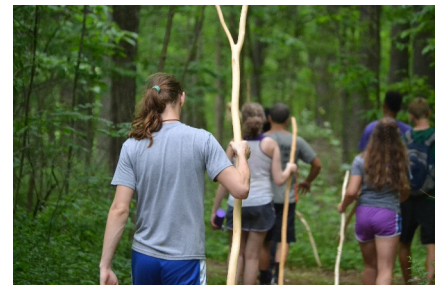


2019

REPORT BOOK  
of the

**Central District Conference**  
of  
Mennonite Church USA

*Come, walk with us . . . To God knows where!*



Milwaukee Mennonite Church  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
June 20-22, 2019



# CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE

Schedule

June 20-22, 2019

Milwaukee Mennonite Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

*Come, walk with us. . . to God knows where!*

## Thursday, June 20

*Family Day events are open to everyone! You don't need to be registered for the annual meeting to attend.*

- 1:00 pm Disc Golf at Dretzka Park
- 1:00 pm Bike/run/walk (Hank Aaron Trail) leaving from the east side of Petitt Ice Center Park and Ride Parking Lot (See map on Disc Golf, Bike, Run, Walk Brochure).
- 2:00 pm Registration begins at Milwaukee Mennonite Church in the lobby
- 3:00 pm Pre-conference seminar in the sanctuary Spiritual Practices for the Journey with Mary Etta King
- 5:00 pm Pastor Appreciation Dinner in the Blues Egg, 317 N 76<sup>th</sup> St, Milwaukee, WI 53213
- 5:00 pm Backyard Picnic in Milwaukee Mennonite Church, fellowship hall
- 7:30 pm WORSHIP I: Milwaukee Mennonite Church  
Theme: Obstacles  
Text: John 4:4-10  
Speaker: Anton Flores-Maisonet
- 9:00 pm Ice Cream Social in Milwaukee Mennonite Church fellowship hall, Madison Mennonite hosting

## Friday, June 21

- 8:30 am *Delegate Session I* in MMC sanctuary  
Song: SS 39 *Will you come and follow me*  
Welcome  
Getting acquainted around tables  
State of the Conference Address  
Centering, silent reflection, and prayer  
Congregational Story: Milwaukee Mennonite Church  
Introduction of Resolutions and Listening Committees, and Parliamentarian  
*Resolutions Committee:* David Stolpe (Milwaukee), Sueann VonGunten (Hively Ave), George Lehman (First Bluffton)  
*Listening Committee:* Lori Nester (First Bluffton), Tyler Klassen (Hively Ave), Brenda North Martin (Raleigh)  
*Parliamentarian:* Gerald Mast  
*Medical Persons On Call:*  
*Youth Delegates/Mentors:*  
Summary Review of 2018 Annual Meeting Minutes  
ACTION: 2018 Annual Meeting Minutes  
Highlight Actions in 2019 Agenda  
Treasurers Report/Presentation of 2019-2020 Proposed Spending Plan  
  
Presentation of Gifts Discernment Committee and Slate  
ACTION: 2019-2020 Slate  
Commissioning Prayer: Incoming and continuing committee members

9:45 - 10:15 am Break/Snacks in fellowship hall, provided by Chicago Community Mennonite Church

- 10:15 am Song: SS 39 *Will you come and follow me*  
 Receiving Americus Mennonite Fellowship, Emmanuel Mennonite Church, and Jubilee Mennonite Church  
 ACTION: Vote to receive into membership  
 Word from MC USA
- 10:45 am Song/centering: SS 39 *Will you come and follow me*  
 Sharing around tables/open mic - Dwelling in the Word/Visioning (Text Deut 10:12-13; 17-19)  
 Introduction of Jane Wood  
 Introduction of Guests  
 Announcements
- 11:45 am Lunch on your own. A list of local restaurants can be found in your delegate packet.
- 1:30 pm *Delegate Session II*  
 Song: SS 39 *Will you come and follow me*  
 Announcing Americus, Emmanuel, Jubilee vote/presentation of blessing cups  
 Term Review of Conference Minister  
 Congregational Story: Madison
- 1:45 pm Storytelling stations  
 \*Biblical Storytelling with Karla Minter and Deron Brill Bergstresser  
 \*How Camp Friedenswald Changes Lives with Jenna Liechty Martin  
 \*Stories of Call from AMBS with Janeen Bertsche Johnson  
 \*Congregations and Prison Ministry with Tim Lind and Christine Nofsinger
- 4:00 pm Break in MMC fellowship hall
- 4:30 pm WORSHIP II: Hymnsing in MMC sanctuary  
 Theme: Perseverance/Persistence  
 Song/worship leader(s): Andrea Welty Peachey  
 Offering for Central District Conference  
 Communion
- 5:45 pm Transition
- 6:00 pm Dinner  
 Mennonite Women Dinner in MMC fellowship hall  
 Speaker: Karla Minter
- A list of area restaurants is available (in delegate packets and at the registration table) for those not attending the Mennonite Women's dinner.*
- 7:30 pm Free Time or Seminars at MMC  
 \*Looking Forward to #MennoCon19 with Michael Danner  
 \*Sanctuary for our undocumented neighbors led by Isaac Villegas and Joel Miller  
 \*Faith Formation for Children and Families led by Lora Nafziger  
 \*Youth Ministry Resource Sharing led by Mark Rupp  
 \*A Life in Story led by Jane Wood

**Saturday, June 22**

- 8:30 - 9:30 am      WORSHIP III: MMC sanctuary  
Theme: Thriving  
Speaker: Alison Brookins  
Text: Luke 19:1-10
- 9:30 am      Break: MMC fellowship hall, provided by St Paul Mennonite Fellowship
- 10:15 am      *Delegate Session III* in MMC sanctuary  
Song/Centering: SS 39 *Will you come and follow me*  
Missional Church Committee Report  
Congregational Story: Covenant Mennonite Fellowship  
Ministerial Committee Report  
    Leaders in Training - Journey  
    Recognition of new pastors/credentialed leaders  
    Remembering pastors who have died  
ACTION: 2019-2020 Spending Plan  
Everence: Resources available  
Open Mic
- 11:00 am      Song (standing): SS 39 *Will you come and follow me*  
CLC Report  
Camp Friedenswald Highlights  
MCC Great Lakes Report  
Listening Committee Report
- 11:40am      Evaluations/Committee Nominations  
Close of Delegate Sessions
- 11:50am      Songs/Benediction SS 40 *Som 'landela (We will follow)*  
Prayer
- 12:00 pm      Close of Annual Meeting

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## **Welcome from the Planning and Worship Committees**

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There are several groups who have been thinking about, praying for and preparing for this event for a very long time—the Annual Meeting Planning Committee and the Local Planning Committees: Worship, Children’s Programming, and Logistics Planning. We’re excited that everyone is at last gathered to worship, discern, learn and enjoy each other’s company—and we extend a special welcome to this event from us! We have felt God’s leading in our planning and we look forward to the moving of God’s spirit in our gathering.

### *Coordinators:*

Kim Miller (Madison)  
Sarah Mast (Milwaukee)  
Rachel Stolpe (Milwaukee)

### *Local Worship Committee:*

Beth Peachey (Chicago Community)  
Andrea Welty Peachey (First Urbana)  
J Denny Weaver (Madison)  
Rachel Stolpe (Milwaukee)  
Frank Trnka (St Paul)

*A big thanks to all who have helped in all kinds of ways—from caring for children to setting up chairs and everything in between—to make this event happen. Thanks to all of you.*

## **Golf Outing and Bike/Run/Walk**

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A special thanks goes to Ben Hochstedler (Milwaukee) for planning the 2019 disc golf outing and to Sarah Mast (Milwaukee) for coordinating the Bike/Run/Walk event. The proceeds from both events will go to help fund the Leadership Development Fund. This fund provides resources for our pastors, such as helping new pastors engage in the Transitioning into Ministry program provided by MC USA. The fund also helps provide the Healthy Boundaries Training program that trains all credentialed persons, provides resources for development and networking for youth ministers, and resources to help youth develop leadership skills.

## **Some Helpful Tips for a Good Experience**

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- \* Keep this book with you. It has schedules, delegate action items, committee reports and other things to guide you through your time at the Delegate Assembly.
- \* If you’re lost and confused—or just looking for a friendly face—visit the registration/information table located in lobby across from the fellowship/delegate hall.
- \* Visit the information table to make a contribution in memory or honor of a loved one.
- \* An offering for Central District will be taken on Friday afternoon during the worship service.
- \* The hosting congregations have selected The Cathedral Center, a ministry with a mission of providing a safe environment for women and families while working to end homelessness one life at a time. You may donate online or by check. Please make checks payable to Central District Conference and designate “Cathedral Center” in the memo line. Checks may be placed in the offering on Friday.
- \* Care for our environment. Use the reusable coffee mug and water bottle you have brought with you. Use the recycling bins provided around the meeting site. Turn off the lights when you leave a



room. Enjoy walking around the town and surrounding Milwaukee area.

- \* Scent free policy: In recognition of individuals with asthma, allergies and severe environmental and chemical sensitivities, we ask you to refrain from wearing fragrances and scented personal care products at the Annual Meeting activities. This includes perfumes, colognes, aftershave and scented hair products. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated by those affected.
- \* If you need first aid or medical assistance, please go to the information table located just outside the delegate session meeting area.

### **Displays During the Annual Meeting**

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Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary  
(AMBS)  
Bluffton University (BU)  
Camp Friedenswald (CF)  
Eastern Mennonite Seminary (EMS)  
Eastern Mennonite University (EMU)  
Everence  
Goshen College (GC)

Journey  
Madison Mennonite  
Mennonite Central Committee Great Lakes  
(MCC GL)  
Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS)  
Mennonite Mission Network (MMN)  
Mennonite Women  
The Corinthian Plan

Thanks to all these folks for sharing their time with us. The displays are located outside the sanctuary.

## **Discussion Guidelines for Delegates**

The delegate assembly is designed to tend the church's business in a timely manner that allows for due consideration. When we need to process decisions, we invite our delegates into a corporate discernment process. One goal of the discernment process is to avoid tyranny of the majority and to avoid tyranny of the minority. In order to accomplish the goal of tending to the decision-making process in a timely manner, we will use the following guidelines:

### **Basic Guidelines for Conversation**

So that all who seek to be heard may be heard:

- Do not speak more than twice in a day on any one topic.
- Before you speak a second time on one topic, make sure that no one else who has not yet spoken on that topic wishes to do so.
- When you go to the microphone to address the assembly, wait to be recognized by the moderator. Once recognized, state your name and (if appropriate) the group you represent before making your remarks.
- In order to keep the discussion from becoming personal, always address the moderator rather than a previous speaker or someone else in the meeting.
- Always speak respectfully. If you disagree with another person who has spoken, please describe that point of view with respect.
- So that the group can put your remarks in context, always indicate whether you are speaking in favor or against the proposal that is being discussed.
- Only delegates may make motions or vote on them.

Report of the Board of Directors to  
Delegates of the Central District Conference Annual Meeting

The Board of Directors 2018-2019 included Arman Habegger, Mary Etta King, Tim Lind, Phil Martens, Carrie Mast, Anna Yoder Schlabach, and Rachel Stolpe. Emma Hartman and Doug Luginbill always met with the Board as members of the CDC staff. The Board will have met a total of six times since the last annual meeting.



Prior to our first meeting in early August, we held a get-acquainted session with Dr. Jane Wood, the newly appointed president at Bluffton University. Those who attend this year's annual meeting will have an opportunity to meet her.

At last year's annual meeting the Board announced that CDC had received a financial gift from the estate of Russell and Lora Oyer of Illinois. The Conference received nearly \$70,500, and the Stewardship Committee was directed to provide counsel for using these funds. The Board did approve that \$7000 be given to the hymnal project *Voices Together*. An additional \$20,000 was placed in the CDC reserve fund.

One key item of discussion that has occupied the Board has been the conversation between CDC and Allegheny Conference. Specifically, these two bodies have been exploring whether they should merge in some manner. Ultimately, Allegheny Conference determined that it wanted to remain a separate conference, though recognizing that its financial viability was strained. Central District opted to extend a financial gift of \$8000 paid over a two-year period to help the conference maintain a presence at denomination-wide events.

Regional gatherings were hosted in the east, central, west and south of CDC, the latter since we now have three more congregations in the southeastern United States.

Our conference minister Doug Luginbill has now served CDC for nearly three years, and our bylaws require that the annual meeting delegates approve a recommendation for a renewal term. The Board will bring that recommendation to the delegates after having conducted a survey of a variety of persons across the conference.

Finally, at our March meeting, we spent some time discussing the art of resolutions. I remember that as a much younger meeting attendee, delegates might spend considerable time writing and approving resolutions. Those resolutions often addressed various social issues prevalent in the news at those times, and a resolution would be proposed, the language would be fine-tuned, and the resolution would be approved by the delegates. What difference that action made we don't know. But I think it accurate to observe that the resolution made little difference in how we acted when we returned home. Though the Board has made no decision on the role of resolutions in our affairs, we continue to consider their value.

As a Board, we hope that you will enjoy attending this year's annual meeting in Milwaukee and we thank the many persons who have planned this event for our benefit.

Arman Habegger, CDC President

## CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE CONGREGATIONS

### Church listing codes:

- \* Congregation is a member of both Central District and Indiana-Michigan Mennonite conferences
- \*\* Congregation is a member of both Central District and Illinois Mennonite conference
- \*\*\* Congregation is a member of both Central District and Ohio Mennonite conferences
- \*\*\*\* Congregation is a member of Central District Conference and the Church of the Brethren

Where there are two addresses listed, the **bold type** refers to the **mailing address**

Membership/Covenanted attendee numbers are in parentheses (as reported on the 2019 delegate report)

<p><b>***Agora Ministries</b> 614.280.1212  <i>Richard/Rebecca Bartholomew, Pastors</i>            400 W Broad St, Columbus, OH 43215  <a href="mailto:rich@agoraminstries.org">rich@agoraminstries.org</a></p>	<p><b>Ames Mennonite Church (5)</b> 515.232.3482  <i>Keith Schrag, Contact Person</i>            meets at Ames Friends Church, 121 S Maple            Mail to: 1211 N 3<sup>rd</sup> St, Ames, IA 50010  <a href="mailto:keithgs@aol.com">keithgs@aol.com</a></p>
<p><b>*Ann Arbor Mennonite Church (10)</b> 734.996.9198  <i>Chibuzor Ozor, Pastor</i> <a href="mailto:chibuzor.ozor@aol.com">chibuzor.ozor@aol.com</a>            meets at Arrowwood Community Center, 2566            Arrowwood, Ann Arbor, MI            Mail to: 1455 Kelly Green Dr, Ann Arbor, MI            48103</p>	<p><b>Assembly Mennonite Church (250)</b> 574.534.4190  <i>Karl Shelly, Pastor</i> <a href="mailto:karlss@assemblymennonite.org">karlss@assemblymennonite.org</a>  <i>Lora C Nafziger, Pastor</i> <a href="mailto:loracn@assemblymennonite.org">loracn@assemblymennonite.org</a>  <i>Anna Yoder Schlabach, Pastor</i> <a href="mailto:annays@assemblymennonite.org">annays@assemblymennonite.org</a>            727 New York St, Goshen, IN 46526  <a href="mailto:office@assemblymennonite.org">office@assemblymennonite.org</a>  <a href="http://assemblymennonite.org">http://assemblymennonite.org</a></p>
<p><b>Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship (16)</b> 404.590.1344  <i>James Rissler, Pastor</i>            meets at Atlanta Friends Meetinghouse,            701 W Howard Ave, Decatur, GA 30030            Mail to: James Rissler, 1718 Arrowhead Trail NE,            Atlanta, GA 30345  <a href="mailto:amf@atlantamennonite.org">amf@atlantamennonite.org</a>  <a href="http://atlantamennonite.org">http://atlantamennonite.org</a></p>	<p><b>Berea Mennonite Church (17)</b> 404.244.0289  <i>In Pastoral Search Process</i>            1088 Bouldercrest Dr SE, Atlanta, GA 30316            Website: <a href="http://www.bereamennonitechurch.org/">http://www.bereamennonitechurch.org/</a>            Facebook:  <a href="https://www.facebook.com/BereaMennoniteChurch">https://www.facebook.com/BereaMennoniteChurch</a></p>
<p><b>Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship (45)</b> 919-357-5496  <a href="mailto:chmennonite@gmail.com">chmennonite@gmail.com</a>  <i>Isaac Villegas, Pastor</i> <a href="mailto:isaac.villegas@gmail.com">isaac.villegas@gmail.com</a>            Meets at Church of Reconciliation: 110 N. Elliott Road,            Chapel Hill, NC 27514 (no mail here)            PO Box 2145, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-2145            Website <a href="http://mennonit.es/chmf/">http://mennonit.es/chmf/</a> Twitter: @CHmennonite            Facebook:  <a href="https://www.facebook.com/ChapelHillMennonite/">https://www.facebook.com/ChapelHillMennonite/</a></p>	<p><b>Chicago Community Mennonite Church (84)</b> 773.343.4251  <i>Alison Brookins, Pastor</i> <a href="mailto:pastor@ccmcil.org">pastor@ccmcil.org</a>            meets at First Church of the Brethren, 425 S            Central Park Blvd, Chicago, IL 60624  <a href="http://www.ccmcil.org">http://www.ccmcil.org</a></p>
<p><b>Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship (76)</b> 513.871.0035  <i>In Pastoral Search Process</i>            meets at 4229 Brownway Ave, Cincinnati, OH            Mail to: 3046 Minot Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45209  <a href="mailto:office@cincinnati-mennonite.org">office@cincinnati-mennonite.org</a>  <a href="http://www.cincinnati-mennonite.org">http://www.cincinnati-mennonite.org</a></p>	<p><b>Columbus Mennonite Church (159)</b> 614.784.9002  <i>Joel Miller, Pastor</i> <a href="mailto:joel@columbusmennonite.org">joel@columbusmennonite.org</a>  <i>Mark Rupp, Pastor of Christian Formation</i>  <a href="mailto:mark@columbusmennonite.org">mark@columbusmennonite.org</a>            35 Oakland Park Ave, Columbus, OH 43214  <a href="mailto:office@columbusmennonite.org">office@columbusmennonite.org</a>  <a href="http://www.columbusmennonite.org">www.columbusmennonite.org</a></p>

<p><b>**Community Mennonite Church (35)</b> 708.333.1358  <i>In pastoral search process</i>  16200 S Kedzie Ave, Markham, IL 60428  cmc-markham@sbcglobal.net  www.communitymennonite.us</p>	<p><b>Covenant Mennonite Fellowship (100)</b> 941.366.3545  <i>Linford/Mary Etta King, Pastors</i>  linfordk@comcast.net/  maryetaking27@gmail.com  1400 Cattleman Dr, Suite 102, Sarasota, FL 34232  covenantmennonite@gmail.com  www.covenantmennonite.com  https://www.facebook.com/mennonites</p>
<p><b>Eighth Street Mennonite Church (202)</b> 574.533.6720  <i>Brenda Sawatzky Paetkau, Pastor</i>  bpaetkau@8thstmennonite.org  <i>Julia Gingrich, Pastor</i>  jgingrich@8thstmennonite.org  602 S 8<sup>th</sup> St, Goshen, IN 46526  office@8thstmennonite.org  www.8thStMennonite.org</p>	<p><b>Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship (50)</b> 260.301.6498  <i>Peter Martin, Pastor</i>  meets at South Adams Senior center,  825 Hendricks St, Berne, IN 46711  Mail to: PO Box 22, Berne, IN 46711  redigerfarm@gmail.com  http://emmausroadmennonite.org</p>
<p><b>**Evanston Mennonite Church (9)</b> 312.502.7660  <i>Mitchell Brown, Pastor</i>  mitchellbrown211@gmail.com  meets at Hemenway United Methodist Church,  933 Chicago Ave, Evanston, IL 60202  Mail to: PO Box 6397, Evanston, IL 60204-6397  http://evanston.il.us.mennonite.net</p>	<p><b>Faith Mennonite Church (65)</b> 574.533.6622  <i>Deron Brill Bergstresser, Pastor</i>  deronbbergstresser@gmail.com  <i>Kay Bontrager-Singer, Pastor</i>  k.bsinger@comcast.net  meets at Assembly Mennonite Church  727 New York St, Goshen, IN 46526  Mail to: 413 S 7<sup>th</sup> St, Goshen, IN 46526</p>
<p><b>First Mennonite Church (200)</b> 419.358.5766  <i>Wanda Stopher, Pastor</i>  fmc.wanda@bluffton.edu  <i>Theda Good, Pastor of Connections</i>  fmc.theda@bluffton.edu  101 S Jackson St, Bluffton, OH 45817  fmc@bluffton.edu http://www.fmcbluffton.org</p>	<p><b>First Mennonite Church (50)</b> 708.870.5260  <i>Alfreda Burke, Church Facilitator</i>  dibupe@aol.com  1477 W 73<sup>rd</sup> St, Chicago, IL 60636</p>
<p><b>First Mennonite Church (50)</b> 330.852.2822  <i>Mike Gehman, Pastor</i> mgehman3@gmail.com  113 W Main, PO Box 250, Sugarcreek, OH 44681  pastor@firstmennonitesugarcreek.com</p>	<p><b>**First Mennonite Church (167)</b> 217.367.5353  <i>Michael Crosby, Pastor</i>  michael.crosby@fmc-cu.org  <i>Debra Sutter, Associate Pastor</i>  debra.sutter@fmc-cu.org  902 W Springfield Ave, Urbana, IL 61801  office@fmc-cu.org www.fmc-cu.org</p>

<p><b>First Mennonite Church (25)</b>      330.334.1863  <i>Charles Bontrager, Pastor</i>  <i>chalresbontrager@gmail.com</i>  405 Trease Rd, Wadsworth, OH 44281  fmcwadsworth@gmail.com  www.firstmennonite.com</p>	<p><b>****Florence Church of the Brethren-Mennonite (50)</b>      574.361.9536  <i>Devon Miller, Pastor</i>  17975 Centreville-Constantine Rd,  Constantine, MI 49042  florence.brethren.mennonite@gmail.com  florencechurch.blogspot.com</p>
<p><b>Grace Mennonite Church (150)</b>      419.384.3038  <i>Matthew Yoder, Pastor</i>  <i>matthewpyoder@gmail.com</i>  502 W Main St, PO Box 387, Pandora, OH 45877  gmc@bluffton.edu  www.gracepandora.org  https://www.facebook.com/gracemennonitepandora</p>	<p><b>Hively Avenue Mennonite Church (100)</b>      574.294.3423  <i>Tim Stair, Co-pastor</i>      <i>stair.tim@gmail.com</i>  <i>Jake Hess, Co-pastor</i>  <i>jhess@hivlymennonite.org</i>  800 E Hively Ave, Elkhart, IN 46517  office@hivlymennonite.org  www.hivlymennonite.org</p>
<p><b>**Joy Fellowship Mennonite Church (15)</b>      309.637.8424  <i>Phil Maclin, Pastor</i>      <i>pmaclin@ci.peoria.il.us</i>  2918 W Montana, Peoria, IL 61605</p>	<p><b>Lima Mennonite Church (50)</b>      419.222.2120  <i>Emily Hedrick, Pastor</i>  <i>limamcpastor@gmail.com</i>  1318 N Main St, Lima, OH 45801  limamc1318@gmail.com  www.facebook.com/limamennonite</p>
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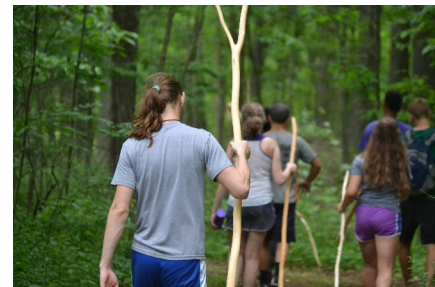


2019

REPORT BOOK  
of the

**Central District Conference**  
of  
Mennonite Church USA

*Come, walk with us . . . To God knows where!*



*Part I*

*Action/Discussion*



# 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 62<sup>nd</sup> 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 50<sup>th</sup> 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 62<sup>nd</sup> delegate session of Central District Conference.

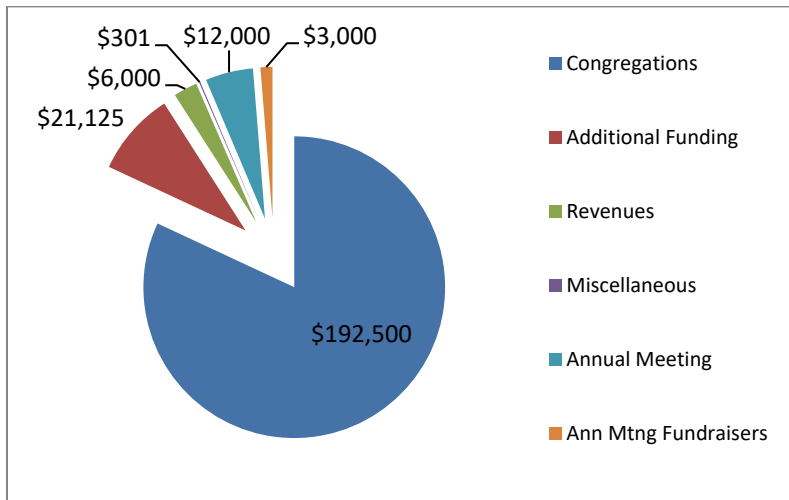
**Songs/Benediction:** Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street) led delegates in singing SJ2, *Come, walk with us*. Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton) led delegates in a participatory prayer, followed by another verse of *Come, walk with us* led by Janeen.

Close of Annual Meeting

Emma Hartman  
Recorder

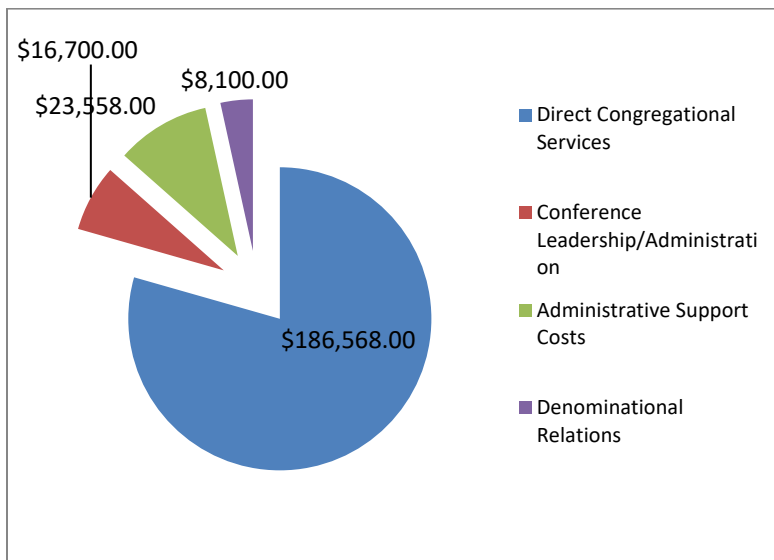
Central District Conference 2019-2020 Spending Plan								
		SP 2016-2017	Actual 2016-2017	SP 2017-2018	Actual 2017-2018	SP 2018-2019	YTD Actual As of 4/30/2019	SP 2019-2020
<b>INCOME</b>								
	Congregational giving	\$185,000.00	\$198,271.84	\$192,500.00	\$188,549.18	\$192,500.00	\$153,066.05	\$192,500.00
	Annual Meeting	\$11,000.00	\$17,931.00	\$11,000.00	\$14,882.00	\$11,000.00	\$343.00	\$12,000.00
	Ann Mtng Offering/Fundraisers	\$2,000.00	\$4,992.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,938.00	\$3,000.00	\$20.00	\$3,000.00
	Additional Giving	\$30,500.00	\$20,996.00	\$23,000.00	\$23,172.36	\$21,500.00	\$20,898.98	\$21,125.00
	Bequests	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$70,471.93		\$0.00	
	Earned/Interest income	\$6,000.00	\$6,519.60	\$6,000.00	\$6,352.08	\$6,000.00	\$6,296.60	\$6,000.00
	Miscellaneous income	\$16.00	\$1,574.52	\$380.00	\$1,547.18	\$257.00	\$250.00	301
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$234,516.00</b>	<b>\$250,284.96</b>	<b>\$235,880.00</b>	<b>\$308,912.73</b>	<b>\$234,257.00</b>	<b>\$180,874.63</b>	<b>\$234,926.00</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>								
<b>Direct Congregational Services/Networking</b>								
	Missional Church Committee	\$2,000.00	\$1,048.08	\$2,000.00	\$796.87	\$2,000.00	\$534.43	\$2,000.00
	Ministerial Committee	\$4,000.00	\$4,729.36	\$5,500.00	\$4,714.51	\$5,500.00	\$3,706.83	\$5,500.00
	Historian/*Archives	\$3,100.00	\$3,531.00	\$3,975.00	\$3,382.00	\$3,975.00	\$3,445.00	\$3,975.00
	Publications	\$6,000.00	\$3,979.99	\$5,000.00	\$5,118.11	\$5,000.00	\$4,527.38	\$5,000.00
	*Editor Stipend	\$5,400.00	\$5,400.00	\$5,500.00	\$5,500.00	\$5,571.00	\$4,642.50	\$5,671.00
	Regional Meetings/Congregational Listening	\$1,200.00	\$564.26	\$1,000.00	\$220.93	\$1,000.00	\$660.31	\$1,000.00
		\$21,700.00	\$19,252.69	\$22,975.00	\$19,732.42	\$23,046.00	\$17,516.45	\$23,146.00
<b>Denominational Relations</b>								
	Mid-States Conferences		\$251.41		\$199.49	\$250.00	\$0.00	
	*General Assembly Delegate Escrow	\$3,500.00	\$3,499.99	\$3,600.00	\$3,600.00	\$3,600.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,600.00
	Denominational Meetings	\$1,000.00	\$1,451.90	\$1,500.00	\$1,101.85	\$1,500.00	\$1,934.09	\$1,500.00
	Constituency Leaders Council	\$2,000.00	\$2,504.30	\$2,000.00	\$3,636.56	\$2,500.00	\$2,115.12	\$3,000.00
		\$6,500.00	\$7,707.60	\$7,100.00	\$8,537.90	\$7,600.00	\$7,049.21	\$8,100.00
<b>Conference Leadership/Administration</b>								
	Board of Directors Meetings	\$3,000.00	\$1,154.66	\$2,500.00	\$1,280.50	\$2,500.00	\$1,730.56	\$2,000.00
	Gift Discernment Committee	\$100.00	\$111.46	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
	Stewardship Committee	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$26.24	\$100.00
	Leadership Council	\$3,000.00	\$2,036.71	\$3,000.00	\$1,510.12	\$3,000.00	\$2,243.66	\$2,500.00
	Annual Meeting Expense	\$12,000.00	\$18,908.23	\$12,000.00	\$15,697.79	\$12,000.00	\$1,727.35	\$12,000.00
		\$18,200.00	\$22,211.06	\$17,700.00	\$18,488.41	\$17,700.00	\$5,727.81	\$16,700.00
<b>Administrative Support Costs</b>								
	*Sabbatical Coverage Escrow	\$0.00						
	*Liability Insurance	\$2,400.00	\$2,114.91	\$2,500.00	\$2,254.48	\$2,500.00	\$1,937.23	\$2,500.00
	*Rent	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$2,536.00	\$3,108.00
	Supplies	\$2,000.00	\$2,495.78	\$2,000.00	\$2,609.94	\$2,500.00	\$1,788.27	\$2,500.00
	Equipment	\$2,500.00	\$1,634.42	\$2,500.00	\$1,080.52	\$2,500.00	\$1,440.53	\$2,500.00
	Telecommunications	\$2,500.00	\$2,943.66	\$2,750.00	\$2,706.74	\$2,750.00	\$2,293.65	\$2,750.00
	Postage	\$600.00	\$905.20	\$750.00	\$930.50	\$1,000.00	\$820.23	\$1,000.00
	*Bookkeeping Services	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,100.00	\$3,100.00	\$3,140.00	\$2,616.68	\$3,200.00
	Staff Travel	\$4,500.00	\$5,789.57	\$5,000.00	\$5,897.91	\$6,000.00	\$4,711.39	\$6,000.00
	Misc.	\$500.00	\$320.85		\$210.00		\$557.00	
		\$21,000.00	\$22,204.39	\$0.00	\$21,790.09	\$23,390.00	\$18,700.98	\$23,558.00
	<b>Sub-total Expenses</b>	<b>\$67,400.00</b>	<b>\$71,375.74</b>	<b>\$47,775.00</b>	<b>\$68,548.82</b>	<b>\$71,736.00</b>	<b>\$48,994.45</b>	<b>\$71,504.00</b>
<b>Personnel</b>								
	*Salaries	\$123,600.00	\$121,081.09	\$121,911.00	\$121,911.50	\$123,013.00	\$103,532.60	\$128,476.00
	*Benefits	\$36,467.00	\$31,445.61	\$36,331.00	\$34,792.34	\$31,234.00	\$23,653.25	\$29,572.00
	*Payroll tax/Workman's Comp	\$5,049.00	\$5,089.88	\$5,263.00	\$5,142.22	\$5,274.00	\$4,386.32	\$5,374.00
		\$165,116.00	\$157,616.58	\$163,505.00	\$161,846.06	\$159,521.00	\$131,572.17	\$163,422.00
<b>Cash Reserves</b>								
		\$2,000.00	\$1,999.99	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$2,500.00	\$0.00
	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$234,516.00</b>	<b>\$230,992.31</b>	<b>\$214,280.00</b>	<b>\$233,394.88</b>	<b>\$234,257.00</b>	<b>\$183,066.62</b>	<b>\$234,926.00</b>

## 2019-2020 Proposed Spending Plan Income



**Congregations:** Makes up 82% of total spending plan  
**Additional Funding:** Makes up 10% of total spending plan  
**Miscellaneous:** Makes up <1% of total spending plan  
**Revenues:** Makes up 2% of total spending plan  
**Annual Meeting:** Makes up 6% of total spending plan

## 2019-2020 Proposed Spending Plan Expenses



**Direct Cong Services:** Makes up 80% of total spending plan expenses  
**Conference Leadership/Administration:** Makes up 7% of total spending plan expenses  
**Administrative Support:** Makes up 10% of total spending plan expenses  
**Denominational Relations:** Makes up 3% of total spending plan expenses

**Direct Congregational Services:** Includes Missional Church and Ministerial Committee expenses, annual meeting planning expenses, archives, publications, editor stipend, regional gathering expenses, salaries, housing, social security, pension, continuing education, health insurance, health savings account, payroll taxes, and workman's comp.

**Conference Leadership/Administration:** Includes Board of Directors, Gifts Discernment Committee, Stewardship Committee, Leadership Council, and Annual Meeting expenses

**Administrative Support Costs:** Includes Cash Reserve Escrow, Liability/Directors & Officers Insurance, Office Expenses, Bookkeeping Services, Staff Travel, and Miscellaneous expenses.

**Denominational Relations:** Includes Mid-States Conferences, General Assembly/Convention Escrow, Conference Ministers or other denominational meetings, Constituency Leaders

## 2019-2020 Slate of Nominees

Position: **Board of Directors**  
 President-elect  
 Name: James Rissler  
 Congregation: Atlanta Mennonite  
 Fellowship  
 Occupation: Pastor



“I was honored to serve on CDC’s Board of Directors from 2009-2106, and appreciate the opportunity to return as President-elect. I appreciate CDC’s healthy, joyful commitment to following Christ, trusting our unity in God’s Spirit while appreciating the diversity of our journeys and gifts. I look forward to exploring where God is leading us now. I am married to Christina (21 years this Thursday, June 20), who is a partner at Eversheds Sutherland. I have been pastor of Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship for almost 13 years, and also serve as president of Midtown International Parents, the PTO at the school our boys Andrew (14) and Peter (10) attend. Many years ago, I earned a PhD in philosophy from Notre Dame, and still have to occasionally remind myself that sermons are not lectures. :-)



Position: **Board of Directors** Secretary  
 Name: Jamie Pitts  
 Congregation: Hively Avenue  
 Mennonite Church  
 Occupation: Associate Professor of  
 Anabaptist Studies; Director, Institute of  
 Mennonite Studies; Editor, Anabaptist

Witness journal

Jamie Pitts, PhD, seeks to join the Spirit's work of bringing healing, justice, and joy in and through the church to all of creation. He does this in part through teaching and research on global Anabaptist-Mennonite theology and history, and participation in local congregational life and community organizing. His current research interests include theological method, pneumatology, baptism, gender and sexuality, and postcolonial mission. He is also the editor of Anabaptist Witness journal and the director of the Institute of Mennonite Studies at AMBS.



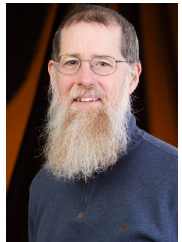
Position: **Board of Directors**  
 Treasurer  
 Name: \*\*Tim Lind  
 Congregation: Florence Church of the  
 Brethren-Mennonite  
 Occupation: Retired



Position: **Ministerial Committee**  
 Name: \*Kay Bontrager-Singer  
 Congregation: Faith Mennonite Church  
 Occupation: Pastor



Position: **Ministerial Committee**  
 Name: \*Ray Person  
 Congregation: First Mennonite Church  
 Bluffton  
 Occupation: Professor of Religion, Ohio  
 Northern University



This will be my second term on the Ministerial Committee. My wife, Elizabeth, and I live on one of the historic Swiss Mennonite homesteads between Bluffton and Pandora, which we run with a cooperative of 17 other families for meat, eggs, and vegetables. My research interests include ecological hermeneutics, as demonstrated in my book, Deuteronomy and Environmental Amnesia (Earth Bible Commentary).



Position:  
**Missional Church Committee**  
 Name: \*Kiva Nice-Webb  
 Congregation: Chicago Community  
 Mennonite Congregation  
 Occupation: Chaplain



Position: **Missional Church Committee**  
 Name: \*\*Mark Rupp  
 Congregation: Columbus Mennonite  
 Church  
 Occupation: Pastor of Christian  
 Formation







Position: **Camp Friedenswald Board**  
 Name: \*Jerry Nussbaum  
 Congregation: Columbus Mennonite Church  
 Occupation: Chaplain

I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the ministry of Camp Friedenswald as it serves to nurture our spirits across all generations. It truly is a place to experience retreat and renewal and from which to "reconnect" more fully as followers of Jesus.



Position:

**Camp Friedenswald Board**

Name: Alita Yoder Funk  
 Congregation: Silverwood Mennonite Church

Occupation: Nurse at Maple City Health Care Center in Goshen, Indiana



When I'm not working (I love what I do!), you'll most likely either find me in the kitchen cooking or baking, or doing something active. I love running and being outdoors, I love plants, and I love playing with our pup, Ginger. And, I'll never pass up an opportunity to share a quality meal with people I love.

Position:

**Camp Friedenswald Board**

Name: Teresa Dutchersmith  
 Congregation: Faith Mennonite Church

Occupation: Hospice Chaplain



Teresa is active in worship, with children's/youth nurture, and in mutual care at Faith Mennonite. She is a former pastor of the congregation. Teresa is also a member of the Goshen Community Chorale.

Her hobbies include bicycling, sewing, walks in the woods with the family dog, baking, reading, and watching movies.

She is married to Kent. They have two daughters, Magdalena (Goshen College student) and Luisa (Bethany Christian Schools student).



Position: **Bluffton University**

**Board of Trustees**

Name: Tim Stried

Congregation: Columbus Mennonite Church

Occupation: Communications and Media Relations



\* = incumbent

\*\*=appointed to complete a term following a resignation, first elected term

Background for Table Discussion on Friday morning, June 21, 2019 **(Please read prior to Annual Meeting.)**

*The mission of Central District Conference is to know Christ's abundant love in who we are and how we live, and to answer God's persistent call to share that love with one another and the world by:*

- *Promoting a Christ-like community of hospitality where all are welcome and where grace-filled relationships flourish, and patience and generosity are practiced,*
- *Calling and nurturing wise, dynamic and compassionate Anabaptist leadership,*
- *Supporting missional partnerships that make God's reign visible and fostering ministries of evangelism, peace, healing and hope.*

Christian hospitality. Anabaptist leadership. Missional partnerships. These are three enduring values that the congregations of CDC have identified as central to our common mission. Finding resources and suggesting ways of living out these missional values individually and in our congregations is the ongoing task of the CDC board of directors, committees, and staff.

CDC leadership recognizes that, while these values endure, the ways these values are lived out and the relationships we develop need continued attention and realignment. Many of our congregations in CDC and MC USA are giving attention to relationships across race, culture and nationality. We confess that we have much to learn about holistically engaging in such relationships.

Over the past several years Mennonite World Conference, Mennonite Church USA and CDC have invited engagement in such relationships.

In April 2019, leaders of Mennonite World Conference participated in an event entitled *Justice on the Journey: Migration and the Anabaptist story*, at Iglesia Vida Abundante in San Rafael de Heredia, Costa Rica. In an article entitled [Challenge and hope on the road](#) by Kristina Toews and Karla Braun, they recorded the following observations by participants.

*"I learned that to belong is a two-way street," said Chief International Events Officer Liesa Unger, who moved to Germany from Siberia as a child. "Whether I belong or not does not only depend on the others who need to accept me, it also depends on me – whether or not I accept the invitation."*

*"The story of migration is one that we all share as brothers and sisters in an eternal kingdom," said YABs (Young AnaBaptists) North American representative Larissa Swartz. "Our spiritual identity is that of foreigners in a foreign land on a pilgrimage to reach our true home."*

*Zaida López of Costa Rica offered a challenge: "When we meet a migrant in our country do we think, how would I like to be treated if I were in their place? And rather than discriminate against them, we offer them a helping hand because they offer an opportunity to share the love of God."*

In 2011 MC USA developed the *Purposeful Plan* which states, in part:

“Racism, antipathy and alienation among different cultural groups stand in the way of Christ’s kingdom of love, justice and peace. As missional communities we will seek to dismantle individual and systemic racism in our church. We will also seek to develop intercultural competence, which means that we intend to heal racial divisions, learn to live and work in a multicultural context, and value all the gifts of God’s diverse people. We envision people of many nations, tribes, people and languages as participants in the kingdom of God. We believe it is Jesus, pictured as the Lamb, who calls people together from all nations. (Acts 10, Galatians 3:25-29, Ephesians 2:15; Revelation 7:9, Article 9, Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective).”

In 2014 Mennonite Church USA affirmed a [Churchwide Statement on Immigration](#). (p132 in report book)

In 2017, congregations were encouraged to be part of a “Big Read” and study [Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism](#) by Dr. Drew Hart. Dr. Hart also preached and provided a plenary session at our 2017 Annual Meeting in Bluffton.

The CDC Missional Church Committee has formed a task group to enhance the missional capacity of congregations and provide essential and needed resources for them to effectively minister in their context. The task group is charged with developing strategies for addressing racial, ethnic and religious reconciliation.

On Friday morning of our Annual Meeting, participants will be invited into conversation around the following questions. Read Deut 10:12-13, 17-19.

1. What questions would you invite the Missional Church Committee task group to address in regard to racial, ethnic and religious reconciliation?
2. Are there activities and resources from your congregational experience (or other places) that have helped build relationships across race, culture and nationality? If so, please share an example.
3. Have you or your congregation developed relationships with individuals or communities in Mexico, Central America and/or Latin America?

More recently Central District Conference leadership has been learning more about [SEMILLA](#), an Anabaptist seminary in Guatemala. SEMILLA may be a valuable resource to our congregations as we engage in this important relationship-building across race, culture and nationality. Here is a link to a [brief history of SEMILLA](#). (p 45 in report book)

4. If you or anyone at your table has had experience with or a personal story about SEMILLA, please share it with your table.

## SEMILLA - An Emmaus Journey

“Why haven’t we been doing this long ago?” “I’ve just discovered I can think for myself. . .my faith takes on much more meaning to me now.” “It’s urgent that our own people (the Anabaptist-Mennonite churches) really know our faith. . .it’s so biblical. . .why many of the basic teachings of the evangelical churches arose in the radical reformation of our Anabaptist forefathers!” “Please get more of our own history and theology into Spanish. We’re reading everyone else’s theology but the Anabaptist approach to life and the Scriptures make so much more sense in Central America today!” “The social situations we face today and those confronted by the sixteenth century Anabaptists are incredible similar!”

These are typical questions and comments that are heard at the SEMILLA study encounters.

In SEMILLA we are on an Emmaus journey. Central American Anabaptist pastors and leaders, men and women, are asking many questions . . .they are cautiously lifting the wrappings from their carefully pre-packaged Christian faith. Obedience to Jesus’ example and teaching is pushing leaders to risk leaving safe ground. Conviction is growing that our living God is concerned for the whole of life in creation and for the whole movement of humanity in history. The answers to painful and perplexing questions are not always clearly understood. But we are confident that Christ, the Truth walks with us and want his Spirit to penetrate us and the whole church. We have a deep concern that the church have a truly biblical message that is indeed “good news” in the chaotic circumstances in the Central American region today. A feeling of hope and excitement is rising as brothers and sisters, nationals and missionaries share and walk together with Christ in this learning process.

There is a growing awareness that too often Anabaptist-Mennonite churches have simply been following after other evangelicals. Most everyone has been tied up exclusively with salvation and damnation questions neatly separated from the realities of the daily struggles of living. At times it seems as if the evangelical patterns of ministry as well as leadership training programs have unwittingly conspired with cultural, political and economic factors to perpetuate the status quo. For many decades most area countries have had strong-handed military or dictatorial-type governments. These leadership patterns seem to have influenced the church structures unduly and many evangelical pastors see themselves as having exclusive rights to congregational ministry and administration. Since there is not much feeling of community or commitment to one another, witness and service are felt to be competitive and lose vitality. Worship is performed by the “experts” and soon becomes just another routine that is endured or abandoned by most. Faith seems irrelevant to life or becomes practically non-existent for many second and third generation believers.

But, what about the dramatic regenerating conversion experiences many recall? Discerning leaders, ministers and lay-persons (now involved in SEMILLA) strongly affirm regeneration as a result of personal faith in Christ. They are also diligently seeking to have a relevant and meaningful biblical witness. There is a firm conviction in the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures. Disciplined Bible study is combined with serious reflection on everyday happenings. A response to this concern for an on-going Christian faith that is relevant is the Anabaptist oriented leadership training program known as SEMILLA.

“SEMILLA,” an acronym meaning seed, is derived from “Seminario Ministerial de Liderazgo Anabautista-Mennonita” (Ministerial Seminary for Anabaptist-Mennonite Leaders). It is a unified leadership training effort of ten Mennonite and Brethren in Christ national church organizations in the Central American area. . .an area that stretches from Mexico to Panama with approximately ten thousand Mennonites. There are six Conferences - Mission Boards who relate to these national churches that provide the major subsidy for the program in the form of scholarships. They are Brethren In Christ Mission, Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions, Evangelical Mennonite Conference of Canada, Franconia Mennonite Conference, Mennonite Brethren Missions & Services and Rosedale Mennonite Missions. These sponsoring groups are linked to SEMILLA through its board of directors which consists of a delegate from each country representing its participating church(es). This board determines the overall policies and procedures to follow and names a director to coordinate the total study program. It has now also selected a part-time dean to begin late this year.

The SEMILLA project is a decentralized program of study and disciplined reflection that attempts to combine the best elements of a residential study program and theological education by extension. (TEE) The program consists of assigned investigation and three or four intensive seminars annually that are repeated in four to six countries. The curriculum includes 36 courses for the “bachillerato” level and 18 additional ones for the “licenciatura” level. Reading and writing assignments in preparation for each two-week seminar require 80-100 hours of study. Seminars are held in countries where there are at least 10 qualified students with smaller numbers from neighboring countries joining them. Between seminars, each student is expected to participate in regular encounters of study-dialogue with his country’s group of SEMILLA students. Each participating conference seeks to encourage its academically capable pastors and leaders to participate in the courses. The assumption is that all sectors of the church can participate fully, but the selection of students for scholarships is left to each respective conference.

The persons who teach SEMILLA courses are very crucial to the whole project. These are sought from all Anabaptist-Mennonite groups and are recommended and approved by the board. Professors are selected on the basis of their mature spiritual and ministerial experience and well-defined Anabaptist convictions. They are to have at least a master’s degree academic level, must speak Spanish fluently and be well informed of the complicated, difficult situations confronting the church in Central America. Each professor is asked to prepare the original course syllabus so that corresponding anthologies with assignments can be prepared and distributed in advance to students. Carefully selected student-teachers repeat one of two of these courses annually using the original syllabus and study materials.

To date\* throughout 1984-85, nine different courses have been taken for credit by 151 students from nine L.A. countries. Another 120 students audited courses, primarily the evening ones. Ten of the Canadian and U.S. MCC & Mission personnel also took courses. Among the students were nearly 50 pastors and six Bible institute directors. The number of women students jumped from 33 in 1984 to 61 in 1985. Some of the men have had difficulty in accepting that the women are among the most dedicated and insightful students. Fortunately there have not been any conflictive or competitive attitudes regarding their distinct roles in the churches and communities. Other professions represented among the students are agronomists, business men and women, secretaries, bankers, home-makers,

lawyers, doctors, nurses, accountants, salespersons, engineers and educators, as well as several high school and university students.

The SEMILLA participants themselves have done most of the promoting since they really value these advanced biblical, theological, and historical studies. The clue to their attraction seems to be that they are given conscientiously in and from a Latin American context and perspective. They are relevant not only due to the expertise of the professor but through the realities of the students. The course procedures include disciplined reflection in small groups and the professor serves as a specialist and guide without imposing pre-packaged applications of biblical principles. The students are taking ownership of conclusions that are reached, which gives life and meaning to their faith. The 1984-85 teaching staff included two seminary professors, Hugo Zorrilia, now a missionary in Spain, and Laverne Rutschman; two college professors, Ron Collins at Goshen and C. Arnold Snyder at Conrad Frebel College; two C.A. women, Concepcion Villeda, Guatemala and Anny Blanco de Vargas, Costa Rica; two SEMILLA staff persons, Gilberto Flores and Amzie Yoder in Guatemala City and eight Mexican and Central American SEMILLA student-teachers.

The general response to SEMILLA has been both exciting and demanding. The sharing and interchange by church leaders from these various Anabaptist-Mennonite groups and countries has greatly enriched their learning experience. Strong affirmation is given to this alternative to sending leaders to educational institutions in alienating cultural contexts and life situations. The student-course costs are a mere fraction of what they would be in North American Mennonite Institutions, and there is little risk of indirectly encouraging the "brain drain" from Central to North America. The sharp hierarchical divisions between clergy and laity are diminishing. The churches as a whole are establishing their own identity as biblical Christians who are responsible to their own people in their own culture and time. And this in spite of the risk of being misunderstood both by fellow Christian and nonbelievers. This leadership training has the disadvantage of taking more time. One of the board members, a middle-aged businessman, quipped, "Surely SEMILLA will supply us with walking canes when some of us walk up to receive our diploma!"

\*Three more national seminars are scheduled to be held in three countries yet during the latter months of 1985. The estimates are that about 50 students will participate.

Amzie Yoder  
SEMILLA Director  
October, 1985



## *Americus Mennonite Fellowship*

Hello Doug Luginbill,

My name is Brian Kilheffer, I am the Leader/Deacon of Americus Mennonite Fellowship. We are a Mennonite USA, Laity led church in Americus GA. We are currently in the Southeast Conference of Mennonite USA. We are wanting to start a process of moving our affiliation to Central District. This is due to the fact that our current conference is leaning towards leaving Mennonite USA.

Our Congregation wants to stay in Mennonite USA. We as a congregation practice "Forbearance" on the Same-Sex Relations issue & are encouraged by the way Mennonite USA has been handling this issue. We know that this puts us at odds with the Southeast Conference view on this issue. The impression we have got through the conference is that they would be leaving Mennonite USA if "forbearance" policy continues. We have had strong connections in the past with Mennonite USA through the Mennonite VS program. Mennonite VS is how many of our congregants came to Americus.

Also, the Mennonite churches that we are the closest to, both geographically and in friendly connections, are either in Central District Conference or in the process of joining the Conference. We realize that this would mean that we would be the only church in Southeastern Conference above the Sarasota area or in Georgia. James Rissler from Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship shared with us about Central District Conference & what would be involved if we decided to join.

We started this conversation of changing conference affiliation in October. James Rissler of Atlanta came to visit us in November. We have discussed it at 3 business meetings & finally came to consensus on moving forward this last Wednesday. It is with sadness that we feel we need to leave our conference. We waited until "doing nothing, would be doing something". We have enjoyed being apart of Southeast Conference even though geographic distance has been a problem. We have been in contact with Lee Miller who has been very supportive & we are leaving Southeast Conference on good terms. I told him of our decision & that I would be contacting you.

I welcome your input & guidance on this or any other issues you see here. Please feel free to e-mail or call me.

Thanks,

In Christ's Peace,

Brian Kilheffer



Deacon of Americus Mennonite Fellowship

212 Valley Rd

Americus GA 31709

(229) 815-1034





**Central  
District  
Conference**  
A conference of  
Mennonite Church USA

**Doug Luginbill**  
**Conference Minister**  
1015 Division Street  
Goshen, IN 46528-2000  
confmin@mcusacdc.org  
574-534-1485

***Knowing  
Christ's love...  
Answering  
God's Call***

February 20, 2018

Dear brothers and sisters of Americus Mennonite Fellowship,

Greetings to you in the name of Jesus Christ, Lord of the church. Over the past couple of months I have been in conversation with Brian Kilheffer via phone calls and emails. These conversations were about your congregational discernment regarding conference affiliation.

In early February 2018 I received, via postal mail, a letter from Brian requesting to begin a discernment process regarding your desire to affiliate with Central District Conference (CDC). I have also been in contact with Lee Miller, Conference Administrator of Southeast Mennonite Conference. He has acknowledged and is supportive of your process. At the February 15, 2018 meeting of the CDC Board of Directors, your letter was reviewed and your request to begin the discernment process toward joining CDC was approved.

We recognize the importance of being connected with other congregations for support and accountability. We understand the purpose of joining together as congregations, the purpose of being a conference, is to provide encouragement and mutuality between congregations. We also recognize the importance of clear communication and the tending of relationships between both the sending and receiving conferences of MC USA and the congregation discerning reaffiliation.

Below are steps that we believe will help foster good process and relationships as we discern together the Spirit's leading.

1. Please refer to and follow the membership guidelines from MC USA regarding changing conferences. A copy is enclosed.
2. We invite you to consider the CDC membership criteria affirmed by delegates in June 2010. These criteria, which are enclosed, include the requirements established in our constitution. Please provide a written response indicating your understanding and support of the membership criteria prior to our Annual Meeting, June 21-23, 2018.
3. Our President of the board, Arman Habegger, and I would like to visit with you sometime this spring. I am planning to worship with you on Sunday, March 11. Arman may join me but is uncertain of his schedule at this point.

4. We invite you to attend our CDC Annual Meeting at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, IN on June 21-23, 2018. At the meeting you will be introduced to the delegates. Arman Habegger, CDC President, will contact Brian in the coming weeks to talk more about this.
5. Throughout the year, you are invited to participate fully in CDC activities and events, receive our publications, interact with our members and leadership as we continue to discern together God's leading toward possible membership.
6. Assuming continued interest by both Americus Mennonite Fellowship and Central District Conference, the delegates at our June 2019 Annual Meeting would vote on membership.

Please don't hesitate to contact me or other CDC leadership when questions arise. May God's grace, wisdom and peace be with you during this season of discernment.

In Christ's love,



Doug Luginbill, Conference Minister



Arman Habegger, CDC President



## Emmanuel Mennonite Church

*"Proclaiming peace through Christ"*

**Meeting House**

1236 NW 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Gainesville, FL 32609

**Phone:** 352-377-6577

**e-mail:** gnvmenno@bellsouth.net

**web site:** gainesvillemennonites.org

September 17, 2017

To the Central District Board of Directors,

As chair of Emmanuel Mennonite Church Council, on behalf of the congregation, I am writing to communicate our request to begin the process of joining Central District Conference.

The basis of this request is our strong desire to remain a congregation of Mennonite Church USA. Actions, votes, and table discussions at recent Southeast Conference assemblies revealed that a large majority of Southeast Conference congregations have already, are in the process of, or intend in the near future to leave Mennonite Church USA. Those who have not already left stated their intention to leave as congregations or a conference if the "forbearance" policy is not revoked at the 2019 MC USA convention.

In the near-certainty of that becoming the case, we would be left without a denominational connection. Since the process of reaffiliation is complex, it seemed prudent that we immediately seek affiliation with the conference that has already become home to several congregations in Florida and Georgia. It happens that these same congregations: Covenant Mennonite Fellowship in Sarasota, Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship, and Berea Mennonite Church in Atlanta, are those with whom we have the closest relationships and compatibility. Additionally, three families in our small congregation have ties with Central District through First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

In Christ's peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kay Martin".

Kay Martin  
Chair, Emmanuel Mennonite Church Council



**Central  
District  
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**Doug Luginbill**  
**Conference Minister**  
1015 Division Street  
Goshen, IN 46528-2000  
confmin@mcusacdc.org  
574-534-1485

***Knowing  
Christ's love...  
Answering  
God's Call***

February 21, 2018

Dear brothers and sisters of Emmanuel Mennonite Church,

Greetings to you in the name of Jesus Christ, Lord of the church. Over the past ten months I have been in conversation with Pastor Eve McMaster via phone calls and emails regarding possibly affiliating with Central District Conference (CDC).

In August I received a letter from Lee Miller, Southeast Mennonite Conference Administrator stating their openness to having you explore joining CDC. In September I received a letter from Kay Martin, Chair of EMC Council, officially requesting to begin the discernment process for joining CDC. On September 29, 2017, the CDC Board of Directors affirmed moving forward with the membership process. On November 12, 2017 I had the privilege of meeting with a dozen or so folks from your congregation and heard more about your desire to join Central District Conference. I appreciated your hospitality and questions as we learned to know one another.

We recognize the importance of being connected with other congregations for support and accountability. We understand the purpose of joining together as congregations, the purpose of being a conference, is to provide encouragement and mutuality between congregations. We also recognize the importance of clear communication and the tending of relationships between both the sending and receiving conferences of MC USA and the congregation discerning reaffiliation.

Below are steps that we believe will help foster good process and relationships as we discern together the Spirit's leading.

1. Please refer to and follow the membership guidelines from MC USA regarding changing conferences. A copy is enclosed.
2. We invite you to consider the CDC membership criteria affirmed by delegates in June 2010. These criteria, which are enclosed, include the requirements established in our constitution. Please provide a written response indicating your understanding and support of the membership criteria prior to our Annual Meeting, June 22-24, 2017.

3. We invite you to attend our CDC Annual Meeting at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, IN on June 21-23, 2018. At the meeting you will be introduced to the delegates. Arman Habegger, CDC President, will contact Pastor Eve in the coming weeks to talk more about this.
4. Throughout the year, you are invited to participate fully in CDC activities and events, receive our publications, interact with our members and leadership as we continue to discern together God's leading toward possible membership.
5. Assuming continued interest by both Emmanuel Mennonite Church and Central District Conference, the delegates to our June 2019 Annual Meeting would vote on membership.

Please don't hesitate to contact me or other CDC leadership when questions arise. May God's grace, wisdom and peace be with you during this season of discernment.

In Christ's love,



Doug Luginbill, Conference Minister



Arman Habegger, CDC President Elect



November 28, 2017

Doug Luginbill, Conference Minister  
Central District Conference  
1015 Division St.  
Goshen, IN 46528

sent by e-mail to [confmin@mcusacdc.org](mailto:confmin@mcusacdc.org)

Dear Doug,

This is Jubilee Mennonite Church's request to join Central District Conference. We met as a congregation in November, 2016 and April, 2016 and then voted in September, 2017 by 96 % to begin the discernment process with CDC. That ballot read:

“Jubilee will begin the two-year process of affiliation with Central District Conference, remain in Ohio Conference during that interim, and consider the question of single or dual affiliation at the end of the affiliation process with CDC.”

We did not reach a decision as to whether to leave Ohio Conference but agreed to revisit this discussion depending on the results of discernment and entry into CDC.

Jubilee is a small fellowship of approximately 25 families. It began in 1996 and grew by merger with Bellefontaine Community Fellowship in 2000. We have had two pastors, Tim Lehman and Tony Doehrmann. Tony is retiring at the end of this year. Jubilee has decided to delay hiring another pastor for the first half of 2018, and reassess our need at that time.

Our discussion to request affiliation with CDC grew out of the LGBTQ discussion and many of our member's concerns with the strained relationship between Ohio Conference and MCUSA. In September, 2017, the group also adopted a new welcoming statement that reads:

“Jubilee welcomes all people who wish to be in covenant with Christ to full participation in the activities and life of our church.”

This statement evolved from a multi-year discussion in congregational meetings, small-groups and adult Sunday school.

While this discussion is not the sole reason for our desire to affiliate with CDC, it has been the crucible in which the decision was made. Many in the congregation feel out-of-step with Ohio Conference's statements and policies around this discussion. But more so, many expressed an admiration for CDC's focus on congregational autonomy and vision of being a gathering of

sibling congregations, as expressed in CDC's Conference polity statement. We sent six people to CDC's Bluffton Conference this past summer and all came away impressed with the feeling of unity there. As shown by our vote on this issue, we had near consensus on this decision.

We have been open about this discussion with Ohio Conference regional pastor, Cliff Brubaker. Cliff attended our April, 2017 congregational meeting and has had several discussions with either Pastor Tony and or with me as church chair.

We are excited to begin this new partnership. Our Leadership Team looks forward to working with you in the discernment process.

Peace and blessings,

*/Jeffrey C Snapp/*  
Jeff Snapp, Chair

*/Tony Doehrmann/*  
Tony Doehrmann, Pastor

*/Russ Miller/*  
Russ Miller

*/Karla Kauffman/*  
Karla Kauffman

*/Jeri Rumsey/*  
Jeri Rumsey



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Answering  
God's Call***

February 20, 2018

Dear brothers and sisters of Jubilee Mennonite Church,

Greetings to you in the name of Jesus Christ, Lord of the church. Over the past five months I have been in conversation with Jeff Snapp via phone calls, emails, and a visit in Bluffton by Russ Miller in January. I was also grateful for the presence of Beth and Russ Miller, Karla Kauffman and Debbie Walker at our Regional Gathering on February 10. I also know there have been representatives from your congregation at our last two Annual Meetings. These interactions have been good opportunities to get to know one another as you consider your conference affiliation.

On November 28, 2017 I received, via email, a letter from Jeff Snapp requesting to begin a discernment process regarding your desire to affiliate with Central District Conference (CDC). I have also been in correspondence with Cliff Brubaker from Ohio Conference and he is supportive of your discernment process and decision. At the February 15, 2018 meeting of the CDC Board of Directors, your letter was reviewed and your request to begin the discernment process toward joining CDC was approved.

We recognize the importance of being connected with other congregations for support and accountability. We understand the purpose of joining together as congregations, the purpose of being a conference, is to provide encouragement and mutuality between congregations. We also recognize the importance of clear communication and the tending of relationships between both the sending and receiving conferences of MC USA and the congregation discerning reaffiliation.

Below are steps that we believe will help foster good process and relationships as we discern together the Spirit's leading.

1. Please refer to and follow the membership guidelines from MC USA regarding changing conferences. A copy is enclosed.
2. We invite you to consider the CDC membership criteria affirmed by delegates in June 2010. These criteria, which are enclosed, include the requirements established in our constitution. Please provide a written response indicating your understanding and support of the membership criteria prior to our Annual Meeting, June 21-23, 2018.



3. Our President, Arman Habegger, and I look forward to being with you on Sunday, April 29 for worship and further discussion.
4. We invite you to attend our CDC Annual Meeting at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, IN on June 21-23, 2018. At the meeting you will be introduced to the delegates. Arman Habegger will contact Jeff in the coming weeks to talk more about this.
5. Throughout the year, you are invited to participate fully in CDC activities and events, receive our publications, interact with our members and leadership as we continue to discern together God's leading toward possible membership.
6. Assuming continued interest by both Jubilee Mennonite Church and Central District Conference, the delegates to our June 2019 Annual Meeting would vote on membership.

Please don't hesitate to contact me or other CDC leadership when questions arise. May God's grace, wisdom and peace be with you during this season of discernment.

In Christ's love,



Doug Luginbill, Conference Minister



Arman Habegger, CDC President Elect

## Term Review for Conference Minister

The Board of Directors asked 35 persons who had been directly involved in some capacity with Doug Luginbill to complete a survey about his work as conference minister. We received 27 responses, a bit short of 80 percent. The responses were overwhelmingly positive as shared in this sample of comments:

--Doug has been strongly supportive of us elders . . . in the transition to CDC as well as during the time of transition without a pastor in leadership.

--Doug has a wonderful, non-anxious presence. He's a lovely human. I've been impressed by how he can both be fully present in whatever space he's in and at the same time be very efficient with answering questions and emails.

--Doug has a positive outlook and presents a hopeful direction for the future.

--Doug has been an excellent resource, listening ear, and wise counselor during our congregation's pastoral leadership.

Respondents did express concern about his being able to minister to the entire conference in light of its large geographical footprint and a fear that he might burn out.

The Board appreciates the solid support of persons in the Central District for Doug's work with them as congregations, as pastors, as lay leaders. In that spirit, we commend him to you and recommend that you affirm him for another term of three years as Conference Minister for the Central District Conference. With that affirmation, we ask your prayers for him as he serves this call.

Arman Habegger  
For the Board of Directors

April 2019

2019

REPORT BOOK  
of the

**Central District Conference**  
of  
Mennonite Church USA

*Come, walk with us . . . To God knows where!*



*Part II*

*Conference Financial and Staff Reports*

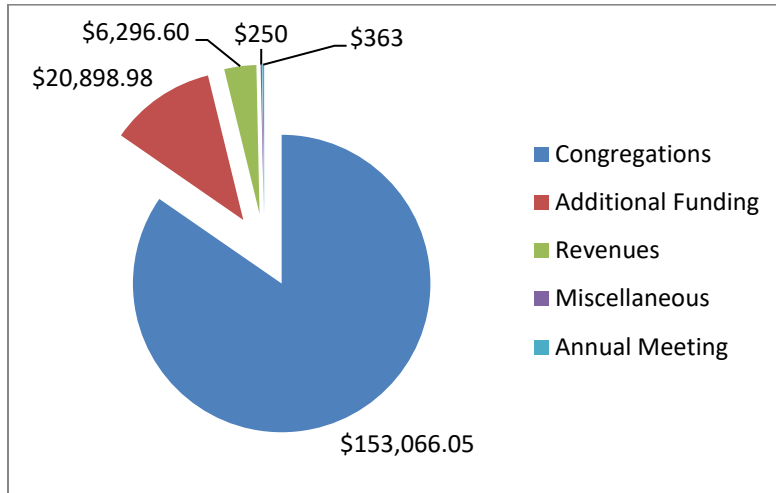


**CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE**  
**Balance Sheet**  
**As of April 30, 2019**

Checking	86,291.70
Savings	189,476.59
	<u>275,768.29</u>
Undeposited Funds	370.09
Prepaid expenses	1,598.56
Missional Fund	169,313.02
	<u>171,281.67</u>
	<u>447,049.96</u>
	<u><b>447,049.96</b></u>
Accounts Payable	-2,076.90
Other Agency Transfer	27,471.48
Other Current Liabilities	2,760.03
Funds/Escrows	
General Assembly Escrow	13,533.32
Cash Reserve Escrow	116,743.39
Conf Min Sabbatical Escrow	15,704.04
Leadership Dev Scholarship	14,690.64
Ministerial Committee	0.00
Min Inquiry Program	319.75
Mennonite Women	2,205.31
Missional Ch Committee	135.33
Jubilee Fund	17,252.15
Transitional Pastors Sabbatical	7,506.94
Reign of God Grant	3,750.00
Surplus Reserve Fund	3,493.20
Missional Activities Fund	19,972.87
Celtic Pilgrimage	7,675.12
Total Current Liabilities	<u>251,136.67</u>
	251,136.67
Equity	
Equity	169,837.44
Net Income	26,075.85
Total Equity	<u>195,913.29</u>
	<u><b>447,049.96</b></u>

Central District Conference						
Income and Expense Statement						
As of April 30, 2019						
		Actual	SP	SP	Actual	SP
		2018-2019	2018-2019	2018-2019	2017-2018	2017-2018
		thru April 30	thru April 30	(12 months)	(12 months)	(12 months)
		(10 months)	(10 months)			
<b>INCOME</b>						
	Congregational Giving	\$153,066.05	\$160,416.66	\$192,500.00	\$188,549.18	\$192,500.00
	Annual Meeting Registration/Offering	\$343.00	\$0.00	\$11,000.00	\$17,343.00	\$11,000.00
	Annual Meeting Donations: Memorial/G	\$20.00	\$0.00	\$3,000.00	\$1,507.00	\$3,000.00
	Additional Funding	\$20,898.98	\$17,916.66	\$21,500.00	\$23,172.36	\$23,000.00
	Bequests	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$70,471.93	\$0.00
	Earned/Interest income	\$6,296.60	\$4,500.00	\$6,000.00	\$6,352.08	\$6,000.00
	Miscellaneous income	\$250.00	\$214.16	\$257.00	\$1,547.18	\$380.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$180,874.63</b>	<b>\$183,047.48</b>	<b>\$234,257.00</b>	<b>\$308,942.73</b>	<b>\$235,880.00</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>						
<b>Direct Congregational Services/Networking</b>						
	Missional Church Committee	\$534.43	\$1,666.66	\$2,000.00	\$796.87	\$2,000.00
	Ministerial Committee	\$3,706.83	\$4,583.34	\$5,500.00	\$4,714.51	\$5,500.00
	Historian/*Archives	\$3,445.00	\$3,312.50	\$3,975.00	\$3,382.00	\$3,975.00
	Publications	\$4,527.38	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,118.11	\$5,000.00
	*Editor Stipend	\$4,642.50	\$4,642.50	\$5,571.00	\$5,500.00	\$5,500.00
	Regional Gatherings	\$660.31	\$833.34	\$1,000.00	\$220.93	\$1,000.00
		\$17,516.45	\$20,038.34	\$23,046.00	\$19,732.42	\$22,975.00
<b>Denominational Relations</b>						
	Mid-States	\$0.00	\$208.34	\$250.00	\$199.49	
	*General Assembly Delegate Escrow	\$3,000.00	\$2,500.00	\$3,600.00	\$3,600.00	\$3,600.00
	Denominational Meetings	\$1,934.09	\$1,250.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,101.85	\$1,500.00
	Constituency Leaders Council	\$2,115.12	\$2,083.34	\$2,500.00	\$3,636.56	\$2,000.00
		\$7,049.21	\$6,041.68	\$7,600.00	\$8,537.90	\$7,100.00
<b>Conference Leadership/Administration</b>						
	Board of Directors Meetings	\$1,730.56	\$2,083.34	\$2,500.00	\$1,280.50	\$2,500.00
	Gift Discernment Committee	\$0.00	\$83.34	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
	Stewardship Committee	\$26.24	\$83.34	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
	Leadership Council	\$2,243.66	\$2,500.00	\$3,000.00	\$1,510.12	\$3,000.00
	Annual Meeting Expense	\$1,727.35	\$0.00	\$12,000.00	\$15,697.79	\$12,000.00
		\$5,727.81	\$4,750.02	\$17,700.00	\$18,488.41	\$17,700.00
<b>Administrative Support Costs</b>						
	*Sabbatical Coverage Escrow					
	*Liability Insurance	\$1,937.23	\$2,083.34	\$2,500.00	\$2,254.48	\$2,500.00
	*Rent	\$2,536.00	\$2,500.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00
	Supplies	\$1,788.27	\$2,083.34	\$2,500.00	\$2,609.94	\$2,000.00
	Equipment	\$1,440.53	\$2,083.34	\$2,500.00	\$1,060.52	\$2,500.00
	Telecommunications	\$2,293.65	\$2,291.64	\$2,750.00	\$2,706.74	\$2,750.00
	Postage	\$820.23	\$833.34	\$1,000.00	\$930.50	\$750.00
	*Bookkeeping Services	\$2,616.68	\$2,616.68	\$3,140.00	\$3,100.00	\$3,100.00
	Staff Travel	\$4,711.39	\$5,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$5,897.91	\$5,000.00
	Misc.	\$557.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$210.00	\$0.00
		\$18,700.98	\$19,491.68	\$23,390.00	\$21,770.09	\$21,600.00
<b>Personnel</b>						
	*Salaries	\$103,532.60	\$103,532.53	\$123,013.00	\$121,911.50	\$121,911.00
	*Fringe	\$23,653.25	\$25,007.07	\$31,234.00	\$34,792.34	\$36,331.00
	*Payroll tax/Workman's Comp	\$4,386.32	\$4,394.58	\$5,274.00	\$5,142.22	\$5,263.00
		\$131,572.17	\$132,934.18	\$159,521.00	\$161,846.06	\$163,505.00
<b>Cash Reserves</b>						
		\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$183,066.62</b>	<b>\$185,755.90</b>	<b>\$234,257.00</b>	<b>\$233,374.88</b>	<b>\$235,880.00</b>
* = Fixed expenses						

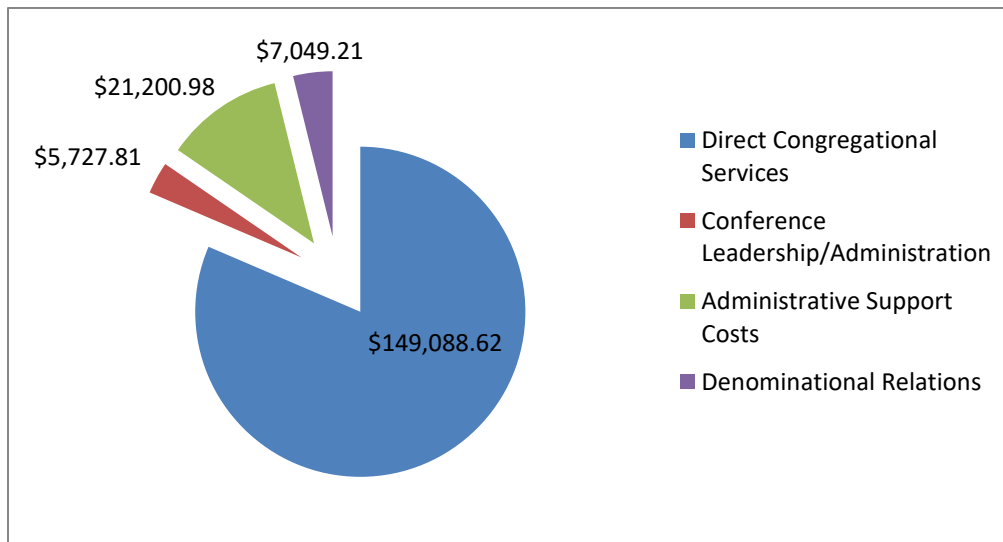
**2018-2019 Year-to-Date Actual Income (as of April 30)**



**Income Sources**

- \***Congregational Contributions**
- \***Additional Funding:** Individual donations, Leadership Council pledges, Fundraising letters, Conference leadership donating back expenses
- \***Revenues:** Interest from checking/savings, Distributions from Missional Fund
- \***Annual Meeting Registration/Fundraising**
- \***Miscellaneous**

**2018-2019 Year-to-Date Actual Expenses (as of April 30)**



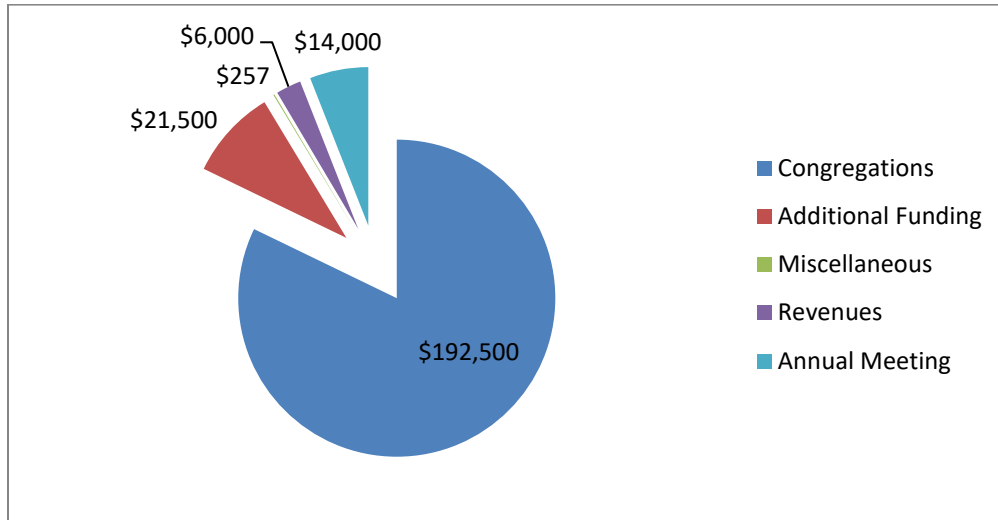
**Direct Congregational Services:** Includes Missional Church and Ministerial Committee expenses, annual meeting planning expenses, archives, publications, editor stipend, regional gathering expenses, salaries, housing, social security, pension, continuing education, health insurance, health savings account, payroll taxes, and workman’s comp.

**Conference Leadership/Administration:** Includes Board of Directors, Gifts Discernment Committee, Stewardship Committee, Leadership Council, and Annual Meeting expenses

**Administrative Support Costs:** Includes Cash Reserve Escrow, Liability/Directors & Officers Insurance, Office Expenses, Bookkeeping Services, Staff Travel, and Miscellaneous expenses.

**Denominational Relations:** Includes Mid-States Conferences, General Assembly/Convention Escrow, Conference Ministers or other denominational meetings, Constituency Leaders Council

## 2018-2019 Spending Plan Income



**Congregations:** Makes up 82% of total spending plan

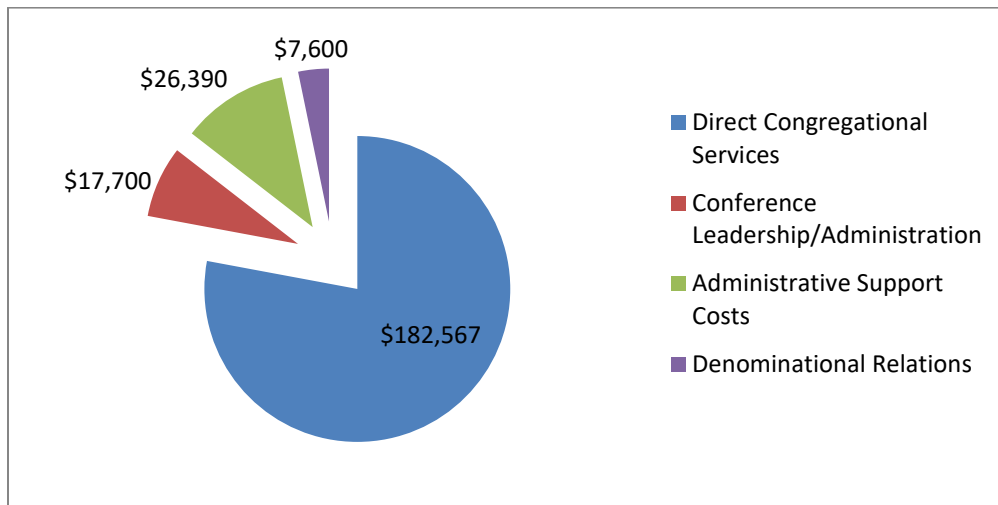
**Additional Funding:** Makes up 10% of total spending plan

**Miscellaneous:** Makes up <1% of total spending plan

**Revenues:** Makes up 2% of total spending plan

**Annual Meeting:** Makes up 5% of total spending plan

## 2018-2019 Spending Plan Expenses



**Direct Congregational Services:** Makes up 78% of total spending plan

**Conference Leadership/Administration:** Makes up 8% of total spending plan

**Administrative Support Costs:** Makes up 11% of total spending plan

**Denominational Relations:** Makes up 3% of total spending plan



Central District Conference				
Congregational Contributions				
Number of giving units (as reported in 2018) is in parentheses				
*Dual Conference Congregations				
Congregations	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
	As of 4/30/19			
	10 months	12 months	12 months	12 months
Agora*	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Americus	\$400.00			
Ames	\$250.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Ann Arbor*	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$250.00
Asian Mennonite Community	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Assembly (129)	\$12,673.50	\$16,716.00	\$18,375.00	\$11,250.00
Atlanta (13)	\$1,565.38	\$1,997.88	\$1,608.06	\$1,668.16
Berea (16)	\$1,000.00			
Carlock withdrew 2016			\$0.00	\$1,958.99
Chapel Hill (24)	\$1,200.00			
Chicago Community (35)	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
Cincinnati (42)	\$5,070.00	\$6,825.00	\$8,310.00	\$6,030.00
Columbus (103)	\$14,865.00	\$14,180.00	\$13,890.00	\$13,890.00
Community Mennonite*(14)		\$750.00	\$0.00	\$370.00
Covenant (37)		\$5,800.00	\$2,300.00	\$0.00
Eighth Street (101)	\$13,875.00	\$18,500.00	\$18,350.00	\$15,127.00
Emmaus Road (24)	\$2,105.00	\$3,380.00	\$5,482.50	\$5,815.00
Evanston*		\$500.00	\$5,000.00	\$0.00
Faith (27)	\$2,500.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,750.00	\$1,500.00
First, Bluffton (110)	\$15,742.00	\$21,196.00	\$21,000.00	\$17,577.00
First, Chicago		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
First, Sugarcreek (17)	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00
First, Urbana* (68)	\$4,875.00	\$6,500.00	\$6,375.00	\$4,687.50
First, Wadsworth (19)	\$300.00	\$350.00	\$726.75	\$100.00
Florence (19)	\$1,200.00	\$2,400.00	\$1,200.00	\$0.00
Grace Mennonite (43)	\$5,760.00	\$8,087.50	\$8,657.40	\$7,933.50
Hively Avenue (35)	\$4,950.00	\$6,892.50	\$5,647.52	\$5,512.99
Joy Fellowship*		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Lima* (20)	\$3,000.00	\$2,250.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,125.00
Madison (51)	\$5,760.00	\$6,640.00	\$7,760.00	\$6,400.00
Maplewood (28)	\$750.00	\$3,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$3,625.00
Mennonite Church of Normal* (110)	\$11,290.86	\$15,054.48	\$18,651.15	\$14,613.81
Milwaukee (17)	\$1,200.00	\$600.00	\$1,024.14	\$932.65
Morning Star*	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
North Danvers (63)	\$3,154.00	\$3,199.00	\$3,201.00	\$4,363.00
Oak Grove* (94)	\$5,813.00	\$4,812.00	\$8,058.00	\$6,313.00
Open Table Mennonite Fellowship (12)	\$1,500.00	\$300.00	\$0.00	\$500.00
Paoli* (24)	\$2,359.81	\$3,063.82	\$3,151.82	\$1,545.00
Raleigh (30)	\$2,000.00			
Shalom Community (40)	\$1,650.00	\$3,300.00	\$1,625.00	\$0.00
Shalom Mennonite Congregation (71)	\$6,532.50	\$4,875.00	\$4,875.00	\$4,288.00
Silverwood (69)	\$7,875.00	\$10,280.00	\$12,653.50	\$7,875.00
Southside (38)	\$2,750.00	\$5,500.00	\$5,500.00	\$1,500.00
St Paul (7)	\$600.00	\$600.00	\$600.00	\$600.00
Trenton (34)	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$153,066.05</b>	<b>\$188,549.18</b>	<b>\$198,271.84</b>	<b>\$154,850.60</b>



Conference Minister's Report  
2019 CDC Annual Meeting, Milwaukee, WI

Our theme for this year, "Come walk with us...to God knows where," came out of our board of directors visioning day last August. The theme has, appropriately, elicited both chuckles and contemplation. It is both a confession of faith (God does know where God is leading) and it is a prayer of relinquishment ("God, we don't always know where you are leading but we trust you.") The theme also has a sense of "throwing up one's hands," suggesting the path is out of our control.

We're just along for the ride. Depending on the day...or hour...I identify with any of these perspectives. I offer the following observations about our journey as CDC congregations.

- ❖ The past year saw fewer pastoral transitions than my first two years as conference minister. A question I'm often asked is, "Are there enough pastors for our churches?" If we look only at graduates from Mennonite colleges, universities, and seminaries, the answer is "no." When we consider graduates from schools such as Fuller, Duke, Harvard, various Methodist seminaries, Candler, Iliff, Wake Forest, Chicago School of Theology, Pittsburgh, Bethany, and others, there seems to be growing interest in Anabaptist/Mennonite ministry. Many students who knew little to nothing about Mennonites before entering college or seminary are discovering "their people" when they are introduced to Anabaptist theology and community. I wonder if God is paving a path of greater collaboration between Mennonite and non-Mennonite schools? I continue to believe that Anabaptist ways of understanding are vital to God's reign on earth.
- ❖ Related to this, a number of CDC congregations participated in the *Journey Forward, Pathways Curriculum* over the past year. Many expressed resonances with the three themes; Following Jesus, Witnessing to God's Peace, and Experiencing Transformation. As MC USA finds its way forward, I wonder how these themes might invite greater unity of mission and purpose. Can these broad theological claims carry us through and beyond the arguments that have divided us?
- ❖ At our four Regional Gatherings we tested three possible areas of emphasis for the future; youth ministry, planting and nurturing new communities of faith and developing a relationship with SEMILLA (an Anabaptist seminary in Guatemala.) I anticipate further discussion and discernment at our Annual Meeting in June. How might God be guiding us along paths less-traveled or even new paths of faith formation, discipleship and Christian hospitality?
- ❖ We continue to test new ways of living out our witness of peace and justice in a polarized society. I am grateful for the work of the Missional Church Committee as they have invited persons to serve on a task group to attend to racial, ethnic, and religious reconciliation. They are inviting pastors and others in CDC to also grow in intercultural competence. How might God be leading us to be healthy, diverse and interculturally competent communities of faith?
- ❖ I am grateful for the many staff, board and committee members, pastors, lay leaders and congregational members throughout CDC and MC USA who are committed to the journey wherever God may lead!

Doug Luginbill  
Conference Minister

# **Ministerial Credential Report**

June 1, 2018 – May 31, 2019

## ORDINATIONS

Melissa Florer-Bixler (Raleigh), November 18, 2018 by Doug Luginbill

## LICENSINGS

Sarah Thompson (Assembly), license for specific ministry for Mennonite Boomerang Project, May 16, 2018 – May 15, 2019 by Ministerial Committee

Sally Weaver Glick (Open Table), licensed toward ordination June 10, 2018 by Doug Luginbill

Catherine Lee (Chapel Hill), licensed toward ordination, November 18, 2018 by Doug Luginbill

Anna Yoder Schlabach (Assembly), licensed toward ordination, Nov 18, 2018 by Kay Bontrager-Singer

## CREDENTIAL TRANSFERS

Isaac Villegas (Chapel Hill) from Virginia Conference, June 22, 2018, reactivated Aug 23, 2018

Rebecca Kauffman to Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA, Jan 10, 2019

Mattie Marie Mast (Shalom Mennonite Congregation) from Ohio Conference, Jan 22, 2019

Michael Mast (Shalom Mennonite Congregation) from Ohio Conference, Jan 22, 2019

Charles Geiser (Hively Avenue) to Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, Jan 22, 2019

Teresa Geiser (Hively Avenue) to Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, Jan 22, 2019

Matt Pritchard (Berea) from Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference, Mar 6, 2019

Jane Hooper Peifer (Shalom Mennonite Congregation) from Atlantic Coast Conference, May 13, 2019

## INSTALLATIONS

Janice Troyer (Silverwood), Started August 13, 2018, installed August 19, 2018

Anna Yoder Schlabach (Assembly), started Nov 1, 2018, installed Nov 18, 2018 by Kay Bontrager-Singer

Rachel Taylor (Raleigh) installed as Intergenerational Pastor, Nov 18, 2018 by Doug Luginbill

## RESIGNATIONS

Cyneatha Millsaps (Community), June 30, 2018

## ANNIVERSARIES / SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL EVENTS

Hively Avenue, 60 year celebration, Sept 30, 2018

Oak Grove, 200 year celebration, throughout the year

## INTERIM / TRANSITIONAL PASTORS

Tom Kauffman (Assembly) ended Oct 31, 2018. Began at Paoli Nov 1, 2018

## RETIREMENTS

Helen O'Brien, June 29, 2018 from chaplaincy  
Robin Walton, Sept 2018 from chaplaincy  
Loren Johns, May 2019 from faculty at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

### DEATHS

Alice Ruth Ramseyer (First Bluffton), Nov 5, 2018  
Howard Habegger (Hesston, Kansas), Dec 28, 2018  
Burton Yost (First Bluffton), Jan 7, 2019

### CONGREGATIONAL TRANSITIONS

#### In Search Processes

Assembly Mennonite Church, Goshen, IN. .56time Pastor of Congregational Life and Hospitality. Begins immediately.

Community Mennonite Church, Markham, IL. 1/2 time Pastor. Begins immediately. Former pastor Cyneatha Millsaps.

Madison Mennonite Church, Madison, WI. Full time solo pastor. Begins immediately. Former pastor Ron Adams.

## Locations of Central District Conference Annual Sessions

- 1957 First Mennonite Church, Normal, Illinois
- 1958 First Mennonite Church and Founders Hall, Bluffton, Ohio
- 1959 Eighth Street Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana
- 1960 First Mennonite Church, Berne, Indiana
- 1961 Calvary Mennonite Church, Washington, Illinois
- 1962 Grace Mennonite Church, Pandora, Ohio
- 1963 Wayland Mennonite Church, Wayland, Iowa
- 1964 Salem Mennonite Church, Kidron, Ohio
- 1965 First Mennonite Church, Normal, Illinois
- 1966 Fairview Mennonite Church (OM), Fairview, Michigan
- 1967 First Church of the Nazarene and Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana
- 1968 First Mennonite Church, Wadsworth, Ohio
- 1969 Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio
- 1970 East Bay Camp, Lake Bloomington, Illinois
- 1971 First Mennonite Church, Berne, Indiana
- 1972 Camp Windermere, Lake of the Ozarks, Roach, Missouri
- 1973 Goshen College Campus, Goshen, Indiana
- 1974 East Bay Camp, Bloomington, Illinois
- 1975 Ottumwa, Iowa
- 1976 Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio
- 1977 Calvary Mennonite Church, Washington, Illinois
- 1978 First Brethren Church, Wooster, Ohio
- 1979 Maplewood Mennonite Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana
- 1980 First Mennonite Church, Berne, Indiana
- 1981 Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois  
(Joint with Illinois Mennonite Conference of the Mennonite Church)
- 1982 First Mennonite Church (MC), Middlebury, Indiana
- 1983 Grace Mennonite Church, Pandora, Ohio
- 1984 Kidron Mennonite Church (MC), Kidron, Ohio  
(Joint with Ohio Conference of the Mennonite Church)
- 1985 Wayland Mennonite Church, Wayland, Iowa
- 1986 Calvary Mennonite Church, Washington, Illinois
- 1987 College Mennonite Church (MC), Goshen, Indiana  
(Joint with Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference of the Mennonite Church)
- 1988 Oak Grove Mennonite Church, Smithville, Ohio
- 1989 Camp Windermere, Lake of the Ozarks, Roach, Missouri
- 1990 Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio
- 1991 Summit Christian College, Fort Wayne, Indiana  
(Joint with Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference of the Mennonite Church)
- 1992 Fairview Mennonite Church (MC), Fairview, Michigan
- 1993 Trinity Mennonite Church (MC), Morton, Illinois  
(Joint with Illinois Mennonite Conference of the Mennonite Church)
- 1994 College Mennonite Church (MC), Goshen, Indiana
- 1995 Mennonite Church of Normal, Normal, Illinois
- 1996 Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio  
(Joint with Ohio Conference of the Mennonite Church)
- 1997 First Mennonite Church, Berne, Indiana
- 1998 Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio
- 1999 Iowa Wesleyan College, Mt Pleasant, Iowa
- 2000 Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana

(Joint with Illinois Mennonite Conference, Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, and Ohio Conference of the Mennonite Church)

- 2001 Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio
- 2002 Meadows Mennonite Church, Chenoa, Illinois
- 2003 Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio
- 2004 Oak Grove Mennonite Church, Smithville, Ohio
- 2005 Maplewood Mennonite Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana
- 2006 Bluffton University, Bluffton, Ohio
- 2007 First Mennonite Church, Berne, Indiana
- 2008 Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois
- 2009 First Mennonite Church, Sugarcreek, Ohio
- 2010 Bluffton University, Bluffton, Ohio
- 2011 Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana
- 2012 Mennonite Church of Normal
- 2013 Bluffton University, Bluffton, Ohio
- 2014 Madison Mennonite Church, Madison, Wisconsin
- 2015 Southside Fellowship (on AMBS campus)
- 2016 Columbus Mennonite Church, Columbus, Ohio
- 2017 Bluffton University, Bluffton, Ohio
- 2018 College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana
- 2019 Milwaukee Mennonite Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

## Conference Presidents, 1957-2019

1957-	Lotus E Troyer	2005-2007	Alice Roth
1958	Ernest J Bohn	2007-2009	Gordon Oyer
1959-1960	Harry Yoder	2009-2011	Karl Shelly
1961-1962	Gordon J Neuenschwander	2011-2013	Joyce Schumacher
1963-1964	Jacob T Friesen	2013-2015	Ron Guengerich
1965-1966	Lorris A Habegger	2015-2017	Lisa Weaver
1967-1968	Claude F Boyer	2017-2019	Arman Habegger
1969-1970	Leonard Wiebe		
1971-1973	Larry Voth		
1974	Lloyd L Ramseyer		
1975-1976	Howard Raid		
1977-1978	James Dunn		
1979-1980	Roger Siebert		
1981-1984	James Waltner		
1985-1986	Vyron Schmidt		
1987-1988	Howard Baumgartner		
1989-1991	Ruth Naylor		
1991-1993	Jake Elias		
1993-1995	Barry Schmell		
1995-1997	Larry Wilson		
1997-1999	Stan Clemens		
1999-2001	Janeen Bertsche Johnson		
2001-2003	Kevin Farmwald		
2003-2005	Mick Sommers		

2019

REPORT BOOK  
of the

**Central District Conference**  
of  
Mennonite Church USA

*Come, walk with us . . . To God knows where!*

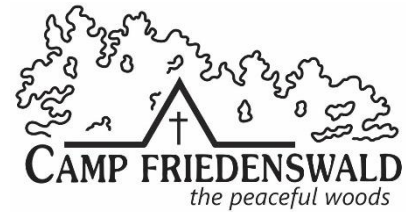


*Part III*

*Conference Committee Reports*







Throughout the past year 11,000 people experienced the hospitality, community, nature, and peace of Camp Friedenswald. These individuals included summer and winter campers, Outdoor Education campers, friends and families, and church retreaters, among many others. To do this we **relied on the connection and support of Central District Conference congregations**. The following highlights provide a glimpse into the year and illustrate the interactions between Camp Friedenswald, Central District Conference, and its congregations.

- **2018 Winter Retreats** brought together Junior and Senior High youth and sponsors for weekends of worship, play and fellowship. Pastor Mark Rupp, Columbus Mennonite Church, provided input during Jr High retreat. Over 200 people attended representing eight CDC congregations including Assembly, FMC Bluffton, Eighth Street, Hively, Silverwood, Milwaukee, Columbus, and Maplewood.
- **Summer 2018** brought 440 youth and family campers (150 who came from twenty CDC congregations) to explore the theme *Followers of the Way*. Nearly half of the twenty four summer staff represented CDC congregations including FMC Bluffton, Eighth Street, FMC Champaign/Urbana, Columbus, and Assembly.
- We drew upon the rich resources from within CDC, and its partners, for **summer camp pastors** including: David Moser, pastor, Southside Fellowship; Teri Steinmetz, lay leader, Grace Mennonite Church; Melissa Florer-Bixler, pastor, Raleigh Mennonite Church; Matthew Yoder, pastor, Grace Mennonite Church; Janeen Bertsche Johnson, campus pastor, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary; Walt Paquin, associate professor, Bluffton University.
- **Women's Retreat** brought eighty women together from across the conference. The weekend was based on the theme *Hearing your voice, finding ours*. Worship was led by Cyneatha Millsaps, director of Mennonite Women, and Theda Good, pastor at FMC Bluffton, spoke during one of the sessions.
- In September, Camp Friedenswald co-led a **climate change retreat** for pastors in conjunction with Doug Kaufman of the Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions, which was attended by several pastors from across the conference.
- Hospitality was extended to seven CDC congregations for their **annual church retreat** including Assembly Mennonite Church, Faith Mennonite Church, Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, Open Table Mennonite Fellowship, Mennonite Church of Normal, Southside Fellowship, and Silverwood Mennonite Church.
- CDC congregations help with tasks that are vital to the running of camp. The following congregations spent time **volunteering** at Friedenswald: Faith, Maplewood, FMC Bluffton and Grace.
- Camp Friedenswald hosted the **CDC Leadership Council** and committee meetings in the spring and fall as well as a Pastor Peer gathering.
- Nearly \$40,000 of **financial support** was given from congregations towards Camp's programs. Thank you for continuing to partner with Camp in our shared ministry and for giving generously!

If there is a **physical manifestation of the love of God**, people who our campers want to be like, friends in whom they see God's love echoing back, I suspect it is in [the camp counselors] who spend their summer caring for our children.

*Reflection from Melissa Florer-Bixler, pastor of Raleigh Mennonite Church, after serving a week as camp pastor.*



Anabaptist Mennonite  
Biblical Seminary

## **Journey: A Missional Leadership Development Program**

Forty-three people were involved in the Journey program during the 2018-2019 year, including eighteen participants and sixteen mentors. Three participants and two mentors are from Central District Conference, including Dennis Miller and mentor John Heyerly, Janet (JP) Schumacher and mentor Gloria Hernandez Bucher, and Jan Croyle. Conference Minister Doug Luginbill, along with other conference ministers, seminary staff, proctors, and two additional pastors also participated. Dennis Miller is completing the program this spring.

All participants gathered at Amigo Centre for the fall Weekend Learning Event with the theme “Abide with Me as I Abide with You.” Pastors Duane Beck and Donna Mast, proctors for Journey, led the Friday evening session, “inFORMation: Stories of Formation.” On Saturday, their sessions were “FORMation: Stories of Practice” and Sunday’s session was “transFORMation: Stories of God’s Work in our Lives.” Eleanor Kreider, assisted by David B. Miller, led worship sessions throughout the weekend. Saturday afternoon, Jewel Gingerich Longenecker and David B. Miller led an orientation to the online learning platform, preparing participants to access the Journey curriculum. Cohort sessions followed, providing opportunities for participants to work on their personal timelines, take personality inventories, and explore spiritual direction. Mentors and mentees also met together to work on and update their learning covenants. Doug Luginbill introduced participants to the personality inventories.

Following the fall gathering, participants joined online classes. As part of these studies they also carried out a wide variety of ministry tasks in their congregations and communities. Throughout the session they met with their mentors, typically bi-weekly, to discuss the study materials and their experiences in various forms of ministry.

The winter Weekend Learning Event was held on the AMBS campus. Presentations focused on the theme, “The Continuing Conversion of the Leader.” Friday evening’s session, led by David B. Miller, was entitled “Leading from Within.” Saturday’s sessions included: “Intersectionality and Undoing Oppression” by Nekeisha Alayna Alexis and “Gender Equality” by David B. Miller and Jewel Gingerich Longenecker. Sunday’s session, led by David, was “Healthy Boundaries.” Eleanor Kreider served as worship leader for the weekend. Each mentee submitted a reflection paper focused on her/his learning from the previous study unit, and each mentor submitted reflections on the learning of her/his mentee.

Following the winter Weekend Learning Event, participants again joined online classes and met bi-weekly in mentor-mentee pairs.

The Journey Board continues to play a vital role in keeping the program running. Many thanks to Nina Lanctot for chairing the board, Doug Luginbill, conference minister, and Ardean Friesen, Central District Conference representative, for serving on the board.

According to our Journey participants and alumni, Journey is a tremendous opportunity for lay leaders, pastors, church planters, and other emerging leaders. If someone you know wants to develop ministry gifts or is exploring a call to ministry, please encourage them speak to Doug Luginbill about whether the Journey program might be the right next step.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jewel Gingerich Longenecker  
AMBS Dean of Lifelong Learning



*Members: Michael Crosby (First, Urbana) Kay Bontrager-Singer (Faith), Ardean Friesen (Silverwood), Renee Kanagy (Cincinnati), Ray Person (First Mennonite, Bluffton), Brenda Sawatzky Paetkau (Eighth Street), Doug Luginbill, Conference Minister (ex officio).*

During the past year the Ministerial Committee has paid attention to a number of policies and procedures. First, we reviewed and approved an updated **Healthy Boundaries** policy based on the updated policy of MC USA.

Secondly, we have started work on a new **Roles and Responsibilities** document that can be used for our conference minister. Currently no such documentation exists so it was decided to complete this process. This will aid in succession or if someone is needed to fill in on short notice.

As leadership within congregations change many utilize **Transitional Ministers**. Doug along with the committee want to ensure that adequate qualified transitional ministers are available to fill these needs. We are working on ways to identify qualified candidates and providing educational/training resources as needed.

This was the first year of the **annual clergy report form**. Over 90% of clergy replied to the initial request. We appreciate the attention that all have given to this and hope this will encourage and strengthen the relationship with the Conference.

The Ministerial Committee meets in person twice a year at Camp Friedenswald once in the Spring and then in the Fall. We also meet monthly online via Zoom.

**Credentialing for ministry** is a significant part of our work as a committee. We work with the Conference Minister in credentialing interviews, for both licensing and ordination. It is a joy to interact with so many gifted and well-qualified candidates for ministry. Our conference is truly blessed.

Most of our work is directed by Doug and we very much appreciate the attention he pays to many details. Without reservation our most important responsibility is to provide support and facilitate the work of our conference minister. We seek to be **a supportive resource for Doug**, helping in his work as possible and paying attention to his well-being, monitoring the work load and travel especially as we add new congregations. We feel it is a privilege to accompany Doug in his work on behalf of the conference.

—Submitted by Ardean Friesen

# Missional Church Committee Report

The Missional Church Committee met six times over the course of the past year. Three of those meetings were in the flesh (Central District Conference Annual Gathering at Goshen College, Fall Leadership Council at Camp Friedenswald, Spring Leadership Council at Camp Friedenswald). Our three other meetings were held via video conference call.



## **Reign of God Grants**

This year the committee received only one Reign of God grant application. Three CDC congregations submitted the joint application: Grace Mennonite, Pandora; First Mennonite, Bluffton; and Lima Mennonite. Salem Mennonite, a congregation in Ohio Mennonite Conference, also joined these three CDC congregations.

The committee awarded \$1250 to the applicants for the purpose of hosting a series of events called *Reading the Bible With Jesus*. At these interactive events, singer/songwriter/teacher Bryan Moyer Suderman explored the way that Jesus interpreted Jewish scriptures. The events were hosted the weekend of January 11-13, 2019 with Bryan performing music at First Mennonite Church on Friday, hosting Bible study sessions at Grace Mennonite Church on Saturday, and leading parts of worship at Grace Mennonite on Sunday.

The committee finished the year with a surplus budget in the Reign of God account, and encourages more congregations to submit applications in the coming year.

## **Racial, Ethnic, and Religious Reconciliation**

This year, the Committee formed a separate group called the Racial, Ethnic and Religious Reconciliation Task Group. This group is working to identify, name, and correct the myriad ways that individuals and congregations in CDC remain complicit in white supremacy. Because of the nature of this work, the Missional Church Committee found it appropriate that (a) the bulk of the work be done by white members of the task force, (b) the task force receive admonishment, correction, advice, and feedback from non-white persons. Members of the task group are: Annette Bill Bergstresser, Charles Bontrager, Sandra Miller, Kiva Nice-Webb (chair), and Brian Sauder. Accountability members are Isaac Villegas and Cyneatha Millsaps.

## **Growing Communities of Faith and Peace**

Mennonite Mission Network hosts an annual gathering called the *SENT* conference, for people interested in learning about church planting. Missional Church Committee member Karla Minter works with MMN, and attended the year's SENT conference in Denver, CO. The committee voted to send Carolyn May (Columbus) to this year's SENT conference and to assist with her travel expenses. Dennis and Vert Miller (Silverwood) also attended the conference.

~

The Missional Church Committee wishes to express sincere and abundant gratitude to Central District Conference Administrator, Emma Hartman, for her very fine work in keeping the committee organized.

The members of the Missional Church Committee are:

Lois Kaufmann-Hunsberger (Maplewood), Karla Minter (Open Table), Matt Morin- *chair* (Milwaukee), Kiva Nice-Webb (Chicago), Valerie Showalter (Shalom), Tim Stair (Hively), Matthew Yoder (Grace)

Submitted by Matthew Morin

## Central District Conference Mennonite Women

*Members:* Janeen Bertsche Johnson, president (Eighth Street); Janet Liechty Martens, past president (First Mennonite Champaign-Urbana); Barbra Gant (Columbus); Cindy Ropp (Normal); Allison Trent (Cincinnati)

Several congregations within Central District Conference have active women's groups. Not all of them are called "Mennonite Women," but all of them exist to support women in their spiritual journeys and in service to others. Some are activity groups--working together to make quilts, comforters, or do other projects. Some are groups that focus on Bible study, book studies, or issues. Some are groups of women who eat together, share about their lives, and support and pray for one another. Groups evolve and emerge to meet the changing needs of women, their congregations, and their communities.



At the 2018 CDC gathering of Mennonite Women, we were blessed to hear speaker Dr. Anita Hooley Yoder speak on "Behind and Beyond the Mennonite Women Centennial History Book." She gave a fascinating account of the roles and organizations of Mennonite women over the last 100 years, sharing stories from throughout the denomination.

Another important place where women from across CDC come together is at the annual Women's Retreat at Camp Friedenswald. In September 2018, the program was planned by a team of women from northern Indiana (Ruth Guengerich, Marisa Smucker, Rae Ann Miller, Phoebe Graber, Cyneatha Millsaps), along with Naomi Graber Leary, program director at Friedenswald. The theme was "Hearing Your Voice, Finding Ours," and the weekend intentionally lifted up women's voices that often go unheard or ignored by our world and our churches. Cyneatha Millsaps, new executive director of MC USA Mennonite Women, was worship leader, and the "Work in Progress" group from Mennonite Mission Network led our singing. We heard the sacred stories of Febri Kristiani, a student at AMBS; Theda Good, a pastor at First Mennonite Church in Bluffton; and Izaete Nafziger, a pastor at North Goshen Mennonite Church.

A third event at which many CDC women gathered, along with women (and a few men) from across North America, was the Women Doing Theology Conference. This biennial conference is planned by the Women in Leadership Project of Mennonite Church USA, and the 2018 event was hosted by Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Nov. 8-10. Over 200 participants joined for worship and workshops on the theme "Talkin' Bout a Revolution: Dialogue, Practice and the Work of Liberation." CDC Mennonite Women provided a scholarship for a young woman to attend.

The leadership team of Mennonite Women CDC enjoyed meeting in person at Women's Retreat for a brainstorming session. Some of the ideas which had the most energy were:

- inviting younger women (including high school age) to come to Women's Retreat at Friedenswald
- hosting women seminary students for a meal at Women's Retreat
- encouraging women's groups to support the MCC project of Dignity Bags, making reusable feminine products
- encouraging a carload of women from each congregation to visit another congregation for a weekend

We invite everyone to join the CDC Mennonite Women Facebook page to share activities, events, resources, and ideas. For example, there was a special celebration January 13 at First Mennonite Bluffton called "Mennonite Women: 100 Years in Story and Song."

Submitted by Janeen Bertsche Johnson



2019

REPORT BOOK  
of the

**Central District Conference**  
of  
Mennonite Church USA

*Come, walk with us . . . To God knows where!*



*Part IV*

*Reports by Related Institutions*







## Central District Conference Everence Activity with Central District Churches in 2018

Everence values the significant partnership we have with Central District conference and your congregations. Below are some of the ways this partnership happened in 2018.

### Scholarship winners

Noah Yoder	\$750	Madison Mennonite Church, Madison, Wisconsin
Joseph Stoltzfus	\$750	Open Table Mennonite Fellowship, Goshen, Indiana
Cade Fisher	\$750	Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana

### Sharing Fund

The Sharing Fund grant program is a testimony of the local and larger community of faith coming together to address the financial hardships within the community. The amount below reflects the portion from the Sharing Fund. The congregations' portion would more than double that amount. Thanks for being the Christ-like light in responding to the benevolence needs in your communities.

2018 amount	\$29,852
Number of grants	69
Churches receiving grants	20

**Number of churches with stewardship advocates** 24

**Number of Everence members** 1,287

### Participation in Pastors Financial Assistance Program

Over the past three years, more than 15 Central District pastors have participated in the Everence Pastors Financial Assistance Program, funded by the Lilly Foundation. This includes participation in one of the following benefits:

- Grants to assist pastors with debt burdens
- Financial educational events that include a learning and social (fun) component
- Subsidy toward the cost of the first-year Everence comprehensive financial plan

A reminder to those who were unable to participate, Everence has been awarded another Lilly Endowment grant of \$1 million. You now have another opportunity to participate in 2019-2021. Contact an Everence stewardship consultant to learn how.

# Embracing new horizons

Everence 2019 report

Central District Conference Annual Meeting  
June 20-22, 2019  
Milkwaukee Mennonite Church

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!*

– 2 Corinthians 5:17

## **Strong church partnerships remain vital to Everence**

Everence® works closely with churches and their members, as we have since our organization started as Mennonite Mutual Aid in 1945.

Our goal is to help our brothers and sisters in Christ “build up the common life” through decisions about their money and other resources.

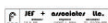
We value these connections and look forward to many more years of focusing on the best interests of your church members – helping them create and implement plans tailored to their needs and goals to share with others.

As we have for nearly 75 years, we will continue to serve the faith community as partners in stewardship throughout 2019 and beyond.

## **Everence church loans make a difference**



5540 WEST 25TH STREET, CICERO, IL.



Sonido de Alabanza, a suburban Chicago church, financed a major construction project with help from an Everence church loan.

The church needed a new building for worship and related activities after using a former American Legion hall for many years.

Everence has years of experience in helping churches find solutions to fit their needs, with customized loan options.

Our annuity program funds our church loans. The annuity program aligns the priorities of like-minded believers from the Everence community who want to help churches and their ministries grow through their investments.

Learn more at [everence.com/church-loans](http://everence.com/church-loans).

## **Pastoral Financial Assistance Program expanding with new Lilly grant**

Lilly Endowment approved Everence in November 2018 for another \$1 million grant to help improve the financial lives of pastors.

Everence was one of the first grant recipients in 2015 as part of Lilly's National Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders.

The new grant allows Everence to expand our Pastoral Financial Assistance Program. Assistance now is available for credentialed and active pastors from



other denominations and church networks that share our Anabaptist faith tradition and/or values – in addition to Mennonite Church USA and Conservative Mennonite Conference.

The program includes:

- Direct grants to help pastors with debt burdens.
- Financial education events for pastors and spouses.
- Subsidies toward the cost of a first-year Everence comprehensive financial plan.

See [everence.com/pastor-financial-planning](https://everence.com/pastor-financial-planning) for more details.

### **MyNeighbor card users are supporting nonprofits**

The MyNeighbor credit card from Everence generated more than \$300,000 for nearly 400 nonprofits in 2018.

The MyNeighbor MasterCard is available for personal or business use. Everence donates 1.5 percent of each transaction total to the charity the cardholder chooses from thousands of possibilities, including churches.

“The MyNeighbor card gives people a simple and effective way to support the charities dear to their hearts,” said Kent Hartzler, President and CEO of Everence Federal Credit Union.

### **Scholarship amounts increasing for 2019-2020 academic year**

Everence college scholarships will be worth more for the 2019-2020 school year.

Regional scholarships will be for \$1,000, compared with the previous level of \$750. The top three national recipients will receive scholarships totaling \$2,000 or \$3,000. More information is available at [everence.com/scholarships](https://everence.com/scholarships).

“Everence believes it’s important to support students as they work toward their college degrees,” said Kenda Mishler, Member Benefits Manager. “We want to reward young women and men committed to improving their communities and the world beyond their communities.”

### **Everence joins Philadelphia financial community**

A new office in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania – opening in spring 2019 – is the first in an

Everence initiative to serve individuals, nonprofits, churches and small businesses in larger cities.

The office is in an Esperanza Health Center building on Allegheny Avenue – a former bank building that’s been part of the Philadelphia landscape since 1925.

Everence services there include banking, financial coaching, insurance and other resources for individuals and families.



### **Safe Church Grant is available from Everence**

Everence supports churches in protecting children and others with the Safe Church Grant.

One-time grants of up to \$350 can reimburse churches for program expenses within the last 12 months to protect children, teens or others from sexual, physical, emotional/psychological or other forms of abuse.

Grants can be used to develop policies, train people or implement programs. Churches with an Everence stewardship advocate may apply for a Safe Church Grant. Visit [everence.com/safe-church-grant](https://everence.com/safe-church-grant) for more information.



# Alcanzando nuevas perspectivas

Informe de Everence 2019

Conferencia del Distrito Central Reunion Anual  
20 y 22 de junio de 2019

*Por lo tanto, si alguno está en Cristo, es una nueva creación. ¡Lo viejo ha pasado, ha llegado ya lo nuevo!*

– 2 Corintios 5:17

## Las relaciones sólidas con iglesias siguen siendo vitales para Everence

Everence® trabaja en estrecha colaboración con las iglesias y sus miembros, como lo hemos hecho desde que nuestra organización comenzó como Ayuda Mutua Menonita (MMA) en 1945.

Nuestro objetivo es ayudar a nuestros hermanos y hermanas en Cristo a “desarrollar la vida común” a través de decisiones sobre su dinero y otros recursos.

Valoramos estas conexiones y esperamos muchos años más para enfocarnos en los mejores intereses de los miembros de su iglesia, ayudándolos a crear e implementar planes adaptados a sus necesidades y metas para compartir con otros.

Como lo hemos hecho durante casi 75 años, continuaremos sirviendo a la comunidad de fe como socios en la mayordomía a lo largo de 2019 y más allá.

## Los préstamos para iglesias de Everence marcan la diferencia

Sonido de Alabanza, una iglesia suburbana de Chicago, financió un importante proyecto de construcción con la ayuda de un préstamo para iglesias de Everence.

La iglesia necesitaba un nuevo edificio para el culto y actividades relacionadas después de usar un antiguo salón de la Legión Americana durante muchos años.



5540 WEST 25TH STREET, CICERO, IL.

Everence tiene años de experiencia ayudando a las iglesias a encontrar soluciones que se ajusten a sus necesidades, con opciones de préstamos personalizadas.

Nuestro programa de anualidades financia los préstamos para iglesias. El programa de anualidades alinea las prioridades de los creyentes de ideas afines de la comunidad de Everence que desean ayudar a las iglesias y sus ministerios a crecer a través de sus inversiones.

Obtenga más información en [everence.com/church-loans](http://everence.com/church-loans).



## La beca Safe Church está disponible en Everence

Everence apoya a las iglesias con la protección de los niños y otras personas con la beca Safe Church.

Las subvenciones únicas pueden reembolsar a las iglesias hasta \$350 por gastos de programas incurridos dentro de los últimos 12 meses con el fin de proteger a los niños, adolescentes u otras personas del abuso sexual, físico, emocional / psicológico u otras formas de abuso.

Las subvenciones se pueden utilizar para desarrollar políticas, capacitar personas o implementar programas. Las iglesias junto a un promotor de la mayordomía de Everence pueden solicitar una subvención Safe Church. Visite [everence.com/safe-church-grant](http://everence.com/safe-church-grant) para obtener más información.

## Los usuarios de tarjetas MyNeighbor apoyan a organizaciones sin fines de lucro

La tarjeta de crédito MyNeighbor de Everence generó más de \$300,000 para casi 400 organizaciones sin fines de lucro en 2018.

La tarjeta MasterCard MyNeighbor está disponible para uso personal o comercial. Everence dona el 1.5 por ciento del total de cada transacción a la organización benéfica que el titular de la tarjeta elija entre miles de posibilidades, incluidas las iglesias.

“La tarjeta MyNeighbor les brinda a las personas una manera simple y efectiva de apoyar a las organizaciones benéficas que deseen,” dijo Kent Hartzler, Presidente y Gerente de Everence Federal Credit Union.

## Las becas se incrementan para el año académico 2019-2020

Las becas universitarias de Everence se incrementarán para el año escolar 2019-2020.

Las becas regionales serán de \$1,000, en comparación con el nivel anterior de \$750. Los tres principales beneficiarios nacionales recibirán becas por un total de \$2,000 o \$3,000. Más información está disponible en [everence.com/scholarships](http://everence.com/scholarships).

“Everence cree que es importante apoyar a los estudiantes mientras trabajan para obtener sus títulos universitarios,” dijo Kenda Mishler, Gerente de Beneficios para Miembros. “Queremos premiar a mujeres y hombres jóvenes comprometidos con la mejora de sus comunidades y el mundo más allá de sus comunidades.”

## Everence se une a la comunidad financiera de Filadelfia

Una nueva oficina en Filadelfia, Pennsylvania y que se abrirá en la primavera de 2019, es la primera de una iniciativa de Everence para servir a los individuos, organizaciones sin fines de lucro, iglesias, y pequeñas empresas en ciudades grandes.



La oficina está en un edificio del Centro de Salud Esperanza en la Avenida Allegheny en lo que antes fuera un antiguo edificio bancario que ha sido parte del paisaje de Filadelfia desde 1925. Los servicios de

Everence incluyen banca, asesoría financiera, seguros y otros recursos para individuos y familias.

## Se amplía el programa de asistencia financiera pastoral con la nueva beca de Lilly

Lilly Endowment concedió a Everence en noviembre de 2018 otra subvención de \$1 millón para ayudar a mejorar la vida financiera de los pastores.

Everence fue uno de los primeros beneficiarios de subvenciones en 2015 como parte de la Iniciativa nacional de Lilly para Abordar los Desafíos Económicos que Enfrentan los Líderes Pastorales.

La nueva subvención le permite a Everence ampliar nuestro Programa de Asistencia Financiera Pastoral. Esta ayuda ahora está disponible para pastores acreditados y activos de otras denominaciones y redes de iglesias que comparten nuestra tradición y/o valores de fe anabaptistas, además de la Iglesia Menonita de EE. UU. y la Conferencia Conservadora Menonita.

El programa incluye:

- Subvenciones directas para ayudar a los pastores con sus deudas.
- Eventos de educación financiera para pastores y cónyuges.
- Un plan financiero integral de Everence subsidiado por el primer año.

Visite [everence.com/pastor-financial-planning](http://everence.com/pastor-financial-planning) para obtener más detalles.



## MENNONITE EDUCATION AGENCY REPORT TO THE CENTRAL DISTRICT | MARCH 2019

Greetings from MEA! In this report, you can get a glimpse of some of the work we do in cooperation with six colleges/universities/seminaries, two Ministerios Hispanos programs, more than two dozen primary and secondary schools in the Mennonite Schools Council (MSC), Mennonite Early Childhood Network (MECN), and others. Some of the activities and initiatives of the past year include the following:

### **MEA Board Strategic Planning Direction**

Mennonite Education Agency (MEA) has identified its guiding values and strategic goals for a “new MEA” that aims to adapt to the evolving needs of education within the Anabaptist and Mennonite context. At a March meeting, the MEA board described the new MEA as “cultivating energy and synergy for the whole of Anabaptist/Christian education by communicating compelling stories, coordinating services and collaborating with partners.”

Some of the goals for the new MEA include functioning in the role of “community collaborator” and bridge builder between schools, the church and world; developing a network of grassroots initiatives to connect experts in MEA-affiliated schools and educational programs with others seeking best practices; and providing training in diversity and intercultural competence on school campuses, including audits and recommendations for growth.

As part of the strategic plan, MEA and its partners — the Mennonite Higher Education Association (MHEA), the Mennonite Schools Council (MSC) and Hispanic Educational Programs (HEP) — are developing a new mission statement and vision statement to more clearly focus and guide their work together. A five-person committee was appointed to propose new statements by July 2019, based around five guiding values: Christ-centered, innovative collaboration, trustworthy relationship, culturally informed and responsiveness. These values were identified through a discernment process with the MEA board, MHEA Presidents, MSC Executive Committee, leaders of HEP and MC USA Executive Board representatives.

The preliminary draft of MEA’s strategic plan that emerged out of the March meeting identified overall priorities and goals. MEA staff, including the recently appointed interim executive director, will add specific initiatives, polish language and share with all stakeholders for feedback and counsel. The hope is

to present a more finalized plan to the MEA board this summer.

This Strategic Direction Plan will guide the MEA as it walks with, empowers, and partners with schools, conferences and educational programs in and beyond Mennonite Church USA. The adoption of the Mennonite Higher Education Church/School Relations Agreement, outlining a new way for Mennonite Church USA to relate, partner and support each other, presents a unique opportunity to look and envision a new future for all. The adoption of the agreement which included a vision for Mennonite Higher Education, the creation of the Mennonite Higher Education Association (MHEA) in conjunction with the Mennonite Schools Council (MSC) going through a process to consider the initiatives that best serve its members schools and the growing Hispanic Educational Programs in Mennonite Church USA and other denominations calls us to re-look at our work. Mennonite Education Agency is looking forward to the development of a strategic plan to best serve and support the needs and missions of our educational partners and Mennonite Church USA.

### **MEA Leadership transition**

The MEA Board announced that Thomas Stuckey of West Unity, Ohio, has been appointed interim executive director of Mennonite Education Agency (MEA). He will replace Carlos Romero who announced at the recent board meeting his intentions to transition out of MEA by the end of the summer. Romero has served as executive director since the formation of MEA in 2002, guiding the new agency's mission to strengthen the life, witness and identity of Mennonite Church USA through education. The appointment of the interim executive director will be followed by the appointment of a search committee to seek a new executive director.

# Be local. Be global. Be the Gospel.



Incredibly, God chooses to make the progress of the mission for which Jesus came, closely tied to human engagement! Thank

you so much for your partnership and the support you've given to advance God's mission in the world. Through your kind sharing, and the generous support of congregations within your conference, we were

able to extend the reach of God's healing and hope in so many places around the globe. Thank you for being such an important part of our common witness to the good news of Jesus in word and deed. Our

hearts are filled with gratitude and hope by your sharing in the gospel. Blessings!

*Stanley W. Green*

Stanley W. Green  
Executive Director

## Central District Conference + Mennonite Mission Network

### Worker support around the world



**Jerrell and Jane Ross Richer**—Work with indigenous church leaders in the Ecuadorian rain forest.

» Eighth Street Mennonite Church

**Mary Raber**—Teaches at theological schools in Ukraine. She also translates theological books and writes.

» Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship

» Grace Mennonite Church

**Eric and Kelly Frey Martin**—Work with young adult leaders of *Iglesia Cristiana Menonita de Colombia* (IMCOL) to help develop youth programs, to recognize and nurture the spiritual gifts of young people.

» Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship

» Silverwood Mennonite Church

**Bruce Yoder and Nancy Frey**—Teach and support local ministry within Burkina Faso and West Africa. In Ougadougou, they work at the hostel for Mennonite university students and with church leaders.

» First Mennonite Church, Bluffton

» Oak Grove Mennonite Church

**Requiyah (Ricki) Johnson**—Serving with Journey International at *La Casa Grande*, Benin.

» Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

**Deborah Byler**—Accompanies Kekchi women leaders in Guatemala.

» Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

**Mark and Mary Hurst**—Build Anabaptist Networks in Australia and New Zealand, and lead conflict transformation trainings.

» First Mennonite Church, Wadsworth

**Neal and Janie Blough**—Train Anabaptist leaders and create worship resources in France.

» First Mennonite Church, Bluffton

» Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

**Anne Kompaoré**—Linguist who serves various organizations and the church in West Africa through freelance consulting and teaching.

» First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana

**Brian and Noelia Fox**—Mentor and lead young couples and support church leadership in Spain.

» Maplewood Mennonite Church

**Peter Wigginton and Delicia Bravo**—Serve as Ecuadorian partnership coordinators and in the church programs with their gifts in music, education, and children's and youth ministries.

» Paoli Mennonite Fellowship

» Trenton Mennonite Church

**Worker in a sensitive location**—Coordinates logistics for a mission program in West Africa.

» Oak Grove Mennonite Church

### Service participants



#### Christian Service sites

**MVS units**—Chicago, and Madison, Wisconsin

**SOOP site**—Camp Friedenswald

#### Mennonite Voluntary Service

**Hannah Thill**, serving in Alamosa, Colorado

**Hanna Hochstetler**, serving in Kansas City, Kansas

**Jonatan Moser**, serving in Alamosa, Colorado

**Irena Khari**, serving in San Francisco, California

#### Service Adventure

**Michelle and Rudy Moyer-Litwiller**, serving in Albuquerque, New Mexico

#### SOOP

**Peter and Sheryl Dyck**, Washington, D.C.

**Kathy Falk**, Three Rivers, Mississippi, and Bloomfield, Minnesota

**Keith and Kathleen Springer**, Macon, Mississippi, and Americus, Georgia

**Herbert and Sarah Myers**, Akron, Pennsylvania

**Mervin and Rose Stutzman**, Aibonito, Puerto Rico

**Mary Hofstetter**, Macon, Georgia

**Ruth Stoltzfus**, Three Rivers, Mississippi, and Bloomfield, Minnesota

**John and Edna Reimer**, Gotha, Florida

**Ted and Gayle Koontz**, Tucson, Arizona

**Vernon and Shirley King**, Tucson, Arizona

**Roger and Linda Clemmons**, Gotha, Florida

#### Youth Venture

**Danielle Klotz and Nata Fontan** served in Ecuador.

### Prayer partners



51 people have committed to pray daily for Mission Network ministries.

### Mission banks



Children from Hively Avenue Mennonite Church gave a total of \$100 to missions.

### Congregational giving to Mission Network



During Mission Network's fiscal year, Aug. 1, 2017, through July 31, 2018, 29 of 42 Central District Conference congregations (69 percent) gave \$197,741, or an average of \$6,819. Thank you!



*May you be rooted and established in love...having the power, with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ!*

*Karla J. Minter*

Karla J. Minter  
Church Relations Representative

Thank you for your continued partnership in God's mission!

www.MennoniteMission.net Toll-free: 1-866-866-2872

# Sé local. Sé global. Sé el evangelio.



De manera increíble, Dios ha elegido conectar estrechamente el avance de la misión de Jesús en la tierra con el compromiso humano.

Muchas gracias por tu coparticipación y el apoyo brindado para adelantar la misión de Dios en el mundo. Gracias a tu amable contribución y al apoyo generoso de las congregaciones de tu Conferencia, fue posible ampliar el

alcance de la esperanza y la sanación de Dios en muchos lugares alrededor del mundo. Gracias por ser una parte tan importante de nuestro testimonio compartido de las buenas nuevas de Jesús, de palabra y en los hechos.

Nuestro corazón se llena de gratitud y esperanza al compartir el evangelio. ¡Bendiciones!

*Stanley W. Green*

Stanley W. Green  
Director Ejecutivo

## Conferencia Central District + Red Menonita de Misión

### Apoyo a obreros alrededor del mundo



**Jerrell y Jane Ross Richer**—Trabajan con líderes de iglesias indígenas en la selva tropical ecuatoriana.

» Eighth Street Mennonite Church

**Mary Raber**—Enseña en las escuelas de teología en Ucrania. Además traduce libros de teología y escribe.

» Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship

» Grace Mennonite Church

**Anne Kompaoré**—Como lingüista, apoya a varias organizaciones y a la iglesia en África Occidental mediante la consultoría y la enseñanza de forma independiente.

» First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana

**Bruce Yoder y Nancy Frey**—

Enseñan y apoyan ministerios locales en la región de Burkina Faso y África Occidental. Además, en Uagadugú trabajan en el albergue para estudiantes universitarios menonitas y con los líderes de las iglesias.

» First Mennonite Church, Bluffton

» Oak Grove Mennonite Church

**Requiyah (Ricki) Johnson**—Trabaja con *Journey International* (Viaje Internacional) en La Casa Grande, en Benín.

» Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

**Mark y Mary Hurst**—Construyen redes anabautistas en Australia y Nueva Zelanda, y dirigen talleres sobre la transformación de conflictos.

» First Mennonite Church, Wadsworth

**Eric y Kelly Frey Martin**—Trabajan con líderes de jóvenes de la Iglesia Cristiana Menonita de Colombia (IMCOL) en el desarrollo de programas para jóvenes, para reconocer y fortalecer sus dones espirituales.

» Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship

» Silverwood Mennonite Church

**Neal y Janie Blough**—Capacitan a líderes anabautistas y desarrollan recursos para el culto en Francia.

» First Mennonite Church, Bluffton

» Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

**Brian y Noelia Fox**—Sirven como mentores y líderes de parejas jóvenes y apoyan a los líderes de la iglesia en España.

» Maplewood Mennonite Church

**Peter Wigginton y Delicia Bravo**—

Sirven como coordinadores de la coparticipación ecuatoriana y en los programas de la iglesia con sus dones de la música y la educación y en los ministerios con niños y jóvenes.

» Paoli Mennonite Fellowship

» Trenton Mennonite Church

**Deborah Byler**—Acompaña a mujeres líderes kekchi en Guatemala.

» Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

**Obrero que trabaja en un área sin revelar**—Coordina la logística para un programa de misión en África Occidental.

» Oak Grove Mennonite Church

### Participantes y lugares de servicio



#### Sitios de servicio cristiano

**Grupos de Mennonite Voluntary Service (Servicio Voluntario Menonita)**—Chicago, y Madison, Wisconsin

**Sitio de SOOP**—Camp Friedenswald

**Mennonite Voluntary Service (Servicio Voluntario Menonita)**

**Hannah Thill**, sirve en Alamosa, Colorado

**Hanna Hochstetler**, sirve en Kansas City, Kansas

**Jonatan Moser**, sirve en Alamosa, Colorado

**Irena Khari**, sirve en San Francisco, California

**Service Adventure (Voluntarios aventureros)**

**Michelle y Rudy Moyer-Litwiller**, sirven en Albuquerque, New Mexico

**SOOP (Oportunidades de Servicio con Nuestros Hermanos)**

**Peter y Sheryl Dyck**, Washington, D.C.  
**Kathy Falk**, Three Rivers, Mississippi, y Bloomfield, Minnesota

**Keith y Kathleen Springer**, Macon, Mississippi, y Americus, Georgia

**Mary Hofstetter**, Macon, Georgia  
**Herbert y Sarah Myers**, Akron, Pennsylvania

**Mervin y Rose Stutzman**, Aibonito, Puerto Rico

**Ruth Stoltzfus**, Three Rivers, Mississippi, y Bloomfield, Minnesota

**John y Edna Reimer**, Gotha, Florida

**Ted y Gayle Koontz**, Tucson, Arizona

**Vernon y Shirley King**, Tucson, Arizona

**Roger y Linda Clemmons**, Gotha, Florida

**Youth Venture (Jóvenes Aventureros/as)**

**Danielle Klotz y Nata Fontan** sirvieron en Ecuador.

### Alcancias y misión



Los niños de la iglesia Hively Avenue Mennonite aportaron un total de \$100 para las misiones.

### Oración



51 personas se han comprometido a orar diariamente por los ministerios de la Red Menonita.

### Aporte congregacional a la Red Menonita



Durante el año fiscal de la Red Menonita, del 1 de agosto de 2017 al 31 de julio de 2018, 29 de 42 congregaciones de la conferencia Central District (el 69%) aportaron \$197.741, o un promedio de \$6.819. ¡Gracias!

*¡Que ustedes, arraigados y cimentados en amor... sean plenamente capaces de comprender con todos los santos cuál sea la anchura, la longitud, la profundidad y la altura del amor de Cristo!*



*Karla J. Minter*

Karla J. Minter

Representante de las Relaciones con las Iglesias

¡Gracias por tu colaboración continua en la misión de Dios!

www.MennoniteMission.net Línea Gratuita: 1-866-866-2872





## 2019 REPORT TO CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE

The mission of MHS is to strengthen and extend Anabaptist-affiliated health and human service organizations. MHS serves members in the following states where CDC congregations are located:

- Florida
- Illinois
- Indiana
- Iowa
- Michigan
- Ohio
- Virginia

For a complete listing of MHS members, visit: <http://www.mhsonline.org/member-directory>.

### Activities

- MHS remains deeply invested in the Values-based Leadership Program. Visit <http://www.vblp.org/>, or contact MHS for additional information. Other leadership development activities include an Executive Circle for CEOs, an Emerging Leaders program at Mennonite Health Assembly, and a website – [ValuedLeadership.org](http://ValuedLeadership.org) – that offers education on leading from an Anabaptist perspective and poses thought-provoking questions for reflection. All of our leadership tools are designed to support leaders to be faithful and effective.
- More than 200 health and human services professionals gathered in Wichita, Kansas, February 28-March 2 to attend Mennonite Health Assembly 2019. Following the theme of “Cultivate Joy,” attendees were met at each general session by featured artists throughout the week including various artists and musicians, a potter and a woodworker. Experts in areas ranging from women in leadership, to ageism, to social connection, led engaging Learning Lab workshops each day of Assembly. Save the date for the 202 Assembly in Greenville, South Carolina, March 19-21!
- We are partnering with China Christian Council for an Executive Residency Exchange program to support developing senior care services. A group from China plans to visit the Souderton, PA area in April.
- New in 2019, we’re offering a series of free webinars for board members, called *Speaking of Non-Profit Boards*. These are open to anyone who is interested in the topics; visit [www.mhsonline.org](http://www.mhsonline.org) to learn more and to register.

### For Thanksgiving and Prayer

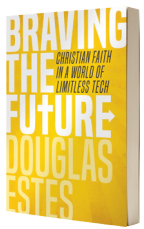
- Finding and keeping qualified and compassionate employees is a significant concern for MHS members across the country.
- We are grateful for the wisdom of the dozens of volunteer board members who are trustees of the missions of our member organizations.

## REPORT TO CENTRAL DISTRICT MENNONITE CONFERENCE

Spring 2019

At MennoMedia we publish highly readable, thoughtful curricula and books that call readers to follow Jesus in word and deed. We publish resources about Christian discipleship, spirituality, reconciliation, justice, and theology from an Anabaptist perspective, and our products reach a broad spectrum of evangelical, mainline, and Anabaptist readers. Our MennoMedia curricula, periodicals, and hymnals reach congregations that share these same affinities, cultivating passion for faith formation and an active life of discipleship rooted in trusting God and following Jesus. Our Herald Press books support the spiritual life of Christians and inform thoughtful faith and action.

### NEW RESOURCES FOR THE ENTIRE CHURCH, FROM HERALD PRESS



#### **Braving the Future**

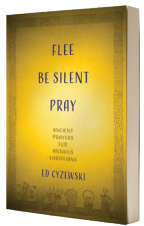
Christian Faith in a World of Limitless Tech

*Douglas Estes*

Humanity is nearing a technological tipping point. Futurists tell us that the blistering pace of technological, scientific, and social change is ushering in an era in which human bodies merge with devices, corporations know everything about us, and artificial intelligence develops human and even godlike potential. Author Douglas Estes guides Christian readers to faithfully discern questions about emerging technologies.

Author Douglas Estes guides Christian readers to faithfully discern questions about emerging technologies.

**Paperback. \$16.99 USD**



#### **Flee, Be Silent, Pray**

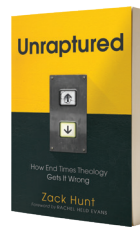
Ancient Prayers for Anxious Christians

*Ed Czerwinski*

What if prayer could be simple rather than strenuous? Anxious, results-driven Christians can never pray enough, serve enough, or study enough. Yet what if God is calling us not to frenzied activity but to a simple spiritual encounter? Author Ed Czerwinski

guides readers out of the anxiety factory of contemporary Christianity and toward a God whose love astounds those who are quiet long enough to receive it.

**Paperback. \$16.99 USD**



#### **Unraptured**

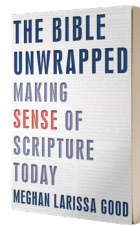
How End-Times Theology Gets It Wrong

*Zack Hunt*

*Unraptured* traces how the church's focus on escaping to heaven has it mired in decay. Teetering on the brink of irrelevancy in a world rocked by refugee crises, climate change, war, and rumors of war, the church cannot afford to focus on the

end times instead of following Jesus in the here and now. Author Zack Hunt helps readers reorient their understanding of the gospel around loving and caring for the least of these.

**Paperback. \$16.99 USD**



#### **The Bible Unwrapped**

Making Sense of Scripture Today

*Meghan Larissa Good*

Drawing from contemporary biblical scholarship and the ancient well of Christian tradition, Meghan Larissa Good helps readers consider why the Bible matters as she delves into biblical authority, literary genre, and Christ-centered hermeneutics. Good

invites readers to faithful reading, communal discernment, and transformative wonder. Join an honest conversation about the Bible that is spiritually alive and intellectually credible.

**Paperback. \$17.99 USD**

### VOICES TOGETHER

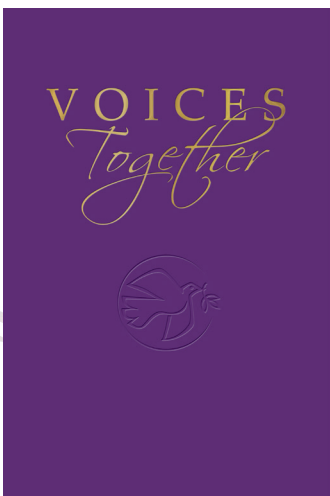
Our hymnals have aged. Some have worn and tattered pages, and others lack the new songs we love to sing. We need a collection that includes our favorites, both classic and contemporary. We need a collection compatible with our churches' technology and our diverse styles of gathering. We need a collection that unites us and brings our voices together to honor and worship God.

#### **We need Voices Together.**

*Voices Together* is a new worship and song collection for the Mennonite church to deepen our lives of faith. This robust collection will be available for congregations in fall 2020. Representing a variety of musical styles and patterns of worship, *Voices Together* contains many new songs alongside old favorites, as well as comprehensive indexes by topic, tune, title, Scripture, first line, and more. *Voices Together* will be available in the following formats:

- Pew edition
- Large print/keyboard edition
- Accompaniment edition
- Worship leader edition
- Projection edition
- App edition

**Watch for full pricing information in late spring 2019!**





## Resources for faith formation and leadership development

### *Academic programs*

AMBS serves the church as a learning community with an Anabaptist vision, educating followers of Jesus Christ to be leaders for God's reconciling mission in the world.

- **Deepen your understanding of Scripture, Anabaptist theology and faith:** Our programs integrate academics, spiritual formation and practice, equipping students to read the Bible with an Anabaptist lens, apply critical thinking skills, lead compassionately and live faithfully — wherever God may call them to serve.
  - **Master of Divinity**
  - **Master of Arts in Christian Formation**
  - **Master of Arts: Theology and Global Anabaptism**
  - **Master of Arts: Theology and Peace Studies**
  - **Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies**  
[ambseu.edu/academics](https://www.ambseu.edu/academics)
- **Distance education options** include the **MDiv Connect** program (with online and hybrid courses), the fully online **MA: Theology and Global Anabaptism** and the customizable **Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies** (fully or partially online). [ambseu.edu/academics](https://www.ambseu.edu/academics)
- **Financial aid:** AMBS offers generous need-based financial aid, grants and scholarships to help make your education affordable. For example, MDiv Connect students taking at least 12 credit hours per academic year are eligible to receive the full amount of need-based tuition aid from AMBS. [ambseu.edu/financialaid](https://www.ambseu.edu/financialaid)
- **Want to explore seminary study?** Take an online, campus or hybrid class, even if you're not yet admitted to AMBS, and your first class is 50 percent off! Check out our upcoming offerings: [ambseu.edu/onecourse](https://www.ambseu.edu/onecourse)
- **Experience AMBS:** Visit our campus to learn more about all that AMBS has to offer. [ambseu.edu/visit](https://www.ambseu.edu/visit)

### *Center for Faith Formation and Culture*

- **!Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth:** Students (grades 10–12) can explore ministry, develop their leadership gifts and listen for God's call through a 100-hour Congregational Experience and a 16-day Group Experience in this summer program. Encourage someone you know to apply for 2020! [ambseu.edu/explore](https://www.ambseu.edu/explore)

### Conference connections

#### AMBS students

- **Master of Divinity:** Kajsa Herrstrom (First – Urbana), Randall Jacobs (Faith), Eric Frey Martin and Renee Reimer (Silverwood)
- **MA: Theology and Peace Studies:** Perdian Tumanan (Hively)
- **Certificate in Christian Spiritual Formation:** Deanna Risser (Assembly)
- **Journey participants/mentors:** Jan Croyle/Marilyn Rossiter (First – Wadsworth), Dennis Miller/John Heyerly (Silverwood), Janet (JP) Schumacher/Gloria Hernandez Bucher (First – Bluffton)

### *Lifelong learning*

AMBS's Church Leadership Center offers various nondegree options for you to continue your education and strengthen your leadership skills:

- **Online short courses (2019–20):** *Exploring Anabaptist History and Theology; Understanding Anabaptist Approaches to Scripture; Exploring Peace and Justice in the Bible; Transforming Congregational Conflict and Communication*
- **Pastors and Leaders 2020** (March 2–5)
- **Leadership Clinics** (March 2, 2020)  
[ambseu.edu/lifelong-learning](https://www.ambseu.edu/lifelong-learning)
- **Journey: A Missional Leadership Development Program:** Explore your call to ministry in this 2-1/2-year distance-friendly nondegree program that features a five-unit online curriculum, biweekly mentor-mentee meetings and two visits to the AMBS region per year. [ambseu.edu/journey](https://www.ambseu.edu/journey)
- **Host a speaker!** Bible teacher **Bryan Moyer Suderman**, MTS, is available to lead **"Reading the Bible with Jesus" workshops** in English or Spanish. (First – Bluffton and Grace – Pandora received a CDC Reign of God grant to host Bryan!) **David B. Miller**, DMin, speaks on holistic witness, Christian leadership, healthy boundaries, and the missional church. [ambseu.edu/workshops](https://www.ambseu.edu/workshops)
- **Spiritual Guidance Seminars:** Prepare to offer spiritual direction through this two-part program led by **Dan Schrock**, DMin. [ambseu.edu/seminars](https://www.ambseu.edu/seminars)



## 2019 Report to Central District Conference

### Ten-year accreditation

Bluffton University has been reaccredited with no stipulations for 10 years by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Bluffton met the requirements without a need for follow-up evaluations from the committee before the next accreditation visit during the 2028-29 academic year. **"I believe Bluffton University is an institution that lives out its mission more than any other of which I've been a part,"** said Dr. Jane Wood, president. "This positive step in our journey only solidifies that belief."

### Voices of Conscience

From Feb. 17-March 31, Bluffton University hosted "Voices of Conscience," a traveling exhibit developed by the Kauffman Museum, which remembers the witness of peace-minded people against the First World War. **"Of Bronze and Bravery,"** a complementary exhibit developed by Bluffton alumnae and archivist Carrie Phillips '99, featured selected works and archival documents exploring the Bluffton College experience during the Great War. A self-guided art trail featuring artist John Peter Klassen's work was developed and several exhibit-related events took place on campus. For more information, visit [www.bluffton.edu/voices](http://www.bluffton.edu/voices).

### Dr. Jane Wood inaugurated

President Jane Wood shined the light on Christian higher education during her Sept. 28, 2018, inauguration as Bluffton's 10th president. "From the very beginning," noted Dr. Wood, "this college set out to transform young people by calling them to lives of meaning and purpose. Bluffton University has, for 120 years, lighted the way for students to face and find solutions for the personal and social issues facing their lives and their communities. The foundation of a Bluffton education, in seeking truth, asking questions, and posing solutions, will position students well for life."

**SIMPLY  
INNOVATE** | **THE CAMPAIGN FOR  
BLUFFTON UNIVERSITY**

Thank you to the many donors who have helped confirm more than 90 percent of the \$14.5 million total project cost for the Austin E. Knowlton Science Center. The 32,500 square foot building is designed for 21st teaching and learning for students in biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, pre-medicine, nursing and dietetics. The facility will also serve as an integral part of Bluffton's liberal arts education for all students.

### Thank you!

Bluffton University currently enrolls nine students from Central District Conference churches. **Justin Berg** and **Ezra Amstutz**, Eighth Street Mennonite; **Meghan Gibson**, **Lydia Lugibihl**, **Andrew Renner**, **Alex Weaver**, **Ben Weaver**, Grace Mennonite; **Madeleine Elwell**, Trenton Mennonite; **Jeff Strayer**, Columbus Mennonite. Matching Scholarship support is \$12,100 for 2018-19.

CDC representatives on Bluffton's Board of Trustees include **Heather Reichenbach**, Eighth Street Mennonite, Goshen, Ind.; **Kerry Strayer**, Columbus Mennonite, Columbus, Ohio; and **Kent Yoder**, Silverwood Mennonite, Goshen, Ind.

### #BeaversAll

**Alicia Loch '19**, a biology and sociology double major from Quakertown, Pa., is completing a year-long research project on paper waste. Her goal is to work in environmental sociology.

Read more about Alicia and other Bluffton students, faculty and staff at [www.bluffton.edu/beaversall](http://www.bluffton.edu/beaversall)

For more information, contact **Robin Bowlus** Senior director of advancement operations and public relations [bowlusr@bluffton.edu](mailto:bowlusr@bluffton.edu)



**Seminary and undergraduate Bible, Religion, Theology Department build new relationship**

The long-standing interest in working in a more integrated fashion with the undergrad Bible, Religion, Theology department has become a reality. Most faculty now teach in both programs and meet together monthly. Dr. Andrea Saner has been teaching Old Testament for both seminary and undergrad students for several years, and now Dr. Peter Dula and Dr. Andrew Suderman will strengthen our theology and missiology offerings.

**New Testament Scholar and Augsburg Lecture Series guest**

Renowned New Testament scholar NT Wright spoke to standing room only crowds during his visit November 13-14, 2018 as part of a series on the theme "Discerning the Dawn." Wright, the keynote for the annual Augsburg lecture, spoke in seminary and undergraduate chapels. Wright's presentations included "The Spirit and the Church's Task" (based on John 16:4b-15) and "The Day the Revolution Began: Atonement the Right Way Round." He also met with seminary and Bible major students for conversation and engagement.

**2019 School for Leadership Training: January 14-16**

January 14-16 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> annual SLT. The keynote speakers were Sue Park-Hur (MC-USA denominational minister for leadership development), John Pavlovitz (pastor, writer, and activist from Wake Forest, North Carolina), and EMS faculty member Dr. David Evans. The theme was "Thriving in the Stormy Seas of Change" and provided participants with a worshipful and renewing encounter through the narrative of Jesus' crossing the stormy sea with his disciples in Mark 4:35-41. Visit <https://emu.edu/seminary/slt/> for more information.

**Intensive Hybrid Course Options**

EMS will offer several intensive hybrid courses this fall.  
Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Life, Theology & Witness (3 SH)  
Introduction to Spiritual Guidance (2 SH)

Visit <https://emu.edu/seminary/courses/fall> for more information on fall courses.

**21 Graduated from EMS This Spring**

EMS awarded Master of Divinity and Master of Christian Leadership degrees May 5 to the graduating class of 2019. Graduates from Eastern Mennonite Seminary joined those of Eastern Mennonite University for the ceremony at 1:00 p.m. on the campus front lawn. Dr. Judy Mullet was the commencement speaker. Seminary Baccalaureate was held in Martin Chapel on Saturday, May 4 with the theme "Where You Go: Casting an Imaginative Journey" and scripture focus of Luke 5:1-11 and Ruth 1:16-17. Dr. Lonnie Yoder spoke at the baccalaureate/commissioning service. Seminary Class president, Tyler Goss (MDiv/MACT) was one of the student speakers at the commencement exercises.

**Statement of Purpose**

*Eastern Mennonite Seminary prepares men and women to serve and lead in a global context. In response to God's saving grace, we educate students to bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of God's Spirit as wise interpreters, mature practitioners, discerning communicators, and transformational leaders.*

- ▶ **Susan Schultz Huxman**, president
- ▶ **Sue Cockley**, seminary dean
- ▶ **Nancy Heisey**, associate dean
- ▶ **Veva Mumaw**, seminary admissions, placement & church relations

For the most up-to-date information on EMS, give us a call, visit us on the web, "Like" us on Facebook!

**emu.edu/seminary**  
**540-432-4257**

## Mission Matters

### President Susan Schultz Huxman

Greetings from EMU! I am honored to steward this remarkable “Christian University like no other” into its second century. I have found EMU uniquely equipped to give our church and the broader society a special “360” kind of vision:

#### Hindsight.

Every Mennonite church and school has its sustaining story of the past. Much of ours is captured in the bold centennial history book, authored by Don Kraybill, *EMU: A Century of Countercultural Education* (Penn State University Press, 2017). Our students, most of whom are not Mennonite, are attracted to and empowered by our counter-culture attention to peacebuilding and what it means to follow Jesus.

#### Foresight.

Foresight is the ability to see what is coming and embrace our future full-throttle! At EMU, we push the frontiers of what it means to study peace in our culturally diverse world. We are looking ahead not just to prepare our students for a meaningful career, but to “serve and lead in a global context.”

#### Insight

Insight is the power of apprehending the inner nature of things. Insight is built upon a distinctive witness of “shalom,” steeped in the Good News of the Resurrected Jesus, and practiced in community. At EMU, this inner way of seeing nudges us to take every opportunity to “do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.”

Looking backward. Looking forward. Looking inward and beyond. This is one way to see: Why EMU for Century Two?

## EMU Highlights and Happenings

- **Judy H. Mullet**, a beloved professor of psychology retired this spring after 32 years at EMU, and provided the 101<sup>st</sup> commencement address on Sunday, May 5. She has taught in the psychology department and MA in education program, as well as directed and advised within the Honors program.
- **Wu Wei**, a 2006 graduate of Eastern Mennonite Seminary, was named president of the China Christian Council in November 2018, leading an umbrella organization based in Shanghai that oversees more than 60,000 churches and nearly 25 million believers.
- EMU’s celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day was styled as a “day on” instead of a “day off.” In place of classes, the community was invited to worship services, a formal convocation program, a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new student barbershop and salon, and other events.

### How can EMU serve you?

Contact the church relations office to schedule the president or a faculty guest speaker: 540-432-4597 or [ChurchRelations@emu.edu](mailto:ChurchRelations@emu.edu).

### Ohio Conference Connections to EMU

#### Undergraduate Students

Twelve undergraduate students from Central District Mennonite Conference were enrolled in the spring 2019 semester.

#### Giving

Ohio Mennonite Conference churches gave \$16,000 in matching church grants during the year ending June 2018.

- ▶ **Susan Schultz Huxman**, *president*
- ▶ **Kirk Shisler**, *vice president for advancement*
- ▶ **Jasmine Hardesty**, *director of development & planned giving*
- ▶ **Braydon Hoover**, *director of development & annual giving*
- ▶ **Stuart Showalter**, *associate director of development*
- ▶ **Matthew Ruth**, *director of admissions*

### Our Vision

*EMU envisions a learning community marked by academic excellence, creative expression, professional competence, and passionate Christian faith, offering healing and hope in our diverse world. To this end, we commit ourselves to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God.*

### **President opens year with message on Global Citizenship**

New and returning students from 28 countries and 37 states were welcomed back to campus for the start of the 2018-19 Goshen College school year with a memorable opening convocation in the college's Church-Chapel. President Rebecca J. Stoltzfus spoke about this year's core value focus of global citizenship as the college celebrates 50 years of its nationally-recognized study abroad program, Study-Service Term (SST). During the 1968-69 academic year, Goshen College's first official SST units traveled to Costa Rica, Guadalupe, Jamaica, Honduras, Nicaragua and Haiti.

Dr. Stoltzfus laid out three propositions for being a Christ-centered global citizen: That it entails seeing the world from another's point of view; that global citizens train their minds to see the connections between things; and that global citizens encourage each other to act in the interest of transformative justice. Following the convocation, students took part in the annual applause tunnel, an 18-year tradition with a cheering tunnel formed by faculty and staff, then seniors, juniors, sophomores and finally the first-year students. The procession led out to Schrock Plaza, where, in the tradition of new Goshen College presidents, President Stoltzfus was dunked in the Schrock Plaza fountain by students.

### **Conference connections**

This academic year we have 32 students enrolled from 12 Central District Conference congregations. Those churches generously pledged \$111,948 in congregational student aid for the academic year. The Goshen College Church Aid Matching Grant program provides a dollar-for-dollar match of the first \$1,000 per student and a 1:4 match after that, up to full tuition.

Students from the conference are involved on- and off-campus in many edifying ways, but we specifically recognize students who studied and served abroad for a semester through GC's Study Service Term (SST) program. Ryan Miller from the Mennonite Church of Normal, Suzanna Griest from Chicago Community Church of Chicago, Nicole Martin from Columbus Mennonite Church, Seth Weaver from Madison Mennonite Church, Rae Ann Miller from Silverwood Mennonite Church and Luke Rush and Annelise Wiebe from Eighth Street Mennonite all studied and served for a semester in Peru. Benjamin Meyer Reimer from Assembly Mennonite Church studied and served for a semester in Senegal.

### **2018-19 Campus ministries theme**

This year's Goshen College core value is Global Citizenship - out of which flows our Campus Ministries theme: #InThisTogether. At a very practical level, we are all #InThisTogether. We are a part of a community here at Goshen College - together. Students live in dorms and houses and apartments - together. We interact in classes - together. We gather to eat - together. We congregate for Convocations and Chapels - together. This is the reality of our lives. But the reality doesn't stop there. Our "togetherness" extends beyond our GC community to the communities that support us near and far. Ultimately our "togetherness" extends beyond Goshen, beyond this country, even beyond our human species to include the very earth that sustains us all and all the creatures that inhabit this earth with us. #InThisTogether calls us to own the reality that we are more connected than we sometimes acknowledge, and invites us to honor and value and support each member of our community as a part of a sacred whole.

Embracing our life together as sacred challenges us to be genuinely thoughtful in the ways we interact with each other, inspiring us to live in such a way as to extend our concern beyond ourselves and those closest to us. Our eyes are opened to reveal the ways our behaviors impact the people around us, the environment around us, the world around us. We are drawn to a universal ethic of compassion when we acknowledge that we all come from the same source, all made in the image of God, and all mysteriously connected spiritually, as well as in very practical ways. Our hope is to live into this reality throughout the year at Goshen College as we embrace the profound truth that we are #InThisTogether.

-Joanne Gallardo, Campus Pastor



**For more information, contact Dan Koop Liechty, Director of Alumni Relations & International Student Adviser. Call (574) 535-7002 or e-mail [churchrelations@goshen.edu](mailto:churchrelations@goshen.edu).**

### La presidenta comienza el año con un mensaje sobre Ciudadanía Global

Nuevos y recurrentes estudiantes de 28 países y 37 estados fueron bienvenidos al campus para el inicio del año escolar 2018-19 de Goshen College con una convocatoria de apertura memorable en Church-Chapel de la facultad. La presidenta Rebecca J. Stoltzfus habló sobre el enfoque de valor central de la ciudadanía global de este año, ya que la universidad celebra 50 años de su programa de estudios en el extranjero reconocido a nivel nacional, Study-Service Term (SST). Durante el año académico de 1968-69, las primeras unidades oficiales de SST de Goshen College viajaron a Costa Rica, Guadalupe, Jamaica, Honduras, Nicaragua y Haití.

Dr. Stoltzfus presentó tres propuestas para ser un ciudadano global centrado en Cristo: que implica ver el mundo desde el punto de vista de otro; que los ciudadanos globales entrenan sus mentes para ver las conexiones entre las cosas; y que los ciudadanos globales se animen mutuamente a actuar en beneficio de la justicia transformadora. Después de la convocatoria, los estudiantes participaron en el túnel anual de aplausos, una tradición de 18 años con un túnel de entusiastas formado por profesores y personal, estudiantes de cuarto año, tercer año, segundo año y, finalmente, los estudiantes de primer año. La procesión condujo a Schrock Plaza, donde, según la tradición de los nuevos presidentes de Goshen College, los estudiantes sumergieron la presidenta Stoltzfus en la fuente de Schrock Plaza.

### Conexiones de conferencia

Este año académico tenemos 32 estudiantes matriculados de 12 congregaciones de Central District Conference. Esas iglesias generosamente prometieron \$111,948 en asistencia estudiantil congregacional para el año académico. El programa Aid Matching Grant de Goshen College Church brinda un partido dólar por dólar de los primeros \$ 1,000 por estudiante y un partido de 1:4 después de eso, hasta la matrícula completa.

Los estudiantes de la conferencia están involucrados en y fuera del campus de muchas maneras edificantes, pero reconocemos específicamente a los estudiantes que estudiaron y presentaron servicios en el extranjero durante un semestre a través del programa Termino de Servicio de Estudio (SST) de GC. Ryan Miller de Mennonite Church of Normal, Suzanna Griest de Chicago Community Church, Nicole Martin de Columbus Mennonite Church, Seth Weaver de Madison Mennonite Church, Rae Ann Miller de Silverwood Mennonite Church, Luke Rush y Annelise Wiebe de Eighth Street, estudiaron y sirvieron durante un semestre en Perú. Benjamin Meyer Reimer de Assembly Mennonite Church estudio y sirvió durante un semestre en Senegal.

### 2018-2019 Tema del Ministerio del Colegio

El valor central de Goshen College de este año es la ciudadanía global, de la cual fluye nuestro tema de Campus Ministries: #EnEstoJuntos. En un nivel muy práctico, todos estamos #EnEstoJuntos. Somos parte de una comunidad aquí en Goshen College, juntos. Los estudiantes viven en dormitorios, casas y apartamentos, juntos. Interactuamos en clases, juntos. Nos reunimos para comer, juntos. Nos congregamos para convocatorias y capillas, juntos. Esta es la realidad de nuestras vidas. Pero la realidad no se detiene ahí. Nuestra "unión" se extiende más allá de nuestra comunidad de GC a las comunidades que nos apoyan cerca y lejos. En última instancia, nuestra "unión" se extiende más allá de Goshen, más allá de este país, incluso más allá de nuestra especie humana para incluir a la misma tierra que nos sostiene a todos y todas las criaturas que habitan en esta tierra con nosotros. #EnEstoJuntos nos llama a reconocer la realidad de que estamos más conectados de lo que a veces reconocemos, y nos invita a honrar, valorar y apoyar a cada miembro de nuestra comunidad como parte de un todo sagrado.

Abrazar nuestra vida como algo sagrado nos desafía a ser genuinamente reflexivos en las formas en que interactuamos entre nosotros, inspirándonos a vivir de tal manera que extendamos nuestra preocupación más allá de nosotros mismos y de quienes están más cerca de nosotros. Nuestros ojos se abren para revelar las formas en que nuestros comportamientos afectan a las personas que nos rodean, al entorno que nos rodea, al mundo que nos rodea. Nos sentimos atraídos por una ética universal de compasión cuando reconocemos que todos venimos de la misma fuente, todos hechos a la imagen de Dios, y todos misteriosamente conectados espiritualmente, así como de maneras muy prácticas. Nuestra esperanza es vivir en esta realidad durante todo el año en Goshen College mientras aceptamos la profunda verdad de que estamos #EnEstoJuntos

-Joanne Gallardo, Pastora del Campus



Para más información, contacte Dan Koop Liechty, Director de Graduados y Red de Carreras Académicas. Llame al (574) 535-7002 o mande un correo electrónico a [churchrelations@goshen.edu](mailto:churchrelations@goshen.edu).



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**CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE OF MENNONITE CHURCH USA REPORT**  
March 2019

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**Starting 2018-19** – Hesston College kicked off the 2018-19 year with Opening Weekend Aug. 17 to 19 and the first day of classes Aug. 20. The student body represents 28 U.S. states and territories and 21 international countries, and includes 56 international students. Global engagement is a growing focus at Hesston College with several initiatives in place to increase the college’s global reach and transcultural opportunities for all students. “Being globally engaged is unquestionably what it means to be faithful followers of Jesus and that’s what we are at Hesston College,” said President Dr. Joseph Manickam. “We can’t sit unto ourselves, in our own bubble. Hesston College has something to offer the world, and we are being beckoned to engage widely. It’s the missional mandate of following Jesus.”

- 2018 graduate Mackenzie Miller is the participant in a global experience pilot program. Miller is spending the year in China through a partnership with Mennonite Partners in China that is allowing her to study Mandarin at Nanjing Normal University, serve with a local organization and experience a new culture.
- Hesston is developing an Intensive English Program, which would allow the college to offer more services and support for English language learners coming to Hesston.
- A transcultural program director is working to develop global travel opportunities that will allow students to experience different cultures.

**Capital campaign** – Hesston College met its fundraising goal of \$5.25 million to secure a \$750,000 challenge grant from the J.E. and L.E. Mabee Foundation for the Be Greater capital campaign, which will provide facility renovations and additions for the college’s nursing and athletics programs. With about 41 percent of the student population enrolled in the college’s nursing and pre-nursing programs, and 36 percent who are athletes, nursing students and student-athletes comprise the two largest student populations on campus. The campaign will improve and add to facilities within these areas, as the current spaces are not sufficient to accommodate program needs and inhibit the full student experience. Ground breaking started December 2018, with completion in September 2019.

**AVDS conference “Growing More Like Jesus from the Outside In”** - Hesston College’s 2019 Anabaptist Vision and Discipleship Series (AVDS) conference explored “Growing More Like Jesus from the Outside In: Transforming Heart and Mind,” February 1 to 3. Partnering with Mark Scandrette, internationally-recognized expert in Christian spirituality and founder of ReIMAGINE: A Center for Integral Christian Practice, the conference offered a time of spiritual formation grounded in community and full of healing and hope in our everyday lives. Conference information can be found at [hesston.edu/avds](http://hesston.edu/avds).

**Aviation program establishes industry partnership** - In an effort to provide a variety of continuing education and career opportunities to students, Hesston College Aviation recently established a partnership with SkyWest Airlines, a passenger airline company that operates in partnership with Delta Airlines, United Airlines and Alaska Airlines. As an official SkyWest Airlines Partner School, students from Hesston’s aviation program will gain a more streamlined and efficient pathway to transition into a flying career at SkyWest through the Pilot Pathway Program.

**Congregational student aid** – Hesston College offers a match grant for scholarships provided by student churches. During the 2017-18 year, 52 churches contributed \$95,172 in student scholarships to 76 recipients. Hesston College matched a total of \$67,761. The average church aid per student was \$1,252 while the average church-and-college aid per student was \$2,144. **If your congregation is interested in providing a scholarship program to support Mennonite higher education, contact the Church Relations Office at 866-437-7866.**

Read these full stories and more at [www.hesston.edu](http://www.hesston.edu). For questions or more information, contact Dallas Stutzman, director of Alumni and Church Relations toll free at 866-437-7866.

**2018-19 campus theme verse** – I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. – Isaiah 43:19, NRSV

**Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA  
Statistics and Connections**

**2018-19 Academic Year Students** – 1

**Congregational Student Aid** – 1 congregation provided \$1,000 in tuition assistance for 1 student as of March 15, 2019.

**Unified and Designated Giving** – We are grateful for the financial support of conference churches to Mennonite colleges and Mennonite Education Agency through Unified and Designated Giving and for personal contributions given from individuals.

Dr. Joseph A. Manickam, President  
Dallas Stutzman, Director of Alumni and Church Relations  
Tony Brown, Development Officer  
Carley Wyse, Admissions Representative

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*Relief, development and peace in the name of Christ*

## **2019 Report to Central District Conference**

Mennonite Central Committee, a worldwide ministry of Anabaptist churches, shares God's love and compassion for all in the name of Christ by responding to basic human needs and working for peace and justice. MCC envisions communities worldwide in right relationship with God, one another and creation. We are grateful to our supporters like you who make this work possible through your time, talents, prayers and financial gifts.

### **Our connections**

- Groups from the following churches and schools volunteered with MCC's Sharing With Appalachian People (SWAP) program in Kentucky and West Virginia working to make homes safe, warm and dry: Eighth Street Mennonite (Goshen), Bluffton University, Columbus Mennonite, Maplewood Mennonite (Fort Wayne), Mennonite Church of Normal and Assembly Mennonite (Goshen).
- CDC congregations and individuals support relief sales in Bloomington, Atlanta and Goshen, along with the Twin Cities MCC Annual Benefit Evening fundraiser. They also contribute significantly to the My Coins Count initiative.
- MCC speakers shared at First Mennonite (Sugarcreek), Grace Mennonite (Pandora), Florence Church of the Brethren-Mennonite (Constantine), Maplewood Mennonite, Emmaus Road Mennonite (Berne), Hively Avenue Mennonite (Elkhart), Assembly Mennonite, Paoli Mennonite and Silverwood Mennonite (Goshen).
- Individuals from CDC congregations play integral roles in helping with meat canning, volunteering in thrift shops and assembling material resources kits and blankets.
- MCC is grateful for the ongoing gifts of funds from Central District Conference churches, whether through the conference office, My Coins Count, directly from individuals to MCC or by estate bequests.

### **MCC at work around the world**

- Over the past year, with your support, we made a difference in 57 countries by collaborating with 508 partners.
- Since 2012, MCC has worked with partners to respond to people affected by the ongoing war in Syria: providing monthly food to 6,000 families and sending 81 shipments of supplies, including almost 175,000 comforters and nearly 50,000 relief kits. We've also helped train more than 1,000 people in trauma healing, and supported tuition and education programs across the country.

### **Representatives and contacts**

- CDC is represented on the MCC Great Lakes Board by Peter Martin of Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship. Also serving on the Great Lakes Board is Milton Borntreger of Paoli Mennonite who is board chair.
- MCC Great Lakes staff are available to speak to your congregation and connect you with resources. Please contact our office, and subscribe to MCC's *In Touch* monthly e-newsletter to get the latest news and information.

Thank you for being part of MCC's ministry in the name of Christ,

Eric Kurtz, Executive Director for MCC Great Lakes

*Mennonite Central Committee, a worldwide ministry of Anabaptist churches,  
shares God's love and compassion for all in the name of Christ  
by responding to basic human needs and working for peace and justice.*



# Strangers no more

“Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.” *Romans 12:12-13 NRSV*



Ponce, Puerto Rico



Cottondale, Florida



Rockport, Texas



Williams Lake, British Columbia

## 2018 AT A GLANCE

5,445 volunteers from churches across Canada and the U.S. gave their time, skills and compassion to build

75 new homes, complete

278 repairs, finish

301 clean ups, and build

14 new bridges for households who experienced a disaster. This volunteer labour is a value\* of over

\$9 million USD.

**LOOKING BACK ON 2018**, we see a year of disasters, large and small. The California wildfires, and hurricanes Michael and Florence, affected hundreds of thousands of people. So-called “smaller” disasters — such as the tornadoes that struck the Ottawa area of Ontario — also left people with pressing needs and lasting trauma.

There are many statistics associated with disasters: wind speed, acres burned, homes lost, numbers of people evacuated, and we share some of those statistics in this Annual Report. However, we look at 2018 though an MDS lens; one that is both statistical and emotional/spiritual.

The reality is, there will always be another disaster. Let us ask together, honestly: Can we do more? Based on the seeds of compassion you planted in 2018, I believe the answer is a resounding “yes!”

"We tell a lot of people thank you, but it's definitely not enough. ...We just made friends for life." —Anna & Jerry Rucker



Clendenin, West Virginia

There were so many moments in 2018 when I was amazed by you, our MDS family. First, you served as volunteers or helped support volunteers as they cleaned up, repaired or rebuilt homes, and were present with disaster survivors. This may have involved traveling to Canada or from Canada to the U.S. You raised nearly \$250,000 in less than 24 hours during a telethon. You constructed a home in the parking lot of the MDS headquarters, then trucked it to Texas for a hurricane survivor.

Our theme for the 2019 All-Unit Meeting in Tucson, Arizona in February is based on Romans 12:12-13, which calls us to "extend hospitality to strangers", which you have also expressed in so many ways.

When the winds of one of the strongest typhoons ever to hit land blew through Saipan, I was amazed — but not altogether surprised — to watch our MDS-built houses stand firm. Yes, there will always be another disaster. But we will stand firm, and we can do more.

— Kevin King, Executive Director

For the full 2018 MDS Annual Report, please see the winter issue of *Behind the Hammer* or visit our website at <https://mds.mennonite.net/annual-reports/>



Hattiesburg, Mississippi

In 2018

MDS volunteers served more than

**46,000 days**

helping nearly

**700 households**

recover from disasters



Vici, Oklahoma

**Step up and join the team in 2019**



**Mennonite  
Disaster  
Service**

[mds.mennonite.net](http://mds.mennonite.net)

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## 2019 Annual Report to Conference

Mennonite Men is the men’s organization of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada. Our mission: *Engaging men to grow, give and serve as followers of Jesus.* Our two programs, *JoinHands* and *JoinMen*, served this mission in several ways in the last year.

### JoinHands: Grants for New Churches

Through your donations to JoinHands, Mennonite Men has granted over 2 million dollars to assist new congregations to acquire their first church building.



The most recent grants went to two church projects in Africa. One went to this church in Dodoma, Tanzania (pictured above). This building will serve as a meeting house for a congregation and peace center in the Tanzania Mennonite Church. The second grant went to a church with Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission in Cradock, South Africa for a meeting house and community center.

Eden Life Church in Kansas City, Missouri (pictured below), a member of South Central Conference will



receive the next grant. This new church plant is serving immigrant populations from Ethiopia and South Sudan.

These congregations are scheduled to receive grants:

- A Congolese Mennonite church in Oregon.
- A Hispanic Mennonite church in Pennsylvania.
- A Haitian Mennonite church in Florida.

The church is growing rapidly in these racial-ethnic congregations. We join God’s work among them and share with these immigrant populations.

### JoinMen: Retreats and Resources for Men

Responding to men behaving badly in our culture, we focused this year’s retreats on healthy masculinity. This is also the subject of our new book, *Peaceful at Heart: Embracing Healthy Masculinity.* This in-depth exploration of masculinity is written from an Anabaptist perspective and published by Institute of Mennonite Studies and Wipf & Stock.

Another new development was the first annual immersion experience. During a week-long wilderness adventure in Taos, New Mexico men explored ways to live as followers of Jesus in a world where our lifestyles impact people and the planet.



### Join Us: Individual and Congregational Support

Mennonite Men needs \$150,000 to fund grants for the church building projects described above and share with these growing immigrant congregations. Please consider how you and your congregations can partner with us.

To learn more, support our work, download resources, or schedule a retreat, visit [MennoniteMen.org](http://MennoniteMen.org).

Together in Christ,  
Steve Thomas, U.S. Coordinator



## Informe Anual a la Conferencia 2019

Mennonite Men es la organización de hombres de Mennonite Church USA y Mennonite Church Canada. Nuestra misión: *Involucrar a los hombres para que crezcan, den y sirvan como seguidores de Jesús.* Nuestros dos programas, *JoinHands* y *JoinMen*, cumplieron esta misión de varias maneras en el último año.

### JoinHands: subvenciones para nuevas iglesias

A través de sus donaciones a JoinHands, Mennonite Men ha otorgado más de 2 millones de dólares para ayudar a las nuevas congregaciones a adquirir su primer edificio de iglesia.



Las subvenciones más recientes fueron para dos proyectos de la iglesia en África. Uno fue a esta iglesia en Dodoma, Tanzania (en la foto de arriba). Este edificio servirá como centro de reunión para una congregación y centro de paz en la Iglesia Menonita de Tanzania. La segunda subvención fue para una iglesia con misión intermenonita de África en Cradock, Sudáfrica, para un centro de reuniones y un centro comunitario.

Eden Life Church en Kansas City, Missouri (en la foto a continuación), un miembro de la Conferencia central del sur



recibirá la siguiente beca. Esta nueva planta de iglesia está sirviendo a poblaciones inmigrantes de Etiopía y Sudán del Sur.

Estas congregaciones están programadas para recibir subvenciones:

- Una iglesia menonita congoleña en Oregon.
- Una iglesia menonita hispana en Pennsylvania.
- Una iglesia menonita haitiana en Florida.

La iglesia está creciendo rápidamente en estas congregaciones étnico-raciales. Nos unimos a la obra de Dios entre ellos y compartimos con estas poblaciones inmigrantes.

### JoinMen: Retiros y Recursos para Hombres

Respondiendo a los hombres que se comportan mal en nuestra cultura, enfocamos los retiros de este año en la masculinidad saludable. Este es también el tema de nuestro nuevo libro, *Peaceful at Heart: Embracing Healthy Masculinity*. Esta exploración profunda de la masculinidad está escrita desde una perspectiva anabautista y publicada por el Instituto de Estudios Menonitas y Wipf & Stock.

Otro nuevo desarrollo fue la primera experiencia anual de inmersión. Durante una aventura de una semana en el desierto en Taos, los hombres de Nuevo México exploraron formas de vivir como seguidores de Jesús en un mundo donde nuestros estilos de vida impactan a las personas y al planeta.



### Únase a nosotros: Apoyo individual y congregacional

Mennonite Men necesita \$150,000 para financiar subvenciones para los proyectos de construcción de iglesias descritos anteriormente y compartir con estas crecientes congregaciones de inmigrantes. Por favor,

considere cómo usted y sus congregaciones pueden asociarse con nosotros.

Para obtener más información, apoyar nuestro trabajo, descargar recursos o programar un retiro, visite [MennoniteMen.org](http://MennoniteMen.org).

Juntos en Cristo,  
Steve Thomas, Coordinador de los EE.UU.



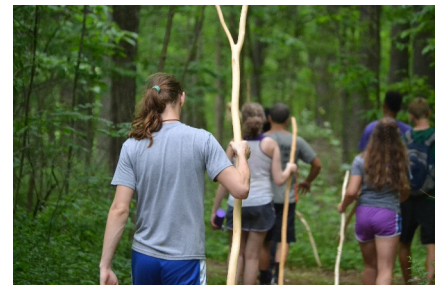


2019

REPORT BOOK  
of the

**Central District Conference**  
of  
Mennonite Church USA

*Come, walk with us . . . To God knows where!*



*Part V*

*Reference*



**CONSTITUTION  
of the  
CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE**

**(Who We Are)**

**Article I. Name and Purpose**

The name of this organization shall be “Central District Conference,” an affiliation of congregations that covenant together in common life and mission. Central District Conference is a member conference of Mennonite Church USA.

The purpose of Central District Conference, a member conference of Mennonite Church USA, is to promote community among congregations, to serve as a resource for pastors and congregations, and to facilitate the reign of God by providing channels through which congregations and pastors may work.

**Article II. Our Common Faith and Mission**

Vision:

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. *(Adopted November 15, 2003)*

Mission Statement

The mission of Central District Conference is to know Christ’s abundant love in who we are and how we live, and to answer God’s persistent call to share that love with one another and the world by:

- Promoting a Christ-like community of hospitality where all are welcome and where grace-filled relationships flourish, and patience and generosity are practiced,
- Calling and nurturing wise, dynamic and compassionate Anabaptist leadership,
- Supporting missional partnerships that make God’s reign visible and foster ministries of evangelism, peace, healing and hope.

KNOWING CHRIST’S LOVE . . . ANSWERING GOD’S CALL

As members of Mennonite Church USA (MC USA), we are guided by the statement of faith as addressed in the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, 1995* and MC USA approved documents.

**Article III. Membership**

***Section A: Expectations:***

Every member congregation shall meet the following requirements:

- (a) It shall have a statement of purpose/faith in keeping with this constitution and vision of MC USA.
- (b) It shall have a viable strategy and leadership appropriate for the above purpose.
- (c) It shall demonstrate a commitment to become an established congregation in the community.
- (d) It shall have a definitive membership.

Conference expectations of congregations include regular participation in conference, giving and receiving counsel, providing regular financial support and willingness for members to serve in leadership positions.

***Section B: Application for membership***

A congregation which has made application to join the Conference and has met the above requirements and has been visited by a Conference representative(s) may be recommended by the Board of Directors to the Conference for membership. Congregations attain membership upon Conference delegate approval of the Board of Directors’ recommendation.

A group which desires to relate to the Conference, but does not yet meet the requirements, or does not desire

congregational status, is encouraged to participate in conference activities, but does not have voting privileges.

### ***Section C: Change or Withdrawal***

1. *Changing Conference relationship:* When a CDC congregation wishes to alter conference membership within MC USA, the CDC Conference Minister and Board of Directors will process with that congregation on the basis of MC USA Guidelines.
2. *Ending Conference relationship:* If a congregation wishes to end membership in CDC and MC USA, the Conference Minister, in consultation with the Board of Directors, will establish with the congregation the appropriate steps that provide for giving and receiving counsel, for communication within the congregation and with the congregations of CDC, and for delegate recognition of the congregation's decision to leave the Conference.

## **Article IV: Amendments**

### ***Section A: Amendment***

This constitution may be amended at any regular meeting of the Conference by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast. Notice and a copy of such proposed amendment shall be given to the congregation at least 30 days before the time of meeting.

### ***Section B: Review***

This document shall be reviewed every five years.

## **Article V: Purposes and Limitations of Corporate Authority**

### ***Section A: Purposes***

Central District Conference (the Corporation) is organized and operated exclusively for religious purposes in accordance with section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or a corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue law, referred to below as the "Code"). More specifically, the Corporation, as a subordinate organization of Mennonite Church USA, is organized to promote community among congregations, to serve as a resource for pastors and congregations, and to facilitate the reign of God by providing channels through which congregations and pastors may work.

### ***Section B: Limitations of Corporate Authority***

- A. The Corporation, being organized exclusively for religious purposes, may make distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Code.
- B. No part of the net earnings of Corporation shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to its members, directors, officers, or other private persons, except that the Corporation shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Article 5 above.
- C. No substantial part of the activities of the Corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the Corporation shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.
- D. Notwithstanding any other provision of these articles, the Corporation shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (1) by a corporation exempt from Federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Code or (2) by a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under section 170(c)(2) of the Code.
- E. Upon dissolution of the Corporation, the Board of Directors shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all of the liabilities of the Corporation, dispose of all of the assets of the Corporation, exclusively for the purposes of the Corporation in such manner, or to such organization or organizations organized and operated exclusively for religious purposes, as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Code, as the Board of Directors shall determine. Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by the appropriate court of law of the county in which the principal office of the Corporation is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for exempt purposes.

## BYLAWS OF CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE

### (How We Are Organized)

#### **Bylaw 1. Delegate Assembly**

##### ***Section A: Meetings***

Conference shall meet in regular session annually in response to invitation from congregations or as arranged by the Board of Directors. Special meetings may be called by the Board of Directors upon thirty days' notice.

All meetings shall be conducted in accordance with generally accepted parliamentary procedure.

##### ***Section B: Delegates, Voting and Floor Privileges***

1. Representation and Voting: Every member congregation of the Conference shall have the right to be represented by one vote for every thirty members or fractional part of that number, with a minimum of two delegates from each congregation. In addition to the above delegates, every member congregation is encouraged to appoint one high school age youth delegate who is an active participant of the congregation and youth group. This will be an additional voting delegate.
2. Delegate Forms: Proper delegate forms shall be sent to all member congregations by the Conference administrator, and these forms shall be returned to the Conference administrator designating all delegates before or by the opening session of the annual meeting.
3. Floor Privileges: Any member of a constituent congregation present at Conference sessions may participate in discussion on the conference floor. Other guests present are welcome to join open discussion in the spirit of Christian love and mutual helpfulness.

##### ***Section C: Annual Reports***

All boards, committees, appointed positions, Conference ministry staff, and the Treasurer shall present written reports of their work to the Conference at the regular annual meeting.

##### ***Section D: Gifts Discernment Committee, Nominations, Elections and Appointments***

1. Gifts Discernment Committee: This committee shall consist of six members appointed by the Board of Directors. Two shall be appointed each year for a term of three years. The Conference Minister shall be an ex-officio member of the committee. The committee shall prepare a slate of available positions for presentation to delegates at the annual meeting after it has been approved by the Board of Directors. The committee shall assist the Board of Directors and other committees as requested to make appointments, both within the conference and for denominational roles.
2. Nominations/Elected Positions: A studied effort shall be made to maintain a proper continuity in the overall organization of the Conference in its various aspects and at the same time to effect a reasonable rotation of personnel. Nominations should be made with sensitivity and balance with regard to the makeup of the conference. Two successive terms for elected positions is the usual maximum. No one shall be elected to more than one standing committee at the same time.
3. Appointments: For vacated positions needing to be filled between annual meetings, the Board of Directors shall appoint persons, who will serve the remainder of the term. Persons appointed to complete a vacated term are eligible to be elected to two full terms.

##### ***Section E: Resolutions Committee***

This committee shall consist of two or more members appointed by the Board of Directors. One member shall be appointed each year for a term of three years. The committee shall seek to determine the most salient matters on which, or to which, the Conference should speak; then formulate and submit a proposed statement of the Conference position in relation thereto.

##### ***Section G: Conference Year***

The conference year shall begin with the close of the annual meeting and extend through the annual meeting the following year. All elected positions shall be governed by the conference year. The fiscal year begins July 1 and extends through June 30 of the following year.

## **Bylaw 2. Conference Leadership and Structure**

### ***Section A: Incorporation and Officers.***

Central District Conference of the Mennonite Church USA, is a corporation now existing and incorporated under the laws of the State of Illinois. The purpose of Central District Conference is to promote community among congregations, to serve as a resource for pastors and congregations, and to facilitate the reign of God by providing channels through which congregations and pastors may work.

### ***Section B: Legal Authorities and Responsibilities.***

1. Said Conference in its corporate capacity shall have the power to hold title to property, receive and hold intangibles in all forms, dispose of properties when the interests of the Conference are served by doing so, and have such powers and privileges granted under the General Not-For-Profit Corporation Act of the State of Illinois, as amended from time to time.
2. All conveyances of real estate shall be executed at the direction of the corporation by the president and attested by the secretary, and when the corporate seal has been attached thereto any such conveyance shall be sufficient to convey title to corporation property without further authorization.
3. The Corporation will not participate in "activities in question" as determined by the Internal Revenue Service, specifically:
  - Providing housing through a partnership, joint venture or similar arrangement with any entity that is not described in IRC 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4);
  - Functioning as a title-holding organization described in IRC 501(c)(2) or 501(c)(25);
  - Participating in gaming as its primary activity;
  - Credit counseling as a primary function;
  - Operating donor advised funds;
  - Functioning primarily for the benefit of fundraisers;
  - Being involved in down-payment assistance;
  - Functioning as a private foundation;
  - Being organized and operated in a foreign country.

***Section C: Officers of Conference.*** The officers of the Conference shall consist of president, president-elect, secretary and treasurer.

1. Duties
  - a. The president shall preside at all meetings of the Conference, Board of Directors, Leadership Council and any specially called meetings.
  - b. The president-elect shall perform the duties of the president in the absence or upon request of the latter.
  - c. The secretary shall see that a correct record of all meetings and proceedings is kept and that conference reports and minutes are published in such manner as the Conference may direct.
  - d. The treasurer shall oversee the operational funds of the Conference and see that necessary payments are made on behalf of the Conference.
2. Elections and terms of office. The election of officers shall be by ballot at the regular meeting of Conference. A two-thirds majority of all delegates present shall decide. A president-elect shall be elected every two years, and upon completion of a two-year term of office as such shall automatically become the president for two years. The secretary and treasurer shall be elected for terms of three years. All officers shall take office at the close of the annual meeting at which elected and shall remain in office until their successors take office. (For tenure of officers refer to Bylaw 1, Section D.2.)

***Section D: The Board of Directors.*** The affairs of Central District Conference shall be managed by a Board of Directors which shall consist of the officers of the Conference and three Members-at-Large. The Conference officers shall serve in their various capacities as the respective officers of the Board of Directors.

1. Duties. The duties of the Board of Directors shall include but shall not be limited to the following:
  - a. It shall serve as custodians, or investors, of surplus or reserve funds which may accrue to Conference committees or auxiliaries, until such funds may be needed for the furtherance or expansion of the work of the committee or auxiliary concerned.
  - b. It shall meet and act upon matters as needed between annual Conference sessions.
  - c. It shall have power to fill vacancies in the Conference organization or on committees and boards, such

- persons to serve the remainder of the unexpired term.
- d. It shall keep informed regarding the various phases of the work of the Conference and its auxiliary organizations with a view of correlating and facilitating those activities.
- e. It shall see that Conference finances are audited on a regular basis.
- f. It shall appoint the editor of the Conference publication, which shall be made available to all the congregations in the Conference. The Board of Directors shall have general supervision of the publication work of the Conference.
- g. It shall make appointments to churchwide and other bodies as needed, including delegates to the MC USA Assembly.
- h. It shall receive and review the reports of the activities of the Conference Minister.
- i. It shall encourage and monitor relationships with other conferences, especially those conferences with geographic overlap with CDC.
- j. It shall appoint a Historian who shall relate to the archival system of CDC and MC USA.
- 2. Elections and terms of office.
  - a. The three Members-at-Large are to be elected by the Conference, one each year for a term of three years.
  - b. See Section C. 2. for election and terms of office for the officers of the Conference.

**Section E: Committees.** The Ministerial, Missional Church, and Stewardship Committees provide leadership and resources to carry out the priorities and ministries of Central District Conference. These committees shall be elected or appointed in the manner and for the purposes hereinafter defined. Task groups may be appointed by these committees in such manner, for such purpose, and at such times as the Conference shall see fit. (For tenure of committee members refer to Bylaw 1, Section D.2.)

- 1. Ministerial Committee
  - a. Election. This committee shall consist of six members, at least three of whom shall be pastors. Two shall be elected each year for a term of three years. The Conference Ministry staff will serve as ex-officio member(s).
  - b. Duties.
    - (1) It shall be the duty of the Ministerial Committee to be available to churches and pastors in their church-pastor relationship, offering their counsel, support, and service as needed.
    - (2) The committee shall counsel with congregations seeking pastoral leadership with pastors called to serve congregations in the District. In cooperation with congregations they shall examine candidates for pastoral, chaplaincy, and missionary service, grant licenses, and perform ordinations (see *A Mennonite Polity for Ministerial Leadership* for procedures), and assist in a service marking the beginning of a person's ministry.
    - (3) The committee shall provide opportunities for personal growth and professional improvement for pastors.
    - (4) The committee shall give attention to the call and nurturing of Anabaptist leadership. It shall link with the MC USA Ministerial Leadership and Congregational Life Team.
- 2. Missional Church Committee
  - a. Election. This committee shall consist of seven members, two or three elected each year for three year terms. The Conference Ministry staff are ex-officio members. Individual committee members may have experience and expertise in various facets of congregational life, such as worship, nurture, evangelism, education, peace and justice. It will intentionally link with MC USA resources.
  - b. Duties.
    - (1) This committee will encourage use of denominational and conference resources, nurturing congregations in developing and mobilizing their missional potential.
    - (2) This committee will be alert to congregational needs and special interests, linking congregations to appropriate resources and to other congregations with similar interests.
    - (3) This committee will encourage missional partnerships.
- 3. Stewardship Committee
  - a. Appointment. This committee shall consist of the Treasurer (ex-officio), Conference Ministry staff (ex-officio), and additional members appointed by the Board of Directors. Additional members shall be

appointed for four-year terms.

b. Duties.

- (1) Recommend financial policy and direction to the Board of Directors which includes: management of funds, bookkeeping, auditing procedures, salary levels, formulating the annual spending plan, and monitoring conference income and expenditures.
- (2) Create and manage a long-range development plan.
- (3) Develop and promote a vision of stewardship for the conference and link with denominational resources to meet that vision in the local congregations.

**Section F: The Leadership Council.** The Leadership Council shall be composed of the Board of Directors, the Ministerial Committee, the Missional Church Committee, and the Stewardship Committee.

Duties

- a. It shall meet periodically to provide discernment and give counsel to the Board of Directors and to each other on issues of life and faith in the Conference.
- b. The Board of Directors and chairs of the committees in the Leadership Council shall meet annually to assess the vision, mission, and goals of the Conference.

**Bylaw 3. Conference Staff**

**Section A: Conference Minister**

1. The Conference Minister shall be employed by the Board of Directors of the Conference, following consultation with chairpersons of committees and the pastors of the District. The Board of Directors shall determine a contract utilizing the guidelines set by MC USA. Subsequent renewals of the contract shall be the responsibility of the Board of Directors upon utilization of appropriate review procedures and such renewal shall be brought to the Conference for affirmation. The Conference Minister shall be responsible to the Conference through the Board of Directors and Ministerial Committee.
2. It shall be the duty of the Conference Minister to assist congregations in discerning and realizing their mission, and in securing pastors.
3. The Conference Minister shall serve as a representative of CDC to denominational and intra-conference meetings as requested by the Board of Directors.
4. The Conference Minister shall have general supervision of all conference staff.

**Section B: Associate Conference Minister(s):** The Board of Directors may employ Associate Conference Minister(s) to perform specified duties of the Conference Minister in certain capacities. The Associate Conference Minister(s) shall be employed in the same manner and as set out above for the Conference Minister.

**Section C: Support Staff:** Support staff may be employed as deemed necessary by the Board of Directors.

**Bylaw 4: Conference Auxiliaries and Related Boards**

Auxiliaries of the Conference are chapters of denominational organizations operating under their own organizational structure, which is approved by the Conference. Annual reports of such organizations shall be submitted to the Conference. Currently, such auxiliaries are Mennonite Men and Mennonite Women. In addition, CDC appoints board members to Chicago Mennonite Learning Center, MCC Great Lakes and Adriel School.

Section 1: Camp Friedenswald Board

A. Election.

1. The Camp Friedenswald Board shall consist, in part, of nine members elected by the Conference, three to be elected each year for a term of three years.
2. The Camp Friedenswald Board may also consist of an additional one to six at-large members, to be appointed by the Camp Friedenswald Board. At-large members shall serve a term of three years. All at-large appointments are to be approved by the Central District Conference Board of Directors, prior to their being asked to serve.

B. Duties

1. The Board shall be responsible for the care, maintenance, and development of the Camp



- Friedenswald property.
2. The Camp Friedenswald Board shall also formulate policies, plan overall program schedule, and appoint leaders to carry out the program.

Section 2: Bluffton University Trustees: CDC representatives to the Bluffton University Board of Trustees are elected by the Conference in accordance with the Bluffton University Board of Trustees policy and represent the university in the Conference and its constituent congregations.

### ***Section A: Amendment***

These bylaws may be amended at any regular meeting of the Conference by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast. Notice and a copy of such proposed amendment shall be given to the congregation at least 30 days before the time of meeting.

### ***Section B: Review***

This document shall be reviewed every five years.

Adopted June 2004

Updated June 2007

Updated June 2009

Updated June 2011

Updated June 2016

## **Policies and Procedures:**

### ***Membership Criteria***

The CDC Board of Directors proposes the following criteria for all congregations seeking membership in CDC, namely that they shall:

- Keep Jesus Christ at the center of their faith and action
- Affirm commitment to congregational discernment that is biblically based, Christ-centered, and Spirit-led
- Be guided by the Mennonite Church USA *Vision: Healing and Hope* and *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (1995) [See CDC Constitution, Article II: Statement of Faith].
- Affirm the CDC statement on Conference Polity
- Meet the CDC constitutional requirements for membership (see Art. III, Section A)  
(Includes being an established congregation with a definitive membership, participating regularly in conference, providing financial support, giving and receiving counsel, and willingness for members to serve in leadership positions).
- When applicable, follow MC USA guidelines for changing conference affiliation

*Affirmed by delegates, June 2010*

### ***Task Group Formation Process***

In response to special needs or interests Task Groups may be formed/created through an application process for the purpose of performing special duties and assignments. The purpose of task groups is to provide a venue for work that benefits and is shared among congregations within the conference.

\*\*The application, including measurable goals will be approved by the Missional Church Committee.

\*\*A member of the Missional Church Committee will serve as a link between the Task Group, committee, and the Leadership Council of CDC.

\*\*The outcome of the work done by the task group will be shared with conference leadership and may be distributed among conference congregations.

\*\*If funds are requested, the Missional Church Committee will determine the means to procure funding needed, i.e., access funds through the Missional Fund, initiate fundraising.

\*\*Task Group assignments may run as long as needed to complete a task. If the assignment continues beyond three years, a renewal must be requested. The task group assignment will expire if no request for renewal is received.

\*\*Task Group members are encouraged to connect using technology of video (such as YouTube), telephone video

conferencing (SKYPE) and internet using email, website links, etc, and other presentation methods such as Power Point.

*Missional Church Committee*

*May 2010*

### ***Reign of God Grants***

Since a key purpose of conference is to facilitate our work together in mission, the Missional Church Committee designed *Reign of God Grants* to encourage missional activity among congregations. This Missional Church Committee program will match (1-1) money raised at the grassroots level to give the extra financial boost necessary for a new, cooperative missional initiative between two or more congregations. A missional initiative is any activity capturing and honoring God's continuing creative energy in establishing God's reign in the world.

Grant proposals may be submitted at any time during the fiscal year. Proposals should be no more than three pages in length and may be submitted online, by fax, or by postal mail. Individual grants will range from \$500 to \$2,500 will be given. Our goal is to distribute \$5,000 annually.

#### **Grants must be used for:**

- Missional initiatives based in the Central District region of the United States by Central District Conference congregations,
- Missional initiatives related to worship, nurture, evangelism, education, peace and justice, and creation care,
- New initiatives, or significantly new additions to current programs. Operating funds for existing programs will not qualify.

Decisions for funding will be made by the Missional Church Committee at the regularly scheduled committee meeting following submission of the application and funds will be distributed after receiving information that the matching funds have been raised.

*Missional Church Committee*

*February 2011*

*Updated December 2015*

### ***Planning for Annual Meetings***

Staff members will meet to orient local coordinators and worship planners from hosting congregations in the region in which the annual meeting is held. The planning day includes a review of logistical details and an on-site facilities tour. Staff members also orient the local worship planners and help to begin the planning process. Planning is then turned over to the local coordinators and worship planners. Staff members collaborate with them throughout the planning process.

*Affirmed by delegates, June 2016*

### ***Conflicts of Interest Policy***

***Section 1. Purpose.*** The purpose of the conflict of interest policy is to protect this tax-exempt Corporation's interest when it is contemplating entering into a transaction or arrangement that might benefit the private interest of an officer or director of the Corporation or might result in a possible excess benefit transaction. This policy is intended to supplement but not replace any applicable state and federal laws governing conflict of interest applicable to nonprofit and charitable organizations.

#### ***Section 2. Definitions.***

- (a) ***Interested Person.*** Any director, principal, officer, or member of a committee with delegated powers from the Board of Directors, who has a direct or indirect financial interest, as defined below, is an interested person.
- (b) ***Financial Interest.*** A person has a financial interest if the person has, directly or indirectly, through business, investment, or family:
  - (i) An ownership or investment interest in any entity with which the Corporation has a transaction or arrangement;

- (ii) A compensation arrangement with the Corporation or with any entity or individual with which the Corporation has a transaction or arrangement; or
  - (iii) A potential ownership or investment interest in, or compensation arrangement with, any entity or individual with which the Corporation is negotiating a transaction or arrangement.
- Compensation includes direct and indirect remuneration as well as gifts or favors that are not insubstantial.

A financial interest is not necessarily a conflict of interest. Under Section 2, a person who has a financial interest may have a conflict of interest only if the appropriate Board of Directors or committee decides that a conflict of interest exists.

### ***Section 3. Procedures.***

- (a) Duty to Disclose. In connection with any actual or possible conflict of interest, an interested person must disclose the existence of the financial interest and be given the opportunity to disclose all material facts to the Board of Directors and members of committees with delegated powers from the Board of Directors considering the proposed transaction or arrangement.
- (b) Determining Whether a Conflict of Interest Exists. After disclosure of the financial interest and all material facts, and after any discussion with the interest person, he/she shall leave the Board of Directors or committee meeting while the determination of a conflict of interest is disclosed and voted upon. The remaining Board of Directors or committee members shall decide if a conflict of interest exists.
- (c) Procedure for Addressing the Conflict of Interest.
  - (i) An interested person may make a presentation at a Board of Directors or committee meeting, but after the presentation, he/she shall leave the meeting during the discussion of, and the vote on, the transaction or arrangement involving the possible conflict of interest.
  - (ii) The chairperson of the Board of Directors or committee shall, if appropriate, appoint a disinterested person or committee to investigate alternatives to the proposed transaction or arrangement.
  - (iii) After exercising due diligence, the Board of Directors or committee shall determine whether the Corporation can obtain with reasonable efforts a more advantageous transaction or arrangement from a person or entity that would not give rise to a conflict of interest.
  - (iv) If a more advantageous transaction or arrangement is not reasonably possible under circumstances not producing a conflict of interest, the Board of Directors or committee shall determine by a majority vote of the disinterested Board of Directors whether the transaction or arrangement is in the Corporation's best interest, for its own benefit, and whether it is fair and reasonable. In conformity with the above determination, it shall make its decision as to whether to enter into the transaction or arrangement.
- (d) Violations of the Conflicts of Interest Policy.
  - (i) If the Board of Directors or committee has reasonable cause to believe a member has failed to disclose actual or possible conflicts of interest, it shall inform the member of the basis for such belief and afford the member an opportunity to explain the alleged failure to disclose.
  - (ii) If, after hearing the member's response and after making further investigation as warranted by the circumstances, the Board of directors or committee determines the member has failed to disclose an actual or possible conflict of interest, it shall take appropriate disciplinary and corrective action.

***Section 4. Records of Proceedings.*** The minutes of the Board of Directors and all committees with delegated powers from the Board of Directors shall contain:

- (a) The names of the persons who disclosed or otherwise were found to have a financial interest in connection with an actual or possible conflict of interest was present, and the Board of Directors' or committee's decision as to whether a conflict of interest in fact existed.
- (b) The names of the persons who were present for discussions and votes relating to the transaction or arrangement, the content of the discussion, including any alternatives to the proposed transaction or arrangement, and a record of any votes taken in connection with the proceedings.

### ***Section 5. Compensation.***

- (a) A voting member of the Board of Directors who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from the Corporation for services is precluded from voting on matters pertaining to that member's compensation.
- (b) A voting member of any committee whose jurisdiction includes compensation matters and who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from the Corporation for services is precluded from voting on matters pertaining to that member's compensation.

- (c) No voting member of the Board of Directors or any committee whose jurisdiction includes compensation matters and who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from the Corporation, either individually or collectively, is prohibited from providing information to any committee regarding compensation.

**Section 6. Annual Statements.** Each director, principal officer and member of a committee with delegated powers from the Board of Directors shall annually sign a statement which affirms such person:

- (a) Has received a copy of the conflicts of interest policy;
- (b) Has read and understands the policy;
- (c) Has agreed to comply with the policy; and
- (d) Understands the Corporation is charitable and in order to maintain its federal tax exemption it must engage primarily in activities which accomplish one or more of its tax-exempt purposes.

**Section 7. Periodic Reviews.** To ensure the Organization operates in a manner consistent with charitable purposes and does not engage in activities that could jeopardize its tax-exempt status, periodic reviews shall be conducted.

The periodic reviews shall, at a minimum, include the following subjects:

- (a) Whether compensation arrangements and benefits are reasonable, based on competent survey information, and the result of arm's length bargaining.
- (b) Whether partnerships, joint ventures, and arrangements with management organizations conform to the Corporation's written policies, are properly recorded, reflect reasonable investment or payments for goods and services, further charitable purposes and do not result in inurement, impermissible private benefit or in an excess benefit transaction.

**Section 8. Use of Outside Experts.** When conducting the periodic reviews as provided for in Section 7 above, the Corporation may, but need not, use outside advisors. If the outside experts are used, their use shall not relieve the Board of Directors of its responsibility for ensuring periodic reviews are conducted.



# Central District Conference

OF MENNONITE CHURCH USA

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## **CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE POLITY:**

### **History and Current Understanding**

#### **Report of the Polity Articulation Task Force**

(Accepted by the CDC Board of Directors January 23, 1999)

## **I. WHY WE NEED TO BE AND WANT TO BE A CONFERENCE**

Conference for the congregations in Central District is something like a family of adult sisters and brothers. We love each other and are concerned about each other. We want to help each other but we do not feel a need to control each other. We share a common faith heritage and commitment, as well as a desire for common mission. Being together helps us strengthen those commitments, continue discovering God in significant ways, and define what it means for our walk as Jesus' disciples and Anabaptist Mennonites today.

For us conference is a place for fellowship, for discussion, and for mutual counseling as we seek to hear what the Spirit is saying to us about what it means to follow Christ. It is a place where relationships are vital. Conference is also a means for organizing so that we can work together in mission and church planting, for providing resources such as Camp Friedenswald and Bluffton College, for help in choosing and supporting pastoral leadership, and for keeping us responsive to the needs in the world around us.

Although our conference is part of what church is and does, it is not analogous to or a substitute for our congregations. It is in our congregations that we commit ourselves to participation as members of the body of Christ, a commitment which encompasses our total lives. The congregations' commitment to conference is different and more specific, defined by what we have come to understand the purpose of conference to be.

We confess we have often failed at being our best as conference. We talk of being family, but have sometimes failed in incorporating new members as full participants in the family. We talk of mutual accountability but have often failed to responsibly give and receive counsel, hindering the work of God's Spirit among us. We talk of unity but disunity has sometimes disrupted our conference efforts in witness, mission, and service. At times we have been left with a sense of scatteredness and weakened in our ability as a group to proclaim important understandings of faith and in our witness to Christ in the broader public arena. Yet conference continues to be very important, enhancing and facilitating God's work among us so that God's healing and hope will flow through us to the world.

## II. THE FORMAL CONGREGATION-CONFERENCE RELATIONSHIP

Article II of our Central District Conference constitution defines the purpose of our conference as follows:

1. To promote community among member churches in our commitment to Christ.
2. To serve as a resource for, and to offer guidance to, pastors and congregations in matters of faith and life.
3. To facilitate the reign of God by providing channels through efforts in mission, evangelism, church planting, Christian education, nurture, and peacemaking.

Our conference, then, is intended to be a resource: to promote, serve, offer, and facilitate. Conference is congregations working *together*, it is not a separate body *over* congregations. Conference is formed by congregations coming together voluntarily for specific purposes. The constitution (Article IX) describes the steps which a congregation takes to join the conference and also notes that congregations may choose to leave the conference. The constitution does not grant the conference authority to remove a congregation from membership.

## III. OUR HISTORY AS A CONFERENCE

According to Harold S. Bender, writing in the *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, congregational autonomy was the form of church government for virtually all groups in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when some conferences in North America began to develop “into authoritative ecclesiastical bodies with power over the local congregation and ministers.” (Vol. I, p. 669)

The roots of our own Central District Conference lie in the formation of the General Conference in 1860. The Central District Conference was organized in 1957 with the merger of the Central Conference Mennonite Church (organized in 1908) and the Middle District Conference (organized in 1888). These conferences carried on the Anabaptist tradition of congregational autonomy while enabling congregations to come together for fellowship and mutual encouragement and to organize for work which congregations could do best in cooperation with each other. These conferences did not simply evolve, but were deliberately organized for specific objectives. A major objective was the inclusion of all who shared the same purpose and wanted to walk together following Christ.

*Walking Together in Faith*, our conference history, speaks directly to the congregation - conference relationship and to the purposes for which conference was formed. Writing about the formation of the Central District Conference, conference historian Steve Estes observes, “each group [Middle District Conference and Central Conference] shared an essential commitment to the congregation as the central focus of church life — an independent congregationalism with the conference as a place for working together toward common ministry goals in Christian fellowship (and not as the locus of authority for the church).” (p. 8)

A mistaken assumption has been that Central District Conference polity developed in reaction to more authoritative practices in some other Mennonite conferences. This assumption is often based on the rather large number of Central District leaders who transferred to the Central Conference and Middle District Conference in the first half of this century from these other Mennonite conferences where, in some cases, they had been the objects of what they considered to have been harsh discipline.

The historical record shows that these leaders came to us long after our polity had been decided. They came to us precisely because we had a congregational autonomy clearly in place. It is probably fair to say, however, that many of our attitudes toward church discipline, particularly “harsh discipline,” were influenced significantly by the coming of these leaders. In that sense, the attitudes toward discipline in many of our congregations today may be a reaction to practices found in other Mennonite bodies.

#### **IV. THE AUTHORITY OF CONFERENCE**

The authority of Central District Conference lies in our coming together to seek God’s will and embrace God’s ultimate authority in our lives. As congregations in relationship, we do this seriously, humbly, and prayerfully, and then agree to share our understanding with each other in conference. The authority comes, or emerges, as our conference decisions are recognized as the will of God. It is not coercive, does not threaten, and comes without sanctions.

Conference statements reflecting the majority position on issues are to be taken seriously and studied carefully and prayerfully. At the same time we also humbly recognize that a majority can be mistaken and a minority may be nearer the mind of God.

We also understand that this kind of authority means that everyone within the conference has the responsibility both to give and receive counsel honestly and clearly. Unless we are engaged in this way, our conference will not discover authority as a reflection of God’s ultimate authority and we will find ourselves going in many different individualistic directions.

#### **V. DISCIPLINE AND DISCIPLING IN CENTRAL DISTRICT**

We believe that *discipline*, as that is usually understood (sanctions), belongs in the congregation and is not a function of conference. Discipline is, after all, part of discipling and care which the church, the family of God, gives to each Christian. As such it needs to be done in the setting where the person has made a membership commitment, is best known, and the situation understood. That is the local congregation.

The relationship between conference and congregation is not the same as the relationship between the congregation and its individual members. When Paul speaks of the body of Christ, it is a body of which individuals (I Corinthians 12:27) are members, not a conference of which congregations are members.

Along with the congregations, the conference participates in the universal Christian mission of forming disciples (Matt. 28:18-20). The conference *disciples* by providing opportunities for people to come together and seek the meaning of discipleship in our time and by providing resources for helping us to actually walk as disciples.

#### **VI. THE CONFERENCE ROLE IN PASTORAL LEADERSHIP**

We consider the role of conference in the selection and credentialing of pastoral leadership to be very important. Our conference ministers and Ministerial Committee play a vital role in the call, credentialing, and ongoing accountability (and discipline, when necessary) of pastoral leadership. We recognize the heavy responsibility this places upon the Ministerial Committee and conference ministers.

We also see pastoral mentoring and pastor-peer groups as essential ways of giving and receiving counsel, of strengthening our conference as a family, and of discipling all of us.

## VII. IN CONCLUSION

The relationship of conference to congregations in resourcing and mutual discernment is very important in Central District. It also calls us to engage each other responsibly. Every person in Central District Conference is called upon to actively seek God's will, to listen to the Holy Spirit, and to share what we have heard with our brothers and sisters in our congregations and in the wider conference. In Central District we are not passive followers. We are all called and invited to take responsibility, together with our sisters and brothers, to seek God's will on what it means concretely for us to be disciples of Jesus today.

We understand this individual responsibility, this call to mutual accountability — difficult as it may be — to be at the heart of Anabaptism. This is what baptism on confession of faith means. The Anabaptists rejected the idea of church as a traditional community which relied on tradition and the authority of traditional leaders. The church is a voluntary community which each person enters on the basis of his or her own individual decision and confession of faith — an individual, responsible, adult decision, which calls us into mutual relationship with each other. The Anabaptists believed that this is what the New Testament clearly teaches.

We face the future transition with some uncertainty, but also with anticipation, believing that, as we continue walking together in faith as responsible disciples, our Lord will continue to transform us in ways wonderful and new.

Respectfully submitted:

### **Task Force Members**

Robert Ramseyer, Chair  
Rich Bucher  
Janeen Bertsche Johnson  
Lynn Liechty  
Elmer Neufeld  
Jane Roeschley

### **Observer-Participants**

Willis Sutter, Illinois Mennonite Conference  
David Sutter, Indiana-Michigan Menn. Conference  
Allen G. Rutter, Ohio Mennonite Conference

### **Staff**

Lloyd L. Miller  
Carol M. Morales

December 1998



## Central District Conference Membership Criteria

All congregations seeking membership in CDC shall:

- Keep Jesus Christ at the center of their faith and action
- Affirm commitment to congregational discernment that is biblically based, Christ-centered, and Spirit-led
- Be guided by the Mennonite Church USA *Vision: Healing and Hope* and *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (1995) [See CDC Constitution, Article III: Statement of Faith].
- Affirm the CDC statement on Conference Polity
- Meet the CDC constitutional requirements for membership (see Art. IX, sections 1 and 2)  
(Includes being an established congregation with a definitive membership, participating regularly in conference, providing financial support, giving and receiving counsel, and willingness for members to serve in leadership positions).
- When applicable, follow MC USA guidelines for changing conference affiliation

Affirmed by delegates/June 2010



## CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE

A conference of Mennonite Church USA

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.

--CDC Vision Statement



### Mission Statement:

The mission of Central District Conference is to know Christ's abundant love in who we are and how we live, and to answer God's persistent call to share that love with one another and the world by:

- ▶ Promoting a Christ-like community of hospitality where all are welcome and where grace-filled relationships flourish, and patience and generosity are practiced
- ▶ Calling and nurturing wise, dynamic and compassionate Anabaptist leadership
- ▶ Supporting missional partnerships that make God's reign visible and fostering ministries of evangelism, peace, healing and hope.

KNOWING CHRIST'S LOVE. . . ANSWERING GOD'S CALL

*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.*

—Luke 10:27

### CDC Core Values:

As Anabaptist Christians who received God's grace we affirm the following core values:

- ▶ Christ-centeredness through worship, discipleship and prophetic witness
- ▶ Sharing the good news of Jesus through a lifestyle which includes simple living, non-violence, service, evangelism, peacemaking, and justice
- ▶ Faithfulness to the way of Jesus through community discernment of Scripture by the guidance of the Holy Spirit
- ▶ Trust in congregational discernment
- ▶ Creating healthy and healing relationships within and among congregations and conferences
- ▶ Stewardship of God's gifts and resources
- ▶ Dismantling of racism, economic disparities and gender and disability biases.
- ▶ Nurturing and celebrating the faith of all ages within diverse contexts
- ▶ Trained and capable Anabaptist ministers and lay leaders
- ▶ Openness and commitment to learning from others throughout the world.

### CDC Core Program Strategies:

Support congregations by:

- ▶ Fostering 'grace, joy and peace' within and among congregations of CDC
- ▶ Facilitating and providing resources which empower congregations and promote missional partnerships
- ▶ Encouraging the call and development of Anabaptist leadership
- ▶ Providing resources in the placement and care of pastors
- ▶ Ministering in times of congregational transition and/or conflict
- ▶ Cultivating the Anabaptist vision as expressed in our confession of faith
- ▶ Acting as a liaison with the agencies and leadership groups of MC USA
- ▶ Effective communication flow within the conference and with MC USA conferences and agencies

### CDC Critical Success Factors:

- ▶ Robust congregations
- ▶ New Anabaptist outreach ministries and/or congregations within CDC
- ▶ Leadership development among all ages
- ▶ Generous financial stewardship
- ▶ Nurture and care of pastors
- ▶ Increased involvement of young adults
- ▶ Shared CDC/MC USA identity
- ▶ Vital Camp Friedenswald ministry
- ▶ Viable Anabaptist educational institutions

### DOING TOGETHER WHAT WE CANNOT DO ALONE AS INDIVIDUAL CONGREGATIONS

*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.*

—Matthew 28:19-20 a

For more information about CDC, visit our website at [www.centraldistrict.mennonite.net](http://www.centraldistrict.mennonite.net)

# Delegate Expectations

Title: Central District Conference Delegate

## Function

Acting on behalf of members of their respective congregations in any meetings of the conference, delegates determine major policy issues, evaluate the work of the Board of Directors, and discern the voice of the Spirit in the midst of the conference.

## Responsibilities and Duties

1. Prepare in advance of conference meetings.\*
  - a. Read carefully all the materials distributed to delegates before conference meetings.
  - b. Seek clarification from the Board of Directors on materials or statements that are not understood.
  - c. Ask for the advice and opinions of other persons in your congregation or the conference about policy issues for Central District Conference.
  - d. Formulate your opinions in advance based on input from others, prayerful discernment, and your own best thinking.
2. Participate actively in the Annual Meeting.
  - a. Be present and on time for each session.
  - b. Listen carefully to input from the moderator, conference leaders, and other delegates.
  - c. Participate assertively and intelligently in deliberations, respecting the needs of others to speak and be heard as well as your own.
  - d. Work cooperatively with other delegates to discern the voice of the Spirit in the conference, and to articulate God's desired future for Central District Conference.
  - e. Offer suggestions on ways to improve the various programs and services of Central District Conference.
  - f. Experience the conference sessions as worshipful work that honors God.
3. Serve as a conduit for information between conference sessions.
  - a. Receive and respond to requests for information and counsel from the Board of Directors.
  - b. Register new ideas, advice and suggestions focused on improving the outcomes and effectiveness of Central District Conference.
  - c. Suggest qualified candidates to the Gifts Discernment Committee to fill delegate-elected positions.
4. Communicate to congregation regarding conference decisions and activities.
  - a. Report back to your congregation the highlights and important issues discussed at annual meeting sessions or specially called delegate meetings.
  - b. Share other conference information distributed to delegates between annual meeting sessions.
5. Provide for continuity with newly appointed delegates.
  - a. Pass along past information of interest to the next delegate before the end of term.
  - b. Provide assistance as needed to orient newly appointed delegates to their work.

## Qualifications

1. Active participation in a member congregation of Central District Conference.
2. A commitment to discerning God's desired future for Central District Conference.
3. Interest in dealing with systems, values, and vision.
4. Willingness to make policy decisions in the best interests of the whole conference.
5. Personal commitment of time and necessary resources to attend each conference meeting for a minimum of two years.

### Congregational Responsibilities to Delegates

1. Appoint delegates immediately after the annual meeting in June, asking them to serve for the next two years.
2. Provide discernment in the delegate selection process to appoint capable and interested participants as their delegates.
3. Properly orient delegates regarding their role and responsibilities.
4. Assure that delegates are selected and delegate forms are filed with the conference office on a timely basis to permit their participation in annual meeting sessions.
5. Provide economic support of delegate attendance at conference gatherings as congregational finances permit.
6. Provide adequate venues and support for delegates to report back to the congregation on conference matters.

\*Conference meetings include the annual meeting held the fourth weekend of June and any other specially called meetings.

Note: Central District Conference does not necessarily expect delegates to be the same people who serve as delegates to the General Assembly of MC USA.

The function of delegate representation as outlined in the Central District Conference Bylaws Bylaw 1, Section B is as follows:

#### ***Section B: Delegates, Voting and Floor Privileges***

1. Representation and Voting: Every member congregation of the Conference shall have the right to be represented by one vote for every thirty members or fractional part of that number, with a minimum of two delegates from each congregation. In addition to the above delegates, every member congregation is encouraged to appoint one high school age youth delegate who is an active participant of the congregation and youth group. This will be an additional voting delegate.
2. Delegate Forms: Proper delegate forms shall be sent to all member congregations by the Conference administrator, and these forms shall be returned to the Conference administrator designating all delegates before or by the opening session of the annual meeting.
3. Floor Privileges: Any member of a constituent congregation present at Conference sessions may participate in discussion on the conference floor. Other guests present are welcome to join open discussion in the spirit of Christian love and mutual helpfulness.

Adopted by the Board of Directors, February 6, 2004

## *Developing resolutions for Central District Conference*

### **Purpose of resolutions**

Resolutions are tools of the church intended to:

- **Educate** – Resolutions can provide information about issues facing the church and can help our congregations and members better understand viewpoints and experiences beyond their current awareness.
- **Build consensus** – While it is not necessary for us to arrive at unanimous approval in order to pass a resolution, careful work toward common understandings and language can build unity in the church. Resolutions will not be considered binding on members and congregations of Central District Conference unless identified as having that intent from the beginning of the process.
- **Provide a conference understanding, while acknowledging dissenting voices** – Resolutions offer church members as well as those beyond our denomination a better understanding of our conference's positions. When we are not united in our viewpoints, resolutions can name both our areas of agreement and areas of differing views, in hopes of fostering better understanding and ongoing discernment.
- **Provide a foundation for member advocacy to government** – Rather than viewing the primary purpose of resolutions as statements our conference or denomination sends to the government on our behalf, resolutions can be more effective as resources for individuals and congregations as they address legislative bodies.

### **The role of the Resolutions Committee**

At each Annual Meeting, a Resolutions Committee appointed by the Board of Directors has the role and authority to receive and edit ideas for resolutions. A proposal given to the Resolutions Committee should come from a congregation(s) with enough time allowed for processing by congregations as outlined below.

When it is important to respond to a situation of more immediacy, some aspects of this preferred approach might not be appropriate. In these times, the Resolutions Committee may present resolutions for delegate discernment without going through a congregational study process. Such resolutions must be received by the Resolutions Committee by the end of the worship service on the first day of the Annual Meeting. However, if it is determined that delegates are significantly divided by an issue, the resolution may be tabled until more study and discernment are possible.

### **Preferred process for developing resolutions**

The Resolutions Committee, after consultation as needed with the framers of the original resolution, will discern which resolutions should be developed for future consideration, which resolutions should be dealt with during the current Annual Meeting, and which perspectives should be shared with the Board of Directors for their awareness and discernment.

### ***Suggested format for resolutions***

We recommend that resolutions be crafted with the following theological framework:

- **Faith** – what we believe and affirm.
- **Hope** – our vision of God's intention for members, congregations, conferences, our denomination, and/or the world.
- **Love** – what compassion, justice, and righteousness require of us.

This framework may not serve the purposes of all resolutions, but where possible, the use of this framework can help keep the focus on God's work in our world and in our midst.

In order to best accomplish the purpose described above, we are committed to:

1. **Begin with a careful study process involving congregations** – Major issues will be processed best if study documents are developed and distributed – *before* resolutions are crafted.
2. **Create a safe space for all voices to be heard** – Honest discernment will not shut off differing viewpoints.
3. **Seek to understand the stories behind our differing viewpoints** – Rather than arguing positions, we will search for common ground through hearing how we have come to our various perspectives.
4. **Involve significant delegate discussion in groups** – We will commit adequate time for hearing each other's viewpoints and giving feedback to the whole delegate body.
5. **Allow for segmented consideration** – If delegates agree on most parts of a resolution but not on a particular part, the Board of Directors will have the option of testing delegate response on a section-by-section basis.
6. **Set a high threshold for adoption** – The more important we consider a decision to be, the higher our level of agreement should be. If a simple majority vote does not seem appropriate, the Board of Directors will suggest a percentage needed to adopt a particular resolution.

*Adapted from "Developing Resolutions for Mennonite Church USA"  
Approved by the Board of Directors, May 11, 2007*

**Expectations for Credentialed Leaders Regarding  
*Healthy Boundaries Training*  
Central District Conference Ministerial Committee  
Approved September 21, 2018**

**Background:**

Credentialed clergy throughout MC USA are responsible for participating in a Healthy Boundaries Training. This training identifies the complexity of the relationships we have in our ministries and provides essential understandings and practical ways to manage these relational and ethical boundaries with integrity and faithfulness. Ultimately, the goal is to enhance our ministries through tending to appropriate, safe and healthy boundaries.

*A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership* provides the theological and biblical foundation for how Mennonite Church USA and Central District Conference understand credentialed leadership in the church. Specifically, it states,

*The congregation and the person ordained enter a covenant of a mutual accountability, support, respect and care. The person covenants to live a life that has moral integrity, to be a faithful steward of the gospel, to lead with humility, to respect others, and to grow in ministry. The congregation covenants to pray for the ordained person, to give and receive counsel, to support the person's leadership ministry, and to recognize the authority of the office into which the pastor has been ordained. (p.20)*

The Ministerial Committee of the Central District Conference has identified *Healthy Boundaries Training* as an essential training for all credentialed leaders actively serving in ministry. *Healthy Boundaries Training* provides tools, practices and examples for how “accountability, support, respect and care” can be authentically lived out as ministering individuals.

**Expectations:**

It is the expectation of the CDC Ministerial Committee that all credentialed leaders actively serving in ministry receive *Healthy Boundaries Training*.

1. All newly credentialed leaders will complete *Healthy Boundaries Training* within one year of their credential date (licensed or ordained).
2. After an initial *Healthy Boundaries Training* course, all credentialed leaders will complete a refresher course within three years of their initial training and every three years thereafter.
3. Should a credentialed leader be unable to complete the above training expectations within the timeframe given, the credentialed leader may request an extension of no more than one year in order to complete the training.
4. Should a credentialed leader not complete the training expectations outlined above, their credential shall be considered suspended for up to one additional year. At the end of that year, if the credentialed leader has not completed the training, their license shall be terminated. Credentialed leaders are aware that such termination of their credential may have employment consequences as well.

**Definitions:**

*Actively Serving-* A credentialed leader is considered “actively serving” in ministry if they are currently providing leadership (paid or volunteer) in a church or other organization that either requires a credential for their position or if the ministering person expects to utilize the privileges of their credential to serve their community. (Example: A chaplain may not be required by their employer to hold a credential for their continued employment but the chaplain wishes to maintain their credential as active and considers their place of employment as their place of ministry.)

*Credentialed-* As defined on pages 43-44 of *A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership*

*Credential Date-* The date of the public credentialing service in which the credentialed leader was licensed or ordained.

*Healthy Boundaries Training-* This is the specific name for a training offered by *Faith Trust Institute*. CDC relies on several individuals who have been trained by *Faith Trust Institute* to provide training to credentialed leaders. The *Healthy Boundaries 101- Fundamental's* course provides the basic guidelines and expectations by which other trainings will be considered as fulfilling the requirement. A *Request for Recognition of Alternative Training for Healthy Boundaries* form is available to credentialed leaders who would like the ministerial committee to consider other trainings as sufficient for this requirement. *Healthy Boundaries Training 101* will address the following primary topics:

- Christian Biblical and Theological Foundations for Maintaining Boundaries
- Boundary Basics for Clergy and Spiritual Teachers
- Dating, Friendships, and Dual Relationships
- The Pulpit, Transference, Hugging and Touch, Intimacy
- Preserving Boundaries: Personal and Professional Health
- Understanding Cultural Differences Related to Boundaries

*Refresher Course-* This can include participation in at least three hours of the *Healthy Boundaries 101* course, participation in *Healthy Boundaries 201*, or other continuing education of at least three hours that addresses the primary topics identified above.



CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE of MENNONITE CHURCH USA

**CODE OF ETHICS FOR MINISTERS**

**A. Ministerial Sexual Ethics**

1. Ministers are representatives of God and the church, and as such are to be agents of healing and redemption. They are aware that sexual exploitation or abuse of spouse, family members, colleagues, congregational members, employees or counselees is an abuse of trust, an abuse of power and an abuse of the authority of a pastoral position. They accept their responsibility to define and maintain appropriate boundaries within their ministerial relationships.
2. Ministers are aware that their personal relationships and lives must also reflect healthy morals and sexuality. Spouse or child abuse, domestic violence, use of pornography, or other forms of immorality may also lead to discipline.
3. Ministers are aware that discipline for sexual misconduct and immorality may involve the loss of both their ministerial credentials and their vocational status.
4. Ministers are aware of and willing to abide by church policies and disciplinary procedures to address sexual misconduct including *Pastoral Sexual Abuse Policies and Procedures* which is available on the MC USA website; <http://mennoniteusa.org/resource/sexual-misconduct/>.
5. Ministers accept responsibility to call each other to account and to exercise biblical responsibility to confront colleagues concerning perceptions of inappropriate sexual relationships.
6. Ministers are aware of their calling as servants of God under the lordship of Jesus Christ, and from that they accept their responsibility for and accountability to people entrusted to their care.
7. Ministers accept the obligation to disclose information regarding previous sexual misconduct for which they have been called to account prior to formal candidacy for a new ministry position.

**B. Other Ethical Standards**

1. Ministers are aware of the harm that may be caused to themselves and others by engaging in addictive behaviors such as alcohol and drug abuse, gambling, and use of pornography. Ministers accept responsibility to seek help and receive counsel regarding such addictions.
2. Ministers will comply with ethical and legal standards regarding congregational finances.
3. Ministers are expected to be truthful when representing their education, training, experience, and ministerial performance.
4. Ministers are expected to keep and maintain strict confidentiality, unless that confidentiality will result in physical harm to a child and in the case of other threats that mandate reporting.
5. In addition to the above affirmations, ministers are expected to have read and comprehended Section IV, Ethics in Ministry, in *A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership* (MennoMedia, 2017), *Expectations for Credentialed Leaders Regarding Healthy Boundaries Training* (CDC Ministerial Committee September 21, 2018).

**As a minister of Jesus Christ and as a representative of the church within its office of ministry, I accept and subscribe to these affirmations.**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Outline of Common Assumptions Regarding Mid-States “Preferred Resource Provider” Relationships for Pastoral Searches**

Objectives:

- Simplify the process of pastoral search for dual conference congregations
- Limit conference duplication of resources in pastoral searches
- Mutually supporting the relationship of each conference to the congregation

At beginning of search, both conferences:

- Assure that the congregation is aware of the PRP process
- Encourage congregation to choose one conference as “preferred resource provider” [PRP] for conducting the search
- Reinforce that the integrity of two separate, equal conference relationships with the congregation remain intact though working through a single conference

During the search, the PRP will periodically report back to the other conference minister:

- At least quarterly if the search takes an extended time period
- Promptly if difficulties or problems surface during the search
- At the point a preferred candidate is identified:
  - Who it is
  - When the congregation will meet with the candidate
  - When the vote is scheduled
  - Whether the call is issued and if so, if accepted

Once acceptance occurs, the PRP status ends and the process becomes equally collaborative, which includes the two conferences, candidate, and congregation jointly determining:

- Dates for credentialing interviews
- Dates for installation

**Note:** Different conferences may have different processes and expectations for how the scheduling of these meetings occurs. It may require in some cases one of the conferences adjusting normal practice to make the process equally collaborative. Whenever a dual conference congregation search is underway, the credentialing groups of both conferences need to make sure they are familiar with the process of the other conference to avoid misunderstanding.

February 12, 2008

## **Mid-States MC USA Area Conference Statement on Congregational Dual Conference Affiliation**

When Mennonite Church USA formed in 2002, approximately 51 congregations chose to retain pre-existing affiliation with more than one area conference. During the subsequent six years, many of these congregations ceased their dual affiliation, either through new area conference formation (Mountain States) or by choosing single affiliation. Currently, only 26 congregations in MC USA retain this status. Twenty-one of the 26 are located in the mid-states region; all 21 of these affiliate with Central District Conference and either Illinois Mennonite Conference (9), Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference (7), or Ohio Mennonite Conference (5).

Regarding dual affiliation, Mennonite Church USA Membership Guidelines (Part II, Section 11) indicate that:

*“Congregations will hold membership in only one area conference. Where dual affiliation of a congregation with more than one conference already exists and it is perceived to be in the best interests of the congregation and their conference at this time, dual conference membership may be retained as long as mutually agreed upon. We also recognize that certain congregations may find it beneficial to maintain ties to other denominational bodies.” (Adopted July 5, 2001)*

This position is affirmed in the Bylaws of the Mennonite Church USA (Article III, Section 3a: 2003).

More recently, in looking to the future of our denomination, the Executive Director of MC USA reported to the Constituency Leadership Council that “the long term intention is for congregations to hold membership in only one area conference.” [Distributed “Highlights” of the CLC gathering at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, March 6-8, 2006.]

Given these denominational perspectives, the four mid-states area conferences jointly encourage and support dual conference congregations in their own discernment processes as they consider, when ready, what conference affiliation would enable them to best carry out the ministries they find themselves in or feel called to develop. Although some may wish to retain dual affiliation at this time, others may find that single affiliation can free them in their missional calling and enable stronger, mutually beneficial relationships with their area conference of choice. When engaged in this discernment process, we ask congregations to inform and work with both conferences regarding their deliberations.

Should a dual conference congregation decide to affiliate solely with one area conference, we will respect and support their participation in the conference of their choosing. Regardless of affiliation, we encourage all of our congregations to pursue ongoing fellowship, mission cell formation, and other missional collaboration with congregations of other area conferences. We also welcome continued attendance at each of our area conference gatherings by congregations affiliated with other area conferences. We are together called to build God’s Kingdom as God leads, and a congregation’s choice of which area conference will formally connect them to MC USA need not impact their relationship with other congregations.

In saying this, we recognize the varied circumstances that originally led these congregations to obtain dual affiliation, and we celebrate the vision for unity and spirit of collaboration these congregations have embodied. Some are dual because of the church planting process used at the time, and some chose to be dual with the goal of including Mennonites of diverse backgrounds and ultimately of bringing two denominations together. Two (Lima Mennonite and Mennonite Church of Normal) chose to be dual because two singly affiliated congregations merged to form a new congregation.

Although we remain committed to collaboration and fellowship among our conferences and congregations, as conference leaders we are not currently addressing larger questions of conference merger. We recognize that over time, as our area conferences and congregations follow God’s call to missional transformation of our world, God may also transform our structures and forms—in God’s time the mid-states region will undoubtedly look very different. In the meantime, we encourage our congregations to also devote their energy to God’s missional call.

September 18, 2007

Central District Conference

Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference

Illinois Mennonite Conference

Ohio Mennonite Conference of Mennonite Church USA



# Churchwide Statement on Immigration

2014 Revision of 2003 Statement

Feb. 15, 2014

## 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. (*Mennonite Church USA Vision Statement*)

Mennonite Church USA's 10-year Purposeful Plan (2011) calls the church to pursue the priorities of Christian Formation, Holistic Christian Witness, Undoing Racism and Advancing Intercultural Transformation, among others.<sup>1</sup>

Millions of people are painfully caught in the web of the structures that comprise the United States' broken immigration system. Long wait lists keep families separated for years and tempt people to circumvent the system; workplace raids create a culture of fear and harm entire communities; and lax oversight of guest worker programs leaves a system ripe for exploitation and worker abuse.<sup>2</sup> Societal discord on the issue has risen and also polarized people within the Church.

As Mennonite Christians, we are moved by the healing and hope that God offers through Jesus Christ to join with sisters and brothers from other faith traditions in offering our faith-filled responses to this suffering and injustice. We claim our identity as citizens of God's kingdom, and therefore, as "aliens" and "exiles" in the country in which we reside. We renounce the indifference to and mistreatment of undocumented and documented immigrants that has occurred and continues to occur in our congregations, our communities, and this country. We are committed to joining God's reconciling mission (Isa. 58:6-9, 2 Cor. 5:16-19) and to live and act as sisters and brothers in Christ regardless of our legal status.

As such, we advocate for just and humane immigration policies for immigrants and refugees, and we empower congregations, area conferences and denominational staff to serve as advocates for these vulnerable groups of people.

We commend all levels of the Church in efforts to welcome immigrants: providing mutual aid and social service resources, building intercultural relationships and diverse worshiping communities, and treating immigrants with dignity and respect.

We commit to grow in understanding our context—to comprehend the root causes of immigration and examine how the U.S. immigration system operates—so that we can better understand each other's stories. We also commit to grow in cross-cultural competency to advance our goal of being an intentional community for Christ.

We seek to join in God's healing work regarding immigration, trusting that God goes before us and desires wholeness and well-being for all people.

Supporting documents are available that include recommended actions, the biblical basis for this document, a statement on identity, a brief exploration of the issues, and a list of resources.

<sup>1</sup> Mennonite Church USA's seven churchwide priorities: Christian Formation, Christian Community, Holistic Christian Witness, Stewardship, Leadership Development, Undoing Racism and Advancing Intercultural Transformation, and Church-to-Church Relationships.

<sup>2</sup> These descriptive statements come from "Immigration Policy Principles," a document compiled by Mennonite Central Committee U.S. and updated in April 2009. See [mcc.org/media/resources/664](http://mcc.org/media/resources/664). Additionally, some immigrants without documents are considered to be "undocumentable" because for them to reside in the U.S. legally, they would first have to return to their home countries for three or 10 years (depending on how long they had been in the U.S.) before they would be eligible to apply for legal re-entry.

## Appendix A: Actions

The following action steps are grouped into two sections:

- The first section (A) has five specific action steps; two are educational and three are ministry actions. The Executive Board calls congregations and area conferences to engage at whatever level possible in *at least one educational action* and *one ministry action* in the next two years (2014–2016).
- The second section (B) offers suggestions for additional educational and ministry actions, which congregations and area conferences are encouraged to engage in as they are able.

Depending on the action, congregations, area conferences and/or the denomination will be in a position to take the lead, facilitate and/or provide resources. Some actions may best be served by ecumenical partnerships in local and/or regional areas.

Appendix C contains a list of resources that support the actions.

### A. Actions for 2014–2016

#### **Educational**

1. Learn skills to help facilitate intercultural competency and/or undoing racism processes in congregations through the Communities of Hope process.
2. Plan Bible studies, sermons and worship services on themes of hospitality to immigrants.

#### **Ministry**

3. Advocate for just and humane immigration policies for immigrants and refugees by contacting our local, state and national elected officials. (See “Immigration Policy Principles,” a document compiled by Mennonite Central Committee U.S.: [mcc.org/media/resources/664](http://mcc.org/media/resources/664))
4. Offer church facilities and volunteers for documentation services, language classes, mental health support, cultural celebrations, after-school homework help and other ministries.
5. Engage in mutual aid to offer food, shelter, clothing, housing, transportation and other resources to immigrants regardless of their status.

### B. Additional suggested actions

#### **Educational**

1. Learn about the political and economic situations that push and pull people’s migration to the U.S.

and how U.S. consumer culture and policies such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) have helped to create these dynamics.

2. Plan local and/or regional learning tours in our communities.
3. Join study tours to the U.S./Mexico border, refugee camps or detention centers to learn more about U.S. immigration and refugee policies. Share our learnings.
4. Learn about the process and timing of legally becoming a U.S. citizen.
5. Learn about the detention centers across the U.S. that hold undocumented immigrants, and locate the ones nearest our congregations.
6. Attend a *Bienvenido* training to provide support for immigrants in our congregations and/or communities.
7. Study and learn about the U.S.’s prison industry and how private prison corporations profit from their role in the current immigration system.

#### **Ministry**

8. Support immigrants in navigating the legal system to become U.S. citizens. Offer information about the available alternative oath for those who are not willing to bear arms. Help connect immigrants with attorneys and/or with financial assistance for legal support.
9. Advocate for a fair and living wage for all low-wage workers and immigrants in our workplaces and communities.
10. Build relationships among newcomers and long-term residents in our communities. Facilitate the mutual sharing of stories in our congregations and neighborhoods.
11. Partner with immigrant congregations to plan church services or community events.
12. Plan and join public ecumenical or interfaith witness events for immigrant justice.
13. Pray for just and humane immigration reform and policies for all immigrants and refugees; for immigrants in our communities and across the globe; and for all parts of Mennonite Church USA as we seek to discern and follow the Spirit’s leading.

# Appendix B: Background

## 1. What does the Bible say?

We hold in the Light of God's Word the complex realities of today's undocumented migration. With our hearts, minds and might, we desire to walk in the wisdom, witness and humility of Jesus Christ.

- **God creates humankind “in our image, according to our likeness” (Gen. 1:26).**

Despite the restrictions, permissions and requirements that the United States' immigration laws have assigned to newcomers at different times throughout history, we hold to the biblical understanding that *all* persons are sacred. According to the Genesis 1 creation story, each woman and each man is a gift of our Creator. The Bible calls us to view and to treat one another as persons created in the image of the Holy One, regardless of our status under immigration laws.

- **God covenants with people “on the move.”**

The Hebrew Scriptures are full of stories of migration! The stories of Abraham and Sarah, Joseph, Moses, the Israelites escaping Egypt, Naomi and Ruth, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther and others are faith stories of immigrants. We claim our immigrant biblical ancestors as spiritual guides who teach us about struggle, failure, vulnerability, perseverance and God's faithfulness in their risky journeys with God and with their communities.

- **God's Law compassionately provides for immigrants.**

In the ancient world of the Old Testament, foreigners were extremely vulnerable due to their lack of extended family and lack of access to land, which was passed on through inheritance. More laws regarding treatment of immigrants appear in the Hebrew Torah than in any other law code known in the ancient world.<sup>3</sup> God repeatedly urges God's people to remember their own salvation history: “You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt” (Exod. 22:21). God loves the stranger and commands God's people also to love and give consideration to the stranger (Deut. 10:17-19).

- **God sent Jesus, who embraced outsiders.**

Jesus, whose parents fled with him as political refugees to Egypt after his birth (Matt. 2), was consistently

attentive to and compassionate with people who were ostracized from society. Jesus taught his disciples to welcome strangers, to minister to prisoners and to provide for anyone who was hungry, thirsty or in need of clothing, because through these actions his disciples would minister directly to him (Matt. 25:31-46). He described his mission as bringing good news to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives, giving sight to the blind and freeing the oppressed (Lk. 4:18-21). He consistently violated social norms, sharing God's love by spending time with and eating with those on the margins of society, such as “sinners,” tax collectors, Gentiles and Samaritans (Matt. 8:5-14; Mk. 7:24-30; Lk. 5:29-32, 7:1-10, 10:25-37, 17:11-19; Jn. 4). The Apostle Paul taught the first churches how Christ's giving up his life for all because of love, and then being raised up through the power of God's love, broke down dividing walls and created peace between hostile peoples (Eph. 2:11-22).

## 2. Who are “we”?

We are Mennonite Church USA, and we come from many places. Some of us are recent immigrants to this country. Some of us have ancestors who migrated here generations ago. Some of us are living especially vulnerably in the United States, without documentation.

Through the Holy Spirit's transforming presence and power, we are on a journey of healing and hope to become a Church in which “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female, for all are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:27-28; Eph. 2:11-22).

Together, on this journey, we affirm that:

- we are beloved children of God. This is our fundamental identity. Therefore, each one of us is a sacred image of God, created in God's likeness (Gen. 1:26-27). Yet we are all sinners, all falling short of the glory of God, receiving the grace of Jesus Christ as a gift (Rom. 3:21-26).
- we are “aliens” and “exiles” in the United States, an identity freely chosen in our baptisms, given to us by

<sup>3</sup> In the Law, God provided for the needs of the foreigner, addressing fair labor practices (Exod. 20:10, 23:12; Deut. 5:14, 24:14-15), justice (Deut. 1:16-17, 24:17-18, 27:19), food sharing (Lev. 19:9-10; Deut. 14:28-29, 24:19-22), inclusion in worship (Exod. 12:45-49; Lev. 16:29) and love for neighbor, including the foreigner (Lev. 19:18 with 19:33-34). The content of this teaching about God's law and the Scripture references are taken from “Immigration: Today's Civil Dilemma and Theological Challenge—What Does the Bible Say?,” a keynote presentation to the Mennonite Church USA 2013 Delegate Assembly in Phoenix by M. Daniel Carroll R., Ph.D., Denver (Colo.) Seminary, on July 2, 2013.

the Spirit who forms us as God's own people. Our first loyalty is to God and to live as citizens in God's Kingdom (1 Pet. 2:9-11).

- we are residents of the United States whose roots are *all* connected to migration in one of three ways:<sup>4</sup>
  1. those of us whose ancestors were original inhabitants of this land, and who have suffered a continuing legacy of displacement.
  2. those of us whose ancestors were *forced* to come here by economic and political forces such as slavery, war or colonization, and those who continue to come because of push factors such as economic hardship and/or fear of danger in our countries of origin.
  3. those of us whose ancestors *chose* to migrate here to seek religious freedom and economic opportunity—in many cases, without documentation.

We acknowledge that we come from diverse cultural backgrounds and hold a variety of perspectives as we prayerfully discern how God is calling us to respond to the complex issues of immigration before us. Our biblical and theological understandings, as well as our own stories, unify us as we respond with our prayers, words and actions to the United States' broken immigration system and to the injustices that undocumented immigrants are suffering.

We lament the reality that injustice in how we treat each other happens not only outside the Church but also in our congregations. It is urgent that those among us with privileges gained through U.S. citizenship, education, lighter skin color, gender and/or socioeconomic status find the courage and will to recognize and renounce

the individual and systemic racism in ourselves, in our church and in this society. May those of us who have benefited from the unfair treatment of immigrants—historically or currently—be able to see and confess our complicity, allowing God to transform us and use us as agents of reconciliation.

### 3. What issues are we facing?

Among the factors that displace people in vulnerable communities across the globe and lead to migration are natural disasters, floods and droughts caused by climate change, economic instability, violence and war. People from places all over the world—from Asia, Africa, Latin America and elsewhere—come to the U.S. hoping to start a new life, some as refugees.

Another factor is U.S. trade agreements,<sup>5</sup> which have focused on consumer goods crossing borders but have neglected to take into account the human needs of workers, in many cases displacing small farmers and other small businesses. Facing poverty, millions of people have chosen to migrate from their homes, hoping and praying to be able to provide for their families and earn a living wage.

However, a broken U.S. immigration system often makes it difficult to migrate to the U.S. for work or to reunite with family.<sup>6</sup> Families are kept separated by an unjust and outdated quota system that discriminates against citizens from some countries, and by long delays in document processing.<sup>7</sup> Family separation causes emotional pain and stress as well as economic hardship and motivates spouses and children to face extremely dangerous conditions to cross the borders in the hope of reuniting in the U.S.

<sup>4</sup> These categories are attributed to Ched Myers, *Our God is Undocumented* (Orbis Books, 2012), pp. 63–64.

<sup>5</sup> One essential part of addressing the root causes of migration is the renegotiation of trade agreements. For example, over the last 20 years, the largest root cause of undocumented migration to the United States from Mexico and other Latin American countries has been the economic push/pull dynamics between our countries. According to the Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Policy Principles (2009), one way to address this is for the United States to seek foreign policy solutions and trade agreements that promote economic opportunity and stability in migrants' home countries.

<sup>6</sup> Mennonite Central Committee U.S. [Immigration Policy Principles](#) (2009) suggest what just and humane immigration policy could look like. These include (1) ensuring a legal pathway to citizenship for immigrants currently living in the U.S., without requiring unworkable fines or "touchback" provisions; (2) maintaining the current family-based immigration system and increasing the number of available family visas, so that families can reunite and immigrate together in a legal and timely way; (3) creating just and fair guest worker programs, along with appropriate oversight mechanisms, to protect labor rights such as fair wages, employer choice and due process protections; and providing the opportunity for immigrant workers to apply for permanent status and, eventually, citizenship; (4) ensuring access to basic benefits and services for those lawfully present, while avoiding policies that seek to deter access to public health and safety services and lead to a culture of fear and isolation in immigrant communities; (5) choosing border security strategies that protect community rights, human dignity and the natural environment while opposing policies that contribute to deaths and increased fear in immigrant communities; (6) addressing political instability and economic disparity in migrants' home countries caused, in part, by U.S. foreign policies and trade agreements; and creating incentives for sustainable development; (7) ending indiscriminate raids and detention for non-dangerous immigrants, while targeting enforcement efforts on drug, weapon and people smugglers.

<sup>7</sup> To legally immigrate to the U.S. with a work visa, a person needs to have an adult family member in the U.S. or an employer who is willing

Although the U.S. depends economically and culturally on the contributions of immigrant laborers,<sup>8</sup> entrepreneurs, professionals and artists, many immigrants experience hardship, discrimination and abuse. Many undocumented immigrants work difficult and often dangerous jobs for very low pay. They are vulnerable to being cheated out of wages and denied compensation for work-related injuries. Undocumented immigrants in poverty cannot receive most welfare and healthcare benefits. Millions of children of undocumented immigrants live in poverty in the U.S.<sup>9</sup>

Many U.S. citizens view immigrants as a threat to safety and economic security. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security, whose stated vision is “to ensure a homeland that is safe, secure and resilient against terrorism and other hazards,” also handles immigration enforcement and services.<sup>10</sup> Racial profiling, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids on workplaces, and increased collaboration between local police and ICE agents cause high stress and fear in immigrant communities. Also, the increasing militarization of the border between the U.S. and Mexico has led to hundreds of deaths in the Arizona Sonoran Desert each year<sup>11</sup> and to reports of abuse by border patrol agents.

While thousands of immigrants of many nationalities await deportation in detention centers across the nation, the private corporations that own and operate the prisons

earn large yearly profits paid from taxes. This is a rapidly growing part of the lucrative U.S. prison industry that incarcerates people with brown and black skin at rates far exceeding those of people with lighter skin.

Many teenagers and young adults who were brought to the U.S. as young children by their parents have grown up experiencing the stress and fear of living without documentation. Known as “DREAMers,”<sup>12</sup> some have organized themselves politically, asking for a path to legal status so that they can work and attend college without the fear of deportation. Many DREAMer organizations are asking for protection for their families as well.

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As Mennonite Christians, we prayerfully discern, “What does it mean for Jesus to be the center of our faith, community the center of our lives, and reconciliation the center of our work?” If we truly “see the misery, hear the cries and know the sufferings”<sup>13</sup> of undocumented immigrants among us, our authentic response will be to choose, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to walk the difficult and sometimes risky journey of growth in confronting these complex immigration issues. As people who look to Scripture for guidance, we believe that the stories of our spiritual ancestors in the Old Testament and Jesus’ teachings in the New Testament are clear: we are to welcome the stranger.

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to sponsor him or her. Immigrants who enter the U.S. without documents or inspection or who overstay their visas are subject to “three-and-ten-year bars” that require them to return to their home country for three or ten years before they can legally apply for a visa to enter the U.S. ([www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/so-close-and-yet-so-far-how-three-and-ten-year-bars-keep-families-apart](http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/so-close-and-yet-so-far-how-three-and-ten-year-bars-keep-families-apart))

<sup>8</sup> History shows that business interests during the past half century have invited workers from Mexico and Central America to come to the U.S. because their labor was needed. However, their presence was not consistently welcomed.

<sup>9</sup> More Latino/a children are living in poverty in the U.S.—6.1 million in 2010—than children of any other racial or ethnic group. Of these, more than two-thirds (4.1 million) are the children of immigrant parents (not necessarily undocumented), and 86.2 percent of the 4.1 million were born in the U.S. The other 2 million are the children of parents born in the U.S. Data from “Childhood Poverty Among Hispanics Sets Record, Leads Nation,” Pew Research Center Hispanic Trends Project, Sept. 28, 2011, [www.pewhispanic.org/2011/09/28/childhood-poverty-among-hispanics-sets-record-leads-nation](http://www.pewhispanic.org/2011/09/28/childhood-poverty-among-hispanics-sets-record-leads-nation).

<sup>10</sup> The U.S. Department of Homeland Security defines its five core missions as follows: to prevent terrorism and enhance security, to secure and manage our borders, to enforce and administer our immigration laws, to safeguard and secure cyberspace and to ensure resilience to disasters. See [www.dhs.gov/our-mission](http://www.dhs.gov/our-mission).

<sup>11</sup> University of Arizona researchers report that the Pima County Office of the Medical Examiner processed the remains of 2,238 migrants from 1990 to 2012, of which more than 750 remain unidentified. “Migrant deaths are still very high in Southern Arizona,” said Robin Reineke, coordinator of the Missing Migrant Project at the Pima County Office of the Medical Examiner. “(There are) hundreds each year, and that hasn’t changed despite the fact that there are fewer migrants crossing [according to Border Patrol apprehension statistics].” The report, “A Continued Humanitarian Crisis at the Border,” shows that the majority of bodies recovered in the desert are those of Mexican citizens. However, there has been an increase in people from Central American countries being apprehended by Border Patrol or dying along the international border.

<sup>12</sup> DREAMers take their name from the DREAM (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) Act, proposed legislation that has historically had bipartisan support, through which qualifying undocumented youth would be eligible for a conditional path to citizenship. In 2010, the DREAM Act was passed in the U.S. House of Representatives but fell five votes short in the Senate.

<sup>13</sup> This sequence of seeing, hearing and knowing comes from Yahweh’s own self-description of compassion culminating in “coming down to deliver” the Israelites suffering in Egypt (Exod. 3:7-12). In the Phoenix 2013 convention workshop “Take Off Your Sandals,” Anton Flores-Maisonet of the Alterna Community in Georgia named these steps as ones that are taken in one’s journey toward compassionate action.



## Appendix C: Resource list [in process]

Many of these resources come from the Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office website and are reprinted with permission: [washingtonmemo.org/immig](http://washingtonmemo.org/immig) and [mcc.org/learn/what/migration](http://mcc.org/learn/what/migration)

### A. Pray

1. Prayers, faith reflections, sermon resources and worship resources:  
[washingtonmemo.org/immig/for-churches](http://washingtonmemo.org/immig/for-churches)
2. Faith statements:  
[washingtonmemo.org/immig/in-brief](http://washingtonmemo.org/immig/in-brief)
3. Guides for organizing vigils in your church or community:  
[washingtonmemo.org/immig/take-action](http://washingtonmemo.org/immig/take-action)

### B. Learn

1. General information about immigration issues, in-depth resources for border issues, DREAM Act, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA):  
[washingtonmemo.org/immig/topics](http://washingtonmemo.org/immig/topics)
2. State immigration policies:  
[washingtonmemo.org/immig/state-policy](http://washingtonmemo.org/immig/state-policy)
3. *People on the Move*, an MCC migration exhibit that can be reserved: [mcc.org/learn/what/categories/immigration/exhibit](http://mcc.org/learn/what/categories/immigration/exhibit)
4. Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Listening Project  
The Immigration Listening Project was launched by MCC U.S. in order to assess attitudes about immigration among Anabaptist churches across the U.S. MCC staff organized listening sessions with 36 groups from Anabaptist churches. The project intentionally included a diverse spectrum: people of color and white people; new and long-time immigrants. Download PDF: [washingtonmemo.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/mcc-us-listening-project-pdf.pdf](http://washingtonmemo.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/mcc-us-listening-project-pdf.pdf)

### C. Advocate for justice

1. "Principles for U.S. Immigration Policy," (*Mennonite Central Committee Washington Office Memo, Spring/Summer 2013*):  
[mcc.org/media/resources/664](http://mcc.org/media/resources/664)  
[washingtonmemo.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/immigration-fact-sheet-2013.pdf](http://washingtonmemo.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/immigration-fact-sheet-2013.pdf)

2. Sign up to receive MCC Action Alerts:  
[org2.salsalabs.com/o/5764/signup\\_page/signup](http://org2.salsalabs.com/o/5764/signup_page/signup)
3. Guides to letter-writing and visiting officials; op-eds: [washingtonmemo.org/immig/take-action](http://washingtonmemo.org/immig/take-action)
4. Larger interfaith campaigns:  
[www.interfaithimmigration.org](http://www.interfaithimmigration.org)
5. Resources for monitoring state policies:  
[washingtonmemo.org/immig/state-policy](http://washingtonmemo.org/immig/state-policy)

### D. Teach

1. *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible*  
M. Daniel Carroll R., Ph.D., Baker Academic: 2008, 176 pp., ISBN: 080103566X  
[www.bakerpublishinggroup.com/books/christians-at-the-border-2nd-edition/283513](http://www.bakerpublishinggroup.com/books/christians-at-the-border-2nd-edition/283513)  
(also available in [Spanish](#))
2. *Strangers in the Land*, a six-week study guide based on *Christians at the Border*, from Sojourners  
[amzn.com/B00FL2VH40](http://amzn.com/B00FL2VH40)
3. *Missio Dei 19: Immigration and the Bible / La inmigración y la Biblia*,  
M. Daniel Carroll R., Ph.D.,  
Purchase: [store.mpn.net/productdetails.cfm?PC=1873](http://store.mpn.net/productdetails.cfm?PC=1873)  
Download: [English](#) | [Español](#)
4. *Loving Strangers as Ourselves: Biblical Reflections*  
This resource, in the form of a booklet, reflects on God's view of the strangers in the biblical text. Seven lessons written by seven different Anabaptist authors address biblical texts in which God reminds his people about how to treat the strangers who live among us.  
[mcc.org/media/resources/696](http://mcc.org/media/resources/696)
5. Video: *Dying to Live*; 33-minute DVD (2-hour session): [dyingtolive.nd.edu](http://dyingtolive.nd.edu)  
Download resources for a group process:
  - *Dying to Live* schedule: [mennoniteusa.org/resource/dying-to-live-schedule/](http://mennoniteusa.org/resource/dying-to-live-schedule/)
  - *Dying to Live* questions: [mennoniteusa.org/resource/dying-to-live-questions/](http://mennoniteusa.org/resource/dying-to-live-questions/)
  - Circle process instructions: [mennoniteusa.org/resource/circle-process/](http://mennoniteusa.org/resource/circle-process/)
  - Reflection guide: [dyingtolive.nd.edu/DyingtoLiveREFLECTION%20GUIDE1.pdf](http://dyingtolive.nd.edu/DyingtoLiveREFLECTION%20GUIDE1.pdf)

6. Materials for group presentations (Sunday school, workshops):  
[washingtonmemo.org/immig/for-churches](http://washingtonmemo.org/immig/for-churches)
7. Videos related to immigration:  
[washingtonmemo.org/immig/for-churches/videos](http://washingtonmemo.org/immig/for-churches/videos)
8. Books related to immigration:  
[washingtonmemo.org/immig/for-churches/books](http://washingtonmemo.org/immig/for-churches/books)
9. Stories related to immigration:  
[washingtonmemo.org/immig/for-churches](http://washingtonmemo.org/immig/for-churches)
10. Speakers
  - Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
    - Saulo Padilla, coordinator, immigration education, (717) 859-1152, [sp@mcc.org](mailto:sp@mcc.org)
    - Tammy Alexander, senior legislative associate, MCC Washington Office, (202) 544-6564, [TammyAlexander@mcc.org](mailto:TammyAlexander@mcc.org)
  - Mennonite Central Committee East Coast
    - Curtis Book, peace and justice coordinator (Philadelphia), (215) 535-3624, [cbook@mcc.org](mailto:cbook@mcc.org)
    - Andrew Bodden, diverse constituency coordinator (Miami), (305) 249-3477, [apb@mcc.org](mailto:apb@mcc.org)
  - Mennonite Central Committee Great Lakes
    - Jorge Vielman, peace and justice coordinator (Goshen), (574) 534-4133, [jorge@mcc.org](mailto:jorge@mcc.org)
  - Mennonite Central Committee West Coast
    - Gloria James, legal services advisor (Calif.), (909) 945-0809, [gjames@mcc.org](mailto:gjames@mcc.org)

If your congregation has found a particular resource helpful, please let Iris de León-Hartshorn, director of transformative peacemaking for Mennonite Church USA, know: [irisdh@mennoniteusa.org](mailto:irisdh@mennoniteusa.org).

## E. Engage

1. Communities of Hope Process  
Communities of Hope is a process for assisting congregations in becoming more culturally competent and working at undoing racism.  
[mennoniteusa.org/what-we-do/undoing-racism/communities-of-hope/](http://mennoniteusa.org/what-we-do/undoing-racism/communities-of-hope/)
2. *Bienvenido* Program  
The *Bienvenido* Program began as a mental health promotion intervention for adult Latino/a immigrants and has expanded to reach adolescents in community settings, schools, churches, jails and juvenile correctional settings.  
[bienvenidosolutions.org](http://bienvenidosolutions.org)
3. Mennonite Church USA DREAMer Fund  
To help undocumented persons who qualify for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program pay the application fee.  
[mennoniteusa.org/resource/dreamer-fund/](http://mennoniteusa.org/resource/dreamer-fund/)
  - [DREAMer Fund Guidelines](#)
  - [DREAMer Fund Covenant](#)
  - [DREAMer Fund Application](#)
4. Resources for finding partners:  
[washingtonmemo.org/immig/state-list](http://washingtonmemo.org/immig/state-list)
5. Opportunities for volunteering and resources for teaching English as a second language:  
[washingtonmemo.org/immig/take-action](http://washingtonmemo.org/immig/take-action)
6. Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement (CIVIC)  
The official national network of the U.S. immigration detention visitation movement.  
[www.endisolation.org/](http://www.endisolation.org/)
7. Immigrant detention watch network  
[immigrantdetentionwatch.blogspot.com/2013/02/visitation-guide-published-by-civic-to.html](http://immigrantdetentionwatch.blogspot.com/2013/02/visitation-guide-published-by-civic-to.html)
8. Guides to visiting detention facilities:  
[washingtonmemo.org/immig/take-action](http://washingtonmemo.org/immig/take-action)



# Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love

**“Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph.4:3), as both individual members and the body of Christ, we pledge that we shall:**

## In Thought

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Accept conflict  | <b>1.</b> Acknowledge together that conflict is a normal part of our life in the church. <i>Romans 14:1-8, 10-12, 17-19; 15:1-7</i>  |
| Affirm hope      | <b>2.</b> Affirm that as God walks with us in conflict, we can work through to growth. <i>Ephesians 4:15-16</i>  |
| Commit to prayer | <b>3.</b> Admit our needs and commit ourselves to pray for a mutually satisfactory solution (no prayers or my success or for the other to change but to find a joint way). <i>James 5:16</i> |

## In Action

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Go to the other...           | <b>4.</b> Go directly to those with whom we disagree; avoid behind-the-back criticism.* <i>Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-20</i>  |
| ...in the spirit of humility | <b>5.</b> Go in gentleness, patience and humility. Place the problem between us at neither doorstep and own our part in the conflict instead of pointing out the others'. <i>Galatians 6:1-5</i>  |
| Be quick to listen           | <b>6.</b> Listen carefully, summarize and check out what is heard before responding. Seek as much to understand as to be understood. <i>James 1:19; Proverbs 18:13</i>  |
| Be slow to judge             | <b>7.</b> Suspend judgments, avoid labeling, end name calling, discard threats and act in a nondefensive, nonreactive way. <i>Romans 2:1-4; Galatians 5:22-26</i>   |
| Be willing to negotiate      | <b>8.</b> Work through the disagreements constructively. <i>Acts 15; Philippians 2:1-11</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify issues, interests, and needs of both (rather than take positions).</li> <li>• Generate a variety of options for meeting both parties' needs (rather than defending one's own way).</li> <li>• Evaluate options by how they meet the needs and satisfy the interests of all sides (not one side's values).</li> <li>• Collaborate in working out a joint solution (so both sides gain, both grow and win).</li> <li>• Cooperate with the emerging agreement (accept the possible, not demand your ideal).</li> <li>• Reward each other for each step forward, toward agreement (celebrate mutuality).</li> </ul> |

## In Life

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Be steadfast in love  | <b>9.</b> Be firm in our commitment to seek a mutual solution; be stubborn in holding to our common foundation in Christ; be steadfast in love. <i>Colossians 3:12-15</i>  |
| Be open to mediation  | <b>10.</b> Be open to accept skilled help. If we cannot reach agreement among ourselves, we will use those with gifts and training in mediation in the larger church. <i>Philippians 4:1-3</i>   |
| Trust the community   | <b>11.</b> We will trust the community and if we cannot reach agreement or experience reconciliation, we will turn the decision over to others in the congregation or from the broader church. <i>Acts 15</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In one-to-one or small group disputes, this may mean allowing others to arbitrate.</li> <li>• In congregational, conference district or denominational disputes, this may mean allowing others to arbitrate or implementing constitutional decision-making processes, insuring that they are done in the spirit of these guidelines, and abiding by whatever decision is made.</li> </ul> |
| Be the body of Christ | <b>12.</b> Believe in and rely on the solidarity of the Body of Christ and its commitment to peace and justice, rather than resort to the courts of law. <i>1 Corinthians 6:1-6</i>  |

\*Go directly if you are European-North American; in other cultures disagreements are often addressed through a trusted go-between. Mennonite Church USA (adopted by the General Conference Mennonite Church Triannual Session and Mennonite Church General Assembly, Wichita, KS July 1995)

**C**hristians are not immune to conflict. We face it in our homes and churches, in our neighborhoods and work places. Wherever we interact with other people, we experience conflict.

Too often conflict becomes destructive, because we try to avoid it, or because we don't know how to face it well. But we can make it an opportunity to grow, to become more faithful to Jesus, to model Christ-like love for one another.

To work constructively with conflict, we need skills. "Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love" outlines approaches to conflict that will help us live out our calling to be Christian peacemakers.

## Biblical Foundation

The Bible guides us to seek reconciliation when we disagree. Scripture teaches us that conflict can be an arena for God's revelation.

- Reconciliation is at the heart of the gospel. Through Christ we are reconciled to God, who gives us the ministry of reconciliation. *Romans 5:1-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20*
- Reconciliation with others in the church is a prelude to genuine worship. *Matthew 5:23-24*
- Jesus describes a process for addressing conflict and restoring relationships in the church. *Matthew 18:15-22*
- Groups in the early church came together to talk about their differences, to seek the Spirit's leading as they worked for consensus. *Acts 6:1-6; Acts 15:1-3*
- The church needs each person's gifts and perspectives; no one has a corner on truth. *1 Corinthians 12-14*
- God's chosen ones are to bear with one another, to forgive each other and to clothe themselves "with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." *Colossians 3:12-17*
- We are to grow in unity and maturity by speaking the truth in love. *Ephesians 4:1-16*
- God calls us to act and speak with respect for each other despite differences of culture or conviction. *Romans 14:1-7; James 1:19; John 7:51; Ephesians 4:25-32; Matthew 7:1-5; 1 Peter 3: 8, 16*
- God's people do not seek the absence of conflict but the presence of shalom, a peace based on justice. *Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8; Isaiah 58; Matthew 23:23-24; Luke 4:18-19*

## Adopting the Guidelines

We encourage congregations, area conferences, church boards and agencies to adopt the guidelines for agreeing and disagreeing in love, and to use them. The process you use to consider adopting the guidelines can itself be a model for working through differences together.

Design a process to study the guidelines and decide whether to adopt them. Your written process design could include these pieces:

- A. Define the issue: Should our group adopt these guidelines?
- B. Identify goals: To enhance our commitment and ability to deal constructively with conflict. (Add your goals.)
- C. Clarify steps and timeline:
  1. Approve the process design. The appropriate decision-making body acts to do this.
  2. Study the guidelines and the biblical foundations.
    - a. Offer a Sunday school class on conflict resolution skills for congregations.
    - b. Invite an outside resource person to present a Saturday workshop on the topic.
    - c. Encourage committees and small groups to study the guidelines.
  3. Talk together about using the guidelines.
    - a. Discuss ways to use the guidelines in your context.
    - b. Integrate the guidelines into constitutions, bylaws, personnel policies.
    - c. Note concerns that arise and work to resolve them.

4. Implement the decision rule (see below).

D. State the decision rule: Identify who will make the decision, and how it will be made

## Using the Guidelines

After your group has adopted the guidelines, you can:

- Display the "Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love" poster in rooms where committees meet.
- Include training on the guidelines in new member classes or orientation sessions.
- Use reconciliation and conflict resolution as a focus for worship from time to time.
- Include articles in your newsletter about the guidelines and your experience with them.
- Appoint a process observer for your meetings, to monitor your group's use of the guidelines.
- Every year evaluate how your group is working with conflict.

## Several Cautions

The guidelines should not be used as a substitute for the proper exercise of authority. When laws have been broken or people abused, mediation would only be appropriate at later stages, when offenders have taken responsibility for their actions and victims are requesting face-to-face meetings as a step toward their own healing.

The guidelines may inform disciplinary or grievance procedures, but they are not intended to be a substitute for such procedures. In cross-cultural settings, the guidelines should be adapted to fit the context.

The guidelines were primarily adopted to help parties in conflict, not as instructions for groups pursuing God's will in matters of church practice or theology. For such purposes, it is recommended that groups seek additional guidance in processes of Biblical/communal discernment.

## Some Basic Principles

In interpersonal and group conflicts, people can take many of the steps identified in the guidelines without the help of an impartial third party. But when conflict escalates and the principal parties cannot resolve it by negotiating together, they should seek outside help.

In mediation, disputing parties come to their own agreement with the assistance of an objective third party. Those serving as mediators should be trained; attempting to mediate a dispute without having the necessary skills can make matters worse. Trained mediators can help people come to agreement on issues and also aid in healing broken relationships.

If mediation fails to resolve a dispute, arbitration could be sought. The disputing parties would agree in advance to abide by whatever decision the arbitrators make. The arbitrators listen to each party's case, consult with each other, and agree on a win-win decision that attempts to address the interests of all the parties.

## For more information, contact:

### Mennonite Church USA

Jason Boone, Coordinating Minister of Peace and Justice Support Network  
Peace@MennoniteUSA.org;  
Toll-free 866-866-2872; [www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace](http://www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace)

**Lombard Mennonite Peace Center**—101 W. 22nd Street, Suite 206,  
Lombard, IL 60148; 630-627-0507; [Admin@LMPeaceCenter.org](mailto:Admin@LMPeaceCenter.org)  
[www.LMPeaceCenter.org](http://www.LMPeaceCenter.org)

# Guidelines for Biblical/Communal Discernment

Commended by the Executive Board for use in settings across Mennonite Church USA

## What is Biblical/Communal Discernment?

Discernment is a means by which people of faith come to understand God's will. It is one way to practice the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples: "May your kingdom come, and your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). It is a process by which believers . . .

- ✠ anticipate God's presence,
- ✠ seek for God's guidance, and
- ✠ listen for God's call.

In both Old and New Testaments, the people of God sought out those who were wise and discerning among them. The church as described in the New Testament calls the people of God to come together for discernment *as a fellowship of believers*. Jesus promised to be present among even two or three believers gathered in his name (Matthew 18:20).

As Anabaptist Christians, we believe that *we make our best decisions when we gather in the name of Jesus around the Word of God, prayerfully seeking the leading of the Holy Spirit for our shared life in the world*. That is why we call it Biblical/Communal Discernment. Such discernment involves

- ✠ the intent to live faithfully in the world
- ✠ critical reflection on important matters of faith and life
- ✠ obedience to God's will as revealed in scripture.

Discernment is one of the functions of a congregation when it gathers for worship or fellowship (see Rom. 12:2, 1 Cor. 6:1-9; 12:8-10, Heb. 5:14, and Phil. 1:10). Groups may seek to discern God's will on a wide range of questions, from the broadest issues of moral and ethical behavior to very specific practical decisions in the life of an individual or group.

## Who can use a Biblical/Communal Discernment process?

Any Christ-centered community may engage in Biblical/Communal Discernment. Congregations often serve as the best place for believers to give and receive counsel on matters of discernment. However, Mennonite Church USA encourages small groups, leadership teams, committees, task forces, and boards at all levels in the church to engage in Biblical/Communal Discernment as appropriate. The group must agree on the best process for making significant decisions. The nature of the process and the outcome will be shaped by the group's level of authority and responsibility, as well as its relationship with others who have an important stake in the decision.

Communal Discernment works best in small groups that have come to know and trust one another. The larger the group, the greater will be the challenge for coming to a satisfactory group decision. Therefore, if the group is larger than twenty persons, it is helpful to divide into smaller groups. We recommend the use of table groups or circle processes where everyone can readily see and hear each other.

When a large group divides into subgroups, a group facilitator is needed for the large group as well as the smaller groups. These facilitators must work together to assure that all participants have the same information at hand, along with clear instructions. At appropriate times, the smaller groups should report their process to the larger group. Matters of importance to everyone should be posted for all to see. If and when a facilitator seeks to make a statement on behalf of the whole, it must be readily available to all participants.

## **Why do we use Biblical/Communal Discernment?**

We engage in Biblical/Communal Discernment as a form of worshipful work, seeking to make decisions that align with God's work in the world. To truly demonstrate our allegiance to the reign of God, the church must sometimes stand as a contrast society. In other words, we must make decisions which reflect our commitment to God and scripture rather than the prevailing culture. It requires careful discernment to determine the best way to live "in the world," yet not "of the world." In this way, communal processes can provide guidance and protection for believers in an individualistic, pluralistic society.

## **When is Biblical/Communal Discernment most helpful?<sup>1</sup>**

Not all matters call for the same level of discernment. Certain group processes work better than others, depending on the decision to be made. For example:

*Biblical/Communal Discernment may be most helpful when*

- ✚ Dealing with significant matters that affect the whole body
- ✚ A sizeable minority or range of views is present
- ✚ More voices or ideas need to be included
- ✚ Sufficient time is available to explore more options and build consensus
- ✚ A diversity of cultural backgrounds is present
- ✚ Persistent and substantial differences exist
- ✚ Facing a question that defies simple answers

*Parliamentary procedure may be most helpful when*

- ✚ Dealing with routine organizational matters
- ✚ An issue has near or full consensus
- ✚ Clear alternatives have been identified and further discussion is not likely to surface more options
- ✚ Delaying a decision is not a good option
- ✚ Participants are comfortable with parliamentary procedure
- ✚ The group is willing to accept majority rule when a common direction cannot be found.

Some believe that the parliamentary procedures defined in *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised (RONR)* are antithetical to discernment, but that is not accurate.<sup>2</sup> The intent of *RONR* is a carefully structured discernment of ideas. There are various methods for using discernment available within *RONR*. One can be as simple as the moderator beginning a discussion by only taking questions until everyone has the information they need to proceed. Section 52 of *RONR*

describes two processes, “committee of the whole” and “informal consideration,” that can allow for a wider discussion. “Aids to the Crystallization of Opinion”<sup>3</sup> establishes small breakout groups with appointed moderators. Input from the small groups may be reported directly to the body after it has reconvened or it may be conveyed to a committee that attempts to report a consolidated response to the body. A more formal procedure that allows for considering multiple options is “Filling Blanks.”<sup>4</sup> This process allows the body to view all the options at one time. *Robert’s Rules of Order* and discernment can be partners when church bodies come together to seek the leading of the Holy Spirit.

## **What are the essential elements for Biblical/Communal Discernment?**

To truly function as a community of faith, we must be committed to God and to each other. Good group discernment is enhanced by a common commitment to Jesus Christ as the center of our faith, community as the center of our lives, and reconciliation as the center of our work.

A good group discernment process requires the same kind of mutual respect and caring regard for each other that builds any community of faith. The many “One Another” appeals of scripture give instructions for building up the body of Christ. Many of these appeals are deeply familiar—“love one another,” “bear one another’s burdens,” “be kind and compassionate to one another,” “bear with one another and forgive each other.” Most importantly, group discernment requires a willingness to give up one’s own personal preferences for the good of whole.

In order to truly hear God in the midst of the group, individuals must be experienced in listening for God in their personal lives. Personal discernment is learned over time as one engages in spiritual disciplines and practices that help one to notice God’s work in the world—in oneself as well as in others. The quality and depth of communal discernment depends on the spiritual maturity and discernment capacity of the individuals that make up the group. It also depends on the group members’ familiarity with and understanding of scripture. The true message in scripture is learned over time as individuals persist and delight in reading, studying, and meditating on the scriptures.<sup>5</sup> Some individuals are particularly gifted by God’s Spirit to be prophetic—seeing and/or hearing messages from God. Others have a particular gift from God for discernment of spirits (Romans 12:6, 1 Corinthians 12:10). Such individuals do well to submit their sense of God’s direction for the group to discern together.

Another basic element in Communal Discernment is the willingness to give and receive counsel as members of the body of Christ, expressed in a spirit of cooperation or collaboration with the others in the group. Many groups benefit from the use of a written covenant which names the commitments that group members are willing to make to one another as part of the process.

Good group discernment processes also benefit from good facilitation, or leadership, in at least two designated roles:

*Facilitator:* Depending on the setting, this individual might be designated as a moderator, a clerk, or even a “discernmentarian.” The facilitator holds the group accountable to its covenant, guides the group process, calls for prayer as appropriate, and identifies the emerging direction.

*Recorder:* The recorder keeps a record of comments, suggested options, emerging direction or “trial balloons,” and the final decision that is made by a group. This material must generally be available in ways that all can see, such as a chalkboard, newsprint, screen projection, or electronic post.

Perhaps the necessary element that is most difficult to find is sufficient meeting time. Yet when time is too limited, it can diminish the completeness and effectiveness of a discernment process. The movement of the Spirit cannot be manipulated or controlled, and it often takes more time than groups envision to discern God’s will at a deep level. But when groups take sufficient time to make a good decision, it generally takes less time to implement the decision. This is particularly true when the decision to be made is complex, involving a diversity of stakeholders with strong differences of opinion.

## **What are the steps in Biblical/Communal Discernment?**

In its simplest form, Biblical/Communal Discernment means that we gather in the name of Jesus, seek God’s guidance through prayer and scripture, and then discern God’s will together. Those simple steps will be considered in more detail as follows.

### ***I. Gather in the Name of Jesus***

**A. Build community.** The stronger the relationships among the group that is gathered for discernment, the better they can make communal decisions. When people gather who hardly know each other, they must give attention to building relationships. For example, they should use name tags, introduce themselves to each other, and share about their lives. The group facilitator can help group members as individuals, not just in the roles or positions that they carry. By taking time to help participants know each other’s interests and concerns, they can help them move to a deeper level of group participation.

**B. Adopt a group covenant.** A written covenant can help group members to understand the commitments that help the group to do its best work. Taking enough time to discuss the covenant can help the group to avoid misunderstandings that can arise when people come with conflicting assumptions about what is expected. We urge groups to make at least the following commitments:

- ✠ to assume the best intentions of all persons who participate in the group
- ✠ to pray for one another and the group leaders
- ✠ to be patient and kind
- ✠ to speak honestly and directly
- ✠ to practice humility and be willing to change or be corrected
- ✠ to listen actively and carefully
- ✠ to respect the views of those who may not agree with the majority
- ✠ to respect the wisdom of the larger group

**C. Agree on the matter for discernment.** Since groups can easily be distracted by a discussion of many things, it is helpful to clarify the specific decision to be made. This should generally be done by a person or group appointed for this task. Sometimes, the



matter for discernment may be put in the form of a question, such as “What is God’s will for our congregation regarding the needs of undocumented immigrants in our community?” In this case, the goal of group discernment would be to generate different options, and come to a decision.

At other times, the matter for discernment may be stated in the form of a proposal. If so, it should be stated as a simple declarative sentence that represents a change from the status quo, such as: “God is calling our congregation to help sponsor a new community outreach to meet the needs of recent immigrants.” In this case, the goal of group discernment would be to affirm, deny, or “improve” the proposal for acceptance. In some cases, groups may come to the conclusion that it is not the right time to make the decision, and choose to drop the matter.

## ***II. Seek God’s Guidance Through Prayer and Scripture***

- A. Pray together.** Since prayer is an essential element of the discernment process, the facilitator should call the group to prayer not only at the beginning of the meeting but throughout the process. Prayer and silence can help group members refocus when they get sidetracked or overly committed to personal aims. Prayer is a way to assure that our focus remains on discovering God’s will, not achieving individual desires.
- B. Let go.** Most group members bring to the group process their personal needs, desires, wounds, interests, and preferences or convictions regarding the outcome of the group decision. They may also bring spiritual issues such as broken relationships, besetting sins, and resentment towards God. Depending on the strength of these “personal agendas,” they can block that individual’s ability to sense or flow with the Spirit’s leading in the group. Even though these “personal agendas” may remain hidden to the group, they may prevent the group from being able to have a fruitful and open-handed discussion. For this reason, it is helpful for group members to seek a “holy indifference” to everything but God’s will. That was the attitude expressed by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, when he prayed, “Not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). Similarly, the Apostle Paul urged the Philippians to pray that the Spirit would give him sufficient courage to face whatever was in store for him, whether to live or to die (Philippians 1:19-25).

It may be helpful for group members to write down on paper any concerns that might block their ability to listen to God or others, and then to place that paper into an offering basket or at the foot of a cross as a ritual act of worship.

- C. Reflect on scripture.** We acknowledge Scripture as the authoritative source and standard for distinguishing truth from error, for discerning good from evil, and for guiding prayer and worship.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, we believe that scripture should guide our decision making on important matters. Reflection on scripture can help us to align our thoughts with those of the Spirit who inspired the writing of scripture.

The group may choose to designate one or more scriptures for individual study in preparation for the group meeting. Again, during the discernment process, it is helpful to

allow times for both individual and group reflection on scriptures that specifically relate to the matter for discernment. Or they could reflect on an overarching theme that runs through many scriptures, such as God's love for the poor and oppressed. Dwelling in the Word is a particular approach to Scripture. It is designed to help groups engage with the same scripture in multiple settings over time. People are encouraged to listen to the reading of a passage of scripture in the manner of *Lectio Divina*, share their insights with each other in dyads, and then report to larger groups what they heard someone else say. It aims to enhance our listening to both God and others, for the purpose of learning about God's mission in the world.

- D. Share information.** In order to properly engage in a discussion about the matter for discernment, groups need to have sufficient background. In most cases, it is necessary for a designated leader or facilitation group to consider all of the information that the group must have in hand to make a good decision, and how it should be distributed. If the issue is complex and involves many stakeholders, the facilitation group must represent a sufficient range of perspectives to enable them to anticipate the questions and concerns that will be expressed in the larger group.

Since individuals grasp information in different ways, it is helpful to share information orally as well as in written form, and to allow plenty of time for questions of clarification. Participants often feel most comfortable sharing their initial questions and concerns in small groups, with perhaps as few as two or three persons. The questions that arise in smaller settings may signal the need for additional information to be provided for everyone.

- E. Listen to each other.** Listening to each other does not happen in only one step of a larger process; it is an essential part of the entire discernment process. Careful listening will strengthen relationships from the time when participants introduce themselves to each other, to the time that they make a final decision. The goal of a discernment process is to make sure everyone has a chance to be heard, even though some will have more to share than others.

The role of listening is highlighted during this step because it is the time when group members move toward direct engagement with each other on the matter for discernment. To assure that everyone has a chance to speak, facilitators may choose to use a circle process<sup>7</sup> or similar means. The facilitator may also call for times of prayer, silence, or meditation on scripture during this step in the process. If the discerning group is larger than 20 persons, this is a time to use smaller groups to enable everyone's perspective to be heard.

### ***III. Discern God's Will Together***

- A. Consider the options for discernment.** After participants have sufficient clarity on the matter for discernment, the group may be ready to explore specific options for a decision. If the matter for discernment was stated as a proposal, participants will do well to consider both the cons and the pros of accepting the proposal. The separation of the

discussion into cons and pros assures that everyone has adequate opportunity to explore all good reasons for one side of the issue at a time. Otherwise, the discussion can be divisive, turning the discernment process into a debate between members of the group who argue from opposite sides of the issue. Further, experience has shown that it is helpful to consider together all of the reasons *against* accepting a proposal before considering the reasons *for* accepting the proposal. Negative reasons can easily lead to strong negative feelings or aggressive behavior, so it is important to provide an opportunity to release those feelings in an atmosphere of careful listening and opportunity to ask questions for clarification. After all of the reasons for *not* accepting the proposal are posted for all to see, the group can then generate a comprehensive list of reasons to adopt the proposal. At this stage, the group must not debate the merits of any of the reasons. It is simply a time to list them for all to see.

If the matter for discernment was written as a question, the group can begin by brainstorming various ways to answer the question. Sometimes it is helpful to begin with small groups of two or three, so individuals can feel free to share their ideas. These small groups can then choose which ideas should be posted for all to see. When the list of ideas for responding to the question for discernment is complete, the group may be ready to weigh the options for moving forward together.

**B. Weigh the options.** If the group has been considering a proposal, now is the time to weigh the list of cons and pros. It is important to take adequate time for prayer and individual reflection on the cons and pros before entering a group discussion.

If the matter for discernment was written as a question, the groups can begin to weigh the various ideas on the brainstorming list. It is helpful for groups to consider the good in each idea, seeking for the ones with the greatest merit in the eyes of all. Depending on the desired outcomes of the discernment process, it may be sufficient to end the process once the participants have identified the ideas with the strongest merit. However, if the group intends to come to a decision on the very best idea to implement as a group, they would do well to state the decision as a proposal in a simple declarative sentence. They could then test the proposal by weighing the cons and pros as outlined above.

**C. Seek consensus on a decision.** There are a number of ways for a facilitator to enable participants to weigh the options and come to a decision. Groups may use various means to read the emerging consensus of a group. For example, when a “trial balloon” is launched, some groups use a three-finger exercise to show the level of support for an emerging solution: Three fingers raised means strong support for the proposed solution, two fingers means partial support or a willingness to live with it, and one finger stands for an unwillingness to support it. Some groups use various colored cards to indicate essentially the same dispositions as the above.

Consensus is the goal of Communal Discernment in most groups, although they seldom reach complete unanimity on a matter. Consensus means that the group has listened carefully to all voices, majority and minority together, and sought the unity of the Spirit. Consensus is reached when the group has come to a common mind on a matter, or when

those who dissent have indicated a readiness to accept the group decision, even though it may not represent their preference. A statement of consensus may acknowledge minority points of view.

However, the goal of Biblical/Communal Discernment goes beyond group consensus. It reaches for the joyous convergence of our desires with our sense of God's will. It longs for the sense of God's presence and power among us, showing the way forward. It aspires to arrive at the outcome expressed in Acts 15:28: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...."

The quality of a good discernment process is tested over time, as it often leads to a settled sense of peace, consolation by the Holy Spirit, and the flowing of God's healing and hope from us to the world.

### **Additional resources:**

1. Barton, Ruth Haley. Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups, Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2012.
2. Curtiss, Victoria G. Guidelines for Communal Discernment, Louisville, Kentucky: Presbyterian Peacemaking Program.
3. Fendall, Lon, Jan Wood and Bruce Bishop. Practicing Discernment Together: Finding God's Way Forward in Decision Making, Newberg, Oregon: Barclay Press, 2007.
4. Glick, Sally Weaver. In Tune with God: The Art of Congregational Discernment. Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Faith and Life Resources, 2004.
5. Morris, Danny E. and Charles M. Olsen. Discerning God's Will Together: A Spiritual Practice for the Church, Nashville, Tennessee: Upper Room Books, 1997.
6. Stutzman, Ervin R. Discerning God's Will Together: Biblical Interpretation in the Free Church Tradition, Telford, Pennsylvania: Cascadia Publishing House, 2013.

### **Notes**

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<sup>1</sup> The majority of the following two lists are drawn from Victoria G. Curtiss in *Guidelines for Communal Discernment* produced by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, which extends permission for adaptation of the material.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 9-10 This paragraph is taken in its entirety from *Guidelines for Discernment* by Victoria G. Curtiss.

<sup>3</sup> Robert, *op. cit.* pp. 524-25.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 155-60

<sup>5</sup> See page 22, *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*

<sup>6</sup> See page 21, *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*

<sup>7</sup> A Circle Process involves a Talking Stick or similar method, where participants pass a stick or other object around the circle, and only the one who has the stick in hand can speak. Participants are given the freedom to "pass" on the first round, knowing they will have the first opportunity to speak after the stick has made its way around the entire circle the first time.

Ervin R. Stutzman  
Executive Director  
Mennonite Church USA  
May 1, 2013  
Updated June 5, 2015

# Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, 1995

Mennonite Church USA

## Summary Statement

1. We believe that **God** exists and is pleased with all who draw near by faith. We worship the one holy and loving God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit eternally. God has created all things visible and invisible, has brought salvation and new life to humanity through Jesus Christ, and continues to sustain the church and all things until the end of the age.
2. We believe in **Jesus Christ**, the Word of God become flesh. He is the Savior of the world, who has delivered us from the dominion of sin and reconciled us to God by his death on a cross. He was declared to be Son of God by his resurrection from the dead. He is the head of the church, the exalted Lord, the Lamb who was slain, coming again to reign with God in glory.
3. We believe in the **Holy Spirit**, the eternal Spirit of God, who dwelled in Jesus Christ, who empowers the church, who is the source of our life in Christ, and who is poured out on those who believe as the guarantee of redemption.
4. We believe that all **Scripture** is inspired by God through the Holy Spirit for instruction in salvation and training in righteousness. We accept the Scriptures as the Word of God and as the fully reliable and trustworthy standard for Christian faith and life. Led by the Holy Spirit in the church, we interpret Scripture in harmony with Jesus Christ.
5. We believe that God has **created the heavens and the earth** and all that is in them, and that God preserves and renews what has been made. All creation has its source outside itself and belongs to the Creator. The world has been created good because God is good and provides all that is needed for life.
6. We believe that God has **created human beings** in the divine image. God formed them from the dust of the earth and gave them a special dignity among all the works of creation. Human beings have been made for relationship with God, to live in peace with each other, and to take care of the rest of creation.
7. We confess that, beginning with Adam and Eve, humanity has disobeyed God, given way to the tempter, and chosen to **sin**. All have fallen short of the Creator's intent, marred the image of God in which they were created, disrupted order in the world, and limited their love for others. Because of sin, humanity has been given over to the enslaving powers of evil and death.
8. We believe that, through Jesus Christ, God offers **salvation** from sin and a new way of life. We receive God's salvation when we repent and accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. In Christ, we are reconciled with God and brought into the reconciling community. We place our faith in God that, by the same power that raised Christ from the dead, we may be saved from sin to follow Christ and to know the fullness of salvation.
9. We believe that the **church** is the assembly of those who have accepted God's offer of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. It is the new community of disciples sent into the world to proclaim the reign of God and to provide a foretaste of the church's glorious hope. It is the new society established and sustained by the Holy Spirit.
10. We believe that the **mission** of the church is to proclaim and to be a sign of the kingdom of God. Christ has commissioned the church to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all things he has commanded.
11. We believe that the **baptism** of believers with water is a sign of their cleansing from sin. Baptism is also a pledge before the church of their covenant with God to walk in the way of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Believers are baptized into Christ and his body by the Spirit, water, and blood.
12. We believe that the **Lord's Supper** is a sign by which the church thankfully remembers the new covenant which Jesus established by his death. In this communion meal, the church renews its covenant with God and with each other and participates in the life and death of Jesus Christ, until he comes.

13. We believe that in **washing the feet** of his disciples, Jesus calls us to serve one another in love as he did. Thus we acknowledge our frequent need of cleansing, renew our willingness to let go of pride and worldly power, and offer our lives in humble service and sacrificial love.

14. We practice **discipline** in the church as a sign of God's offer of transforming grace. Discipline is intended to liberate erring brothers and sisters from sin, and to restore them to a right relationship with God and to fellowship in the church. The practice of discipline gives integrity to the church's witness in the world.

15. We believe that **ministry** is a continuation of the work of Christ, who gives gifts through the Holy Spirit to all believers and empowers them for service in the church and in the world. We also believe that God calls particular persons in the church to specific leadership ministries and offices. All who minister are accountable to God and to the community of faith.

16. We believe that the church of Jesus Christ is **one body** with many members, ordered in such a way that, through the one Spirit, believers may be built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

17. We believe that Jesus Christ calls us to **discipleship**, to take up our cross and follow him. Through the gift of God's saving grace, we are empowered to be disciples of Jesus, filled with his Spirit, following his teachings and his path through suffering to new life. As we are faithful to his way, we become conformed to Christ and separated from the evil in the world.

18. We believe that to be a disciple of Jesus is to know **life in the Spirit**. As the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ takes shape in us, we grow in the image of Christ and in our relationship with God. The Holy Spirit is active in individual and in communal worship, leading us deeper into the experience of God.

19. We believe that God intends human life to begin in **families** and to be blessed through families. Even more, God desires all people to become part of the church, God's family. As single and married members of the church family give and receive nurture and healing, families can grow toward the wholeness that God intends. We are called to chastity and to loving faithfulness in marriage.

20. We commit ourselves to tell the **truth**, to give a simple yes or no, and to avoid the swearing of oaths.

21. We believe that everything belongs to God, who calls the church to live in faithful **stewardship** of all that God has entrusted to us, and to participate now in the rest and justice which God has promised.

22. We believe that **peace** is the will of God. God created the world in peace, and God's peace is most fully revealed in Jesus Christ, who is our peace and the peace of the whole world. Led by the Holy Spirit, we follow Christ in the way of peace, doing justice, bringing reconciliation, and practicing nonresistance, even in the face of violence and warfare.

23. We believe that the church is God's holy nation, called to give full allegiance to Christ its head and to witness to every **nation, government, and society** about God's saving love.

24. We place our hope in the **reign of God** and its fulfillment in the day when Christ will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. He will gather his church, which is already living under the reign of God. We await God's final victory, the end of this present age of struggle, the resurrection of the dead, and a new heaven and a new earth. There the people of God will reign with Christ in justice, righteousness, and peace for ever and ever.

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Adopted by the delegates of Mennonite Church General Assembly, and of the General Conference Mennonite Church Triennial Session, July 28, 1995, Wichita, Kansas. [Mennonite Church USA](#), formed by the merger of these two groups, has adopted this confession as its statement of faith. Copyright © 1995 by Herald Press Scottsdale PA 15683. Used by permission. Order print copies of *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, and *Summary Statement, Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, From [Herald Press](#), Scottsdale, Pa. [Worship resources](#) based on this confession, and [translations](#) are also available.



## Renewed Commitments for MC USA

*A Living Document for the Journey Forward Process<sup>1</sup>*

God invites us to experience and bear witness to the belovedness of all creation. We yearn to know and share in the mystery of God's unending love.

We confess that sin fragments our wholeness and strains our relationships with God, each other and the world. Confronted with the misuses of power in our lives, communities and institutions, we seek to tell the truth and repent.

The Holy Spirit beckons us toward the restoration of all things in Christ. God continually calls us beloved.

<sup>2</sup> On this journey together, we commit to:

### **Follow Jesus**

As an Anabaptist community of the living Word, we listen for God's call as we read Scripture together, guided by the Spirit. Through baptism we commit ourselves to live faithfully as Jesus' disciples, no matter the cost.<sup>3</sup>

### **Witness to God's peace**

We are called to extend God's holistic peace, proclaiming Christ's redemption for the world with our lives. Through Christ, God frees the world from sin and offers reconciliation. We bear witness to this gift of peace by rejecting violence and resisting injustice in all forms, and in all places.<sup>4</sup>

### **Experience transformation**

The Holy Spirit dwells in and among us, transforming us to reflect God's love. Through worship the Spirit gathers the body of Christ, where our diversity reveals God's beauty. The Spirit empowers our communities to embody the grace, joy and peace of the gospel.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Journey Forward* refers to a two-year process of church-wide discernment growing out of the Future Church Summit held in Orlando in 2017. JF has two primary documents for church use: this living document and an interactive study guide. The feedback gathered from congregations, conferences, constituency groups and church agencies will shape future improvements to this document in preparation for delegate engagement in Kansas City in 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 1, Psalm 24:1, Luke 15:11-31, John 3:16-17, Ephesians 3:19, Romans 5:8

<sup>3</sup> 2 Kings 23:1-3, Isaiah 61:1-2, Mark 8:34, Luke 4:17-19, Ephesians 4:1-6, Hebrews 1:1-4

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 9:6, Micah 6:6-8, Matthew 5:38-48, 2 Corinthians 5:19, Ephesians 4:32

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 133:1, John 14:16, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Ephesians 3:10, Revelation 7:9

# Transitional Pastor Policy

## Menonite Church USA<sup>1</sup>

### Rationale and Objectives

There has been a growing recognition of the value of transitional pastor ministry in congregations throughout Menonite Church USA. At the same time, there has been an increasing shortage of qualified transitional pastors. To encourage existing transitional pastors to continue and to add significantly to their ranks, attention needs to be given to:

1. The establishment of common practices in transitional pastor ministry in Menonite congregations;
2. Addressing employment issues peculiar to transitional pastors;
3. Working relationships between transitional pastors and conferences, among conferences, and between conferences and Menonite Church USA.

### Definitions

*Transitional pastors* (sometimes referred to as intentional interim pastors), serve congregations during interim times, typically between long-term pastors or lead pastors. They are specialists who provide leadership that enables a congregation to work at focused agenda which results in healing, clarifying identity, discerning new vision, and setting a fresh tone for the next long-term pastor/s. Transitional pastors see that normal pastoral ministry continues through their own efforts and through empowering others to assist so that they have adequate time to devote to transitional objectives. Transitional pastors may come into conflicted settings or follow a long-term pastor that has been highly respected and loved.

*Interim pastors* provide maintenance pastoral ministry in congregations that have chosen to begin searching for long term leadership immediately after a pastor has announced a resignation or has left, or is on a sabbatical. The interim pastor is not expected to provide leadership focused on self-study and vision work.

### 1. Common practices

#### A. Qualifications

##### 1) Emotional maturity

Transitional pastors have an opportunity to model healthy pastoral ministry performance in specific areas: being self-differentiated—a non-anxious presence, practicing healthy self-care, exiting, avoiding over-functioning, enabling the congregation to make crucial decisions without interjecting personal preferences.

##### 2) Theological orientation

In situations of theological conflict, transitional pastors have a unique opportunity to clarify what it means to be Anabaptist/Mennonite in ecclesiology, and facilitate healthy congregational decisions regarding theological identity and ecclesiological understandings.

##### 3) Specialized training

a) Specialized training in transitional ministry is encouraged. Recommended opportunities include Interim Ministry Network's training, Menonite Church USA training, and certification through a regional support group and supervision.

b) Due to the shortage of trained transitional pastors, new transitional pastors without specialized training or experience are encouraged to pursue training during an interim assignment.

c) All transitional pastors are minimally required, when logistically possible, to participate in quarterly educational and support programs (similar to those in northern Indiana, Ohio Menonite Conference and Franconia Conference).



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**B. Context and Calling**

1) **Length of transitional pastor assignments**

The length of an interim period is determined by congregational objectives. The majority range from 12-24 months. Interim periods longer than two years are not advisable, and should only happen when specific objectives warrant it.

2) **Non-availability for long term candidate status**

All transitional pastors are required to explain the rationale for non-availability for long term candidate status during the negotiation phase, and to include in their employment contract a statement similar to the following: *The transitional pastor will not be considered as a candidate for long term pastoral leadership in this congregation.*

3) **Timing and role of the transitional pastor in the search process**

- a) Congregations are best served when they wait to begin their pastoral search process until several other items have been addressed. These include, at a minimum, work at grief, healing and reconciliation, but ideally also include clarification of the congregation's vision. The pastoral search usually occurs in the last half or third of the transitional period. Embarking on the search process before that point is counterproductive for accomplishing objectives for the transitional period.
- b) If adequate education and consultation about the search *process* is provided by the conference, the transitional pastor's role is usually limited to reminding the search committee to communicate adequately with the congregation. In cases where this resource is not provided, the transitional pastor should provide *process* education and consultation to the search committee. The transitional pastor should not be involved in providing or evaluating candidate profiles. The transitional pastor should not attend candidate interviews or candidate presentation weekends.

**C. Church Membership and Ministerial Credentials**

- 1) Transitional pastors (as well as spouse and family where applicable) are encouraged to select one local congregation in which to maintain long term membership. (This is similar to the practice of many international missionaries.) The transitional pastor's ministerial credential will remain lodged in the conference with which the transitional pastor's home congregation is affiliated.
- 2) The conference minister(s) of the transitional pastor's home conference is responsible to oversee *long term pastoral care* of the transitional pastor, e.g. sabbatical planning, vocational direction, ministerial ethics, etc.
- 3) Responsibility for addressing issues of pastoral misconduct would be assumed by the home conference in close relationship with the conference where the accusations are made.
- 4) The ministerial credential would be recognized by (but not transferred to) the conference the transitional pastor is currently serving. The ministerial leadership of the current conference is responsible for oversight of *short term pastoral care* of the transitional pastor: illness, crises, support for ministry, etc. The congregation in which the transitional pastor is serving will provide associate membership status for the transitional pastor.

**D. Supervision and Accountability**

- 1) The transitional pastor is encouraged to respect and fully participate in the supervision and accountability structures in place in each congregation being served.

- 99 2) In addition to accountability in the local congregation, the transitional pastor is expected to  
100 identify and/or clarify supervision and accountability relationships within the conference  
101 structure in which the transitional pastor is currently serving.  
102 3) The area conference being served by the transitional pastor is encouraged to provide a  
103 coaching relationship or a transitional pastor peer support group to help the transitional  
104 pastor navigate the resources and culture of the conference.  
105 4) The participation of transitional pastors in current conference functions and relationships is  
106 valuable to the congregation being served, the transitional pastor, and the conference.  
107 However, the transitional pastor is constantly challenged by time limitations and sometimes  
108 might, in consultation with congregational and conference leadership, need to make unique  
109 arrangements to meet this need. In maintaining adequate support levels, he/she is  
110 sometimes not able to attend all conference and ecumenical pastors groups.  
111

## 112 2. Employment issues peculiar to transitional pastors

### 113 A. Salary

114 The complete Mennonite Church USA guidelines will be followed for salary calculations. In  
115 addition, the congregation being served will continue salary and benefits for one month beyond  
116 the conclusion of the transitional period in recognition of the irregular nature and higher  
117 intensity level of this particular kind of ministry. This practice will provide time for  
118 regeneration and retooling for the transitional pastor before taking on the next assignment. In  
119 situations of great complexity or intense conflict which call for exceptional emotional and  
120 physical effort, congregations are encouraged to compensate accordingly by exceeding  
121 Mennonite Church USA salary guidelines, or regeneration or sabbatical recommendations. In  
122 these settings, conference ministers will advocate on behalf of the transitional pastor.  
123

### 124 B. Benefits

- 125 1) Benefits shall include continuing education and retirement, as per Mennonite Church USA  
126 guidelines. In addition:  
127  
128 2) *Vacation*: Mennonite Church USA guidelines for accumulated years in ministry will be  
129 followed. The transitional pastor is generally encouraged to take short breaks of 3-7 days  
130 duration rather than a long multiple-week break.  
131  
132 3) *Health Insurance*: Congregations and conferences are encouraged to be flexible in  
133 insurance matters in recognition of the unique stressor dealing with health insurance places  
134 on the transitional pastor and family. An additional month of insurance coverage will be  
135 provided by the congregation at the end of the assignment. **For congregations with**  
136 **Corinthian Plan coverage see 3b. below**  
137

#### 138 Other Health Insurance Options:

- 139 a. The transitional pastor could be considered employed ministry staff of his/her home  
140 conference. This would insure that coverage is as seamless as possible for the  
141 transitional pastor, and would avoid underwriting that could occur in changing insurance  
142 providers. The home conference could invoice the cost of insurance to a) the  
143 congregation where serving, or b) when the transitional pastor is between assignments,  
144 directly to the transitional pastor.  
145  
146 b. Most Corinthian Plan participants have the option to continue their medical coverage for  
147 an additional 18 months after congregational employment is completed, through  
148 Continuation of Coverage. (Pastors who are Medicare eligible or enrolled in Medicare

149 are not eligible for Continuation.) The process for Continuation is: The congregation  
150 must cancel Corinthian Plan coverage by submitting a completed Cancellation Form to  
151 Everence when the pastor ends employment (best to submit cancellation in advance of  
152 actual date), and then Continuation will be offered directly to the pastor. If the pastor  
153 elects Continuation they will be directly invoiced until their next assignment begins,  
154 they begin other coverage, become eligible for Medicare, or the maximum period of  
155 Continuation (18 months) is reached, whichever is earliest (if the pastor does not elect  
156 Continuation, medical coverage will end on the last day of the month in which the  
157 pastor ends employment). If the new congregation is participating with The Corinthian  
158 Plan, then coverage can be transferred to the new assignment. Otherwise, the pastor on  
159 Continuation may choose to remain on Continuation until they begin other coverage/is  
160 Medicare eligible, or the 18 month maximum for Continuation ends. Congregations will  
161 cover the cost of one month of insurance premium for Continuation of Coverage under  
162 The Corinthian Plan or coverage under another plan-after the congregational assignment  
163 is completed for the Transitional Pastor.

- 164
- 165 4) *Sabbatical*: In addition to the salary and benefit extension that covers regeneration time  
166 between assignments, congregations served by a transitional pastor will provide an amount  
167 equal to one month of regular salary for each 12 months of ministry, or fraction thereof,  
168 and prorated accordingly. Unused years toward a sabbatical in a long term congregation do  
169 not accrue when such a pastor becomes an II/T pastor, but years do accrue when an II/T  
170 pastor moves to the next assignment. This money will be placed in a sabbatical fund to be  
171 held in trust by the area conference office for that particular transitional pastor. The funds  
172 will be available for a sabbatical after several transitional assignments, based on actual  
173 accumulated service of 4 years. The home credentialing area conference will issue a 1099  
174 for tax reporting purposes at the end of the tax year when sabbatical fund monies are  
175 disbursed to a transitional pastor. Sabbatical planning is to be done by the transitional  
176 pastor in consultation with the conference minister where his/her credential is held. In  
177 situations where these monies are not fully vested or claimed, the monies shall be  
178 forwarded to the Transitional Pastor Fund, referred to in item 3, B, 5 below.

179

180 5) *Expense Coverage*:

- 181 a) Congregations are encouraged to recognize that above budget expenses will often be  
182 incurred during a transitional period for such items as curricular supplies, consultants'  
183 fees, specialized training, etc.
- 184 b) Transitional pastors are expected to attend conference and denominational meetings, as  
185 are long-term pastors. The congregation will cover the expenses of attendance.
- 186 c) In addition to travel costs of carrying out the pastoral duties, there are times when the  
187 transitional pastor will need to travel longer distances from home in order to carry out  
188 the assignment and incur additional travel/lodging expense. The receiving congregation  
189 should assume responsibility for these extra expenses.
- 190 d) When a long distance commuting situation emerges, the congregation being served by  
191 the transitional pastor will assume responsibility for seeing that everything possible is  
192 done to limit commuting stressors. A transitional pastor should not incur financial  
193 liabilities for lodging or commuting costs, and should have a realistic work schedule that  
194 allows adequate time at home with family.

195

196 **3. Conference Responsibilities**

197 **A. Employment Negotiations**

198 Conference leaders will serve in an advocacy role for the transitional pastor in salary and  
199 benefit negotiations. In situations where congregation/conference relationships are strained,  
200 conference leaders will advocate for the transitional pastor. When advocacy is absent, the  
201 transitional pastor needs to utilize her/his own resources to educate the congregation on the  
202 transition process. Conferences will encourage congregations to realize that interim periods are  
203 not the time to attempt to save financial resources by understaffing, since that results in  
204 transitional pastors devoting an inordinate amount of time to routine pastoral tasks.  
205

#### 206 **B. Inter Conference Cooperation**

207 Cooperating conferences are encouraged to communicate freely with each other so as to  
208 maximize stewardship of the limited availability of transitional pastors. This includes the  
209 following understandings:

- 210 1) Conferences may **contact** transitional pastors in other conferences regarding potential  
211 assignments.
- 212 2) Conferences will keep each other informed, upon request, of **availability dates** of their  
213 transitional pastors.
- 214 3) **Credential** recognition: see p. 2.
- 215 4) Conferences, in consultation with the transitional pastors group, will **establish criteria** to  
216 determine who is qualified to be included in a list of recommended transitional pastors.

#### 217 **Possible criteria:**

- 218 a) completion of a training experience deemed adequate by the conference minister in  
219 consultation with the transitional pastors group.
- 220 b) completion of Interim Ministry Network's basic training or a year of  
221 supervised transitional ministry experience along with quarterly transitional pastors  
222 group participation which results in a recommendation by the supervisor who is an  
223 experienced/trained transitional pastor;
- 224 c) regular participation in a transitional pastors support group;
- 225 d) a commitment to continue in transitional pastor ministry, vis-à-vis using transitional  
226 ministry as an entry point into regular pastoral ministry or as a means of income  
227 between long term assignments.

#### 228

#### 229 **4. Development and Promotion**

##### 230 1) Constituency Education

231 Transitional pastors, their support groups, conferences and the denomination are encouraged  
232 to make constituency education a priority through seminars and other conference and  
233 denominational venues. This includes helping congregations acknowledge the wisdom in  
234 seeking objective, outside counsel as a matter of basic congregational health at all times.  
235 Congregations are usually not the best judge in discerning their need regarding a transitional  
236 pastor or interim pastor assignment.  
237

##### 238 2) Recruitment

239 Transitional pastors, their support groups, conference and denominational leaders are  
240 encouraged to develop a specific plan for recruitment to increase the ranks of qualified  
241 transitional pastors. This will include a strategy for utilizing bi-vocational transitional pastors.  
242

##### 243 3) Training

244 The Transitional Pastor Group will be encouraged to provide regional training  
245 opportunities. Conferences and the denomination will work cooperatively in funding,  
246 promoting and recruiting, potential candidates for transitional pastor training events.  
247

- 248 4) The Transitional Pastor Management Group shall be composed of:  
249 a. The director of denominational ministry or designee  
250 b. Two (2) conference ministers  
251 c. Two (2) transitional pastors

252 Terms for the conference ministers and transitional pastors will be three (3) years with eligibility  
253 for an additional term for a total of six (6) years. This Group shall give a report at the annual area  
254 conference ministers meeting.  
255  
256

## 257 **Expectations of Congregations Using Transitional Pastors**

258

- 259 1. It is often difficult for congregations to admit the need for specialized leadership during times  
260 of transition, such as between long-term pastors or lead pastors, or during difficult periods of  
261 congregational life. There is a sense that they can handle these periods on their own.  
262 Therefore, it is very helpful, indeed imperative, that a congregation requests assistance during  
263 these times.  
264
- 265 2. Congregations are expected to consult often with their conference leaders, and utilize the  
266 expertise of the Conference Minister. Keep the Conference Minister apprised of  
267 developments within the congregation, progress made, and needs which arise. Your  
268 Conference Minister wants to rejoice with you as progress is made.  
269
- 270 3. The goal of a transitional period is to develop a focused agenda which speaks to the issues at  
271 hand. This agenda is often developed with the transitional pastor, and the transitional pastor  
272 will then give this agenda priority in his / her work. This agenda may include: working  
273 through grief, healing of congregational hurts, clarifying the identity of the congregation,  
274 discerning new vision, or setting a fresh tone for the next long-term pastor/s.  
275
- 276 4. Be willing to work hard and to be very focused for an interim period of 12-24 months. This is  
277 intended to be a temporary period, and the transitional pastor is not to be seen as the long-term  
278 pastor.  
279
- 280 5. Provide the budget necessary for the transitional pastor to bring in the needed resources to  
281 work at the agenda. This includes an adequate salary, benefits, and expenses for the  
282 transitional pastor, suggested to be, at a minimum, the guidelines of Mennonite Church USA.  
283 Benefits shall include continuing education, vacation time, and retirement.  
284
- 285 6. In addition to their salary, the congregation being served will set aside one month of additional  
286 salary and benefits at the conclusion of the transitional period in recognition of the irregular  
287 nature and higher intensity level of this particular kind of ministry.  
288
- 289 7. Congregations and conferences are encouraged to be flexible in all such insurance matters in  
290 recognition of the unique stressor dealing with health insurance places on the transitional  
291 pastor and family. An additional month of insurance coverage will be provided by the  
292 congregation at the end of the assignment.  
293

294 [One possible way of dealing with medical insurance coverage is for the transitional pastor to  
295 be considered employed ministry staff of his/her home conference. This would insure that  
296 coverage is as seamless as possible for the transitional pastor, and would avoid underwriting  
297 that could occur in changing insurance providers. The home conference could invoice the cost

- 298 of insurance to a) the congregation where serving, or b) when the transitional pastor is  
299 between assignments, directly to the transitional pastor.]  
300
- 301 **8.** In addition to the salary and benefit extension that covers regeneration time between  
302 assignments, congregations served by a transitional pastor will provide an amount equal to one  
303 month of regular salary for each 12 months of ministry, or fraction thereof, and prorated  
304 accordingly. This money will be placed in a sabbatical fund to be held in trust by the  
305 transitional pastor's home conference office for that particular transitional pastor.  
306
- 307 **9.** Congregations are encouraged to recognize that above budget expenses will often be incurred  
308 during a transitional period for such items as curricular supplies, consultants' fees, specialized  
309 training, etc.  
310
- 311 **10.** Provide space and priority for the transitional pastor to consult with your Conference Minister  
312 and to attend conference events, appropriate churchwide meetings, and pastor-peer meetings.  
313 The congregation will cover the expenses of attendance.  
314
- 315 **11.** When a long distance commuting situation emerges, the congregation being served by the  
316 transitional pastor will assume responsibility for seeing that everything possible is done to  
317 limit commuting stressors. A transitional pastor should not incur financial liabilities for  
318 lodging or commuting costs, and should have a realistic work schedule that allows adequate  
319 time at home with family.  
320
- 321 **12.** Congregations need to realize that transitional periods are not the time to attempt to save  
322 financial resources by understaffing, since that results in the transitional pastor devoting an  
323 inordinate amount of time to routine pastoral tasks.  
324
- 325 **13.** Be willing to postpone or delay the pastoral search process until adequate attention is given to  
326 the issues at hand. The transitional pastor will be able to assist this discernment, and suggest a  
327 process for the congregation during its search. The Conference Minister should be brought in  
328 for this process.  
329
- 330 **14.** The transitional pastor will not transfer membership to your congregation. They may become  
331 associate members for the period they serve your congregation. The TP's ordination will  
332 remain with their home conference.  
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<sup>1</sup>The Mid-States Conferences (IL, IN-MI, OH, and CDC) developed a prototype of this policy in 2008. Members of the task force were Cliff Brubaker, Gary Martin, Dan Miller, Larry Wilson, Lavon Welty, Sherm Kauffman, Tim Lichti, Wayne Nitzsche, Willie Kanagy, and Wayne Hochstetler (Chair).

The Task Force was formed at the initiative of the Leadership Meeting of the Mid-States Conferences on October 12, 2006. It met for the first time on January 22, 2007. This proposal was approved as revised at the January 28, 2008, meeting of the Mid-States Conferences. The proposal was presented and briefly processed at the December 2008 annual area church/conference ministers' meeting. With feedback from that meeting, a draft Mennonite Church USA policy was developed by Lee Lever, Director of Denominational Ministry, for discussion at the 2009 annual area church/conference ministers' meeting at AMBS. Conference ministers approved and adopted the policy with minor changes.

Minor edits were made by the Intentional Interim/Transitional Ministry Task Group (MC USA) in December, 2016: 2.A. Salary; 2.B.3.b Corinthian Plan; 2.B.4 Sabbaticals.

April 2017



## Congregations Considering Leaving Current Conference or Mennonite Church USA

1. Withdrawal from Mennonite Church USA
  - a. Process - Building on the Membership Guidelines which encourages mutual respect for one another when a relationship is ending we suggest the following steps:
    - i. Congregational leadership will share with conference leadership that they are considering leaving the Area Conference and Mennonite Church USA
    - ii. A conversation between congregational leaders and Area Conference leadership will happen before any decision has been made
    - iii. When a congregational decision is made, a letter stating this decision will be sent to the Area Conference office.
    - iv. The Area Conference office will notify Leadership Development that the congregation has officially left Mennonite Church USA
    - v. A public service of acknowledgement of the end of relationship
  - b. Implications for credentialed leaders - Here are some basic understandings and steps to follow in these instances.
    - i. When a congregation leaves an area conference, that area conference will no longer hold and is no longer responsible for the credentials of persons associated with that congregation. This will include those serving within the congregation and those who are serving outside of the congregation.
    - ii. For archival reasons, the conference will enter documentation into the credentialed person's file and then transfer the credential to the Leadership Development Office. The credential will be considered by the denomination as "inactive" (A Mennonite Polity for Ministerial Leadership, p. 90).
    - iii. According to the Mennonite Polity for Ministerial Leadership this credential is not valid for performing ministerial functions nor does Mennonite Church USA and its member conferences have responsibility for the person holding an inactive.
    - iv. The congregation may recognize this credential as valid, but they should know that they are alone responsible for the credential.
    - v. When a congregation leaves a conference, the conference minister should communicate these understandings to the congregation and the person(s) whose credentials were formerly held by the conference. A copy of this communication should be sent to Leadership Development. (A sample letter is attached.)
    - vi. Record of the credential will remain in Leadership Development database for archival purposes.

- vii. If the congregation has no intention of remaining with Mennonite Church USA, the pastor's credentials are terminated effective with the date of departure.
  - a. If the pastor is not in agreement with the decision to leave, s/he is encouraged to join another Mennonite Church USA congregation.
  - b. If "a" is not an option, credential can be held with some continuing accountability plan in place. Length of such holding is indeterminate. (Office of Ministerial Leadership Office 2002ff)
  
- 2. Seeking to move to another conference within Mennonite Church USA
  - a. Process - The Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA has outlined the following process (Article III, 3.b of the Mennonite Church USA Bylaws and Membership Guidelines, Part II, No. 12).
    - i. A congregation is required to follow a process of discernment with their conference of origin before another conference may formally consider their application for membership.
      - a. Normally this process will require several meetings of the congregation's leaders with leaders of the conference they wish to leave (at least three meetings is suggested).
      - b. With their application for membership in the new conference the congregation will present a joint congregation/conference of origin statement to the receiving conference which states reasons why the congregation wants to change area conference affiliation
      - c. When the congregation/conference of origin meetings were held, with a summary of the discussion of the meetings
      - d. How or if this affects any other matters in the conference of origin
      - e. The matters that have been resolved in the congregation, Conference of origin relationship along with those that may remain unresolved
    - ii. In the event that a conference has taken disciplinary action that separates a congregation, and that congregation subsequently applies to another conference for membership, the conference to which the congregation applies for membership is required to follow a process of discernment with the congregation\*s conference of origin. The conference to which the congregation is making application for membership will initiate several meetings with the conference of origin to discuss the congregation\*s dismissal, and their application for membership into the receiving conference.
      - a. The conference of origin will supply the conference to which the congregation is making application, a written statement of reasons why and how they separated the congregation.
      - b. The receiving conference will supply a statement to the conference of origin explaining why, and on what time frame; they are considering accepting the congregation into membership.
    - iii. Both conferences will notify the Executive Director of Mennonite Church USA when either of these processes begins and will supply copies of the statements named above. The executive director reserves the right of



counsel throughout the process, but will respect the polity of Mennonite Church USA that rests final discretion of membership of congregations with area conferences (Bylaw Article IV, 2.a).

*Adopted by Mennonite Church USA Executive Board, June 26, 2004*

- b. Implications for credentialed leaders
  - i. When the intention of the congregation is to join another Mennonite Church USA Area Conference, the original area conference will hold the credential for up to one year while the congregation is in the process of transferring.
  - ii. If the process of transferring to another conference takes longer than a year, the credential may be transferred to the Leadership Development Office.
  - iii. During this transition process the pastor is expected to be in active relationship with the conference they are moving towards. The pastor will be accountable to the leadership of this conference during this exploratory phase.
  - iv. If after two years, the congregation has not joined an area conference within Mennonite Church USA the credential will become inactive. According to the Mennonite Polity for Ministerial Leadership this credential is not valid for performing ministerial functions nor does Mennonite Church USA and its member conferences have responsibility for the person holding an inactive.

December 13, 2013  
Leadership Development Office  
Terry Shue and Nancy Kauffmann

This document is the result of looking at existing Mennonite Church USA documents, building on the Membership Guidelines and receiving input from Area Church/Conference Ministers' Meeting in Phoenix 2012.

(Today's date)

Dear (credentialed minister and congregational name):

SUBJECT: CREDENTIAL STATUS OF (CREDENTIAL MINISTER)

This letter is to officially recognize your congregation's desire to leave (*said*) conference of Mennonite Church USA. This affects the credential our denomination holds for your pastor, (*name*).

As a result of the congregation's choice to leave the conference and choosing not to be part of Mennonite Church USA, our area conference will no longer hold and is no longer responsible for the ministerial credentials of persons associated with your congregation. This includes those serving within the congregation and those who are serving outside of the congregation.

The credential of (*said minister*) is now considered invalid for performing ministerial functions and Mennonite Church USA and its member conferences have no responsibility or liability for the actions of the person holding this invalid credential. Your congregation may recognize this credential as valid, but you should know that you alone are responsible and liable for the credential.

If the credential was in good standing (*you may want to comment case by case on this*) when the congregation left, the denomination will acknowledge and transfer the credential should another recognized credentialing body request it.

Sincerely,

(Conference Minister)

cc: Leadership Development, Mennonite Church USA

**Executive Board Criteria**  
**For application of Article III, 3.b of the Mennonite Church USA Bylaws and**  
**Membership Guidelines, Part II, No. 12.**

A congregation is required to follow a process of discernment with their conference of origin before another conference may formally consider their application for membership.

- a. Normally this process will require several meetings of the congregation's leaders with leaders of the conference they wish to leave (at least three meetings is suggested).
  - b. With their application for membership in the new conference the congregation will present a joint congregation/conference of origin statement to the receiving conference which states
    - i. Reasons why the congregation wants to change area conference affiliation
    - ii. When the congregation/conference of origin meetings were held, with a summary of the discussion of the meetings
    - iii. How or if this affects any other matters in the conference of origin
    - iv. The matters that have been resolved in the congregation/conference of origin relationship along with those that may remain unresolved
2. In the event that a conference has taken disciplinary action that separates a congregation, and that congregation subsequently applies to another conference for membership, the conference to which the congregation applies for membership is required to follow a process of discernment with the congregation's conference of origin.

The conference to which the congregation is making application for membership will initiate several meetings with the conference of origin to discuss the congregation's dismissal, and their application for membership into the receiving conference.

- a. The conference of origin will supply the conference to which the congregation is making application, a written statement of reasons why and how they separated the congregation.
  - b. The receiving conference will supply a statement to the conference of origin explaining why, and on what time frame; they are considering accepting the congregation into membership.
3. Both conferences will notify the Executive Director of Mennonite Church USA when either of these processes begins and will supply copies of the statements named above. The executive director reserves the right of counsel throughout the process, but will respect the polity of Mennonite Church USA that rests final discretion of membership of congregations with area conferences (Bylaw Article IV, 2.a).

*Adopted by Mennonite Church USA Executive Board, June 26, 2004*



# Membership Guidelines

(Approved by the Nashville 2001 Delegate Assembly July 5, 2001)  
(Distributed as an administrative update to the Delegate Assembly July 2013)

## I. Basis for membership

Mennonite Church USA desires to be a people of God committed to biblical foundations and to Anabaptist perspectives. While our church was formed out of various backgrounds and formations, we believe the Holy Spirit has called us to unite in faith and mission (Acts 1, 2).

Membership signifies a mutual commitment to build on the true foundation, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11); to become "a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22); to be "salt of the earth" and "light of the world" (Matthew 5:13, 14).

### Covenant

Membership is a voluntary covenant between and among four inter-related communities of faith: congregations, area conferences, national church bodies, and international fellowships. Congregations are formed of individual members; area conferences are constituted by member congregations; area conferences with their member congregations join to form national church bodies; national church bodies join to form international affiliations. Once made, a covenant of membership is nurtured in a spirit of mutual commitment to Jesus Christ and to the body of Christ, the church.

### Accountability

Membership assumes accountability before God and toward one another. Accountability has an inward and an outward dimension, with a biblical commission supporting both aspects. Looking inward, the church is commissioned to be a "binding and loosing" fellowship (Matthew 16:13-20; 18:15-20; John 20:23; Ephesians 4:15-16). The joyful obligation of membership includes the calling to build up the body of Christ through mutual discernment of the will of God. Looking outward, the church is commissioned to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 10; Acts 1:8). Membership includes the invitation to become a community engaged in mission and service.

### Unity

Members are called to unity in Spirit, "so that the world may believe that [the Father] has sent [the Son]" (John 17:21; see also Ephesians 2:14-22). The church is called to practice humility, gentleness, patience, and love, as it strives to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1-6). As witness to God who is one, and to Jesus Christ who was sent to reveal the will of God, Mennonite Church USA desires that members give faithful expression to their unity as the body of Christ. The Mennonite churches have heard this call to unity ever more clearly in recent years.

### Diversity

Within the context of unity, Mennonite Church USA celebrates the rich diversity among its constituent entities (Ephesians 4:7; 1 Corinthians 12). The church is an interdependent and diverse body of believers who together form the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12; Galatians 3:25-29; Colossians 3:11; 1 Peter 2:9-10). This body includes people "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" (Revelation 7:9), creating a colorful multicultural family of God.

*"No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11).*

## II. Policy and practice of membership

1. The foundation for Mennonite Church USA as a developing denomination is the following: • our common vision statement (currently “Vision: Healing and Hope”)
  - our common mission statement
  - our common *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (1995) as the “statement of faith for teaching and nurture in the life of the church.” (COF, introduction, p. 9)
  - a commitment “to seek to understand and interpret Scripture in harmony with Jesus Christ as we are led by the Holy Spirit in the church.” (COF, article 4)
  - a commitment to participate in discerning and living out statements of Christian faith and life made by Mennonite Church USA
  - a commitment to participate in the denomination’s life and mission through delegate representation and financial support

We expect member area conferences to share the vision and commitments listed here, and to ask the same of their member congregations.

2. Where area conferences with their congregations are committed to the vision, mission, and teaching positions of the denomination, they have the freedom to seek God’s wisdom and discernment as to how to apply these principles in a life-giving way in the many chaotic, broken and/or sinful situations which present themselves to the church. This should be done in consultation with the broader church, in a spirit of mutual accountability.
3. Congregations have the authority to determine the criteria and the responsibility to implement the process for membership of persons joining their congregation, as well as leaving. They do so in consultation with their area conference and in consideration of expectations for membership in Mennonite Church USA.
4. Area conferences have the authority to determine the criteria and the responsibility to implement the process for membership of congregations within their area conference, either to join or to leave. They do so in consideration of expectations for membership in Mennonite Church USA. Congregations forfeit their membership in Mennonite Church USA if and when they are no longer affiliated with an area conference.
5. Mennonite Church USA has the authority to determine the criteria and the responsibility to implement the process whereby area conferences join or leave as member conferences of Mennonite Church USA. They do so in consideration of the expectations for membership in Mennonite Church USA (see II.1).
6. Charter membership in Mennonite Church USA consists of all member area conferences and congregations who were part of the General Conference Mennonite Church or the Mennonite Church at the effective date of the original Bylaws, and who indicated their decision to join, either by their vote on the Plan of Merger or by a reaffirmation of their commitment to be part of Mennonite Church USA before February 1, 2002. This includes those congregations who joined area conferences during the time of area conference deliberations on whether or not to reaffirm their membership in Mennonite Church USA.
7. The official number of members in Mennonite Church USA shall be the sum of members reported to the Executive Directors by each area conference. This shall also be the membership number submitted to Mennonite World Conference.
8. New area conferences may apply for membership through the Constituency Leaders Council. Such application for membership will be reviewed by the Constituency Leaders Council and forwarded to the Executive Board with their counsel. These new conferences may attain membership in Mennonite Church USA through action of the Delegate Assembly upon recommendation from the Executive Board.
9. New congregations attain membership in Mennonite Church USA through their membership in an area conference.
10. Congregations will generally hold membership in only one area conference. Where dual affiliation of a congregation with more than one area conference existed prior to the merger and continues to be perceived to serve the best interests of the congregation and their conferences, dual conference membership may be retained as long as mutually agreed upon. We also recognize that certain congregations may find it beneficial to maintain ties to other denominational bodies.

11. We recognize the possibility that from time to time a congregation may seek a new area conference relationship. Out of mutual respect for one another, no congregation shall separate or be separated from one area conference and subsequently be accepted by another area conference without consultation among the area conferences and congregations involved, according to criteria established by the Executive Board.
12. Our vision for Mennonite Church USA includes the invitation to Christian church bodies of common faith and mission to affiliate with Mennonite Church USA in order to support and strengthen the fellowship and mission of an Anabaptist witness in North America and around the world.

### **III. Clarification on some issues related to homosexuality and membership**

#### **Introduction**

For the last several years, issues of same-sex orientation and lifestyle have been the source of deep controversy in our nation and in the church. More particularly, the process of bringing together our two denominations was complicated by differing responses to congregations who have accepted persons in same sex relationships as members. There are several congregations, formerly members of two conferences, who were removed from membership by one of the conferences while retaining membership in the other. In various and significant ways, these disciplinary actions touch other congregations, area conferences, and the entire church. Many people are asking for clarification regarding the beliefs and practice of the Mennonite Church USA regarding the matter of homosexuality, particularly as it touches on issues of church membership. The following commitments and polity guide our discernment and practice:

#### **Commitments**

Our hearts belong to God, God's word and God's church. We will follow Jesus.

We know what it is like to be misunderstood and misjudged. We have within our own history misunderstood and misjudged others, resulting in alienation and exclusion. Nevertheless, we hold the church as God's gift; and we hold the church's teaching as our best human understanding of God's way.

We hold the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (1995) to be the teaching position of Mennonite Church USA. "We believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life" (Article 19).

We hold the Saskatoon (1986) and Purdue (1987) statements describing homosexual, extramarital and premarital sexual activity as sin to be the teaching position of Mennonite Church USA.

We hold the Saskatoon and Purdue statements calling for the church to be in dialogue with those who hold differing views to be the teaching position of Mennonite Church USA.

We hold the abuse of power, in its many forms, to be against the teaching position of Mennonite Church USA. Our passion for the church remains undiminished. Our search for the truth finds answer in the scriptures. Our love for God through Christ lifts us up. Our vision for God's people is healing and hope.

#### **Polity**

Pastors holding credentials in a conference of Mennonite Church USA may not perform a same-sex covenant ceremony. Such action would be grounds for review of their credentials by their area conference's ministerial credentialing body. (See *A Mennonite Polity for Ministerial Leadership*, p. 125 for a list of other actions that may prompt such a review.



**Mennonite World Conference**  
A Community of Anabaptist-related Churches

**Shared Convictions**

By the grace of God, we seek to live and proclaim the good news of reconciliation in Jesus Christ. As part of the one body of Christ at all times and places, we hold the following to be central to our belief and practice:

1. God is known to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Creator who seeks to restore fallen humanity by calling a people to be faithful in fellowship, worship, service and witness.
2. Jesus is the Son of God. Through his life and teachings, his cross and resurrection, he showed us how to be faithful disciples, redeemed the world, and offers eternal life.
3. As a church, we are a community of those whom God's Spirit calls to turn from sin, acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, receive baptism upon confession of faith, and follow Christ in life.
4. As a faith community, we accept the Bible as our authority for faith and life, interpreting it together under Holy Spirit guidance, in the light of Jesus Christ to discern God's will for our obedience.
5. The Spirit of Jesus empowers us to trust God in all areas of life so we become peacemakers who renounce violence, love our enemies, seek justice, and share our possessions with those in need.
6. We gather regularly to worship, to celebrate the Lord's Supper, and to hear the Word of God in a spirit of mutual accountability.
7. As a world-wide community of faith and life we transcend boundaries of nationality, race, class, gender and language. We seek to live in the world without conforming to the powers of evil, witnessing to God's grace by serving others, caring for creation, and inviting all people to know Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

In these convictions we draw inspiration from Anabaptist forebears of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, who modeled radical discipleship to Jesus Christ. We seek to walk in his name by the power of the Holy Spirit, as we confidently await Christ's return and the final fulfillment of God's kingdom.

*Adopted by Mennonite World Conference  
General Council  
Pasadena, California (USA)  
March 15, 2006*



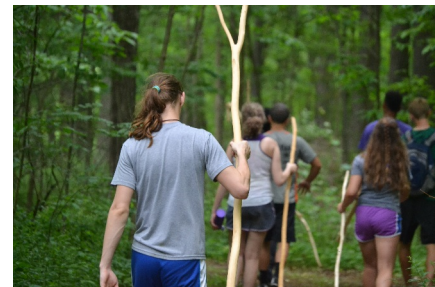


2019

REPORT BOOK  
of the

**Central District Conference**  
of  
Mennonite Church USA

*Come, walk with us . . . To God knows where!*



*Part VI*

*CDC Resolutions*



## ***CDC Resolutions***

1998-2008

### **1998 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Session at Bluffton College**

ACTION: “On this weekend, the broader Mennonite Church is recognizing the *25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ordination of Emma Richards to pastoral ministry*. It is with gratitude that we recognize the gift of leadership that women have brought to our churches and conferences. Therefore, be it resolved that the Central District Conference will continue to call out, affirm and encourage the gifts of women in ministry.”

ACTION: “We, as the Central District Conference of General Conference Mennonite Church gathered at Bluffton College, June 18-20, 1998, *deplore and grieve the presence of handguns* in our society and the violence and death caused by the use of the handguns in our homes, schools and communities. Therefore, be it resolved that we call our society to join us in taking a bolder stand against this violence by supporting such actions as handgun legislation, teaching conflict mediation, praying and confronting the economical and racial injustices which lie at the root of this violence and in which we may knowingly or unknowingly participate.”

### **1999 43rd Annual Session at Iowa Wesleyan College**

ACTION: “*Mennonite College of Nursing*: In these very days that the Central District Conference is meeting in its annual session, the Mennonite College of Nursing is celebrating the completion of 80 years of nursing education as an independent Mennonite Church related institution, after which it will become an integral part of Illinois State University in Normal. Its principle historic landmark, the Troyer Memorial Nurses’ Home, has been sold and will continue to be used by another facility. It is appropriate that we use this occasion to express deep appreciation for these eighty years of dedicated service – For the Love of God and Humanity, as stated in the College memo. We call to remembrance the pioneer leaders, such as Peter Schantz and Emanuel Troyer, who convinced the Central District Conference to establish a hospital and training school for nurses, and then solicited the assistance of the Defenseless Conference, thus leading to the establishment in 1919 of the Mennonite Sanitarium and the Mennonite Sanitarium Training School. We recall and express our appreciation for the many dedicated Mennonite administrators (e.g. Benjamin and Lydia Rupp, first Superintendent and Matron; Lena Maxwell, long-time Superintendent of the Nursing School; William Dunn, CEO of the Mennonite Hospital Association; Presidents Jacquelyn Kinder and Kathleen Hogan), as well as staff members, teachers, and constituents who made possible the growth of the hospital program and the nurses training school from its early beginnings to its more formal education program as the Mennonite Training School. Mennonite Hospital School of Nursing and its eventual establishment as the Mennonite College of Nursing with accredited Bachelor of Science and Masters of Science in Nursing Degree programs. We express appreciation for the 2,258 dedicated nurses who completed requirements for Diplomas, Bachelors, or Masters degrees at the Mennonite Hospital School of Nursing and the Mennonite College of Nursing and have faithfully served not only the needs of central Illinois but also the needs of many other parts of the world in a wide variety of service and mission programs. Today we especially express our deep appreciation to President Kathleen Hogan for 30 years of meritorious service, including 15 years as CEO and President, during which she led the Mennonite College of Nursing to be the first fully accredited independent College of Nursing in the United States.

## **2000 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Session at Goshen College (joint session with IMMC, IMC, and OMC)**

No resolutions

## **2001 45<sup>th</sup> Annual Session at Bluffton College**

ACTION: “We, the delegate body of the Central District Conference of the General Conference Mennonite Church, declare the *intent of the Central District Conference to join Mennonite Church USA*. Central District Conference with its member churches will become part of Mennonite Church USA upon the approval of the Plan of Merger (see Membership Guidelines for the Formation of the Mennonite Church USA, section II, 7, b) by the General Conference delegate body in July of 2001.”

## **2002 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Session at Meadows Mennonite Church**

ACTION: “*Resolution for Peace*: Be it resolved that we continue to pray for leaders of nations, especially George W. Bush, Colin Powell, Ariel Sharon and Yassar Arafat, that the seeds of hatred which have been and are being planted might not germinate and the seeds being planted for peace could grow, so that current and future generations might be enabled to live in hope and peace.”

## **2003 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Session at Bluffton College**

ACTION: “We, the delegate body of the Central District Conference, *affirm the Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship in their service to the people of Atlanta*. We support and encourage them in their mission of hospitality to the vulnerable in their midst and in their fellowship together as the body of Christ. During the coming year, we pledge as congregations to engage with Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship in sharing the cup of blessing, in deepening our connection with one another, and in acknowledging our kinship in God’s family. We look forward to completing Atlanta Mennonite fellowship’s application process in our net annual meeting.

## **2004 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Session at Oak Grove Mennonite**

ACTION: “We, the delegates of CDC, ask our *conference leaders to work with leaders from Illinois Mennonite, Indiana-Michigan Mennonite, and Ohio Mennonite conferences, and with MC USA leadership, to explore new possibilities for the way these conferences work together*. This exploration will reflect the reality that these conferences and congregations are part of one denomination, Mennonite Church USA, and that there is a strong call within these conferences and MC USA to become more effective as a missional church. Any new plan will require both the counsel and the confirmation of conference delegates.”

Action: “*Resolution on USA & Iraq*: “We, the delegate body of the Central District Conference, gathered at the Oak Grove Mennonite Church in Smithville, Ohio on June 24-26, 2004, affirm the “*Confession of Faith from a Mennonite Perspective*” — in particular articles 22 & 23 which relate to matters of peace and justice. We commit ourselves to teach more faithfully our understanding of Christ’s call and His way of peace. We believe that the same Spirit that empowered Christ empowers us too: to love enemies, to forgive rather than seek revenge, to practice right relationships, to rely on the community of faith to settle disputes, and to resist evil without violence. In response to all forms of violence, personal and corporate,

private and public, individual and national, we confess our guilt and disclose our shame. We admit our knowledge of God's will for us — God's will that we would live at peace with one another. We know this to be God's will for all humanity. As gathered followers of Christ, and in response to our Savior's call and example, we recommit ourselves to living and speaking for peace. To this end we pray and work for an immediate cessation of all hostilities in Iraq. We lament our nation's chosen form of engagement. We stand in resolute opposition to the invasion and occupation of Iraq. We commit ourselves to praying for our nation's leaders, to offering visions for peaceful alternatives, and to supporting all who are working for an end to the present war. May God bind the hands of all who would do violence and free the hands of those who yearn for peace. We pray for all involved: For those who make decisions, for those who are ordered to carry them out, and for those who are required to endure their consequences. We pray for ourselves too, when we, willingly or unwillingly — knowingly or unknowingly — pay for the very violence we deplore. May God have mercy on us all. In this volatile and uncertain time, [we] pray that the new Iraqi provisional government will rule justly and be like a morning after a long and dark night for the Iraqi people." —*J. Daryl Byler, MCC Washington office director.* May the Spirit of Christ guide us in our every thought and deed."

**ACTION: *Letter to Vietnam:*** Ruth Naylor, Resolution Committee, presented a letter defining the relationship of Mennonites in Vietnam and asking for the release of Mennonite Church leader, Nguyen Hong Quang sent from MC USA. This letter will be sent to the United States Embassy in Vietnam on behalf of Central District Conference. Delegates received copies of the letter and were encouraged to ask their congregations to send copies of the letter as well.

### **2005 49<sup>th</sup> Annual session at Maplewood Mennonite Church**

**ACTION:** "Be it resolved that we, the delegates of Central District Conference, note the *death of Ann Hilty*, First Mennonite Church, Bluffton, Ohio on June 9, 2005. We express our deepest appreciation for her years of service to CDC as conference historian and member of the former Historical Committee."

**ACTION: "*Resolution on Military Recruitment:*** We as Anabaptist-Mennonites are known as an historic peace church. That history begins with those first disciples who followed the nonviolent Jesus in his way of salvation through the cross and Resurrection. The 16th-century Anabaptist-Mennonite movement renewed a witness to the way of radical love for Christian disciples. With the apostle Paul we testify that "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5.1). We have taught that faithful obedience to the example (I Peter 2.21-24) and teaching (Matthew 5-7) of Jesus requires us to refuse military service. At many points in our history as a community of faith we have sought options of alternative service when governments instituted compulsory military conscription. Today in the United States we face a different situation. Although officially there is no military draft, we have become aware that the vigorous recruiting efforts by the armed services in fact represent a "virtual draft." We are concerned about the impact of these tactics on both our own young people and the society as a whole.

Current military recruitment efforts

Whereas

- \* Young men and women in high school are being approached by military recruiters with an effort unparalleled in U.S. history;
- \* Promises of money, education, and a profession are being used to entice youth who feel vulnerable and without viable options for their future;
- \* The U.S. military has given its Armed Service Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test in about 14,000 high schools nationwide to look for potential recruits, often without parents'

- knowledge;
- \* Federal law now provides for student contact information to be released to military recruiters, unless a student takes action to “opt out;”
  - \* Many public school administrators across the country are cooperating with military recruiters to meet recruiting quotas.

Therefore, we, the delegates of Central District Conference, call on congregations to take the following actions.

Commit to Christ's way of peace and to affirm that peace and nonviolence are core Anabaptist Christian commitments.

Learn what your local school administration's current policy is and request they release to military recruiters only contact information of students whose parents request this. This is called an “opt in” policy.

Encourage youth to begin a file about their beliefs regarding conscientious objection to war. Christian Peacemaker Registration forms are available from the MCC web site.

Participate in the organizing of a broad community coalition to work at counter-recruitment strategies.

Spend time with the youth of your congregation developing strong relationships and educating them about conscientious objection to war and nonviolence. (see resource list)

÷If ASVAB test is given in the local high school challenge its appropriateness for students not interested in military service.

÷Be available to counsel youth and offer alternatives to those being actively recruited by military personnel.

Resources:

From MCC: Thermostat: a new DVD and study guide for youth on peace, conscientious objection to war and nonviolence. A website: [www.mcc.org/ask-a-vet](http://www.mcc.org/ask-a-vet), provides e-mail links to military veterans who are now conscientious objectors to war, so youth can have direct conversation with them. Also includes Christian Peacemaker Registration information. Second Mile: curriculum for a congregational journey of peacemaking. Change of Command: video featuring the stories of military veterans now committed to peace and nonviolence.”

## **2006 50<sup>th</sup> Annual session at Bluffton University**

**ACTION: *Resolution of Appreciation for Lee Snyder.*** On this occasion of Dr. Lee Snyder's retirement from the presidency of Bluffton University, we express gratitude for her ten years of faithful service to Bluffton University and to the Mennonite church, for her strengthening of ties between the church and the university, for her commitment to the peace church mission of Bluffton and its impact on students from many backgrounds, for her leadership in building an institution of higher learning that will serve the faith and scholarship of future generations of Central District Conference members, for her wise and steady leadership as moderator of Mennonite Church USA during the historic 2002 merger between the Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonite Church, for serving as a role model for leaders of church institutions, especially for women, and for her lifelong commitment to the mission of the church of Jesus Christ. We wish for her and her husband Del God's richest blessings in the years to come.

**ACTION: *Resolution of Remembrance of Barney Habegger.*** We, the delegates of Central District Conference, note the death this past year of Barney Habegger, First Mennonite Church, Berne, Indiana. We remember with deep appreciation his creative and passionate service to the church, his masterful recruitment of people for the projects of the church, and his ability to turn dreams into practical and

accessible realities. We recall with gratitude his service on the Commission on Home Missions and on the board of Camp Friedenswald. We especially note the impact he had on many young and recently planted churches through his work with the men's organization, Join Hands, and we acknowledge the contributions he made to these churches through his hard work, often down on his knees, on behalf of the renewal and reconstruction of church facilities. Many who responded to his call to service were deeply transformed by his life and witness. Thanks be to God.

**ACTION: *Resolution of 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration:*** During this 2006 annual meeting, as we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Central District Conference, we thank God for:

- those congregations that covenanted in 1957 to create the Central District Conference;
- the congregations that have joined the conference since its beginning;
- the individuals who provided leadership and facilitated the work and ministry of the conference;
- the institutions and programs of the conference where God's love has been made known;
- those issues which have brought us closer together through discussions in which God's will has been discovered and followed.

We thank God for faithfulness to us in the past and in bringing us together this year. We thank God for the stories of how God is working in our congregations.

We pray for God's wisdom and guidance as we seek to:

- strengthen the mutual awareness of the ministries that are emerging among us;
- free the Spirit to move in our midst through faithful stewardship and greater generosity;
- discern the practical shape of God's grace in our discernment of faithful lifestyles;
- articulate more clearly the strengths of our conference's heritage of voluntary congregational and conference relationships;
- extend our hospitality beyond conventional Mennonite habits of connection and relationship;
- expand on our present diversity to more faithfully reflect the global and cultural variety of God's in-breaking reign.

We pray God's vision and strength to continue the journey as God shows us the way. We anticipate the as-yet-unwritten stories of God working in our congregations.

Praise be to God for the past, present, and future faithfulness of that part of the church of Jesus Christ known as the Central District Conference!

## **2008 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual Session at Wheaton, Illinois**

**ACTION: *Iran Resolution***

***Be it resolved: It is Time to Talk with Iran***

### ***The situation:***

*Tensions are mounting between the governments of the United States and Iran. In fact, it appears the U.S. is positioning itself for more aggressive action toward Iran, including the strong possibility of military strikes within the coming months.*

***Our Faith:***

*In the spirit of our assembly theme: "For such a time as this:"*

*\*We know that all are created in the image of God, U.S. and Iranian citizens alike.*

*\*We know that we are called to be bearers of peace in the world.*

*\*We call for the following response,*

***Our Response:***

*The delegates of Central District Conference pledge to:*

*\*Respectfully call on all our elected leaders to talk (pursue diplomacy) with Iran and refrain from military action.*

*\*Pray weekly with our families and congregations for peace with Iran*

*\*Educate ourselves regarding U.S.-Iranian relationships and support Mennonite peacemaking efforts with Iran.*

For more information and resources: [www.centraldistrict.mennonite.net](http://www.centraldistrict.mennonite.net); [www.mennoniteusa.org/peace](http://www.mennoniteusa.org/peace); [www.mcc.org](http://www.mcc.org)



**An invitation to the congregations of Central District Conference**  
***A Congregational Peace Pledge:***  
**A call to intentionally encounter the realities of war**

**Goal:** To invite congregations and conferences to commit to the actions delineated in the proposal

**Whereas:**

We believe that peace is the will of God, that God created the world in peace, that God's will is most fully revealed in Jesus Christ, who is our peace and the peace of the whole world, and that as Christians we are called to follow the path of Jesus and his call to live as peacemakers; we thus believe that we are called to engage the violence of war and injustice in the world that largely leaves us untouched.

1. When we have opportunity for personal contact with those who suffer, compassion is planted, and out of this compassion comes our responses. Examples of showing compassion are encounters: with the hungry in soup kitchens, the homeless in a tornado's wake, or with prisoners. Warfare, on the other hand, causes hurt in ways that Mennonites are not as likely to confront on a regular basis.

2. Historically war was an inescapable reality forcing hard choices on U.S. Mennonites. During the Civil War men had to choose whether they would fight, hire substitutes, pay commutation fees, or face punishments. In World War I some Mennonites drafted into the military refused to wear the uniform or carry guns, while others became stretcher-bearers for the army. There was no possibility of alternative service. Some were court-martialed, imprisoned, and suffered mistreatment. In World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War young Mennonites could claim conscientious objector status and engage in alternative service if they could defend their convictions convincingly. In recent years the government has adopted a volunteer army and ended the use of the draft. This has radically changed the relationship of civilians to war and in particular has changed the dynamics for pacifists wishing to witness faithfully to the issues of war.

3. Men and women around us volunteer to fight multiple wars simultaneously; Mennonites may avoid scenes of violent conflict, demands to bear arms, or having to justify their pacifism. Can we continue to be a peace church if we remain insulated from the reality of war and the need to witness to this reality?

**Therefore, be it resolved:**

That Central District Conference invites congregations, who wish to be intentional about the reality of war, its victims, and the hard questions it asks of nonviolent followers of Jesus, to commit themselves each year to actions such as the following:

- For each 100 members in the congregation, send one member on a delegation to a conflict zone with Christian Peacemaker Teams, Witness for Peace, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), Mennonite Mission Network, or other organizations dedicated to providing a nonviolent presence internationally or locally. The congregation is encouraged to pay partial funding for the trip and support the member's efforts to raise the remaining funds. Congregations with less than 100 members may pool resources into a common fund to support one of their members. After the trip the congregation will assist the member with sharing about his/her experiences with the congregation and other local audience.
- Sponsor at least one event each year that asks youth to question participation in war. Examples can include education of the congregation's youth group, counter-recruitment efforts in local schools, and/or provide a counter-presence when military recruiters visit local schools.
- Bring at least one speaker to the congregation each year who has worked at peace building with victims of war, is a former combatant who knows the experience of having inflicted harm on others, or did alternative service during a previous war. The Oasis of Hope Community in Newport News (757-775-8101), the TWOW (Transforming the Wounds of War) program at EMU's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding (<http://www.emu.edu/cjp/pti/twow>), or the MCC Peace Office are possible sources of speakers.

## A Resolution on Unity in a Time of Disagreement

**Call to unity.** As Mennonite disciples, we believe we have been called by Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit to live in unity. We believe that our unity is in Christ, brought about through his life, death and resurrection. We believe that God has promised that all things will be gathered into Christ Jesus, and that God is at work in the church to bring that promise to fruition.

We believe that Christian unity is not ours to create, but is a gift from God already given. We are aware that we often lack faith in that promised and already-given unity. We are aware of our human tendency instead to seek uniformity of belief and practice through the setting of boundaries and the creation of rules. We are aware that this tendency is most evident in times of disagreement and stress. We are aware that we are currently living in such times.

It is our hope that we will continue to grow in faith, and so learn how to inhabit the unity that is ours in Christ Jesus. It is our prayer that the Holy Spirit will be poured out on our congregations, conferences and denomination, making that growth possible. We pray that we will love one another as Christ loved us, and that we will be known to the world by that love.

**Our ongoing anxiety.** The current disagreement regarding the credentialing of a pastor in a same-sex committed relationship has once again raised the anxiety about inclusion in our denomination. Questions of theology, polity, faithfulness, and discernment of the Holy Spirit's leading are being asked across our denomination.

**Respecting each other's discernment.** We believe that the answers we seek are best found in dialogue and mutual discernment, rather than denunciation and separation. We ask our sisters and brothers in the broader church to remember our common "*commitment to ongoing dialogue and discernment and 'agreeing and disagreeing in love,'*" as affirmed by MC USA delegates in Columbus (2009).

We believe that a strength of our denomination has been its understanding of accountability as being relational rather than punitive. Current calls by some to reverse the credentialing of Theda Good seem to us to work against that understanding. We are concerned that such action would set a troubling precedent, moving us toward a polity that is based on a centralized and hierarchical understanding of Christian unity. And we believe that calls to the Executive Board to discipline Mountain States Conference, or risk losing other area conferences, run counter to our denominational commitment to agree to disagree in love.

**Therefore,** as the MC USA Executive Board engages in conversation with Mountain States Mennonite Conference leaders, we call on them to help us be a denomination that continues the practice of relational rather than punitive accountability, no matter the strength of our disagreement. We commit ourselves to remaining in relationship with our sisters and brothers in Mountain States Conference, as we will with other area conferences, regardless of the outcome of their conversation with MC USA Executive Board. We commit ourselves to prayer for all concerned. And we will continue to do our part to help us, as a denominational body of believers, to live into the unity already ours in Christ.

## **An invitation to the congregations of Central District Conference**

### **A call to greater inter-racial and cross-cultural engagement**

**Goal:** to invite all CDC congregations and members to take deliberate steps to develop inter-racial and cross-cultural relationships that will increase mutual understanding and equip us to work and witness together for greater justice and peace.

#### **Confession:**

We acknowledge and grieve the long history of racism in our nation and in the church. We have too often failed to be proactive in seeking justice, and in building bridges of understanding and friendship with sisters and brothers of different races and cultures. We have not always modeled nor reflected in our community life God's welcome and love for all the racial and cultural diversity of God's people and we too often reflect the fact of Sunday morning being the most segregated time in our society.

**Whereas:** We believe that God created and equally loves the broad diversity of our human family, that God desires that the church reflect the racial and cultural diversity that is the human community, that God calls the church to bear witness to God's mission to form a community made up of people "from every nation" and defined by just relationships, that Jesus prayed for the unity of his followers and that we are all enriched through inter-racial and cross-cultural relationships; we thus believe that this should be reflected in each of our local communities of faith and that we are called to take the initiative for that to happen.

#### **Therefore be it resolved:**

That Central District Conference invites all member congregations to take intentional steps to connect with and develop relationships with a church of a predominantly different cultural and/or racial composition through one or more of the following steps:

1. Plan a joint worship service
2. Cooperate in a joint activity such as a church picnic
3. Host a joint Summer Bible School/camp activity
4. Engage in a joint public peace and justice witness
5. Plan a pulpit exchange
6. Do a joint service project
7. Plan a one-day workshop on anti-racism
8. Etc.

Respectfully submitted by Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, March 17, 2014

## An invitation to the congregations of Central District Conference

### **A call to greater faithfulness in our witness for peace**

**Goal:** to encourage all CDC churches and members to take a small step in faithfulness to our call to be peacemakers and witnesses for peace by deliberately and clearly communicating our convictions with our government and government agencies such as the Internal Revenue Service.

**Confession:** We grieve the violence of war and conflict throughout the world. We acknowledge and confess the role our country has played and plays overtly and covertly in so much of that violence. As a nation, we readily respond in violence to perceived and real threats. We have settled into a state of perpetual war with which we are too readily at peace. Defense of perceived national interests, defense of national honor, and political pressure often lead our nation to shortsighted and reckless use of military power. In the process, people have been tortured, innocent civilians have been killed by drones, oppression of peoples by their repressive governments have been supported, and movements for greater justice and peace have been squelched. This all happens at a sanitary and safe distance from us, but in our name. We confess that we know this is not God's will. We also confess that we are too often silent in proclaiming God's will both by what we do and by what we don't do.

**Whereas:** We believe that God's will for the world is redemption and wholeness and peace, in essence, shalom, that justice is God's will for all relationships both personal and international, that resources are given for building and not destroying, and that we are called to give witness to these convictions through word and action,

#### **Therefore, be it resolved:**

That Central District Conference encourages all of its congregations and members to take deliberate steps in our context and time to witness to God's reign and God's will for peace this next year through taking one or more of the following or similar actions during "tax season":

1. Sending a congregational letter to the local newspaper
2. Creating a banner expressing our beliefs for public display
3. Hosting a community candle light vigil
4. Witnessing outside the post office while sharing a snack and an information sheet
5. Including with our IRS tax filing, a written testimony of our commitment to peace and withholding a symbolic portion of our taxes paid for war
6. Etc.

Respectfully submitted by Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, February 19, 2015

Affirmed by delegates June 12, 2015 at the Annual Meeting, Southside Fellowship on the AMBS campus