

CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE

Minutes

June 21-23, 2018

College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana

Come, walk with us. Tell us your story!

Thursday, June 21

Family Day events

- *Golf Scramble at Black Squirrel Golf Club
- *Bike/run/walk
- *The Art of Listening led by Nina Lanctot
- *Pastor Appreciation Dinner
- *Backyard Picnic

WORSHIP I: The Divine No

Text: Acts 16:6-15 Speaker: Nina Lanctot

*Ice Cream Social

Friday, June 22

Delegate Session I

Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street) led delegates in singing SJ2, *Come, walk with us*.

Arman Habegger (Grace) opened the delegate sessions with the sounding of the gavel. He welcomed members to the 62nd session of Central District Conference. Arman invited participants to introduce themselves around the tables.

State of the Conference Address: Arman shared that 50 years ago Faith and Life published the first history of the conference entitled *Faith in Ferment* by Dr. Samuel F Pannebecker. The history recorded the first 10 years of the existence of the Central District Conference. In 1957, 41 congregations joined the Central District which was formed by the merger of the Central Conference and the Middle District of the General Conference Mennonite Church. Congregations were located among eight states: Illinois - 16, Indiana - 7, Iowa - 4, Kansas - 1, Michigan - 2, Missouri - 1, Nebraska - 1, and Ohio - 9. The total membership was ~8300. Compared to the distribution of congregations today, there is a significant difference. There are 41 congregations distributed among ten states: Florida - 1, Georgia - 1, Illinois -9, Indiana - 11, Iowa - 1, Michigan - 4, Minnesota - 1, Ohio - 10, Virginia - 1, and Wisconsin - 2. The total membership is ~4000. On the final page of *Faith and Ferment*, Dr. Pannebecker writes,

“What does a historian have to say of the future? The moving finger of history writes on, but the historian waits for further revelation. Perhaps one thing can be projected with assurance, that as there has been change in the past, so there will be change in the future. We like to build for ourselves comfortable little nests, where there is sufficient challenge to appease a Christian conscience but not so much as to seriously disturb our way of life. God acts in history to disrupt old patterns and force adjustment to the unknown. Our fathers [and mothers] faced perplexities in a new continent and reacted—hesitantly at times—but with confidence in God. Only as we are shaken free of old supports and guarantees can faith begin to operate, with trust and growth.”

Change has occurred this year in Central District and Mennonite Church USA as well. At this gathering, we will take the step to approve membership for two congregations in North Carolina and one in Georgia. We continue to have discussions with Allegheny Mennonite Conference about whether both parties want to define a new union of congregations. Doug Luginbill and Arman spent time at Laurelville and then again at Hyattsville to listen and engage in a discussion about the future of AMC. A joint committee of three persons from each of the conferences continues to work on possible affiliation options. Visits have been made to several other congregations who want to join Central District.

Glen Guyton became executive director of MC USA when Ervin Stutzman retired. In the summer of 2017, MC USA delegates spent considerable time working on the Future Church Summit, seeking to reshape the identity of MC USA. More information is available through Journey Forward documents and the Pathways study materials that are available for download from the MC USA website.

Central District continues to be grateful for the financial support that we receive from congregations and individuals. We continue to hope for that strong financial base to enable the various efforts that CDC pursues:

- *Reign of God grants
- *Staffing needs
- *Annual meeting, Board of Directors, and committee meetings

Together with Everence, we have created an account to enable donors to gift stocks and mutual funds instead of cash.

Immigration has been one of the topics in the front of the national news in the last several years. This issue has also commanded tangible attention several of our CDC congregations during this past year. Columbus Mennonite and Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship have declared their buildings to be sanctuary spaces for immigrants whose cases are under review. Some congregations in the Elkhart/Goshen area participated in a community wide conversation about the proposed construction of an immigration and customs enforcement detention center. The conversations ultimately resulted in the withdrawal of the proposal.

Many congregations continue to study the seeds of racism and explore appropriate responses. Other congregations are learning about the Doctrine of Discovery, an issue that prompted significant comment at the MC USA convention in Orlando. Developing interfaith relationships, seeking to understand and to respect peoples of different faith perspectives in their communities, posting three-language welcoming signs in front yards of homes, churches and diverse places - many of us as people of faith our engaging scripture, worshipping faithfully and discerning how to be God's healing and hope in our communities.

Jim Harder retired as President of Bluffton University at the end of 2018. He and Karen have served Bluffton University well and have been a presence at CDC annual meetings each year. Delegates recognized Jim with applause. Karen was unable to attend due to the birth of twin granddaughters in early June in Thailand.

Arman recognized Jorge Vielman (Hively Avenue), Marlene Steiner Suter (Columbus), and Roger Nafziger (Eighth Street) who will be leaving the Board at the conclusion of the annual meeting. Board members who continue are: Anna Yoder Schlabach (Assembly), Carrie Mast (First Bluffton), Tim Lind (Florence), and Arman Habegger (Grace). He recognized staff members: Emma Hartman (Faith), Beth Yoder, Mary Klassen (Hively Avenue), and Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton). The CDC Board and various committees continue to function because of the willingness of people to serve. Arman encouraged people to consider accepting a position of leadership if asked. The assignment will certainly take some time, but it also rewards with new friendships, accomplishments, and semi-annual visits to Camp Friedenswald. CDC exhibits good spirit. Comments garnered from regional gatherings and annual meetings testify that participants enjoy themselves among other CDC people, that work gets done, that prayer deepens our experience, that laughter lightens our moments together. These same qualities evidence themselves at Board and committee meetings as well. We believe this is a good place to be. May we continue to be a blessing to each other.

Centering: Donna Mast (Silverwood) offered a moment of centering time using Thomas Merton's quote: *My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that my desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will*

not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Congregational Story: Omie Baumgartner (Silverwood) shared the following story:

It all started years ago at Silverwood with a program called Church Family Night (CFN). It was a night of fellowship and food. During a fall session and spring session we met for a number of Wednesdays for a time to build relationships and eat together. Wanting to get to know people outside our walls, CFN soon morphed into Wednesday Connections. Similar to CFN, we had food and fellowship, but the congregation was encouraged to invite people in to build relationships with our community as well. Relationships were made and friendships strengthened. The food was amazing and conversations were priceless. These nights brought a lot of people to the table on a Wednesday night but like the saying goes, "All good things must come to an end." There were so many good things happening with Wednesday Connections but it was a lot of work, hard work, and it had run its course.

Jump ahead a few years and we decided to walk down a different path and become an outreach in a different way. We were going to host classes for the community, specifically for parents. We hosted a Triple P parenting class. This class was advertised to the community, a local elementary school we partner with, and through a fostering company for foster parents to gain hours toward their annual educational hours. It was unknown how many would attend but we were praying that God would walk with us as we walk with others. It turned out that the numbers of people that attended was not an exorbitant amount but the impact was just as meaningful as with our large groups at Wednesday Connections. The smaller number of people seemed to allow people to connect a little better. People were intentional about talking with the visitors each week to connect in a different way. There were multiple people that attended multiple classes.

One connection was with Josh and Jon. Josh was attending the classes each week and enjoying the good food. Jon came, for the good food, but also to meet new people. After some general conversations it was discovered that Josh was a beekeeper. Jon wanted to get his start into beekeeping and this was the key. With the ability to make a one on one connection over dinner, friendships are made. We are excited to see what path God will walk us down in the future.

Introductions: Arman introduced the following

Resolutions Committee: David Stolpe (Milwaukee), Sueann VonGunten (Hively Ave), George Lehman (First Bluffton)

Listening Committee: Brian Bolton (Shalom Mennonite Congregation), Jane Roeschley (Mennonite Church of Normal), Tim Stair (Hively Ave)

Parliamentarian: Gerald Mast

Medical Person On Call: Ardean Friesen

Summary Review of 2017 Annual Meeting Minutes: Carrie Mast (First Bluffton) summarized the minutes of the 2017 annual meeting. *A motion was made, seconded, and affirmed to accept the minutes of the 2017 annual meeting as written. [David Rensberger (Atlanta), Kerry Strayer (Columbus)]*

Highlight Actions in 2018 Agenda: Carrie Mast (First Bluffton) reviewed the agenda and highlighted actions/agenda for the delegate sessions.

Treasurers Report/Presentation of 2018-2019 Proposed Spending Plan: Roger Nafziger (Eighth Street) invited delegates to turn to p77 of the report book and reviewed the balance sheet. He then referred delegates to p78 and reviewed the income/expense statement as of April 30. He noted that congregational giving is down, as of this point, for 2017-2018. Additional giving is above the spending plan goal. He directed delegates to p48 and reviewed the 2018-2019 spending plan.

Presentation of Gifts Discernment Committee and Slate: Peter Eash-Scott (Milwaukee), chair of the committee, thanked all those who have served on committees or as representatives of Central District Conference. He introduced members of the committee: Ruth Guengerich (Eighth Street), Lois Hochstetler (Mennonite Church of Normal), Jon Hilty (Grace), Joel Miller (Columbus), and Sally Weaver Glick (Open Table). Peter directed delegates to the 2018-2019 slate on pp 50-51 of the report book and reviewed the

slate. He note that Jane Roeschley's name should be added under the BU Board of Trustees. On behalf of the Gifts Discernment Committee, Peter moved to affirm the 2018-2019 slate of nominees. Janeen Bertsche Johnson seconded the motion. The slate was affirmed as presented.

Commissioning Prayer: Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton) recognized incoming and continuing committee members. He led in a commissioning prayer.

Break: Snacks provided by Eighth Street Mennonite Church

Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street) led delegates in singing SJ2, *Come, walk with us*.

Introduction of Congregations: Arman Habegger (Grace) invited the pastors and representatives of Americus Mennonite Fellowship, Emmanuel Mennonite Church and Jubilee Mennonite Fellowship to introduce their congregations to the delegates.

Americus Mennonite Fellowship: Doris Poole and Jackie Campbell shared that Americus began in 1967 led by Lewis and Mary Overholt. The congregation started as a house church and now has a building. Lewis and Mary retired about 15 years ago. The congregation has been lay led for about 10 years. They are located in southwest Georgia about 150 miles south of Atlanta. Most participants are not from Americus. Many came through Habitat and other service organizations and have found a home in the community. Americus does community well by caring for each other. The congregation really wants to remain part of MC USA and believes it is important to be in relationship with the greater Mennonite community.

The congregation has a presence in Americus that is important. The outreach of the congregation includes involvement in Habitat For Humanity, the Fuller Center for Housing, Koinonia Farm, and the Alterna Community led by Anton Flores and many other places in which members do service. In the last several years, the congregation has connected with the local Hispanic community. They recently began a tutoring program in the community for 30-40 kids. Other youth groups from the area have come and joined in the program.

Americus has been meeting annually with Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship, Berea Mennonite Church, Emmanuel Mennonite Church, and the Alterna community for an Anabaptist Mennonite Gathering. It has been a good time of fellowship for them.

Emmanuel Mennonite Church: Eve MacMaster shared that Emmanuel is located in Gainesville, Florida. The congregation began as a house fellowship and is now 35 years old. The congregation is made up of mostly non-ethnic Mennonites. For the first 25 years they rented space to worship. About 10 years ago, one of their members in his 90s died and left the congregation a legacy that enabled them to buy a house and convert it into a meeting space. Moving into their own space changed the congregation. They are now able to do things in their community and invite others into their space. They have created a number of opportunities for people of the community (refugees/immigrants) that need assistance. Emmanuel became the base for organizing help for immigrants. They have invited Quakers into their space to work on dismantling racism. They are involved in an ongoing Muslim/Christian dialogue group that takes place in the community.

Jubilee Mennonite Fellowship: Russ Miller shared that Jubilee is located in west central Ohio. In 1973, Keith and Thelma Matthews came to Jubilee with a heart for people. They started a church plant in Bellefontaine with a ministry to mentally handicapped. They were not affiliated at that time but later decided to affiliate with the Mennonite Church. In August of 1983, they moved from meeting in a house to a building. They have always had a pastor from within the congregation. Their budget was structured so that 25% went within the congregation, 25% to pastor support, 25% outside the community, and 25% within the community. Currently they have 35 people with nine children. In 1993, they formed a support group for cancer patients which continues. The congregation had several families with gay or lesbian children. Jubilee is at CDC because of the LGBTQ issue. They have decided that they can give everyone

space but can't give them time. It needs to be clear that the church is welcoming. In addition, Jubilee is providing support for a deported citizen.

Receiving Berea Mennonite Church, Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship, and Raleigh Mennonite Church: Arman Habegger (Grace) moved to receive Berea Mennonite Church, Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship, and Raleigh Mennonite Church as member congregations of Central District Conference. Paper ballot votes were taken.

Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street) led delegates in singing SJ2, *Come, walk with us*.

Resolution of Appreciation: George Lehman (First Bluffton) presented the following resolution:

***Resolution of Appreciation for Bluffton's President Harder
Presented by the Central District Conference Resolutions Committee
June 23, 2018***

On this occasion of Dr. James M. Harder's retirement from the presidency of Bluffton University, we express gratitude for his twelve years of faithful service to Bluffton University and to the Mennonite church, for his strengthening of ties between the church and all of the Mennonite schools, for his commitment to the peace church mission of Bluffton and its impact on students from many backgrounds, for his leadership in building an institution of higher learning that will serve the faith and scholarship of future generations of Central District Conference members, and for his lifelong commitment to the mission of the church of Jesus Christ. We congratulate Jim on the recent birth of twin granddaughters and wish him a successful transition in whatever new roles emerge.

On behalf of the Resolutions Committee, George moved to affirm the resolution, Jane Roeschley (Mennonite Church of Normal) seconded. The motion was affirmed.

Introduction of Guests: Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton) welcomed and introduced guests and representatives from Mennonite Church USA Executive leadership and its agencies, Mennonite schools, and from other organizations related to the conference.

Lloyd and Joan Yoder Miller were recognized for celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary while attending the annual meeting.

Sharing around tables re Affiliation with Allegheny Mennonite Conference (AMC): Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton) introduced James Rissler (Atlanta). James gave an overview of the formation and task of the Network Team made up of three members from CDC (James Rissler (Atlanta), Loren Johns (Southside), and Jane Roeschley (Mennonite Church of Normal), three members from AMC, Doug Luginbill and Dave Mishler. They were tasked with visiting at least one conference gathering of the other conference and at least one congregation from the other conference, and dialoguing together about the affinity between CDC and AMC. Could we see our conferences affiliating more closely in terms of culture, history, leadership models, etc. In early November 2017, each conference produced a report and both reports indicated a strong sense of affinity between our conferences and a desire to think more particularly about how we might affiliate more closely. James directed delegates to the reports found in the delegate folders.

Out of this process, a new affiliation task group was formed. It was made up of three members from CDC, three from AMC, and Doug Luginbill and Dave Mishler. One member from both CDC and AMC carried over from the Network Team (James from CDC and LeAnne Zook from AMC). Other members from CDC were Donna Mast (Silverwood) and Ron Guengerich (Eighth Street). The group met several times via Zoom exploring possibilities for affiliation. Each group enjoyed one another and had productive conversations.

James introduced Dave Mishler, conference minister of AMC. Doug and Dave together shared further about the conversations.

AMC is in the midst of a rebirth. Formerly 37 congregations in four states (Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland and West Virginia), AMC is now made up of 12 congregations across the same four states. The geographic center has remained the same in south central Pennsylvania. Dave was called to be conference minister in 2016 after much pain and hope were generated on differing sides of aisles. In 2015, after a reconciliation process, Hyattsville was reinstated to full membership after being under discipline for 10 years. The decision to reinstate Hyattsville passed by one vote, which led to the largest fracture in the conference following several smaller fractures over the Mennonite Church USA merger in 2001.

What is happening now, some are calling a miracle and some are calling rebirth. Two years of re-visioning, re-branding, focusing on pastor resourcing and support, generally fellowshiping and having fun together again is raising hope and collegiality again in AMC. When they looked at re-visioning, they looked at what Central District has been doing over the last decades and liked what they saw. After receiving permission to copy what CDC has done, they have used that material to form a new structure. The Network Team and AMC leadership is undertaking the task of forming strategic partnership. AMC has moved from being quite fragile to not so fragile. They have restructured their budgets and staffing to get to a more stable financial picture over the long term. CDC is helping to ask hard questions of viability and purpose. They seem to be determining together that a third more diversity inspired conference is better in Mennonite Church USA. AMC needs CDC to help in testing that aspiration.

The CDC/AMC Affiliation Task Group is generating some exciting ideas of staff sharing and short term sustainability proposals that could assist Allegheny in being a place that congregations currently considering realignment within Mennonite Church USA might make a new home. One creative idea that AMC had is to invite congregations who have interest to become associate members of Allegheny for a defined period of time, maybe two or three years, to become midwives with AMC.

Staff sharing that might benefit both conferences include ideas such as CDC buying time from AMC ministry staff to focus on specific functions or serve as a resource to specific congregations. Another idea might be in administrative sharing, i.e, CDC take on updating the credentialing information in Mennodata system or issuing ministerial id cards annually, which could lower AMC expenses. One way that AMC has reduced expenses is to remove funding for representation in broader denominational meetings such as the Constituency Leaders Council, conference minister meetings and staff participation in MC USA. CDC has talked about sharing resources with AMC for a period of two years in order to keep AMC's voice present in MC USA functions. The cost would be between \$2750 and \$4000 per year.

AMC offers a college/seminary level Bible study at Laurelville each year. Dave invited delegates to pick up a flier about next year's event from their tables and shared details with them. Dave also invited delegates to attend the storytelling station focused on the International Guest House, a hospitality ministry based in Washington, D.C. that is a significant ministry of AMC.

Instead of sending staff to train the trainers meetings last year, AMC used national staff to do Healthy Boundaries Training. The hope is to collaborate with CDC in this effort if the strategic partnership develops.

We recognize the strong history AMC has for the support and development of youth ministry. Joy Cotchen is on staff at 30% to provide leadership. The Youth Cabinet has helped train excellent leaders over the years. AMC has provided program support to congregations around youth ministry in the past. We have explored ways that CDC might benefit from AMC's focus on youth ministry.

How the strategic partnership develops will depend on mutual purposes and desires as they line up in discernment over the next year. Both conference leadership and delegates will need to affirm any specific development. Would both conferences welcome shared leadership or staffing for the short term or the long

haul?

Delegates were invited to provide feedback to questions in discussion around their tables. Written summaries were turned in to conference staff.

Lunch, Visiting Displays

Delegate Session II

Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street) led delegates in singing SJ2, *Come, walk with us*

Announcing Membership Vote and Presentation of Blessing Cups: Arman Habegger (Grace) announced the results of the votes to accept Berea Mennonite Church (unanimous), Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship (99%), and Raleigh Mennonite Church (unanimous). He presented each congregation with a cup filled with blessings from Central District Conference congregations.

Congregational Story - Southside Mennonite Fellowship: Using a video presentation, David Moser shared the following story:

“Walls impose a simplified identity on those who cannot cross them. You are either from here or you are from there. You are either one of us or one of them. The walls allow no nuance, no mutually agreed upon story.” (Quote from *Walls: Crossing the Barriers* written by a Canadian who traveled around the world visiting walls and studying the impact on the societies where they are located. At Southside Fellowship we’ve been living with walls and trying to address the political theater of walls with the act prophetic witness. This witness is shaping us as a community. In 2015, David and the Southside Fellowship congregation received a Pastor Renewal Grant from the Lilly Foundation. They used the sabbatical funds to undertake a story of their own immigration story and of their neighbor’s immigration story. They learned how Anabaptists (David’s wife’s family) were deported citizens from Canton, Switzerland (Berne) and how his own ancestors were undocumented in Switzerland and the problems that caused. As well as their trip to Europe, the sabbatical trip involved going to Mexico and learning about the Mexican immigration story and culminated with David and his wife participating in the Migrant Trail, a 75 mile border walk that crosses the desert Sasabe, Mexico and back to Tuscon, Arizona. The Migrant Trail is sponsored and funded by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and other organizations. It is an annual event. The Migrant Trail is hosted by a congregation (Southside Fellowship) in Arizona that has played an important part in the process. The purpose of the Migrant Trail is to remember the men, women, and children who have lost their lives trying to cross the border and to bear witness against the inhumanity of US immigration and border policies. In 2017, in the area between Sasabe, Mexico and Tuscon, Arizona there were 58 bodies found. The year David and Ingrid walked the trail, there had been 140 bodies found. In 2017, there were 435 deaths along the entire southern border of the United States. Since the 1990’s more than 7000 people have lost their lives trying to cross the southern border. To put the deaths in perspective: walls have defined the southern border for about 26 years. The Berlin wall stood for 28 years. During the 28 years the Berlin wall separated the East and West German people, approximately 140 people died trying to cross the Berlin wall. Today, those who died trying to cross the Berlin wall are memorialized in a museum in Berlin.

Southside Fellowship continues to be involved and engaged in the Migrant Trail and in this justice issue. Because of a Reign of God grant, Southside Fellowship and Hively Avenue Mennonite Church were able to send members of the congregation to a border learning trip in Douglas, Arizona. Southside has continued to do these kind of things as a congregation. More recently, the congregation has gotten involved in an organization called Faith in Indiana that is working at numerous justice issues. One of the central issues is more just laws around immigration and immigration reform.

The most important and meaningful thing that Southside has done is to become more aware of how the border issues impact the local community and particularly people in their congregation. This past spring,

the congregation rallied around a family whose grandfather was dying of cancer in Mexico. The congregation made it possible for the family to travel back to Mexico to be with him. Following his death, the congregation had a memorial service for the family who were not able to go.

As a congregation, they continue to participate in migrant, justice issues and that has spilled over into all kinds of other issues and interests as well such as the Palestine/Israel issue and the tensions in Northern Ireland. Since 2015, six members have participated in the MCC border learning tour, one has gone back to volunteer at the border teaching English, and another has become involved in local immigration justice work, three are trained as rapid responders in Elkhart County to document ICE raids, three are training other rapid responders and Southside is hosting a rapid response training. Southside was involved with numerous congregations in the county in resisting an ICE detention center proposed for Elkhart County.

They have made it a habit at the end of May each year to send participants from the congregation to walk the Migrant Trail. To date, six members have walked the desert. This is a practice they continue because walking is shaping them in the way of Jesus.

Camp Friedenswald Highlights: Amy Huser, Sustainability and Education Director, brought greetings from Jenna Liechty Martin, Executive Director. Jenna and Peter welcomed Mae Lillian to their family in May this year. Summer is off to a good start. They have completed high school camp, primary camp, and jr. high camp. Camp Friedenswald (CF) has a wonderful summer staff and the numbers are stable. Ten of the summer staff grew up in CDC congregations.

This past March, CF hosted the Mennonite Bi-national Camping Conference. It was a full week of people from all over Mennonite camps in the United States and Canada coming together to worship, share and learn from each other about the way camps are playing key roles in faith development.

In 2017, CF created a Resilience and Sustainability Plan with goals in financial, social and environmental areas and connects their core values to the work done at CF. She shared highlights of the work they have done:

*Socially: CF increased education for sustainability by completing environmental sustainability education sessions for both staff and board members, in summer sessions they included eco skits during two meals, one focused on food waste and one focused on an all camp vegetarian meal. CF will be hosting a retreat for pastors titled, 'Who cares about climate change?' with Doug Kaufman and the Center For Sustainable Solutions in September.

*Environmental: To meet environmental goals, they went to all LED lighting. They are continuing the Oak Savannah restoration which will help bring more diversity to camp's habitats. Summer staff have helped with environmental goals by hanging up lots of clotheslines and using them.

*Financially: One goal is to have a 5-10% surplus to reinvest back into the camp's ministry at the end of the fiscal year and they made that goal for 2017. They have enjoyed one year of using the newly renovated cabins, Cottonwood Center, and Sandhill Lodge, enabling CF to bring more people to the peaceful woods. CF is close to meeting their \$2.1 million Renew Friedenswald goal with just \$30,000 remaining to be raised. Amy expressed appreciation for the financial support of CDC congregations as well as volunteer and donor support across the conference.

Mennonite Boomerang Project: Doug Luginbill drew delegates attention to a flyer in the delegate packets describing a new resource available to CDC congregations. Jonathan Larson and Sarah Thompson will be available for four different weekends to help congregations imagine how God is inviting us to be at work in our communities and beyond.

Storytelling stations: In keeping with the theme, *Come, walk with us. Tell us your story!*, delegates were invited to participate in the following four storytelling stations. Each station told their story four different times, each 25 minutes in length. After 25 minutes, the participants rotated to another storytelling station.

*A Quintessential Story of Jesus-like Mission with Jonathan Larson

*Short term Transitional Housing with Kay Bontrager-Singer

*Get Home Safe: African Americans' rules for survival in an age of hate and guns with Cyneatha Millsaps

*International Guest House with Jonathan and Betty Schrag, Cindy Lapp, and David Mishler

Break with snacks provided by Open Table

Seminars

*Mennonite Boomerang Project: full-circle mission for the outward bound led by Jonathan Larson/Sarah Thompson

*The Future of Mennonite Education led by J Denny Weaver, James Harder, and Rebecca Stoltzfus

*Mennonite Worship and Song led by Bradley Kauffman

*Missional Discipleship led by Karla Minter

Transition

Dinner

Mennonite Women Dinner in the Koinonia Room in College Mennonite Church

Mennonite Men Dinner in the Gathering Place in College Mennonite Church

Free Time

WORSHIP II: Host as friend, enemy, stranger, guest

Speaker: John Powell Text: Acts 16:6-15

Offering for Central District Conference

Communion

Informal gathering: The Board of Directors hosted an informal gathering in the fellowship hall and invited delegates to meet representatives from Americus Mennonite Fellowship, Emmanuel Mennonite Church, and Jubilee Mennonite Fellowship.

Saturday, June 23

WORSHIP III: The Divine Yes

Speaker: Jonathan Larson Text: Acts 16:6-15

Break with snacks provided by Assembly

Delegate Session III

Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street) led delegates in singing SJ2, *Come, walk with us*

Missional Church Committee Report: Matt Morin, chair (Milwaukee) introduced the members of the committee: Phil Hart (Columbus), Gladene Hershberger (Oak Grove), Lois Kaufmann-Hunsberger, Resource Advocate (Maplewood), Karla Minter (Open Table), Kiva Nice-Webb (Chicago Community), John Powell (Shalom Community, and Tim Stair (Hively Avenue). Using a 'Jeopardy' format the committee shared highlights of what the committee has been doing over the past year. They shared about and highlighted the following:

****Role of the committee**

****Resources on the website**

****2017-2018 Reign of God recipients:** Lima Mennonite, Grace Mennonite, First Mennonite Bluffton, Oak Grove Mennonite, and First Mennonite Wadsworth. This year's recipients used the grant to host performances by *Ted and Company*. The purpose of the performances was to teach about the Doctrine of Discovery: its dreadful place in US history, and its continuing legacy today. Performances were made free and open to the public.

****Communities of Faith:** Several years ago, the Missional Church Committee began to hear rumblings

of non-traditional, peace and justice minded groups springing up around and among CDC congregations. Some of these communities were made of people who expressed hesitancy about joining a church, but were nevertheless passionate about joining God's work in the world. As a committee, we walked alongside these groups, providing coaching, counseling, and assistance as we were asked. Some of these groups have gone away in the past year, but we don't know whether they have withered away for good, or have merely gone underground like seeds. The Missional Church Committee remains attentive to all of the ways that God might bring people together into non-traditional communities of faith and peace.

***SENT Conference:* An annual conference, organized by Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Mission Network for people who wish to plant peace churches, and who "feel sent to the world to be a kingdom presence."

Congregational Story - Assembly Mennonite Church: Karl Shelly shared that Assembly has been trying to respond to their concerns re immigrants and our country's cruel immigration policies. They have written letters to elected officials, participated in protests, brought hundreds of "We're glad you are our neighbors" yard signs to Goshen, provided material aid and sent a group from the congregation on a Learning Tour to the Mexican border.

A year and a half ago, they initiated a new way of walking with their immigrant neighbors. Soon after the 2016 election, fear of deportation raids spiked in Goshen. The National Immigration Justice Center (NIJC), which has an office in Goshen led by Lisa Koop, member at Assembly, was inundated with undocumented persons seeking legal and practical help. The most urgent need was for transportation to immigration and other court related appointments. In response, a dedicated group within Assembly developed an online referral center where volunteers were matched with transportation needs. There were also needs for interpreters, childcare, education about one's rights, financial assistance and support for people who felt isolated and scared. Networks of volunteers were built for these and other areas of needs. This program was called Safety Networks and has been up and running since March 2017. Each of the ten networks has a designated coordinator and carefully crafted guidelines and procedures. While Safety Networks started with Assembly volunteers and responding to NIJC's referrals, we've since expanded the volunteer pool to a variety of Goshen area congregations, including some in attendance, and their referral partners now include social workers at high schools, medical offices that serve the Latino community, and the Center for Healing and Hope. They've encountered many dozens of people with a variety of needs.

One volunteer worked with a young immigrant wanting to learn to drive. They studied the driver's education manual and practiced driving together. Another taught a person how to navigate the South Shore train to Chicago so he could get to his pro bono attorney's office in Chicago. Others arranged a last minute ride to Indianapolis for an ICE check-in necessary to avoid the threat of deportation.

They have raised and spent thousands of dollars for DACA applications, legal fees, rent assistance, and volunteer reimbursement. One volunteer commented that, "Volunteering with Safety Networks has been a meaningful way I can impact our discordant immigration system. All my experiences have been humbling and positive. While never knowing the immense struggles these immigrants have faced, I do know that in a small way I have made life easier."

Safety Networks is one way Assembly walks with others on the long journey toward immigration justice.

Ministerial Committee Report: Michael Crosby (First Mennonite Urbana), Ardean Friesen (Silverwood), Brenda Sawatzky Paetkau (Eighth Street), Kay Bontrager-Singer (Faith), Ray Person (First Bluffton), Renee Kanagy (Cincinnati)

Ardean Friesen shared a summary of the role of the Ministerial Committee. It is their duty and privilege to walk with the credentialed ministers of CDC along their journey. They participate in interviews for licensing, interviews for ordination, and provide avenues for relationships within the credentialed leaders. He invited delegates to read the full report on p91 of the report book.

Ardean shared that it is a privilege to walk and work with Doug Luginbill, the conference minister. The committee helps and assists him whenever possible. They are aware of his schedule and travel and ongoing needs that may arise due to increased numbers of congregations. He thanked Doug for his work, his gifts and leadership on behalf of CDC.

Ardean shared a personal story that speaks to the importance of the credentialed leaders in the conference. As one who identifies as LGBT, Ardean has experienced the transformational love of God that comes from credentialed leaders in CDC. He was welcomed and invited to the table. He thanked Jane Roeschley (Mennonite Church of Normal) for her hand of love. He thanked Lois Kaufmann (Assembly) for the work she has done. The story is not over and the work will continue to share the love of God to those around us.

Ardean invited delegates to celebrate with those who have licensed, ordained or installed in the past year:

Ordinations:

- *Debra Byler (Hively Avenue)
- *Julia Gingrich (Eighth Street)
- *Debra Sutter (First Mennonite Urbana)
- *Lora Nafziger (Assembly)
- *Lydia Brenneman (Lima)

Licensings

- *Jake Hess (Hively Avenue)
- *Alison Brookins (Chicago Community)
- *Eliza Wertenberger (Columbus)
- *Peter Martin (Emmaus Road)
- *Devon Miller (Florence)

Installations

- *Tim Stair (Hively Avenue)
- *Linford and Mary Etta King (Covenant)
- *Theda Good (First Mennonite Bluffton)
- *Hillary Watson (Shalom Community)
- *Trevor Bechtel (Shalom Community)
- *Tim Peebles (Madison)

Kay Bontrager-Singer (Faith) offered a blessing.

Journey Program: The Journey Program is a collaboration among Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Central District Conference, and Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference. Dennis Miller (Silverwood) shared his story of finding Journey and his participation in it. It has changed his life and priorities. It has caused him to think about what he does and to be different. He is thankful for what he is gaining and looking forward to where God will be leading him.

Remembering pastors who have died: Brenda Sawatzky Paetkau (Eighth Street) led in remembering pastors who died during the past year. She gave thanks for the gifts each gave to the conference and beyond and for their participation in the cloud of witnesses that encourage all of us. Those remembered were:

- *Nancy Kerr, died September 24, 2017
- *Gordon Dyck, died November 2, 2017
- *Marilyn Kern, died March 15, 2018
- *Earl Sears, died April 6, 2018

ACTION: 2018-2019 Spending Plan: Roger Nafziger (Eighth Street) announced that the conference received an estate gift from the Dr. Russell Oyer estate, who died in March 2018. The Board of Directors will be considering how that gift will be put to use for the betterment of the conference and the Kingdom.

He directed delegates to the spending plan on p48 of the report book, He noted that column 4, the actual

year-end amount of the 2016-2017 fiscal year were as of April 30, 2017 instead of as of June 30, 2017. Congregational giving for 2016-2017 was \$198,272. Total income for 2016-2017 was \$250,285 and total expenses were \$235,992, resulting in a gain of ~\$19,000. Through May 2018 (column 6), the difference between total income and expenses is (\$226). Even though congregational giving is down, expenses are also down. The conference will likely end the fiscal year in the black.

Roger moved to adopt the 2018-2019 spending plan as presented. George Lehman (First Mennonite Bluffton) seconded the motion. The motion was affirmed

Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street) led delegates in singing SJ2, *Come, walk with us*.

Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) Report: Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton)

CLC serves a valuable role for mutual resourcing, discernment, and leadership building across the denomination. The relationships nurtured at CLC strengthen the life of the denomination. The CLC representatives from Central District are Arman Habegger (Grace), President; Anna Yoder Schlabach (Assembly), President-elect; and Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton), Conference Minister. Doug shared highlights from the last two CLC meetings, one in October 2017 and one in April 2018.

October 2017: The meeting focused on three primary areas:

****Discernment:**

- *Reviewed and reflected on the MC USA Convention in Orlando, which included the Future Church Summit

- *Heard initial plans for the Journey Forward process and gave feedback around the process.

****Sharing ideas and resources:** Heard from two area conferences about how they are responding to concerns around immigration.

****Discernment:** Focused on the changes happening within MC USA leadership and programs:

- *Received updates on the search process for a new executive director of MC USA and other open staffing positions

- *Heard about proposed changes to the Mennonite Education Agency and the proposed formation of a Mennonite Higher Education Association

- *Discussed the metaphor of MC USA as a federation of conferences

April 2018: The April meeting at Dock Academy in Lansdale, Pennsylvania had some similar themes:

- *Heard an update about the work being done by the writing team of the Journey Forward process. Journey Forward is a church wide renewal process of engaging in scripture, storytelling and sharing how God is at work in the lives of people and congregations across MC USA. The CDC Leadership Council strongly encourages every CDC congregation to engage in the Journey Forward Pathways Study Guide before the end of 2018.

- *Provided feedback and counsel on a proposed policy of the MC USA Executive Board regarding board appointments. In summary, the policy clarifies who can be considered for MC USA board positions. If a credentialed person is being considered, his/her credential must be in good standing with his/her conference. If a lay person is being considered, then his/her congregational membership must be in good standing. This guidance was used as the Board ultimately affirmed Doug Basinger as a member of the Leadership Development Committee of Mennonite Church USA.

- *Heard a final report from the panel on sexual abuse prevention, which has been focusing recently on developing resources for congregations and response to accusations of abuse by non-credentialed leaders. Received copies of two resources that are available on the MC USA website.

- *Bradley Kauffman led in singing and provided an update on the progress of the worship and song collection project. The name of the new resource was recently released as *Voices Together*.

- *Heard a report from a special meeting of Conference Ministers that took place the day before the last CLC meeting. Conference ministers shared openly and honestly with one another about differences in the credentialing practices between conferences. They named the importance of supporting and resourcing one another, and recognized that they need each other as conference ministers. The conference ministers committed to communicating with conference leaders and delegates that credentialing decisions are a function of the local conference, recognizing that there

will likely continue to be different practices among the conferences.

*Transition and change within MC USA was highlighted.

*Heard new Executive Director, Glen Guyton, deliver an inspiring and artistic presentation to the Dock Woods students during chapel

*Celebrated the eight years of leadership of Ervin Stutzman

*Were introduced to four new leaders of MC USA: Sandra Shenk Lapp, office manager of Leadership Development; Sue Park-Hur, Denominational Minister for Leadership Development; Shana Peachey Boschart, Denominational Minister for Faith Formation; and Michael Danner, Associate Director of Church Vitality and Engagement.

Word from MC USA: Michael Danner, Associate Director of Vitality and Engagement

Michael noticed that CDC has a lot of fun! He thanked the delegates for their warm hospitality and shared that, as someone who has not been to CDC before, that everyone seems to love one another. He appreciates the clarity of vision that CDC has and the way that comes out of who CDC is collectively as a group. He expressed appreciation for the way Doug and leadership of CDC engage other conferences collaboratively and creatively as was done with Allegheny Mennonite Conference. He noted that kind of work will make his work much easier. It is extremely important when congregations can engage one another on substantive issues and come to common understandings to move forward.

There is a lot of transition within MC USA. Staff is trying to find their footing as a team. They have not all started their terms yet and not only are they all fairly new, they are spread out in different places. He invited prayers for them as they get to know each other and begin their work together.

The Journey Forward process is front and center for the work of MC USA at the current time. He encouraged delegates to go to the MC USA website to find more information and resources about the process. He shared a reading, *Hollow Inside*, from Seth Godin, who is an entrepreneur, best-selling author, and speaker in the field of marketing. "What's inside the leaning Tower of Pisa? Nothing. It's a hollow tube. One of the most iconic buildings in the world is empty, but that's okay because the building doesn't make any promises about what's inside. There is no expectation, no offer of engagement. It merely is. Chocolate Easter rabbits are a different story. You can't help but feel ripped off when you discover that they are hollow. When you bring a brand to the world, it's rare indeed that people are okay with having nothing inside. The wrapper matters, but so does the experience within."

That has a lot to say about the spirit behind the Journey Forward process. In our world today, as Anabaptist Mennonite followers of Jesus that make up Mennonite Church USA, what offer are we making to our neighbors, to our communities and cities, to our country, and to the world? It is not a question of what our wrapper looks like, whether the visual identity guidelines are followed or not, it's what people are experiencing within our communities, our churches. That is not a question that can or should be answered at an office somewhere by national staff and then wrapped up in a shiny package to be distributed to churches and conferences. It is a grassroots question that needs to be answered by the people in the churches and communities. If it is to have integrity and be a genuine offer, it has to come from you. The spirit behind the Journey Forward process is actually a grassroots conversation about who we want to be, about what offer we want to make to the world as Anabaptist Mennonite followers of Jesus called Mennonite Church USA.

From what Michael has seen at CDC, there is a lot to offer communities. He encouraged delegates to participate fully in the Journey Forward process and to provide feedback.

MCC Great Lakes Report: Cyneatha Millsaps

Cyneatha encouraged delegates to read the MCC Great Lakes report on p119 of the report book. She thanked congregations for their generous and faithful support of MCC Great Lakes. The work is ever moving and never stops. Whether giving relief kits and comforters to families and individuals on the move in Syria, building and creating bore holes in Zimbabwe, or planning a pipeline tour in Elkhart, Indiana, it is all made possible through the support given to MCC over the years. We still have a lot of work to do and

have as many challenges as the rest of the Mennonite Church in the process. Thank you.

Listening Committee Report: Brian Bolton, (Shalom Mennonite Congregation); Jane Roeschley (Mennonite Church of Normal); Tim Stair (Hively Avenue) reflected back what they heard in worship, delegates sessions, and in the sessions in between.

Worship: We don't know where we are going. God is with us. God will never leave us. Through chant and song, text and sermon, through confessions and prayers, through children's story and rituals, with our senses, with our voices, with our minds, with our bodies we encountered again and again this powerful articulation of the essences of our faith. We don't know where we are going, yet God is with us and God will never leave us. Our worship services this annual meeting continue to be rich and full. For many CDC'ers, these worship times not only hold us together as sister congregations, but they help hold us in MC USA right now while we face our unknowing reminded that a keener sense of God's being with us is found in the God we see and experience in worship with each other, especially in warm hugs, the shared laughter, and the weeping eyes that testify to the righteous power of welcome and affirmation and full inclusion. We are a conference on a journey. We are congregations on journeys and individuals too with stories to hallow and share. Thank you to the worship planners, preachers, musicians, and leaders. You guided us, taught us, led us, challenged and inspired us to choose trust when knocked off our high horses, to choose trust that Jesus is on the other side of any dead end, notice God in one another by the affirmation of 'I see you,' to learn new chants, to keep walking on the journey that is long, to pray for the only real currency, which is love, and to be a humble, hospitable people that embody the power of God's table and the voice that calls us beloved at the waters of baptism so as to cultivate a culture of encounter as healers and repairers of the breach in God's shalom needed near and far.

Seminars and Storytelling: Part of our not knowing where we are going is the disorientation and chaos of our culture. We find our way as we tell our stories and find companions on the journey. That seemed to be the message of the seminars and workshops this year whether it was learning what our African American sisters and brothers need to teach each generation to get home safe, or discovering the power of presence on a train ride in a country at war, or whether it was a congregation discovering a mission of transitional housing or providing hospitality with people from around the world in our nation's capitol. In the late afternoon seminars, we found ourselves finding reorientation by focusing on the reign of God in mission, education, service and song. We heard appreciation for using a different format for how the workshops and seminars were done.

Delegate Sessions: With distinctive humor and a note of history, Arman Habegger gave his inaugural rapping of the CDC gavel and then invited us all into his curiosity and delight about the piece of wood from which the gavel is made. In that, and in giving his state of conference address, Arman proved that he is capable of invoking what he called, "the laughter that lightens our moments together." That laughter was and is a vital part of CDC, especially during our delegate sessions. Laughter is what helps CDC maintain its party kind of reputation as much as is possible in a conference kind of delegate meeting. This year, we were happy to welcome individuals, friends, visitors, new congregations and even Allegheny Mennonite Conference to the party. Welcoming others to the party is one of a number of ways in which our delegate sessions were a study of shifting boundaries. We heard testimony of how boundaries have been shifting for many individuals as our faith in church expanded, contracted and transformed over the years. We caught a glimpse of CDC's current dance with Allegheny, and it evoked a sense of hope in some that our institution is capable of new creative ways of cooperating. It evoked questions that if we can buy time from a kindred institution, might we also be able to spend our currency with organizations whose boundaries require us to stretch even further in our work of overcoming racism and all that we are called to. Speaking of such boundaries, we found ourselves chuckling at repeated jokes about the congregational makeup of Gentiles or one which is pastorless but also Yoderless. Such laughter brings a cathartic, and to some, a painful reminder that a 'come here, from here' mentality is still very strong at the intersection of Anabaptist commitment and other identity markers such as race, gender, and ethnicity. On Twitter, delegate Hillary Watson, invited Mennonites to "reexamine the way they talk about ethnic Mennonites." Last year's CDC plenary speaker, Drew Hart, replied offering a succinct justification, "It is racist. It is a

racialized, hierarchical framework which obscures the way Euro Mennonites simulated into, performed, and are advantaged by whiteness.” As with our confessional tones in worship, we at CDC, continue to deepen our awareness of the ways that we are in the red, perhaps not as much as we thought in reconciling our spending plan, still we have much reconciling to do with one another and our neighbors. Meanwhile, we at CDC have been able to conduct our business of this institution like a family with respect, truthfulness, love, laughter, and as was said last year, with nary an intervention by the parliamentarian.

The committee offered thanks:

- *To the local churches and individuals who supported and planned the assembly, to all the visitors from sister congregations and churchwide guests
- *To the Gifts Discernment Committee and their work to help us call people for new or continuing roles
- *To the worship planners and all participants
- *For Carrie Mast’s work in brining the summary of the minutes
- *For those ending terms with CDC and those beginning new ones
- *To the Missional Church Committee for fulfilling our deepest desire to have our reports enriched with superfluous and dramatic license
- *For Jim Harder’s presidency at Bluffton University
- *To College Mennonite Church, the catering staff who brought us excellent meals, and the building staff who transitioned rooms at early and late hours
- *To Doug for steady leadership and generous smiles and finally, to Emma who is likely to be the first person to help us when we don’t know where we are going.

Evaluations/Committee Nominations: Arman Habegger (Grace) invited delegates to fill out the evaluation forms and share suggestions for committee nominations.

Close of Delegate Sessions: Arman announced that next year’s annual meeting will be June 20-22, 2019, meeting place TBD. With the sounding of the gavel, Arman closed the 62nd delegate session of Central District Conference.

Songs/Benediction: Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street) led delegates in singing SJ2, *Come, walk with us*. Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton) led delegates in a participatory prayer, followed by another verse of *Come, walk with us* led by Janeen.

Close of Annual Meeting

Emma Hartman
Recorder