



**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 Warwick River Mennonite church  
 Address 250 Lucas Creek Road, Newport News, VA 23602  
 Church telephone 757-874-0794 Email warwickrivermc@gmail.com  
 Website www.warwickrivermennonite.org
2. Chairperson of search committee Susan Ackerman  
 Address 524 Marlin Drive, Newport News, VA 23602  
 Telephone 757-817-3947 Email susan@ackerman.net
3. Area church/conference Virginia Mennonite Conference – Eastern District  
 Name of area church/conference minister assisting your church's search committee David Lehman  
 Address  
 Telephone 540 810-2749 E-mail Pastor@wmcva.org
4. Year in which the congregation first began meeting or was organized 1898 (met in homes before that)

**B. MEMBERSHIP**

1. Average Sunday worship attendance during the last 12 months: 48  
 Highest attendance during that time 60 Lowest attendance during that time 35
2. Total current members 100 (+/-) Nonresident members 30 (+/-)  
 Resident members 70 Children (not members) 6
3. Age of members and children. Give totals and percentage.
 

012	5	%	3145	4	%
1318	1	%	46-64	24	%
19-30	8	%	65+	35	%
4. Occupational profile: (ages 19 to 70). Give totals.
 

Business/manager/proprietor 7	Homemaker 5
Education/administration/teacher 7	Clerical/sales 1
Craftsman/laborer/operative 10	Student/VS 1

Medical: doctor/nurse/administration 3  
Church institution/administration/minister 2  
Retired 33

Farmer/rancher 1  
Other professional 1

5. Educational level of adults:
- |                                  |      |
|----------------------------------|------|
| Up to and including high school. | 45 % |
| Some college or college graduate | 45 % |
| Graduate school                  | 10 % |
6. Describe the racial or ethnic composition of the congregation. Caucasian (regular attendees)

### C. LEADERSHIP

1. Identify the present staff position for which you are seeking a candidate. Transitional Pastor
2. Two previous persons in the above position: (previous regular Pastors)

Name John Dey                      Dates of service August 2006 – June 2022

Name Gordon Zook                  Dates of service 1994- 2006

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

John is a wonderful Pastor, a strong preacher and teacher, a wise counselor, and more. In his case, John gave notice early in 2022 that he had done much soul-searching and had determined that it was time for him to move on from WRMC. He felt it was a good time for him and a good time in the life of the church. We talked about it as a Church Council, both among ourselves and with our District Overseer, and with the Congregation. Ultimately, the Congregation decided our goal was to hire a Transitional Pastor.

Gordon Zook served twelve years as pastor of Warwick River Mennonite Church, after which he served as Administrator of Warwick River Christian School. Gordon had a gift of organization, and was a very caring pastor, able to diffuse problems before they became major issues. He decided to end his term at WRMC. Transitions were not a problem.

3. Did your congregation follow the Pastor Salary Guidelines recommended by the denomination for the previous pastor? Yes                  If not, describe how you varied from the Guidelines
4. Identify other staff: (assistant/associate minister, lay ministers, administrative assistant, custodian, musicians, youth)

Title Janitor    .075% of full time                      Specific responsibilities Clean facilities/vacuum & dust sanctuary  
Years served 1984 to present

Title Administrative Assistant    75% of full time    Specific responsibilities. All duties as assigned  
Years served August 2017 to present

Title                      % of full time                      Specific responsibilities                      Years served

Title                      % of full time                      Specific responsibilities                      Years served

Title                      % of full time                      Specific responsibilities                      Years served

5. Describe housing options for the above position: Is there a parsonage or a housing allowance (US) or housing credit (Canada)? Housing allowance  
Is the person free to choose between these options? We do not have a parsonage

### 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? WRMC is highly committed to Anabaptist/Mennonite faith. Despite our differences in beliefs, since the beginning of our Mennonite community we have maintained a good relationship with the large military community around us. Over the years, and presently, persons of non-Mennonite background have joined and taken an active part in the ministry of our church. Being a "peace church" attracts some but turns others away. One place our faith takes action and we spread our beliefs and faith as a "peace church" is through our school, Warwick River Christian School.
- B. What is the vision for your church? What are your priorities that shape the church's ministry?  
 In 2020, we did a visioning process, primarily focused on our new building. The idea was to give the Building Committee guidance on what we needed in a new building. We got information that confirmed that the Building Committee was on the right track, but we also got a great deal of other information. WRMC's overall vision: *Healing and Hope - God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy, and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.* Specifically from 2020 our vision included: Strengthening our community (looking inward) – 1) Encourage special interest groups; 2) Hold fellowship events; 3) Improve internal communication and organizational responsibilities. Engage the larger community (looking outward) – 1) develop new ministries, activities, and services; 2) Focus on social justice issues; 3) Hold community events; 4) Improve external communications; 5) support Learning Center ministry. Become more Intentional with Our Welcoming Nature – 1) Work on attitudes, behaviors, and actions; 2) Make physical space and layout more conducive to welcoming; Enhance worship experience – 1) Continue to use a variety of hymns and music as a key element; 2) Encourage variety and diversity, 3) Sermons; 4) Continue Zoom worship (even after we begin to worship in person); Maintain/Promote music as a strength; Education – 1) Have Sunday school for all ages. Some of these things we have done, some we are working on, and several have been impeded by COVID. Most importantly, since we are amid so much change (new building, new pastor, worship part Zoom/part in person) with a long legacy, yet essentially church planting, we are engaging in a new Visioning process right now. People are signing up and the Visioning Team is forming groups with plans to start meeting in the next 2-3 weeks.
- 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? The Pastor should be a spiritual leader, preacher, teacher, and counselor of our Church. She/he works with the worship commission (but is not the chair) and guides the worship experience within the church. She/he performs weddings, funerals, baptisms, and other events. Pastoral care and counseling is also needed. The Pastor meets with the Chair of the Council of Ministries and the Elder weekly to discuss and plan for various items within the life of the congregation and to support one another. May meet with various commissions or work teams from time to time to support their work. In this case, looking for a transitional pastor, WRMC is in the unique position of having a long history and legacy, but with a new Pastor, a new building, changing worship style, looking for new members, visioning for the future, we are almost church planting. We need a Transitional Pastor who can guide and lead us through this process.
- 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.  
 We believe that we are the body of Christ living out God's kingdom in the world by the power of the Spirit. Together we strive to know God and God's ways more fully, to strengthen each other and bear one another's burdens, and to share Christ and minister to those around us and around the world.
- 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? The spiritual and emotional health is very strong. We have a faithful group of attenders who love God and try to live like Jesus as best we can. We care for each other well. Other elements of the congregation are mixed however. Some people are very content with doing things "the way they've always been done", while some feel that they would like to see some changes. Our 2020 Visioning process uncovered a divide of sorts in the congregation. While nearly everyone agreed that the church was warm and welcoming, some felt a division within the church. It was described as an "inner circle" which included the "colony Mennonites" (ie. those who grew up in Denbigh in the colony area, went to the church for generations, went to the school together, etc.) and everyone else. There is no malfeasance or intent to disenfranchise anyone. It is simply a by-product of circumstances. Since then, we have had some "non-colony" members join in leadership of committees, etc. and participating in workgroups etc., among other things. Though the issue still exists, it seems to be getting better. We will find out more as we begin our current visioning process. As far as worship style, Sunday school, many are open to new ways and ideas, many are not. Again, as we work on our visioning process, it will be interesting to take a new temperature as we have changed our music and some other small parts of our worship in the last few years, we are in a new Chapel, and we are in a sea of change right now.
- 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?  
 This is a question where the answer may change after the visioning process we are starting now. But based on our current situation and the 2020 visioning, there are some things that are likely. First, we should have a new building which will make a huge difference in our ability to resume our fellowship meals and meetings, kids club,

adult Bible study, making blankets, filling backpacks for foster children, and more. The 2020 visioning called for small groups, more diversity in the congregation, mending the feeling of division between “colony Mennonites” and other members, more diversity of music in our worship services, more gatherings. We should be on the road to doing all those things in 5 years.

### III. Organization/Ministry

#### A. CHURCH STRUCTURE

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

Name Council of Ministries and an Elder who also sits on Council of Ministries.  
 meets weekly , monthly x, quarterly  (More often as required) 10 # of avg. age 55 M – F

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

Name Worship Commission meets weekly , monthly x, quarterly  # of 5-6. avg. age 55 M – F

Name Building Commission meets weekly , monthly x, quarterly  # of 4-5. avg. age 55 M – F

Name Visioning Team meets weekly x monthly , quarterly  # of 4 avg. age 63 M – F

Name Others curtailed due to COVID meets weekly , monthly , quarterly  # of avg. age M – F

Name meets weekly , monthly , quarterly  # of avg. age M – F

#### B. Worship AND MUSIC

1. Describe your worship service

We are no longer meeting in the sanctuary we have enjoyed for decades. We have been impacted by the pandemic as our gathering was limited for the last two years. However, in spite of everything, our worship services are designed with the goal of gathering in the Chapel to strengthen each other and to worship God. The Pastor’s sermon, or another presentation of worth, is the backbone of the service. A rotating list of people take their turns at reading scripture as well as leading the service and the responsive readings. The same goes for the Zoom host and the person who chooses and presents the music electronically so that whether in person or on Zoom the congregation can see the words and hear the music and sing along if they like. At this time, we have not yet gone back to congregational singing the way it was two years ago.

During Lent, Advent, or other special times, themes are put forward with visuals and activities to experience the season and grow in the knowledge of God.

An important time of the service is the sharing of joys and concerns, followed by prayers of gratitude or of petition for the things shared. We always feel blessed if we hear a baby or small child pipe up during the service, and we appreciate when children or teens participate in a skit or assist in some other way.

Fellowship after the service has taken the form of Coffee Connect. People linger to catch up with each other and taste a pastry with a cup of coffee.

2. What role does music play in your congregation? Music is very important to our congregation. We love Hymn Sings. The music in our Worship is chosen to compliment the Pastor’s message. We use a combination of our beloved 4 part a cappella and newer, more modern songs,

3. What song books/collections of music does your congregation use? Presently, we are not using our hymnbooks, which are the blue *Hymnal a Worship Book*, the red *Mennonite Hymnal*, *Singing the Journey*, and *singing the Story*. We often use printed sheets with the day’s music selections on them instead and share the words to music on the screen for Zoom participants.

4. Name the musical instruments used in worship and other events (piano, keyboard, organ, guitar organ, drums, handbells, violin, etc.) Piano, organ, guitar, violin. All prior to COVID. We haven’t gotten back to the instruments yet. Recorded music is played simultaneously on Zoom and in church and we sing along. We just started singing due to COVID.

5. Identify choirs and/or music groups

Name Worship Commission and Song Leaders (different on each week) selects the music.

Occasionally we form a choir for special occasions but there is not a standing, regular choir.

Name	Age range	Number of participants
------	-----------	------------------------

Name	Age range	Number of participants
Name	Age range	Number of participants
Name	Age range	Number of participants

**C. CHRISTIAN FORMATION- Describe your approach to Christian Formation**

1. Number of children's classes 2 Total Sunday school enrollment 15  
 Number of youth classes 0 Average total attendance. 18  
 Number of adult classes 1

Note: We are just starting classes since COVID. Have not restarted the older adult class.

What curriculum resources are used by these classes? Adult class uses Herald Press series.

The children use Menno Press curriculum.

2. How does the congregation attend to the formation needs of persons of all ages?

Until recently we had midweek Kids' Club and Bible Study for adults. There is a prayer time open to members and community once a week in the chapel for intercession and encouragement.

3. What other opportunities are there for growth and transformation?

Occasionally we will do an informal book study or a topic study such as racism on Zoom or meeting together in person.

4. Describe the involvement of youth in the life of the congregation.

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

Youth are asked to be a part of our services and events in any appropriate way—readings, skits, ushering. Right now, our numbers are too small for youth groups.

Yes, we have always worked to send our youth to conferences and service opportunities. It has not happened recently due to COVID and small numbers, but we hope it will again.

We support the Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center. Our kids have attended camps or worked as counselors or both

5. Does your congregation have active small groups? If so, describe the number of groups, focus of the groups and how often they meet. We do not have active small groups. This is something that was of interest to some during our visioning in 2020. We have not looked at this further yet due to COVID.

6. What men's/women's groups are active? We have no men's or women's groups. We used to have fellowship and Bible study on Wednesday nights, but it was stopped due to COVID and has not yet restarted.

7. What ministries do you have for children, youth and young adults over 18, etc.?) Nothing

8. In the next five years, do you anticipate a membership: increase  stability x decrease?

Why? We have a large elderly population which we will lose by the natural course of life. We hope to gain new members at the same time.

**D. OUTREACH AND EVANGELISM**

1. Describe how you cultivate the visibility of your church in the community.

In the beginning they met people/business owners in the community. There was a colony Farmer's Market that raised visibility in the community. They had Bible school in black churches. We started Calvary Mennonite Church in downtown Newport News. Today still doing that in our own neighborhoods. We also

use our website and Facebook.

2. Describe how you connect to seekers and make new disciples.

We try to live our lives as Jesus taught us, be genuine, use our welcoming nature to meet and care for people. This attracts people to your way of life and want to be part of it.

3. Describe your congregation's ministry in and with the community.

We do various things to serve the community including collecting and delivering food to Thrive, our local food bank, to enable them to serve Newport News' substantial homeless and hungry population. We also have our school Warwick River Christian School, where we educate and minister to children and their families.

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

We use Zoom weekly for access to the adult Sunday school, various meetings, and church on Sunday. We record the sermon weekly and post it on our website. We also post things on Facebook and have a group email that we use to communicate with the congregation. We use projectors and PowerPoint to teach/present information.

#### **F. CHURCH BUILDING AND PROPERTY**

1. Do you own or rent your facility? If rent, describe the type of space.

Own. We are planning for renovations and upgrades to our building. We are in the stage of working with the architect and hope to make some decisions in the coming months in regard to next steps. We are now worshipping in a newly renovated Chapel that previously housed our childcare.

2. Seating capacity of sanctuary or worship area

Sanctuary seats 300+. Chapel seats about 50.

3. Date of construction of church building:

Present church building was constructed in 1961. Chapel: 1973.

4. Date of last renovation.    N/A                      Describe what was done

What if any building/renovation program is needed or projected?

See above.

5. Describe the educational facilities.

Church Building: 10 classrooms. We also have access to Warwick River Christian School (located on the property). Presently, we use it for meeting rooms, Sunday school classes, and church offices.

6. Describe the fellowship and/or recreational facilities.

We are not currently hosting fellowship events due to COVID, but when we do, they will be held in the Chapel until the renovations of the original facility are completed. The facility to be renovated has a fellowship hall and kitchen. We have a playground and a large field that can be used for fellowship and recreational events. We also, on occasion, use the property of one of our members down by the Warwick River.

7. Describe the church office location and equipment:

Computers, phones, other. We have the Administrative Assistant's office, which includes a phone, computer, and copy machine. The Pastor's office includes a phone and a laptop. Both offices are located in the school facility at this time.

8. Are building and equipment adequate for the needs of the congregation? Describe any special assets or liabilities of the building.

The Chapel works for us for now except that we do not have space adequate in size for funerals, weddings, etc.

The Chapel is handicap accessible with an ADA bathroom. The original facility, after completed renovations, will be adequate for much larger gatherings than the chapel can accommodate.

9. Name the insurance company and describe the coverage for church liability, property, pastor's liability, etc., for the church.

**Erie Insurance; Church Liability** is \$1,000,000.00 each occurrence limit/\$2,000,000.00 Aggregate; Sexual misconduct is \$100,000.00 each occurrence limit/\$300,000.00 Aggregate; **Property-church building** is \$2,782,500.00; **Property-church contents** is \$337,500.00; **Property-chapel building only** is \$252,000.00; **Pastor's liability** is \$1,000,000.00 each occurrence limit/\$2,000,000.00 Aggregate; **Professional Liability-Cemetery** is \$1,000,000.00 each occurrence; **etc.**, Declarations Page available upon request

10. Are there community programs or groups who also utilize your church facilities? Who are they and how often do they use the building?

Not currently

What interaction do you have with them?

#### G. CHURCH STEWARSHIP/FINANCES (Tom)

1. Based upon your last report, identify the previous year's giving of your church.

##### Local Church

Expenses Budget \$180,387

Local needs and outreach

Buildings and facilities

**TOTAL LOCAL CHURCH CONTRIBUTIONS**

##### Non Local Contributions

Area church/conference

Denominational total

Mennonite institutions and agencies

Mennonite Central Committee

Other Mennonite causes

Non-Mennonite causes

**TOTAL NON LOCAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

Note: Denomination refers to either Mennonite Church USA or Mennonite Church Canada
---

2. Church budget

Who makes recommendation regarding pastoral and staff salaries? Council of Ministries

Who determines church budget or makes recommendation to the church? Council of Ministries

What plan is used to challenge the church to Christian stewardship

Current total budget \$ 187,387

3. Is there church indebtedness? Yes  No  Amount \$

How is it being reduced?

#### 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)  Metropolitan area (over 1,000,000)

dispersed over mostly large suburban area

2. Which best describes this community?  
 Growing  Stable  Declining
3. Describe racial or ethnic composition of the community. White: 47.94% Black or African American: 41.07% Two or more races: 5.17% Asian: 3.21%
4. List two or three primary business/industries in the community. Huntington Ingalls Industries (shipyard),  
Riverside Healthcare System, Army & Navy Exchange Services
5. Identify other Mennonite/Anabaptist churches in the community, if any.  
What other churches and faith groups are in the community?  
Providence Mennonite Church, Huntington Mennonite Church
6. Name of nearest college or university Christopher Newport University  
  
In what way does your church relate to this academic community? We have a few members who work there but do not have any particular relationship with the University or its students.
7. Identify significant issues confronting your community. Poverty. The poverty rate in Newport News is 16.4% (average is 11.9%), meaning 1 in 6.1 people live in poverty.
8. Describe what you believe to be distinctive assets of your community.  
  
One is taking care of each other in time of need: deaths, illness, new babies, etc. Carrying meals in is especially heartwarming and many other ways. Our adult Sunday school classes have also had strong bonds and fellowship.
9. Describe your congregation's ministry in the community.  
  
Our Wednesday night fellowships included kids club, adult bible study, and a meal with a strong community participation. Also on Wednesday nights, we hosted family nights that we collected toiletries and made care kits for those in need and we filled backpacks with supplies for children coming into foster care. Homemakers also makes blankets and other requested items for the homeless. Senior fellowship has been ongoing for many years and includes many from the community and outside of our church family.
10. How does your congregation work with ecumenical and interfaith efforts?  
  
Community church services like special Thanksgiving and Christmas services, work with community homeless organizations like Port and Thrive that help those facing financial hardships and struggle to survive.

## **B. AREA CHURCH/CONFERENCE**

1. Describe your relationship with and your participation in the area church/conference.

We have joint activities and services with Huntington Mennonite and Providence Mennonite, and we share prayer requests with those churches as well. We have also had joint services via Zoom with Richmond Mennonite. We also have 2 delegates at this time, Ted and Sue Yoder, on the Eastern District Council. Our pastor represents us on Virginia Conference, etc.



### **C. WIDER CHURCH**

1. Describe your relationship with and your participation in Mennonite Church Canada/Mennonite Church USA.

We are part of Mennonite Church USA and believe the Pastor represents us at meetings.

### **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.

We could not locate this website so could not answer the question.

- 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: Tammara Geary, Susan Ackerman, Kathryn Baer, Nelson Baer, Pat O'Connor, Tom Salyers, Cheri Shenk, Lisa Zeigler

Date of completion June 14, 2022

March 2017