

Elders' Meeting Minutes: 2015

January 14, 2015

Present: Mag Richer Smith, Bob Smith, Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler, Cathy Gingerich, Bill Hochstetler, Marian Schwabbauer, Larry Swartzendruber, and Miriam Miller.

1. Devotions: Karla shared comments and observations regarding Michael King's recent article in *The Mennonite* entitled "A Bible as big as the universe".
2. Personal and Pastoral Sharing: The elders and pastors shared personal comments and concerns. The pastors reported on visits, congregational concerns, and other matters. There was a time of prayer.
3. Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the elders' meeting on December 10 were approved.
4. Small Groups / Bible Study Groups: An email survey was sent out on January 6. The response was low. Subsequent to this meeting, paper surveys were placed in the mailboxes of people who had not returned surveys. This topic will be discussed further at the next meeting, subject to the possibility of deferring until more responses are received.
5. New Covenant for Congregations of Central Plains Mennonite Conference: Mag, Bob and Karla reported on discussions among conference pastors and leaders regarding a new covenant of accountability that would provide guidance to congregations when we face questions and differences regarding faith and practice.
6. The pastors reported on a future event for March 6 and 7, where input for an interfaith gathering on Friday evening and a workshop on Saturday morning will be provided by Brian McLaren.
7. Pastoral Transition: The Elders met with Karla to further discuss on-going communications with conference ministers to identify a trained "transition" pastor to begin serving with us as early as July 1, 2015. The intent is to have such leadership in place for a period of 7-9 months, during which time a formal search process for long-term leadership can take place.
8. The next meeting will be Wednesday, January 28, 2015.

January 28, 2015

Present: Mag Richer Smith, Bob Smith, Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler, Cathy Gingerich, Bill Hochstetler, Larry Swartzendruber, and Miriam Miller.

1. Devotions: Mag read from Mark 1 and shared reflections on a day in the life of a pastor.
2. Personal and Pastoral Sharing: The elders and pastors shared personal comments and concerns. The pastors reported on visits, congregational concerns, and other matters. There was a time of prayer.
3. Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the elders' meeting on January 14 were approved.
4. Small Groups / Bible Study Groups: The survey results were reviewed. Suggestions were made regarding possible new groups. Follow up plans were made.

5. New Covenant for Congregations of Central Plains Mennonite Conference: The pastors were affirmed in giving feedback to the conference pastors and leaders regarding a new covenant of accountability that would provide guidance to congregations when we face questions and differences regarding faith and practice. We have questions, but the idea should be explored further.
6. Pastoral Transition: Mag and Bob shared some thoughts regarding leaving plans and closure with the congregation in June.
7. The next meeting will be Wednesday, February 11, 2015.

February 11, 2015

Present: Mag Richer Smith, Bob Smith, Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler, Bill Hochstetler, Marian Schwabbauer, Dave Sickles, and Larry Swartzendruber.

1. Devotions: Dave shared some thoughts by Margalea Warner on The Lord's Prayer.
2. Personal and Pastoral Sharing: The elders and pastors shared personal comments and concerns. The pastors reported on visits, congregational concerns, and other matters. There was a time of prayer.
3. Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the elders' meeting on January 28 were approved.
4. Small Groups / Bible Study Groups: The survey results and Elders' discussion regarding possible new groups has been provided to Marion. She will work further on possible new groups.
5. Bob provided a handout regarding the Brian McLaren interfaith gathering and workshop that is coming to Iowa City on March 6 and 7. Bob also reported that the pastors and several commission members will be participating.
6. The pastors shared a proposed resolution from the leadership of Lower Deer Creek Mennonite Church. The hope of the authors and signers of this resolution is that it might be considered by delegates at the Kansas City Mennonite Assembly this summer. The resolution calls upon the Constituency Leaders Council to review actions of area conferences regarding same-sex matters and exercise discipline. We were asked to consider signing this resolution, but we declined.
7. Pastoral Transition: The Elders confirmed the weekend of June 13 and 14 as a time to celebrate with Mag and Bob their time with us as pastors and to provide a time for good-byes.
8. The next meeting will be Wednesday, February 25, 2015.

March 11, 2015

Present: Mag Richer Smith, Bob Smith, Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler, Cathy Gingerich, Bill Hochstetler, Mim Miller, Marian Schwabbauer, Dave Sickles, and Larry Swartzendruber.

1. Personal and Pastoral Sharing: The elders and pastors shared personal comments and concerns. The pastors reported on visits, congregational concerns, and other matters. Special attention was given to the events of the past week regarding Max Villatoro. There was a time of prayer.

2. Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the elders' meeting on February 11 were approved.
3. Small Groups / Bible Study Groups: Marion reported on her review of the survey results. Suggestions were made and discussed. Marion will follow up with several potential group leaders.
4. The next meeting will be Wednesday, March 25, 2015.

March 25, 2015

Present: Mag Richer Smith, Bob Smith, Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler, Cathy Gingerich, Bill Hochstetler, Miriam Miller, Marian Schwabbauer, Dave Sickles, and Larry Swartzendruber.

1. Personal and Pastoral Sharing: The elders and pastors shared personal comments and concerns. The pastors reported on visits, congregational concerns, and other matters. There was a time of prayer.
2. Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the elders' meeting on March 11 were approved.
3. Small Groups / Bible Study Groups: Marian provided thoughtful suggestions for several new small groups, with suggested individuals to help organize the groups. The Elders thanked Marian for this good work.
4. Dave reported on the progress in obtaining an interim transitional pastor, who would be available at the beginning of July to serve a term of perhaps one year. During this interim time, the congregation would focus on its goals and the skills and gifts that the congregation would be seeking in a long-term pastor. It was agreed that Dave should make an announcement on Sunday (March 28).
5. The next meeting will be Wednesday, April 8, 2015.

April 8, 2015

Present: Mag Richer Smith, Bob Smith, Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler, Cathy Gingerich, Bill Hochstetler, Mim Miller, Marian Schwabbauer, and Dave Sickles.

1. Devotions: Bill read a poem about worship and commented on its meaning for him.
2. Personal and Pastoral Sharing: The elders and pastors shared personal comments and concerns. The pastors reported on visits, congregational concerns, and other matters. There was a time of prayer.
3. Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the elders' meeting on March 25 were approved.
4. Dave reported further on communications with a possible interim transitional pastor. Arrangements were made for a phone meeting with the pastor and with a conference minister.
5. The next meeting will be Wednesday, April 22, 2015.

April 22, 2015

Present: Mag Richer Smith, Bob Smith, Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler, Cathy Gingerich, Bill Hochstetler, Mim Miller, and Marian Schwabbauer.

1. Devotions: Marian shared from a book entitled "*The Agile Church*", by Dwight Zscheile – spirit led innovation in an uncertain age.

2. Personal and Pastoral Sharing: The elders and pastors shared personal comments and concerns. The pastors reported on visits, congregational concerns, and other matters. There was a time of prayer.
3. Small Groups / Bible Study Groups: Marian provided an update on the progress in establishing several additional small groups.
4. Covenantal Conference: Karla and Bill reported on the meeting in Des Moines on April 11 for pastors, elders and delegates from the Central Plains Mennonite Conference congregations. The meeting provided more information about the proposed "*New Covenant of Accountability for Central Plains Mennonite Conference.*" At the end of the day, a majority of the congregations present affirmed continued work by the conference ministers in further developing this covenant.
5. The next meeting will be Wednesday, May 13, 2015.

May 14, 2015

Present: Mag Richer Smith, Bob Smith, Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler, Cathy Gingerich, Bill Hochstetler, Miriam Miller, Marian Schwabbauer, Dave Sickles, Larry Swartzendruber.

1. Devotions: Larry shared thoughts about the first of six covenantal practices that Central Plains Mennonite Conference urges its congregations to practice as a way of becoming transformed – We will worship God as the central act of our common life whenever the church is gathered.
2. Personal and Pastoral Sharing: The elders and pastors shared personal comments and concerns. The pastors reported on visits, congregational concerns, and other matters. There was a time of prayer.
3. Small Groups / Bible Study Groups: Marian provided an update on the progress in establishing several additional small groups – one group is started and another is forming.
4. The minutes for the meetings on April 8 and April 22 were approved.
5. The Elders reviewed materials that Bob prepared that outline various timely administrative matters for our church life together.
6. The next meeting will be Wednesday, May 27, 2015, at 6 pm at Dave and Glenda's house.

June 10, 2015

Present: Mag Richer Smith, Bob Smith, Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler, Dave Sickles, Marian Schwabbauer, Cathy Gingerich

1. Devotions: Karla shared from the second covenant that the Central Plains Conference urges congregations to practices. This covenant Prayer, Fasting, and Generous giving was brought to the conference by the Hispanic churches. Karla asked us not only talk to God but to listen to God.
2. Personal and Pastoral Sharing: The elders and pastors shared comments and concerns in their personal lives. Bob brought a list of concerns from the congregation that the Elders need to be aware of after their departure.

3. Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the elders' meeting of the May 14 were approved.
4. Elders and Karla went through the email from Gordon and responded to his questions and concerns.
5. We decided to contact the visitation team and ask if they are available to do visitation during the next year to relieve Gordon and to continue the long term and maybe some short term visitation while Gordon is with us. This will allow him more time for his intentional interim work.
6. Next meeting June 24 Devotions Miriam

June 24, 2015

Present: Karla Stolfus Detweiler, Cathy Gingerich, Bill Hochstetler, Miriam Miller, Marian Schwabbauer, Dave Sickles, and Larry Swartzendruber.

1. Devotions: Miriam Miller shared thoughts about the third of six covenantal practices that Central Plains Mennonite Conference urges its congregations to practice as a way of becoming transformed – We will prayerfully study the Bible together.
2. Personal and Pastoral Sharing: The elders and Karla shared personal comments and concerns. Karla reported on visits, congregational concerns, and other matters. There was a time of prayer.
3. The minutes for the meeting on May 10 were approved.
4. The Elders discussed congregational care matters and made some assignments.
5. The next meeting will be Wednesday, July 8.

July 8, 2015

Present: Karla Stolfus Detweiler, Cathy Gingerich, Bill Hochstetler, Miriam Miller, Marian Schwabbauer, Dave Sickles, and Larry Swartzendruber.

1. Devotions: Cathy shared thoughts about the fourth of six covenantal practices that Central Plains Mennonite Conference urges its congregations to practice as a way of becoming transformed – We will accept and offer hospitality, believing it creates the context for God's kingdom to appear in our midst.
2. Personal and Pastoral Sharing: The elders and Karla shared personal comments and concerns. Karla shared some pastoral concerns matters and gave a report on her experience at the Mennonite Church USA convention in Kansas City. There was a time of prayer.
3. The minutes for the meeting on June 24 were approved.
4. The Elders discussed congregational care matters. The Elders will have more responsibility during this year of transition. Karla will prepare a bulletin announcement.
5. Gordon Scoville's beginning date, August 9, 2015, and ending date, August 7, 2016, were confirmed.
6. The next meeting will be Wednesday, July 22.

July 22, 2015

Present: Karla Stolfus Detweiler, Cathy Gingerich, Bill Hochstetler, Miriam Miller, Marian Schwabbauer, Dave Sickles, and Larry Swartzendruber.

1. Devotions: Dave shared thoughts about the fifth of six covenantal practices that Central Plains Mennonite Conference urges its congregations to practice as a way of becoming transformed – We will study the Bible with neighbors and strangers, inviting them to become disciples of Jesus.
2. Personal and Pastoral Sharing: The elders and Karla shared personal comments and concerns, and Karla shared some pastoral concerns. There was a time of prayer.
3. The minutes for the meeting on July 8 were approved.
4. The Elders discussed congregational care matters and discussed possible alternatives for pastoral care, preaching, and other pastoral matters during Karla's maternity leave which will begin in January.
5. A statement regarding the expected timeline and search process for a long-term pastor to fill the vacancy caused by the retirement of Mag and Bob was approved for distribution to the congregation.
6. The next meeting will be Wednesday, August 12.

August 12, 2015

Present: Karla Stolfus Detweiler, Gordon Scoville, Cathy Gingerich, Bill Hochstetler, Miriam Miller, Marian Schwabbauer, and Larry Swartzendruber.

1. Welcome and Introductions: The Elders and Karla welcomed Gordon and provided introductions.
2. Meditation: Bill shared thoughts about the sixth of six covenantal practices that Central Plains Mennonite Conference urges its congregations to practice as a way of becoming transformed – We will practice peacemaking by extending loving-kindness and forgiveness to our brothers and sisters as well as to our neighbors and enemies.
3. Personal Sharing and Congregational and Pastoral Joys and Concerns: The group shared personal comments, as well as pastoral and congregational joys and concerns. There was a time of prayer.
4. Approval of Minutes: The minutes for the meeting on July 22 were approved.
5. Listening for Grace: Possibilities for providing support for the Ted & Co. production of "Listening for Grace" were discussed. The performance would likely be at an Iowa City location on October 22.
6. Organization for 2015 – 2016: The Elders picnic for August 22 was deferred until September. Bill agreed to serve as chair of the Elders for 2015 – 2016. The selection of a secretary and a representative to Administrative Cabinet was deferred.
7. Intentional Interim Items: Gordon explained (i) his plans for interviewing each Elder, (ii) assistance he will need from the Elders, and (iii) the formation of a Response Group that will assist him with his work. Open congregational meetings will be held on October 11 and November 15 with more details to follow.
8. The next Elders meeting will be held Wednesday, August 26.

August 24, 2015

Present: Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler, Gordon Scoville, Cathy Gingerich, Bill Hochstetler, Cheryl Martin Miller, Miriam Miller, Marian Schwabbauer, Dave Sickles, and Larry Swartzendruber.

1. Meditation: Marian read a poem about World War I, *Parable of the Old Man and the Young* and also read from the book *The Gift of Change*.
2. Personal Sharing and Congregational and Pastoral Joys and Concerns: The group shared personal comments, as well as pastoral and congregational joys and concerns. There was a time of prayer.
3. Approval of Minutes: The minutes for the meeting on Aug 12 were approved.
4. Intentional Interim Items: Open congregational meetings are scheduled for October 11, November 15, and January 24. Gordon explained some logistics regarding those meetings. Good progress is being made regarding the Response Group that will assist him with his work. This group will likely consist of 8 to 10 members of the congregation.
5. There was discussion about various aspects of Karla's maternity leave.
6. The Elders and Pastors retreat will be held on Thursday, September 3, 2015, at the church.
7. The next Elders meeting will be held Wednesday, September 9.

September 9, 2015

Present: Bill Hochstetler, Larry Swartzendruber, Marian Schwabbauer, Cheryl Martin Miller, Karla Stoltzfus-Detweiler, Miriam Miller, Gordon Scoville, Cathy Gingerich

1. Devotions: Bill shared the story of Samuel and Eli and spoke to us about listening and discerning and following Gods leading.
2. Personal and congregational care items: We shared personal and congregational joys and concerns and spent time in prayer.
3. Designation of Elder responsibilities:
 - Cathy volunteered to be the Secretary.
 - Larry volunteered to be the Elder representative to the Ad Cabinet.
 - Marian will continue with her duties as Small group Coordinator.
 - Cheryl will coordinate our listings of 'Congregational Care by Elders'. We will update our lists as needed.
 - The Liason with members of the 'Visitation' Team, is yet to be determined. The liason will check in with those people who are helping with visitation, and get their feedback.
4. Goals for the Elder/Pastor Team 2015/16:
 - A) Providing for congregational care:
 - 'Congregational Care by Elders' Teams;
 - Coordinating visitation with the pastors, elders and members of the visitation team;
 - Welcoming and integrating newcomers into the life of the congregation.
 - B) Provide support for Karla:
 - Ensuring that Elder and congregational expectations for Karla are reasonable;
 - Releasing Karla for her maternity/family leave time;

- Providing the 'three year' evaluation for Karla (IF advisable during this year of transition).
- C) Provide support for Gordon's focused intentional interim ministry work:
- Helping us clarify the congregations self understanding -exploring the congregations identity and future vision and mission.
- D) Lead the congregation in obtaining long-term leadership.
5. Minutes from the August 26th meeting were approved with the changing of the date from August 24 to August 26.
 6. Gordon gave us an update regarding the congregational assessment process. He has received 101 questionnaires back so far which is very encouraging. He has conducted many interviews. The first Congregational meeting is scheduled for 10/11/15 12-2 pm.
 7. We reviewed the terms of Karla's maternity leave.
 8. We discussed Pastor assistance for the time Karla is on maternity leave.
 9. Other business: The Mutual Aid fund has money but the Community Compassion Fund is low. An announcement in this regard will be put in the bulletin.
 10. Our next meeting will be 9/22/15 at 7pm.
- Respectfully submitted, Cathy Gingerich

September 22, 2015

Present: Bill Hochstetler, Larry Swartzendruber, Marian Schwabbauer, Cheryl Martin Miller, Gordon Scoville, Cathy Gingerich, Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler

1. Larry led devotions. He spoke of the 'Fruits of the Spirit' and in particular about patience.
2. We shared personal and congregational care items and these were lifted up in prayer.
3. Marian, small group coordinator, updated us. She is going to find out what small groups are currently functioning and put an announcement in the bulletin for those looking for a small group to join.
4. Cheryl gave us an update on the 'Congregational Care by Elders' listings. The Elders who have not updated her spreadsheet need to do so and send it back to her.
5. Goals for the Elders/Pastors Team- 2015-2016. Larry will deliver these (listed in the 9/9/15 minutes) to the Ad Cabinet.
6. Bill will get a list from members of the 'Visitation Team' re who is matched with who.
7. The minutes from 9/9/15 were approved.
8. Gordon gave us an update regarding the congregational assessment process. He has received 120 questionnaires back from the congregation and feels good about the intentional process.
9. We discussed plans for pastoral assistance during Karla's maternity leave. This discussion will continue as we explore possibilities.
10. Next meeting: 10/14/15 7pm.

October 14, 2015

Present: Bill Hochstetler, Larry Swartzendruber, Gordon Scoville, Marian Schwabbauer, Miriam Miller, Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler, Cathy Gingerich

1. Devotions: Karla. Karla read parts of Romans 8 and we pondered 'hope for what we do not see', 'all things work together for good', 'neither death nor life' 'nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord'
2. We shared personal and congregational care items and spent time in prayer.
3. Interview for the time Karla is on maternity leave: Jim Grossnickle-Batterton came and we took time to ask and answer questions. (Elders only, Gordon and Karla left the meeting during this agenda item). He is happy with the thought of serving our congregation in this way and it was decided to make an announcement to the congregation with our decision to have Jim join us during Karlas time in the upcoming Sunday Morning Worship service.
4. Update from Cheryl/Coordinator 'Congregational Care by Elders' listings: deferred. Cheryl is not present tonight.
5. Liason with members of the 'Visitation Team'. Bill gave us an update. He is making contact with those helping in this capacity.
6. Small Group Update: Marian. We spent some time discussing current small groups, both traditional 'organized' ones and other groups that end up meeting small group needs for the people involved ie the "Moms group" and "Mens breakfast group". Marian will put an announcement in the bulletin inviting those interested in joining a small group to contact her.
7. The minutes of the 9/22/15 meeting were approved.
8. Gordon gave an update on his time with us. 10/20/15 marks the end of the assessment period. He is feeling supported and grateful.
9. We discussed timing for getting a Search Committee together and the makeup of this committee. We will continue this discussion at our next meeting which will be 10/28/15.

October 28, 2015

Present: Bill Hochstetler, Gordon Scoville, Miriam Miller, Cheryl Martin Miller, Marian Schwabbauer, Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler, Cathy Gingerich
 Absent: Larry Swartzendruber

1. Devotions: Cathy read portions of Psalm 31, Jeremiah 29:11 'For I know the plans I have for you', declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'. We talked of hope amidst hopelessness, and also considered a quote on hope from Anne Lamotts book, 'Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers"
2. Personal and Congregational Care Items were shared and time was spent in prayer.
3. The October 14 Minutes were approved.
4. Gordon gave us an update regarding the congregational assessment process. He is preparing for the next church wide meeting November 15.
5. We spent time discussing Congregational Expectations for Long-Term Leadership. We discussed possibilities regarding the type of leadership we are seeking, this is an ongoing discussion. We want to be able to give the Search Committee clear direction when they start the search.
6. Time was spent discussing the makeup of the Search Committee, and possible members. Consideration was given to suggestions from the congregation in response to our invitation to do so.

7. Next meeting: November 11. Dave Boshart will be attending.

November 11, 2015

Present: Gordon Scoville, Marian Schwabbauer, Larry Swartzendruber, Bill Hochstetler, Miriam Miller, Cheryl Martin Miller, Cathy Gingerich

Present for Agenda Items 1 and 2 only: Dave Boshart and the co-chairs of the Pastoral Search Committee

1. Devotions: Dave Boshart: Dave read Luke 5:1-11. He spoke to us about this being a lesson in TRUST. In times of anxiety, we are not alone. The Search Committee being formed, the congregation of First Mennonite, the Elders, Dave, we are partners. God will be with the faithful. We are called to walk in FAITH.
2. Discussion with Dave re the process of finding long term Pastoral Leadership. The Search Committee is in the process of being formed. We discussed with Dave and the co-chairs various aspects of the Search process. We agreed that communication is crucial.
3. Update from Gordon regarding the congregational assessment process: Sunday 11/15/15 is the next meeting with the congregation and is 'the completion piece of the assessment period'.
4. Update: Formation of the Search Committee: We have co-chairs. We have the Elder representative and one other member so far. The other members are to be determined/finalized soon. The members of the committee will be announced to the congregation when the positions are filled.
5. We shared personal and congregational care items and spent time in prayer.
6. The 10/28/15 meeting minutes were approved

Respectfully submitted: Cathy Gingerich

December 9, 2015

Present: Bill H, Larry S, Karla S-D, Gordon S, Marian S, Cheryl M-M, Miriam M, Cathy G

1. Devotions: Cheryl shared excerpts from a blog written by Megan Good, from Albany Mennonite in Oregon re 'The Bibles final words', 'His story is not just behind us but AHEAD of us'.
2. Personal and congregational care items. We shared together and spent time in prayer.
3. Update from Gordon regarding the congregational assessment process: Gordon met recently with his 'listening/response group' and they discussed the next steps for his time with us as intentional interim minister. We discussed this also. This discussion will continue at our January meeting.
4. Update from the Search Committees first meeting December 8. Bill attended the first meeting. We feel it is a good group and will work well together. Bill gave us an update on their first steps in the search process.
5. The minutes from the November 11 meeting were approved.
6. The next meeting will be January 13, 2016. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted, Cathy Gingerich

