Peter taking the request for further funding to the Leadership Council.

Street Song will perform at the potluck on March 4<sup>th</sup>! Thanks, Gingie Ward!

March 14<sup>th</sup> will be a tour of Groveland Food Shelf before our meeting. Meet at 6pm in Guild Hall. Jared will give us an update on the Immigrant Welcoming Group.

**Next Meeting**

March 14, 2018

6:30-8:00pm, Room 203

---

*Respectfully submitted,  
Peter Vitale, secretary*