



EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

An Evangelical Covenant Church of Canada Affiliate

"We strive to follow, love & share Jesus"

September 6, 2020

To the Members of the Congregation of Evangelical Fellowship Church:

RE: Petition and request for a new vote for contracts of pastors

On December 2, 2019, the Board of Elders received a petition signed by 37 members of the congregation alleging numerous irregularities in the way the vote was conducted prior to and during the Congregational Business Meeting on November 24, 2019. This was the Congregational Business Meeting at which the contracts for Pastor Jesse Kane and Pastor Josh Mueller were voted on.

The petition alleges the following four irregularities in the way the vote was conducted:

1. People whose names were not on the EFC membership list and were, therefore, not eligible to vote, were given ballots.
2. The ballots from the early vote held the Sunday before the congregational meeting were not properly secured or counted in the presence of a witness. Instead, these early ballots remained in the possession of a board member until the time of the vote at the congregational meeting.
3. On the day of the congregational meeting, completed ballots were left unattended on an offering plate.
4. Members who were not able to vote in person and who requested to vote had their request denied, even though allowances had been made in the past to accommodate members who were away or ill.

As these alleged irregularities may have had the potential to alter the outcome of the vote, the signatories of the petition demanded a revote to confirm the democratic will of the congregation regarding the contracts for the pastors.

The EFC Church Council has reviewed and discussed the petition that was submitted to the Board of Elders. Council recognizes the serious nature of the irregularities brought up and acknowledges that they likely took place. However, the members of Church Council are in agreement that none of these actions were carried out with malicious intent to alter the outcome of the vote. Furthermore, it is the judgment of

Church Council that these noted irregularities, although serious in nature, likely would not have changed the outcome of the vote on November 24, 2019.

Church Council also recognizes that congregational votes on the contracts for pastors have historically been emotionally charged and divisive, pitting those members of the congregation who desire change against those who desire a continuation of the status quo. As such, it is Church Council's belief that a revote, which would likely again result in the same outcome, would unnecessarily reignite tensions within the congregation and would ultimately do more harm than good.

That being said, the anguish and hard feelings within the congregation that resulted from the way the vote of November 24, 2019 was carried out highlights the urgent need for EFC to put in writing clear and unambiguous policy and procedures around how voting will be conducted in the future.

To that end, the EFC Church Council is continuing, and expanding upon, work begun by the last EFC Board of Elders to create and revise written policy, procedures and documentation to provide greater guidance and clarity on all matters of church governance and stewardship, including voting practices and procedures at Congregational Business Meetings, how pastors' contracts and renewals are handled, and ways to accommodate and support the orderly and positive transition of incoming and outgoing pastors.

It is the hope of Church Council that greater transparency, better communication and the establishment of clear and unambiguous processes will help the EFC Family move forward in greater harmony. It is the hope of Church Council that painful events, like the recent vote on the pastors' contracts, can be avoided in the future.

As a result of the controversy regarding the vote, many members of the previous Board of Elders resigned. The remaining members of the previous Board of Elders temporarily extended Pastor Josh's contract to August 31, 2020 in the hope of maintaining the stability and viability of EFC, and leaving it to the new Church Council to determine how to proceed.


Church Council is actively discussing the matter and what would be the best way forward. It will take prayer and time for Church Council to make decisions that are thoughtful, compassionate and respectful of the diverse perspectives of members of the congregation.

Meanwhile, owing to the COVID crisis and the operational and spiritual needs of Evangelical Fellowship Church, Church Council has decided to extend Pastor Josh's contract on a month-to-month basis until a decision about his contract can be made and a plan for transition, if needed, is solidified.

Although the usual practice of extending a pastor's contract through a vote at a Congregational Business Meeting is not possible under the current circumstances, the congregation will have the opportunity to discuss and ratify the Council's interim decision when we are able to hold a Congregational Meeting again in the future, potentially in October 2020.

Members of the congregation are encouraged to provide feedback to the EFC Church Council. As well, Church Council members appreciate your continued prayers.


In Christian love, your brothers and sisters in Christ,



Simon Winkelmann



Mike Ettrich



Ingrid Maier



Christa Ettrich



Monika Kosheiff




Ian Wood



Dorothee Hauf



Paul Budinski



Terry Neumann

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. - **Philippians 4:6-8 (ESV)***