

Bethel College Mennonite Church Board Minutes

Pending approval at the May 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

Board Members not present: Jon Zerger

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

Staff not present:

Others attending:

1. **Welcome and Opening Prayer** – Ada Schmidt-Tieszen read a meditation from Black Liturgies, a collection of meditations by Cole Arthur Riley.
2. **Consent Agenda** – Brad Kohlman gave a review of Creation Care resources on our church website. Lots of resources have been posted over the years. There were no other questions about reports or minutes. **Judy Friesen moved to accept minutes and reports. Doug Penner seconded the motion; approved by consensus.**

Financial Report for January – Mike Claassen emailed the report before the meeting. He had no additional comments. It was noted that the gap between income and expenses is narrower this month than last, which is an improvement. **Brad moved to approve the Financial Report; Karen Penner seconded. The motion carried.**

3. **Housing allowance revision for Elizabeth Schmidt** – **The board voted overwhelming by email on March 16, 2024, to approve revision of the housing allowance for Elizabeth Schmidt from \$8,000 to \$12,000.**
4. **Application for Federal Rebate for Solar Project** - Margaret Toews reported on the process of applying for the federal rebate for the solar project. She recommended informally that the board consider using the same CPA firm from McPherson that is handling the application for the rebate for Hesston Mennonite Church. The cost for this would be approximately \$2000. Margaret will visit with the solar sub-committee and bring a formal recommendation to hire the CPA firm the May or June board meeting.
5. **ESSC Report concerning Scholarship Program** - Margaret updated the board on funding for church scholarships provided to BCMC youth attending supported colleges. Funding is needed to keep the scholarships in place. The scholarships provided to students attending any supported college come from the BCMC Mission and Service Endowment Fund. We are currently drawing more than the 4-5% recommended for withdrawing from an endowment. Margaret will investigate the exact terms of the

endowment. The scholarships provided to students attending Bethel come from money donated by the congregation. She will make a presentation at the May congregational meeting outlining the church scholarship program and the need for ongoing funding.

- 6. Signing on to Amicus Brief on Behalf of Apache Stronghold at Oak Flat** – John Kliewer updated the board on the status of an appeal to the Supreme Court following the March 1, 2024, decision by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals not to oppose a land transfer of the sacred Oak Flat to a copper-mining company. Apache Stronghold plans to draft an amicus brief to influence the Supreme Court to hear the case. Mennonite Church USA and others are being asked to sign onto this brief when it is drafted. **John moved that the board act for BCMC to sign on to this amicus brief by authorizing Ada Schmidt-Tieszen as current moderator and church board chair, or Brad Kohlman as moderator elect, or Nathan Koontz as BCMC pastor, or all three of them to sign on to this amicus brief in the same spirit in which BCMC voted to join the Repair Coalition and as a logical outcome of our having joined it. Tim Hodge seconded. The motion carried.** Several questions were raised about how an amicus helps brief helps. Since recent decisions were close, decided by one vote, an expression of support from others outside the case would be helpful in supporting a strong minority opinion. This action by BCMC will be communicated to the congregation through a church email. John will contact Raylene about next steps.
- 7. Structure and Policy Task Group** – The Structure and Policy Task Group is not ready with a policy for the disbursement of excess funds. Ada will help provide clarity moving forward.
- 8. Plans for Congregational Meeting May 19** – The board set the next congregational meeting for May 19, 2024, at 10:45am in the sanctuary. The agenda includes a vote on the pastoral candidate and reports from Witness Commission, ESSC, the College Relations Committee, and an update on changes that have been made in our congregation following the Credence Report. Other reports may be added. A vote affirming people who've agreed to serve on commissions and committees will also be held. Ada will talk to George Leary about having the youth group serve a fund raiser lunch following the meeting.
- 9. Reports and Announcements**
 - Welcoming Statement status: Ada clarified that at our last board meeting the question of whether and where in the constitution the Welcoming Statement should reside was referred to the Deacon Commission and to the Inclusion Task Group.
 - APRC: Judy gave a report of recent work. APRC will come back later to the question of hiring an attorney to advise the group.
- 10. Executive Session. The board moved into executive session at 8:12 pm.**
- 11. The meeting was adjourned at 8:27pm. Next meeting will be held May 2, 2024, at 7:00 pm.**

Submitted by Margaret Toews, clerk.

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