

Bahia Vista Mennonite Church
Overseers Update to the Congregation
April 13, 2014

1. The Overseers met on Tuesday, April 8, 2014.
2. Chair Nancy I. Yoder reported that the Southeast Mennonite Conference review of the actions of the Overseers to determine if they acted within their rights as designed in the BVMC Bylaws has not yet been received.
3. Treasurer Mitch Helmuth reported that the Finance Committee would be reviewing the Financial Policy for people and groups giving concerts, programs, etc. and clarifying the role of the Finance Committee.
4. Mike Christner reported that the work of the SCS Student Assistance Program Task Force is in process.
5. Pastoral Report: Pastor Roger Shenk

On April 6, 2014 we received nine new members, and baptized twelve people, with four of the twelve responding to a spontaneous invitation. God is good. The service was beautiful and the celebration deafening. Thank you for being a church that rejoices about people putting their faith in Jesus Christ!

We're almost halfway through our forty-day prayer fast. I am pleased with how many people are participating in some way. I believe God is answering our prayers, not because we're fasting, but because we're praying with great devotion. My prayer is for greater personal union with God. I pray the same for my Bahia Vista family. Please join me in also praying for greater love, unity, and vitality. God is listening and prepared to answer.

Of course, there continues to be sadness among us about Larry's departure at the end of this month. But I am hopeful that this long grief process will soon give way to peace. Let's remember that for every hard decision, we sought much counsel and prayed many prayers. That does not make our decisions flawless, but it does give us reason to trust that God has not left us, nor have we left him. I believe that Bahia Vista will not be defined by these struggles, but rather, refined by them.

So, let's not become fearful of making hard decisions, nor so emboldened that we lose our dependency on the Holy Spirit's leading. Let's listen, watch, and learn; we can always do better. And please, let's renew our love for Jesus Christ and his church, and strengthen our conviction about fulfilling the Lord's commission here in Sarasota.

COMMUNITY

Our semester-based 242 groups, such as book-studies, are taking their break in April. But groups that are designed for specific age groups or seasons of life, are continuing on. These are: Little Eden (children), Student Connect (Middle School and High School), the Post (young adults), BV Young Families, and the bible and prayer group attended mostly by seniors.

Our weekly 242 meals will continue through the end of May and then take a break for the summer. We are planning special church-wide family events to help us connect in different settings.

WORSHIP

In May we will begin a rotation of volunteers to help plan and lead the congregational singing in the Traditions service. It is hard to know how to plan given the current uncertainty about who will still be here in this service. I expect that the rumors of people leaving will prove true in some cases, and that will be sad for us all. But I am praying and hopeful that God will lead us through it in love.

Our winter crowd has started returning to the north so the Family service will soon be our larger worship gathering again. I continue to be pleased that so many winter residents attend this service and, just like in the first service, it will be hard to see them go home. But that is the reality of loving Sarasota. It is an honor to minister to and with them. And I look forward to getting to know our year-round people better this spring and summer.

SERVICE

Last Tuesday, April 1st, we hosted our first monthly Service Teams meeting with about one-third of our 264 volunteers attending. Following a brief welcome and vision-casting, we had each of the service teams meet separately with the ministers responsible for their respective areas. Each minister presented the vision as it pertains to their specific ministries area, and then led their teams in discussion around the following questions: (1) "What are we doing that is working?" (2) "What are we doing that needs fixing?" and (3) "How could I, as your directing minister, help you do your best?" The discussions were lively and helpful. We look to do this again in May and will try to do a better job of communicating it to everyone.

CHILDREN

Four children were baptized this past Sunday. I met with two of them ahead of time and confirmed their faith as genuine. Our ministry is bearing fruit! Two additional children responded to the spontaneous invitation, with their parents' approval. It was a beautiful thing. Glory to God.

YOUTH

Six of the twelve people baptized this past Sunday were middle or high school students. Four had attended a baptism class ahead of time. Two were baptized in response to the spontaneous invitation. Their parents and grandparents were already present and very appreciative of being able to experience the moment. God is good.

ADMINISTRATION

We are hosting the Southeast Mennonite Conference annual meeting on October 3rd and 4th. We want to put together a team to help us honor our sister congregations by wowing them.

Offerings are down the first quarter of this year. Our average attendance was also down by about 140 people (14%), so that accounts for some of it. But some people have informed us that they are withholding funds in protest of certain decisions. I understand that for some it is an act of conviction, believing they should not support actions they disagree with. I pray God's clear guidance for them. For others, I am compelled to point out that offerings given or withheld as a means of exerting control reveal a heart that "sows sparingly," and it will also "reap sparingly." That is an issue of faithfulness, and is more important to me than money. But we will continue to work at living within our means.

Nancy I. Yoder, Chair
Nancy B. Yoder, Secretary