

**MINUTES**  
**ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING**

Bethesda Mennonite Church  
Henderson, Nebraska  
Sunday, February 2, 2020

Norm Yoder, Congregational Moderator, called the meeting to order. He thanked all for their attendance, time, and input for the direction of the church. Approximately 139 people were in attendance.

Pastor Seth led devotions with reflections from Matthew 25: 14-30, the Parable of the Talents.

Motion by Rod Drews to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Jay Dee Janzen. Motion carried.

Offering for Sunday School Department/Board of Education was received by the ushers.

Wendy Janzen, Congregational Secretary read a summary of congregational minutes from 2019. The minutes included the February 3, 2019, Annual Meeting and two additional congregational meetings. Motion by Bev Quiring to accept minutes. Seconded by Bryan Bechtel. Motion carried.

Mike Bergen, Nominating Chair, came forward to present the nomination for election of members to boards and committees. He thanked everyone for their service on boards and committees and thanked the individuals who helped on the Nominating Committee. Mike noted each position available and those whose name were on the ballot. He also noted there were positions vacant at this time and if anyone was willing to fill those positions to please speak with him or the Congregational Moderator. Mike Bergen moved to accept the nominations as presented. Arlyce Friesen seconded. Motion carried. Ushers passed out ballots for voting and accepted completed ballots. Tellers Tim Bergen, Jan Friesen, Donna Thieszen and Gerald Friesen were dismissed.

Reports as printed for comment:

Norm reviewed reports as printed in the Annual Meeting booklet for comment and recommended that if congregational members had not taken time to read those reports that they should do so. Norm asked those individuals that were on boards and committees this past year to stand and be recognized.

No old business.

Kara Janzen with senior youth provided instruction on the noon meal. The meal in Fellowship Hall is a fundraiser for summer 2020 DOOR service trip to Denver. Grace Janzen led in prayer.

Norm called the meeting back to order in the Fellowship Hall. He asked all youth to be present and the congregation showed their thanks with a round of applause.

During new business discussion, Norm noted the Pastor Search Committee report was in the Annual Meeting booklet and there was no updated information at this time.

Discussion relating to membership and associate membership categories in the constitution was led by Pastor Seth and Deacon Jeff Peters. Associate membership can be granted by the Deacons. A review of the Constitution by the Deacons occurred, and the Deacons propose a line be added to Article 5, section A, #4, which is written in red below.

*Section A. Requirements for Admittance*

*1. People may become members of this church who confess Christ as their Savior and Lord, and who show Christian conduct. When they confess their faith in Christ and are baptized, they will become members of Bethesda. (John 3:16; 14:6)*

*2. People from other Mennonite churches or other Christian denominations, who want to become members, are to request a letter certifying good standing from their church. They may also be admitted by confession of faith with the recommendation of the pastors and deacons. Our church will provide instruction in our confession of faith and our practice.*

*3. People who live here temporarily and who are members of other Mennonite churches or other Christian denominations, but who wish to retain their home church membership, may become associate members, if that is acceptable practice in their home church and if they are in good standing there. They will have all the rights and duties of members, with the exception of voting in congregational meetings and holding congregational office or being appointed to a board.*

*4. We offer our members the privilege of keeping associate membership here while living elsewhere and attending a church there. **Spouses of members and associate members may request associate membership by letter with the approval of the Board of Deacons.***

There will be no vote today due to policy which states a minimum of two weeks' notice before a vote can be held by the congregation.

Discussion questions presented by congregation and answered by Pastor Seth and Deacon Jeff Peters:

Do associate members have same rights as members? Only difference is no voting and no serving on boards.

Any requirements of the associate membership? Done by letter of transfer membership. Left to the Board of Deacons for discussion and decision.

Alan Janzen, Chair of Board of Business gave an update on building maintenance and projects. He stated the Board of Business has an aggressive agenda, and he welcomed Will Epp and Roy Smith to the group. He also thanked Brian Bergen and Carey Friesen who are going off the board for their dedication and hard work. Asbestos abatement will be done this spring by carpeting hallways and stairs and touch up painting. Working on adding chiller to the air system for the sanctuary. The board has been pleasantly surprised at the changes when monitoring the system. Hopes are to have chiller installed and working by May. Parking lot to the west will be completed this summer, which includes updates for tile drainage, due to the church being short on electricity some power to the basement. Alan updated that the drive up drop off which was discussed at last year's Annual Meeting on the west side is not cost effective due to elevation change. He presented a drawing as an example of another idea which would put a door at the coat room entrance on south side of narthex. It would include a handicap accessible doorway, and a cover/canopy. There is enough room to put a driveway between the bell tower and the church building. Still planning a garage where the little storage shed is. Alan recognized Edda Schlund as she was hired as custodian. Changes are being noticed.

Congregational questions were received about the status of the west side of narthex needing attention? Steps up from the south are the most broken up and plan is to remove those and put in a small retainer

wall and a small walk up next to building. There will also be plans for handicap access on the north edge of those narthex steps. Norm recommended each table discuss for a few minutes these ideas being presented.

Questions/Comments from congregation:

Would this be completed in stages? Yes, it would need to be. First would be prep site and driveways.

Many doors already in the church. Why would we add another?

Recommendation to think about the driveway through the area between the bell tower and church, and a ramp entrance on the south side of the narthex steps since they need to be fixed – could the canopy be over the handicap entrance ramp/drop off area there? Then no need for another door. Alan thanked everyone for their comments and ideas and asked that if anyone had any further questions or comments, they could speak to one of the Board of Business members: Alan Janzen, Brad Janzen, Will Epp, Roy Smith, Mark Thieszen, Shawn Peters.

Bev Quiring, Church Council Chair, gave the budget presentation. She noted that there are more substantial changes in the budget, reminding the congregation that a budget is an estimate of expenses. It doesn't mean we plan to spend that much. 2019 income was \$578,353. 2019 we spent 85.97% of the total budget. The following are items Bev specifically noted:

6032 - Messiah budget as Bethesda will present the Messiah in December.

6110 – Pastor search expenses.

6210 & 6211 – Deacons increased their budget and are not using pastor allowances to cover materials.

6410 – Salaries and benefits: Due to possibility of new pastor and some overlap in transition period. Noted in salary calculations, errors were found and worked with pastors to fix that error, as we owed them funds.

Board of Business Special Projects: OFF BUDGET items... already paid for or seeking out additional funds.

Comments or questions: electricity budget increased to help with costs with the new chiller.

Bev moved to approve budget as presented in report. Royce Janzen seconded. Ballot vote.

Offering Schedule Presentation was given by Bev Quiring, Council Chair. It remained the same as last year. It was noted that on the Designated Offering List, Reach International will be removed due to the retirement of Dr. Sam Evans. Bev motioned to approve offering schedule. Steve Michel seconded. Ushers passed out ballots for budget and offering schedule voting. Tellers Jeanette Friesen, Kathy Siebert, Vera Epp and E. James Friesen were dismissed. Norm declared the voting closed.

Celebration of Achievements for the church were read by Norm Yoder. He asked the question: what have we accomplished in the past year?

Board of Deacons: One highlight for the Board of Deacons was the March retirement celebration for Pastor Jim Voth. It felt good to be able to worship and celebrate as a church in this way. The deacons were aware of the gap in our ministry team due to Pastor Jim's retirement and the maternity time of pastor Andrea. They prayed for God's leading in a smooth transition... It has been an answer to prayer for Kara Janzen to fill Pastor Andrea's youth work and for Pastor Eugene Thieszen to fill the position of Interim pastor of pastoral care and worship. They are also thankful that the deacons were able to take on some additional servant roles. Another highlight has been the devotional time that Pastor Andrea and Pastor Seth has brought to the deacon board prior to each of their meetings.

Church Council: The Church Council is grateful that Gene Thieszen and Kara Janzen agreed to fill the interim pastor roles at Bethesda. With the retirement of Pastor Jim in the spring and Pastor Andrea's maternity leave in the fall, Bethesda is fortunate to have Gene and Kara willing to step in and help meet

the pastoral needs of the Bethesda Church family. The council feels fortunate that along with Pastor Seth, Bethesda had and continues to have, a strong pastoral team. Bethesda has been blessed as the recipient of estate gifts. These gifts have provided financial flexibility in considering projects to meet the needs of not only our local church but our church at large and its missions. The Church Council is deeply appreciative of the estate gifts and feels the responsibility to be diligent and mindful in choosing how to best use these fits to encourage others to consider estate designations to Bethesda. One additional comment from the Church Council... they would like to thank everyone for their giving to the ministry of the local church and local projects as well as the ministry of MC USA, Central Plains Mennonite Conference and other related programs of the Mennonite church. To think that the total giving for this past year was \$1,049,188.11 is not only commendable but outstanding! Thanks be to God for the efforts of the Bethesda congregation.

Board of Business: A new church van was purchased to provide transportation for members of the congregation. The pastor offices and preschool rooms were provided new air conditioning units. In addition, the Preschool room was updated with the volunteer help of many people. The addition of Edda Schlund to the church staff.

Board of Service and Outreach: As a board they have operated under the premise that just as there are needs, there are also those willing to step in to help. The challenge for the board has been to find those matches. They are grateful for a list of volunteers whom the committee can tap for help. They have had multiple examples where volunteers were able to address needs or take on projects that have been presented to them. When one is able to make these matches the blessings are mutual. Not only are needs met, but those doing the help find blessings both being able to use their gifts as well as being blessed by working together with those one might not see on a day to day basis. The result is a win/win

Specifically, they saw this happening in coordinating MDS work in Wood River and Comstock, Nebraska, providing rides to treatments, yard work and home maintenance. It is always a joy to see the church at work.

Board of Education: A highlight was the Bible series sessions led by Pastor Seth for the congregation. A second was to be able to facilitate the Bible series led by Mark Nation in conjunction with Henderson Heritage Park's display on pacifism in America. He led studies on Dietrich Bonhoeffer and how his writings and teaching lean toward pacifism.

We as a congregation have accomplished a lot this past year. Thanks to each of you for your part in making all of these things happen.

Announcement was made of extra food available for a donation at the kitchen window.

Vote results – Election: Affirmed  
 Budget: 98% affirmed  
 Offering: 99% affirmed

**Congregational Moderator**

Vacant

**Music Committee**

Wendy Janzen

Kelsey Bergen – will complete Ron Ulrich’s term

**Church Council**

Jay Dee Janzen

Lin Friesen, Congregational Secretary

**Board of Service and Outreach**

Michael Hiebner

Greg Buller

**Board of Business Administration**

Roy Smith

Will Epp

**Board of Education**

Ashton Brown

Amie Friesen

**Sunday School Committee**

Connie Bechtel

Daphne Hall

**Weekday Christian Education Committee**

JoAnn Friesen

Vacant

Vacant

**Sunday Evening Committee**

Valerie Regier

**Student Services & Camping Committee**

Milf Doell

**Preschool Committee**

Roberta Bergen

Norm thanked the youth, sound, tellers, ushers, special thanks to Will Epp, custodians, and those serving on boards and committees over the years. Special thanks to Wendy Janzen who served on Church Council and as Congregational Secretary and to Norm Yoder who has finished his term of Congregational Moderator after serving six years.

Pastor Gene closed in prayer.

Wendy Janzen, Congregational Secretary