

Elders minutes 2013

January 10, 2013, 7 p.m.

Present: Cathy Gingerich, Noreen Gingerich, Bill Hochstetler, Lance Miller, Shirley Oswald, Mag Richer Smith, Dave Sickles, Bob Smith, Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler. Guests for points

1 and 2 below: Collette Hostetler, Ezra Plank, Marian Schwabbauer

1. Bill recited from memory the John account of Jesus' feeding of 5000 persons. He noted that the account is recorded in all four gospels but each brings a different perspective, which is an important element of life together as believers.
2. Marian, Ezra, and Collette shared experiences and impressions from the December 15 dialogue among Iowa Mennonite Churches about responses to Faith Mennonite Church's gender-inclusive marriage policy
3. We discussed a letter that our congregation received from Lower Deer Creek Mennonite Church and talked possible responses. Since the letter was sent to all Central Plains Mennonite congregations. we decided not to respond at this point.
4. Pastoral concerns were shared and followed by a time of prayer.
5. Plans for our upcoming Feb. 3 noon meal with FMC senior members were discussed. Nancy Halder will prepare food. Set-up is at 4 p.m. Feb. 2. Karla is securing servers from among the young adults. Shirley will send invitations by church mailbox Jan. 13 and collect RSVPs Jan. 20. Dave will convey plans to Dianne Brenneman.
6. Health insurance options were discussed for Karla and Nathan's child and a provider chosen.
7. The meeting closed at 9:30. Next meeting: Jan. 22: Devotions: Dave

Jan. 22, 2013

Present: Bill Hochstetler, Lance Miller, Shirley Oswald, Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler, Jim Grossnickle-Batterton, Dave Sickles

1. Karla and Jim shared on Bob Smith's condition. He was lifted up in prayer.
2. Dave shared a column from newspaper concerning prayer at the inauguration and how far the country has come but how far we have yet to go.
3. Personal and Pastoral concerns were shared.
4. Minutes from Jan. 10, 2013 were approved.
5. We further discussed the letter that was received from Lower Deer Creek and talked about possible responses. We will discuss it further when Mag and Bob return.
6. We briefly discussed Bob/Mag's concern about credentials.
7. Plans were finalized for the Feb. 3 noon meal with FMC senior members. Dave will get an email out to Elders and Pastors and Dianne Brenneman with the questions that we will discuss with the seniors.

February 12, 2013, 7 p.m.

Present: Cathy Gingerich, Noreen Gingerich, Jim Grossnickle-Batterton, Bill Hochstetler, Lance Miller, Shirley Oswald, Mag Richer Smith, Dave Sickles, Bob Smith, Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler.

1. Noreen led a time of meditation focusing on our love for Jesus.
2. Personal and pastoral joys and needs were shared, and prayers were offered.
3. The remainder of the meeting was spent compiling responses gathered from FMC senior members at the February 3 meal together. Concrete plans for responding to needs that were mentioned will be taken up at the next elder/pastor meeting.
4. The meeting ended at 9:00. The next meeting will be on Feb. 26. Lance will bring devotions.

February 26, 2013 7 p.m.

Present: Cathy Gingerich, Noreen Gingerich, Jim Grossnickle-Batterton, Bill Hochstetler, Lance Miller, Mag Richer Smith, Dave Sickles, Bob Smith

1. Lance brought a passage from *Kitchen Table Wisdom* by Rachel Naomi Remen, highlighting the ways that carrying a critical, judgmental attitude diminishes us as greatly as those we judge.
2. Personal and pastoral joys and needs were shared, followed by prayer.
3. Discussion centered on the spiritual and logistical needs expressed by our aging FMC members. Careful discernment will continue in the coming months as these needs are addressed.
4. The meeting adjourned at 9. Next meeting: March 12, 2013. Devotions to be announced.
5. Tentative sabbatical plans for Bob and Mag were approved for the following dates: June 24-July 29 and October 14-Nov 12. A week of vacation will also be taken from May 24 – June 4.

Next meeting will be on March 12.

March 12, 2013, 7 p.m.

Present: Noreen Gingerich, Jim Grossnickle-Batterton, Lance Miller, Shirley Oswald, Mag Richer Smith, Dave Sickles, Bob Smith

1. Shirley shared thoughts on Acts 9:1-9, Saul's meeting with Christ on the road to Damascus, which offers the promise that Christ can change any situation.
2. Personal and pastoral joys and needs were shared and lifted to God in prayer.
3. Discussion continued on ministry among our senior members, taking note of components that are already in place and appreciated, and also considering ways in which our church commissions might enhance ministry to this age group. More concrete steps will be taken at the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9.

Next meeting: March 26, 2013. Cathy will bring devotions.

March 26, 2013, 7 p.m.

Present: Noreen Gingerich, Jim Grossnickle-Batterton, Bill Hochstetler, Lance Miller, Shirley Oswald, Mag Richer Smith, Dave Sickles, Bob Smith

1. Cathy had us consider Isaac Villegas' thoughts on "Church as Prayer" (*The Mennonite*, April 2013, p.8) and its relation to the passion of Christ.
2. Personal and pastoral joys and needs were shared and offered up in prayer.
3. The March 12 minutes were reviewed and approved.
4. Bob and Mag's sabbatical, due this year, will be split into two parts: May 25 to July 9 and October 15 to November 12.
5. Responsibilities were divided among those present for working with various church commissions on ways to enhance community life and spiritual care for our senior members: Dave--trustees; Bob--Christian education, visitation ministry; Mag--worship; Shirley--prayer ministry; Noreen--fellowship. All of us can encourage increased cross-generational faith story-telling in Christian ed. classes. Small group formation will be considered at the next meeting.
6. The meeting adjourned at 9.

Next meeting April 9, 2013. Mag will bring devotions.

April 23, 2013, 7 p.m.

Present: Cathy Gingerich, Noreen Gingerich, Mag Richer Smith, Dave Sickles, Bob Smith

1. Bob read from Rachel Naomi Remen on "serving" people, which comes from a stance of equal regard and in which even our wounds are fodder for service. This is in contrast to "helping" or "fixing" people,

which may come from a position of power.

2. Personal and pastoral joys and needs were shared and prayers were raised.
3. The April 9 minutes were reviewed and approved.
4. Bob will orient five or more of the former Stephen Ministers in May for pastoral visitation during June and beyond. Marian Schwabbauer and Marilyn Rose will lead Griefshare beginning in early May. Dave reported that he has given the trustees a list of possible adaptations in the church building for ease and safety of movement.
5. There was discussion of a pastoral response to share with Central Plains leadership in relation to Faith Mennonite Church's relationship with conference.
6. Dave will prepare a memo to the congregation about the upcoming sabbatical granted to Bob and Mag for the following dates: May 24 to July 9 and October 15 to November 12. He will also inform the congregation of Karla's return from sabbatical leave and the ending of Jim's internship.
7. Ideas for broadening small group experiences at FMC will be taken up at the next meeting.
8. Next month's meeting dates will be May 7 and 21. Dates for the summer quarter will be decided by email.
9. The meeting ended at 9:00.
Next meeting May 7, 7p.m.
Bob will offer the meditation.

May 21, 2013, 7 p.m.

Present: Cathy Gingerich, Noreen Gingerich, Bill Hochstetler, Lance Miller, Shirley Oswald, Mag Richer Smith, Dave Sickles, Bob Smith, Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler

1. Bill recited Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and offered thoughts on the value of committing Scripture to memory.
2. Personal and pastoral joys and concerns were shared and brought to God in prayer.
3. The May 7 minutes were approved.
4. Details were clarified for the coming month: (a) Karla will be making pastoral visits with several laypersons helping. (b) Dave will check into possibilities for ongoing maintenance of the office computers and internet service. (c) Needed changes in the elders' spending plan for 2013-2014 will be discussed at the June meeting.
5. Pastors Bob and Mag reported on their past and planned meetings with conference pastors to express support for Faith Mennonite Church pastor Joetta Schlabach.
6. Shirley will move forward in June on soliciting FMC congregants who will pray intentionally and regularly for current local and national prayer concerns.
7. Discussion continued on steps to enhance pastoral care through small groups at FMC. We will begin to gather names of possible group facilitators at the next pastor/elder meeting.
8. The meeting ended at 9:15.
9. The next meeting will be June 11, with Noreen bringing devotions.

June 11, 2013, 7 p.m.

Present: Cathy Gingerich, Noreen Gingerich, Shirley Oswald, Dave Sickles, Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler

1. In place of a devotional we prayed in small groups by name for First Mennonite Church brothers and sisters.
2. Personal and pastoral joys and concerns were shared and offered up in prayer.
3. The May 21 minutes were accepted.
4. Karla and Dave reported on improvements made in the computers and internet service in the church offices. Dave will continue to work with a professional information technology company to evaluate and upgrade our system, and will consult with the church treasurer about designating an

annual \$1000 line item for that purpose in the spending plan.

5. Various plans were explored for health insurance coverage for Karla's family. The elders recommended the Corinthian plan and approved this expenditure until Nathan is employed full time with benefits. Congregational support toward the deductible expenses may be asked for if needed.
6. Pastors' salaries and benefits recommendations from the financial administrator were reviewed and approved for the 2013-2014 fiscal year.
7. It was decided to take up discussion of small groups at the July meeting.
The next meeting will be July 16, with Dave bringing devotions.

July 16, 2013, 7 p.m.

Present: Cathy Gingerich, Noreen Gingerich, Bill Hochstetler, Lance Miller, Shirley Oswald, Mag Richer Smith, Dave Sickles, Bob Smith, Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler

1. Dave shared a devotional based on Ezra 5:2, reminding us that life in Christ is not simply personal, but is in community with our brothers and sisters in faith.
2. Personal and pastoral joys and concerns were shared and prayer was offered.
3. The June 11 minutes were approved.
4. Bob and Mag shared several of the inspiring events of their recent sabbatical.
5. Dates were discussed for the annual Elders Retreat in September and subsequently, Sept 7 at Dave Sickles's home beginning at 9:00 AM has been confirmed. Mag will arrange dates for a farewell and welcoming dinner and host that in their home.
6. Goals were reviewed for providing more small group options for church members, especially those recently starting to worship with us, and others who would enjoy small group fellowship. Karla will compile a current list of young adults for our next meeting.
In August we will consider names of possible conveners of small groups.
7. Other business: Shirley reported receiving names of persons who can participate in a special prayer ministry. The office will send out a prayer list at given intervals. Dave will continue trying to contract professional IT help for the office computers. Health insurance for Karla has been purchased as recommended in the June meeting. Ideas were offered for a more suitable time for congregational meetings, so people can participate without an evening trip to Iowa City.
8. Next meeting is scheduled for August 13. Shirley will bring devotions.

Aug 13, 2013, 7 p.m.

Present: Cathy Gingerich, Noreen Gingerich, Bill Hochstetler, Shirley Oswald, Mag Richer Smith, Dave Sickles, Bob Smith, Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler

1. Shirley read I Corinthians 12:12-26 and portions of Psalm 63, reflecting on the danger in thinking we can walk alone in the church. We are all one Body, and when someone aches, we all do.
2. Personal and pastoral joys and concerns were shared and prayer was offered.
3. The July 16 minutes were approved.
4. Dave reported on improvements in internet service to the office.
5. In our intention to expand our small group ministry, Mag will compose an interest survey for each household on behalf of our team. Noreen volunteered to work with Karen in exploring ways of sending this survey/ note of invitation.
6. Shirley reported that ten individuals have offered to pray regularly for needs in the congregation, the wider church, and the community. Mag will compile monthly lists of prayer requests to give to these people.

7. Dave will be seeking a new Chairperson for the Immigration Task Force, as Karla is asking for relief from that position.
 8. Next regular meeting will be held August 27. Lance will bring devotions.
- Elder/pastor retreat will be held at Dave's home Saturday morning, Sept. 7.
Farewell and welcome potluck will be held at Bob and Mag's home Sept. 20.

September 11, 2013, 7 p.m.

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

1. Cathy guided our thoughts to Christ's mandate of choosing ways of peace, as she read from an essay by Duane K. Friesen, former Bible teacher at Hesston College.
2. Personal and pastoral joys and concerns were shared and prayer was offered.
3. The August 27 minutes were approved.
4. In the coming year Dave will continue as chair of the elder/pastor group, and Noreen will continue as secretary.
5. Dave will continue the Immigration Task Force leadership search.
6. Safe Church Committee membership length of term was discussed and a three year rotation was suggested. Karla will continue conversations with the current members on that topic.
7. Directions for elder/pastor spiritual leadership in the coming year were pondered. Progress on the past year's goals was evaluated. Mag offered a summary of our Sept. 7 discussion in the form of "longings" and "prayers" on three general themes for our church—rest and renewal on the journey of life, sharing our stories in a safe and welcoming space, and turning outward in compassion to the world around us, which follows from deep fellowship with Christ and rich prayer life. These themes could be blended into the past year's ongoing goals to guide our emphases in the coming year. We will formalize goals at our next meeting.
8. We will gather on Friday, Sept 20 at 6:00 p.m. at Bob and Mag's home to bid farewell to retiring elders and welcome new ones.
9. The next regular meeting will be on Wed. Sept. 25, 7 p.m. Devotions: Noreen.

September 25, 2013, 7 p.m.

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

1. Noreen read II Timothy 1:1-5, shared stories of faith from her family, and reflected on the gratitude we must feel for the faith of ancestors.
2. The meeting began with thanks and intercession to God for various personal and congregational needs.
3. The Sept. 11 minutes were corrected (Duane Friesen taught at Bethel College).
4. Dave and Karla reported on progress in finding new members for the Immigration Task Force and Safe Church Committee, respectively.
5. We reviewed names of persons who would like to participate in small groups and considered suggestions for getting the groups going. Initial conveners for several new groups have been named.
6. More discussion followed on goals for the coming year. It was agreed that *prayerful attention to spiritual, physical, relational and emotional needs of the congregation* is the central mission of the elder/pastor group. Out of that mission specific initiatives will arise throughout the year and be attended to as they arise. Dave will report to the Administrative Cabinet the overarching goals as summarized from our elders' retreat sharing. He will also encourage commission chairpersons to consider beginning their meetings with a brief personal sharing time among commission members.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00. Next meeting is on Wed. October 9, 7 p.m. Devotions: Bill

October 9, 2013, 7 p.m.

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

1. Bill led devotions by reflecting of the need for Sabbath and daily rest, and quoted Exodus 20:8-11, the fourth commandment, and Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus' promise of rest.
2. Thanksgiving and intercessory prayer were offered, remembering joys and suffering within our congregation.
3. The Sept. 25 minutes were approved.
4. There was a brief update on the status of new small groups forming.
5. Bob handed out a list of FMC members, including those who are not active in church life and may not even live in the area. Discussion followed, including a suggestion to send absent members a letter with a response envelope to return if wishing to remain members. Action was tabled till a later meeting.
6. Karla shared a list of local and out-of-state young adult members, regular attendees, and visitors. It was observed that meaningful encounters often happen around meals offered by the church; that ministry was affirmed.
7. Thought was given to the process for hiring a church administrative assistant. The Administrative Cabinet will review the current job description, including suggestions from the elders and pastors, and will name a search committee.
8. The meeting adjourned at 9:00. Next meeting is on Wed. October 23, 7 p.m. Devotions: Larry

October 23, 2013, 7 p.m.

Present: Cathy Gingerich, Noreen Gingerich, Marian Schwabbauer, Dave Sickles, Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler, Larry Swartzendruber

1. Larry guided devotions, referring to John 6--Jesus' promise to be the bread of life--and shared thoughts on the IMS chapel theme for this year--the "I am's" of Christ and the "I am's" that we in turn experience in our lives.
2. Personal and pastoral joys and needs were shared, followed by a time of prayer.
3. The Oct. 9 minutes were approved.
4. We reflected on the ministry with youth and young adults, noting plans young adults are making for a shared meal Oct. 27, as well as the potential formation of two small groups, plus possibly a group for mothers of young children. Discussion included the potential of establishing a social media site for communication, more frequent fellowship meals, invitations to participate in short term local community service experiences, and other ways for young adults to express their dreams for the church and the reign of God.
5. Dave and Marian reported that the job description for church administrative assistant has been finalized by the Ad. Cabinet and publicized in print and on the FMC website. Interviews will be conducted by Bob Smith, Steve Ropp, and Marian.
6. Karla and Dave will continue seeking participants for the Safe Church Committee and the Immigration Task Force.
7. The meeting adjourned at 8:45. Next meeting is on Wed. Nov. 13, 7 p.m. Devotions: Marian

November 13, 2013, 7 p.m.

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

1. For our meditation Marian shared the "Top 20 Lessons of Grief" from the Griefshare materials and "Grief Intelligence" by Ashley Davis Bush. We were challenged to deeper understanding and sensitivity to the many around us who are suffering loss.
2. Personal and pastoral joys and needs were shared, and prayers were offered.
3. Bob and Mag told a bit about their recent sabbatical. It imparted healing rest, a renewed sense of the Resurrection and living out of joy and meaningful reconnection with family.
4. There was discussion and affirmation of Maria Kummer's proposal to hold cooking classes in the church kitchen, together with some explanation of the Bible or Christianity, for several Chinese visitors who have requested cooking lessons. Karla will follow up with Maria. Bob will explore a way to introduce to our congregation the recent attendees connected with the Chinese visiting scholar program.
5. An update was given on the formation of several new small groups.
6. Dave reported that the Immigration Task Force will be chaired in the coming year jointly by: Jerry Partridge, Silvia Quezada, and Jim Martins.
7. Meeting adjourned at 9:00. The next elders/pastors meeting will be held on Wed. Dec. 11. Bob will bring devotions.

December 11, 2013, 7 p.m.

Meeting held at Karla's home

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

1. Bob led devotions with accounts of God's way of transforming our ashes of tragedy and suffering. The examples were taken from Robert Ellsberg's book *All Saints-- Reflections from Saints for Every Day*.
2. Extensive time was given to sharing pastoral concerns, followed by a time of prayer.
3. Minutes from November 23 were approved.
4. Brief reports were shared:
 - a. Immigration Task Force; suggestion was made that a report be shared with the congregation soon.
 - b. Small Groups; several groups are continuing to form.
 - c. The search for a new Administrative Assistant has been completed and results will be shared soon with the congregation.
5. The next meeting will take place January 8, with Bill chairing. Mag will bring devotions.