

Notes on the Congregational Meeting
Regarding the Proposal from Mission Commission
June 12, 2016

There were about 30 to 35 people present, including Executive Conference Minister David Boshart. Tim Krabill opened the meeting by reading from the First Mennonite Church Vision Statement and Congregational Covenant, a statement from Mennonite Mission Network, and a passage from the prophet Isaiah, all as printed in the proposal from Mission Commission, and then offering a prayer.

David Boshart shared information about the R-1 religious worker visa, how it became related to First Mennonite Church, work of Central Plains Conference with Torre Fuerte and the Villatoro family, and how members of the Villatoro family have been doing.

Tim listed the items and information required from FMC and from the Villatoros in petitioning for the R-1 visa. He also reported an estimate of Max's salary and benefits for the 2017-2018 church year, which is the earliest Max could be back in Iowa. Based upon last year's giving, the congregation would need to increase giving by 5.8% annually to the FMC General Fund beginning in 2017 or 2018.

Comments from the congregation included benefits experienced from other congregations who have worked closely with fellow believers from immigrant communities, such as Des Moines Mennonite Church, affirmation of the faith and commitment of Latino Christians, and a vision of how working more closely with Max as a pastoral staff member would improve communication and interaction between our two congregations.

A concern was spoken of a potential risk to the integrity and reputation of First Mennonite Church if it appears that we are just using this visa as a way to get Max back, rather than as an active member of the FMC pastoral staff.

Several concerns were raised about how this position would be funded, whether through congregational giving, contributions from other congregations, CPMC, grants from MMN or Everence, other additional fundraising, and possible decreases in current spending.

Additional concerns questioned the ability of the congregation to increase giving by 5% or more, particularly considering those on fixed incomes and in consideration of our remaining debt on our building project.

There was also some confusion about the 1.5 full time equivalent which the pastoral search committee has been commissioned to fill, and how a new pastoral position for Max would have an effect upon that search.

Other questions included the extent to which Max and the Torre Fuerte congregation have been informed of this proposal, and whether Max would have office space in the church building.

David Boshart informed us that CPMC would not be contributing directly to fund this position or to serve as the petitioner for the R-1 visa due to a lack of resources and a resolution that CPMC should not be involved in this kind of arrangement. This must be a congregational responsibility. The conference will continue to receive contributions for the Villatoro family. Grants from MMN or Everence might be available, however there is much demand and need for them elsewhere, so our chances might not be so good. Also, they would not be awarded more than once and for a time period of not more than a year, which would not help us for the five-year time period we are considering in order for Anthony Villatoro to petition for Max to stay in the U.S. as an alien relative when Anthony becomes 21 years old.

Torre Fuerte is not able to serve as the petitioner themselves because they do not have the history and documentation of an established and stable congregation, and they do not have the funds necessary to pay a pastor.

Dave also commented that the job description for the position and the covenant of understanding between the two congregations needs to be detailed and explicit in how the position relates to both congregations and how the two congregations are related to each other in order to prove the legitimacy of this new position and safeguard the integrity of FMC when petitioning the government.

Cindi Schrock and Tim Krabill, members of the pastoral search committee stated that the committee has been commissioned to fill the 1.5 FTE left by the retirement of Bob and Mag last year, meaning that we are in search of two pastors, one full time and one half time, or any other combination that equals 1.5. Tim commented that if the congregation were to desire that the half time opening for FMC be considered for Max, that would need to be addressed to the Elders, however the proposal from Mission Commission states that the position for Max should be a new position in addition to the 1.5 FTE for FMC in order to provide the pastoral care and administrative leadership that our congregation seeks.

Tim also reported that Max is aware of the possibility of the R-1 visa. Gloria has not encouraged him to get his hopes up about it. Some members of the Torre Fuerte congregation, aside from Gloria and her family members, may also be aware of the possibility, but have not been given details. If FMC were to decide to serve as the petitioner for an R-1 visa, Max and the Torre Fuerte congregation would then be fully informed and their input invited.

There is no certainty of whether Max would have office space in the church building, however in regard to Max being considered as other pastors on staff, that would be a very real possibility.

The meeting concluded with the suggestion that Stewardship Commission be asked to prepare a proposal for the congregation on how this position could be funded in a sustainable way for the five-year period that we would need.

The meeting was closed with a prayer from David Boshart.

These are only cursory notes of the meeting. The meeting was recorded and the CD is available in the church library.

Submitted by Tim Krabill

Reviewed by Rosie Hochstetler