

Bethel College Mennonite Church Board Minutes

Pending approval at the August 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: Brad Kohlman (Moderator), Bill Eash (Moderator-elect), Ada Schmidt-Tieszen (Past Moderator), Mary Ann Boschmann, Tim Hodge, Carolyn Penner, Doug Penner, Lois Preheim, Margaret Toews, John Waltner, 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** – After reading our purpose statement together, Brad Kohlman opened the meeting with a welcome to new members and thanks to Ada Schmidt-Tieszen for her leadership over the past few years. He referred to the church bylaws which state the task of the board is to understand and articulate the vision of BCMC. The board leads and unifies the congregation; it also delegates responsibilities to commissions and committees.
- 2. Consent Agenda** – Nathan Koontz reported on the work of the Worship Commission as new music staff members (Joel Garber as adult choir director, and Will Wiebe-Friesen as co-music coordinator) take up their work for the coming year. Worship Commission will be the supervisory group for the music staff and is working out how to handle these responsibilities. Staff Congregation Relations Committee (SCRC) has a goal for the coming year to provide guidelines to commissions for supervising staff. In the change from lead pastor to a co-pastor model and with part-time staff filling some roles, both Faith Formation and Worship Commissions have staff supervisory responsibilities. There were no additional questions. **Lois Preheim moved to accept reports and minutes as presented. Ada seconded the motion; approved by consensus.**
- 3. Financial Report for May** – The financial reports were distributed by email ahead of the meeting. Income is back on the downhill slide after a good bump in May. When contributions which historically come in at the end of the year are prorated through the year, Mike feels the budget is on an acceptable track. Expenses will be down a bit through the summer since music staff are not paid through the summer. Approximately \$134,000 of pledges for the solar project have been collected so far. Also noted – SCRC manages the entire staff section of the budget. **Tim Hodge moved to approve the Financial Report, Jon Zerger seconded. The motion carried.**
- 4. Membership Guidelines** – Brad brought a recommendation from the Deacons to bring the following **Membership Guidelines in Article IV of Section B of the church constitution to the congregation for approval at the September congregational meeting.**

“Membership in the Bethel College Mennonite Church is open to all who affirm their faith in God, who seek to center their lives in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, who are open to the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, and who have received baptism as the symbol of their commitment and covenant.

Bethel College Mennonite Church welcomes into fellowship and membership all persons who commit to Jesus Christ, without regard to their race, ethnic background, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, economic status, marital state, age, or other factors which can lead to discrimination and marginalization.

Members offer themselves to support Mennonite principles and to share in the life and work of this congregation.”

Several months back the church board asked the Deacons to review and revise the Membership Guidelines. The Deacon discussed the guidelines at their April and May meetings. They reported that they had a good discussion on various aspects of language and Anabaptist theology and came to a consensus on the final recommendation printed above. Some years back a Welcoming Statement which included LGBTQIA+ persons was placed in the constitution in order to highlight the church’s commitment to acceptance. If this constitutional change is approved, the Welcome Statement which was approved on January 28, 2024 will no longer be in the BCMC Constitution, but will be published weekly in the church bulletin and will be a part of the official minutes of the congregation. Care will be taken to clearly explain the history behind these actions at the congregational meeting.

Tim moved to recommend to the congregation that the new membership guidelines be adopted. Mary Ann seconded. The motion carried.

- 5. Peace Garden policy changes – Nathan Koontz reported for the staff that two additions to the Peace Garden policy are recommended. 1) Sometimes a family requests niches or memorial pavers be located close to other loved ones so a sentence has been added to section 4 of Policies and Guidelines for the Columbarium and Scattering of Ashes which reads “Additional considerations for niche location include proximity to other family members or loved ones.” 2) Sometimes questions are raised about order of names on plaques and pavers so a sentence has been added to section 4 of the same policy which reads “With a two-person capacity for the south columbarium, the order by which the names and dates are listed on the granite plaque is decided by the family or spouse.” The south columbarium wall will begin to be used as the first wall is approximately 90% full.**

Mary Ann Boschmann moved that the board accept the above recommendation from church staff. Tim seconded; the motion passed.

6. Plan/Process for Staff and Pastor Transitions –

Roger reported that he, Richard Friesen and Judy Friesen of the Structure Task Group (STG) would like to schedule a training session for board and staff soon. The session could be a 30-45 minute session during a regular board meeting and would educate the board as to structures and policies that have been studied by the task group. It would help the board to be effective at delegating tasks to commissions or committees.

Nathan reported that on June 28 the pastors, including Joanna, will meet to discuss the possibility of scheduling time with a clergy coach, someone Joanna is familiar with. Such a session could be helpful with the transitions the pastoral staff is navigating. SCRC is seeking possibilities for funding this session. A recommendation from SCRC may come at the August meeting or via email before then.

Roger distributed a summary of the work the (STG) has done as it has been responding to the Credence Report of Oct, 2022, to “create greater simplicity, creativity, breathing room and a greater sense of joy...” by reviewing the structure and policy framework of BCMC. Changes already occurring include a shift from a pastor-centered structure to a more Commission/Committee centered model. The STG has worked hard to think through the consequences of these changes. There are 3 or 4 policy changes that will need to be approved by the board in August. The STG will stop meeting after the August board meeting. STG recommends starting with bylaws approved by the congregation. The updated constitution and bylaws will be published later in the fall. On July 14, WDC will be here at BCMC for a listening session and discussion around tables. What is going well, what has sustained you are two of the questions that will be asked.

August 11 is Roger’s last day and Joanna’s first day. Installation for Joanna will take place later. Need to contact WDC for possible dates – August 18 or 25?

7. **APRC** – Nathan gave a summary of the work of the Abuse Prevention and Response Committee for the benefit of new members. APRC works to create a safe space in the church and responds to incidents of abuse. Its approach may change when Joanna Harader comes. APRC would like some collaboration with interested members of the board as it works to respond to an incident in July of 2023. The possibility of setting up an ad hoc committee of some board members and APRC would be a new way of working to address issues.

8. **Summer & Early Fall Board Schedule**

- a. The July meeting will be cancelled.
- b. The August meeting will be on August 1 as usual. Joanna will begin work on August 11 so she will have a few weeks to settle in before the September meeting.
- c. New Board, Committee & Commission Member Orientation will be held June 30 during the SS hour.
- d. The date for the annual fall leadership retreat will be determined later.
- e. Chairs of committees and commissions have received Committee & Commission Starter Sessions – Task Lists/Goals & Priorities. Responses will be helpful to the board this coming fall and to Joanna as she starts.

9. **Board Appointments to Committees:** Brad reported on the following appointments

- a. **SCRC – Keith Harder has accepted a term.** One more person would be great.
- b. **Finance Committee – Al Peters has accepted.**
- c. APRC – Discussion will continue.
- d. **Facilities – Tom Jackson, Harald Boschmann have agreed to serve.**

Lois moved to approve these members. Bill Eash seconded; the motion passed.

10. Feedback from the Congregational Meeting on May 19 – No congregational feedback was reported. Lois noted that we need to create a process for passing out ballots more efficiently.

11. Reports and Announcements

- a. No other reports were made.
- b. July 14 – WDC Listening Group

12. Executive Session – The board moved to executive session at 8:37 pm.

13. Adjournment – The board adjourned at 8:40 pm. The next meeting will be held August 1 at 7:00 pm.

Submitted by Margaret Toews, clerk.

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