**Governance Task Force**

Report to FMC Annual Meeting

Sunday, Sept 9, 2018

**A New Path Together**

Where we came from --

* Early conversations emerged from the congregational discernment process in 2016. From these congregational meetings the 5 Priorities emerged.
* Governance Task Force (GTF) was chartered by Church Council in November 2017 to “to lead us in a process of examination of our current structure for accomplishing our vision, purpose and priorities. Certainly exploring where vitality and life can be found and identifying challenges and concerns will be part of this work. In addition, GTF will deliberately work to encourage and free us as a congregation to experiment with new ideas to effectively accomplish our vision, purpose and priorities, and will also lead us in ways of evaluating their effectiveness. The GTF will provide a report and further recommendations at the end of 12-18 months.”
  + Gerald Mast, Greg Hartzler, and Elizabeth Kelly appointed by Council to join Pastor Wanda in this work.
* We first met after Easter in 2018 and have had 10 meetings, made 2 formal reports to Council, and provided bulletin announcements and information in Menno-Life.
* During our meetings we prayed, discussed the book: Governance and Ministry by Dan Hotchkiss on governance change, sought to understand the present challenges of our congregation, and worked to develop a process by which the congregation could discover what forms of governance and ministry are most fitting for us. (Honestly, we sometimes felt overwhelmed by the information, emerging awareness of the possibilities and discernment of next-steps!)
* We invited Marathana Prothro to sit with us and help us begin to organize our thinking and imagining. We used this reflection as a springboard for planning the Commissions Retreat which was affirmed by Council in July.

The retreat, *A New Path Together*, was held yesterday at Grace Mennonite Church. About 45 members of the congregation attended – nearly evenly divided between Commission members and Deacons, and members of the congregation who were interested in attending. At least 15 others expressed interest but were not able to attend due to prior commitments.

Marathana guided us through intentional education and discussion about governance and ministry, the ways they support one another in a church’s mission, and started us thinking about how the day’s work might inform our current structures and be a catalyst for ongoing discernment. She offered illustrations from other Mennonite congregations that have been through this process, each developing their own governance and ministry model over a time of discernment, trial and error experimentation with new structures, and insight of the Holy Spirit.

This workshop is an early step in the process we have envisioned. We are eager for the broader congregation to become acquainted with the things we have been learning so that we can all together make some informed and critically important decisions about the future of our congregation’s ministry and governance.

What happens next?

* The information generated in table groups at the retreat will be summarized and disseminated to the groups and the congregation, but not today!
* Copies of Governance and Ministry will remain available in the church office for anyone to check out and read.
* GTF will be in conversation with Council and commissions as they begin their work of organizing and reflecting on the important task of identifying work that is governance and work that is ministry. Yesterday each group committed to identify goals based on essentials and priorities (each commission choosing one or two priorities) and draft governance/ministry goals related to those priorities.
* Structure Council meetings in a way that makes room for processing emerging visions (i.e. consent agenda/discussion agenda) and engagement with commissions and their work.
* At the January congregational meeting share a report to the congregation on progress made.
* Spring 2019: first invitation to meeting process of open questions with congregation that Council is beginning to identify. We anticipate initiating 1 or 2 congregational gatherings to share and discuss.

We are deeply grateful for:

* Marathana’s companionship in planning and facilitating the retreat.
* Kerry Bush designing a graphic logo that helps us remember that this is a new path and one we make together.
* Grace Mennonite for space to “get away” and have uninterrupted time to do this work.
* For people who helped us organize the day, prepare the food, the set-up and clean-up. Mary Pannabecker Steiner helped us keep floating details and event planning in order.
* Senior High Youth who gave of their time and energy to provide childcare on a rainy day!
* And we continue to be awed by the enthusiasm and support for this important congregational work.

*~ Elizabeth Kelly, Greg Hartzler, Gerald Mast, Wanda Stopher.*