

Boulder Mennonite Church

Annual Congregational Meeting Minutes

July 12, 2026

Barry Janzen, Church Chair, opened the meeting with thanks to everyone who has helped BMC through this pastoral transition period. He asked that we all read the reports about all the good work we have done over the past year. For today's meeting, he said that we will focus on next year's budget, and Terry's recommendations for how we move forward with finding a permanent pastor.

Before doing so, he asked that we begin exploring questions about our long-term future as a church. How do we move forward in a time of decreasing attendance, offerings, etc.? How do we "right size" our church property as our primary asset to manage in the future? He asked that we start answering and discussing these questions today. For example, should we consider using our property as a future site for affordable housing (e.g., for special needs community members) as some other local churches have done (e.g., convert to underground parking to enable above ground construction). Unlike many other churches, our location is particularly attractive based on services accessibility (e.g., RTD). This could create real opportunities for our building Monday through Friday for those on-site residents.

Kurt Firnhaber: We can offer a tour of local examples of what this housing construction option could look like.

Mary McKay: Let's keep in mind that this proposal is only one option that Terry described in his recommendations.

Carole Suderman: I think we should look to the Pastoral Search Committee to help define what we need in our pastor and consider Barry's idea as a related but separate, longer-term effort after our new pastor is here.

Cindy Firnhaber: Our current situation with our church property is not sustainable, so I believe on campus affordable housing should be part of what we need to consider as a longer-term vision.

Brenda Fox: Our church vitality has always been dependent on our mutual connections and causes with organizations outside of our local congregation. Our church property presents us with a great opportunity for meeting not just our needs to continue as a congregation but those of our local community.

Bruce Fast introduced and passed out copies of a proposed budget for 2026-27. Our cash reserves are about \$116,000, which we will need to continue to tap to balance our budget. Income and expenses were both lower this past year. We may expect our expenses next year to be greater with a part/full time pastor. The costs will also vary depending on if the pastor is younger and expecting a lower salary vs. an experienced pastor. Property insurance costs have risen, including an 8% increase from last year.

Toni Bachus Diaz: As a property manager, I would be willing to explore whether another insurance company could offer us a more cost-effective policy.

Paul McKay: I moved that we approve the budget which was seconded by others.

Terry Zimmerly: I have met with over fifty folks in my interviews with current and past members. Your core membership is strong and committed. I heard concerns about declining attendance, but most folks are engaged at the level of effort they prefer. It was noted that most folks had read Terry's report.

Terry briefly went over his recommendations in his report. There is some variance in what we think BMC should become. He recognized that past efforts to increase membership were not successful. Amy Zimbelman advised we advertise for new pastoral leadership as soon as possible as there are not a lot pastoral candidates available.

Toni asked that we hold a series of congregational meetings soon that help inform who we want to become including what type of pastoral leadership we need. Brenda and others voiced support for these meetings. Terry suggested we use the consensus building model in our Handbook to make these decisions. He also shared that the number of committees we have is more indicative of a much larger church and perhaps should be reduced.

Terry acknowledged our painful past including the loss of the Stutzman/Mast family, Barry Cox's passing, and Randy's departure as our pastor. He sees these interviews as another step in helping us further process this history. He asked what more we should consider in processing our grief? Is there more we need to do in telling our story given that lay leadership was sworn to confidentiality? Terry does not think it is healthy when the level of knowledge of these experiences has varied significantly among the members.

Toni briefly described the process lay leadership went through in addressing the Stutzman/Mast situation. Brenda agreed with Toni that we should not be re-adjudicating this painful part of our history. However, is there a need to create a safe space for those who are still grieving including those who only recently learned about the details of this situation, etc.?

Mary: What are our next steps toward selecting pastoral leadership? In response to this question, there was some consensus to start these conversations in August after MSMC

Assembly. Becky Neumann proposed we use the 11 am hour to meet. Brenda also suggested we take time to hold a “listening session” to help those who need to continue to grieve.

We agreed to hold our first meeting to discern future pastoral leadership on August 9th at 11 am. Separately, Brenda will propose at least one date for folks to gather to process their residual grief through a “listening session.”

--Douglas Minter