

Congregational Information Form

To be completed by congregations seeking new pastoral leadership.

Purpose of this form

This form is to assist a congregation to present information concerning itself to prospective candidates for a pastoral leadership position. Completing the form will also assist the pastoral search committee in self-understanding as they assess the strengths and weaknesses which may exist at the time of pastoral transition.

I. Information

A. BASIC INFORMATION AND CONTACTS

1. Name of church: Bethel Mennonite Church **Address:** 416 Washington Street, PO 549, West Liberty, Ohio 43357

Church telephone: (937) 465-4587 **Email:** **Website:** www.bethelchurchwl.org

2. Chairperson of search committee: Doug Steiner **Address:** 309 West Columbus Street, West Liberty, Ohio 43357

Telephone: 937-465-5101 **Email:** dandesteiner@gmail.com

3. Area church/conference: Ohio Conference

Name of area church/conference minister assisting your church's search committee: Cliff Brubaker

Address: **Telephone:** 517-398-2172 **E-mail:** cliffbru7@gmail.com

4. Year in which the congregation first began meeting or was organized: 1890

B. MEMBERSHIP

1. Average Sunday worship attendance during the last 12 months: 79

Highest attendance during that time: 117 **Lowest attendance during that time:** 32

2. Total current members: 107 **Non-resident members:** 4

Resident members: 103 **Children (not members):** 4

3. Age of members and children. Give totals and percentage.

0-12: 2, 2% **31-45:** 0, 0%

13-18: 2, 2% **46-64:** 31, 29%

19-30: 7, 6% **65+:** 64, 60%

4. Occupational profile (ages 19 to 70): Occupations include small business owners and employees, educators, medical and nursing staff, social workers, farmers and agricultural workers, factory workers, college students, homemakers and retired persons.

5. Educational level of adults: Up to and including high school: 30%

Some college or college graduate: 55% **Graduate school:** 15%

6. Describe the racial or ethnic composition of the congregation. Predominantly Caucasian of European descent.

C. LEADERSHIP

1. Identify the present staff position for which you are seeking a candidate. Lead pastor

2. Two previous persons in the above position:

Name: David Maurer Dates of service: 2006-2015
 Name: Alvin Yoder Dates of service: 1997-2005

Comment on the transitions experienced by the above staff persons. What were the reasons for their assignments ending? How were the transitions handled?

Both of our previous pastors resigned to accept positions at other Mennonite congregations. David’s resignation produced some tension in the congregation. In particular, some individuals expressed frustration with his preaching style, while others were surprised and disappointed he left. With both pastor resignations, we used interim or transitional pastors.

3. Did your congregation follow the Pastor Salary Guidelines recommended by the denomination for the previous pastor? If not, describe how you varied from the Guidelines. We use the MCUSA Pastor Salary Guidelines.

4. Identify other staff: (assistant/associate minister, lay ministers, administrative assistant, custodian, musicians, youth)

Title	% of full-time	Specific responsibilities	Years served
Administrative Assistant/ Treasurer	~20%	Office tasks, bulletins, newsletters. Financial record-keeping	3
Interim Pastor team	50%	Begin 2/1/17 to fill in as Transitional pastor leaves. Consists of two lay leaders sharing pastor duties.	
House Keeper	4-7 hrs/wk	Cleans church building	4

5. Describe housing options for the above position: Is there a parsonage or a housing allowance (US) or housing credit (Canada)? Is the person free to choose between these options? No parsonage available. We offer a housing allowance in keeping with the MCUSA Pastor Salary Guidelines.

II. Interpretation

The answers to the questions in this section are more difficult but probably more important in determining the qualifications needed by pastoral leadership. Use a small group to test for consensus on the answers given in this section. (Would recommend that the governing board of the congregation review and sign off on this section)

A. Describe the commitment of your church to Anabaptist/Mennonite faith. How does this contribute to strengthening your ability to join God’s mission in the world? We identify ourselves as Mennonites and have a long history of commitment to the Anabaptist/Mennonite faith. We typically hold a Christ-centric view of the bible, which inspires our vision and priorities. We share a strong commitment to service to others, locally and through Youth Service Projects, Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS), Service Opportunities with Our Partners (SOOP) and other ways. We also share a strong value in community support and nurturing.

B. What is the vision for your church? What are your priorities that shape the church's ministry?

Our vision and priorities continue to be shaped by the work of our transitional pastor consultant, and the work of our transition team over the past several months. The transitional work included interviewing the majority of the congregation on Bethel’s relationships; with God, with each other, and with the world, all focusing on our personal, relational and spiritual strengths. In addition, the transition team identified road blocks that hinder our relationships in these key areas. From this information gathering and listening, several congregational meetings were held to offer feedback on the listening process and to begin addressing road blocks, as well as areas for spiritual and interpersonal renewal. The visioning work is on-going, building on our congregation’s “DNA” of spiritual hunger for a meaningful relationship with Christ, actively caring for one another, and joining in God’s mission in our community. Toward this end, our priorities are: 1) deepening our relationship with Jesus, 2) be a caring community, and 3) engage God’s mission locally. We continue to test our purpose phrase for the church called “RePresent Jesus”.

C. What is your view of the pastor's role in the church? Are there special gifts in ministry which you hope will be fulfilled? How do you expect the pastor to be a representative of the congregation beyond the congregation?

We are approaching the new pastor’s role as finding someone who can help us live into our vision and priorities. We believe this takes a certain set of skills and abilities. In line with our priorities, the pastor needs to have gifts in ministry in the following

areas: a deep and infectious relationship with Jesus, understand how to navigate and enhance relationships in the congregation, and engage in local mission and outreach.

We also are working on redesigning our church structure to better align us with the work of the Spirit. Our transitional pastor consultant is helping us focus on the three priorities listed above as the framework for the revised organizational leadership structure. In addition, in late 2015, we adopted the APEST (apostle, prophet, evangelist, servant, teacher) system of ministry, developed by Alan Hirsch, which is integrated into our Elder Leadership Team. We re-worded the acronym to ASTEP, which feels more in line with our way forward. We would expect our new pastor to work with us, offering additional leadership to our organizational re-structuring work.

Beyond the congregation, we understand there are a variety of local missions in the West Liberty area. We believe there are opportunities to continue to join in these efforts, while helping to identify and expand new mission ventures.

D. Recognizing our differing theological orientations as persons and as congregations, make a brief statement about your congregation and the overarching theological commitments important to you.

Our listening sessions and congregational meetings indicate a variety of theological orientations within the congregation. We have identified three primary spiritual expressions at Bethel; Social Justice, Evangelical and Charismatic. Our Anabaptist beliefs and values is the stream that bind these expressions. These expressions emerge in worship and in other expressions in the work of the church and in person’s lives. These expressions are reflected in descriptions of favorite scriptures, words used to describe our faith and the different lens we see the world. Of course, these differences surface occasionally and we are working on extending grace to each other. This is evident in listening to each other’s testimonies, allowing a relatively wide range of musical expression and song selection, and being receptive to different teaching, preaching and worship leading styles, to name a few.

E. Church morale: Assess the spiritual and emotional health of the congregation. Are relationships among members wholesome and harmonious? Is there openness to new ideas and ways of doing things? Would everyone agree with your answers?

At a recent congregational meeting, we asked persons about their hopefulness at church and whether they believe it is improving. The general consensus is that our spiritual and emotional health as a congregation was at a low point in the past year and is improving, mostly as a result of our transitional pastor consultant’s work at spiritual renewal and teaching, training in communication and conflict transformation, reconciliation, and organizational redesign. Signs of improved health included persons reporting they are more hopeful, have increased energy in worship, are more encouraging and extending grace to each other, and are making progress with interpersonal trust and reconciliation. There is a shared commitment to new ways of being a church and doing things, although this is still being developed as specific strategies and changes are developed and implemented.

F. What changes or trends do you envision for the congregation over the next five years? Do you have any other comments significant in the process for looking for new pastoral leadership?

We know we are at a watershed moment in our church history. We realize we are experiencing some of the same demographic, sociological and religious trends as MCUSA, as well as Mennonite and Christian churches nationally and internationally. Being a rural community, very few of our youth remain in the church or community after high school, often going off to college and locating elsewhere, or drifting away from the church. We are struggling to attract young adults and families with young children. In spite of these challenges and realities, there is a core group of dedicated, compassionate persons in the congregation seeking to be Christ-like. We seek to RePresent Jesus, representing Him in our interactions with each other, being present with Him in our individual and corporate lives, and offering His presence to others.

III. Organization/Ministry

A. CHURCH STRUCTURE

1. Identify the primary governing body (council, board, elders) which represents the church.

Name	Meeting Schedule	#	avg. age	M – F
Elder Leadership Team	1-2 x/month	5	61	3 males, 2 females

2. Identify five other significant leadership/programming bodies: e.g. trustees, deacons, elders, commissions, councils, boards, committees.

Name	Meeting Schedule	#	avg. age	M – F
Bethel Leadership Team (ministry chairs + Elder team)	Quarterly	10	64	5 males, 5 females
Ministry of Worship	Monthly	5	60	3 males, 2 females
Ministry of Stewardship	Quarterly	8	63	5 males, 3 females
Trustees	As needed	3	57	3 males
Pastoral Care Team	Quarterly	6	73	4 males, 2 females

B. Worship and Music

1. Describe your worship service: Worship at Bethel consists of scripture and sometimes other readings, praying, singing, preaching and individual sharing. Lay worship leaders are used and services tend to be more thoughtful and reflective.

2. What role does music play in your congregation? Music is an important part of our worship experience. We spend time in singing traditional, unaccompanied hymns, accompanied worship and scripture songs, piano and/or organ music, as well as occasional special music.

3. What song books/collections of music does your congregation use? We use the three published hymnals: Hymnal Worship Book (HWB), Sing the Journey (STJ), and Sing the Story (STS), as well as a non-published Praise Hymnal.

4. Name the musical instruments used in worship and other events (piano, keyboard, organ, guitar organ, drums, hand bells, violin, etc.) Bethel has a two-manual Allen digital electronic organ with a full pedalboard. It is approximately 25 yrs old and is serviced regularly. We also have a 5' Kohler and Campbell grand piano that is tuned and serviced regularly. There are a set of Conga drums, and a Djembe, as well as a tambourine and a Shekere. There are also two studio-sized pianos in the basement that are tuned occasionally. We have a two-octave set of Schulmerich hand bells complete with cases, tables and pads. We often use a double bass and piano, when not singing a cappella, and occasionally acoustic guitar and tambourine.

5. Identify choirs and/or music groups: There are no permanent choirs. However, at times we recruit choirs from the congregation for special music.

C. Christian Formation: Describe your approach to Christian Formation

1. Number of children's classes: 1 Number of youth classes: 1 Number of adult classes: 5

Total Sunday School Enrollment: Children - 2, Youth - 2, Adult - 80

Average total attendance Adults & Youth: 55 (Sept. – May, the summer varies greatly) A high percent of our regular attenders go to SS classes. *Beginning in January 2016, there were no children in the elementary or junior high who attended Bethel weekly. The 2 children listed here, come with their grandparents several Sundays a month. However, there is always an adult prepared to teach children's Sunday School in case any children are present. A new youth/adult Sunday School class has started in the fall of 2016. Since many youth went to college this fall, leaving 2 youth, some adults were invited to join the youth. Some of the college-age youth attend this class when they are home from school.

What curriculum resources are used by these classes? Uniform Series – 4; Bible and selected topics - 2

2. How does the congregation attend to the formation needs of persons of all ages? Children attend Sunday school and Bible School. Our Bible School this past June served an average of 38 children daily during the week. When we had children of junior high age, there was an activity group that met outside of Sunday School and a weekend VBS for them. Right now we don't have any junior high age children. Previously the youth met midweek for a study time. With fewer youth this year they have elected to be involved at other churches midweek. We do have a youth mentoring program. High school youth select a Bethel adult to be their mentor. Mentors and youth meet once a month during the school year to study and discuss together as a group. Mentors and youth occasionally meet together at other times. Examples are attending a sporting event or concert, perhaps going shopping or to a movie. Generally the same two relate to each other during all 4 years of high school. The youth attend MCUSA youth conventions every 2 years and are involved in a service project on the alternate years. Baptism/church membership classes are offered yearly. Adult Sunday School classes are a time of sharing personal concerns, Bible study, reflection and interaction. The Sunday morning worship service is a corporate gathering for worship, teaching and inspiration. It is a formative time for all people. It is the one time a week that the body of Bethel shares and experiences together. Purpose, Rejoice, and The Mennonite subscriptions are available to anyone who would like to receive them.

3. What other opportunities are there for growth and transformation? There are several small groups and Bible studies. Women Serving in Love (our local name for Mennonite Women) meets monthly except in June.

4. Describe the involvement of youth in the life of the congregation. There is a youth representative on the Ministry of Worship and on the transitional team. Youth sometimes participate in Sunday Morning worship service by reading scripture, or being ushers. Last spring, youth volunteered as assistants in Bible School all week. Youth help serve along with adults at Our Daily Bread, a soup kitchen in Bellefontaine once a month.

Does your church support and send young people to Mennonite camps, area church/ conference and colleges?

Currently, three of our youth are attending Mennonite colleges. In the past, children from our families attended Camp Luz, our Ohio conference camp. We also have a tradition of sending youth to the MCUSA bi-annual conferences.

5. Does your congregation have active small groups? If so, describe the number of groups, focus of the groups and often they meet. There are 2 small groups doing Bible Studies. The Peace and Justice Group, promoting awareness and activities of social and biblical justice, meets twice a month. A Restaurant group meets periodically. SS classes for the members are well-liked and serve as support groups. There are several people that are actively a part of small groups and bible studies in the community.

6. What men's/women's groups are active? Women Serving in Love (Mennonite Women group, meets at Bethel involving women from Oak Grove Mennonite Church and the community). Men's Breakfast Group meets bi-monthly at Liberty Gathering Place for breakfast and fellowship.

7. What ministries do you have for children, youth and young adults over 18, etc? Bethel Homework Help meets every Tuesday after school November through April. Volunteers from the congregation assist four 3rd-5th graders with their homework. The students are referred by their classroom teachers. There is a list of children waiting to be included. There are 2 paid, part-time staff, plus volunteers.

8. In the next 5 years do you anticipate a membership: increase? stability? decrease? Why? Although membership has decreased in recent years, it is our hope that it will stabilize and increase. We intend to be a welcoming place, sharing the love of Christ.

D. Outreach and Evangelism

1. Describe how you cultivate the visibility of your church in the community. We use our church website and Facebook page, and announce church services in the local paper. We have signage in the community and around the church. We advertise and hold Vacation Bible School for the community children. During West Liberty's Labor Day festival, Bethel operates a sausage sandwich booth as a fund raiser. We also host a free breakfast on Friday morning for vendors in the Labor Day flea market. During the village's annual "Fire Sale" in May, the church property is often used by a group from the church seeking to raise money. Up until this past year, we hosted the community churches' Christmas Dinner, time of community-wide fellowship and providing a meal for the community and delivering meals to shut-ins. We host the Mastersingers Community Chorale directed by a church member at least one program a year. Representatives from the congregation serve on local non-profit boards, including Adriel, Inc, (a residential and foster care treatment program), Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Thrift Shop, Green Hills Retirement Center.

2. Describe how you connect to seekers and make new disciples. We connect with seekers in our daily lives, neighborhoods, and occupations as we establish meaningful relationships with those around us.

3. Describe your congregation's ministry in and with the community. West Liberty Cares - one month a year staff food bank; Community Sharing Fund – Monetary aid to individuals in the community; Brotherhood Fund - Monetary aid to individuals in the congregation; the Bethel Odd Jobs Crew is available to do small miscellaneous repair jobs; West Liberty Ministerium; Bethel Homework Help; Our Daily Bread - monthly meal at the soup kitchen in Bellefontaine; Labor Day - Sausage Booth and Vendors' Breakfast; Community Christmas Dinner; Host Mastersingers Community Chorale directed by a church member at least one program a year. Representatives from the congregation serve on local non-profit boards. Adriel School, MCC Thrift Shop, Green Hills Retirement Center.

E. HOW DOES THE CHURCH UTILIZE TECHNOLOGY IN WORSHIP, IN TEACHING, AND IN OUTREACH IN THE COMMUNITY?

We have a projector in the sanctuary for visuals, music lyrics, videos and sermon outlines. We also have a couple of assisted hearing devices in the sanctuary for those with limited hearing. Our church website is maintained by the church administrative assistant and includes photos, upcoming sermons and other events, staff contact information and other information about the church. Our worship services are recorded and put on our website.

F. CHURCH BUILDING AND PROPERTY

1. Do you own or rent your facility? If rent, describe the type of space. The church and an adjacent house (for youth activities) is owned.

2. Seating capacity of sanctuary or worship area: 200

3. Date of construction of church building: The current building was rebuilt after a fire in 1923. An addition was added in 1956.

4. Date of last renovation: 1983 **Describe what was done:** Expanded the fellowship hall and added additional classrooms and libraries.

What if any building/renovation program is needed or projected? Add about taking good care of building. One of our members recently donated funds to replace the two main entry doors to the building. The current solid metal doors will be replaced with full-glass, aluminum storefront doors.

5. Describe the educational facilities. Large groups meet in the fellowship hall. The primary dept. has a large gathering room and five classrooms. There are seven adult classrooms, a children’s and adult library, plus the balcony which has served as an extra classroom.

6. Describe the fellowship and/or recreational facilities. The fellowship room is one of the most used rooms and has an adjacent kitchen and serving area. Children and youth use either the fellowship room, primary dept. or adjoining Potter’s House (next to the church).

7. Describe the church office location and equipment: Computers, phones, other. The church office is adjacent to the pastor’s study on the main floor. The office has a copier/fax machine. There is a second copier off to the side in the kitchen area.

8. Are building and equipment adequate for the needs of the congregation? Describe any special assets or liabilities of the building. An elevator was installed approx. 20 years ago and seems to be nearing the end of its life cycle.

9. Name the insurance company and describe the coverage for church liability, property, pastor’s liability, etc., for the church. Mennonite Mutual Insurance w/ \$2,000,000 general liability, \$2,700,000 building and property, \$1,000,000 pastoral counseling coverage.

10. Are there community programs or groups who also utilize your church facilities? Who are they and how often do they use the building? One of our members periodically leads different community singing groups which meet at the church. Most recently, they performed portions of the Messiah. For several years, we hosted a community-wide Christmas dinner which consisted of many community volunteers to prepare, serve and deliver meals.
What interaction do you have with them? Bethel members often join these activities and groups.

G. CHURCH STEWARSHIP/FINANCES

1. Based upon your last report, identify the previous year’s giving of your church. \$155,000, plus \$38,000 of restricted giving. The giving amount and the contributions listed below are for the last fiscal year (Oct – Sept, 2016).

Local Church	
Expenses (does not include staff compensation)	\$30,000
Local needs and outreach	\$6,200
Buildings and facilities	\$15,000
TOTAL LOCAL CHURCH CONTRIBUTIONS	\$51,200

Non-Local Contributions (budgeted amounts)	
Area church/conference	\$4,290
Denominational total	\$4,290
Mennonite institutions and agencies	\$12,000
Mennonite Central Committee	\$0
Other Mennonite causes	\$0
Non-Mennonite causes	\$8,200
TOTAL NON-LOCAL CONTRIBUTIONS	\$24,490

2. Church budget
Who makes recommendation regarding pastoral and staff salaries? Stewardship Committee and Elders
Who determines church budget or makes recommendation to the church? Stewardship
What plan is used to challenge the church to Christian stewardship? None
Current total budget: \$155,000

3. Is there church indebtedness? Yes No **Amount \$:** 0 **How is it being reduced?** NA

IV. Relationships

A. COMMUNITY

1. Character of community your congregation serves or in which it is located:
 Rural Village (under 2500) Town (under 10,000) City (over 10,000) Large city (over 100,000)

2. Which best describes this community? Growing Stable Declining

3. Describe racial or ethnic composition of the community. 95% White, 2% Black, 1% Hispanic, 1% Asian

4. List two or three primary business/industries in the community. Agriculture, West Liberty-Salem School, Adriel, Green Hills Retirement Center.

5. Identify other Mennonite/Anabaptist churches in the community, if any. Oak Grove Mennonite Church (5 miles), South Union Mennonite Church (2 miles), and Jubilee Mennonite Church (9 miles)

What other churches and faith groups are in the community? 13 churches are located in the West Liberty area.

6. Name of nearest college or university: Urbana University, Urbana
In what way does your church relate to this academic community? Minimal relationship

7. Identify significant issues confronting your community. West Liberty is racially and ethnically homogeneous. Folks moving into the community sometimes describe feeling as though they are outsiders, even after living here a number of years. Much like other areas in the country, a portion of the population is transitioning into the community. Some of those individuals are comprised of single-parent families or blended families and in need of connections and support. Sometimes that includes economic support, as well as help with child care and relationships.

8. Describe what you believe to be distinctive assets of your community. Historical and natural landmarks, including Ohio Caverns and Piatt Castles. West Liberty has a nice community park that hosts an annual Labor Day festival, as well as seasonal softball tournaments, quarter midget racing, soccer and football teams for youth and occasionally live music. We have used the park for baptisms for a number of years. Community churches regularly have fund raising meals for individuals or families in need, most recently for an individual seriously injured in an accident.

9. Describe your congregation's ministry in the community. Of the Mennonite churches in the area, Bethel is the only one located in the town of West Liberty. Our previous pastor had a vision of building a wood-fired pizza oven on the property, and this was used for parties and occasional movie nights. We have a community outreach called "Homework Help", run by volunteers at the church which offers help with school work 1 afternoon per week for students referred from the school. We participate in the WL Ministerium, a collection of churches which sponsor a local food pantry several weeks/month, as well as maintain a fund for individuals or families in need. We host a sewing group, that includes individuals from other churches, to make comforters, school kits and quilts for MCC and local projects. We host a large collaborative Christmas Day meal that includes cooks, servers, musicians and many volunteers, all from different churches in the community. The meal is served at the church or volunteers deliver meals to individuals in the community. Individuals from the church periodically perform odd jobs for members of the community as a need arises. One of the more ambitious tasks was completing a major remodel of a man's house that had fallen into serious disrepair. For a number of years, we have hosted a breakfast at the church for out-of-town vendors who came to WL for the annual Labor Day festival.

10. How does your congregation work with ecumenical and interfaith efforts? Several have been mentioned above. Bethel members routinely participate in community church services, e.g. Labor Day festival. Our resident choral music leader collects singers from different churches to sing portions of the Messiah in December, as well as other performances throughout the year.

B. AREA CHURCH/CONFERENCE

1. Describe your relationship with and your participation in the area church/conference. We have delegates, including a young adult delegate, to the Ohio Conference and traditionally attend the Annual Conference Assembly. Our previous pastors attended conference events and routinely interact with the regional pastor and a strong pastor peer group. Currently, our regional pastor has assisted our search process and has attended search meetings, when he is available.

C. WIDER CHURCH

1. Describe your relationship with and your participation in Mennonite Church Canada/Mennonite Church USA. We have delegates who attend the bi-annual MCUSA conference. We also share information and updates from MCUSA and distribute The Mennonite and Mennonite World Review periodicals to those who request them. Our music/worship leader has attended the Music & Worship annual conference at Laurelville Retreat Center for the past number of years. He occasionally recruits others to join this conference. This year 5 persons attended from Bethel.

V. Conclusion

A. Compile your church's response to the "Twenty Pastoral Areas" found at <http://manygifts.org/20pastoralareas/> and include summary of the results. The results of our 20 Pastoral Areas reflect the priorities from our transition process and our renewed focus on our building blocks of: 1) deepening our relationship with Jesus, 2) be a caring community, and 3) engage

God's mission locally. Our highest pastoral priority areas are consistent with these building blocks.

B. Send a copy of this form to your area church/conference minister. You may also use copies to send to prospective candidates whom you may wish to interview.

Name of group or persons responsible for completion of this form: Bethel Pastor Search Committee

Date of completion: January, 2017

Revised November 2012

N Kauffmann, Leadership Development, Mennonite Church USA