

Bethel College Mennonite Church Board Minutes
December 7, 2023

Pending approval at the January 2024 Board Meeting

*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: Ada Schmidt-Tieszen (Moderator), Brad Kohlman (Moderator-elect), Mary Ann Boschmann, Judy Friesen, Tim Hodge, John Kliewer, Doug Penner, Karen Penner, Lois Preheim, Margaret Toews, Jon Zerger

Board Members not present:

Staff Present: Nathan Koontz (Pastor), Roger Neufeld Smith (Interim Pastor), Mike Claassen (Treasurer)

Staff not present:

Others attending:

1. **Welcome and Opening Prayer** – Ada opened with reflections on waiting followed by a prayer.
2. **Consent Agenda** – There were no questions. **Judy Friesen moved to accept the minutes. Brad Kohlman seconded the motion; approved by consensus. Brad will summarize the minutes of commissions and committees for the January meeting.**
3. **Financial Report and 2024 Budget** – Over \$4000 has been spent for fire alarms in the past 11 months which has affected the Facilities Fire Alarm line item. There were no other questions about the November budget report. **Brad moved to approve the November treasurers report. Mary Ann Boschmann seconded; the motion carried.** Discussion followed about the status of the pledge drive, including the following points:
 - Status of pledge drive – The Finance Committee is concerned that we are not as close to meeting the budget at this point as we have been in the past. There has been a change of pattern since 2018. From 2006 to 2018 contributions would come in around 5% under budget, and expenses would be around 10% under budget. During covid we may have lost some active congregants who don't contribute any more.
 - Ada will visit with Finance Committee about any next steps.
 - Do we need to start planning for cuts?
 - Snail mail letters are sent to those who don't use email. At least 20 of those receiving snail mail letters responded
 - When we think about the difference between intents and the 2024 budget we can maybe consider cutting half the difference and raising the other half.
 - Last year intents were slow at this point.
 - Many congregations look at the previous year's contributions to formulate a budget for the current year.
 - Thanks to the Finance Committee for their hard work.

The board moved into Executive Session 7:37 and left at 7:41. Tim Hodge moved to accept the amounts each pastor designated for housing allowance. This has implications for each pastor's taxes but not for the church budget. Judy seconded; the motion passed.

4. **Recommendation for Time Away for Elizabeth Schmidt** – Brad moved to accept the SCRC recommendation of time away for Elizabeth Schmidt. Tim Hodge seconded; the motion carried.
5. **Formal Approval to Renew Roger Neufeld Smith for an Additional Year** – The board entered Executive Session at 9:03 and exited at 9:05. Jon Zerger moved to approve Roger Neufeld Smith as half-time interim pastor through the end of 2024 unless a settled pastor is found sooner. Tim seconded the motion; the motion carried.
6. **Update on solar project process** – Jon Zerger went through the slide presentation for Sunday's congregational meeting following worship and answered questions from the board. It was decided that if 51% of the vote is positive, the board would begin Phase 1 of the project. Phase 1 would determine specific financial support from the congregation by soliciting pledges. Once the board knows how much the congregation is able to pledge, loans will be arranged for if needed. When all those plans have been made, the board will return to the congregation with Phase 2, probably at the January 28 congregational meeting, with a specific proposal to move ahead with the solar installation and a request for congregational approval.
7. **Proposal to Change Church Officers** – The following proposal was brought to the board: **That the Church Officer positions be changed from Moderator Elect and Moderator, each serving two-year terms with a total commitment of four years, to Moderator Elect, Moderator, and Past Moderator. In the new model, each position would be held for one year with the Moderator Elect moving on to Moderator and Past Moderator in the following years, thus serving a three-year commitment. In summary, the new model shortens the term of commitment by one year and establishes a three-person leadership team. The following wording is proposed for Bylaw No. 2:**

Bylaw #2: Organization

Section A: Church Officers

1. **Moderator:** The Moderator of the congregation shall also serve as Chair and voting member of the Church Board. The Chair shall preside at all meetings of the Church Board and shall, subject to the control of the Church Board, have general supervision and direction of the business of the Church Board. The Chair shall be a member ex officio of all the commissions and committees and shall exercise and perform such other powers and duties as may be assigned to the chair by the Church Board or by these bylaws. The term of office shall be one years.
2. **Moderator Elect:** The Moderator Elect of the congregation shall serve as a voting member of the Church Board and shall preside at meetings of the Church Board and the congregation when the Moderator is unavailable. Other leadership tasks will be determined by the Moderator, Moderator Elect, and Past Moderator as needed and appropriate. The term of office shall be one years followed by t-we one years as Moderator.

- 3. Past Moderator:** The Past Moderator of the congregation shall serve as a voting member of the Church Board and may preside at meetings of the Church Board or congregation in the event that neither the Moderator nor Moderator Elect is available. Other leadership tasks will be determined by the Moderator, Moderator Elect, and Past Moderator as needed and appropriate. The term of office will be one year, immediately following the one-year term as Moderator.

The board discussed and agreed with the rationale for the change. These reasons include a shortened commitment and additional leadership partner resources. This may make it easier to fill the position of moderator and bring a wider variety of gifts and viewpoints to the position. Ada will assume the post of Past Moderator at the start of June 2024. **John Kliewer moved to accept the proposal. Judy seconded; the motion carried.**

- 8. Faith Formation proposal to add Total Senior High Youth Group Fund** – Because of an increased number of youth participating in senior high activities, the Faith Formation is asking for a fund that carries over from year to year to help with increased expense of trips. **Faith Formation asks the board to approve a change to the Bethel College Mennonite Church Board Handbook - Care for Resources Policy, p. 3, lines 125-144. The change adds point vii) to “Budgeted line items that are not spent during the budget year do not carry over to the new year with the following exceptions. Unless another procedure is noted below, the unspent balance of the line item is transferred into a corresponding Special Fund:” with the wording “Faith Formation: Senior High Youth transferred to Total Senior High Youth Fund”.** This means that unspent money in a line item can be transferred to a fund that can grow year over year. The board is glad to have this problem! **Tim moved to approve the motion. Mary Ann seconded; the motion carried.**
- 9. Planning for Congregational Meeting on January 28** – Possible agenda items will include consideration of the 2024 budget, a revised welcome statement, possible solar project, change to the moderator model, possible report from the youth, and an update on pastoral search. The sanctuary is good for live streaming.

10. Reports and Announcements

- Update on work of Credence Report Task Group – the Structure group met with Nathan for a good session. Asked what kind of structure would be helpful to Nathan and future staff.
- Welcome Statement update – tweaked. Will talk about at January meeting.
- multi generational – Adam and Brad have talked to some people who will be beginning leaders for small groups. They are excited about the response.

- 11. The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 pm. Next meeting will be held January 4, 2024, at 7:00 pm.**

Submitted by Margaret Toews, clerk

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