

Bethel College Mennonite Church Board Minutes
Pending approval at the March 2025 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, Carolyn Penner, Lois Preheim, Margaret Toews, John Waltner, Jon Zerger

Board Members not present: Tim Hodge, Doug Penner

Staff Present: Nathan Koontz (Co-pastor), Elizabeth Schmidt (Pastor for Congregational Care), Mike Claassen (Treasurer)

Staff not present: Joanna Harader (Co-pastor),

Others attending:

- 1. Welcome and Opening Prayer** – Brad offered a prayer for the meeting.
- 2. Consent Agenda** – Brad asked for questions and comments on the Pastors' reports and online minutes which were made available to the board before the meeting. Bill Eash asked the board to note in its minutes that for clarity and transparency, all committees should be taking and filing minutes. Lois Preheim noted items in the January congregational meeting minutes that needed clarification. John Waltner had a correction for the January board meeting minutes. **Lois moved to accept minutes from the previous meeting as corrected, pastors' reports, and online minutes of commissions and committees. Bill seconded the motion; approved by consensus.**
- 3. Financial Report: Mike Claassen** – January 2025 was the worst January in 20 years for income. Brad asked for clarification of the status of the General Fund – 2023 Excess Contributions. This fund was created to hold one half of the excess contributions at the end of 2023, which the board wanted held in reserve as stated in the motion passed by the board in January 2024 which reads: *That 50% of the excess income from 2023 be distributed to benevolences based on Witness Commission discretion and 50% of excess from 2023 be carried forward to the 2024 general fund. The 50% carried forward to the 2024 general fund will be dispersed in 6 months' time, as determined by the Board and depending on BCMC's financial situation at that time. The purpose of this motion is to acknowledge the gap between intents and the 2024 budget.* The money was not needed in the general fund. The Witness Commission has dispersed most of the other half of the 2023 excess contributions. It is time to distribute the balance of excess funds to benevolences as stated in the January 2024 motion and close out the General Fund – 2023 Excess Contributions line item. **Bill moved to approve the Financial Report. Carolyn Penner seconded; the motion carried.** Margaret Toews noted to the board and to Mike that the relevant information has been submitted to Adam Grilliot of Swindoll Janzen Hawke and Lloyd accounting firm so he can file with the IRS for the Direct Pay rebate of 30% of the cost of the solar panel installation.

4. **Executive Session – Bill moved; John Waltner seconded. The board entered executive session at approximately 7:15 pm. The board exited executive session at 7:42 pm.**
5. **From Finance Committee** - Brad distributed the Policies and Procedures of the Mission and Service Endowment Fund. This fund received a large gift toward the end of 2024. We need to understand how this fund is being managed and how best to use its annual earnings. Brad asked the board to think about this with the intent of discussion at a future board meeting. He noted that the Education Service and Scholarship Committee (ESSC) is the designated administrator of this fund. Margaret, current ESSC chairperson, shared that for some time the ESSC has focused mostly on dispersing college scholarship money. The board needs to find a chairperson for the ESSC who is knowledgeable and willing to be the point person for the management of the fund.
6. **Secure Entry Install** – Brad distributed a revised quote from TC Wireless for installation of a secure entry system. TC Wireless installed a similar system several years ago at First Mennonite in Newton. Ada gave a report from First Mennonite who said they felt the system was effective and easy to manage. The board was in favor of approving funds for this expenditure but also had questions. Brad shared that there is bequest fund money which can be used for this project. Jon Zerger encouraged the board to move ahead with a secure entry system. He suggested asking for more funding than the \$10,000 quoted by TC Wireless to allow the church to make decisions about effective implementation without funding restrictions. **Bill moved to approve funding from bequest funds up to \$20,000 for the installation of a secure entry system. Mary Ann Boschmann seconded; the motion carried.** Questions included: keypads vs. cards, number of entries and community playschool considerations. **Ada will talk to Facilities to establish a point person who will work with Monica, pastoral staff, Community Playschool and the installer.**
7. **Leadership Retreat Follow Up** – The board had a lengthy discussion around what we can do to be more welcoming. Points included:
- Mary Ann - Improved signage for the bathrooms. Places for coats is too far away.
 - John – comment about front doors, doors to the castle really resonated. Can we increase size of front door windows? In nice weather – stand outside
 - Brad – Schedule intentional training of greeters, decrease use of acronyms in communication.
 - Jon – comment about architecture resonated. Architectural features of the building make it difficult. Side aisles are narrow. The greeter is right behind the door – a bit sudden after opening the heavy door. Current lobby is very small. Beatrice church – walled off with glass. Hope Mennonite – enter into a big space.
 - Usher training – specifically with ushers but also everyone. People who come with someone else are often ignored.
 - Bill – seasonal outdoor decorations on front doors

As a follow-on to the Leadership Retreat discussions, the board plans to engage in a “welcoming” initiative focused on three areas: 1) evaluating signage; 2) training ushers, greeters and the broader congregation in specific ways to be more welcoming; 3) evaluating church architecture and possibilities for re-envisioning spaces around the front doors, the lobby, and the rear of the sanctuary. **Brad will email Marlene Faul, chair of Hospitality Commission about a March/April SS hour meeting with Tim Schrag.** It is time to give attention to the sound quality under the balcony. People with hearing issues should not have to sit under the balcony so they can hear. This is an issue we need to give attention to. We should also identify outgoing people to act as informal greeters and to reach out to new people.

8. Reports and Announcements

- Ada – Personnel files – Ada talked with Monica about personnel files. She explained she only keeps MOUs. What data to keep and where to keep it is an issue that needs attention.

9. Future Agenda Items - Brad asked for clarification as to how conference delegates are chosen and whether staff expenses are paid for conference attendance. Gifts Discernment Committee is responsible for getting delegates to conferences.

10. Adjournment – The board adjourned at 9:03 pm. The next meeting will be held on March 6 at 7:00 pm.

Submitted by Margaret Toews, clerk

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