



Central
District
Conference

A conference of
Mennonite Church USA

focus

April 2019

KNOWING CHRIST'S LOVE—ANSWERING GOD'S CALL

SENT 2019

Equipping church leaders to seed new churches

More than 80 church leaders from across the country came together for SENT 2019 at Beloved Community Mennonite Church, April 26–28, in Englewood, Colo. The SENT conference, now in its fourth year, is a peace church conference, hosted by Mennonite Mission Network and cosponsored with Everence, that helps connect, inspire, and equip church leaders to seed new churches, as well as reinvigorate legacy congregations.

SENT draws an intercultural cadre of church planters, missional entrepreneurs, denominational and area conference leaders, agency representatives, and seminary and college students. Several members of Central District Conference congregations participated: Carolyn May, Columbus (Ohio) Mennonite Church; Sandy Miller and Dennis and Vert Miller, Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.; and Karla Minter, Open Table Fellowship, Goshen.

SENT reflections

Dennis Miller

Church planting was unfamiliar territory for me as I attended my first SENT Conference. My expectations were open and it didn't take long to be pulled into the culture of Anabaptist church planting. This three-day event certainly offered life-giving worship times, enlightening teaching sessions, good seminars, as well as learning about the SENT Network support system resources already in place to equip church planters. More than that, it was also the interaction with other attendees that brought deep meaning to this conference. Hearing others' stories on a personal level and hearing about their uncertainties through this process made it very real for me. These uncertainties are the same ones I have. Some common themes I heard interacting with people were courage



Joe Sawatzky shares at the Sent 2019 conference. Photo by Travis Duerksen

SENT reflections from Dennis Miller (cont.)

to take that first step, having a group of people with a vision, and total faith in God. One thing for sure is nobody has all the answers, and we cannot let that prevent us from being part of this movement.

“Beloved Feet: Hearing Christ’s call to proclaim the good news.” The conference theme reminded us that we the church, are the ones who bring the good news, proclaim peace, and proclaim salvation. Bringing this charge back home, I ask myself if this is a reality in Goshen. I believe it is, but it takes people with different gifts and a common vision. We have a great

support system with our churches, conferences (CDC), and the SENT Network already in place.

Dennis Miller is a member of Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., He also is a participant in Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary’s Journey program for missional leadership development.



More about SENT 2019

The best aspect of the conference for Sandy Miller and others was how SENT 2019 modeled the variety of expressions of how God makes all things new in Christ.

“It was exciting to see a diverse group of people come together to be engaged in launching peace faith communities,” Miller said. “Much that is happening in church planting is solidly Anabaptist yet happening from the perspective of those who were not cradle-born into this faith tradition.”

Vern Rempel, one of the pastors of Beloved Community, the host congregation, said, “This is the most intercultural of all Anabaptist events I attend. It draws a diversity of perspectives that go beyond a middle-class background of those born in the United States. And there is a greater mix of sensibilities of music, prayer and the theological language used to engage with an Anabaptist perspective.”

This year’s conference included the unveiling of SENT Network, a six-month resource program to be launched this August. The curriculum includes three phases—explore, equip and send—and Mission Network staff will teach a course every other week, completing 12 modules, four in each phase. In addition to online studies, there will be group learning and individual coaching available. (For more information visit the Sent Network website:

www.mennonitemission.net/resources/church-vitality/church-planting/The-Sent-Network).

“We want to share our passion, experience

and wisdom, and to learn with others as we walk together responding to God’s call,” Chenlo said. “In our efforts, we hope to ... inspire a shared vision for creating Anabaptist communities of faith across the street and around the world.”

During a presentation on April 28, Glen Guyton, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, affirmed how Mennonite Mission Network is following the lead of the Spirit by fostering unity in an increasingly diverse church.

In a later telephone interview he said, “One of the priorities of Mennonite Church USA is church planting, and Mennonite Mission Network is carrying out this priority ... We are called by God to follow Jesus and to witness to God’s peace as we seek to foster transformation in all kinds of local contexts.

“That means we need to be about planting historic peace churches that will look different in different places, yet they all will bear the same fruit of the Spirit of peace. If we really believe in carrying out the Great Commission in the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, then we need to live together into our call.”

— excerpted from *Mennonite Mission Network releases by Laurie Oswald Robinson and Travis Duerksen*

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Central District Conference
www.mcusacdc.org office@mcusacdc.org
800.662.2264