

Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference

Board Meeting Minutes

September 18 & 19, 2015
At the Pony Soldier Inn in Portland, OR

Mission Statement:

Promote personal spiritual development; Nurture healthy congregations;
Make strong connections throughout the conference; Call each other to fulfill God's purpose for the world.

Present: Jennifer Delanty, moderator; Samuel Moran, moderator elect; Brett Tieszen; Kathleen Aeschliman; Sarah Hooley; Todd Lehman (Fri. only); Nelly Moran-Ascencio (Sat. only); Matt Yoder; Tom Brenneman

Staff: Katherine Jameson Pitts, Executive Conference Minister; Barb Buxman, Administrative Assistant

Absent: Jack Swaim

Friday, September 18th

Welcome and prayer– Jennifer

Opening “ice breaker” – Katherine

We were asked to share a skill that we're good at that the group may not know and a skill that we wish we had.

Dwelling in the Word–Jennifer

Jennifer chose chapter 9 of the Gospel of John. The religious leaders in this story seem to be the blindest of all. This is our challenge as a leadership group. We are called to discern so that when God moves, we can move with God. Jennifer would like all of us to read *Pursuing God's Will Together* by Ruth Haley Barton. Each of us needs to purchase our own copy.

Reporting/Updates

Executive Conference Minister Report–Katherine

Katherine shared her written report. (See attached)

-Much of Katherine's time goes toward conflict mediation within congregations, but she would like to move away from this and is looking for better solutions.

-It's been 3 years since our last pastors' retreat, and this will happen **November 3-5** at Menucha Retreat Center.

-There are conversations concerning a church plant in Portland.

CIHAN Report–Nelly

-There was a women's gathering in March; 70 women attended. An offering was taken and given to a needy family.

-There were about 50 youth who met together this summer for a gathering.

-CIHAN celebrated its 17th anniversary recently.

-The council put together a discernment committee (Jesús Muñoz, Noemí Estrada, Nelly Moran-Ascencio, Samuel Moran, Miguel Castillo) to discuss their response to the same sex marriage question and their future relationship with PNMC. They had a meeting in August. They sent a letter to each congregation telling them to decide whether they want to stay with PNMC or not rather than having CIHAN decide. The committee and district pastors and delegates and any other interested leaders will meet again September 28 to receive the feedback.

Treasurer's Report – Brett

-Brett presented the budget in 4 forms..

-The most noteworthy point is that our giving from churches is behind.

- Brett has been working on investing some of our funds so money can grow through investments.
- Finances seem to be healthy at this time.

Peace Property Update–Todd

-Jennifer reported background information about PNMC's involvement with this property. Board members were oriented to the history of the property, discussed the transition of Steve away from day-to-day property management and the need that poses for the property? The board would like to continue the conversation of supporting the ministries of Anawim and Bethel while recognizing that day-to-day management of the property is not central to the mission of PNMC.

Discuss the Sanctuary/Peace Property Arrangement

Last year, our Board affirmed the ministries of Anawim Christian Community and International Bethel City Church, two Mennonite congregations that lease the Peace Property east of Portland, which PNMC owns. The two churches had proposed a pathway to purchase the property from PNMC in 2010, but that did not happen. Last year, Anawim and Bethel confirmed they are unable to purchase, and the Property Management Committee has since been working to draw up a lease agreement.

Discussion about Sanctuary/Peace Property Agreement

- Steve is unable/unwilling to continue in the day to day management of the Sanctuary property.
- PNMC needs to have a clear agreement with the 2 groups. They no longer want to jointly purchase the property.
- Brett will find out what the market value is so the board has the correct information for the future.

Decisions:

- Brett will explore options to bring back to the board. He will also find out the real market value.
- In the meantime, Todd will be working with Bethel and Anawim to rewrite the lease agreement with a day-to-day property management piece built into it. Todd will also have the 4 tenants help decide who's responsible for cleaning toilets/showers, taking care of trash, mowing the grass, coordinating use of the building, etc. Jennifer and Katherine will work on a list of what the PNMC needs from the tenants to help Todd.

Katherine closed the evening with prayer.

Saturday, September 19th

Open sharing and prayer –Jennifer

Discuss the 2015 Lebanon Delegate Table Feedback & Denominational Issues

- Feedback from the annual meeting in June- we received many thoughtful observations and suggestions from our PNMC delegates.
 - We seem to have a hard time finding common ground to have the conversation about what to do with same sex marriages and what congregations can do about the deep divides that exist.
 - Samuel feels there's much mistrust among CIHAN congregations that PNMC has a "hidden agenda" to make inclusion occur. However, he feels that the congregations are making positive progress.
 - Katherine observes that there has been no push from any church in PNMC in the past 3 years to either force acceptance of inclusion or purge the conference of groups who want inclusion.
 - Matt has observed that having our PNMC churches largely scattered geographically have a general spirit of forbearance with each other. We need each other.
 - It is possible to be in membership with a group like EVANA and also remain in the PNMC.
 - We need to work on the question of what does forbearance mean? What does membership in the conference really mean?

- Forbearance and membership guidelines passed at national conference in Kansas City in July; how will these impact PNMC?
 - The PNMC has stated that pastors who perform a same-sex marriage will have their credentials reviewed.
 - The 2 resolutions say that individual congregations can act independently, but the area conferences have responsibility to decide how to treat these actions with respect to other conferences. Individual conferences do not want to have other conferences telling them what to do. This is a difficult situation.

Decision/Conclusion: We are a diverse conference and we will continue to treat one another with a spirit of forbearance, grace, trust, and love on this as well as other issues that divide us. As a member conference of MC USA our pastors are not free to preside at same-sex weddings with the blessing of the denomination or conference. Those whose conscience and faith leads them to do so will have their credentials reviewed as the Membership Guidelines state. PNMC is committed to remaining a member conference of MC USA and supporting all our congregations as they individually find ways to be authentic witnesses to the gospel of Christ wherever they are.
- Potentially difficult case scenarios work from last Spring and the Calvary Mennonite case
 - We will work on the hard case scenarios in our next meeting. Jennifer would like email input on these. This is a process document, not a PNMC action.
 - Katherine and Jennifer will contact Calvary to try to set up a meeting.

Upcoming Conference Communications Council (CCC)

*Mark your calendars for **January 9, 2016**, our next **CCC meeting**, hosted by Salem Mennonite Church.

Katherine is seeking our input for subject matter during this meeting. Ideas are below.

-Have congregational representatives share what their congregation does well, what others can pick up and use to improve their congregations, stories to share.

-"Speed-dating" format in which persons move from one person to another every 5 minutes and answer a set of questions.

-Use the book on discernment we'll be reading together to give some input followed by exercises that are done at individual tables. This gives leaders and pastors teaching to take back to their congregations.

-Have scripture and worship interwoven in the meeting.

-Remember to plan with the Idaho group in mind.

* Possible themes that may arise for the **June 24-25, 2016 Annual Meeting** at Zion Mennonite Church.

-Zion will be asked to be a part of the program planning.

-Eleanor and Alan Krieder will be contacted about how to be a Missional Church in a post-Christendom setting.

-Theme of sharing the good news, how to live in peace

-Possible service project

-A group of persons who are praying for CCC and the Annual Meeting---Maybe Meghan Good could help us in this.

Next Meeting: Dec. 11-12, 2:30 pm to 8:30 Friday, 8:30 to 3 Saturday

Our meeting ended with a story of courage and then prayer.