

Shalom Mennonite Church
Commission Chair Team
Meeting Minutes
January 23, 2024

The Commission Chair Team convened on January 23, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. EST via Zoom. Present were Frank Kandel, Pastor Brian Bither, Brittany Bither, Pastor Craig Oury, Carol Bixler, Linda Showalter, Mike Wigginton, Zenebe Abebe, CoraLyn Turentine, and Nizeet Deiter.

Introduction

Frank opened the meeting by asking the team members what excites them the most about the snow we have had in Indianapolis. Each member shared what they liked about the snowstorms.

Following the icebreaker, Frank led the assembly in a prayer.

As the meeting progressed, Frank announced that there were two agenda items.

1. Updates
2. Share how the work of each commission seeks to advance one of the church goals which are:
 - **FOLLOWING** Jesus together, by seeking unity amidst our differences
 - **GROWING** in desire to more fully know God and each other through deepening spiritual, social, and physical connections
 - **SUPPORTING** one another and committing to nurture children and youth
 - **BECOMING** an anti-racist church, sharing God's love, justice, and peace with all of God's children.
 - **INVITING** others to join us and to know God's saving love that leads to forgiveness of sin and discipleship with Jesus Christ.

Commission Teams Updates and Focus on Church Goals

1. Mike provided an update on behalf of the **Administration Commission Team**.
The key points were as follows:
 - Jim Showalter has been working on restoring the heat in the youth room.
 - Dan Rosenberger has been working on reducing the radon levels in Pastor Brian's room.
 - Resolving the cleaning schedules after activities.
 - They have been working on something to include in the Journey Together regarding the Indianapolis Arlington Center proposal. The main goal of this proposal is to improve the playground and trail. Mike read the letter, and the team provided their input.
 - Zenebe suggested holding onto the letter until more information is available.

- CoraLyn asked about the solar panels.
 - Mike confirmed that the solar panels are operating at 100%, and due to the pandemic in 2020, energy has been stored for future use.
2. Carol provided an update on behalf of the **Discipling Commission Team**.
The key points were as follows:
- Antiracism meetings are occurring monthly, but there have been discussions about the continuity of Sunday school classes, mainly focusing on theological subjects.
 - Frank suggested that some topics in the business meeting could be related to a Sunday school class.
 - Brian expressed mixed feelings, stating that sometimes business meeting discussions can make visitors feel like an inward church.
 - CoraLyn recapped the history of Sunday School, emphasizing that it is up to the congregation to decide the direction for that hour.
 - Linda mentioned that some teachers would like to participate in the antiracism business meeting.
 - Frank inquired about finding another suitable time during Sunday school hours.
 - The decision was made to continue the discussion at another time..
3. Linda provided an update on behalf of the **Community Life Commission Team**.
The key points were as follows:
- The team has been focused on the goal of growing in desire to know God more fully and each other through deepening spiritual, social, and physical connections.
 - They are actively working on planning a Superbowl/Valentine activity scheduled for February.
 - Pastor Craig will be working on a care package for Marcela Rosales Harms, who is in college.
 - The team is in the process of organizing the retreat for 2024, which coincides with Columbus Day.
 - There has been an issue with the flower budget exceeding its allocated funds.
 - Discussion is ongoing regarding how to encourage more people to participate.
4. CoraLyn provided an update on behalf of the **Spiritual Gifts Discernment Team**.
The key points were as follows:
- The team has been working on FOLLOWING Jesus together, by seeking unity amidst our differences.
 - They are exploring ways to connect with other churches in the same conference.
 - The team is currently engaged in the deacon search process.

- Brittany suggested the possibility of creating a disability list compiled from participants of the spiritual discernment class. The aim is to raise awareness of disabilities and promote inclusivity within the team.
5. Zenebe Abebe provided an update on behalf of the **Outreach Commission Team**.
The key points were as follows:
- His team recently held their first meeting a week ago, focusing on drafting a letter to reach out to Meseret Kristos Seminary (MKS).
 - Zenebe mentioned that the neighborhood association met yesterday, and he expressed encouragement regarding the positive connection the church is establishing.
 - The Black History Month activities are coming up with a focus on engagement. The team has been working hard. He thanked other commission representatives for their help to work on the Black History Month activities.
2. Brittany Bither provided an update on behalf of the **Worship Commission Team**.
The key points were as follows:
- They are working on a welcoming statement to be read before worship time.
 - QR Code for offerings.
 - The team is developing a policy that permits any member of the worship team who feels uncomfortable with specific language in a reading or is hesitant to participate in any liturgical activity to excuse themselves.
 - They are working on supporting one another and committing to nurture children and youth.
 - Brittany talked about her experience in a worship conference that she participated in
6. Pastor Brian Bither and Pastor Craig Oury provided an update on behalf of the **Pastoral Team**.
The key points were as follows:
- Pastor Craig mentioned that he and Pastor Brian are actively working on achieving all the goals. With the opportunity of not preaching in February, Pastor Craig is specifically focusing on supporting one another and committing to nurture children and youth, by visiting church members.
 - Pastor Craig stated that they are also working sermons post Easter Sunday
 - Pastor Brian echoed Pastor Craig's sentiments about their joint efforts towards achieving all the goals. He elaborated on their recent focus, including the Muslim/Christian conversation group, Indiana AID, Mara Church, and the upcoming annual conference (Annual Sessions). Additionally, he mentioned that he will be preaching at the Mara Church one Sunday next month.

- Zenebe pointed out that the Mara Church might need help with their young members.
 - Brian stated that they are helping to guide young members and one of the activities involves connecting them with Michelle Hershberger, who is well known for working with youth. He stated that he welcomes everyone to help.
 - Zenebe stated his interest in supporting this initiative.
7. Frank Kandel reported on behalf of the **Vision & Accountability Team**.
- The key points were as follows:
- The team is working on the pastor evaluations draft.
 - The team is working on Pastor Brian's sabbatical that is coming up in 2025. The main project is to write a grant sponsored by Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Grant for Pastor Brian's sabbatical. He went over the four focus items during the sabbatical which are:
 - (a) Write a theological manuscript for the first month.
 - (b) Attending the Society of Biblical Scholars conference in November 2025 and potentially presenting his manuscript.
 - (c) Take a philosophy class at IUI.
 - (d) Traveling with his family to Athens to deepen his spiritual direction.
 - Zenebe asked for clarification on when the paper will be done.
 - Brian stated that he has manuscripts from when he went to seminar that he would like to revisit and finish it up.
 - The team has been addressing the LBGQTQAI question. Frank later proceeded to read the letter in the newsletter.
 - Brian mentioned that someone inquired about where the statement would be posted or if it would be archived.
 - Frank expressed his desire for a genuine discussion with everyone's voices. He emphasized his commitment to creating an environment where everyone is involved when the church approves or disapproves of the welcoming statement involving LBGQTQAI.

Next Meeting

The next Commission Chair Team Meeting is scheduled for **Monday, March 4th at 6:30 pm EST via Zoom.**

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Frank at 7:53 pm EST.

Recorded by Nizeet Deiter