Assembly Mennonite Church
Congregational Meeting – 2/16/2025

Ben Sywulka opened the meeting at 7:00 pm
-This is the 2nd congregational meeting to discuss education aid
-Introduction of Student Aid Advisory Group – Anne Horst Hanby, Becky Snider, Ben Sywulka, Cheryl Mast, Justin Rothshank, Leon Bauman, Naomi Roots, Nadia Shank and Paul Meyer Reimer---

Gathering of thoughts from the previous meeting
Current policy is 8% of tuition which varies by institution and by year
2025 budget in General Fund is $56,000 to Mennonite institutions + 10% to public schools
Plus tithing to Minority and Special Needs students outside of Assembly

-Proposal being presented tonight is for an Interim Student Aid policy and a plan for Education Support over the next 2 years while putting a more permanent policy into place
-Many possibilities have been discussed including funding public and private education equally, putting a cap on the number of years for each student to use in elementary, highschool or higher education.
-Concrete support for education advocacy in general
-New committee will be forming to work on permanent policy

Leon Bauman
-discussed "SOS" (Supporting Our Schools) facilitated by Michelle Kercher pulls together churches to relate to elementary and middle schools – all volunteer, no line added to the budget
-SOS is a Public School Advocacy Group - watching what is happening with legislation and what are the needs in public schools
Action Item – consider volunteering for SOS

Ann Horst Hanby
-Why do we support Mennonite Education
Foster faith formation and values in children and youth
Sustain the denomination and our faith community
We value supporting families who desire an education experience for their children that is aligned with our beliefs

Paul Meyer Reimer presented Interim Proposal **Model A**
-Kindergarten-12th Grade Mennonite Education Special Fund
Addresses concerns about Indiana State voucher policies and allows for continued support for K-12 Mennonite education while separating it from the general fund.
Expands student aid to all grades at Bethany Christian Schools
Creates a Special Fund with a target amount $40,000 to support K-12 students at Bethany (applies to covenanted members and their children). Funds would be distributed proportionally to eligible students.
Higher education support remains in the General Fund.

Interim plans would start in the 2025/2027 school year because Bethany needs to know by March 15 in order to prepare their student aid packages. Year 1 would be partial aid from general fund with remainder from special fund, gradual shift Year 2 to special fund funding

Questions raised by attendees:
-Would there be a fixed amount for students?
-Why is K-12 separated from Higher Ed?
-Closer to what we are currently doing? Isn't the presence of vouchers one of the reasons to separate K-12

Leon Bauman presented Interim Proposal **Model B**
Kindergarten-College Mennonite Education Special Fund
Recognizes the value of Mennonite education for students of all ages
Creates a Special Fund for K-12, college and seminary students attending Mennonite related schools
Target 8% of tuition to any student based on the age of the child with support determined by the amount raised in the fund.
May introduce needs-based grants for families bases on income and/or other tuition assistance.
Move current student aid ($56,000) to the new Special Fund for 2025/2026

After small group discussions attendees were invited to post stickers to indicate support for either Model A or Model B.

Results:

Model A – 16 stickers and 11 polled from online attendees = 27
Model B - 8 stickers and 4 polled from online attendees = 12
Two write in votes for "Keep in the General Fund as is currently"

Respectfully Submitted,

Barb Swartley