

## **Bethel College Mennonite Church Board Minutes**

*Pending approval at the October 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, Doug Penner, Lois Preheim, Margaret Toews, John Waltner

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

**Staff Present:** Joanna Harader (Co-pastor), Nathan Koontz (Co-pastor), Elizabeth Schmidt (Pastor of Congregational Care)

**Staff not present:** Mike Claassen (Treasurer)

**Others attending:**

- 1. Welcome and Opening Prayer** – Brad Kohlman offered a centering meditation on finding small wins and celebrating with those you care about.
- 2. Consent Agenda** – Brad asked for questions on the reports and minutes included in the board packet. A typo in the minutes was corrected. In addition, dates and times for congregational meetings for Winter/Spring 2025 were approved. January 26 and May 4, 2025, were designated, with both meetings beginning at 10:45. Lunch will most likely be provided by the youth group. **Lois Preheim moved to accept reports, minutes and church calendar dates. Bill Eash seconded the motion; approved by consensus.**
- 3. Financial Report: Mike Claassen** – Mike was not able to attend. Brad noted that trends are similar to August. There were no questions. **Bill moved to approve the Financial Report. Mary Ann Boschmann seconded; the motion carried.**
- 4. FY25 Budgeting** – The 2024 budget included \$500 for the board contingency fund and \$1000 for the pastors' contingency fund. Brad recommended the board approve a request for the same amounts for the 2025 budget. **This vote was carried out by email on Sept. 6-9 and the recommendation was approved.**
- 5. Plan/Process for Staff and Pastor Transitions** – There was lengthy discussion about staff and pastor transitions. Joanna Harader reported that Monday, Sept. 9, will be a retreat day for pastors. Joanna, Nathan Koontz and Elizabeth Schmidt will sit down together to create a plan for roles and responsibilities. They will subsequently take the plan to SCRC and the Moderator team for discussion. The board may weigh in via email. The hope is to have a preliminary plan in place to share with the congregation at the meeting on September 29. The pastors have met two times with a pastoral coach with future sessions available after some months have passed to let things settle. Additional points in the discussion included:
  - Concern among the congregation about the co-pastor roles. Without rushing it would be good to have skeleton plans to share on the 29<sup>th</sup>.
  - Clarification of program staff roles

- Balance between co-pastors, commissions/committees, board. Training for leaders so tasks don't fall to pastors. We seek to do church in life-giving ways.
- Share on Sept 29 at congregational meeting some of the process the pastors are engaging in to formulate plan for roles and responsibilities.
- Delay the Leadership retreat until winter since there is so much change going on now.
- Reworking bylaws and the constitution will be time-consuming. Should/could they be suspended for a year?

## 6. Summer & Early Fall Board Schedule

- a. Leadership Retreat and Staff Development session – Delay until spring. We need time for moderator team and pastoral team to do visioning.
- b. Congregational Meeting Sept 29 - There will be a vote on membership welcome guidelines. Moderator team will report, pastor team will report. Youth will be fixing a meal. It's a Sunday school hour meeting. Need 6 people to help distribute ballots.
  - i. Membership Guidelines and the Welcoming Statement -

Nathan Koontz recommended that a couple of sentences be added to explain the reasoning for removing the welcoming statement. He stated it's not that we don't like the welcoming statement or that we want to stop using it. The inclusion task group, the deacons, and the board just don't want it as part of the membership guidelines. The welcoming statement and membership guidelines are different items that should not be tied together. His suggested revisions are in italics below:

**The Church Board and Deacons recommend removing the "Welcoming Statement" (approved January 28, 2024) from Article IV: Membership. *Both the Deacons and the Inclusive Task Group desire that the Welcoming Statement be separate from the membership guidelines. The current Welcoming Statement will continue to be used in BCMC publications but can be changed and updated under the leadership of the Inclusive Task Group. The revised membership guidelines for the congregational vote on September 29 read as follows:***

### **Article IV: Membership (Revised)**

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.

- ii. Next Steps, Mid-Transition and Credence – there was no specific discussion of this item.

- c. Ad Hoc w/ Finance Committee – The board together with the Finance Committee need understanding of the FTE for pastoral and program staff. A discussion between the board and the Finance Committee would help us be on the same page moving forward. In addition, the Witness Commission is asking for information about the second half of the excess benevolence funds (approx. \$39000 total) that the board did not distribute at the end of 2023 to designated benevolences as usual because of concerns about meeting the budget in 2024.

**7. ESSC Proposal** – Margaret Toews shared that the Education and Service Scholarship Committee (ESSC) would like to ask the congregation to approve a line item in the annual budget titled Bethel College Scholarship Fund. This request has been sent to Mike Claassen. ESSC is asking for a budget amount of \$4000 for the 2025 budget year. As a congregation we value our youth who choose to attend Bethel. For the 2024-25 academic year, we are supporting four students at Bethel. As a congregation, we have made a commitment to give \$500 per semester per student at Bethel College from our congregation and it would make sense to have that commitment reflected in the budget. ESSC also values above-budget giving for the opportunity it provides members of the congregation to support a specific interest. Above-budget giving will still be needed depending on the number of our youth choosing to attend Bethel. It was suggested that when ESSC makes this request at the congregational meeting in January that the amount of \$4000 will be variable depending on the number of students attending Bethel from our church.

**8. Board Appointments to Committees:** SCRC still needs one more member. Board members should give names of possible candidates to Brad.

#### **9. Reports and Announcements**

- a. The APRC has provisionally approved a change to the Abuse Prevention and Response Policy that will allow the nursery to be staffed by one approved adult and one approved youth volunteer. (II.A.3) This change is immediately in effect and will be incorporated into the updated policy to be approved in 2025. This information will be shared with the congregation.
- b. Bill Swartley submitted a report on behalf of an ad hoc committee which has been meeting to consider how our church can be more welcoming.
- c. Apache Stronghold – Brad shared an update from Apache Stronghold saying they are planning to file a petition asking for Supreme Court review of the case on September 11<sup>th</sup>. They anticipate that amicus briefs will be due around October 16<sup>th</sup> and will provide additional updates soon.
- d. Move Oct board meeting to 10<sup>th</sup> because it conflicts with Taste of Newton

#### **10. Future Agenda Items**

- a. BCMC – Legal Representation
- b. IT needs for BCMC & Staff – These needs would include the website, shared drives, phones – maybe need to update.

**11. Executive Session – Mary Ann Boschman moved to enter into executive session at 8:38 pm. Lois seconded. The motion passed.**

**12. Adjournment – The board adjourned at 8:39 pm. The next meeting will be held October 10 (moved due to Taste of Newton) at 7:00 pm.**

Submitted by Margaret Toews, clerk.