

**Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference**  
**Zoom Board Meeting**  
**Saturday, November 22, 2025**

**Members Present:** Karla Morton - Moderator; Eric Massanari - Executive Conference Minister; Dave Hockman-Wert - Treasurer; Dan Smith Derksen - Secretary; Gary Jewell, Emily Toews, Nelly Moran-Ascencio, Libbie Lapp, Megan Ramer, Deren Kellogg, Janette Wisseman - Moderator-Elect

**Opening prayer** - Karla opened meeting with prayer.

**Review of 9/20/25 BOD Minutes:** Minutes were passed.

**Strategic Planning / PNMC Visioning Discussion:** (Karla)

- Karla introduced the fact that she hears from other conferences about their strategic planning efforts. She also noted there were some comments in the PNMC feedback after the Annual Meeting which asked about where PNMC is at in its strategic plans for ministry. Posed the question asking if this is something the BOD wants to engage in.
- Eric added that it's been a while since the board has done this. He mentioned the many changes the conference has experienced. Raises the question of whether our current structure serves us well. Would probably benefit from having an outside entity come in to lead a strategic planning process as they would be better able to ask questions we can't do as well.
- The idea of strategic planning or Mission defining was affirmed, especially as it could help focus the goals and actions of the Finance team.
- A member asked if there are generic strategic planning tools that could be utilized. One response given affirmed the contributions of an outside professional with experience over template-type process materials.
- Eric added that a consultant could also help dig into deeper details of how/whether the structure builds and supports the mission.
- A couple members tried to recall past efforts, but agreed that it has been a while.
- A Google search of church board mission planning did bring up some possibilities. Could be included on new BOD member training or in retreats. The point was made that a mission statement is one part, but assuring that participants are feeling competent in the expectations of their roles is just as needed.
- It was argued that making an investment in this effort would be worth it, because it would be tailored specifically to PNMC's needs.
- Karla added that definitions and expectations would be helpful and feels that is what congregations are also asking for.
- A couple members thought there could be specific financial support by asking for specific giving, or through grants.
- Karla asked if the BOD approves she and Eric to further look into how other conferences have done this kind of work.
- BOD affirmed this effort.

### **Discussion on Resolution about Christian Nationalism:**

Karla had asked Sam Adams and Craig Morton to create a footnote definition of Christian Nationalism to add to the resolution. She presented the statements they came up with for discussion.

- Dan provided input from PNMC member, Sarah Augustine, that the racial identity of this philosophy should not be dismissed or left out. It is more accurate to use the term “White Christian Nationalism.” Eric affirmed this and noted how that is also being used almost exclusively now by many Anabaptist theologians and academics.
- Libbie mentioned how many in her area already don’t like this statement, so it might as well be as strong as it can be.
- Members gave some feedback and agreed on editing the footnote to read: *“Christian nationalism assumes that Christianity can be identified with a particular nation-state and that there is no inherent tension between Christian identity and national identity. The Christian nationalism we presently witness in this country claims that America was established as a White Christian nation, and that it should be a Christian nation now and into the future.”*
- This footnote will be added to the resolution.

### **Reports**

#### **Executive Conference Minister’s Report: (Eric)**

- Eric shared his written report and highlighted some things. This is the 3-year mark for him in this role and the ECM review has taken place. He thanked the participants in that process and appreciated their efforts.
- Work done on the Resource Companion for congregations as they discuss the PNMC resolution. That has gone out.
- Reviewed the Conference Safety Liaison (CSL) position and engagement of Duncan Smith into that role for the PNMC.
- Has organized a Healthy Congregations training. Two grants were awarded to different churches for their projects.
- Has traveled quite a bit recently. Noted several events in which he engaged, especially workshops with Drew Strait.
- There were two individuals who became credentialed as ministers in our conference.
- Brenda’s annual review has been completed.
- Eric has agreed to join the national committee to review MCUSA structure for revision.
- Conference ministers’ retreat coming up, but will not include CA ministers this year.
- CCC meeting coming up.
- He will be on the delegation to Palestine in February.

One member expressed affirmation of Eric’s ministry of presence throughout the conference.

#### **Moderator’s Report: (Karla)**

- Karla met with Eric, Janette and Gary for the ECM review.
- She wrote to MCUSA and the MOSAIC conference around Worldwide Communion Sunday

- Attended an online meeting with MAST and wrote a letter to MCC National Board in support of MAST
- Attended the releasement service for Western MC
- Attended Portland MC “Anabaptist at 501” gathering and was part of Mennonite Action in Portland
- Had individual meeting with Eric

**Finance Team Report:** (Deren)

- Will be trying to add some elements on the website to promote giving.
- Alternative giving methods through input from Everence rep.
- Next meeting will be in December

**CIHAN Report:** (Nelly)

- Please continue praying for the Hispanic congregations, with everything going on in the country right now.
- Pastor Samuel presented a request for a more official ID certificate for pastors. Eric and Brenda helped design one. Plan is to present it to all credentialed pastors in the conference.
- Members are still in a lot of fear.
- Gary brought up the Rights of Immigrants presentation by immigrant lawyer Jay Stansell, who gave out his card and offered to be an on-call resource. He encourages distribution of his card so that anyone can present it to an immigrant official. He is not offering to be a court lawyer, but he is willing to take calls and address those officials on behalf of anyone.
- A member asked whether Jay could be approached about presenting directly to CIHAN for another presentation. Eric is in regular contact with him.
- Expressed thanks to Portland MC who has people staying outside the church during the CIHAN worship inside to be present and keep the property safe

**Budget Report:** (Dave)

- Review of the Balance sheet. Quick overview shared.
- Explained that the “Endowment Fund” is not really that, but more accurately an investment fund.
- Budget review vs. Actuals - looked at where we currently stand to prepare for 2027 budgeting.
- Notes indicate new items or significant changes. Such as, Community of Hope joining the conference, so they will be invited to give an estimate on what they might commit to toward the budget.
- Will increase budget estimate for individual giving, because this year after appeal at Conference Communication Council meeting, we did get more individual giving.
- Will be removing Mennonite Village contributions from the budget, as they haven't been making those for a couple years.
- Big difference in comparing last year's Annual mtg budget to this year's due to the added expense (and income) of the all-inclusive (meals, lodging) format.
- Investment fund fluctuates, but will keep budgeting income at \$40,000 as that is fairly certain and steady.
- Income/Expense sheet: Corinthian Plan premiums going up
- Bump up amount of stipend for district pastors, per church
- Conference Safety Liaison is new, budgeted at \$3000 stipend
- Increasing Brenda's salary based on MCUSA guidelines
- MCUSA fees have gone up

- Using Google Translate for some translation in E-bulletins has enabled some savings
- There will be a website revamp this year, but we've been saving up coming in under budget on this for several years
- Annual Meeting expenses will be down a lot compared with last  
Actual Expenses: \$63,000 in the red, at this time assuming a negative budget for next year of \$77,000 in the red.

Eric noted that he had discussed with Duncan Smith a slight increase in the CSL budget, like an additional \$300

- Eric also clarified that voting on the budget happens during the January mtg.

### **CCC Meeting Discussion:**

- Will take place on Saturday Jan. 31 starting at 8:30 am PST and wrap up by noon. Format is on Zoom.
- CCC is a Mid-winter check-in for the conference. Hope is that it's attended by the BOD, conference leaders and church reps from each cong.
- Working Agenda, Opening, Pastor Samuel Moran has been invited as guest speaker. Roll call sharing from each church. BOD presents some input.
- Lectio Divina Meditation will be led by Eric using whatever text Pastor Samuel chooses. Eric shared his desire to do this partly because of how much we missed the CIHAN presence at our annual mtg
- Karla noted how interpretation might limit sharing/presenting time. Eric acknowledged that he and Samuel are aware. His length of input might be around 20-25 minutes.
- Karla reiterated the guidance by Samuel for a leading question for all congregations during their roll call.
- BOD - reports from Finance comm. Reports on Budget - Karla asked whether our reports will be long, or would there be a possibility of giving some time back to Pastor Samuel. - might be possible.
- Megan noted this would also be a good time to address the Resolution on Chr. Nat.
- Good opportunity for making a giving appeal
- One member asked as an idea about whether there could be an immediate follow-up on the Sunday after the CCC as a way of spreading the input, like as an adult SS class. Could be done on Zoom as a live report on what transpired at CCC. Idea mentioned as one presentation for all churches simultaneously, but it was pointed out that logically that could prove difficult. Could also encourage individual sharing/reporting back to congregations. Megan added a thought about recruiting one of the youth of the conference to help put together a consolidated video that could be shared, perhaps a week later. - This idea could also be used for the Annual Mtg.

### **Conference Safety Liaison Position: (Eric)**

- BOD approved at last meeting that there would be budget approval for this new role. Eric approached 3 people who each declined for understandable reasons. Eric also approached Duncan Smith, who agreed to take the role. Duncan knows the conference well, and can do the work well of helping individual congregations understand how these new policies can be applied.
- Stipend will begin in December, as trainings are beginning which he'll need to attend. Eric encouraged him to start with getting familiar with the policy manual.

- We are a smaller conference and the fact that the role is a volunteer position with a stipend is unfortunate, but is our reality. Duncan has started already. One member asked about inviting Duncan to share at the annual meeting, and Eric heartily agreed.
- Karla brought up that we have to make some policy and publicity changes. The new role has already been listed on the website. Bryce Miller will help set up a new email for this role.
- We have 5.3.4 operation policy that needs to be rewritten and updated to include the new policies. BOD is responsible for making these changes. In the past Dave and Megan were involved in this. Megan agreed to take the lead to get together with Dave and Karla on these efforts.
- Important to review other policies to see if there are others that need to be rewritten as well. Dave noted 5.3.3 also seems related.
- It was mentioned that an unique element for CSL in our conf. will be working with our 8-9 lay-lead churches. The way policies are written is that anyone in ministry, paid or not, credentialed or not, is liable and responsible to these policies.

## **Upcoming Meetings:**

### **2026**

- BOD meetings will be:
- BOD January 10 - will adopt the 2027 budget
- BOD April 25
- June 25-28 Annual Mtg in Albany, OR - will include BOD meeting
- September - BOD retreat, last one held in 2023 at Camp CAMREC. Would like to consider doing another one. Would it be possible right before the Ann. mtg? BOD feedback was solidly in favor of a retreat held during a weekend in September. Proposal made for 25-27th. Could be one of the camps. Would need to check on their availability.
- BOD November 21

### **2027**

- BOD Jan 9, 2027
- CCC Feb 6, 2027
- BOD Apr 24, 2027

## **2026 Annual Meeting Discussion:**

- Karla asked for any ideas
- One member reflected on having watched the video about church safety by MCUSA and how important it will be having Duncan share in his new role because people won't know very much about it.
- Rachel Ringenberg-Miller who oversees ministerial credentialing will also be present and could share on subjects like, "what's the state of ministry right now? Where do new pastors come from?"
- Eric mentioned having recently worked with Dwight Friesen, who teaches practical theology at the Seattle School. Dwight teaches/engages a lot on "How do we embody together the call of discipleship?" Dwight is a dynamic speaker. Eric believes he would be a great contributor. How do we reach beyond our walls and the borders we've created around us?
- Another member mentioned an article by Parker Palmer, "In praise of disillusionment" which talks about the necessity of being disillusioned in order to inform and redirect one's own motivations and actions. Could be used as a thematic insight.

- Immigration issues in the country are not likely to abate soon. It is important to consider how we continue to support and walk alongside our immigrant neighbors/conference members.
- One member reflected on the report by Iris DeLeon Hartshorn given at the Annual meeting about her conversation with a theologian in Germany asking what is the message to bring to American Christians. He advised two things: 1. Do not be fooled by what's happening in your country. It's dangerous. 2. Don't be silent. If we were the church in 1930s how would we have responded? How do we not cooperate? Some different training needed. Are there possibilities around this? Maybe someone from Mennonite Action.
- Program Planning team should have a BOD member.
- Logistics team should have a BOD member.
- Brenda and Eric will participate in both teams.

**ECM Review Discussion:**

- Eric was invited to leave the meeting so BOD could converse confidentially about his review. Before going out, Eric shared that he finds the work very rewarding and is eager to continue. He also mentioned that the ECM review date has been amended to be in line with the PNMC Fiscal Year, so that for the future it will be done by 2/1 each year.
- Eric left the meeting.
- Karla asked for voice responses from each member regarding their feelings for extending Eric's contract for another 3 years. The BOD approved extension of 2nd term for Eric as ECM.
- Eric was invited back into the meeting and informed of the BOD's affirmation
- Members offered personal blessings and words of gratitude to Eric for his work as ECM.

**Closing prayer and adjournment:**

Megan volunteered to sing a closing rendition of "Go now in peace, everywhere you may go."

Submitted by:

Dan Smith Derksen, PNMC Board Secretary