

Altona Mennonite Church 2021 Annual General Meeting – Sunday, March 13, 2022 1:00 pm

Present: Albert Bergen, Loren Braul, Gina Enns, Marilyn Houser Hamm, Ray Hamm, Lori Hiebert, Andrea Hildebrand, Crystal Kehler, Dan Kehler, Dale Klassen, Sandra Klassen, Margruite Krahn, Anne Loewen, Bill Loewen, Elaine Loewen, Ken Loewen, Karen Martens, Peggy Martens, Robert Martens, Doreen Mierau, Ray Mierau, Marne Mierau Friesen, Mick Friesen, Kevin Neufeld, Nancy Neufeld, Marlene Plett, Dave Regehr, Hildie Regehr, Norma Thiessen

1. Call to Order – Loren Braul called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm
2. Opening – Dan Kehler
 - Every ending is a new beginning, the nature of life... Ecclesiastes 3:1 "For everything is a season, and time for matter under heaven".
 - only 25% of our services this past year were in-person. We learned new ways of connection and learning.
 - We cannot keep using last year's language to move forward in this year. We need a new language.
 - ended with a prayer for centering, understanding, boldness during this meeting
3. Quorum - needed one third of resident membership - met
4. Agenda
 - a. Additions, Changes – to the numbering in the book regarding the reports
 - b. Motion to Adopt the Agenda: Moved by Dale Klassen, Seconded by Elaine Loewen CARRIED
5. Appointments – Listening Committee - Robert & Peggy Martens, Nancy Neufeld
6. Minutes of February 7, 2021 Annual General Meeting
 - c. Motion to Adopt minutes as circulated: Moved by Peggy Martens, Seconded by Ray Mierau CARRIED
 - d. Business Arising - none
7. Reports (*Reports 7.1-7.6 to be adopted as a group*)
 - 7.1 Moderator – Loren Braul
 - Coming to a time where our patience, energy are exhausted.
 - What we do is affected by what we know at the time.
 - How do we continue without knowing what exactly the next step is.
 - Acknowledged Crystal's role in supporting Dan's ministry.
 - Thanked Dan for his leadership and his thoughtful sermons in 12 years at AMC.
 - There will be a more formal farewell in April.
 - 7.2 Pastor – Dan Kehler
 - "I'm not dead yet" in response to Loren's words of thanks.
 - resumed full time pastor role after mental health leave. 2021 was a difficult year.
 - People are concerned about how the technology will affect attendance. We have moved from recording to live-streaming!
 - Small group meetings led by deacons and others were good. Zoom communion created a longing for more connection.
 - Cherish the times we can be together. We gather, this in itself, is a witness to others.
 - Plan to continue to worship here in the future.
 - Is encouraged by the search committee's proposal

7.3 Worship Committee – Lori Dueck – presented by Marne Mierau Friesen

- Thank you to everyone who has been involved in the worship services this year, during this interesting year, often needing to switch gears with very short notice.
- Thank you to the congregation for the grace shown as the worship committee used different resources available.
- **There is a need for committee members going forward.** Harry Wiens has moved to Winnipeg, Lori Dueck is also ending her term. Also if you have ideas for a service, are willing to host a yard service, are willing to speak on a Sunday...

7.4 Formation Committee – Sandra Klassen

- another minimal year. Did connect with the children in their homes, bringing gifts, activity packets.
- tried an activity table in the back of the sanctuary for services.
- working to involve the children more in the Sunday worship services

7.5 Trustees – Dale Klassen/Sandra Klassen

- Church is quiet.
- Many thanks to Bill Loewen and Robert Martens for their work with the ramp and landscaping, Karey Hildebrand for the electrical, Ken Loewen for repurposing the railings and adding his artwork.
- A dedication will be planned for a warmer day.

7.6 Conference Reports

1. MC Manitoba – in the book
2. MC Canada – in the book
 - Dan Kehler added the note about the Be It Resolved challenge. Quite a few AMC members were part of the hundred involved.

7.7 Motion to Adopt Reports: Moved by Andrea Hildebrand, Seconded by Marilyn Houser Hamm CARRIED

8. Treasurer Report – Norma Thiessen

8.1 2021 Report

- The Bridge grant was very helpful in covering some of our expenses.
- Sabbatical Fund was not contributed to in 2021
- Bequest fund is almost empty
- Giving patterns, and average contributions per person were noted.
- Some of our founding members contributed to the ramp through their bequests.
- Corrected some minor numbers, totals didn't change
- Steps were not in the budget, but were covered with new designated gifts.
- Motion to adopt the financial statements: Moved by Norma Thiessen, Seconded by Dave Regehr
CARRIED

8.2 2022 Budget Proposal

- Again, no contribution to the Sabbatical fund this year as we are transitioning
- The pastor salary is an estimate, we will be without a pastor for a number of months, our interim pastor will not be full time.
- Question if some of that monies would be used by the Worship Committee – this is the plan.

8.3 Budget Vote

- Motion to adopt the proposed budget – Moved by Norma Thiessen, Seconded by Dale Klassen
CARRIED

9. Community Connections Church – read in the book, presented as information

- 9.1 Mennonite Collegiate Institute
- 9.2 Gardens on Tenth
- 9.3 Mennonite Central Committee
- 9.4 Eden Health Care Services
- 9.5 Abundance Canada – see abundance.ca/resources/annual-reports/
- 9.6 Youth for Christ – The Station
- 9.7 Rhineland Food Bank

10. Altona Mennonite Church in the mirror – presented as information

- 10.1 2021 Year at a Glance
- 10.2 AMC Statistical Report
(Later corrected to say that Mick and Marne Mierau Friesen actually joined in 2020, not 2021.)

11. Nominations and Elections

- 11.1 Cumulative Position Listing
- 11.2 Nominations and Elections
 - Loren Braul is continuing as AMC Moderator - Marilyn Houser Hamm expressed thanks to Loren Braul for leading us through these past years.
 - Norma Thiessen will continue as treasurer, unless someone else would like to
 - Acknowledgment of the many who aren't officially part of a committee who keep the church energized.

Need two people for the Worship Committee – please consider and step forward

Motion to accept the nominations: Moved by Lori Hiebert, Seconded by Ray Hamm CARRIED

12. Consideration and Approval of Interim Pastor Proposal

The Interim Search committee comprised of Loren Braul, Andrea Hildebrand, Kim Batchelor, Loren Hiebert. The committee reached out to the Conference for assistance. Several names were presented as pastors who have interim pastoral training.

The committee is recommending John Klassen, the long time lead pastor at Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Winkler, and present interim pastor in Arnaud Mennonite Church. John has completed specific training in interim pastoring and is a proponent of the "intentional" interim pastor, being someone who facilitates a congregation's reflection on congregational life and what leadership needs are required to service the congregation.

Leadership Committee has reviewed the work of the Search Committee and is recommending that AMC proceed with hiring John on the terms set out in the Memorandum of Understanding which was sent to the congregation in an email.

John Klassen outlined some of the steps he anticipates during the term that reflect his understanding of the upcoming process.

1. Listening and learning.

- During the first 2-3 months I (John) wish to visit with every AMC member and participant. I want to do this so I get to know the persons whom I am serving as a pastor but also to have them share stories, reflections about AMC, and identify what they see as strengths, growth areas, and opportunities for this congregation.

- Many of these visits will be with couples or individuals; if some are more comfortable doing so in small

groups (eg. Two or three widows; two or three youth), I'm certainly open to that as well.

2. Gathering themes and reflecting them back to Leadership and possibly to the Congregation as a whole

- After listening to the themes that emerge in my conversations, I would prepare a report for the Leadership Council which identifies what I am observing and tests this with their lived experience.

- I expect it might identify issues that need to be worked at by the congregation as well as hopes and visions as we consider moving forward.

3. Work that grows out of the Listening and Learning time (I would provide leadership)

- Some of the things that often emerge include:

- ~ Re-examining or redoing the church's vision statement

- ~ Exploring whether your structure still serves you well. Sometimes churches that are decreasing in style need to re-structure rather than keeping the same structure you had when you were larger.

- ~ Exploring who AMC is and who AMC wants to be; "what might the next chapter of AMC looklike?"

- ~ Hopefully not, but sometimes "skeletons" appear in the listening process; issues or hurts are identified that require healing and/or reconciliation.

- ~ Often this stage also includes some rituals – perhaps story telling of the church's history, perhaps a grieving exercise (grieving what is no longer); perhaps a recommitment covenant of some sort

- ~ This section was hard to write because what needs to be worked on depends on what is identified.

4. Follow-up Work (the congregation always does the work but the Intentional Interim Pastor serves as a guide and a resource)

- If there is a new vision, it will involve taking steps in that direction

- Discerning a job description and beginning a search for your next longer term pastor

- Other Items that emerge

Motion to accept the memorandum of understanding regarding the interim pastor John Klassen: Moved by Elaine Loewen, Seconded by Gina Enns CARRIED

Discussion groups on the following topics/themes and the comments:

-The economics of church – how are we prioritizing our expenses, can we support a full-time pastor, can we share our building

- Full-time/mostly full-time as priority

- economic considerations may support part-time pastoring, for a time at least

- more attractive position for candidates

- Sharing building has challenges – would there be a concern about "who left the lights on?"

- great place to share food, serve food - sacramental

- The community of church - how are we developing and nurturing relationships between congregants and welcoming new congregants

- many people lost as our congregation is aging

- fringe connection – Sunday School children and families

- The future of church – how are we integrating technology into our services and other church services

- appreciating the livestream, does this change the sharing time? The link is ONLY available if you get to it through our church website.

- We often look back, remembering/lamenting what was, but we need to embrace the reality of moving forward.

- added AMC's interaction with the larger community in Altona and Southern Manitoba and beyond

As John Klassen's anticipated start date is only August 1, 2022, we brainstormed ways to bridge the gap.

Ideas from further small group discussion:

- sharing Sundays on specific topics "God speaking...", encourage people from our congregation to speak
- keep virtual sermons from elsewhere to a minimum, we need to be with each other even if it doesn't include a sermon, although care needed so we don't just "support our biases"
- Maybe don't need services on the long weekends – Canada Day, August long
- an "under the cottonwood tree" Sunday
- we have to re-establish connection with each other so we can move forward together
- meal/service combination
- if you are willing to speak, please volunteer your ideas
- While it is good to socialize, we are called to worship
- Canadian assembly, Mennonite World Conference happen this summer. There is information for us there.

13. Other Business - none

14. Closing

Motion to adjourn: Moved by Dale Klassen, Seconded by Nancy Neufeld CARRIED

15. Adjournment at 3:03 pm

Minutes recorded by Lori Hiebert, with assistance by Loren Brul