

Breslau Mennonite Church Council Meeting
Wednesday, February 7, 2024
7:00 pm

We strive to be a welcoming community of faith and worship
Supporting each other as we learn and grow
Extending Christ's love, peace and justice
With our community
With our world.

Attendance: Kyle Gingerich (Chair), Lily Hiebert Rempel (Vice Chair), Pastor Eleanor Epp-Stobbe, Karl Braun, Scott Bruinsma, Andre Charette, Dave Gingerich, Serena Gingerich, Geordie Hagerman, Pat Klassen

Kyle Gingerich opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and led the group in an Epiphany Wednesday Evening prayer from the Anabaptist prayer book 'Take Our Moments and Our Days'.

Financial Update & Budget Discussion – Geordie Hagerman

Stewardship & Finance Report

Draft Budget Review

- Proposing a budget of \$319,443 which is \$80 higher than last year
- Includes \$8,000 for deficit reduction against our \$13,364 deficit
- Increase of 6% over 2023 actual offerings
- 4% increase in expenses over actuals
- External ministries have been held flat
- Student Aid Reduction: Student aid has been decreased to match the budget allocation from 2023, amounting to \$4,900.
 - Capped Payment Amount: The maximum aid per semester is \$700 regardless of the number of students. However, this amount may vary depending on the total number of applicants in any given year.
 - Current Student Count: With the current student count at 5, this translates to a payment of \$700 for January and a payment of \$280 in Sept.

January 2024 Financial Snapshot

- Total income \$18,337.21
- Total expenses \$22,635.46 leaving us with a deficit of -\$4,298.25

Annual meeting date: target Sunday, March 24th at 11:00am

BMC Draft Budget

- Geordie presented the 2024 Draft Budget.

Discussion:

- Staff salaries have been budgeted at 8% lower for 2024 because of having an Interim Children, Youth & Young Adult Coordinator. This can be seen as a year of opportunity to help eliminate our deficit.
- All external ministries have been held flat, therefore, Stewardship & Finance Committee also felt it prudent to not increase Student Aid.
- We are honoring our commitment of \$700 per student for the remainder of this school year. To meet our 2024 budget, students will receive \$280 of support in September, presuming the number of students requesting support does not change.
- We will communicate this early with a specific deadline to request funding so that families are aware of the upcoming support available in September.

Motion: Karl Braun

That Church Council approves the 2024 budget as presented.

Seconded: Pat Klassen

No further discussion.

Carried.

Kyle thanked Geordie, Sharon, Eric, and Stewardship & Finance Committee for their extensive work with this budget.

Summer Camp Director Search Update – Pastor Eleanor Epp-Stobbe

- There have been no applications at this time, however, there has been one inquiry that we hope may turn into an application.
- A sample announcement has gone out to area Mennonite Church Eastern Canada churches and Rockway Mennonite Collegiate inviting interested parties to apply.

Open Spaces Visioning Project (OSVP) Update – Karl Braun

Committee Members: Brent Schmidt, Patti Hobler, Karl Braun

The OSVP Core Team meet has been meeting weekly, since October 17. Our last meeting took place Thursday, Feb 1.

To date, we have held 3 congregational meetings on Nov 19, Jan 7, and Jan 21.

At this point, we anticipate the need for 4 more congregational meetings: Feb 25th, March 3, April 7, 14.

The core team has interviewed representatives from:

- BMC Community
- BMC administration
- BMC congregants
- CMT
- Summer camp
- Youth

Additionally, we have interviewed representatives from 12 agencies from the broader community including:

- Foodbank of Waterloo Region
- Hillcrest Mennonite Church
- Joseph's Place
- MCEC
- MCCO
- Shantz Mennonite Church
- Spire Kingston
- Steinmann Mennonite Church
- WK Mennonite Church
- Woolwich Community Counselling
- Woolwich Community Services
- Woolwich Township Councilor Bonnie Bryant

We have launched and assessed results from 2 surveys: one for BMC congregants who have been unable to attend meetings, and another version that was circulated to members of the Breslau community through different Facebook groups.

Input gathered from meetings, interviews, and surveys has confirmed uses for internal user groups like youth, Sunday school and identified possible uses for 'external' user groups that originate from or are intended for the larger Breslau and Woolwich communities - e.g. daycare.

Internal (and ongoing needs/uses) include:

- Youth area
- Storage for crafts, camp and quilt square and long tables, stacks of chairs
- Sunday School classrooms, kitchen, flexible group area
- Kitchen and dining area - host family gatherings
- Summer camp craft creation area (no carpet)
- Summer camp grade 5-6 lounge
- Quilt creation area and quilt frame storage

Potential 'External' unmet needs/uses include:

- Flexible space
- Children indoor play - young family connections
- Private rooms for teaching, offices for rent
- Daycare and after school
- Indigenous community partnership - quiet offices
- Fitness/Wellness Classes
- Seniors space
- Health and wellness, counselling services

Ongoing External uses include:

- Band rental spa

The BMC congregation has voted and ranked potential external uses (using placement of dots). The next step for external uses is to assess feasibility and viability and degree of fit with the BMC Mission statement.

Presently, a feasibility/viability questionnaire is being completed by teams or individuals representing the potential external uses to help us get a better understanding of the needs, resources, and requirements of each of these unmet needs. The aim is to gather more information that BMC congregants can use to assess and rank these needs further or identify a need for further information.

Next Steps:

1. Gather feasibility/viability information as it is completed (prior to Feb 25 meeting)
2. Feb 25 and March 3 Congregational meetings to discuss/assess feasibility/viability of the external uses
 - Review submitted information
 - 10-minute presentations, questions,
 - dot vote at the end
3. The following 2 meetings are scheduled for follow-on discussions arising from the assessment of external needs and how these uses might impact/interact with identified internal needs and uses.

The committee invites questions, feedback, and input from Church Council.

Maryanne Szuck joined the meeting.

Cemetery Interment Fees Discussion – Maryanne Szuck

Comparison Prices for Interment Charges

	BMC	Memory Gardens	Wanner Mennonite Church	Erb Street Mennonite Church	First Mennonite Church	St Jacobs Mennonite Church
Traditional Burial	\$1,200.00	\$1,445.00	\$1,288.00	\$1,200.00	\$1,860.00	\$800.00/ \$1200.00
Cremation Burial	\$500.00	\$795.00	\$350.00	\$500.00	\$700.00	\$200.00/ \$300.00

Proposal to increase interment fees in 2024:

- Traditional burial \$1350.00
- Cremation burial \$550.00

Last cemetery price list revision was in 2022.

Tom Snyder increased his fee in 2023 by \$100.00 and in 2024 by another \$100.00.

The cemetery commission feels we need to increase our interment fees due to increasing maintenance expenses.

Discussion:

- The number of burials in past years are as follows:
 - 2023: 5
 - 2022: 4
 - 2021: 5
- The number of plot sales in past years:
 - 2023: 2
 - 2019-2022: none
- This proposal is not to increase the price of plots, only to increase the interment fees.
- St. Jacob's Mennonite Church has a Winter fee and a Summer fee hence the two prices

Motion: Scott Bruinsma

That the proposed increase to the cemetery interment fees be approved as presented.

Seconded: Geordie Hagerman

No further discussion.

Carried.

Job Description Working Group Update – Lily Hiebert Rempel

In January Al Rempel led the adult education class in an activity where we brainstormed in groups to prepare for discernment around who we hire to lead our children, youth, and young adults. Responses were gathered and prioritized from our questions of inquiry. We were asked to pray about these priorities and listen to the Spirit of God. These priorities were available for congregants to indicate their priorities that seemed also to be good to the Spirit of God.

We as a committee received these priorities and are using these to create a job description. We met last evening and have completed 2/3 of the job descriptions. Due to the scope of skills needed, we have decided to create 2 part-time job descriptions- one with the focus on faith formation with children and young families and the other faith formation with youth and young adults. Our plan is to work out the remaining aspects in the coming weeks and our goal is to share this description with council at our March meeting.

Thank you for your patience with the extended time needed to complete this task. Have looked at job descriptions from the last number of years for Children, Youth and Young Adult Coordinator position. Also looked at job descriptions from area churches. Scope of skills need to work with such a wide range of ages. Time will be split 50/50 between a Children Position and a Youth/Young Adult Position. Summer camp will be included in the job description.

On behalf of our committee (Kristen Gingrich and Amy Good)
Lily Hiebert Rempel

Gift Discernment Committee Appointment – Pastor Eleanor

- Doris Gingerich's term is ending on Gift Discernment and Church Council's role is to fill this open spot.
- Church Council members are invited and encouraged to send suggestions to Kyle Gingerich in advance of the next Church Council meeting.

Interim Youth Coordinator Report – Kristen Berg

The youth program at BMC continues to be active. At the beginning of January Eleanor led a wonderful youth event for the youth and sponsors with the theme of self-care where we participated in knotting a comforter and reflecting on bible verses that provide us comfort, doing yoga, eating delicious snacks, and other sharing from the youth.

I began as Interim Youth Coordinator on January 15th and have been energized by my time in the role so far. I have had the opportunity to meet with Eleanor to discuss safety policies, future events, communication with youth and families, along with provided support. I have also had the opportunity to meet with Phil Martin to discuss the youth Sunday School program and my involvement over the upcoming months. On Sunday, January 28th I had the opportunity to join the youth SS class where we continued in our project-based learning of music and faith. There will be a survey coming out for the congregation to share their experience and ideas around music and faith. The youth also led singing with the children and taught them two songs from Godspell. It was a beautiful moment that many parents were touched by and I feel privileged to have also participated. The youth are interested in singing with the children in church to share this music with the congregation. I will bring this to worship committee.

I am also currently working on planning for a Youth Winter Getaway for our youth (4 BMC youth will attend) to join the Hanover Mennonite Church youth group (2 HMC youth) on February 10-11. Adults/sponsors will be Kristen, Joel, Eleanor, and Bryan Berg. We will be staying at Bryan Berg's parents' farm to participate in fun winter activities, food, fellowship, and have the opportunity to attend and be a part of the Sunday morning worship service at Hanover Mennonite Church. The youth will lead music and the call to worship. I am coordinating with Marg Berg and Juanita Laverty (HMC pastor). The goal for this weekend is to connect with

another Mennonite youth group in MCEC and experience their church service, to build new and strengthen existing relationships, and to have fun.

I have also begun having conversations with parents of youth who have not been participating over the past months in youth. The conversations have been positive and I am hopeful to draw in a few more people whose families are connected to BMC.

Pastor Eleanor's Report

Worship & Adult Education

- Worship services mid January to mid February are focusing on parables of Jesus, particularly those that are also part of the musical Godspell. Thank you to guest preachers: Philip Martin and Allison Dyjach.
- Lent worship theme is: Hungering for Hope. Lent worship information will be available online and with paper copies in our foyer.
- Together with a few BMCers, we will provide leadership for a worship service at Fairview Seniors Community on Sunday March 3, at 7:00pm. BMCers are most welcome to join in this worship service.
- Adult Christian education (ACE) planned for a focus on the parables of Jesus for January and early February. An ACE series starting Feb 18 is planned: The Mystery of Death and Dying. This series will have a panel discussion, guest presenter/s, sharing about death and dying, hospice, MAID, etc. At this time, this series may be postponed for later in the year as other BMC needs may be part of the ACE time.

Pastoral Care

- Care and visits with BMCers ongoing as well as visit/s contact with some folks new/newer and friends to BMC.
- Thank you BMCers for your care and ongoing prayers for Jan Bowman, as we grieve the passing of Bryan Bowman on Monday January 29th, and celebrate his faith and life on Tuesday February 6, 11:00am at BMC.
- Thank you Missions Cttee for hosting a potato chili lunch on Sun Feb 4 in support of House of Friendship.
- I look forward to attending the BMC youth event with Hanover Mennonite Church on Sat Feb 10.
- I look forward to participating in a Shalom Counselling and Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (MCEC) workshop on Feb 15 "Keeping Faith in Anxious Times".
- I am honoured to officiate at the wedding of Jessa Braun and Kyle Rath on Saturday February 17.
- BMC continues to discuss and discern significant matters of space/facilities use and possible development, and also a staff leadership position. We are served well to continue to engage in these conversations with respect and a spirit of love. "Mennonite Church Canada agreeing & disagreeing in love" and BMC "Conversational Covenant of Respect and Love" documents serve us well. (documents posted on our church bulletin board)

Administrative

- Welcome Kristen Gingrich Berg as Interim BMC Youth Coordinator!
- I appreciated joining with the MCEC KW perimeter cluster ministerial on Wed Dec 6, and look forward to our meeting on Wed Feb 14th.
- I appreciated attending the Conrad Grebel University College Pastors' breakfast on Jan 30th.
- I appreciated attending the Mennonite Economic Development Associates event Feb 1st.
- The MCEC Annual Church Gathering is April 26 & 27 in Leamington, with the theme: Inspired by Hope. As per BMC policy those attending as Regional Church Delegates include: Kyle Gingrich, Congregational Chair, Dave Gingerich, Member Advocate, possible youth delegate, and Pastor Eleanor.
- There is interest from some BMC folks to expand our church communication platform. *Would Council be interested in considering BMC having an Instagram and FB account? What is helpful information for Council to make this kind of decision or needed next steps for Council to consider this communication platform?*

Children's Ministry Team

- Jr Sunday school gathers in room 100 for snack, music, play and learning about the Beatitudes with *Kids Can Be Blessed* (a curriculum from MennoMedia). The Jr Sunday school schedule is also included in our bulletin, weekly email, and through our church website calendar.
- Jr Sunday school plans an open Sunday (not a curriculum Sunday) on February 4 with music, snack, crafts, and games.
- Some Jr Sunday school families gathered with a casual lunch on Sun Jan 28, joining those who are having lunch and gathering for Godspell musical rehearsal. This is a new and evolving initiative.
- The BMC youth are enjoying leading the music time with Jr Sunday school.
- I joined CMT with a Jan 30 meeting.

Young Adults

- The BMC young adults are excited to cheer on the Kitchener Rangers, attending a game on Friday March 1st.

Discussion:

- Church Council affirms the decision to have some BMC folks create a proposal for a social media presence. It is important if we do pursue this avenue that it is a consistent presence.

Missions Committee Report – Andre Charette

- Thank you BMC for your generous donation for the Winter Giving Project to support A Better Tent City. Thank you for the many new and gently used items donated, and the children's offering of \$225.00.
- Missions Committee hosted the February 4th baked potato chili lunch in support of House of Friendship raising \$969.50.
- We discussed Talking About Service features monthly in worship.
 - January – BMC Long-Term Missions Harvest Fund
 - February – House of Friendship
 - March – TBD
- We discussed the New Hamburg Relief Sale Strawberry Pie Project and BMC's support through the Missions committee.
- Missions committee meets next on April 11, 2024.

Elder's Report – Pat Klassen

- The Elder's met on January 17, 2024.
- The vast majority of our meeting was spent discussing "in camera" care concerns.
- There are several upcoming milestones for members of our congregation in the next few months so details on how, where, and when these will be noted were determined.
- The "Just Because" potluck that was held on January 14th was well attended and enjoyed by all who stayed.
- Our next meeting is scheduled for February 21, 2024.

Worship Committee Report – Karl Braun

- There will be an Easter Choir.
- No further report as there has been no Worship Committee meeting since last Church Council meeting.

Trustees Report – Scott Bruinsma

- Scott has been in discussion regarding insurance with Deb Holtzhauer from BrokerLink.
- A few BMC rentals cancelled when they were required to have their own insurance as this poses an additional cost.
- Organized groups such as bands, choirs, etc. have their own insurance. This mainly impacts private rentals such as families.
- Trustees are inquiring to see if we can a premium to our insurance to allow many rental groups not to require insurance. Trustees are still gathering information on what the cost of this premium would be and if it would be worthwhile. Will report back to council with a proposal in the future.
- Trustees are looking to hire someone to clean the church when our Custodian is away on vacation.
- The Trustees are looking to hold their annual Maple Syrup & Pancake lunch on Sunday, March 3rd, 2024.
- Last year proceeds went to the House of Friendship to support the Grocery Gift Cards for seniors through the One Site program.
- Scott asked for suggestions of a charity to support this year; it was suggested any funds raised could go to support Food4Kids, which is what the children's offering is currently supporting.

Next Church Council Meeting: Wednesday, March 6th, 2024.

Minutes recorded by Serena Gingerich