

Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren
Church Board Retreat Minutes
Saturday, January 28, 2023, 9:30 AM
Young Center at Elizabethtown College & via Zoom

In Attendance: Alyssa Cross (Clerk), Jeff Eisenbise (Chair), Kevin Engle (Chair Elect), Pastor Pam Reist, Pastor Jason Haldeman, Pastor Naomi Kraenbring, Duane Hernley, Don Ziegler, Lois Herr, Gina Strouse, Ellen Flury, Allison Bradley, Lynne Hockley, Dave Leiter, Ann Pineda Ziegler, Karen Ungemach, Sandra Flanagan, Kurt DeGoede, Kirk Kreider, Ken Shaffer, Vida Snavely, Craig Coble

Facilitators, Guides, & Observers: Tom Longenecker, Paul Brubaker, Judith Gible, JulieAnn Keith, David Miron (Samaritan Counseling Center)

I.	<p>Centering Paul Brubaker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul opened the meeting with a focus on the idea of holiness; of being set aside for use by God. We who are participating in this meeting today are holy. • Litany for community peace <i>We seek your wisdom in the life we share, holy God. Tutor us to be quick to listen beyond words; to listen without building silent arguments; to listen across barriers of language and style; to listen with a will to understand. Teach us to be slow to speak. Inhibit us from using words that make impetuous judgments; Words that spring forth in self-defense; words that speak truth but without love; words that mask truth with caricatures of love. Transform us that we may be slow to anger. Temper us. Let our anger not explode in stoked bitterness. Let it not erupt in fearful denial or irritation, but let it propel us toward greater integrity, care, and justice. Grant us your spirit as guide, we pray. Amen.</i> 						
II.	<p>Comments Jeff Eisenbise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of group facilitators and observers of today's meeting. David Miron is a partnering consultant from Samaritan Counseling Center and will be observing our session today and offering feedback. • Expressions Commission: Following Board approval at the December meeting, the Expressions commission is officially reinstated. Commission members are Kurt DeGoede, Kirk Kreider, and Amy Engle. • Pastoral team transition: We have immediate short term pastoral needs as of the end of May. The Leadership Team, with the assistance of the District Executive, is researching and contacting possible viable candidates for an interim assignment. It is envisioned that a Pastoral Search Committee will need to be called to address the long term Pastoral needs of the congregation. 						
III.	<p>Facilitated Small Group Sessions Naomi Kraenbring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retreat attendees came prepared having read the feedback from the congregational listening sessions. Groups were tasked with questions driving at figuring out who we are, where we are going, and where God is working. • Groups were reminded: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Our faith community now consists of both in-person and online members who want to fully participate in the worship and work of the community ○ The focus should be on the findings from the fall congregational listening sessions, and not personal preferences or favored projects ○ There will be an empty seat in each group to remind us of God's presence with us and that God will guide our discussions if we give Love a seat and a voice in our circles. 						
IV.	<p>Share Observations of Listening Sessions Naomi Kraenbring</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Task 1: Identify common themes from individual observations of the prominent/foundational themes of this faith community's identity. Distill the group's observations into a one-line description of the Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren faith community.</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">Group 1</td> <td>We see ourselves as hopeful but still in recovery and looking forward with a desire to be relevant to the world around us.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Group 2</td> <td>We are a diverse congregation that are seeking balance in multiple ways as we continue on our journey to follow the radical love of Jesus in the Brethren tradition as we address needs in our current culture.</td> </tr> </table>	Task 1: Identify common themes from individual observations of the prominent/foundational themes of this faith community's identity. Distill the group's observations into a one-line description of the Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren faith community.		Group 1	We see ourselves as hopeful but still in recovery and looking forward with a desire to be relevant to the world around us.	Group 2	We are a diverse congregation that are seeking balance in multiple ways as we continue on our journey to follow the radical love of Jesus in the Brethren tradition as we address needs in our current culture.
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Group 3	God calls us to be an inviting community with an open/questioning theological stance working to serve all creation (people and earth) as the hands and feet of God.
Group 4	Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren is a deeply relational holy community grounded in hope dedicated to service and justice for our neighbors in the example of Jesus.

Task 2: Develop a list of the three most critical needs for this faith community based on who we are.

Group 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information sharing (technology, transparency). An understanding of our demographics. Relevance; How to apply God's word to our lives. Sound structure: The physical building as well organizational structure, and the structure of our spirituality.
Group 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and maintain relationships (young people, online, broader Elizabethtown community, senior care, witness, and outreach) More involvement (kids club, how we structure volunteerism to better fit our lives) Working with technology
Group 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eye towards younger demographics - spiritual engagement building connection within community. increased visibility/invitation to outside community
Group 4	

Task 3: Develop a list of the three most desirable skills/gifts of long-term staff to meet those needs.

Group 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong communicator; dynamic preacher/teacher Creative and energetic; Think out of the box; Able to integrate Do we need a separate manager role? Visionary gifts may not necessarily align with or allow time for day-to-day logistic and business management needs.
Group 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong pastoral team should include at least 1 woman. Does not necessarily need to come from a Brethren background, but should understand who we are as Brethren. Be brave enough to take a stance Involved in pastoral care and working with children and youth ministry
Group 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community-focused: both outward looking and nurturing the community within Gifted in theological/spiritual development Operational/Executive skills. Important to have a non-siloed job description.
Group 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Casting a prophetic vision Shepherding - identifying, encouraging, and empowering the gifts found in our community Exploring and expanding into creative new areas of building an inclusive spiritual community/home outside of the traditional ways we have done church.

V.	<p>Whole Group Debriefing & Consensus Building Naomi Kraenbring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our intention was to come to one overall group consensus on these items following our time of sharing but we did not have enough time to do that today. We'll continue to work at this. <p>David Miron's Impressions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impressed by the careful and thoughtful way this event was put together. This group has a respectful way of relating to one another. Felt welcome and a sense of inclusiveness. Appreciated the intention in asking for God's presence and creating a space for that. Noticed some variety of age. Recognized that the role of this board is to take the aspirations of the congregation and make something of it.
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	<p>Things to think about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focus on understanding the role and function of leadership in our specific congregation. Some styles of leadership work better or not with the aspirations you have as a congregation. Consider the balancing process of polarity management: when is the congregation in charge and when is the pastor or leadership team in charge of doing things. Identify the strengths, limitations of each of those. Make yourself conscious of those dynamics. Periodically look at what is working and what is not in terms of where you want to be as a congregation. ● How are decisions going to be made? What decisions require deep work and engagement and consensus and which ones do not? Personalities will filter into that. Some need immediate answers and others are more comfortable searching for a longer time. Create guidelines on circumstances when congregation needs to be involved in decision making vs. when it does not. ● Consider the opportunity for engagement in understanding leadership function. How does pastoral care function? There was concern about burnout. Can others in designated roles also be considered to fulfill this need? Can expectations be managed (i.e. some only feel cared for if visited by a pastor specifically)? ● Community was mentioned several times. Can have specific meaning or broad meaning. To the extent that you want to be relevant to that community, can you invite persons in the community (non-members) to engage with you (mayor, borough leadership, college, etc.) ● What does diversity mean in the context of this congregation? Is it the same as diversity in the community? ● You have a number of people who have gifts of facilitation. Recognize that competency and skill set within your congregation and continue to provide opportunities for people to exercise that. <p>Jeff's Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What gives me hope is the competency, maturity, and giftedness of this congregation. This is a fantastic group of people that does the work well and willingly and with a generous spirit. In general we don't grind axes at the expense of someone else. That is a gift. ● We will get through this time of transition and then we'll be in another phase of transition. That's life. We'll get through it together.
VI.	<p>Closing JulieAnn Keith</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Julie led the group in a reflective and centering closing exercise.

Respectfully submitted,
Alyssa Cross (Clerk)
January 30, 2023