



1003 W Bryan St. • South Bend, IN 46616 • 574.233.7901

February 19, 2021

Dear KPC board members,

On Tuesday, August 18, 2020, the board met with the two of us to discuss the creation of an Exploratory Committee on denominational alignment. We are happy to report that, six months to the day of that meeting—and after consistent work and collective discernment as a committee—the Exploratory Committee came to a unanimous, formal recommendation at our February 18 meeting.

The Exploratory Committee makes the following recommendation to the board and the members of KPC, which we hope the board will convey to the members after follow-up with the committee and discernment as a board. The Exploratory Committee unanimously recommends that:

*Keller Park Church disaffiliates from the North Central District of the Missionary Church, Inc., in order to begin a process of discerning affiliation with the Central District Conference of the Mennonite Church USA.*

As the board representative on the committee, Chad will be happy to elaborate on the process that led to our recommendation and the reasoning behind it. As *ex officio* members, the pastors are also able to speak to the board on behalf of the committee. Here is just a brief summary of our considerations for the board:

- From the outset, we heard that KPC did not desire to become a nondenominational church. Our dual recommendation to leave our current denomination *in order to* pursue affiliation with another denomination is therefore intended to avoid having a limbo period for our congregation. We want the congregation to know where we're heading as we leave.
- After the February 4 congregational meeting with the North Central District leaders and their response to that meeting shared with the pastors in a separate meeting on February 16, we see no path forward with the Missionary Church.
- From our many conversations with congregants, both formally and informally, we discerned that the congregation widely supports the board's desire to pursue changing denominational affiliation.
- We early on determined that we wanted to stay true to who we are and to find a home that would help us to become more faithful to our mission and vision. We determined that the Anabaptist theological tradition is the most central to our

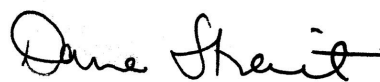
church's identity and mission, and so we limited our research to the dozens of Anabaptist denominations in North America.

- Using criteria we heard from congregants regarding denominational size and resourcing, we identified three major denominational options: the Brethren in Christ, the Church of the Brethren, and the Mennonite Church USA.
- After reviewing statements of faith and practice, we ruled out the Brethren in Christ based on fundamental doctrinal differences and set meetings with regional leadership from the other two whose theology matches KPC's more closely.
- After meeting with the executive minister of the Northern Indiana District of the Church of the Brethren, we determined that they are currently experiencing internal discord and would not be a good fit for KPC at this time.
- After meeting with the conference minister and president of the conference board of the Central District Conference of the Mennonite Church USA, we unanimously agreed it was a natural potential home that could enhance KPC and encourage us in our beliefs, behaviors, and belongings.
- The Central District Conference leaders expressed willingness to meet with the board and with the congregation, either jointly or in quick succession.
- We ask the board to vet this recommendation until it is comfortable conveying it to the membership. We believe time is of the essence, in terms of both disaffiliating from the Missionary Church and conveying our intentions to the Central District Conference. In particular, the Central District Conference would need to receive a letter of intent from the pastors by no later than April 9 in order to begin a year-long discernment process this calendar year.
- We recommend that during this discernment process, the board further explore the financial and practical implications of this potential affiliation.
- We ask that the board communicate to the committee when our work is completed or what our ongoing role in the discernment process should be. We are willing, for example, to assist in negotiations with the North Central District regarding church properties, if the board would find such assistance helpful.

Grace and peace,



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