

Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference
Zoom Board Meeting
Saturday, November 23, 2024

Members Present: Chris Nord, Moderator; Karla Morton, Moderator-Elect; Dan Smith Derksen, Secretary; Dave Hockman-Wert, Treasurer; Nellie Moran-Ascencio, Deren Kellogg, Gary Jewell, Megan Ramer, Emily Toews

Staff & Members Absent: Eric Massanari, Conference Minister, Libbie Lapp

Sharing time - Board members met in break-out rooms with prayer partners.

Opening prayer - Eric shared poem "Continue" by Maya Angelou. Opened meeting with prayer.

Minutes approval - Minutes from the 9/21/2024 meeting were amended & approved by the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference (PNMC) Board of Directors.

Financial Report - Dave shared the Finance Report for 2024, with projection of budget for fiscal year 2025 and fiscal year 2026.

- 80% of budgeted income for this year has already been received. For projected budgets, most kept the same. Albany increased budgeted amount last year. Filer MC contribution has been removed. First MC McMinnville added back in. Megan noted that Seattle MC is increasing their giving to \$21,000 for 2025.
- 2025 Annual meeting budget (\$40,000) higher due to added cost of the host fees at Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp near Kalispell, MT.. PNMC will pay more for each attendee and will ask higher amount in order to get some income from the annual meeting.
- Eric recommended giving small gift (appreciation/recognition) to pastors attending the pre-conference pastoral dinner meeting.
- Projected income higher, mostly due to annual meeting, which will be offset by expenses of the meeting.
- ECM support differences based on MCUSA pastor guidelines. Increase in salary and retirement. Have some preliminary numbers for Corinthian plan. Shouldn't be much changed.
- Budget for Admin Assistant \$26,000 based on 20 hours per week at \$25/hr projection. Eric is collecting timesheets to track Brenda's work hours.
- One suggestion made to increase the registration cost for annual meeting attendance to \$500 just to add that much more potential income.
- Chris noted that there may not be a Board retreat this coming year. Karla responded that she was hoping to have an in-person one since didn't this year. Megan added it is great in theory, but would be nice to get into every-other-year rhythm with Board retreat years being on the off years when MennoCon is held.

Finance Team Report - given by Deren Kellogg

Deficit budgets have continued for several years. Finance Team (FT) looking to the Board to help guide how to address this situation strategically.

- Chris offered some ideas for aiding the situation, not as full solutions: Higher AC registration fees; Click box on PNMC homepage and in the e-Bulletin; Be more proactive to get people to subscribe to the e-Bulletin.(QR code, etc.)
- Dan asked whether PNMC has automated giving options. Not known with certainty whether PNMC has this capability at the moment.
- Deren reminded Board that the Finance Team is asking for Board to determine a larger, long-range strategy.
- Finance Team has recommended a policy for withdrawals, and for usage of the Seed NW Fund.
 - FT proposes to drop the requirement of a congregation to match the contribution for a proposal.
 - FT proposes that \$5000 be set as the limit for project proposals.
 - FT proposes that the Healthy Congregations Team be given authority to review and approve proposals, with recommendation to add one member. - After discussion, amended to be someone from a state other than Washington since current members are all in WA.
 - FT proposes that ECM be given authority to approve grant ideas of \$500 or less.
- Dan asked whether there is a maximum disbursement amount for a calendar year. Deren responded that there is not a known limit for the Seed NW Fund. Eric noted that Healthy Congregations rule is that no congregation receives more than one grant per year.
- Motion made to approve these recommendations. 2nded. All recommendations approved.
- Deren reminded Board of changes proposed for FT management in Governance Policies 5.2.3 & 5.2.1.

Review of the PNMC Conference table discussions - lead by Chris Nord

Question 1 *“What missional paths are exciting to you and/or your congregation? How can the conference best support your passion? What avenue are we called to in our lives and congregations to give and receive the healing, hope and love of Jesus in genuine ways?”*

- Some responses featured “Pride” events. May be due to PNMC Conference overlapping with Albany MC Gay Pride parade.
- “Rural churches struggle with defining their mission. There is a lack of opportunities and lots of broken homes in small towns/rural areas, so there are opportunities to help. Sometimes, it feels exhausting to be a progressive faith community when the larger community tends to be conservative. Some people don’t want to be “political,” but there is no consensus about what is “political” and what is not. There is a need for vision, which the conference could help with.”
- Seems to be several churches talking about working at addressing issues faced by unhoused people in their communities.

- Megan offered understanding of “missional” meaning being about what is happening locally, which may be quite different for separate congregations. When thinking about the conference’s role, one important thing to do is to keep providing space for story-telling.
- Eric agreed with this perspective and offered reflection on what our conference is doing currently in this vein. With more than a quarter of our congregations being lay-lead, this is very striking. Next month will begin process of connecting these churches through providing space for shared story-telling which can also lead to funding assistance through the grants from PNMC.
- Communication with congregations seen as an important issue. Discussion around individual reception of e-bulletins and how congregations provide access. PNMC provides to church offices. Maybe need to encourage more proactive distribution to members. Currently individuals may subscribe through the website.
- Some congregations may be seeking help with defining a vision and mission. Suggestion made for bringing together some churches for brainstorming session. Question/suggestion made for having rotational “sister-church” program designed to structure more clear sharing, thinking and praying between congregations. Hasn’t been tried on any formal basis previously. If trying out, could be used as a method of pairing rural churches with urban churches. Within WA, this kind of happens already at MCA sale and usage of Camp Camrec. WA churches currently discussing sending youth to MennoCon all together rather than individual churches (also might include Hyde Park). One reaction from pastoral perspective was shared that this kind of program could feel like “one more thing” to try to get people involved in. Takes too much energy. Eric added that the Lay-church led group may develop into this kind of thing and might continue. Might be best to allow organic relationships to happen between churches without more specific input.
- Chris requested Board to review discussion table question 3 before next meeting. Eric suggested sending out ahead of meeting as an attachment for members to review.

CCC Planning - Eric shared draft of agenda for the CCC meeting to be held 2/1/25 8:30am - 12:30 pm

Theme: The Transforming Church - Anabaptism at 500; Romans 12:12 (probably using the whole chapter - summary of the Sermon on the Mount)

Transformation is ongoing, continuous. Using the theme to shape discussion in the meeting
 Panel of guests to participate in a panel discussion: Olivia Krall from MCUSA Archives, Amy Gingerich and/or John D. Roth from AMBS; Rep. from PNMC Historical Society

Megan raised question of churches supporting work of the conference by more direct funding when the ECM attends churches and/or their activities. Opportunity to utilize a church’s honorarium budget to send contribution to PNMC when ECM involved with services. What is best way to raise this as a question and point of encouragement to the members?

Reports

Chris - Moderator's Report

- Letter from PNMC Board to MCC Leadership about concerns around abuse
 - Letter not sent yet. Minimal response for signatures from Board members. Dan offered to use Docusign for allowing Board members to digitally sign the letter.
 - Action: Chris will send text of the letter to Brenda to put onto PNMC letterhead. Dan will send to each member to add their signature if they choose to.
- Chris had conversation with the Chair of the Mennonite Village (MV) Board who expressed that meeting to review the relationship between MV and PNMC. Documents need some updating. Chris asked for some PNMC members to volunteer to be part of this conversation. Eric noted that MV makes regular contributions to PNMC. Dave provided the amount, \$350/month.
- Drift Creek Camp (DCC) Annual Meeting took part in Nov. Was shared during that meeting that DCC is trying to build up large endowment, partly due to a legal obligation to return the land to its original state if it ever dissolves. PNMC was named in the legal documents as recipient of funds left over "after returning land to its original state." Question whether PNMC would become liable if camp's funds were insufficient to meet that requirement.

Eric- Executive Minister's Report

- Highlights from submitted written report:
 - Time at Filer MC for their separation from the conference- rich experience. So good, that they were wondering why it was happening. Every indication that Filer MC will continue to relate to the other ID churches. Lesson: these separations will happen, but that doesn't mean relationships will end.
- Good weekend in Aberdeen- affirmed their desire to remain in the conference
- Call from Byron Shenk of the First Mennonite Church of McMinnville - very clear that PNMC messed up by not confirming communication with any lay leaders. Lesson: important to have a couple points of contact with each congregation, lay leadership and pastoral leadership. Meeting last week with Byron very good! They definitely wish to remain part of PNMC. Question for the Board: how should this be shared with other member churches? How can it be shared with kindness? Could it just be termed as a misunderstanding, without providing all details. Eric confirmed that he and Jack Swaim had sent a letter to the two churches when they ended their affiliation with PNMC. He suggested that it would be appropriate to send another letter. Motion made to send new letter with joy acknowledging the continued affiliation of First MC of McMinnville.
 - "We acknowledge, because of miscommunication and misunderstanding, in the summer of 2023, the Board had recognized the departure of River of Life Fellowship, also known as First Mennonite Church of McMinnville. We have since learned that First MC of M wishes to remain part of PNMC." - Motion approved.
 - Question/proposal to offer to cover one or two registrations to Annual Conference. - idea affirmed, but voted on.

- PLT approved ordination of Rachael Weasley, pastor of Community of Hope in Bellingham, WA. Will take place Saturday, Feb 15. Trying to do in an outdoor setting. Will possibly be live-streamed.
- Seattle MC did find and appoint new pastor of Faith Formation, Tyler Merrill. Installation will be tomorrow at SMC. Eric will attend.
- Prayers requested for churches who are seeking pastors.
- Eric will be going to Puerto Rico for conference ministers' retreat in a couple weeks. Important personally as his family lived there when he was young.
- Eric is carefully tracking his hours. Averaging around 50 hours/week. Manages and works well with setting boundaries and taking time

Nellie - CIHAN

- Pastors have been meeting monthly.
- Next year there will be a gathering of the pastors from the three churches to talk about CIHAN. Timing not known yet.

Dave & Deren - Financial Report

Mostly already shared.

Finance Team also has recommendations for how to make withdrawals from the Investment Fund. Specific proposals are in the September Report. Voting postponed to next meeting.

Closing prayer - given by Megan Ramer - read prayers out of Voices Together - 1043 Prayer for National Occasions, by Isaac Villegas; 1044 Response to Community Crisis, by Peter Goerzen