

Minutes: Heartland of Texas Emmaus Community Executive Board Meeting

August 7, 2023, 7:00 PM, Burnet FUMC

Attendees: Alan Bazard, JoAnn Dilworth, Mary Gonzalez, Roberta Goodman, Robert Hall, Bob Munsey, Laura Orr, Grady Roe

Guests: Troy Ellet, Gene McConnell, Steven Scott, Carl Stewart, Richard Wendrock

1. Bob opened in prayer and called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.
2. June minutes were approved for filing.
3. Treasurer's Report was distributed but not discussed.
4. In Gay's absence, JoAnn reported that we currently have 17 pilgrims. The Women's Team has met once and will hold their second meeting on August 26. The Servants' Team is progressing, with many team members who will be working their FIRST walk. JoAnn will meet with the new servants at the August 26 meeting, as well. That gives the new people time to get acclimated to what working a walk looks like before being thrown into the actual walk.
5. JoAnn presented the recommendation from the Team Selection Committee for David Hinojosa to serve as Lay Director for Men's Walk 2024. The Board approved his selection, and David accepted.
6. Roberta prayed for insight over the discussion with our visitors regarding their community needs and a possible merge of communities.
7. Carl Stewart represented the Llano community and gave an overview of their community:
 - Twenty years ago, the community was "on fire" – worked most walks, always sent pilgrims.
 - About 2014-2016, interest dwindled. and they moved to quarterly gatherings and meetings, which gradually stretched to even longer intervals.
 - With COVID, the community was on hiatus and is now coming back, with two pilgrims at the last women's walk and six at the last men's walk.
 - In May, they held the first gathering in a while with 54-56 attendees.
 - They hold gatherings on Sunday evenings, which fits the needs of their community as so many live quite a distance away. They have the meal at 6 p.m. and service at 7 p.m., allowing people to still get home before too late.
 - The next gathering is set for August 20, and they also plan gatherings for November and February.
 - Gatherings are announced via email but also through announcements and church bulletins at the various churches.
 - Llano currently has two identified Reunion Groups, but they have others forming that are not yet registered.
 - Llano would love to be in the mix for HOTEK gatherings, possibly hosting 1-2 per year.
 - They are considering the purchase of a 15-passenger van that could be used for transporting people to gatherings and meetings.
 - The goal for Llano is to stay active in Emmaus.
 - The Llano community has a 3-person "board" that approves all expenditures. Money received in collections at gatherings goes into the fund to assist with costs of gatherings and assistance for pilgrims. In Llano, sponsors usually pay pilgrim fees.

8. Steven Scott and Gene McConnell represented the Greater Austin Emmaus Community and gave an overview of their community and its needs.
 - Prior to 2016, meetings were held on Thursday nights with no food served. This didn't work well, especially for parents with younger children; and participation dropped to 25-30 per gathering.
 - They have most recently been gathering on Saturday, with board meetings, fellowship and gatherings all together (an "event" – sometimes an Agape party, trainings, etc.) and have had as many as 110 people attending prior to Covid.
 - Since COVID, involvement has dropped, and they haven't been able to rebuild it. They've tried virtual then moved to in-person, with 25-35 attending. Many of their people have aged out and are just not involved any longer.
 - Some of their old reunion groups are still active, and a few new ones have been established.
 - They've had difficulty manning walks, which is why they had originally reached out to HOTEK.
 - They communicate with their members through email and newsletters sent via MailChimp. The newsletter is also posted on their website.
 - GAEC has decided to cancel their Men's Walk that was scheduled for November and will send any pilgrims they have to the HOTEK walk in April.
 - Regarding meeting days, they find that the weekend is a better alternative for such a widespread community. They are currently holding their gathering events on the third Saturday in odd months (unless something interferes) and rotate to different churches in their community.
 - GAEC has only four board members remaining. Their walk fees for pilgrims are more than ours with the pilgrim paying 1/3, the sponsor or church paying 1/3, and the community paying 1/3.
 - In past merger situations, they have simply "absorbed" finances, board members and other resources into one.
 - Money received at gatherings goes into the general fund to be used for gathering costs and scholarships.

9. Bob gave a brief overview of HOTEK, stating that we are working diligently to improve communications with our community and are moving to a new system of email and text messaging.

Additional comments / questions included:

- Troy: Are we combining to host one Men's Walk and one Women's Walk?
 - Discussion centered on the possibility of needing to add walks more frequently at some point, which may continue to overburden workers.
- Steven: We can take the best of all three of us and use what each community has. We (GAEC) have a MailChimp database already set up and functioning, which could be used for communication for all three communities.
- Bob: Tonight is just for the purpose of discussion with no decisions made. We need to study the possibilities before making decisions. Combining for Walks is just a given.
- JoAnn: Our by-laws have established our board membership. If we move to a different board arrangement, the by-laws would have to be amended.

- JoAnn: We've studied the cost projections over the past couple of years and voted to keep our pilgrim fees at \$185.00 per person, which is pretty much a "break even" cost. We pay a per-person fee to Eagle's Wings for the use of their facilities and a nominal fee to Upper Room for each pilgrim attending. If we have pilgrims from your communities attending, the walk cost increases for us. As our board has resolved to not increase our prices at this time, this will have to be resolved.
- We may want to consider doing an email for the HOTEK board and Carl, Steven, and Gene so that questions and answers can be communicated online.

At 8:15 p.m., Grady closed in prayer and Bob adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

JoAnn Dilworth, Board Member

August 8, 2023