

**Shalom Mennonite Church  
Commission Chair Team  
Meeting Minutes  
September 11, 2023**

The Commission Chair Team convened on September 11, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. EDT via Zoom. Present were Frank Kandel, Pastor Brian Bither, Brittany Bither, Pastor Craig Oury, Carol Bixler, Linda Showalter, Mike Wiggington, Zenebe Abebe, and Nizeet Deiter.

**Introduction**

Frank Kandel opened the meeting with a brief reflection on leading the meeting as Chair for the first time, sharing a Bible verse from Luke 1:26-28. This verse highlighted how Mary accepted her assignment and found peace with it, despite the challenges she faced. He emphasized that we, too, have the Holy Spirit available to assist us, just as Mary did.

Frank Kandel then opened the meeting with a prayer.

Later, Frank Kandel shared that the purpose of the Commission Chair Team is to facilitate communication, coordinate efforts, and collaborate effectively to prevent any overlap in the congregation's work.

**Updates**

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

The key points were as follows:

- The tree has been removed.
- Jim Showalter and Sam Bixler successfully repaired the lift last week.
- Andrew Martin is working on strategies for how we are presenting ourselves effectively in collaboration with a new group that Pastor Brian is involved with. He is also exploring the possibility of securing a grant for a defibrillator.
- Dan Rosenberger has expressed concerns about air quality in the church building and has installed a full set of HEPA filters. He's also looking into addressing radon levels in Pastor Brian's office, which are currently within acceptable limits but will be further improved.

**Questions/Discussions**

- Pastor Craig added that Jim Showalter fixed a roof leak.
- Nizeet sought clarification on the meaning of "presenting ourselves".
  - Mike clarified that this entails covering all aspects, including newsletters, bulletins, website content, and the overall image within and outside the church.

- Pastor Brian expressed the need for Commission Chair Team members to provide feedback on this group, which he has observed a need for.
- Linda stated that all the information she knew about the group was limited to the information provided in the newsletter.
- Mike explained that the Administration Commission Team is responsible, with Andrew Martin overseeing the group, and expressed support for the idea.
- Frank stated that he thinks the group will work on the public face of the church in all aspects in a unified formed.
- Pastor Brian agreed with Frank and highlighted the group's role in helping the congregation collectively decide how to present themselves in various public contexts. A communication audit will be conducted soon as the first step.

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

The key points were as follows:

- Linda expressed her satisfaction with the success of the recent retreat and mentioned that the team has many ideas for the next retreat. More details will be provided in the next meeting.

Questions/Discussions

- Frank expressed his appreciation for how Linda presented the commission to the congregation.
- Brittany mentioned that Thanksgiving is approaching and wondered if the commission is considering it.
  - Linda clarified that while Thanksgiving dinners have been spontaneous in the past, it is on her list to do list.
  - Pastor Brian suggested that Thanksgiving activities should be a part of the Community Life Commission's responsibilities, and Linda agreed.

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

The key points were as follows:

- The team hasn't met yet, but there are multiple copies of 49 titles that the team will review for suitability in Sunday School classes.
- Carol expressed her gratitude for the work accomplished by the previous team, noting that the current quarter's plans are already in place, and the team is now focused on preparations for the next quarter.

4. Zenebe Abebe provided an update on behalf of the **Outreach Commission Team**.

The key points were as follows:

- The commission's next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, at 5:30 pm, coinciding with Ethiopian New Year.

- Chuck Dunn is a new member joining the commission, and attendees will have the opportunity to learn more about him during the meeting.
- Pastor Brian is helping with the plans for the upcoming Fall Cookout at Shalom, scheduled for September 24<sup>th</sup>.

#### Questions/Discussions

- Carol inquired about plans to invite neighbors to the event on the 24<sup>th</sup>.
    - Zenebe mentioned that invitations were sent to the Arlington Woods Neighborhood Association, but the turnout is uncertain.
    - Pastor Brian noted that he will be printing and distributing flyers with event details next week, and the church sign also contains information about the cookout.
    - Linda suggested a collaboration between the Community Life Commission and the Outreach Commission to personally invite neighborhood residents, as some Community Life Commission activities may involve the neighborhood.
    - Frank offered to join this effort, along with Robert Coleman and Carol.
  - Carol expressed interest in the Festival of Faith, an event featuring different denominations, and asked about the church's involvement.
    - Zenebe stated he saw news coverage of the event but wasn't aware of the church's participation.
    - Brittany suggested using a public website where permits for city activities are posted to identify events in which the church might want to participate.
5. Brittany Bither provided an update on behalf of the **Worship Commission Team**. The key points were as follows:
- The team recently met on August 22<sup>nd</sup>, giving a farewell to Linda, and extending a warm welcome to Justin Hochstetler.
  - Due to an increase in noise caused by children, Linda and Carol Stocksdale have undertaken efforts to redesign the back corner with activities and have revamped all children's bags to reduce noise.
  - Children's Church, on a trial basis (once a month), will commence sometime in October, during the sermon. They will seek feedback from parents, with the first session tentatively scheduled for mid-October.
  - Pastor Brian is working on a series related to the church covenant, and they have some special services for some of those series.
  - The Orange Shirt Service, coordinated along CoraLyn Turentine, is scheduled for September 24<sup>th</sup>, commemorating the actual day on September 30<sup>th</sup>. A special guest representing the indigenous community will deliver the sermon.
  - There has been positive feedback on the rotation of prayers and the visibility of those we support in prayer. Pastor Brian is compiling a list of these supported individuals and causes.

6. Pastor Brian Bither and Pastor Craig Oury provided an update on behalf of the **Pastoral Team**.

The key points were as follows:

- Pastor Brian shared information about the upcoming annual conference called "Annual Sessions," which involves both business decisions and worship. It will take place in Indianapolis for the first time in many years in the summer of 2024. The organizers are collaborating with him and Pastor Craig to secure suitable facilities, and they are open to their involvement in leading worship, providing services, and delivering sermons. A meeting with conference leaders is scheduled to clarify the details of venue arrangements, their participation, and requirements.
- Pastor Craig stated that their work on developing sermon series and the new task of planning for the annual sessions.

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

The key points were as follows:

- The new Vision & Accountability Team will be meeting on October 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- The Pastoral Team will be joining the meeting, facilitating discussions on various concerns.
- Upcoming the team activities includes:
  - Evaluation of pastors and providing them with feedback.
  - There will be a new appointment to the Spiritual Gifts Discernment Team. Chuck Dunn serves in the Outreach Commission and the Spiritual Gifts Discernment Commission, and he is willing to be in both until we find a replacement. Frank is currently reviewing the list of potential replacements that was previously discussed by VAT. Once a replacement is affirmed, Chuck will transition to serving exclusively on the Outreach.
  - Planning a sabbatical for Pastor Brian, with more information to come.
  - The budget process takes place in October, with the following general steps:
    1. Bob Love will send a package with the budget details to each commission chair by **October 2<sup>nd</sup>**.
    2. The deadline for proposed budgets is **October 29<sup>th</sup>**.
    3. The Commission Chair Team will review proposed budgets **on November 13<sup>th</sup>** with Bob.
    4. The proposed budget will be presented at a congregation meeting, tentatively scheduled for **December 3<sup>rd</sup>**.

Questions/Discussions

- Frank mentioned sending the budget process timeline to Nizeet for distribution along with the meeting minutes.

- The date for the next Commission Chair Team meeting was adjusted from November 6th to **November 13<sup>th</sup>** due to a scheduling conflict with the Indiana-Michigan Pastor Retreat.
- There was a discussion about the meeting time for **November 13<sup>th</sup>**. 6:30 pm EDT was proposed, pending confirmation from CoraLyn (the Spiritual Gifts Discernment Chair), who had a work conflict during today's meeting. Frank would confirm with CoraLyn and inform the team accordingly.
- The **November 13<sup>th</sup>** meeting will primarily focus on the budget with Bob Love, followed by reports from each commission chair.

### **General Discussion**

- Zenebe inquired about the process for inviting guest preachers to the church.
  - Brittany explained that Pastor Brian and Pastor Craig schedule the preaching days, and they have an idea of the sermon schedule. The logistical details are then discussed with her.
  - Linda mentioned that it was agreed that the pastors would provide substitutes if they couldn't preach, and there's a Google document maintained by the Worship Commission for this purpose.
  - Pastor Brian stated he loves the idea to have guest speakers in February and discussed compensating guest speakers for travel and preaching. The budget currently allows for 3 or 4 guest speakers per year. However, if there are plans for guest speakers each weekend in February, the Worship Commission may need to consider budget adjustments for the upcoming year.
  - Zenebe stated that the People of Color caucus members are thinking about the upcoming Black History month. They are considering activities for Black History month. They are deliberating whether to hold events in February or spread them throughout the year.

### **Next Meeting**

The next Commission Chair Team Meeting is scheduled for **Monday November 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm EDT via Zoom.**

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned by Frank at 7:27 pm EDT.

Recorded by Nizeet Deiter