

**Shalom Mennonite Church**  
**Commission Chair Team**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**May 13, 2025**

The Commission Chair Team (CCT) convened on May 13, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. EST via Zoom. Present were Frank Kandel, Pastor Brian Bither, Pastor Craig Oury, Carol Bixler, Mike Wigginton, Linda Showalter, and Nizeet Deiter.

### **Introduction**

Frank opened the meeting with an icebreaker, asking team members to share their favorite or least favorite aspect of gardening. He then led the group in reading an Easter prayer and expressed appreciation for the team members' commitment to holding multiple responsibilities.

Frank noted that the Vision and Accountability Team (VAT) is the decision-making body of the church. He invited the commission chairs to share their thoughts on several key topics that VAT will be addressing:

- **Membership:** Should the church require formal membership, or is the current structure sufficient?
- **Communion:** Should children participate in communion?
- **Stained Glass:** Should the stained-glass windows be changed?
- **Mentorship Program:** Should the church explore a new mentorship model, as several members have recently raised the topic?

### **Commission Updates**

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

The key points were as follows:

- This is a particularly busy time for the team. Priority #1 is identifying a Vice-Chair for VAT. They are seeking chairs for the Discipling, Worship, and Outreach Commissions.
- Communication is happening primarily via text to track acceptance or decline of invitations.
- Linda suggested asking congregants to indicate which commissions they'd like to join.
  - Pastor Craig mentioned that the team is adhering to the established outline. He also noted that this approach had previously been attempted, but no one volunteered.
  - Pastor Brian added that while structural questions are VAT's responsibility, individuals are welcome to express their interest directly to the team.
  - Pastor Craig will post a message in *Journey Together* encouraging members to reach out if interested in serving on a commission.

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

The key points were as follows:

- Pastor Craig met with the Deacons earlier on May 13<sup>th</sup> and reported that the meeting went well.
  - Frank affirmed his appreciation for communication from the Deacons.
- Pastor Craig noted that someone approached him for counseling and spiritual direction.
- Pastor Brian reported assisting Amara Church with a lawsuit, which thankfully resolved in their favor. He plans to set boundaries around national-level involvement moving forward.
- Pastor Brian on the VAT topics:
  - **Membership:** He emphasized that membership is foundational for addressing broader church matters, such as the welcoming statement. Without clear membership, it is difficult to move forward on key issues.
  - **Communion:** He noted that the lack of clarity around communion is largely due to inconsistencies in the church's approach to membership. He suggested that a Sunday school class could help bring clarity and consistency.
  - **Stained Glass:** He agreed that the topic is worth discussing.
  - **Mentorship Program:** He is still considering his opinion on this and has not yet formed a definitive stance.

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

The key points were as follows:

- Organizing Shalom Sisters Lunch Day, with 16 RSVPs. It will be on the first Thursday of each month, starting June 5. Men are excluded, though Linda is open to collaborate with the organization of a parallel event for them.
- For the retreat, Linda is communicating with Taylor and Cam Cook to find a local place to celebrate Black history followed by a church meal.
- Planning to invite people into small groups, with the goal of full participation by September.
- Linda on the VAT topics:
  - **Membership:** Feels it is taken too lightly.
  - **Stained Glass:** If it bothers people, it should be changed.
  - **Mentorship Program:** She raised concerns that the idea goes against church policy, which states that an adult should never be alone with a minor.

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

The key points were as follows:

- The team will meet on May 14. She stated that the Sunday School teachings are in place through the end of the fiscal year 2025. She is grateful to Laura Harnd for her ongoing leadership with children’s classes.
  - The mentor program has been discussed, though there are existing policy concerns and staffing challenges.
  - Carol on VAT’s Topics:
    - **Stained Glass:** She expressed interest in changing it, and it has been on the work for the last 5 years and nothing is done.
    - **Communion:** She cited a visitor’s experience that underscored the need for greater clarity to avoid confusion with the optics after the practice.
5. Pastor Brian provided an update on behalf of the **Worship Commission Team.**  
The key points were as follows:
- Responsibilities have been delegated to team members through July.
  - No themes are planned for the summer.
  - The commission hasn’t met since the last CCT meeting.
  - Brian invited members to bring concerns to him or the other two commission members
6. Pastor Brian provided an update on behalf of the **Outreach Commission Team.**  
The key points were as follows:
- The team is focusing on the 500-year Anabaptist celebration on May 17<sup>th</sup>. It is exciting with a lot of participation, and he is grateful that they have received more than enough money to make it possible. He provided a website for the Anabaptist 500 Celebration: [Anabaptist 500 Schedule | Shalom-07.21.2022](#) and he will add it to the *Journey Together*.
  - Considering hosting Spirit and Place, but original partners have shifted direction.
  - Indiana AID:
    - It hosted a jail event with 275-300 participants.
    - Received ~\$30,000 in donations, though more funding is needed.
    - There is ongoing tension between Indiana AID and jail staff, which Pastor Brian is mediating and expects to improve by the next visit.
7. Mike provided an update on behalf of the **Administration Commission Team.**  
The key points were as follows:
- He thanked Carol and Sam Bixler for assisting with the neighborhood cleanup; the community was appreciative.
  - Pastor Craig spoke with Carla, the cleaning provider. Oversight is being addressed and will be revisited in a month.
  - Jim Showalter incorporated a new computer.

- New building insurance takes effect June 1. A class K fire extinguisher is recommended for the kitchen to lower premiums. Pastor Craig contacted Cintas, who will follow up.
  - Mike stated that in the future the church might have to purchase a hood above the kitchen.
    - Pastor Craig stated that an adjustor came to check the stove this year, and they did not report that the stove needs a hood.
- Mike on VAT topics:
  - He deferred to his spouse for opinions when these are formally discussed.
- Frank talked about Peter and Delicia Wigginton and their work nonviolence work in the Durán Conflict.

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

The key points were as follows:

- Next meeting: May 28. Focus topics include membership, communion liturgy, stained glass, and mentorship.
- The team is working on a policy on what to do if ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) arrives at the church. There is a group who will be specifically working on that.
- Pastor Brian's sabbatical in September and next year Pastor Craig will be taking his sabbatical.
- Nizeet on VAT topics:
  - **Membership:** She sees it as essential to address other church matters.
  - **Communion:** She emphasized that the practice should be clarified, noting that the mentioned optics are subjective, like beauty in the eye of the beholder.
  - **Stained Glass:** Should be addressed, but budget must be considered.
  - **Mentorship Program:** Must be approached with great care, given church policy.
- Frank concluded by emphasizing the importance of open, Christ-centered discernment and inclusive dialogue on all topics.

### **Next Meeting**

The next CCT Meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, June 25<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm EST via Zoom**.

### **Adjournment**

Frank closed with a prayer, lifting Peter and Delicia Wigginton for their nonviolence work in the Durán Conflict and the upcoming Anabaptist 500 Celebration. The meeting adjourned at 7:49 p.m. EST.

Recorded by Nizeet Deiter