

**Bethel College Mennonite Church**  
**CHURCH BOARD MINUTES**  
**Dec. 3, 2020 7 pm on Zoom**

*Our faith in a God of love leads us, by the power of the Spirit,  
to follow Jesus in doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God.*

**Board Members Present:** Elizabeth Schmidt (moderator-elect), Pat Friesen (clerk), Glen Ediger, Judy Friesen, John Kliewer, Cynthia Linscheid, Dale Schrag, and Bill Swartley

**Board Members Absent:** Erin Brubacher, Rosalind Andreas

**Staff Present:** Dawn Yoder Harms (pastor), Renee Reimer (associate pastor), Mike Claassen (financial manager)

**Additional present:** Al Peters

Not attending: Nathan Koontz (associate pastor)

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- 1 1. Welcome and Centering Prayer (Elizabeth Schmidt and Pastor Dawn)
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- 3 2. Consent Agenda. November 5, 2020 board minutes, pastors' reports, and online minutes of commissions
- 4 and committees –**All were approved by unanimous consent.**
- 5
- 6 3. Financial (Mike Claassen, Al Peters)
- 7 a. Consider November 2020 financial report – Because Giving is below budget, as per our policy,
- 8 benevolences giving has been suspended due to a shortfall in our current giving. Action: The
- 9 Finance committee is planning to continue posting informational items in the online bulletin.
- 10 b. Harvey County CARES Act Public Health Grant Program – Update
- 11 On Saturday, Nov. 14 Elizabeth Schmidt informed board members by email that Harvey County
- 12 approved our application for CARES Act Community Public Health Grant funds for COVID-19
- 13 pandemic-related expenses in the categories of Personal Protective Equipment, Cleaning and
- 14 Hygiene supplies, and Information Technology improvements to support telework enhancements or
- 15 online service delivery. The award letter is being finalized. Total amount is approximately
- 16 \$9,000.00. A check arrived this week. The final reimbursement will total \$9,215.09.
- 17 The plan is to return the Memorial Fund monies that were used to pay for these expenses until the
- 18 CARES money was received. Thank you to Dorothy Nickel Friesen for calling this opportunity to our
- 19 attention, and to Mike Claassen for providing copies of invoices & authorizations, and the W-9.
- 20 c. Consider 2021 Pastor's Housing Allowance – These were the same amounts approved last year. It is
- 21 not a church budget item but board approval is required in order for pastors to complete their
- 22 federal tax returns. The amounts are calculated based on the local community housing market.
- 23 Dawn: \$25000, Renee: \$25000, Nathan: \$22000 (prorated for part-time)
- 24 **Action: Dale Schrag moved to approve the Housing Allowance, Bill Swartley seconded. Passed**
- 25 **unanimously.**
- 26
- 27 d. Replenishing Plant Fund – update. \$19,000 from the Plant Fund was designated by church board
- 28 action earlier this year toward elevator repair. There is a small (\$2,065.99) balance to date from
- 29 designated contributions received. When the PPP loan forgiveness confirmation is received, the
- 30 Plant Fund money will be replenished. Mike cannot submit the application to forgive the PPP loan
- 31 until January 2021. Our Midland SBA loan for \$62000 was received earlier this year and we are
- 32 holding it in a separate Midland account (see SBA line item) until we receive confirmation that the
- 33 forgiveness loan is approved and will not be required to be repaid. The timeline for completion is
- 34 March 2021 or later.
- 35
- 36 e. 2021 bcmcXpress commitments – Update. Al Peters spoke on behalf of the Finance Committee.
- 37 This is the first year we are trying to collect intent pledges toward Giving in 2021 through our

38 website. To date, 170 responses were received. Last year we received 201; 2 yrs. prior 213 were  
39 received.

40 \$419,600 is pledged to date. That is \$107,000 short of a full budget pledge. On average, by the  
41 end of a year an individual's total contributions are over 10% of their pledges. Therefore, the  
42 Finance committee sees no reason to reduce our proposed budget at this time and recommends it  
43 for congregational approval. The Finance committee will continue to monitor actual giving  
44 throughout 2021. Bill Swartley asked if there was any trend on contribution amount. Mike Claassen  
45 has not yet calculated that comparison. Bill Swartley acknowledged the stress of the pandemic that  
46 might restrict giving and John Kliewer added that many agencies are reporting increased needs.

47  
48 f. Plan for finalizing FY 2021 budget. (Al Peters) **Action: The consensus of the board is to support the**  
49 **Finance committee to continue to solicit more pledges (intents) and bring a final proposal for the**  
50 **2021 budget to our January board meeting.**

51  
52 4. Regier Construction – Update (Pastor Dawn)  
53 Annette Lamp reported yesterday that work on the basement remodel is very slow because of supply chain  
54 issues and many workers have been required to stay home on quarantine. To date, Fellowship Hall does  
55 have new carpet and new lighting. A partial occupancy permit before the entire project is finished may be  
56 approved so the church can begin to use the Fellowship Hall space.

57  
58 5. Reopening church task group – Update (Elizabeth Schmidt)  
59 The next Task Force meeting will be on Dec. 8 to finalize plans for future calendar events. Guidelines have  
60 already been developed for small groups, memorial services, worship teams and guest groups and are  
61 posted on the church website under the covid tab. Faith formation is keyed to the Newton school district  
62 gating criteria so currently no small groups are meeting in-person.

63  
64 6. Abuse Prevention & Response Committee – Update (Pastor Renee)  
65 The committee has new members and held the first meeting mid-November. Dale Schrag is the church  
66 board representative and also secretary for the committee. The primary focus of their first meeting was to  
67 reflect on a common read. Next, they will be looking at policies and considering a proposed congregational  
68 policy update. In January a representative from Dove's Nest will hopefully provide a trauma-informed  
69 training for committee members. Pastor Renee asked the board to consider adding a line item to the  
70 budget for this committee. Anticipated expenses are paid committee training, specific case consultation  
71 contracts and background checks for volunteers.

72  
73 7. Consider funding request for services from Faith Trust Institute or GRACE (Godly Response to Abuse in the  
74 Christian Environment). (Pastor Dawn). We need independent specialized resources to assist us in the  
75 interim period while our policy and procedure is being finalized. Estimated expenses are \$2500+.  
76 Immediate resources could come from the Frank Keller Bequest fund and Western District Conference  
77 "congregational development fund". Board members supported accessing outside agencies to address  
78 sexual abuse cases. Pastor Dawn agreed to submit an application to Western District Conference. **Action:**  
79 **John Kliewer moved approval to expend bequest funds and submit an application to Western District to**  
80 **access outside expert resources. Dale Schrag seconded. Passed unanimously.**

81  
82 8. Technology task group – Update (Bill Swartley). An initial meeting with Michael Dunn from McPherson  
83 Sound System was held. Covid illness has put this on hold. The group plans to bring a formal report to the  
84 board next month.

85  
86

- 87 9. Report and Request to approve survey and establish benchmark for congregational support of Inclusive  
88 Pastors Resolution (John Kliwer)
- 89 At the November 2020 church board meeting Pat Friesen moved: A representative from pastoral staff  
90 and a representative from church board will recommend [persons to be on] a task group to engage the  
91 congregation in deciding whether this congregation is willing to sponsor the Resolution for Repentance  
92 and Transformation. The recommendation for the Task Group membership will be brought to the  
93 December board meeting. Erin Brubacher seconded. Motion carries unanimously.
- 94 On Nov. 13, with the approval of moderator Patty Shelly, Pastor Nathan emailed church board members  
95 announcing committee membership and requesting email replies to approve the committee so they could  
96 begin work immediately. By Nov. 17 all board members had replied, unanimously approving the committee  
97 membership to begin planning.
- 98 John Kliwer is the church board representative, Nathan Koontz is the pastoral staff representative, Karen  
99 Penner serves from her role with the Witness Commission, Karen Ediger serves from her role with the  
100 Deacons, and Megan Kohlman is happy to serve as a member at large with close connections with people  
101 from the LGBTQ community.
- 102
- 103 The Inclusion task group envisions continuing to work long-term. John presented the group's proposed  
104 timeline and process via shared Zoom screen. (attached at end of minutes.) Board discussion addressed:  
105 Do people understand the implications for the wider MCUSA denomination by supporting this  
106 resolution?  
107 It is important to let people know that the board will take action if the threshold level of response is  
108 received.  
109 Should we call it a "binding survey?"  
110 Do we have a mechanism to listen to differing views? (Can talk with pastor, committee or board  
111 member.)  
112 Can we use the same online survey process as our reopening member survey sent out several months  
113 ago so each individual in a household can respond? (yes)  
114 Is this a formal congregational vote? If so, how to establish a quorum? (no. a survey)  
115 For voting members? ....yes.  
116 Do we need to slow down the timeline for more discussion and processing time or has this been an  
117 ongoing concern of our congregation as evidenced by our Welcoming Statement since 2002 and our  
118 decision to support same-sex ceremonies by pastors? (this is not a new topic.)  
119 **Action: Glen Ediger moved to approve the process submitted, making clear that returning the survey is**  
120 **the individual's response; Cynthia Linscheid seconded. Passed unanimously.**  
121  
122 **Action: Judy Friesen moved we establish a 75% minimum threshold required for board approval on behalf**  
123 **of the congregation to support the Inclusive Pastors resolution (attached); Glen Ediger seconded. Passed**  
124 **unanimously.**  
125
- 126 10. Oversight of Columbarium and Peace Garden Committee – Update (Elizabeth) No report this month.  
127
- 128 11. January 2021 Congregational Meeting date and agenda (Elizabeth) – Jan. 24, 2021 would be the customary  
129 date. **Action: To accommodate pastoral calendars, Jan. 31, 2021 was accepted by consensus of the board.**  
130 Possible agenda items would be approval of 2021 budget and update reports from Abuse Prevention and  
131 Response committee and other groups.

- 132 12. Board Transition (Elizabeth)  
133 a. Accept resignation of Moderator/Chair Patty Shelly. On Friday, Nov. 20, all board members received,  
134 via email, the hard news of Moderator Patty Shelly's resignation due to her recent diagnosis of stage 4  
135 pancreatic cancer. **Action: With deep gratitude for Patty's service, Elizabeth asked for acceptance of her**  
136 **resignation. Unanimous consensus.**  
137 b. Affirm transition of Moderator-Elect to Moderator/Chair. **Action: With thanks to Elizabeth Schmidt**  
138 **for being willing to begin her term as Moderator, the board affirmed Elizabeth as Moderator by**  
139 **unanimous consent.**  
140 c. Request that Gifts Discernment Committee replace Moderator-Elect – Action: Request submitted to  
141 **Gifts Discernment Committee by unanimous consent.**  
142 13. Other business. Cynthia agreed to send a seasonal arrangement to Patty Shelly on behalf of the board.  
143 14. Executive Session. Entered into 8:50 pm  
144 15. Adjourn. 8:55 pm. Next board meeting Jan. 7, 2021  
145 Respectfully submitted, with corrections,  
146 Pat Friesen, Clerk

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| <u>Inclusion Task Group Process and Timeline</u> |
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## Proposed Congregational Survey Process and Timeline

- > Dec 6: A Kingdom Report to be given by Megan Kohlman (this coming Sunday) describing the Resolution and the opportunity for BCMC to sponsor the Resolution, as well as announcing an upcoming congregational survey gauging the congregation's willingness to sponsor.
  
- > Dec 9: email an introductory letter to membership email recipients essentially restating Megan's Kingdom Report introduction preparing and encouraging members to participate in the upcoming survey.
  
- > Dec 11: snail mail the introductory letter accompanied by the actual survey to members who do not communicate electronically with a Dec 21 survey return deadline.
  
- > Dec 14: email the survey to membership email recipients with a Dec 21 survey return deadline.
  
- > Dec 22: analyze survey results and report to Elizabeth Schmidt for off-schedule Board action prior to Jan 3 Epiphany Celebration of Light service assuming that the membership approval threshold has been met.
  
- > Jan 3: Announce BCMC Resolution sponsorship as part of the Jan 3 Epiphany Celebration of Light.

Submitted Dec 3, 2020 by John Kliewer on behalf of Inclusion Task Group:  
Nathan Koontz, Karen Penner, Megan Kohlman, Karen Ediger, John Kliewer

**A RESOLUTION FOR REPENTANCE AND TRANSFORMATION***Mennonite Pastors Seeking Broader Inclusion*

*\*The following resolution was written by the [Inclusive Pastors leadership team](#) and will be submitted to the Mennonite Church USA Resolutions Committee on November 6, 2020. We hope this will be brought to delegates at the 2021 MC USA convention. For more background on issues addressed by this resolution, please see the [Report from the Advisory Group](#) on Mennonite Church USA Membership Guidelines.*

*You can support this resolution as an individual by signing below. If you are part of a congregation or other organization that would like to sign on in support, please email [InclusivePastors@gmail.com](mailto:InclusivePastors@gmail.com).*

**Current policies of Mennonite Church USA do violence to LGBTQIA<sup>1</sup> people by failing to affirm their full, God-given identities and by restricting their full participation in the life, ministries and rituals of the broader church. The rejection of LGBTQIA people by MC USA has silenced and denied ministry callings, torn apart families, forced parents to choose between their church and their child, and caused many LGBTQIA people to leave the church. In some cases, rejection by their faith community is a factor in LGBTQIA people self-harming or even dying by suicide.<sup>2</sup>**

**The 2001 Membership Guidelines, especially Section III<sup>3</sup>, are the basis for many of these wounds, and also for harm done to the ministry and witness of our denomination and congregations. The Guidelines were not created for the benefit of LGBTQIA people. The Guidelines' purpose was to facilitate denominational integration, and, in the process, the church willingly offered up LGBTQIA people, their families, their congregations, and pastors as scapegoats for the sake of a false peace and unity.**

**The legacy of the 2001 Membership Guidelines is in direct contradiction to the vision and calling of MC USA; they have given us conflict and loss, not "healing and hope."<sup>4</sup>**

**Excluding LGBTQIA people from the church is a rejection of God's joyous delight in the diversity of creation and a denial of the Divine image and breath animating all humankind.<sup>5</sup> It is unfaithful to the calling and ministry of Jesus who, as "the visible image of the invisible God" and the one through whom "God reconciled everything to God's self," offers radical hospitality to those traditionally despised and rejected by religious institutions and teaches that love is the fulfillment of the law.<sup>6</sup> It is a denial of the work of the Holy Spirit who empowers LGBTQIA Christians to give and receive every gift in the body of Christ.**

**Excluding LGBTQIA people harms not only LGBTQIA people and allies, but it also harms the full body of Christ. Such exclusion is a rejection of the witness of individuals, congregations, and conferences who live out God's life-giving love in and through full affirmation of the lives of LGBTQIA people. It is a failure to realize the denominational vision of "healing and hope" and therefore restricts the life and mission of MC USA. It is a rejection of spiritual gifts that God longs to share through LGBTQIA people with the Mennonite church.**

**The exclusion of LGBTQIA people from the church also perpetuates the interconnected oppressions of heterosexism and racism. "Dualistic tactics"<sup>7</sup> falsely separate the interests of LGBTQIA people, People of Color, and LGBTQIA People of Color, effectively pitting these marginalized groups against one another.**

**Our calling as disciples of Jesus compels us to "[c]onfront the misuses of power in our... institutions" by "seek[ing] to tell the truth and repent."<sup>8</sup>**

**Therefore, be it resolved that, as members of Mennonite Church USA committed to truth-telling, repentance, and transformation in the Way of Jesus:**

### **We confess that:**

- Our denomination’s policies, structures, practices, and theologies have excluded LGBTQIA persons from fully sanctioned participation in the denomination and have caused great harm to LGBTQIA Mennonites and their families.
- We have failed to offer the Good News of God’s “grace, joy and peace”<sup>9</sup> to LGBTQIA Mennonites and their families.
- Our denomination and congregations are diminished in vitality and faithfulness by the loss of our siblings who have chosen to leave because of exclusionary practices and policies.
- We have not affirmed the full status and worth of LGBTQIA people as fully beloved by God.
- We have scapegoated People of Color as the reason for discrimination against LGBTQIA people, and blamed LGBTQIA people for the loss of some People of Color in the church.<sup>10</sup>
- LGBTQIA Mennonite People of Color are virtually erased.
- We have not taken seriously “every human grouping [being] reconciled and united in the church.”<sup>11</sup>
- As a result of the polity implications of the Membership Guidelines Section III, we have driven wedges of mistrust between MC USA pastors and their congregations, and between congregations and conferences.

### **We commit to:**

- **Rescind the Membership Guidelines, Section III.**<sup>12</sup>
- Include representatives of the LGBTQIA community in the creation of any resource, document, or policy that specifically affects LGBTQIA people.
- Require that the Executive Board consult with LGBTQIA leaders<sup>13</sup> to create an LGBTQIA constituency group with representation on the Constituency Leaders Council and/or other denomination-wide leadership groups.
- Provide resources for individuals, congregations, and conferences to engage with repentance and reconciliation in their own contexts. Such resources should explore historic harms, encourage truth-telling, and address areas of intersectionality.
- Follow the leadership of LGBTQIA Mennonites to provide support and resources for LGBTQIA leaders in the church. This should involve investment of denominational time and money.
- Implement policies for MC USA’s Executive Board, staff, and church-wide program agencies that prohibit the use of sexual identity, gender orientation, or marital status as criteria to restrict a person’s full participation in the ministries, activities, roles, and committees of our denomination.
- Expand the definition of marriage in future versions of *The Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*.
- Revise *A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership* to affirm LGBTQIA people in ministry and to explicitly allow Mennonite pastors to officiate without repercussions same-sex weddings.

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1. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual
  2. For example, see Ron Adams, *The Rule of Love*, The Mennonite, Nov. 2013; also Roberta Showalter Kreider, *The Cost of Truth: Faith Stories of Mennonite and Brethren Leaders and Those Who Might Have Been*. 2004 Strategic Press.
  3. Section III of the “Membership Guidelines” reads, in part, “We believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life;” and, “We hold the Saskatoon (1986) and Purdue (1987) statements describing homosexual, extramarital and premarital sexual activity as sin to be the teaching position of Mennonite Church USA;” and, “Pastors holding credentials in a conference of Mennonite Church USA may not perform a same-sex covenant ceremony.”
  4. See [MC USA Vision: Healing and Hope](#) document
  5. Genesis 1 & 2
  6. Colossians 1.15-20, Romans 13.8-10, NLT
  7. See the [Advisory Group report](#)
  8. Renewed Commitments for MC USA, 2018
  9. Mennonite Church USA *Vision: Healing and Hope*
  10. Quoted from Advisory Group report p. 11
  11. Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, Article 9
  12. This will effectively eliminate section III of the Guidelines. Sections I and II are part of the MC USA bylaws.
  13. Many LGBTQIA Mennonite leaders are affiliated with advocacy groups including Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests, Pink Menno, and Inclusive Mennonite Pastors.