



# Plymouth

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

## LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

### Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 24, 2018

Attendance:

Yes	No		Yes	No	
■		Deb Fowler, <i>Chair</i>		■	Becky Dougherty, <i>Spiritual Formation</i>
■		Sarah Lehman, <i>Chair Elect</i>	■		Karen Barstad, <i>Worship</i>
■		Mike McCallister, <i>Secretary</i>	■		Mary Welfling, <i>Archivist</i>
■		Emi Bennett Vo, <i>Community Life</i>	■		Paula Northwood, <i>Acting Senior Minister</i>
■		Eric Olsen, <i>Finance and Administration</i>	■		Beth Faeth, <i>Minister for Congregational Care</i>
■		John Kulstad, <i>Fine Arts</i>	■		Dan Wolpert, <i>Interim Minister</i>
■		Peter Eichten, <i>Outreach</i>			

**GUESTS:** The Deacons (Brian Siska, Dave Homans, Claire Colliander, Katie Dillon, Claire Kolmodin, Peg Birk, Gloria Wallace, Ed Curtis), Allison Campbell Jensen, and Seth Patterson.

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

**Item 1.** Minutes of the previous meeting electronically approved.

**Item 2.** Agreed that the discussion on the Embroideries should be an agenda item for the next Leadership Council meeting.

**Item 3.** Adopted this motion: “The Leadership Council requests that the Racial Justice Initiative provide recommendations to the Leadership Council, on a board by board basis, of how each board and governing body can take concrete actions to address and dismantle systems of racism and exclusion within our church structure.”

### ***Agenda and Minutes***

#### **Meditation / Prayer**

- A reading and reflection, offered by Sarah Lehman, from an *On Being* podcast, where David Whyte gave closing remarks at an On Being Gathering.

#### **Introductions – Leadership Council and Deacons**

- Each member of the Leadership Council and Deacons gave a brief introduction.

#### **Acting Senior Minister’s Report – Paula Northwood**

- Paula recently went to interim ministry training in MA. One of her take-aways was a sadness for churches as a whole, as Dan’s recent storytelling about dwindling congregations has helped illustrate. Many of her fellow participants came from small congregations that are shrinking. Paula was grateful for what we have at Plymouth, and she recognizes that one advantage of Plymouth is our flexibility and nimbleness, and that we can respond to the challenges.

#### **Minutes Procedure**

Minute-taker submits draft to group within 10 days of meeting; members have 7 days to submit revisions (no response is treated as approval).

If any revisions, minute-taker forwards revised draft to group within 3 days for electronic approval; members have 2 days to respond (no response is treated as approval).

Minute-taker submits approved minutes in Microsoft Word format to the Ministry Assistant for Programs (Doug Freeman, dougf@plymouth.org) upon approval.

- Paula is beginning to think about her timeline for retirement, and she will help plan out what is next.
- Paula encouraged the Leadership Council to think about growth in all the boards.
  - The Growth Task Force will contact the boards to arrange meetings with the boards or their chairs. Please discuss what boards can do or are already doing towards growth.
  - Also, please share with Paula and the Growth Task Force what boards are doing with their \$1,000.
- We are more than halfway to the goal for the Stewardship Campaign. There is also a good response on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Fund.
- There is an active discussion within the church about the Embroideries. Paula shared some upcoming activities that will help facilitate this discussion.

### **What does the 21st Century Plymouth Church look like, feel like, act like?**

- The Leadership Council, Deacons, Clergy, and Staff broke into small groups to discuss three questions framed in the contexts of Growth, Racial Justice, and Radical Hospitality.

### **Small Group Reports and Large Group Summary**

- The meeting reconvened and the small groups gave readouts. Elements and themes of those readouts included:
  - We are trying to define the church of the future, and we are focused on changes from the past. We may not know where we will go, but we're not without precedent. Our attitude to the change is important. Our approach to change is important.
  - How do we define racial justice? It's not equality. It's not charity. This underlying question is still open.
  - Inclusivity is an element of racial justice. Inclusivity requires humility, which may be needed within Plymouth.
  - Plymouth Church is living out the call of Jesus. To walk in his footsteps, look at his life and teachings. Live them out in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Particularly for the marginalized.
  - Important questions: what can a church do to meet the needs of the wider community? What's unique about a church? What do we provide that people are seeking?
  - We seem to be poor at evangelism.
  - Racial justice is intermeshed with social, economic, and environmental elements.
  - One group discussed importance of having an aspirational vision. The Embroideries are a very tangible example. How do we honor the past, appreciate the story, while dealing with the ways it is problematic today? Hard work gives us an opportunity to move forward.
  - There needs to be a process for healing, and for dealing with change and the fear of being left behind.
  - Do we have an intention about where we want to go? Do we have a stated goal to be a diverse and multi-racial church? Do we need to declare this is an outcome we seek?
  - It is nice to have people of different groups in the pews. We need to develop personal relationships to develop a sense belonging. Share examples where spending time helped to understand personhood of others.
  - Does racial justice mean diversity? Are there things we can do?
  - There are things we take for granted or are not challenged by.
  - Racial justice often sounds like taking action outside of the church. Diversity, equity, inclusion... There are also lots of opportunities internal to the church, like looking at our language.
  - We're not a non-profit. How do we bring the spiritual elements in? There is a whole dimension that is important to anchor in the work we do as Plymouth. We often revert to "secular" speak. This was represented across many groups.
- Next Steps:
  - The Clergy described the discussion sessions on the Embroideries that will be held the next three Sundays. [NB: a fourth session has since been added]:
    - We expect these sessions will focus on talking and listening, to learn where people are on the topic, with no concrete action coming from these sessions alone.
    - The sessions will use strict ground rules for communication, designed to help them stay healthy and constructive, and will be facilitated with questions for people to react to and people serving as timekeepers and facilitators.

- It was noted that the process and outcomes are uncertain, that Plymouth is learning right now, and that even after these sessions, we may need to find other mechanisms for outreach and engagement across the congregation.
- **Agreed** that this should be a topic of discussion for the Leadership Council on November 28.

### **Other Items**

- Update on the Racial Justice Initiative:
  - The Racial Justice Initiative is beginning to look at Plymouth's Purposes to make racial justice work explicit, and to make proposals to the Deacons.
  - A covenant on racial justice, prepared and adopted by the Board of Worship, was shared with the Leadership Council as an example for consideration. Members of the Initiative will help write similar covenants with/for each board as a proposal/draft for them to consider.
- Leadership Council discussed ways the Leadership Council could help encourage and further Initiative's work.
- **Motion:** The Leadership Council requests that the Racial Justice Initiative provide recommendations to the Leadership Council, on a board by board basis, of how each board and governing body can take concrete actions to address and dismantle systems of racism and exclusion within our church structure. **Seconded and approved.**

### **Next Meeting**

- Next Leadership Council **November 28, 2018** at 6:00 pm

### **Adjourn**

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*Respectfully submitted,*  
*Mike McCallister, Secretary*