

Bethany Christian Schools Tuition Support Plan
Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship
Approved August 20, 2017

The Philosophy:

Each child of Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship is a gift from God. Our children are a gift in the congregation if they choose to attend their local public school or if they choose to attend Bethany. As a congregation, we support the spiritual nurture of all of our children through our Christian education program on Sunday mornings, inclusion during worship, the mentor program, middle school and high school youth group programs (JYF and MYF), summer Bible school, and other special activities. Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship is committed to work continually to strengthen our congregational programs of nurture for our children and youth.

As a congregation in the Goshen area, we are grateful to have a variety of good options for our children's education. Our community has fine public school systems which provide quality education and employ a high percentage of Christian educators including members of our congregation. The state of Indiana cooperates with families who choose home schooling as an option. We also have the opportunity for children to enroll in Bethany Christian Schools, an institution of the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference of which Berkey Avenue is a member, which offers quality education while promoting discipleship within the context of the Mennonite Christian school community.

Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship cares deeply about the support and nurture of our children's spiritual development. We are aware that each child's needs and calling are unique. Some families feel their children would benefit most by attending their local public school. Others families feel that the Christian school setting is the best match for their children. Others may choose to educate their children in their homes. In addition, we recognize that Bethany cannot serve all of the children in our congregation. Berkey Avenue seeks to encourage and support all of our children and families who participate in any of the available educational alternatives.

As taxpayers, we can support our local public schools in a variety of ways. We pay taxes, vote for school board members and on bond levies, participate in fundraisers, and attend events. As a congregation of Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, Berkey Avenue has supported Bethany by contributing to the operating fund and by providing opportunity for any child to be able to choose to attend the school regardless of her or his family's financial resources.

Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship continues to be committed to the ideal that a student's decision about whether to attend Bethany should not rest solely on the financial resources of his or her family. We understand that some families can more easily afford to pay the total cost of tuition while others cannot finance a Bethany education without financial aid of some kind. This congregational plan encourages us to:

- ◆ show congregational support for Bethany as an Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference school and as an educational option for our children while maintaining a budget that supports other ministries;
- ◆ provide tuition support for students who cannot afford the total cost;
- ◆ invite others within the congregation to share the cost of an education at Bethany.

We encourage families whose children attend Bethany and who can afford the total cost of tuition to take responsibility to contribute at least the full amount to the congregational plan (see below). We encourage those families with limited financial resources to give whatever they are able. We encourage other interested persons in the congregation to give generously toward the congregational plan as well. All of these sources of giving will enable the congregation to support tuition costs for the Bethany students in the congregation.

The Plan:

1. Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship desires to participate in the Partnership Plan (full tuition level) offered by Bethany Christian Schools. This plan requires congregations to guarantee 100 percent payment of tuition. Congregational participation in this plan will provide a significant discount on the cost of tuition to households with students at Bethany.
2. Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship's general operating budget will include 20 percent of tuition for any student at Bethany Christian Schools, contingent upon the following:
 - a. The line item for Bethany Christian Schools tuition in the general operating budget will be capped at 15 percent of the total amount of the prior year's general operating budget. This means that the general operating budget may, in some years, cover less than 20 percent of tuition for Bethany students. Notification of such a change will be provided to participating households as early as possible by the Stewardship and Finance Commission.
3. A designated fund for Bethany tuition will continue to operate. The congregation is encouraged to contribute to this designated fund to provide the remainder of the tuition amount. The designated fund will accumulate from May 1 to April 30 for payment of the following year's tuition. (For example, tuition for the 2017-18 school year will accumulate from May 2016 until April 30, 2017.) The Stewardship and Finance Commission or Treasurer will estimate the monies needed in the designated fund for the next school year. They will provide regular reports of the fund balance and the estimated amount needed. Donations to the fund are encouraged from the congregation. Donations are never earmarked for a particular child. Receipt of benefits of this plan is never dependent upon making a contribution, and enrollment at Bethany is never contingent on making a payment or donation to this fund. No contribution appeals will be made as part of the enrollment process at Bethany and no unusual pressure will be placed on parents to contribute compared to other congregational members.

By the first Sunday in April, the Stewardship and Finance Commission will report how much money has been contributed to the Bethany Christian Schools designated fund. The commission will provide the following information: 1) how much money is needed to cover full tuition costs; b) the dollar amount that the designated fund and support from the general fund add up to when combined; and 3) the percentage of tuition that can be covered by Berkey Avenue at that point. The congregation will have the remainder of April to contribute to the designated fund. On the first Sunday in May, the Stewardship and Finance Commission will publicize the final percentage of tuition covered by the congregation (designated fund combined with allocation from the general fund).

If the designated fund does not fully cover the tuition cost:

- a. The fund will be divided proportionately student by student. (For example, if the fund accumulates 80 percent of what is needed, the tuition amount for each student, with multiple student and faculty discounts applied, will be covered at 80 percent.)
 - b. Because participation in the Bethany Partnership Plan requires a guarantee of tuition payment by the congregation, the congregation will bill all student households for the remainder of the cost of tuition and will then make payments directly to Bethany. The amount paid in response to this billing will not be tax deductible. The payments will be due to the congregation by September 1.
 - c. If a family does not pay their portion of the direct bill, then the following should happen:
 - i. The situation will be referred to a sub-committee composed of one representative from appointed by each of the following groups: the Elders, the Christian Education Commission, the Stewardship and Finance Commission, and the Agape Committee. The sub-committee's task is to discern if there is a financial hardship which should be supported by congregational funds. If the total tuition need exceeds the funds available after a general appeal to the congregation, an immediate review of the Tuition Support plan will take place.
 - ii. If the sub-committee determines there is not a financial hardship, or if there are insufficient congregational funds available, the deficit amount will be carried until the following fiscal year when the deficit will be paid from the General Fund Bethany Tuition support line item. An immediate review of the Tuition Support plan will take place.
4. This plan will begin with the 2017-18 school year. It will be evaluated in its fourth year (2021-22) with revisions (if any) implemented in the fifth year (2022-23).
 5. Guidelines for participation in the plan are as follows:
 - a. Parent/s of the student must be a member of or member-in-process on or prior to the early enrollment date established by Bethany Christian Schools. (Currently the early enrollment date is March 15.)
 - b. Parent/s and student must regularly attend Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship.

- c. Students must state their interest in attending Bethany Christian Schools by March 1 to the Bethany Advocate appointed by the Christian Education Commission. A form will be made available during February of each year to indicate interest in attending Bethany Christian Schools for the following school year.
- d. Applications for enrollment must be received by Bethany Christian Schools on or prior to the early enrollment date (March 15). This enables Berkey Avenue to take advantage of the early enrollment discount.
 - i. Student deposits will be paid by Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship for all eligible students who apply to Bethany Christian Schools prior to the early enrollment date.
- e. Students are expected to maintain a C average and abide by behavioral guidelines as outlined by Bethany Christian Schools.
- f. Requests for exceptions to these guidelines should be submitted to the Christian Education Commission for consideration. The Christian Education Commission, in consultation with the Stewardship and Finance Commission, has the final authority to grant exceptions.
- g. Eligibility for participation in the plan is not contingent upon an individual or family's level of giving to the general or designated funds.
- h. As a congregation we recognize that various individuals may feel a conflict of interest related to this plan because they are employees of Bethany, spouses of employees, parents of enrolled students or Bethany board members. No specific relationship to the school is prohibited from serving on the Bethany Plan subcommittee if the individual has been affirmed by their commission or the Elders.