

Bethel College Mennonite Church
CHURCH BOARD MINUTES
August 6, 2020 online via Zoom

Board Members Present: Patricia Shelly (moderator), Elizabeth Schmidt (moderator-elect), Pat Friesen (clerk), Rosalind Andreas, Erin Brubacher, Judy Friesen, Cynthia Linscheid, Dale Schrag, Bill Swartley

Board Members Absent: Glen Ediger, John Kliewer

Staff Present: Renee Reimer (associate pastor), Mike Claassen (financial manager)

Staff Absent: on sabbatical: Dawn Yoder Harms (pastor)

1. **Centering Time.** Patty Shelly opened the meeting with a centering prayer.

2. **Consent Agenda.** The board minutes of July 2, 2020, pastors' reports, and online minutes of commissions and committees had been distributed electronically. **All were approved by consensus.**

3. **Finance Manager Report.** Mike Claassen reporting.

a. Income was \$4,693.71 less than expense in July. Income was \$26,356.35 less than expenses for the year to date. The Gifts Discernment Committee elected to donate the amount budgeted for delegates to WDC Annual ^[SEP]Assembly, which was held online, to the WDC Hope Fund.^[SEP] **The finance report was accepted by consensus.**

b. March natural gas bill error. John Waltner's persistence paid off. Kansas Gas has agreed to adjust our anomalous March gas billing last winter to the amount typically charged for that month in previous years. The \$1,270.43 credit to our account will offset future charges.

c. Budget planning for next year. As we begin budget planning for next year, the board is to submit a request for the Contingency fund. The board agreed to resubmit the current \$500 amount. In November we will receive a draft of an entire congregational budget for 2021 to examine and forward for congregational approval.

4. **New name for BCMC annual pledge drive** Patty Shelly.

At the July board meeting John Kliewer expressed concern about the name of BCMC's stewardship process, The Pony Express, given its connection to settler history and settlers' violence to Indigenous People. This concern was discussed with no action proposal at this time, but with openness to continue the conversation.

After the board meeting, at *their* July meeting, the Finance Committee discussed how to gather pledges for the new budget in a time of COVID. They are working on setting up a process that can be completed online rather than passing envelopes through the congregation. While they discussed issues related to the Pony Express name, they decided not to take action at this time. A request was made to brainstorm names at our August meeting and submit our top 3-4 options to the Finance Committee, who would then be invited to make the final choice (if they are willing).

Following discussion of almost a dozen nominations, the board agreed to forward these four ideas to the Finance Committee:

45 bcmcXpress
46 Expressing Justice and Mercy (or Just Mercy Express)
47 Give4bcmc
48 Generosity (or Gratitude) Express

49 When presenting the new format of the pledge drive this year the board consensus asked that
50 communication to the congregation include some of these ideas:

51 --John Kliewer's concern that the "Pony Express" played a part in the genocide of the indigenous
52 populations on our continent. And that a church with a common purpose statement emphasizing doing
53 justice ought not to highlight a movement that contributed to the genocide of Native Americans.

54 --Dale Schrag's point that our budgets (and budget building) reveal and express the principles, values
55 and commitments we hold as a congregation. And that we could think of "express" as a verb,
56 communicating what we stand for; so that Generosity Express means we are expressing generosity; or
57 Justice and Mercy Express means we are committed to justice and mercy
58

59 **5. Reopening the church task group—update: Elizabeth Schmidt**

60 The task group has met several times since the July board meeting. They will meet again Aug. 26.

- 61 a. Live Stream worship has been implemented.
- 62 b. Based on Survey Monkey feedback and identified community spread of COVID in Harvey
63 County, they decided to wait until October to begin in-person Sunday worship.
- 64 c. Guidelines for funerals and memorial services to be held inside the sanctuary have been
65 developed. To date, memorial services have been held outside. Jim Robb is liaison for using
66 an outdoor microphone system that has been used for MCC Sales in the past.
- 67 d. Discussed adding a COVID-19 section on the website to inform.
- 68 e. Community Playschool board has decided to NOT hold playschool in the fall.
- 69 f. Michael Unruh, Bethel College campus pastor, has contacted Renee Reimer about
70 collaborating to plan the traditional Fall Fest worship service during this time of COVID.
- 71 g. When Fellowship Hall is completed the group will want to take into consideration updated
72 information on ventilation systems.

73
74 Patty Shelly thanked the committee for their work and thought in addressing the myriad issues
75 related to safety in this time of COVID.
76

77 Dale Schrag asked whether the college has asked the church about available large assembly
78 space for college classroom instruction because he had heard such spaces were needed. No
79 one present, not the pastor nor Reopening Task Group nor Church Board moderator, had been
80 asked. Neither had anyone from the church initiated such an inquiry.
81

82 Following discussion, **Pat Friesen moved that the Reopening Task Force immediately contact**
83 **the college to inquire if there is a need for a large space (such as the sanctuary) for classroom**
84 **meetings and determine if we can help. Seconded by Dale Schrag. After discussion**
85 **emphasizing our role as the college church, the motion passed unanimously.**
86

87 **6. Church safety and sexual abuse policy-update. Renee Reimer.**

88 Renee has been working to contact members for the new Abuse and Prevention Committee. 4 out of
89 6 potential members have agreed to serve. Two more are to be contacted.
90
91

- 92 7. **Leadership Retreat in September.** Renee Reimer, Nathan Koontz, Patty Shelly.
93 Date is set: Sept. 12 9 am - 11 am via Zoom for all members of committees, commissions,
94 and board. Will use Breakout rooms via Zoom.
95 Renee talked about building a sense of community with BCMC leaders and discussing : “How can we
96 continue to connect, grow, and reach out in this context”
97 1. What has been exposed in this new context” (Racial justice, health care, wealth distribution)
98 2. What do the lenses of the pandemic reveal to us?
99 3. How can faith and community continue to grow within this context?

100
101 **Other Updates.**

- 102 8. High-def camera and live-streaming equipment (Bill Swartley)
103 Two weeks ago was the first time we used the high-def camera during worship. 90 - 100 viewers
104 logged on. Some Issues are now evident:
105 a. picture vibrations during taping are from foot traffic in the balcony. A solution is to purchase a
106 shock absorber to be placed under the camera. cost is \$500.
107 b. Auto-focus jumps from mike to speaker because of low lighting. McClelland Sound can
108 recommend what can improve it. Theater or flood lights were recommended.
109 c. Gig switch needed to splice equipment into internet connection.
110 **d. Dale Schrag moved that, pending approval by the Finance Committee, we purchase these items:**
111 **shock absorber, enhanced lighting, and ethernet gig switch for a total up to \$1,000. Judy Friesen**
112 **seconded. The motion passed by unanimous consent.**
113 e. Elizabeth Schmidt observed that these expenses are evident because of the changes in our
114 worship and church life required to adapt to life amid COVID.
115 f. Bill Swartley noted that other current technology such as a Laser projector and screens that raise
116 up from the floor are now available for purchase. Screens raised from the floor would not alter
117 the architecture or visual image of the chancel area. Some churches even livestream interviews
118 with missionaries in other countries during worship with such technologies. Estimated screen
119 cost: \$15,000
120 g. Dale Schrag observed that a screen and projector system would enhance classroom instruction at
121 Bethel.
122 h. Pat Friesen said our installation of internet access at multiple points in the building for a strong
123 wifi signal, rather than using boosters, was timely.
124 i. Judy Friesen said we desperately need it right now.
125 j. Patty Shelly observed it impacts many committees: worship, facilities, finance, Bethel College
126 Relations Committee, Faith Formation. Where does it lodge and who coordinates the discussion
127 and need? Do we need to establish a technology task force?
128 k. Dale Schrag suggested it be an item on the Retreat, Sept. 12.
129 l. Mike Claassen queried if the college might contribute to the cost of equipment to make the
130 sanctuary a potential classroom space.
131 m. Patty Shelly noted that additional staff for i.t. operation and cleaning the building would be
132 incurred.
133
134 9. **Fellowship Hall renovation**
135 Patty reported that Annette Lamp and some members of the Finance Committee met with Christa
136 Jahay July 27 to assess progress. Decisions were to add plumbing for a stackable washer and dryer in
137 family restroom for needs such as washing masks or dish towels and to change out water fountains for
138 water bottle dispensers. End of September is the earliest projected completion date.
139

140 **10. Parking issue**

141 The North Newton City Council received a letter in July from the Newton Community for Racial Justice
142 with 78 signatories requesting a review of police department policies for systemic racism and a freeze
143 on the police budget. Dawn Yoder-Harms and Patty Shelly have talked with John Waltner about this
144 new context/awareness re: our congregational parking issue. How will our request to the city to
145 establish a parking ordinance, which the police would have to enforce, be perceived? When we are a
146 predominantly white congregation will it make college students of color feel we are harassing them?
147 How do we think about systemic racism in North Newton? John Waltner will not pursue anything
148 about the parking ordinance unless the board requests that he do so after review. Rosalind Andreas
149 observed this is another "covid moment" to pause and reconsider our actions. We are not holding in-
150 person worship now and will have reduced attendance requirements into the future our need may
151 have changed. This item is tabled until the Sept. board meeting.

152 **11. Executive session--8:27 p.m.**

153

154 Meeting adjourned: 8:30 p.m.

155 Next Meeting: Sept. 3, 2020 7:00 p.m.

156

157 Respectfully submitted,

158 Pat Friesen, Clerk

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