

Meeting of the Official Board of Meridian Pastoral Charge

Nov. 10, 2020 7:00pm

Present: Judy Manness, Jane Manness, Diane Trudeau, Michele Ammeter, Rev. James deBeer, Malcolm Kirkpatrick, Julie Ringash, Georges Cormier, Ron Manness, Jamie Scharf, Margaret Porter, Nancy Langlois

Rev. James - opening prayer

Rev. James asks us to call to mind all the people we wish to lift up to God during this pandemic.

MOTION Michele/Ron - adopt the agenda as circulated carried

Review of minutes from September 8, 2020 meeting

MOTION Georges/Jane - accept the minutes of the September 8, 2020 meeting as circulated. Carried

REPORTS

Minister's Report

Since our last meeting, we resumed in-person worship at all three congregations in September. We have tried to provide different ways in which people can worship and stay connected in a safe and meaningful way, abiding by public health protocols and respecting the varying comfort levels amongst the different members of our congregations. Some have expressed they will likely not return to in-person worship until there is a drastic change in the state of the pandemic (such as when a vaccine is available). While others are enthusiastic to resume full worship services 'pre-pandemic style'. It has been a challenge to provide meaningful pastoral care and worship opportunities for everyone but with a combination of in-person worship (with safety protocols), YouTube worship videos, printed and delivered Orders of Service (particularly Starbuck), we're providing a variety of options.

This was also our first fall without tapping into pulpit supply and we had one weekend where Avonlea had a lay-person led service which, judged by feedback, went well. Once Trinity Lutheran suspended in-person worship at the end of September, Starbuck United was no longer able to gather in-person (outside was no longer possible due to the weather). So I was able to lead the services at Avonlea that would have otherwise been lay-person led.

As we are new in the red (critical) pandemic alert status, in-person worship has again been suspended in all three congregations, and worship services are fully online as well as zoom fellowship.

Sunday school has still not resumed in-person yet, nor, it appears, will be resuming for some time still. I have made Children's time videos since September but I often struggle to come up with things that might appeal to kids of all ages (from very young to young adults) and I'm unsure if I'm keeping the older kids interested. Feedback and suggestions are appreciated.

I truly appreciate all the efforts being made by so many in our congregations to reach out to each other and ensure people are thought of and staying connected.

This upcoming Sunday (the Sunday before Remembrance Day) I've elected to present a Remembrance themed service as many if not all of us will be unable to attend an in-person service on Remembrance Day. Rev. James reminds us that he is always open to feedback.

Rev. James deBeer

Worship report

There is no Worship committee report because the committee meets 1 per year. For a report on that meeting please refer to the September Board Minutes.

Governance Document Committee Report

The governance documents were revised as per the September board meeting and submitted to the Region Pastoral Relations Committee. Unfortunately, they were working on the covenants at the time and have been unable to review the document in time for this meeting. Lynne hopes to have it back to us by the end of the month.

Submitted by Michele Ammeter

M&P Committee report

The Meridian Board chair requested that the Ministry and Personal (M&P) committee have a meeting this fall, but between waiting for harvest to be completed and the worsening pandemic conditions a meeting has not called.

I have been in contact with Rev. James and he has no concerns other than the challenges of provided worship leadership during a pandemic.

I will call a M&P committee meeting as soon as it is feasible.

If there are any M&P concerns please speak to a member of the M&P committee.

Thank you to Rev. James for providing meaningful worship in person and online. Secretary position has been paused per decision at Sept. 8th meeting

Respectfully submitted,
Julie Ringash

Prairie to Pine Region representative report Communication

Meridian Pastoral Charge received a call for Shirley McClaren – from Outreach- to see how were doing. I told her:

- churches had some outside services in June
- we had 1 virtual meeting and 1 meeting social distancing inside Sanford United Church
- we were working on our Governance
- all covenants had been submitted

She asked me to send pictures of our 2 churches to Heather Lea so they can be shown with the Covenants being passed at the meeting.

Lastly, she mentioned the World Ministry Network might interest us.

Submitted by
Diane Trudeau Prairie to Pine Rep.

CHURCH REPORTS

Avonlea United

Covid 19 continues to be the issue of the day. This relentless disease has created a heighten level of anxiety among family and friends, and generally people are blaming everyone else for not only the transmission of disease but every other ill and peril. There couldn't be a more important time for people to turn to religion. We need to be open in order to serve and to support community needs. However, when the code red was issued by the provincial authorities we had a short discussion at our church before the service to survey our congregants and from that discussion decided to close November 8 until covid numbers lessen significantly. A huge thank you to our chief of provincial health, (Dr. Brent Roussin) for standing in there trying to save lives meanwhile taking criticism on a daily basis. I wouldn't take his job for all the money in the world.

We have had no Sunday school classes since March and I fear may not have until next fall. I wonder what the fall out of that might be. I also wonder if this will be a year with no Christmas, certainly it will be very different.

And finally on behalf of the Avonlea congregation I want to commend James for going to the extra effort again. One example of that was the christening of Bennet Johnson (parents Jenny and David Johnson). The board gave permission to have a private christening on a week night. I believe that occurred sometime late September and the only people that attended were James, Bennet, and the parents. Thanks again James for being accommodating during these challenging times.

Ron Manness

Sanford United

We have been gathering for in-person worship services since Sept. 13th with special precautions taken for the Covid-19 pandemic as per Manitoba Health guidelines. The first few services were very cautious with very little congregational participation. However, we quickly learned how to make the service feel "more normal" while still meeting public health guidelines. It was very fulfilling to be able to worship in this way.

Unfortunately, we decided on Nov. 1 (via a Board teleconference) that we will suspend in person services due to the level RED declaration by the province for our region. This decision was made out of an abundance of caution as we realize that our normal attendance is actually under the 15% capacity in the guidelines for level RED. The reasoning being is "just because we can doesn't mean we should". We plan to meet again in 2 weeks to re-evaluate the situation. In the meantime, we will enjoy the online worship our pastoral charge offers. We pray that our worship leadership and especially Rev. James continue to have the energy to make this wonderful online content.

Also, the Nov. 11th service will not occur this year in Sanford. The Legion has decided to do a very small closed ceremony at the cenotaph.

We have also begun some brainstorming with regards to what we might be able to do for Christmas Eve service. We are still optimistic that we can come up with something to celebrate the birth of Jesus while meeting public health orders -- whatever they may be at that time.

Our outreach committee is also still active, looking for ways to do God's work in these unprecedented times. We have made one community drive for food donations for Winnipeg Harvest this fall and have a few members still occasionally going there to volunteer labour.

In these uncertain times, we still gather in whatever way is safe and we long for things to be "normal" again. But as always, I challenge everyone to remember how fortunate we are and pray for everyone who needs extra assistance in these times.

Respectfully submitted,
Jamie Scharf

Starbuck United

It is no easy thing to write a report in these difficult times. Currently our church is shut down and there is no up side to that. We are, however, thankful to have the weekly service available on You tube and are able, somewhat, to feel in touch with each other.

Thanks are due to Diane Trudeau for her work with Prairie to Pines and the successful covenanting.

Thanks to Michelle Ammeter for taking on the Worship job in addition to her M and P duties.

We all hope and pray for better things in the future and for the well being of our congregation.

Margaret

Interchurch

We have been meeting in person, with social distancing. We are studying the book by Bob Geoff called 'Love Does' To help us to "Discover a secretly incredible life in an ordinary world."

" Living a life fully engaged and full of whimsy and the kind of things that love does is something most people plan to do, but along the way they just kind of Forget." It is full of humor and an easy read. Chapter 9 is entitled Just Say Yes - with the note "I used to think you had to be special for God to use you, but now I know you simply need to say yes".

In June one \$500 Service Award was presented to Tamara Sturch of St Hyacinthe Parish.

The second annual Meridian Inter-church Family Day (baseball & BBQ) was cancelled due to Covid with the hopes of planning one for 2021.

The annual church member fee was increased to \$100 per church from \$50. Avonlea United paid \$100 this year. Our current bank balance is 1765.56. This money will be used to fund projects and support the student service award.

The Advent Celebration Service will be virtual and available on each church website Dec 1, 2020. Each church will decide what their capabilities are with respect to technology. The United Churches will submit a song (Scharf family has graciously committed) and a reading (Rev James). Recordings, video and sound will be submitted to La Salle Fellowship who will be hiring someone to put the Advent service together. The finished product will be .mp4 file, approx 1 hour long, likely 1.5 gigs. It will be shared via dropbox, google drive, or usb. We would then create a link on our Meridian website.

We continue to share and support each of the church members of the council. In addition to the 3 United Churches there are 1-3 members from each of the following churches at each meeting: Oakbluff Bible, La Salle Community Fellowship, St Hyacinthe RC, Trinity Lutheran (Starbuck), Springstein Mennonite, Starbuck St Paul's RC, St Paul's Lutheran, Mary, Mother of the Church. We are considering inviting other churches to join this group.

Shawnda Muir of Mary, Mother of the Church, has offered to share links from the church website on marriage enrichment and divorce maintenance. She is also facilitating a 5 week online COVID faith series (chosen from Rick Warren's current Covid sermon series) starting on Wednesdays starting Nov 11 from 7-9 pm. For more details mock.ca. Watch for Advent service online on Dec. 1st

Respectfully Submitted by Judy Manness

MOTION: Michele/Diane Adopt reports as circulated carried

Treasurers- see separate attachment I

Treasurer's notes for the November 9, 2020 MPC meeting by Georges Cormier.

The submitted "2020 Meridian Current/to date Financial Statement with Projections" is current to October 31, 2020.

The first column are the receipts and expense categories.

The second column are the year to date amounts up to October 31, 2020.

The third column are the original projections done one year or so ago.

The fourth column are the differences for the actual to the original projections.

The sixth column are revised projections based on what we currently know.

The event column are projections for the last two months of this fiscal period. The purpose of this was to give me an idea as to what our bank balance should be on December 31, 2020 for budgeting purposes for 2021.

If you look at the Receipts over Disbursements row (third row from the bottom, and the sixth column (Revised Projections) you will note a deficit \$3,490.36. This is before the Manse transfer of \$15,000.

Everything else should be self explanatory.

The 2021 Projections

I have made notes as needed on the projection worksheet, so I will not repeat them here except for the following.

On December 31, 2020, our chequing account balance should be around \$25,000. I am predicting a deficit of around \$15,000 in 2021. So in reality our chequing bank balance on December 31, 2021 should be around \$10,000. Based on this I would suggest that we do not transfer any funds from the Manse term deposit.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I have contacted the three church treasurers to get a feeling where everyone was concerning their 2020 financials and sustainability. I will give a brief recap.

Avonlea will have a deficit of around \$7,000. They have savings of around \$60,000. If nothing changes, they will be able to continue for another 8 years.

Sanford will have a deficit of around \$8,000. They have savings of around \$38,000. If nothing changes they can continue for another 4 to 5 years.

Starbuck will have a deficit of around \$10,000. They have savings of around \$16,000 plus the insurance monies of around \$210,000. Within the next couple of years they will have to start using the insurance monies to maintain themselves. Starbuck can survive another 20 years at this rate.

Meridian Pastoral Charge has the Manse fund at \$95,000. Once Covid19 is over, for 2022 and continuing, our expenses will go up slightly, so we might be having a deficit at around \$20,000. Therefor Meridian might be able to sustain itself for another 6 years.

Travel Expenses for James

James' travel expenses were calculated from Sanford United Church as being the MPC office.

I understand the Canada Revenue rules.

Basically any employee can only claim travel expenses from where the employer is located and the work is performed (in short).

Yes, I know that the UCC requires us to have a physical location for our Charge and Sanford was chosen. As far as I can see, this is for UCC purposes.

As far as where the employer is located, in my opinion, we are virtual. Nothing is done at the Sanford United Church and therefore do not have a physical location that we can call "our office". We do not have an office there, the mail does not go to the church, it goes to a post office box, we do not meet there any more than we meet at the other churches/towns, we have

no equipment there. MPC's current activities and current records are kept in La Salle, Domain, Sanford, Starbuck and Winnipeg (James' residence).

Most of MPC work is done at James' residence, by James. This is where all of the phone calls go, this is where James performs all of his duties to get ready for his services. This is where James coordinates his activities. This is where his Pastoral mail goes to. This is where he has his computer and printer and all of his work is performed there. He regularly meets his congregation members at various locations, not at the Sanford United Church. MPC cannot offer James a workspace and we cannot say that MPC actually has a work space.

So based on this, in September, I asked James to change the way he calculated his travel and to start and finish his travel from his residence and not Sanford.

One reason for this decision is that James must maintain all of his Pastoral records, equipment, answer his phone and organize his whole Pastoral life from his residence. We do not supply him with an office and or equipment to which he can come to and therefore cannot separate his personal life from his business life. and he must use his residence as his office.

Another benefit of this is that I am now able to analyze James division of duties between the three churches based on his travel. In September his duties were divided equally between the three churches, no matter the number of congregants for each church.

The 2019 records are with Jamie Scharf, therefore I did not compare the 2019 to 2020 September mileage expenses to determine what the difference might be. however due to covid19, the comparable would not be accurate.

Yes, this will increase our travel expense. For 2021, I have increase the travel expense by \$1,500 to \$5,000.

Per the decision at the Sept. 8 meeting, the accountant position has been cancelled Diane Trudeau is now the 2nd signing authority

MOTION Michele/Ron - Accept treasurer's report to Oct. 1 2020 carried

Correspondence

Old Business Governance

Just received some feedback from region for changes:

Should we make less restrictions on position rotation? Each COF simply has 3 board members of any position at all the time.

No support from our board on that change.

MOTION Michele/Jamie - We make all the modifications to the governance document requested by the region less the one mentioned above and then circulate to the board for email approval. Carried

MOTION Michele/Jamie - We seek pastoral charge approval of the governance document at the annual meeting (pending board approval) carried

Flyers Update

Won't be distributed until after pandemic

Techsoup

Techsoup/Google for Nonprofits update to Meridian Pastoral Charge

We have signed up for [Google for Non-Profits](#) for free because we were successful in registering Sanford United Church for [TechSoup](#). Google for Non-Profits opens up many opportunities for more efficient digital collaboration within our pastoral charge. To start, we have set up select positions (i.e. the ones whose current person is willing) with accounts to try it and see how they like it.

As of now, we have the following people with meridian-pastoral-charge.ca accounts:

Jamie Scharf = helpdesk@meridian-pastoral-charge.ca

Rev. James = minister@meridian-pastoral-charge.ca

Malcom Kirkpatrick = chairperson@meridian-pastoral-charge.ca

Michèle Ammeter = m_and_p@meridian-pastoral-charge.ca

Georges Cormier = treasurer@meridian-pastoral-charge.ca

Perhaps at a future meeting, this group can make some recommendations on what we want to do with this new capability. In the meantime, please contact me if you want to be set you up with an account. They are completely free! Jamie offers an open invitation to help get people setup with pastoral charge email addresses

Respectfully submitted,
Jamie Scharf

MPC Covenant Update

Discussion regarding trustees -- MPC must name at least 3 trustees (by name not board position)
Trustees must meet once per year and report to annual meeting
COF covenants have been accepted pending trustee update
Diane would like to approve trustees both at COF and Pastoral Charge annual meetings.
Each of MPC and COF needs at least 3 (including Rev. James).
ACTION: For both Ron and Jamie to make this happen at Avonlea and Sanford. Establish COF trustees and name one as the MPC trustee.

CanadaHelps

Setup and ready, considering additional improvements to make the invitation more personal.

Budget 2021

see separate attachment II

MOTION Georges/Diane - Adopt the presented budget for approval at AGM carried

Pulpit Supply

Is everyone still okay with our previous decision to eliminate pulpit supply? Starbuck and Avonlea had one layperson lead service this fall -- no complaints.
Starbuck is currently printing and delivering bulletin and meditation to people without computers.
Diane requests annual reports by Jan 17th.

MOTION Michele - The meeting be adjourned carried