

**Shalom Mennonite Church
Commission Chair Team
Meeting Minutes
September 16, 2024**

The Commission Chair Team convened on September 16, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. EST via Zoom. Present were Frank Kandel, Pastor Brian Bither, Pastor Craig Oury, Brittany Bither, Carol Bixler, Linda Showalter, and Mike Wigginton. Martha Yoder Maust joined the meeting for the first part, and Nizeet Deiter joined for the second part.

Introduction

Frank opened the meeting. In addition to updates from each individual commission, Martha Yoder Maust of the Dismantling Racism Steering Committee was invited to join the meeting for the first part.

Discussion

1. Frank introduced Martha, who leads the Dismantling Racism Steering Committee, to discuss the "People of Color (POC) Caucus Group: Ideas for a Way Forward - 2024."
 - Martha shared that as a result of the antiracism study during Sunday School, the POC developed a document, which the Commission Chair Team (CCT) should view as a gift, focusing on ideas for moving forward. She read and discussed some parts of the document, with some commission chairs offering their opinions on the items that were presented.
 - Frank requested that each Commission Chair share the document with their team to explore how these ideas can be integrated into each commission.
 - Martha agreed and expressed that it is an ongoing conversation, proposing a follow-up in a couple of months.

Commission Teams Updates

1. Pastor Brian and Pastor Craig and provided an update on behalf of the **Pastoral Team**.

The key points were as follows:

- 500 Years Anniversary of the Anabaptist Movement: Pastor Brian is considering ways for the church to participate on this celebration (January 21st). Some of the ideas are worship, service, and outreach. He encouraged all commissions to consider how to celebrate this milestone.
- Sabbatical Planning: Pastor Brian shared that unfortunately he did not receive the Eli Lilly grant for his 2025 sabbatical, which will require some adjustments to the scope and timing of his sabbatical.

- Spiritual Care Webinar: Pastor Craig signed up for a free 3-day webinar titled *Practical Theologies/Wisdom Traditions in Spiritual Care*.

2. Brittany provided an update on behalf of the **Worship Commission Team**.

The key points were as follows:

- The team met last week to plan upcoming special services.
- Efforts are being made to make the services more inclusive for both older and younger members of the congregation.
- The team is looking for a more cost-effective solution to provide a translator for a church member, as the current cost is outside the church budget. Suggestions included using AI translation tools or expanding the network of volunteer translators.
 - Linda suggested mentioning the need for translators in *Journey Together*.
 - Nizeet suggested the church could pay for English classes instead of paying high amounts of money on translators.

3. Carol provided an update on behalf of the **Discipling Commission Team**.

The key points were as follows:

- The team is focusing on the 500th anniversary of the Anabaptist movement in 2025, with celebrations planned for the third weekend in February 2025.
- AI Class: A class on Artificial Intelligence, led by Andrew Martin, is scheduled for December 2024.
 - Linda suggested inviting Chris Deiter, who works with AI.

4. Linda provided an update on behalf of the **Community Life Commission Team**.

The key points were as follows:

- The Retreat Planning: The team is facing a scheduling conflict with Camp Jameson and is exploring other venues.
 - Frank suggested canceling the retreat due to budget cuts.
 - Pastor Brian recommended holding the retreat at the church to provide a beneficial experience for the small congregation like Shalom.

5. Mike provided an update on behalf of the **Administration Commission Team**.

The key points were as follows:

- The team is finalizing the sign renovations.
- Formal recognition to Nathan Walsh on the playground and trail path. One suggestion was to invite him and his team to lunch on a Sunday and honor his contributions.

- Pastor Craig is looking on carpet cleaning business with a major focus on the downstairs.
 - Pastor Craig has consulted with two business, however only one of them has given him a true estimate.

6. Pastor Craig provided an update on behalf of **the Spiritual Gift Discernment Commission Team.**

The key points were as follows:

- The team is still searching for a chair for the Outreach Commission
- Linda inquired whether the Spiritual Gift Discernment Commission also needs a chair.
 - Frank clarified that the Vision & Accountability Team (VAT) oversees SGGT chair selection.

7. Pastor Brian provided an update on behalf of the **Outreach Commission Team.**

The key points were as follows:

- Zenebe Abebe completed his term, and Chuck Dunn has volunteered to be the interim chair.
- Pastor Brian is considering collaborating with the Community Life Commission in some projects such as Trunk or Treat and Thanksgiving Dinner
 - The team is searching for a coordinator for Trunk or Treat due to a scheduling conflict with Linda's schedule.
 - Linda stated that Community Life Commission can oversee the Thanksgiving Dinner.

8. Frank reported on behalf of the **Vision & Accountability Team.**

The key points were as follows:

- Mark Stockdale's term as Congregational Representative (CR) has ended, and Sam Bixler will be the new CR.
- Pastoral Evaluations were a success, and a summary will be published in *the Journey Together*.
- An update on the Shalom Welcoming Statement IN PROGRESS will be provided in *the Journey Together*. VAT members feel it's time to vote on the statement, following positive feedback from the last discussion.
 - Pastor Brian proposed to clarify what does it mean if it is approved or if it is not approved.
 - Carol agreed with Pastor Brian about working on the clarification about if the statement is approved it will be placed on the church's website

- LGBTQ Education Debate: Pastor Brian is working on a session for the congregation.
- Pastor Brian's sabbatical will be next year (2025) for 4 months, which includes his salary for the 4 months. The purpose of the sabbatical is for Pastor Brian to be away to renew and refresh himself.
 - Pastor Craig stated that the Leadership Enhancement Team of Indiana Mennonite Conference small grants for pastoral sabbaticals (\$300). Pastor Craig will be sending that information later in the week.
- Frank stated that Pastor Craig will be in sabbatical the following year (2026).
 - Pastor Craig stated that his sabbatical is coming up in 2025, but he is willing to take it in 2026.
 - Frank stated that he was not aware of it, but he appreciated that Pastor Craig spoke up. He then stated that since Pastor Craig is willing to wait, he will be having his 4 months sabbatical in 2026.
- Frank stated that budget planning for 2025 is coming up and provided the following budget timeline:
 - Submission to Bob Love by the end of October.
 - CCT discussion in the November meeting.
 - Presentation to the congregation in early December, followed by adjustments as needed if not approved.

Next Meeting

The next CCT Meeting is scheduled for **Monday, November 11th at 6:30 pm EST via Zoom.**

Adjournment

Frank thanked everyone for their hard work and encouragement, referencing a devotional from Matthew 16:17. The meeting was closed with a prayer, and adjourned at 7:39 p.m. EST.

Recorded by Nizeet Deiter