

## Interim Adjustments to Bethel College Mennonite Church Bylaws in the Absence of a Lead Pastor

The BCMC Search Committee, in consultation with the BCMC Church Board, is currently searching for a **Co-pastor for BCMC**. So, the language in our bylaws and policy handbooks, especially references to a Lead Pastor, may well change when a new settled pastor is in place.

The current BCMC Bylaws assign most congregational governance responsibilities to the Church Board. **This remains the case.** In this capacity the Church Board appoints various commissions and committees to tasks related to the mission and vision of the congregation.

But the current bylaws also call for the Church Board to hire staff, including a Lead Pastor, to help the board and commissions operate efficiently and effectively. The Bylaws call for the Lead Pastor to:

- 1) serve as the head of all BCMC staff, determining use of staff time in relating to the various commissions and committees.
- 2) be accountable to the Church Board while all other staff are supervised by and are accountable to the Lead Pastor.

**In our current absence of a Lead Pastor, the Church Board has made the following interim adjustments to the BCMC Bylaws.**

**1) The Church Board has assigned various credentialed and non-credentialed BCMC staff members to work collaboratively with one or more of the BCMC commissions and/or committees.** See an excerpt from the Interim Pastor’s report in the Annual Report below for staff assignments to the various commissions and committees.

**2) The Church Board has assigned staff hiring, supervision and support responsibilities to various commissions, committees and to the Staff Congregation Relations Committee.** See a summary of those responsibility assignments below.

The BCMC Bylaws also call for the various BCMC commissions and committees to maintain **policy handbooks that often specify tasks and responsibilities for the Lead Pastor.** The Church Board understands that commissions and committees may find it hard to know how to revise their handbooks in our current time of transition, especially when it comes to references to Lead Pastor. And they may not want to take the time to revise their handbooks now when they will need to be revised again when a new pastor is in place.

So, the Church Boards asks that, **when the policy handbooks of the various commissions and committees refer to the Lead Pastor, commissions and committees follow the interim adjustments approved by the Church Board.** If commissions and committees want to change references to a Lead Pastor in their policy handbooks in this interim time, they are welcome to do so. **But the Church Board will understand if commissions and committees choose not to change references to Lead Pastor in their policy handbooks until a new pastor is in place.** Our understanding will be that staff, commissions and committees will follow the interim adjustments as listed below.

### KEY for Staff Recruitment and Support FLOW CHART (below)

#### Terms

Credentialed Staff	= pastoral staff	Nathan, Elizabeth, Roger
“Commission Staff”	= non-credentialed staff assigned to work primarily with a particular Commission or Committee	George, Jill, Verlene, Barb
“General Staff”	= non-ordained staff who work with staff and/or several Commissions and/or Committees	Monica, Mike

#### Symbols

>>>> or <<<<<	= group begins the process, recommends and/or assists in the process.
X	= group that makes the final decision in the process (with help from other groups.)
>>XXX<<	= group in charge of ENTIRE process



## AN EXCERPT FROM THE 2023 ANNUAL REPORT BOOK, Roger Neufeld Smith, Interim Pastor

One specific item in my job description is to be a liaison to various Commissions and Committees. The Church Board and staff have discussed together what being a liaison entails. We have concluded that, due to the absence of a Lead Pastor, reduced staff time and concerns expressed in the Credence Congregational Discernment Report about burdensome staff expectations, I would NOT be the liaison to every Commission and Committee. Instead, we made the following liaison assignments to our various staff members.

<u>Commission or Committee</u>	<u>Staff Liaison</u>
Deacon Commission	Elizabeth Schmidt
Faith Formation Commission	Nathan Koontz
Hospitality Commission	Roger Neufeld Smith
Witness Commission	Nathan Koontz
Worship Commission	(on sabbatical, Nathan fulfilling WC tasks)
Gifts Discernment Committee	Roger Neufeld Smith
Facilities Committee	Monica Lichti
Finance Committee	Mike Claassen, Roger Neufeld Smith
Staff Congregation Relations Committee	Roger Neufeld Smith
Audit Committee	No staff liaison.
Abuse Prevention & Response Committee	Nathan Koontz
Inclusion Task Group	Nathan Koontz
Credence Report Task Group	Roger Neufeld Smith
Task Group for Indigenous Justice	Nathan Koontz
Creation Cate Committee	Nathan Koontz

Also, due to reduced staff time and concerns expressed in the Credence Report, we decided that a staff liaison would not necessarily need to attend every meeting of their assigned Commission or Committee. They could fulfill liaison responsibilities by carefully reading all relevant Commission or Committee minutes and be in touch with chairpersons after Commission or Committee meetings to learn about significant discussions and actions. This modification of liaison responsibilities seems to be working and is a wise use of our limited staff time.