

**College Mennonite Church
Minutes – Congregational Meeting
March 13, 2016**

1. **Opening:** Max Mertz, congregational moderator, convened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. and led in an opening prayer. He introduced the agenda for the meeting.
2. Don Garber reviewed the **minutes** of the congregational meeting of Nov. 22, 2015, which were approved.
3. Max Mertz introduced a motion from the Church Board to **extend the terms of Daniel and Talashia Keim Yoder** from December 2016 through June 2017. The sabbatical absence of the pastoral team leader this summer necessitates adjusting the normal term review schedule. Max invited discussion and, there being none, called for a voice vote. The motion was approved with no negative votes.
4. Max Mertz highlighted the report of **Phil Waite’s term review**, which had been distributed with the agenda. He introduced the following motion: “The Church Board unanimously recommends that College Mennonite Church call Phil Waite to a second five-year term as pastoral team leader, beginning June 1, 2016.”

In the discussion that followed, 13 participants offered comments:

In a prepared statement, *Leonard Gross* voiced detailed concerns about Phil’s commitment to an Anabaptist-Mennonite understanding of Scripture and associated concerns related to worship practices and sermon themes, his impact on drawing and keeping younger participants, his willingness to give and receive counsel, and his leadership abilities.

Speaking personally from his experience as a board member and volunteer pastor, *Ron Kennel* affirmed Phil’s ministry as being “very much within the Anabaptist tradition.” He commented on Phil’s self-awareness of his strengths and limitations and observed that Phil’s preaching, theological leadership, and visioning are valuable to CMC.

Don Blosser wondered whether some of Leonard’s concerns about worship practices and sermon themes were matters for Worship Commission rather than for Phil. He noted that our difficulty in attracting and keeping younger people predated Phil’s arrival. He encouraged Phil to be forthright in what he believes, rather than holding back due to the diversity of the congregation. [Carl Rutt of the Worship Commission clarified that the Vision Leadership Team plans worship themes and Scripture texts, not the commission. Joe Springer clarified that, although CMC has sometimes followed the Revised Common Lectionary, we have not routinely used the lectionary for a while.]

Sarah Yoder noted that, although she is not yet a member, she is pleased with the way that the congregation welcomes young families. Phil responded to concerns she voiced and helped implement changes in children’s nurture activities.

Justin Gillette observed that Phil understands that people come from different viewpoints and has been a blessing to his young family.

John Smith said that he is comfortable with the way that Phil presents Anabaptist understandings.

Al Graber commented that there is always something to ponder in Phil’s sermons, and he speaks to non-church-going visitors.

Elton Bomberger noted that during his involvement in Mennonite mission work, he was often asked what Anabaptist Mennonites are—it’s not an easy question to answer. Church leaders need to listen to the people around them and to the voice of God. Elton said that he believes that Phil is walking in the Spirit.

Picking up on criticisms voiced by Leonard and Don, *Tim Lichti* observed that we can respond to the expression, “The word of the Lord,” according to our own understandings; for Tim, it is a reminder that Jesus came to reveal God. The term review summary identified areas of growth, which is part of the process of giving and receiving counsel. Current best practices suggest that it is better not to align the review process with a vote on continuing a pastor’s call.

Sam Troyer recalled that, when Phil came, his wife was undergoing cancer treatments. Upon encountering them at the hospital, Phil reached out to them even though they hadn’t yet been introduced. Sam appreciates Phil’s friendship and the different perspectives he brings.

Wilbur Birky strongly affirmed Phil’s preaching. Phil is an effective leader—out in front of us, yet one of us. He has been open and helpful when Wilbur seeks counsel.

Martin Gunawan expressed appreciation for Phil’s response when Martin shared his passion for new music; Phil’s encouragement and support helped lead to New Song. Martin admitted that, with English not being his first language and the distractions of young children, he misses a lot of the meaning in Phil’s sermons; he would welcome more practical examples.

Rachel Hartzler testified that, as a volunteer pastor, she has experienced Phil as open to giving and receiving counsel.

After a time of silent reflection, Max led in prayer and then invited members to mark their ballots.

5. Joe Springer presented an update on **grant-funded congregational renewal activities** planned for the time when Phil Waite is pursuing personal renewal activities, reflecting on the theological streams that have influenced him. Congregational “Grafted In” activities include hosting two pastors-in-residence, intercultural training and assessment with Gilberto Perez and others from the Center for Intercultural and International Education of Goshen College, and reflecting on how we too have been impacted by various streams of theology. Madeline Maldonado, pastor of our sister congregation Iglesia Menonita Arca de Salvación in Fort Myers, Fla., will be with us during June, and later we anticipate hosting Alix Lozano, Colombian Anabaptist theologian, teacher, and pastor.
6. Carol Ebersole and Sue Plank presented an update from the **Strategic Planning Facilitation Team**, highlighting where we’ve been and where we’re going. At the Jan. 24 planning meeting, three strategic priorities were identified—hospitality and welcoming, spiritual formation and discipleship, and community and unity. At the Feb. 20 planning retreat, table groups began identifying goals to support each of these priorities. In preparation for the meeting this coming Wednesday, March 16, the congregation is invited to reflect whether the consolidated goals and action ideas from the retreat accurately represent the strategic interests and energy of the congregation in anticipation of approving them at the next congregational meeting on April 17.

7. Becky Horst announced that a **celebration of ministry for Lee and Susan Dengler** in anticipation of their retirement is planned for the second hour on Sunday, April 17.
8. **Listening/discerning as a congregation:** Table groups were invited to name affirmations, questions, and concerns related to our life together as a church community. [Summary report available in literature racks April 4]
9. Max Mertz announced the **ballot results** (including absentee ballots) of the vote to call Phil Waite: 185 affirmative, 27 negative; the motion is passed with an 87 percent majority. Max has communicated this result to Phil; Phil will now discern his response to the congregation's invitation for a 2nd 5-year term and the Board will then report the response to the congregation. [Reported Phil's acceptance in an announcement in literature boxes April 4.]
10. The meeting was **adjourned** about 7:30 p.m. with the singing of "Gentle Shepherd" led by Becky Horst. Attendance: 118.

Recorder: Don Garber