

Bethel College Mennonite Church Board Minutes

January 8, 2026

Pending approval at February 2026 Board Meeting

Board Members Present: Bill Eash, Kathryn Simmons, Mary Ann Boschmann, Margaret Toews, John Waltner, Brad Kohlman, Jonathan Zerger, Tim Hodge, Elaine Schurr

Absent: Carolyn Penner

Staff: Joanna Harader, Mike Claassen

Guest: Payne Claassen

1. **Welcome and opening prayer-** Bill Eash talked about being thankful for those helping in the church. He talked about the vision of the pastors. He also reviewed the Purpose Statement and the Vision Statement. He ended in prayer.
2. **Consent agenda-** Bill asked for questions and comments. A motion was made by John Waltner and seconded by Kathryn Simmons to approve the minutes and reports. Approved by consensus.
3. **Confirmation of Gifts Discernment appointments-** A motion was made by Tim Hodge and seconded by Brad Kohlman to approve Dorothy Nickel Friesen and Barb Koontz to the Gifts Discernment Committee. Approve by consensus.
4. **Financial Report-** Mike Claassen asked for questions and comments. The church was \$2200 short of expenses for 2025. The general fund has only 1.5 months reserve. A motion by Margaret Toews and seconded by Tim Hodge to accept the report. Approved by consensus. He also presented the proposed budget and answered questions about it. Jonathan Zerger asked about the alternate budget that reduces the benevolence portion of the budget to 10% as voted on in the December Board Meeting. Mike will prepare both for the January congregational meeting. A motion was made by Margaret Toews and seconded by Tim Hodge to approve the proposed budgets. Motion carried.
5. **Church Security proposal:** Bill Eash presented the security proposal: **For the purposes of keeping our children and employees safe, all doors will be locked during the hours that the church office is open. Congregants may access the church via personal codes (available upon request from the church office) or by ringing the entrance buzzer. The church will continue to be open for scheduled meetings.** There were questions about whether the fire marshal would allow this. Tim Hodge will make a video to demonstrate how to use the personal code and have it ready for the congregational meeting. A motion was made by Tim Hodge and seconded by Brad Kohlman to implement the proposal. Motion carried.

6. **Facilities report:** John Waltner reported that he had talked with Tom Jackson, the facilities committee chair. Tom is concerned about the heat pumps (about 16) are aging and could be a significant cost if several failed at the same time. He asked for some thought about setting aside money if this scenario occurred. There will be further discussion. John also related that the tiles in the playschool area are aging and cracking. They got estimates on covering the existing tile(containing asbestos) with LVP flooring. They also looked at covering the tile in the quilting room and the preschool office with carpet tiles. The estimate in October was for about \$11,000. A question was raised about the carpet tiles in the quilting room. A motion was made by Brad Kohlman and seconded by Jonathan Zerger to approve the flooring of up to \$17,000. Motion passed unanimously.
7. **Immigration Justice Task Group**-The group is recommending that the church designate certain areas of the church as Private, that would require federal immigration agents to have a warrant signed by a judge to search these areas. Discussion followed regarding this. Thoughts by Jonathan Zerger and Tim Hodge were considered. Bill will talk with the preschool directors about areas they may feel would need that designation. It was felt that the church office and pastors offices should be included. The preschool classrooms, preschool office, the kitchen, and the bathrooms in the basement should be included. A motion was made by Margaret Toews and seconded by John Waltner to move forward with this recommendation. The church office, pastors offices, preschool classrooms, preschool office, the kitchen, and bathrooms in the basement should be designated Private. Motion passed. The task group should pursue signage. **This should be presented by the task group at the January 25 congregational meeting.** Further discussion should determine who would speak to ICE agents. Training for them should also be discussed.
8. **Discussion: Finance presentation to the congregation**- Brad Kohlman, Jonathan Zerger, and Jeannette Leary will collaborate to explain how we got to this point and why we are presenting two budgets. Joanna reminded us that there is a lot of stress related to the events going on in the world currently.
9. **Pastoral Search Update**- Brad Kohlman stated that they are working with Kathy Neufeld Dunn. The job is posted and they are not aware of any NLI's(similar to resumes) at this time.
10. **AV Update**- Jonathan Zerger and Bill Eash stated that one group had toured the building and another is scheduled for next week. The first group is going to do a follow-up study of acoustics. They were encouraged to keep Monica in the loop.
11. **Congregational meeting agenda/discussion**-Bill will work on this
 - a. Change in Welcoming Statement(Witness)-Bill will talk to Darlene about presenting

- b. Budget (Finance)
- c. Finance committee proposal (Finance)
- d. Pastoral Search-Megan Leary
- e. Facilities Committee update-Tom Jackson
- f. AV renovation update
- g. Security policy
- h. Celebration of the work of the church
- i. Faith Formation
- j. ???Immigration

12. **Bequests/Memorial Funds distribution discussion-** Roll over to February

13. **Committee/commission downsizing reports-** Roll over to February

14. **Executive session-** Begun at 8:50 pm

15. **Adjournment-** Adjourned at 8:55 pm. Next meeting is February 5, 2026

Submitted by Elaine Schurr, clerk