

Boulder Mennonite Church - Congregational Transition Meeting 08/09/26 (11:00am)

Present: Becky Neumann, Steve Voran, Joyce Penner, Cheri Krause, Sandi Sanborn, Paul McKay, Mary McKay, Matt Spiller, Barry Janzen, Kurt Firnhaber, Cindy Firnhaber, Joanna Harrison, Karl Ortman, Anita Jantz, Susan Graber, Douglas Minter, Brenda Fox, Terry Zimmerly, Carol Grasse, Gwen Grasse, Paul Classen, Judy Classen, Bruce Fast, Cornelia Krahn, Michelene Fast, Karen Cox.

1. Becky N. opened and facilitated the meeting.
2. Brenda led in prayer, inviting God to lead us with imagination. Gratitude was expressed for God's faithfulness. Spirit was invited to help us to listen to each other and to God for God's call for what might be our faithful response to God's invitation for us towards justice, mercy, and walking humbly with God in this place and time.
3. Bruce reminded us of our financial situation. We have about \$134,000 in savings, which we are pulling from to meet our expenses. We take in about \$150,000-160,000 in offerings each year. Bruce doesn't expect offering amount to change significantly. The pastoral section of our budget has been about \$120,000 per year. We can continue at this rate for a few more years using up our savings. Number of years hard to predict given a variety of factors.
4. Becky reminded folks that some ideas/thoughts had been shared by email and that copies are available if anyone wants a paper copy. Becky opened discussion for feelings, thoughts, comments and questions by passing the microphone around the circle giving each person a chance to share.

Following is a list of comments that were made:

- a. It makes sense to advertise range of $\frac{3}{4}$ - Full-Time (FT) so as not to steer candidates away from applying if Full-Time vs. Part-Time (FT vs. PT) matters to the candidate.
- b. I'm in favor of $\frac{3}{4}$ from financial point of view, however I'm concerned about how our job description expectations will be met without the pastor working more than $\frac{3}{4}$ time.
- c. I'm in favor of full time with intention to have them help us grow, put out banners to display who/what we are, especially at bus stop, speaking Spanish could help.
- d. Albuquerque's recent pastoral hire wanted only part time. BMC has lots to offer (peace witness, wildfires support, ongoing efforts involving other Mennonite agencies, etc.). Wants to be optimistic about BMC attracting a good leader and growing.
- e. I haven't done research about full-time vs. part-time, but I trust this community. I have gratitude for Pastor Terry stepping in during sad time with Randy leaving and bringing encouragement.
- f. I'm leaning towards $\frac{3}{4}$ time. If the pastor gets an additional $\frac{1}{4}$ time job outside the congregation, then they would have connections with people they could invite to visit BMC.

- g. I'm leaning $\frac{3}{4}$ time. Size of our congregation should fit with part-time. I wonder if it is unrealistic to hope for a pastoral family with small kids.
- h. I agree with advertising $\frac{3}{4}$ -FT with flexibility that affords for possibly getting more applicants to choose from.
- i. What we do as a community matters to me; building school kits, housing Venezuelan family, etc. are important. Continuing with FT for several more years is ok with me. Let's continue to do things that matter together. If we grow, that's great. If we end up closing our doors later, I won't see that as a failure, as what we've done together has been good.
- j. I feel like 75% fits. The thought of growth sounds good, but I wonder if it is just a dream.
- k. 75% pay feels like hard ask of someone given the cost of living in Boulder. Yet I'm still idealistic about asking what God can do through us, wondering if some things that we can't still imagine might be part of our future.
- l. I'm here to listen. I'm not sure I have something to add at this point.
- m. 75% feels like probably all we can handle. I want to keep up our first fruits giving.
- n. List of position items in the job description seems like it might be overwhelming for a person. With our size, 75% is probably doable. Still wanting to hold open possibility of FT.
- o. I like the language of finding someone with a 'welcoming personality'. I appreciate sentences from the written ideas that suggest we find someone who will "inspire us to work to grow the congregation" as that affirms that it isn't just the pastor's responsibility to be reaching out but the congregation needs to be a part of that also. I like the idea of $\frac{3}{4}$ -FT ad flexibility. Maintaining anabaptist values is very important. I want a pastor who really believes and sees that we have things to offer the Boulder community.
- p. I'm one of 4 folks here who are on the search committee to listen carefully (the 5th person couldn't be here today). I'm agreeing with appreciating the flexibility of advertising $\frac{3}{4}$ -FT, not tied to one or other, letting process unfold and see where it takes us. I'm trusting we'll again find good pastoral leadership. Whoever comes, we'll need to meet them where they are (financially, and with other support from congregational lay leadership to prevent burnout).
- q. I was inspired at Assembly with Mike, Todd sharing about their passion ministries. I love that there is no shortage of passion in this congregation and conference in engaging the world in so many ways; the webs of connection are meaningful. Might we be able to find grant monies for possibly 25% position to follow passion(s)? We don't know what's coming in the world, but we know what we have as a resource, we don't seem to be using our resource(s) (building/property?) in best way yet. I'm glad to hear it spoken that closing our doors wouldn't mean failure (we're not here at all costs to uphold the system).
- r. I think it comes down to .75 because of budget but I would certainly advertise $\frac{3}{4}$ -FT range as we don't know what's out there and what might come. I certainly hope we don't end up closing.

- s. It's becoming common for congregations to have to deal with figuring out how pastors can live in high cost of living areas. Can we learn from other congregations (San Francisco, DC, etc.)? Commuting from a less expensive surrounding area is an option.
- t. I like .75-1 flexibility. Grateful to search committees from the past for leading us through finding good people. I am concerned about finding another good leader given that we've been told that the pool of applicants is small. (I don't want a lower quality person who might hurt community). There has been so much good that has happened among us! Maybe we should do a congregational album of our life together.
- u. I appreciate the good people and the rich soil and positive energy and spirit here. I can't imagine folding given this goodness and the possibility of growing. More brainstorming might be good, even considering moving if cost of living is a big concern. I trust that our faith will lead us.
- v. I have such gratitude for the past, and I have hope for the future. Yes, there are challenges, and I don't want to sell ourselves short. I agree with things in the proposals. I think we brace for a real search process, have patience, be open to a range of possible responses. I don't feel we can craft blueprint for what should happen next. I think we need to be open to who wants to walk with us and how.
- w. With our money concerns, maybe we do brainstorming around alternative ways of generating funds. And answers may come to us in walking through the challenges/opportunities together.
- x. I think we need to be open to someone who didn't grow up with anabaptist heritage.
- y. I appreciate Pastor Terry identifying various areas that we might consider focusing on. Given some of the words from bottom of p.5 and top of p.6 of written ideas shared, should we consider changing our name? How can we show people who/what we are? Want people to know that we are a non-traditional and different way of doing church.
- z. In serving on a local environmental committee, we do mailings to our community. Might BMC do that to get the word out about who we are and to be invitational?
- aa. Maybe we don't want to be too prescriptive about the steps we take to grow; we can encourage the candidate to use their unique gifts/skills to put BMC's values out into community. If we go to .75, we need to consider what we will take out of the job description, and if we will fill those responsibilities with volunteers or let those tasks drop? I see a small group of people doing a lot now and I don't want us to get burned out.
- bb. Might we learn from Living Light of Peace in Arvada? Might someone working another job carry pastoring responsibilities also? Should we talk to them about their process and their goals for serving the community around them.
- cc. Former pastor with music gifts, inclusion experiences, arts, didn't bring growth as I thought it might. Some churches are growing (ie Cornerstone). Should we reach out to CU students? (I'm willing to help.)
- dd. A pastor reaching out to a student brought my partner into a church in Boulder.
- ee. We had some success at the old building in the past getting some graduate student participation. An idea then was maybe to meet at a different time to attract undergrad students.

- ff. I see change as an opportunity (even when walking through the change is hard). What is the opportunity? What is the capacity to accept change? Are job descriptions too prescriptive? Are we allowing a new person to do their thing or do we 'need' a job description that lists all of what we want done? Would it be helpful to get some clarity on these questions before committee looks at candidates?
 - gg. When I joined BMC, we had a host of connections in the building and community (Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center, and interfaith campus ministry, a culinary school, Mennonite Voluntary Service participants serving various agencies). Those root systems fed and nurtured me/us. I get juice out of intersections of life and various communities. A pastoral leader with appreciation for those kinds of connections could be helpful.
 - hh. We can keep in mind that our pastor doesn't need to have all skills, as we have gifted lay leaders in various areas of normal congregational ministry.
5. Becky turned our conversation towards possible next steps. Various comments were made. Should we meet again in 2 weeks? Should we activate the Search Committee to drive the process from here? Does the Search Committee have enough input from the congregation to take it from here? Where does authority for decisions lie (3/4 vs. FT, salary, job description, etc.) Would another conversation between Search Committee and Amy Zimbleman be good at this time? Can Susan's professional experience in Human Resources be a resource? Does Terry have direction?
 6. Sense of the group was that Council will take up this 'how to proceed' conversation on this Thursday (8/13/26) at their monthly meeting.
 7. Becky thanked the group for the wonderful participation and sharing!
 8. Brenda closed our gathering with the prayer "Amen! Amen! Amen!"

Notes respectfully recorded by Karen Cox