

*Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many....
God arranged the members in the body, each one of them,
as he chose. 1 Corinthians 12:14, 18*

If you participated in the visitation phase, you will recall the “weighty voices” question. Results in general indicate Shalom is a positive illustration of Paul’s human body analogy for congregations.

Two frequent responses were: “We listen to all voices at Shalom,” and “We respect expertise in a given area.” In this first month, I can affirm this as accurate self-understanding. Specific examples cited: technology, building, biblical scholarship, music, and neighborhood dynamics. One example especially caught my attention: “I was not in favor of the transition, but when one person I respect [for expertise in that field] spoke in favor, I changed my position.”

Please note the complete report projected to arrive via e-mail around June 12 (copies at mailboxes), and participate in the congregational dialogue on June 19.

Congregational Studies is a relatively new academic field, and yet much has been learned in its first 50 years. Alban Institute is one of the weighty voices. Several Mennonite dynamics leave us behind in embracing what has been learned: historic confusion about leadership and authority, especially as it relates to pastoral role; our “we’re different” self-understanding; and congregational polity (and thrift?) which limits conference ability to provide adequate resources, and authority for implementation.

As we transition, let’s continue to recognize and value the different weighty voices the Spirit provides for the topic at hand, and unlike Jonah, allow God’s Spirit to change our thinking when needed (Romans 12:1-2).

Looking ahead:

June 5: 9:30am Jonah 4 *Don’t believe everything you think*

June 12: 9:30am Ervin Stutzman, sermon

June 19: 11:00am Session #2 Transitional period proposal presented

Projected in town schedule: June 5-6; 19-21; 26-28

-Gary Martin, Transitional Pastor

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