

**Bahia Vista Mennonite Church
Overseers Minutes – December 12, 2016
Green Room**

“Befriending all with the love of Christ through community, worship and service.”

Members Present: Wes Oswald (Chair) Dave Kniss
 Danny Remchuk Karissa Miller
 Karl Hees Mitch Helmuth
 Doug Graber

Members Absent: Ben Sprunger – Leave of Absence
 Renee Krabbe

Pastoral Team Present: Roger Shenk Mike Christner
 Shirley Good

Pastoral Team Absent: Dave Denison Kayla Virkus
 Dennis Bontrager

Congregants Present: Dave Polen – newly elected Overseer

1. **Call to Order:** Wes Oswald called the meeting to order at 5:02 pm.
2. **Devotional:** Pastor Roger Shenk invited members to prayer and he closed in prayer.
3. **Minutes:** Chair Wes Oswald declared the November 14th, 2016 minutes approved as distributed with minor name spellings corrected. (Attached)
4. **Open Floor for Members comments :** none. Wes Oswald welcomed Dave Polen, our newly elected Overseer.
5. **New / Unfinished Business:** none
6. **Reports:**
 - a. Pastor Roger reviewed his Annual Report. (attached)
 - b. Finance: the November statement was reviewed. November offerings and contributions were over budget by \$7,330. Year to date through November expenses exceed receipts by \$15,090. Year-to-date receipts are under budget by \$4,705 and disbursements are under budget by \$36,934.

7. Committee Reports:

- a. Finance Committee: none
- b. Membership Policy Task Force: none
- c. Conference Affiliation Task Force: Pastor Roger Sherk reported that he sent a letter to SEC requesting help in defending BVMC's \$16,000 contribution as a good stewardship decision. He has received no response.
- d. Building Fund Committee: none

8. Recommendation:

- a. Sabbatical Leave Policy Revision: Pastor Roger Sherk presented a revised copy of the Sabbatical Leave Policy. MSA Doug Graber, Karissa Miller.
- b. Overseer Appointment: Danny Remchuk recommended that the Overseers appoint Nic King for 2 years to replace the Overseer position being vacated by Karl Hees. MSA Danny Remchuk, Karl Hees.

9. Other Business: Danny Remchuk thanked outgoing Chair, Wes Oswald, and Overseers Mitch Helmuth and Karl Hees for their years of service.

10. Executive Session: none

11. Closing Prayer: Pastor Roger Sherk led in a closing prayer.

12. Adjournment: Wes Oswald declared the Meeting adjourned at 5:40 pm

Upcoming Events:

- Overseers Meeting , Monday, January 9, 2017 at 5pm
- Church Family Meeting, Sunday, February 12, 2017 at 6pm
- Southeast Mennonite Conference Annual Meeting postponed to 2017 (tba)

Secretary, Renee Krabbe

Recording Secretary, Hertha Kornhaus.

If you would like a copy of the attachments listed above, please email Wes Oswald at wmozie@gmail.com

PASTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2016

Bahia Vista Mennonite Church

LOVE

I love the family of believers, and am especially filled with affection and enthusiasm for this family known as Bahia Vista. When I read in Acts 2:42 that the believers gathered constantly for fellowship, study, prayer and worship it invigorates my desire to keep meeting with you, my church family, to grow in our love for Jesus, and for each other. I really believe God has given us something special. And it's something many in Sarasota are desperately searching for and not finding.

They don't necessarily ask for it. In fact, they often ask for something else. In the third chapter of Acts, Peter and John are on their way to meet with their church family and a man who can't walk asks them for money. He's not asking for *everything* they have, just *some* of what they have. He really has no hope that he'll ever walk like them. He just hopes that since (unlike him) they have the ability to earn money, they'll have pity and share some of it with him. So that's what he asks them for. But Peter says, "I've already given my money away, so I can't help you there. But I actually have something better for you—something you're not even asking for—in the name of Jesus Christ, walk!" And then he doesn't just stand back and wait for the man to have faith enough to walk. Instead, he takes him by the hand and helps him up! The *man* didn't have faith; *Peter* did! And as he helped him stand, his feet and ankles became strong by the miraculous power of Jesus. And his life was changed.

As believers, we gather for fellowship, study, prayer and worship and it's life-giving. It should be. But as we come and go, we pass by people asking for a little help: "My marriage is failing." "My health is failing." "My hope is failing." "My decisions have failed me." And even, "My faith has failed me." And, like Peter we may think, "I don't have what they're asking for." But we do have what they need.

As we look toward 2017, I want to challenge us to notice the people around us. Remember: some of the people we know today as men and women of God were, not too long ago, living in the filth of sin. God *does* redeem. He *does* heal. And he asks his Church to extend its hand to help the lame stand. He wants to heal our neighbors, friends, coworkers, and family. And he wants to use Bahia Vista to do it. When we fully accept his love for us, it compels us to befriend others with the gospel. As Paul writes in:

We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others...for Christ's love compels us...From now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view...If anyone is in Christ, the...old has gone, the new is here!...God...reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us [to] implore [others] on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 5:10-11, 14, 16-20 NIV

There are literally thousands of people within fifteen minutes of us who are dead inside. They need what he have. They may be asking for something else, and we should not be dismissive of their felt need. But

at the same time, let's give them the most profound thing we have—new life in Christ. Our mission is to “befriend all with the love of Christ.” Let's look at how we're doing.

LOOKING BACK

In 2016, some events clearly stand out as significant, yet not part of any recognizable trend. Two worth noting are my sabbatical, and changes in staff and leadership.

Sabbatical. This is technically part of a four year pattern. But when we look at 2016, it registers as an anomaly, simply because it's unusual for the church's pastor to be gone three months. But it was good. And not only did we survive it, we thrived in various ways. The staff stepped up and filled in the gaps. We were also able to affirm our connection to three area churches by inviting their pastors to speak. We added people during this time who remained even after the pastor came back.

We did see a moderate decline in attendance during those thirteen weeks, but the net effect was insignificant. The greater significance was that my family and I were renewed in our sense of call, and our affection for Bahia Vista, as was intended. So again, thank you.

Staff & Leadership Changes. In 2016 we had notable changes to staff and leadership positions this year. All were with our blessing, and remain in good standing.

1. Cal Mills retired from his responsibilities as custodian. He continues to volunteer here and there but we are currently without a custodian. We need one, but are determined to live within our means so it is not proposed for next year's budget. Instead, we are looking for volunteers.
2. Gene Yoder retired as Administrator so that he and Fern could become residents at Greencroft in Goshen, Indiana. His responsibilities were assumed by Executive Minister Mike Christner, with the help of Wendy Shenk who moved from Administrative Assistant to Executive Assistant.
3. Cathy Christner retired from her role as front office Administrative Assistant and continues to volunteer in other areas of ministry. At the same time, Kayla Virkus indicated her desire to shift responsibilities from Children's Minister to the front office, while keeping her Special Events Director position. We gave our blessing to this, and are actively searching for a new Children's Minister. The position is being offered at half-time, the same as it has been.
4. We had two unplanned changes in our overseers: Ben Sprunger accepted a position as Interim President for Hesston College. He remains on the overseers board, but has been given a leave of absence until sometime next year. And Wes and Mary Jo Oswald are moving to Texas, which necessitated his resignation as Chair of the Overseers, effective this month.

Other events. Worth noting without further comment:

- We concluded our ministry with Family Promise.
- We participated in Revive Florida.
- We started an active Prayer Ministry.
- We began a semimonthly young adults ministry, “The Gathering.”
- We began a midweek seniors class, “Living Joyfully.”
- We provided the teaching at Sarasota Christian School's high school retreat.
- We changed the locks throughout the building.
- We remodeled the old offices into a Green Room, and dedicated room 11 to childrens ministry.
- We repaired the sewer line running through the kitchen hallway.
- We cut expenses by reducing office hours and adding an automated phone system.

Trends. Trends give us a sense of direction and momentum. We often use numbers to tell the story, even if they do not tell the whole story.

- **Baptism and Membership.** This year we baptized thirteen people, confirmed one, and received seven new members. We also lost three members to death. In the past seven years we have baptized 60 people and received 110 new members.
- **Attendance.** Our median worship attendance (2016 YTD) dropped by 6%. This reflects a 6% decline in the traditions service, and no decline in the modern. As noted, there was a measurable decline in attendance during my sabbatical. However, if we isolate the data from May 16 to August 14, we see that for the rest of the year the attendance was virtually the same.
- **Weekly Per Capita Giving (WPCG).** North American churchgoers give an average of \$26 a week. Last year I reported that we were just under the national average. This year we increased our WPCG from \$25.69 to \$28.05. Additionally, from May through October (which represents our year-round church) we averaged \$30.09, up from \$27.80 in 2015. Noting that our two largest offerings (Generosity Sunday) were taken in February and November, this reflects an increased ownership of our year-round congregation. Further, we continue to thank those who support the church financially during their seasonal attendance.
- **Funerals.** In 2016 we held six funerals which is half of what we experienced in 2015. Five were attenders and three were members. On average, Bahia Vista's pastoral team has conducted twelve funerals a year for the past seven years. It is a sacred privilege. We are sensitive to the reality that many in our community are in various stages of grief, so we continue to host GriefShare to assist people in their grieving process.
- **Children.** Our Sunday morning Kids Church attendance is up 14% over 2015. As in prior years, this includes children from the Korean church which meets on our property at the same hour. We also welcomed new babies this year, and have more on the way. What a joy to have little children among us these days.
- **Youth.** Our youth group has quadrupled in size since mid 2015. In addition to strong attendance on Wednesday nights, we consistently have many attending our Sunday worship services as well.

LOOKING AHEAD

We have become a healthy church that is safe for unhealthy people who want help. This can be messy, but it is good. Our trends reflect this peace and stability. Now we need to rekindle the missional urgency necessary to move from surviving to thriving. I believe 2017 is a year to press in and work through some necessary changes.

Affiliation. The Southeast Mennonite Conference is in transition. In January, the delegates called a task force together to process matters pertaining to the future of the conference. We presented a set of recommendations, not the least of which was a declaration of intent to separate from Mennonite Church USA should the faith statement or membership guidelines ever be changed to normalize sexual immorality. The conference's October annual meeting was canceled due to a hurricane, and is rescheduled for sometime in the spring. Bahia Vista provides the largest financial support at over \$1,300 a month. We continue to value loyalty. At the same time, this year we should prayerfully evaluate the stewardship of our mission resources in this regard.

Membership. Early this year I introduced the concept of an annual covenant style membership. We should look further into what it means to be a member at Bahia Vista. As I noted during the Unity series,

we are multiethnic and multid denominational, gathered around one faith: Jesus is Lord! I sensed a strong “amen” from the church. Somehow this should be affirmed by who or what we call church family members.

Rebranding. Several years ago *Mennonite Mutual Aid* rebranded itself as *Everence* in order to answer the confusion about whether a person had to be Mennonite to bank there. This year *Bay Shore Mennonite* became *Bayshore Church* for the same reason. The growing consensus is that overt denominational branding is a sizable barrier to reaching unchurched people in American culture these days. It’s not hard to make a case for needing to rebrand *Bahia Vista Mennonite Church* to communicate that a person doesn’t have to be Mennonite to come here. What’s hard is having the discussion without it being heard as becoming “non-Mennonite.” Would it be strategically advisable to change our name so that people don’t have to wonder if they’re allowed to come here? Is it possible to “take Mennonite out of the name” without changing who we are or what we believe as a church? Many have been asking these questions unofficially for years. I think we’ll be ready in 2017 to begin an open dialog about it.

Renovations. In the last several years we spent time and money developing a much needed master plan for our campus. It was approved by the county a couple years ago, but we delayed taking it further because we needed to focus on restoring health to our congregation in other ways. As I said last year, the joy has returned. This year it proved to be stable. I think we should start serious discussions about renovating this facility so that it again meets the needs of the many people God wants to bring in the coming decades.

SUMMARY

We are more than just a church; we are a mission outpost compelled by Christ’s love. This year we had many opportunities to give and receive the love of Christ. And we did it well. Next year we will have many opportunities to believe in the impossible—to reach up and out, to do even greater things than these. And I believe that, as we do, we will see people delivered in amazing ways that can only be described as miraculous. At the same time, we will also have many opportunities to doubt—to shrink back from trying anything significant. We will certainly hear stories of failure because, as we read in 2 Corinthians 4:4, “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

Not everyone will accept our message, but Jesus is Lord! That is our one theology, our one spirituality, and our one mission that unites us with all believers throughout history. This is the confession that defines us: “JESUS IS LORD!”

With faith, hope, and love,



Roger Shenk, Pastor
December 4, 2016