

**Bethel College Mennonite Church Board Minutes**

*Pending approval at the April 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, John Kliewer, Doug Penner, Karen Penner, Lois Preheim, Margaret Toews, Jon Zerger

**Board Members not present:** Tim Hodge

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

**Staff not present:**

**Others attending:**

- 1. Welcome and Opening Prayer** – Ada led the board in reading the purpose statement followed by a reflection on tending winter plants, followed by a prayer.
- 2. Consent Agenda** – Ada asked for questions or comments on the consent agenda; there were no questions. Lois Preheim reported on highlights of various commissions and committees, highlighting the Ash Wednesday service, Guess Who's Coming to Dinner, Witness Commission working on repair or replacement of the peace pole, continuing coordination between the Worship Commission and technology. **Brad Kohlman agreed to provide highlights of Commission and Committee work for the April meeting. Brad moved to accept minutes and reports. Judy Friesen seconded the motion; approved by consensus.**
- 3. Financial Report for January** – Mike Claassen emailed the report before the meeting. He highlighted that expenses are right on track although income is down. The Finance Committee continues to place reminders in the bulletin about giving. It was suggested another announcement be placed in the bulletin summarizing the vote results for the solar panel project from the January congregational meeting and subsequent progress. **Jon Zerger moved to approve the Financial Report; Brad seconded. The motion carried.**
- 4. Time with Heather Zerger, Search Committee Chair** – Heather Zerger reported that the Search Committee is recommending that Joanna Harader, current pastor of Peace Mennonite in Lawrence, be the candidate for our next regular full-time co-pastor. The board approved this recommendation from the Search Committee. The candidating weekend is set for May 3-5
- 5. Referral of Question of Welcoming Statement as Part of Constitution – Discussion** followed about how to proceed with the newly approved welcoming statement whether it should be removed from the Constitution or exist outside of it. A motion was proposed: **The board moves to refer the question of whether the Welcoming Statement belongs in the constitution to the Inclusion Task Group and to refer the constitution's statement on membership to the Deacon Commission. An additional informal recommendation for the above groups is that we leave the constitution as it was before the January vote and add the statement. Jon moved to accept this motion, Lois Preheim seconded. The motion carried.**

**6. State of the Church: “Big Picture” discussion** – Ada asked for thought on what’s gone well in the church and what should be celebrated. The following points were made:

- There is a place for one’s passion in this congregation – examples include indigenous justice and the solar panel project.
- We are doing good work on the Credence Report recommendations as a congregation rather than as a pastor-led endeavor.
- The first small group met last week.
- The Credence Report named issues in our congregation agreed upon by most congregants and gave us a common vocabulary to start making changes; an interim pastor could have “fixed problems” and then left. We were motivated to try to do it ourselves and now the institutional memory of these changes is stronger.
- We have taken public positions on important social issues of the day – inclusion of LGBTQ+, de-colonization, creation care, addressing sexual abuse violations (APRC).
- We continue to shift from lead pastor model to co-pastor and to move from pastor-centered to committees and commission-led decisions and actions. This is a shift from “handbook focus” to what we are excited about doing.
- The structure group is working hard to differentiate between important things in the church constitution and less important things.
- People step forward – Jon with slide presentations for the solar panel project and Margaret with additional assistance with the solar panel project; Brad and Megan, Judy, Adam and Jill, Nathan and Esther hosting potlucks.
- Gratitude to George, Elizabeth, and Jill. They stepped up – didn’t just fill a gap but created new energy.
- Celebrate more – for example, on earth day celebrate the solar panel project.

Where do we go from here?

- Adjusting to a new pastor; make it clear to a candidate how open we would be to try new ways to get things done.
- Continue in a co-pastor model.
- Continue the path of giving lay leaders a chance to follow their passions. That needs to be the new culture – the board needs to continue to nurture that culture.
- Structure should continue to follow culture-shift.

**7. Setting the Next Congregational Meeting** - After discussion, May 19 during the Sunday school hour was proposed. The youth group might want to do a fund-raiser.

**8. Reports and Announcements.**

- Solar Panels Project – A contract has been signed and a down payment has been made.
- APRC – Judy updated the board on current work being done by the committee.
- Structure and Policy Task Group: Roger/Judy – deferred to next meeting.
- Policy Revision for Disbursement of Excess Funds – deferred to next meeting.

**9. Executive Session. The board moved into executive session at 9:20 pm.**

**10. The meeting was adjourned at 9:24 pm. Next meeting will be held April 4, 2024, at 7:00 pm.**

Submitted by Margaret Toews, clerk.

