

**Bethel College Mennonite Church Board Minutes**

*Pending approval at the September 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), Mary Ann Boschmann, Carolyn Penner, Lois Preheim, Margaret Toews, John Waltner, Jon Zerger

**Board Members not present:** Ada Schmidt-Tieszen (Past Moderator), Doug Penner, Tim Hodge

**Staff Present:** Roger Neufeld Smith (Interim Pastor), Elizabeth Schmidt

**Staff not present:** Nathan Koontz (Pastor), Mike Claassen (Treasurer)

**Others attending:**

- 1. Welcome and Opening Prayer** – Brad Kohlman opened the meeting with a reflection on a leadership model of compassionate accountability, a model which holds that people are valuable, capable, and responsible. He offered a prayer for the meeting.  
Brad brought several kinds of popcorn to the meeting as an acknowledgement of Roger’s last board meeting. Many thanks were expressed for Roger’s broad skill set which so closely met BCMC’s needs over the past 18 months.
- 2. Consent Agenda** – Brad asked for questions on any of the reports distributed in the board packet. There were no questions. The document Procedures for Hiring Non-credentialed Staff at BCMC was included in the board packet and recommended for board approval by SCRC. Brad also noted the church calendar included in the board packet. One correction was noted, the Peace Sunday date is September 15, not 17 as printed. **Lois Preheim moved to accept reports and minutes, including the Procedures for Hiring as noted above, and the church calendar, as corrected. John Waltner seconded the motion; approved by consensus.**
- 3. Financial Report for June and July: Mike Claassen** – Mike was not able to attend. Brad asked for questions concerning the June and July financial reports. Board members noted that we are at a low point for income. It is not at crisis level, but we should keep an eye on this. Brad suggested a meeting between the board and Finance Committee after some months to allow for the pastoral team to settle in. The purpose would be to discuss the financial health and goals of the congregation. See item #8C below. **Bill Eash moved to approve the Financial Report. Jon Zerger seconded; the motion carried.**
- 4. FY25 Budgeting – Initial Thoughts** - The budget worksheet for Board and Pastors Contingency Funds was included in the board packet. After a brief discussion of transition expenses, the board agreed to leave the budget worksheet as presented.
- 5. Structure and Policy Task Group Report** – Roger distributed the final report of the Structure Task Group (STG). The group, Judy Friesen, Richard Friesen and Roger, have been meeting for about a year to address concerns raised in the Credence Report and summarized there on page 9, section 15: “*BCMC is encouraged*

*to revisit its leadership and organizational structure allowing for greater simplicity, creativity, breathing room and a greater sense of joy – for Pastors and Congregants alike.”* Highlights of Roger’s report include:

- The first task was to get Judy, Richard, and Roger on the same page.
- Attachment A of the report focuses on points including the following:
  - The church did not wait for the STG to recommend changes – it went ahead and changed. These changes have been considered positive.
  - Concern: The co-pastor leadership model will make pastoral and other staff supervision more difficult. Commissions, committees, and the board need to step up to these tasks. The church board will need a plan for supervising pastors.
  - SCRC has technical expertise (how to write an MOU, etc.) and the salary guidelines from MC USA. SCRC can be staff “cheerleaders” -
  - What is the best way to get pastoral input? Meeting with moderators and a few board members might be a way. What would a productive annual review look like?
  - Are we leaving anything out when we say we are not holding ourselves accountable to the handbooks as much? How can we avoid this?
- Attachment B of the report focuses on points including the following:
  - The pastoral team will decide who is doing what – after a month or two, job descriptions can begin to be formed. It is important to let things settle.
  - Main point – Will the church board want a lot of input, or do we want to leave it to the pastoral team? The board’s consensus is to leave it to the pastoral team to decide how they best work together.
  - Hold off on updating bylaws. The congregational meeting in January is probably too soon.
  - The church board will have significant work to move the constitution and bylaws with language that reflects how we are currently living as a church.
  - How could we share this work with the congregation without overwhelming it?
  - Relationships are more important than bylaws.
  - Some staff have lived with these changes for months, others are new. Relationships are more important than focusing too much, especially now, on wording of bylaws.
  - Dan Hotchkiss was mentioned by Elizabeth Schmidt as a resource for effective and meaningful church governance. She will forward an article to the board on this topic.

Appreciation was expressed to Roger and the committee for their work on these tough areas.

### **Break for popcorn!**

6. **Review Crisis Plan** – Brad included the current policies for crisis management in the board packet. Questions about the current plan should be brought to the September board meeting. Questions raised immediately were the location of the AED units and who knows how to use them. John Waltner shared his experiences with managing emergencies and mentioned the Incident Command System as a way of structuring preparation for crises. Jon Zerger raised the issue of carve-outs in our policy as a possible way to limit liability.

## 7. Plan/Process for Staff and Pastor Transitions -

- a. Board & Staff Development Session – October/November – There will be a staff/board development session around updating bylaws and handbooks after the pastoral staff has begun to settle in.
- b. August 11 – Sunday worship will include a farewell to Roger and is the first Sunday of the Bethel College academic year so many Bethel students will be in attendance. It is also Backpack Blessing Sunday for school kids – Roger will give the children’s story. Joanna has agreed to preach, in part because she is interested in college students and their journeys. The worship service start time has been changed to 10 am. There will be a reception following for Roger.
- c. First Day Orientation – Monica has put together a checklist for onboarding new staff. This is the first time BCMC has had such a list and making it uncovered some gaps such as IT, MS Word licenses, etc.
- d. Welcome/Moving Assistance/Groceries? Brad asked for help on August 7 when Joanna will be moving in. Help with moving and a drop-off meal that evening is needed.

## 8. Summer & Early Fall Board Schedule

- Leadership Retreat – sometime this fall
- Congregational Meeting – Sept 29
- Ad Hoc w/ Finance Committee – Brad suggested the formation of an ad hoc committee to meet with the Finance Committee for face-to-face discussions on FTE levels, the BCMC Express, distribution of benevolence funds and the policy governing that distribution as well as broader questions about the general fund. The board agreed it is best to wait at least a month or two to let the pastoral team begin to settle in.

9. **Board Appointments to Committees:** SCRC still needs one more member but not urgently at this time.

## 10. Reports and Announcements

- Other reports? – There were no additional reports
- Publishing of Bylaws and Constitution (After September 2024) – Roger reminded the board of the recommendation for Membership Guidelines and the Welcoming Statement brought by the Deacons and approved by the board at the June board meeting. **For the recommendation to be voted on by the congregation at the September 29 meeting, a notice of thirty days must be given to the congregation.** A discussion followed around the value of having a website where the updated Bylaws and Constitution can be published.

11. **Future Agenda Items** – Brad noted two items for future discussion: 1) Determination of need for BCMC to have legal representation; and 2) IT needs for BCMC Staff.

12. **Executive Session** – The board moved to executive session at 9:47 pm.

13. **Adjournment** – The board adjourned at 9:53 pm. The next meeting will be held September 5 at 7:00 pm.

Submitted by Margaret Toews, clerk.