

Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference
PNMC Board Meeting Minutes
May 16, 2020, via ZOOM
9-11 a.m. and 1-3 p.m. PST

Present: Jeryl Hollinger, Dianna Eshleman, Twila Lehman, Dave Hockman-Wert, Gary Martin, Janet Szabo, Jan Yoder, Leonard Nolt, Barb Buxman, Nellie Moran-Ascencio, Katherine Jameson Pitts, Deren Kellogg

Jeryl opened in prayer at 9:10 a.m.

The minutes of the February 1-2 Board meeting were approved via e-mail prior to this meeting.

Reports

1. Executive Conference Minister Report (Katherine sent previously)

For the most part, our congregations are doing well. The majority responded quickly to the demands of shifting to online gatherings. Zoom and Facebook Live are the two major platforms being used with a few posting pre-recorded messages on YouTube or their websites. Those who are not having services online, are regularly checking in with congregational members by email or phone calls.

In the past two weeks, conversation has shifted to how to re-open in many places. In rural Idaho congregations will be meeting again by the end of May. Seattle Mennonite has said they may not have in person meetings for the next year. We are all trying to find our way in an unknown place. I provided a pre-recorded sermon for congregations so pastors could have a break, and 3 congregations have or will use it.

Congregations report that giving is down, but not yet at a worrying place. PNMC and MC USA have offered a variety of ways to assist congregations with financial needs. Everence/MDS/MCC have initiated relief grants. I am not aware of any congregations in PNMC who have received these. Our Pastor Catastrophe Fund has assisted one pastoral family with an unexpected expense. One congregation has used excess Everence Sharing funds to assist members of two other congregations with living expenses. One Healthy Congregations Grant was approved this week. I have kept in mind the possibility of extending Healthy Congregation Grants for survival expenses.

Janet moved and Jan seconded this motion:

MOTION: The Board approves extending the Healthy Congregational Grants to include meeting emergency needs of congregants for the duration of the pandemic and to leverage money available from Everence in matching grants as much as possible.

MOTION PASSED.

We have had a couple of Zoom meetings for pastors – one set to check in at the beginning of Stay-at-Home orders and another recently to talk about re-opening. These were moderately well attended. MC

USA has provided ongoing support for congregations through weekly webinars which many PNMC pastors have attended. I have encouraged District Pastors to reach out more often during this time. Several new District Pastors had just begun connecting with their congregations in February/March so contact has all been online. I am glad to welcome Sylvia Shirk, Merritt Welty, and Terry Rediger as District Pastors. They are all semi-retired pastors from other MC USA conferences who have relocated to the Pacific Northwest. Mathew Swora had planned to end his term as a DP but is willing to extend considering the pandemic.

I have been amazed at how many congregations have initiated new points of contact during this time or have continued on with discussing/processing congregational issues. Several congregations have new mid-week prayer gatherings. I met with a group at Salem (through Zoom) to talk about the history of LGBTQ inclusion in MC USA. Search committees are still eager to move forward, although candidates are few. I installed Bill Blank as interim at Zion on March 8, the last Sunday they met for worship. Gary Jewell will serve Hyde Park as an interim beginning in the late summer. I am still looking for an interim for Lebanon when Brent retires in September.

Several of our congregations have had members contract Covid-19, but as far as I know, Jimmy Campoz is the only death among our congregations at this point. Initially, Seattle was a hot spot; but now I worry about the CIHAN congregations as cases in the Latino community around Woodburn are high and disproportionate.

And how is PNMC faring?

I am grateful for the financial stability we have and for the work of the finance committee. When I meet with other Conference Ministers (we have been having weekly Zoom meetings for the past two months) I realize what a blessing it is not to be stressed about finances yet, and to have some space to consider and plan for the future. I expect that contributions from congregations will decline. Some congregations may not survive this in the same form they were before. We may need to re-imagine the organization and staffing of PNMC, but we are not on the brink. Our sibling congregation, PSMC, has depended on profits from their thrift store to support their programming and are facing some hard decisions. We may want to think more about how to work together, despite the miles.

The announcement regarding cancelling our Annual Meeting was met with disappointed support. Our conference likes the opportunities we have to fellowship across the miles and the cancellation of the MCC sale in Idaho, the summer camps, our annual meeting, and even a Pastoral Leadership Team meeting are disappointing. We find ourselves wrestling with a desire for normal, a recognition that we may never return to normal, a struggle to imagine a new future, and a great deal of continued uncertainty.

And how am I doing?

Well, I have discovered that the travel to see people face-to-face was a life-giving part of this role, but I am well. I am grateful for the congregations and leaders of PNMC, for our staff, and for our board. We remain a conference that cares for our brothers and sisters, our neighbors, and our communities. Thanks be to God!

Katherine also reported she has been doing some writing and has a column in both the May *The Mennonite* and the summer *Leader* magazine.

- 2. Treasurer's Report (Dave)** The PNMC Treasurer's Report for the conference delegate booklet was sent out previously for the Board's review.

Screen shared the Budget vs. Actuals FY2020 and Balance Sheet as of April 30, 2020.

Balance sheet as of May 8, 2020: The Total Bank Account balance is \$125,129.07

The Endowment Funds (110600) are down from \$1,002,764 in Feb to \$950,000 as of May 15, due to COVID19. (This amount is closer to that of the initial investment amount.)

The net difference in Total Assets compared to last year is \$22,266 (more than last year).

Mexico Project Fund balance is \$13,112.

Healthy Congregations Grant Fund balance is \$36,917.

Catastrophic Sharing Fund balance is \$5,490

Total Assets are \$1,140,681

Budget vs. Actuals: FY2021 Budget

Congregational Giving is at 15% of budget (whereas we have completed 25% of the fiscal year)

Total Income is 21% of budget and Total Expenses are 22% of budget

Annual meeting budget was \$12,000 (both income and expense) but will not be needed as it the annual meeting has moved online so it will not affect the budget.

Net Operating Income is (\$4,600).

Overall, we are in good financial shape as a conference.

- 3. Finance Team Report (Janet Szabo, Dave Hockman-Wert, Brett Tieszen, Jack Swaim)**

Brett and Jack joined our ZOOM meeting for this discussion. The purpose of the finance team is "to provide financial oversight for the PNMC organization so that resources are aligned with PNMCs vision and mission."

The April meeting included a review of our current financial situation, with particular attention given to our investment portfolio in light of the turmoil in the stock market in March. Despite the downturn, our conference is in a better situation than most. We need to remain attentive to the needs of our member congregations and how our resources can best be used to support them.

At the May meeting, we discussed specific ways that the Finance Team can provide that financial oversight. We have developed a calendar of FT activities based on tasks that need to be completed annually, twice-yearly, quarterly, or on an as-needed basis. The team will serve as the liaison between the board and Everence and consult with Everence regularly to ensure that our investment strategy continues to be aligned with PNMC goals. Most importantly, though, we want to keep the "big picture" in mind and plan for where we will be in a year, five years, and

even ten years out and make recommendations to the board accordingly.

The Board appreciates having a Finance Team in place to bring concerns to and get recommendations from regarding the financial health of PNMC and would like to thank Janet Szabo for chairing the finance team, recognizing that this is her last meeting with PNMC as her term is ending.

4. CIHAN Report (Nelly)

The Council meeting and the pastor's monthly meetings have been cancelled due to COVID 19.

EBAFOM: The new material has arrived, and the students are ready to start their new course: "Historia De La Iglesia" (History of the Church). Pastor Samuel Moran is planning to teach this class via Zoom and/or waiting until it is ok to meet and give the classes in person. If it is via Zoom; Pastor Samuel M., will need to check if the students will be able to get Zoom. Portland Mennonite Church has offered their Zoom, (note: not only for EBAFOM, but they have offered it, also for our CIHAN's Board Meeting). This is very generous and kind of them.

HISPANIC CONGREGATIONS: Each of the congregations have been doing online services via Facebook Live or Zoom. It is wonderful to see how during COVID-19, we are still faithful and seeking God, no matter how the situation gets. Each congregation has their own and unique way of staying connected.

PRAYER REQUESTS:

Jerusalén Iglesia Menonita: Pray for Pastor Ángel Campo and his family. The Campo family has lost a brother, son and father. Jimmy was a musician at their congregations, leader, and delegate.

Comunidad Cristiana Vida Nueva: This congregation is without a Pastor. We ask for prayers as they search for a Pastor.

CIHAN's Council: For our Council, in August we will be appointing new people for CIHAN's Board except for Pastor Ángel Campo who will take over with the new board members as a Moderator on September 26. May God guide us in this new transition and do His will.

5. Moderator Report (Jeryl)

Jeryl thanked the Board for the opportunity to serve as PNMC moderator. This is his last "official" meeting as PNMC Moderator and is confident as he hands the reins to Dianna Eshleman. The Board thanked Jeryl, Janet Szabo, and Gary Martin for their service on the PNMC Board.

Session 2 – DISCUSSIONS AND DECISIONS

1. PNMC Ballot

The team that prepared this ballot included Joseph Penner, Renee Johns, ECM Katherine Pitts, Moderator-elect Dianna Eshleman, Jeryl Hollinger.

Gift Discernment Team Ballot:

Moderator-elect:	Kevin Chupp (Aberdeen)
Treasurer:	David Hockman-Wert (Corvallis)
4-yr PNMC board:	Megan Ramer (Seattle)
2-yr PNMC board:	Kiara Yoder (Zion), Nelly Moran Ascensio (CIHAN) Deren Kellogg (appointed to fill Janet Szabo's term)
Pastoral Leadership Team:	Angel Campoz (Jerusalen)
Gift Discernment Team:	Joseph Penner (Salem), Renee Johns (Hyde Park)

MOTION: Janet moved and Nellie seconded to accept the slate of nominees as presented.

MOTION PASSED.

2. Annual Meeting planning: Delegate Assembly - June 27, 2020, 9-11 a.m. (PST) via ZOOM

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the annual meeting planned to take place in Seattle on June 26-28, 2020, has been cancelled by the PNMC board. The adjusted our annual meeting plans include two things:

1. To host a 2-hour delegate session via ZOOM
Saturday, June 27, 2020, 9 am (PST), 8 am (AKST), 10 am (MST)
2. To ask for congregational photos and paragraph to be included in our annual report booklet distributed to delegates.

Tentative plan:

1. Gathering words and prayer
2. Roll call – Just a response with “here” when name is called.
3. Reporting:
 - ECM
 - Treasurer
 - Moderator
4. Questions
5. Election (Dave shared ways to do this electronically—this is the Board's preferred method)
6. Prayer for staff, district pastors & board
7. Transition to new moderator
8. Invitation to annual meeting next year (Just keep communication open and tell delegates that we hope to have more information by the February CCC meeting)

It was decided that a 2-hour meeting is the right amount of time to cover the necessary elements of the delegate session.

Katherine, Jeryl, and Dianna will work on the details along with **Board member Gary Martin**, who has offered to help guide the technology side of the event.

It was decided to keep it to a bare minimum and NOT to include breakout sessions for discussions.

3. ECM Sabbatical options

Katherine had initially planned to take a sabbatical during the months of July, August & September 2020. But due to COVID-19 making sabbatical planning difficult, Katherine has proposed an alternate sabbatical plan.

SABBATICAL PROPOSAL -- PANDEMIC EDITION KATHERINE JAMESON PITTS, EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE MINISTER

Given that travel is not likely to be possible during the coming few months and so the goal of reconnecting with friends and families in other places is probably not possible, or at least only possible on a limited basis;

Given that several educational opportunities I had hope to participate in (writers workshop, interim pastor training, spiritual retreat) are not available this summer;

Given all the limitations of social distancing;

Recognizing the need for rest and refreshment still exists;

Recognizing the need for continuing education still exists;

I propose a 6-week sabbatical – July 1, 2020-August 12

I propose a focus on *“Reducing clutter in life and conference ministry”* by --

- Unpacking the boxes that have not been opened since 2001 and cleaning the garage
- Reading 2 books on middle judicatory ministry that I have set aside
- Talking with other middle judicatory leaders about how they understand their mission and how that aligns with actual daily work. Where to do they experience clarity and not clutter?

I propose including time for rest and seeing family as possible.

I also propose the freedom to attend several continuing education events between 9/2020 and 12/2021, as available online or in person.

The framework outlined by Jeryl Hollinger in the 4/20/2020 draft document *“Planning for our Executive Conference Minister’s Sabbatical”* would adequately provide care for the congregations of PNMC during this time.

This plan would have no financial impact for PNMC.

The Board affirms this altered sabbatical proposal and will use the framework in place for coverage during this time.

4. Financially helping congregations in need.

Katherine will continue to work with congregational leadership to help navigate the financial resources available to them through various resources such as the Everence/MDS/MCC relief grants, Pastor Catastrophe Fund, Everence Sharing funds and PNMC Healthy Congregations Grants. (See MOTION under ECM's report).

Jeryl closed the meeting with prayer at 3 p.m.

Submitted by Twila Lehman
PNMC Secretary