

Shalom Mennonite Church
Commission Chair Team
Meeting Minutes
April 16, 2024

The Commission Chair Team convened on April 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, Mike Wigginton, Zenebe Abebe, CoraLyn Turentine, and Nizeet Deiter.

Introduction

Frank opened the meeting by asking the team members about their favorite manifestations of spring.

Following the icebreaker, Frank initiated the meeting with a prayer.

Discussion

1. Pastor Craig initiated the discussion by addressing the tension arising from the increase in children attending services, leading to elevated noise levels during and after the services. He inquired about existing church policies concerning children and expressed a desire to foster unity among members with and without children.
 - Zenebe shared his observation of two different models, where children either attend separate classes after children's church or remain in the sanctuary, expressing his preference for having children present in the main service.
 - Pastor Brian stated that he has heard similar comments such as kids running around. He proposed designated areas for the kids to play in certain parts of the church as well as an official statement on the matter.
 - Carol stated that they had had this discussion 25 years ago.
 - Nizeet, a member with young children, stated that it is difficult to bring her kids to church and it is easier to stay home and listen to the service through zoom. However, she expressed hope that attending to church regularly will be one of the factors that will influence their decision to follow Jesus in the future.
 - Linda referenced an article advocating for bringing children to church despite potential disorganization in seating arrangements.
 - Frank mentioned that his previous church had established guidelines for managing children during services and offered to share them at the next meeting.

Commission Teams Updates

2. Zenebe provided an update on behalf of the **Outreach Commission Team**. The key points were as follows:
 - The team will be meeting next week. There were no new updates to report.

- Frank inquired about the members of the commission and discussed the plan to deliver food to Morning Star Church in Muncie. Additionally, he mentioned Morning Star Church's intention to construct a parking lot adjacent to the church and expressed a desire to make an announcement encouraging church members to contribute to this project.
 - Zenebe mentioned who was part of the team and he agreed with Frank.

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

The key points were as follows:

- Jim Showalter replaced the TV in the fellowship hall. Additionally, he attempted to repair the air conditioner in the youth group area; however, it unfortunately malfunctioned again. He is currently in the process of repairing it once more.
- Mike informed the group that the insurance rate had been increased, prompting Bob Love to suggest raising the deductible. Despite raising the deductible, there was no adjustment to the rate, so the decision was made to retain the current insurance plan.
- Several weeks ago, the Eagle Scouts assisted with enhancing the pathway in the park, and they are now planning the next steps to further improve the park's landscape.
- Becky Wiggington is coordinating a meeting where the church will host a dedication ceremony for the park on August 5th, with various community members expected to attend.
 - Brian inquired about the expected attendance.
 - Mike clarified that it will be an open house event held outdoors, anticipating a maximum of approximately 200 attendees. The organizers will provide food and set up booths. Shalom will solely facilitate the park during the event.
 - Brittany expressed interest in having a booth for Shalom.
 - Mike confirmed that the church could indeed have a booth.
- Frank asked about the dishwasher repairment.
 - Mike gave an update that is working, and they are working on the user guidelines.
- Brittany asked about marking the handicapped spots in the parking lot to make them more visible.
 - Mike thanked Brittany for mentioning it and they will work on it.
 - The discussion shifted to increase the number of handicapped spots to four.

4. CoraLyn provided an update on behalf of the **Spiritual Gifts Discernment Team**.

The key points were as follows:

- No updates
- Next meeting will be happening next month.

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

The key points were as follows:

- The last meeting was on March 19th.
- The Dismantling Racism Committee proposed a welcoming statement to be read at the beginning of the services, which raised concerns as it differed from a potential welcoming statement for the website. It was also discussed removing the portions regarding gender-identity and sexual orientation until those discussions are more complete. The Commission Team members felt caught between conflicting perspectives and sought guidance.
 - Linda asked about the number of statements the church intended to have.
 - Mike expressed openness to sharing the proposed statement and gathering feedback.
 - Frank expressed hesitation about reading a welcoming statement at the beginning of every meeting since the VAT is already working on one.
 - Brittany read the statement. The statement is as follows: “As Christ-followers, we welcome all persons of every age, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic situation, intellectual or physical capability, gender-identity, and sexual orientation represented in our midst. While we do not always agree with each other, we affirm a unanimous desire to serve God and to love others as Christ has loved us.”
 - After Brittany read the statement Frank felt ok with it.
 - Pastor Craig stated that since the church is in the middle of the conversation about LBGTQAI+ it could cause confusion where members who are wrestling with the LBGTQAI+ welcoming statement will think the welcoming statement was approved and they will be excluded from the conversation.
 - Nizeet questioned whether the statement truly reflected the church's beliefs given the diversity of viewpoints.
 - Pastor Brian preferred deciding on the statement collectively as a congregation but indicated willingness to step aside if necessary.
 - Brittany asked about the authority of the Worship Commission in making such decisions.

** Given the diversity of opinions within the Commission Chair Team regarding the Dismantling Racism Committee's proposed welcoming statement, a decision was not reached, and the discussion shifted to another topic.*

- The frequency of communion during services was discussed, and the team decided to aim for including communion once a month, specifically on the fourth Sunday.
 - One Sunday morning the reserved sign was moved, and they will try to have a check list for the ushers every Sunday morning.
 - Linda suggested that ushers could sit at the back to welcome visitors throughout the service, a proposal which Brittany supported.
6. Linda provided an update on behalf of the **Community Life Commission Team**.
The key points were as follows:
- They continue to send flowers.
 - They will begin organizing "Guess Who Is Coming to Dinner," considering the possibility of hosting a daytime event for those who prefer not to drive at night.
 - They continue to work on the retreat.
7. Carol provided an update on behalf of the **Discipling Commission Team**.
The key points were as follows:
- The Dismantling Racism Steering Committee will be using the "Caucus" Sundays in May, June and July for a single adult Sunday school class to continue our anti-racism work.
 - Fair Housing of Indiana has a display that will be available to be placed in the church.
 - Discussion focused on where the panels can be displayed at the church.
 - There will be no Sunday School on Memorial Day weekend.
8. Pastor Brian Bither provided an update on behalf of the **Pastoral Team**.
The key points were as follows:
- The team is working on a sermon series focusing on family systems.
 - Shalom will be directing the worship team during the Annual Sessions Conference at the Mara Church. The conference encompasses various activities, including a business meeting. They aim to ensure the attendance of delegates from each church. Additionally, they intend to rename the conference Summer Fest.
 - Brittany mentioned that Shalom will take part in three worship sessions on June 7th and 8th.
9. Frank Kandel reported on behalf of the **Vision & Accountability Team**.
The key points were as follows:
- The welcoming statement was presented to the church members on March 3rd, receiving 46 comments. Unfortunately, the session on Sunday, March 10th, did not allow sufficient time for discussion. The next discussion is scheduled for Tuesday,

April 23rd, focusing on what the Bible says about the LGBTQAI+ subject. Pastor Brian will facilitate this session.

- Pastor Brian addressed the numerous questions about the biblical perspective on LGBTQAI+ raised during the March 3rd discussion. He outlined the session's format and proposed the possibility of inviting individuals with more conservative viewpoints to speak periodically.
 - Carol expressed enthusiasm for the upcoming discussion.
 - Coralyn endorsed the proposed format, deeming it beneficial.
- Brittany questioned the session's goal, asking if it aimed to change people's minds.
 - Pastor Brian clarified that, based on the 46 comments received, some individuals are unsure about their stance. The primary objective is to foster trust among attendees. The session will focus on providing information rather than advocating for a specific statement.
- Pastor Craig inquired about the duration of the meeting.
- Frank emphasized the importance of listening to the Holy Spirit and coming together as one.

Next Meeting

The next Commission Chair Team Meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, May 28th at 6:30 pm EST via Zoom.**

Adjournment

Frank adjourned the meeting at 8:10 pm EST.

Recorded by Nizeet Deiter