

2020

REPORT BOOK  
of the

**Central District Conference**  
of  
Mennonite Church USA

*Spirit, bless our souls with yearning!*



June 27, 2020





# CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE

Schedule

June 27, 2020

*Spirit, bless our souls with yearning!*

**Worship: via pre-recorded video**

***Order of Worship***

Introduction and Call to Worship

Music: *Holy Spirit, bless us with a yearning* led by Adam Tice (Faith)

Art Reflections on our Theme: Kay Bontrager-Singer (Faith) and Eugene Stutzman (Covenant)

Scripture

Speaker:

Glen Guyton (executive director of Mennonite Church USA)

Art Reflections on our Theme: Anita Lehman (First Bluffton) and Rachel Horst Lehman (First Urbana)

Hymnsing

Closing/Announcements and Benediction

**10:00 am *Delegate Session I [Zoom]***

**Welcome/State of the Conference Address**

Summary Review of 2019 Annual Meeting Minutes

**ACTION: 2019 Annual Meeting Minutes**

Highlight Actions in 2020 Agenda

Treasurers Report/Presentation of 2020-2021 Proposed Spending Plan

**ACTION: 2020-2021 Spending Plan**

Presentation of Gifts Discernment Committee and Slate

**ACTION: 2020-2021 Slate**

Commissioning Prayer: Incoming and continuing committee members

**10:30 am *Missional Church Committee***

**Ministerial Committee Report**

**Camp Friedenswald Highlights**

Offering to support Central District Conference (donate via PayPal on website or send check)

Committee nominations (online)

**10:50 am *Communion***

**11:00 am *Close of Delegate Session***

Break

**11:15 am Delegate Session II**

**Welcome/Song:** *Holy Spirit, bless us with a yearning*

**Q&A with Glen Guyton**

**Break out session\***

Have one person in your group record responses and email to [office@mcusacdc.org](mailto:office@mcusacdc.org)

\*Break out rooms (5-6 people per room, assigned randomly by Zoom)

\*\*Reflect on your experience with the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on church life

\*\*What did we learn that we might want to carry forward in our congregational life?

12:00 pm **Closing**

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## **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.

## Welcome to the Delegates from the CDC Board President

Welcome to our virtual zoom CDC gathering! It is certainly a disappointment to hold our 64th annual meeting and not be together. Thank you to the good people of **Oak Grove Mennonite Church, First Mennonite Church Sugarcreek, and First Mennonite Church Wadsworth** for their willingness to host us, we wish we could be gathered there instead.



This year we want to extend a particular welcome to Mennonite Church USA Executive Director, Glenn Guyton. It is a gift to be able to hear him preach. We are grateful for his willingness to join us.

While three regional gatherings were held this year — in Elkhart, Indiana, Madison, Wisconsin, and Raleigh, North Carolina — the fourth, scheduled for this spring in Cincinnati, was cancelled amid growing concerns about Covid-19. All of our congregations have had to rethink the way we worship together and care for each other in these challenging times. I have been grateful for the way congregations and communities have supported each other and shared ideas and information freely.

We have significantly altered the way we are gathering this weekend but we, as a board, still hope that in this time together you experience meaningful worship, laughter and fellowship, and above all a sense of God's spirit moving us forward toward God's dreams for Central District Conference and Mennonite Church USA.

Blessings,

Anna Yoder Schlabach



## 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 2020 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>Americus Mennonite Fellowship (30)</b> 229.815.1034  <i>Brian Kilheffer, Contact Person</i> <a href="mailto:bk.ck1@hotmail.com">bk.ck1@hotmail.com</a>            409 E Hill St, Americus, GA 31709  <a href="https://www.facebook.com/AmericusMennoniteFellowship">https://www.facebook.com/AmericusMennoniteFellowship</a></p>
<p><b>Ames Mennonite Church (6)</b> 515.231.1557  <i>Keith Schrag, Contact Person</i> <a href="mailto:kgschrag@gmail.com">kgschrag@gmail.com</a>            meets at Ames Friends Church, 121 S Maple            Mail to: 1211 N 3<sup>rd</sup> St, Ames, IA 50010</p>	<p><b>*Ann Arbor Mennonite Church (10)</b> 734.996.9198  <i>Chibuzor Ozor, Pastor</i> <a href="mailto:ozotas@aol.com">ozotas@aol.com</a>            meets in homes            Mail to: 1455 Kelly Green Dr, Ann Arbor, MI 48103</p>
<p><b>Assembly Mennonite Church (220)</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>  <i>Scott Coulter, Pastor</i> <a href="mailto:scotte@assemblymennonite.org">scotte@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 (15)</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>Kathleen Kennel, Contact Person</i> <a href="mailto:kathleen_kennel@yahoo.com">kathleen_kennel@yahoo.com</a>            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 (60)</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 Caella Brookins, Pastor</i> <a href="mailto:pastor@ccmcil.org">pastor@ccmcil.org</a>  <i>Celeste Groff, Associate Pastor</i> <a href="mailto:celestegracesg@gmail.com">celestegracesg@gmail.com</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 (44)</b> 513.871.0035  <i>Randall Miller, Transitional Pastor</i> <a href="mailto:randymiller@cincinnati-mennonite.org">randymiller@cincinnati-mennonite.org</a>            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 (169)</b> 614.784.9002  <i>Joel Miller, Pastor</i> joel@columbusmennonite.org  <i>Mark Rupp, Pastor of Christian Formation</i>  mark@columbusmennonite.org  35 Oakland Park Ave, Columbus, OH 43214  office@columbusmennonite.org  www.columbusmennonite.org</p>	<p><b>**Community Mennonite Church (25)</b> 708.333.1358  <i>Amy Aschilman, Pastor</i> amy.aschil@gmail.com  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/  maryettaking27@gmail.com  5420 Ashton Rd, Sarasota, FL 34233  covenantmennonite@gmail.com  www.covenantmennonite.com  https://www.facebook.com/mennonites</p>	<p><b>Eighth Street Mennonite Church (198)</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>Emmanuel Mennonite Church (36)</b> 352-377-6577  <i>Eve MacMaster, Pastor</i> gnvmenno@bellsouth.net  meets at 1236 NW 18<sup>th</sup> Ave, Gainesville, FL 32609 (no  mail here)  <b>4130 NW 19<sup>th</sup> Place, Gainesville, FL 32605</b>  gvnmenno@bellsouth.net  www.gainesvillemennonites.org</p>	<p><b>Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship (65)</b>  <i>Peter Martin, Pastor</i> 260.301.6498  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, Contact Person</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 (73)</b> 574.533.6622  <i>Deron Brill Bergstresser, Pastor</i>  deronbbergstresser@gmail.com  <i>Kay Bontrager-Singer, Pastor</i> kay.bsinger@gmail.com  meets at Assembly Mennonite Church  727 New York St, Goshen, IN 46526  Mail to: 413 S 7<sup>th</sup> St, Goshen, IN 46526  faithmennogoshen@gmail.com  https://faithmennonitegoshen.org/</p>
<p><b>First Mennonite Church (200)</b> 419.358.5766  <i>Wanda Stopher, Pastor</i> wanda@fmcbluffton.org  <i>Theda Good, Pastor of Connections</i>  theda@fmcbluffton.org  101 S Jackson St, Bluffton, OH 45817  fmc@fmcbluffton.org http://www.fmcbluffton.org</p>	<p><b>First Mennonite Church (50)</b> 708.870.5260  <i>Alfreda Burke, Contact Person</i> dibupe@aol.com  meets at 1477 W 73<sup>rd</sup> St, Chicago, IL 60636 (no mail here)  Mail to: 11014 Deblin Lane, Oak Lawn, IL 60453</p>
<p><b>First Mennonite Church (80)</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 (177)</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 (60)</b> 330.334.1863  <i>Jan Croyle, Interim Pastor</i> jancroyle2@gmail.com  405 Trease Rd, Wadsworth, OH 44281  fmcwadsworth@gmail.com  www.firstmennonite.com</p>	<p><b>****Florence Church of the Brethren-Mennonite (45)</b>  <i>Devon Miller, Pastor</i> 574.361.9536  17975 Centreville-Constantine Rd,  Constantine, MI 49042  florence.brethren.mennonite@gmail.com  florencechurch.blogspot.com</p>

<p><b>Grace Mennonite Church (130)</b> 419.384.3038  <i>Matthew Yoder, Pastor</i> pastor@gracepandora.org  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 (99)</b> 574.294.3423  <i>Tim Stair, Co-pastor</i> stair.tim@gmail.com  <i>Jake Hess, Co-pastor</i> jhess@hivelymennonite.org  800 E Hively Ave, Elkhart, IN 46517  office@hivelymennonite.org  www.hivelymennonite.org</p>
<p><b>**Joy Fellowship Mennonite Church (15)</b> 309.637.8424  <i>Phil Maclin, Pastor</i> pmaclin@ci.peoria.il.us  2918 W Montana, Peoria, IL 61605</p>	<p><b>Jubilee Mennonite Church (25)</b> 937-592-8101  <i>Russ Miller, Contact Person</i> russbeth1471@gmail.com  169 County Hwy 32N, Bellefontaine, OH 43311  https://www.jubileemennonite.com/  jubileemennon@gmail.com</p>
<p><b>Lima Mennonite Church (40)</b> 419.222.2120  <i>In Pastoral Search Process</i>  <i>Lydia Brenneman, Contact Person</i>  lydiabrenneman3@gmail.com  1318 N Main St, Lima, OH 45801  limamc1318@gmail.com  www.facebook.com/limamennonite</p>	<p><b>Madison Mennonite Church (180)</b> 608.276.7680  <i>Valerie Showalter, Pastor</i> pastor@madison-mennonite.org  1501 Gilbert Rd, PO Box 44522, Madison, WI 53744  mmc@madison-mennonite.org  www.madison-mennonite.org</p>
<p><b>Maplewood Mennonite Church (66)</b> 260.485.8512  <i>Russell Jensen, Pastor</i> uskiwi2016@gmail.com  4129 Maplecrest Rd, Fort Wayne, IN 46815  maplemenno@gmail.com</p>	<p><b>**Mennonite Church of Normal (298)</b> 309.452.6622  <i>Gary Martin, Transitional Pastor</i> gmartin5@comcast.net  805 S Cottage Ave, Normal, IL 61761  church@normalmennonite.org  www.normalmennonite.com</p>
<p><b>Milwaukee Mennonite Church (42)</b> 414.232.8823  <i>Rachel Stolpe, Contact Person</i> rachelstolpe@gmail.com  meets at Martin Luther Lutheran Church,  9235 Bluemound Rd, Milwaukee, WI 53226  www.milwaukeeemennonite.org</p>	<p><b>*Morning Star Church (25)</b> 765.287.0021  <i>Gladys Maina, Pastor</i> gladgem2@gmail.com  <i>Simon Mungai, Pastor</i> maina.mungai@gmail.com  2000 S Hoyt St, Muncie, IN 47302</p>
<p><b>North Danvers Mennonite Church (151)</b> 309.963.4554  <i>Brian Johnson, Pastor</i> brian.johnson67@gmail.com  5517E 1950 North Rd, Danvers, IL 61732  northdanversch@gmail.com  www.northdanverschurch.com</p>	<p><b>***Oak Grove Mennonite Church (338)</b> 330.669.2697  <i>Doug Zehr, Pastor</i> pastor@oakgrovemc.org  <i>Miriam Zehr, Assoc Pastor</i> miriamzehr@oakgrovemc.org  7843 Smucker Rd, Smithville, OH 44677  office@oakgrovemc.org www.oakgrovemc.org</p>
<p><b>Open Table Mennonite Fellowship (25)</b> 574.534.1537  <i>Sally Weaver Glick, Pastor/doula</i> swglick@gmail.com  meets at 413 S 7<sup>th</sup> St, Goshen, IN 46526  http://www.opentablemennonite.org/</p>	<p><b>Paoli Mennonite Fellowship (40)</b> 812.723.2414  <i>Doris Weaver, Contact Person</i> doriswendell@gmail.com  2589 N County Road 100 W, Paoli, IN 47454  mennos.paoli@gmail.com</p>
<p><b>Raleigh Mennonite Church (60)</b> 919. 833.1182  <i>Melissa Florer-Bixler, Pastor</i>  melissa@raleighmennonite.org  <i>Rachel Taylor, Intergenerational Pastor</i>  taylor.rachel.e@gmail.com  meets at 1116 N Blount St, Raleigh, NC 27604  Mail to: PO Box 25545, Raleigh, NC 27611  Website: https://www.raleighmennonite.org  Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/RaleighMennonite/</p>	<p><b>****Shalom Community Church (72)</b> 734.761.7366  <i>Trevor Bechtel, Co-pastor</i>  trevor.bechtelt@gmail.com  <i>Hillary Watson, Co-pastor</i>  meets at Gretchen's Place, 2340 Oak Valley Dr, Ann Arbor  Mail to: PO Box 8080, Ann Arbor, MI 48107  shalomcommunitychurch@gmail.com  www.shalomcc.org</p>

<p><b>Shalom Mennonite Congregation (153)</b> 540.432.1659  <i>Brian Bolton, Pastor</i> <i>brian@shalommc.org</i>  meets at Eastern Mennonite High School,  801 Parkwood Dr, Harrisonburg, VA 22802  Mail to: EMU Campus Box 8, Harrisonburg, VA 22802  office@shalommc.org  www.shalommc.org</p>	<p><b>Silverwood Mennonite Church (146)</b> 574.533.1922  <i>Jeremy Shue, Pastor</i> <i>jeremy@silverwoodmc.org</i>  <i>Donna Mast, Pastor</i> <i>donna@silverwoodmc.org</i>  <i>Janice Troyer, Pastor</i> <i>janice@silverwoodmc.org</i>  <i>Aimee Weishaupt, Pastor</i> <i>aimee@silverwoodmc.org</i>  <i>Jon Weishaupt, Pastor</i> <i>jon@silverwoodmc.org</i>  1745 W Lincoln, Goshen, IN  info@silverwoodmc.org <i>www.silverwoodmc.org</i></p>
<p><b>Southside Fellowship (106)</b> 574.293.2825  <i>David Moser, Pastor</i> <i>2davidmoser@gmail.com</i>  meets at AMBS Sermon on the Mount Chapel,  3003 Benham Ave, Elkhart, IN 46517  Mail to: 140 W Mishawaka Ave, Elkhart, IN 46517  ssfelkhart@gmail.com  https://www.facebook.com/Southside-Fellowship-1591825  197704822/</p>	<p><b>St Paul Mennonite Fellowship (12)</b> 651-291-0647  <i>David Edminster, Contact Person</i>  <i>brodaahoud@gmail.com</i>  meets at Cherokee Park United Church,  371 West Baker Street, St. Paul, MN 55107  http://smpf.mennolink.org/</p>
<p><b>Trenton Mennonite Church (69)</b> 513.988.0313  <i>Ron Wenzel, Pastor</i> <i>rlwenzel35@gmail.com</i>  2 E Main, PO Box 19, Trenton, OH 45067  trentonmennonite@sbcglobal.net  www.trentonmennonite.org</p>	<p><b>In Membership Process</b>  Grand Rapids Mennonite Church 616 729 4882  <i>grmennonitefellowship@gmail.com</i>  <i>Alaina Debrowski, Contact Person</i>  <i>alaina.debrowski@gmail.com</i>  meets at: unlisted (please email for address)  Mail to: 1001 Alexander St SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49507</p>
<p><b>New Community of Faith</b>  <b>**Asian Mennonite Community Church</b>  630.801.5060  <i>Jai Prakash (JP) Masih, Pastor</i>  <i>pastorjpamcc@gmail.com</i>  meets at Lombard Mennonite Church, 528 E Madison St,  Lombard, IL 60148</p>	

## 2019-2020 CDC LEADERSHIP

### **Board of Directors**

#### **President (2021):**

Anna Yoder Schlabach      yoderanna@gmail.com  
Assembly Mennonite Church      574.312.5319

#### **President-elect (2021)**

James Rissler      jamesrissler@gmail.com  
Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship      404.355.8061

#### **Secretary (2022)**

Jamie Pitts      jamiepitts@gmail.com  
Hively Avenue Mennonite Church      574.575.0010

#### **Treasurer (2022)**

Tim Lind      tchristianlind@gmail.com  
Florence Church of the Brethren-Mennonite  
269.444.1000

#### **Member-at-large (2020)**

Mary Etta King      maryettaking27@gmail.com  
Covenant Mennonite Fellowship      717.341.4223

#### **Member-at-large (2021)**

Rachel Stolpe      rachelstolpe@gmail.com  
Milwaukee Mennonite Church      414.403.0860

#### **Member-at-large (2021)**

Phil Martens      philipmartens@comcast.net  
First Mennonite Urbana      571.243.2245

### **Leadership Council**

The Leadership Council is comprised of the Board of Directors, Ministerial Committee, Missional Church Committee, Stewardship Committee, Conference Minister and Administrator.

### **Historian/Archives**

#### **Historian**

**Perry Bush (2020)**      bushp@bluffton.edu  
First Mennonite Church Bluffton  
419.358.2456 (H); 419.358.3278 (W)

#### **Archives & Special Collections Coordinator**

**Carrie Phillips**      phillipsc@bluffton.edu  
Musselman Library, 1 University Dr, Bluffton, OH  
45817  
419.358.4226

### **Resolutions Committee**

**David Stolpe (2020)**      stolpedavid@gmail.com  
Milwaukee Mennonite Church      414.704.0860

**Sueann VonGunten (2021)**      vonalter2@frontier.com  
Hively Avenue Mennonite Church      574.612.3108

**George Lehman (2022)**      lehman@bluffton.edu  
First Mennonite Church Bluffton      419.358.1009

### **Gifts Discernment Committee**

**Jon Hilty (2020)**      jhilty@fairpoint.net  
Grace Mennonite Church      419.722.0900

**Joel Miller (2020)**      joel@columbusmennonite.org  
Columbus Mennonite Church      614.940.7839

**Ruth Guengerich (2021)**      rgueng@frontier.com  
Silverwood Mennonite Church      574.533.3545

#### **Brenda North Martin (2021)**

brendanm@pobox.com  
Raleigh Mennonite Church      919.469.5204

**Peter Eash-Scott (2022)**      eashscott@gmail.com  
Milwaukee Mennonite Church      412.478.3449

**Sally Weaver Glick (2022)**      swglick@gmail.com  
Assembly Mennonite Church      574.534.1537

### **Stewardship Committee**

**Leroy Saner (2020) -chair**      lwsaner@gmail.com  
Hively Avenue Mennonite Church      574.294.6051

**Sharon Rensberger (2021)**      rensberger@comcast.net  
Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship      404.423.2624

**Tim Lind (2022)**      tchristianlind@gmail.com  
Florence Church of the Brethren-Mennonite  
269.444.1000

### **Ministerial Committee**

**Ardean Friesen (2020)**      ardean.friesen@gmail.com  
Silverwood Mennonite Church      574.210.2027

#### **Brenda Sawatzky Paetkau (2020)**

bpaetkau@8thstmennonite.org  
Eighth Street Mennonite Church      574.533.6720

**Robin Walton (2021)**      rwwalton55@gmail.com  
Columbus Mennonite Church      614.431.5233

**Michael Crosby (2021)**      michael.crosby@fmc.cu.org  
First Mennonite Urbana      501.269.6369

**Ray Person (2022)**      r-person@onu.edu  
First Mennonite Bluffton      419.358.0481

#### **Kay Bontrager-Singer (2022)**

kay.bsinger@gmail.com  
Faith Mennonite Church      574.971.6614

### ***Missional Church Committee***

**Karla Minter(2020)** karlam@mennonitemission.net  
Open Table Mennonite Fellowship 574.202.0704  
**Tim Stair (2020)** stair.tim@gmail.com  
Hively Avenue Mennonite Church 574.320.6265  
**Valerie Showalter (2021)** valerie@shalommc.org  
Shalom Mennonite Congregation 540.209.0242  
**Matthew Yoder (2021)**  
matthewpyoder@hotmail.com  
Grace Mennonite Church 509.347.6847  
**Mark Rupp (2022)** mark@columbusmennonite.org  
Columbus Mennonite Church 419.392.0610  
**Kiva Nice-Webb (2022)** kiva.shiri@gmail.com  
Chicago Community Mennonite Church  
828.551.2497  
**TBD (2022)**

### ***Camp Friedenswald Board***

**Mary Habegger Fox (2020)**  
johnmaryfox@centurylink.net  
Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship 260.615.9105  
**Peter Suter (2020)** pete@shirleyspopcorn.com  
First Mennonite Church Bluffton 419.230.0188  
**Matt Troyer (2020)** mljdb@comcast.net  
Silverwood Mennonite Church 574.238.8038  
**Kent Stucky (2020)** kdstucky@yahoo.com  
Eighth Street Mennonite Church 574.612.8466  
Member-at-large  
**Rick Buterbaugh (2021)**  
richard\_buterbaugh@usc.salvationarmy.org  
Evanston Mennonite Church 773.818.6853  
**Todd Kirton (2021)** todd.kirkton@gmail.com  
Eighth Street Mennonite Church 574.238.3716  
**Anita Rediger (2021)** redigarfarm@gmail.com  
Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship 260.301.6498  
**Jerry Nussbaum (2022)** n.jerry75@yahoo.com  
Columbus Mennonite Church 740.965.6220  
**Teresa Dutchersmith (2022)**  
tdutchersmith@gmail.com  
Faith Mennonite Church 574.596.6583  
**Alita Yoder Funk (2022)** alitajy@gmail.com  
Silverwood Mennonite Church 574.304.9420

### ***AUXILIARY GROUPS***

#### ***Mennonite Men***

**Steve Thomas, Coordinator**  
steveforpeace@gmail.com 574.202.0048

### ***Mennonite Women***

**Janeen Bertsche Johnson (2020)**, President  
jbjohnson@ambs.edu  
Eighth Street Mennonite Church 574.533.3608  
**Greta Holt (2020)**, Vice-president gholt1@me.com  
Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship  
**TBD**, Treasurer  
**Barbra Gant (2020)**, Member-at-large  
gantbarbra@gmail.com  
Columbus Mennonite Church 937.303.2221

### ***CONFERENCE RELATED MINISTRIES***

#### ***Bluffton University Board of Trustees***

**Heather Bachman Reichenbach (2021)**  
reichenbachhb@gmail.com  
Eighth Street Mennonite Church 574.220.2354  
**Jane Roeschley (2022)** jane@normalmennonite.org  
Mennonite Church of Normal 815.848.5978  
**Tim Stried (2023)** tstried@ohsaa.org  
Columbus Mennonite Church 614.406.0475

#### ***Chicago Mennonite Learning Center (CMLC)***

##### ***Board of Directors***

**Sueann VonGunten** vonalter@frontier.com  
Hively Avenue Mennonite Church 574.848.7899  
**Sara Reschly** sarareschly@gmail.com  
Chicago Community Mennonite Church  
312.647.3850  
**Libby Hostetler** libber64@gmail.com  
Lima Mennonite Church 419.358.4200  
**Richard Rutschman** richrutsch@ameritech.net  
Evanston Mennonite Church 773.510.6515

#### ***Mennonite Central Committee Great Lakes Board***

**Peter Martin (2021)** peterjmartin@gmail.com  
Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship 574.538.9179

#### ***Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS)***

##### ***Credentialed Faculty***

**Janeen Bertsche Johnson** jbjohnson@ambs.edu  
Campus Pastor 574.533.3608  
Eighth Street Mennonite Church  
**Rachel Miller Jacobs** rmjacobs@ambs.edu  
Asst Professor of Congregational Formation  
Faith Mennonite Church 574.534.5964

***CDC STAFF***

***Conference Minister***

**Doug Luginbill**                      confmin@mcusacdc.org  
1015 Division St, Goshen, IN 46528    800.662.2264  
First Mennonite Church Bluffton  
574.534.1485, 419.296.4759

***Administrator***

**Emma Hartman**                      office@mcusacdc.org  
1015 Division St, Goshen, IN 46528    800.662.2264  
Faith Mennonite Church  
574.534.1485, 574.536.3540

***Editor, Reporter and focus***

**Mary E Klassen**                      cdceditor@gmail.com  
1802 W Clinton, Goshen, IN 46526  
574.533.5251  
Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

***Bookkeeper***

**Beth Yoder**                              office@mcusacdc.org  
1015 Division St, Goshen, IN 46528  
800.662.2264, 574.534.1485





2020

REPORT BOOK  
of the

**Central District Conference**  
of  
Mennonite Church USA

*Spirit, bless our souls with yearning!*



*Part I*

*Action/Discussion*



## CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE

Minutes

June 20-22, 2019

Milwaukee Mennonite Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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

### **Thursday, June 20**

#### *Family Day events*

- \*Disc Golf at Dretzka Park
- \*Bike/run/walk (Hank Aaron Trail)
- \*Spiritual Practices for the Journey led by Mary Etta King
- \*Pastor Appreciation Dinner
- \*Backyard Picnic

#### WORSHIP I: Obstacles

Text: John 4:4-10

Speaker: Anton Flores-Maisonet

- \*Ice Cream Social

### **Friday, June 21**

#### *Delegate Session I*

Steve Hartman Keiser (Milwaukee) led delegates in singing SS #39 *Will you come and follow me*. Brenda Sawatzky Paetkau (Eighth Street) led a moment of centering. She invited participants to reflect on the questions, “When you hear God call your name, what energy accompanies that calling?” Following a period of silence, Brenda shared that joy is experiencing the energy of God’s realm.

Arman Habegger (Grace) opened the 63<sup>rd</sup> delegate session of Central District Conference with the sounding of the gavel. He invited participants to introduce themselves around the tables.

#### *State of the Conference Address*

Arman Habegger (Grace) shared the story of the gavel used by Central District Conference. It is a symbol and icon of the conference history. Over the last four years:

- \*Central District has accepted four new congregations and three more will be voted on by delegates at this meeting.

- \*CDC and Allegheny Mennonite Conference (AMC) held a number of conversations about whether a merger would be beneficial to both conferences. Ultimately, AMC decided to retain own identity.

- \*We have had inquiries from other congregations and visited one of those congregations earlier this month as they try to determine their affiliation for the future. One of the serious questions that emerges from these affiliations, both within CDC and MC USA, is that of homogeneity and heterogeneity. Should we rather promote diversity of perspectives or at least seek to embrace diversity or are we more comfortable with more uniformity of thought within our conferences? We have worked hard to center our voices that have been historically marginalized, but there are still those within the conference who are still on the margins. How do we make space for all voices to be heard?

For our visit to this congregation in early June, Doug Luginbill created a PowerPoint presentation that highlighted features of CDC as it currently stands.

- \*\*Over time the conference has moved from more rural congregations to more urban congregations. It will be interesting to see whether that trend continues as the years pass.

- \*\*CDC has continued to receive financial support from congregations, individuals, and more recently from an estate gift to maintain a solid financial base. Some other conferences report financial concerns as they continue to operate in faith. But, we voice a cautionary note: CDC operates with a lean staff of two salaried persons, Doug Luginbill as conference minister and

Emma Hartman as conference administrator. Doug travels far and wide because our congregations are far and wide. With the addition of new congregations, most of which are at a distance, we place a greater responsibility on Doug.

\*Regional gatherings continue to attract participation. This year we added a gathering in the southeast to make it more possible for persons living in North Carolina, Virginia, Georgia, and Florida to attend a gathering. The one day gatherings are a more informal opportunity to meet other CDC congregants and to get updates about conference activities. The three other regional gatherings are in CDC East (Ohio and Michigan), CDC Central (Indiana and Michigan), and CDC West (Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota)

\*A very recent conversation centers on whether CDC wants to explore a friendship with SEMILLA, a seminary in Guatemala. The board of directors and leadership council discussed this briefly at its last meeting in the Spring. Earlier this month, an exploratory meeting was held in Goshen attended by SEMILLA director Willi Hugo, Charlie Geiser of the North American Board of Directors for SEMILLA, Emma Hartman, and Doug Luginbill as CDC staff members, Tim Stair from the Missional Church Committee, and Anna Yoder Schlabach as president-elect. This group met to get a better sense of how a friendship might benefit SEMILLA and educate and equip conference leaders.

\*In August it will be three years since Doug Luginbill was selected as conference minister. Doug has recalled several times since then the anxiety he felt as CDC worked through a peer review process with the Constituency Leaders Council as we carefully described our process of licensing toward ordination a person who identified as LGBTQ. The CLC considered our remarks and a report from a small interview committee. The CLC took no punitive action and recommended that the peer review process be set aside for the future. CDC has since licensed and or approved ordination for LGBTQ identified persons and some pastors have performed same sex marriages with the knowledge and support of their congregations.

\*Serving as the board of directors this year are Mary Etta King (Covenant), Tim Lind (Florence), Phil Martens (First Urbana), Carrie Mast (First Bluffton), Anna Yoder Schlabach (Assembly), Rachel Stolpe (Milwaukee), and Arman Habegger (Grace). The work of the board is made easier by Emma Hartman, who creates the agendas for the meetings and takes minutes. She provides continuity for the board's work.

\*SF Pannebecker, wrote in *The History of Central District Conference* published in 1968.

“What does a historian have to say of the future? The moving finger of history writes on but the historian waits for further revelation 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 no so much as to seriously disturb our way of life. God acts in history to disrupt old patterns and force adjustments to the unknown. Our fathers and mothers faced perplexities in a new continent and reacted, hesitantly at times, but with a confidence in God. Only as we are shaken free of old supports and guarantees can faith begin to operate with trust and growth.”

**Congregational Story - Milwaukee Mennonite Church (MMC):** Steve Hartman Keiser shared that Anton Flores-Maisonet's comments about being vulnerable made him think about the beginning of Milwaukee Mennonite 13 years ago and the vulnerability it took for six households to become a worshipping community together, bringing whatever gifts they had to the community. That willingness to be vulnerable and share gifts marks the congregation today as a lay led congregation of 23 households (about 60 people). Everyone brings a bit of a spark and are willing to share their gifts with each other which makes the lay led congregation work. Some of the symbols of the gifts that are shared are displayed around the church. One member created a wonderful painting that was used by the congregation for covenant Sunday. Others also created visual art used for covenant Sunday that represent the ways each person brings something to the congregation.

While reviewing some notes from 2008, Steve found the following statement, “We are on the cusp of viability.” In a way the congregation is always on the cusp of viability in that they are able to revisit serious decisions that they

make about doing leadership, engaging with community, how to do communion, etc. Revisiting those decisions can be a freeing thing. The Spirit may lead one way now and we can be open to further leading in the future. They also have “lasagna decisions” which are low impact and low cost. Holding decisions lightly and sharing the gifts of everyone is a bit of what Milwaukee Mennonite is about. They are slightly shocked to be hosting the annual meeting, but it is a beautiful thing to see the entire sanctuary full of people who bring their gifts to us. MMC has benefitted tremendously from the fellowship and support of CDC over the years, the depth of thought, the caring, the laughter, and the singing. CDC has been a wonderful home for them.

**Introductions:** Arman introduced the following:

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

*Listening Committee:* Lori Nester (First Bluffton), Tyler Klassen (Hively Avenue), Brenda North Martin (Raleigh)

*Parliamentarian:* Gerald Mast

*Medical Person On Call:* Ardean Friesen

**Summary Review of 2018 Annual Meeting Minutes:** Carrie Mast (First Bluffton) summarized the minutes of the 2018 annual meeting. *A motion was made, seconded, and affirmed to accept the minutes of the 2018 annual meeting as written. [David Moser (Southside), David Rensberger Atlanta]*

**Highlight Actions in 2019 Agenda:** Carrie Mast (First Bluffton) reviewed the agenda and highlighted actions and agenda for the delegate sessions.

**Treasurers Report and Presentation of 2019-2020 Proposed Spending Plan:** Tim Lind (Florence Church of the Brethren - Mennonite) expressed gratitude to the congregations who continue to provide support to the conference. The congregational giving report can be found on pp 63-64 of the report book. If the current pattern of congregational giving and additional giving from individual donors along with careful oversight of expenditures continues, it appears CDC will finish the year in the black.

Tim directed delegates to the proposed 2019-2020 spending plan on p 38 of the report book. Action on the proposed spending plan will take place on Saturday, June 23.

**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: Sally Weaver Glick (Open Table), Ruth Guengerich (Eighth Street), Jon Hilty (Grace), Brenda North Martin (Raleigh), and Joel Miller (Columbus). Peter directed delegates to the 2019-2020 slate on pp 40-41 of the report book and invited nominees to stand as he introduced them. On behalf of the Gifts Discernment Committee, Peter moved to affirm the 2019-2020 slate of nominees. Jep Hostetler (Assembly) seconded the motion. Delegates affirmed the slate as presented.

**Commissioning Prayer:** Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton) invited all new and ongoing committee and board members to stand. He thanked them for their willingness to share their gifts, experience, time and energy to the work and worship of Central District Conference. Doug invited delegates surround them to demonstrate affirmation and support while he led prayer.

**Break/Snacks** provided by Chicago Community Mennonite Church

Steve Hartman Keiser (Milwaukee) led delegates in singing SS #39 *Will you come and follow me*.

**Receiving Americus Mennonite Fellowship, Emmanuel Mennonite Church, and Jubilee Mennonite Church:**

Arman Habegger (Grace) moved to receive Americus Mennonite Fellowship, Emmanuel Mennonite Church, and Jubilee Mennonite Church as member congregations of Central District Conference. Paper ballot votes were taken.

**Word from MC USA:** Michael Danner, associate executive director for MC USA, shared that the entire staff of MC

USA operates with an open inbox policy and is open to answering any questions at any time. MC USA is made up of conferences of congregations. The viability and health of the conferences determines how MC USA is doing as well.

He thanked CDC's leadership and the conference for doing a fantastic job. Michael loves the way that CDC engages, especially at the Constituency Leaders Council level. The CDC leaders are present and leading in that context. They share what they have learned from the conference and represent CDC well. He expressed appreciation for the way that Doug Luginbill engages other conference ministers on issues related to all kinds of things with kindness and grace even though it is not always an easy space for him. He also expressed appreciation for CDC as a conference. He noticed that CDC takes its work as a conference seriously and that it is done with intention and great care. CDC is driven by a clear sense of values and identity about who it is as a people and about where you want to go. It makes a difference in leading from the position of knowing who you are and where you are headed.

Michael is in a settling phase from just having begun his work last year. Most of the executive board staff has turned over within the past year and they have spent the past year getting to know each other. They have recently had other staff changes in the communications staff. While they are sad to see these people go, it has created opportunities to make a change in the way communications are done. Will Laviest will become the CEO of communications. The goal is to pull together the fragmented way communications are done across MC USA, making it more streamlined and efficient and allowing people to go to one source to find information about any part of MC USA. MC USA will also be putting more staff time toward the Women in Leadership project. There are two full-time openings in MC USA: communications production coordinator and multi-media news editor. He invited delegates to share names of possible candidates with him.

Steve Hartman Keiser (Milwaukee) led delegates in singing SS #39 *Will you come and follow me*. Brenda Sawatzky Paetkau (Eighth Street) led a moment of centering: Joy is more than energy for difficult times, it is also what powers abundance and being lavished in love. She invited delegates to reflect in silence on the question, "What abundance and being lavished in love has landed on you in recent days?"

***Sharing around tables/open mic:*** Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton) shared that the board met in August to choose a theme for the next year. The theme that emerged was "Come, walk with us . . . to God knows where! The theme can be interpreted several ways, depending on where you put the emphasis. In Doug's experience as conference minister over the past three years, there have been surprises that have come our way in terms of where God might be leading. One of those was conversations with Allegheny Mennonite Conference. We didn't anticipate that before we got a call from them asking us to walk on a journey with them that turned out to be very fruitful. Even though our two conferences remain as two separate conferences, it built relationships. That was an unknown journey that we did not know where it would go.

About a year ago, Doug had some conversations with Charles Geiser from SEMILLA, a seminary in Guatemala. Again, we don't know where a relationship with SEMILLA might go, but we want to walk this journey and discover together where it might be leading us.

Doug provided some background information for the table discussions.

For thousands of years people have been on the move. Our faith, as part of the Abraham and Sarah story, is a journey story. Some of our stories are heroic and awe-inspiring; crossing the Red Sea to escape slavery and oppression. Some of our stories are horrific and awful; invading Caanan and destroying its inhabitants. Our God has been called Yahweh the warrior and El Shaddai the life-giver, the lion of justice and the dove of peace.

Our faith also includes the story of a young family fleeing death threats by an envious king, returning to their homeland only after the king has died. Settling in a Galilean fishing village, the family's young son, Jesus, matures and becomes an itinerant preacher and rabbi, announcing the reign of God, a kingdom of peace. His invitation to repentance and radical discipleship was good news for all people, Jew and Samaritan, male and female, slave and free, religious and suspicious. His death on the cross and remarkable resurrection despoiled the principalities and powers of politics and religion and set free the body and soul of all humanity. Salvation!

We cannot read our faith story without encountering migration and immigration, strangers and foreigners, angels and saviors, conflict and hospitality.

Hear just one small selection of scripture that speaks to this ongoing encounter with the stranger. Deuteronomy 10:17-22; *The Inclusive Bible*

YHWY is the God of gods,  
the Sovereign of sovereigns,  
the great God,  
powerful and awe-inspiring,  
who has no favorites and cannot be bribed;  
Who brings justice to the orphan and the widowed,  
and who befriends the foreigner among you  
with food and clothing.  
In the same way, you too must befriend the foreigner,  
for you were once foreigners yourselves in the land of Egypt.  
It is YHWY, the God Most High,  
whom you must serve with awe;  
whom you must cling to and by whom you must swear;  
who is your God;  
who has done great things which your eyes have seen with awe.

I've been reading a book recently released by Herald Press by Karen Gonzalez entitled, "*The God who Sees: Immigrants, the Bible, and the Journey to Belong.*" The book is an autobiography of an immigrant from Guatemala. And it is written through the lens of scripture and faith. I highly recommend it. In the Foreword to the book, Sandra Maria Van Opstal states, "The story of Scripture is the story of displaced people. **Showing hospitality is not only for the benefit of the 'stranger' but for the mutuality and strengthening of the church.**"

Where is God leading us? How can we as individuals and as congregations of Central District Conference learn from one another about showing hospitality to the stranger? How might we be transformed by such hospitality?

Doug invited delegates to turn to pages 42-46 of the report book which outlined examples of resources that MC USA and CDC have used over the past 15 years to address migrant justice and racial, ethnic and religious reconciliation. The missional church committee has recently developed a task group to more specifically address these concerns.

Doug invited table groups to respond to the following questions:

- \*What questions would you invite the Missional Church Committee task group to address in regard to racial, ethnic and religious reconciliation?
- \*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.

Karla Minter (Open Table, Missional Church Committee) shared background information about SEMILLA. After Karla shared, table groups were invited to discuss the following question:

- \*Have you or your congregation developed relationships with individuals or communities in Mexico, Central America and/or Latin America?

**Open mic:** Doug's replies are in italics.

\**Kerry Strayer, Columbus:* Table 16 - The table group shared a number of activities that people are doing, such as having people in sanctuary, sister church relationships, and outreach to local communities. They struggled with the question of how do churches without obvious relational connections engage these issues. The group liked the idea of friendship as a two-way relationship.

\**David Rensberger, Atlanta:* Table 2 - The group noted that relationships need to be mutual. We white folks need to make sure we are needed and wanted and have something that others want. We need to ask questions and listen.

\**Joel Miller, Columbus:* Joel's family, including wife and three daughters, went to SEMILLA for three weeks last

summer. They found it was a very valuable learning environment for all ages. There were opportunities for language learning and relationship building. Understanding our own history is very intertwined with that of Guatemala and the region because of military political histories back to the cold war era, suspicions of land reform, and up to the present moment of the migration that is happening. Joel affirmed SEMILLA as a wonderful place to be a learner.

*\*David Moser, Southside:* Loren and Rachel Johns are serving as hosts for guests coming to SEMILLA. SEMILLA hosts ~7000 guest nights a year. He invited delegates to hold Rachel and Loren in prayer as they are currently walking with Rachel's sister Carol, who is dying of cancer.

*\*Annette Brill Bergstresser, Faith:* Annette's table group wondered how a relationship with SEMILLA might empower congregations relating to immigrant neighbors. They noted that Anton Flores, who spent significant time at SEMILLA, mentioned that a number of immigrants have internalized oppression and how churches have participated in that. He would find it liberating for congregations to offer retreats, encounters and curriculum to help undo internalized oppression. For example, looking theologically at questions such as, "Is it a sin to use fake papers to get a job?"

*\*Beth Peachey, Chicago Community:* Beth asked, "Where are we in this process? Are we still in the discerning stage and learning more about SEMILLA or have we actually approached them about a relationship?" *The initial conversation with Central District Conference happened when Charlie Geiser, North America representative to the board of SEMILLA, approached Doug and asked if he would like to get to know Willi Hugo. They met for coffee and got acquainted. Since then Doug has had different conversations with Charlie and explored what it might mean to have a formal relationship with SEMILLA at regional gatherings, with several people at AMBS, and with leaders from Central District at the Leadership Council. Feedback indicated that the leaders wondered about what a "formal relationship" might mean. They also recognized that some congregations are thinking about immigration and migration. In response to a question about what SEMILLA might want, Willi Hugo said that friendships have happened in a variety of ways with different organizations and churches throughout the history of SEMILLA. They are interested in welcoming us as learners with them and welcome financial support as encouragement for their ministries to share Anabaptist theology and understanding across the Spanish speaking world. It is a two way street. We are currently continuing to gather feedback and sharing the SEMILLA story. We are in educational mode of sharing the story of SEMILLA so we can know more about it.*

*\*Ron Guengerich, Eighth Street:* Ron was on a fellowship and learning tour sponsored by MMN and Central Plains Conference recently. Central Plains has the type of relationship we are talking about with the Ecuadorian Mennonite Church. It might be helpful to talk with people from Central Plains to see how they established their friendship and what it meant.

*\*Justin Weaver, First Mennonite Bluffton:* Justin went to SEMILLA through Bluffton University as a junior in high school. The experience gave him the chance to gain more confidence in speaking the language, learning about the culture, and hearing stories from the people. He learned about their experience during the civil war and how US was partly the cause. They also got to hike up a volcano and roast marshmallows on top of it.

*\*Elli Winter, St Paul:* The statement says it is about racism and antipathy amongst different cultural groups. How should the church address racial, ethnic and religious reconciliation? Elli wondered how the church connects with the diversity of modern day America? Why is the church itself so self-segregating? Jesus did not do that, he went where people are different.

*\*Matthew Yoder, Grace:* The conversation was very confusing to Matthew until he understood that SEMILLA needs money and that CDC has money. We don't want to be in a patron/client relationship but we want to be in a mutual friendship. What can we do about that? In exchange for our money, SEMILLA has goods of cultural competency and Anabaptist in a Latin American context that we as people trying to do this cultural competency work might benefit from in a mutual friendship relationship and financial partnership with SEMILLA.

**Introduction of Jane Wood:** Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton) introduced Jane Wood, President of Bluffton University to the delegates and offered a prayer of blessing.

**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.

### **Lunch, Visiting Displays**



## **Delegate Session II**

Steve Hartman Keiser (Milwaukee) led delegates in singing SS #39 *Will you come and follow me*.

**Announcing Membership Vote and Presentation of Blessing Cups:** Arman Habegger (Grace) announced the votes to accept Americus Mennonite Fellowship, Emmanuel Mennonite Church, and Jubilee Mennonite Church into membership were unanimous. He presented each congregation with a cup filled with blessings from Central District Conference congregations.

**Term Review of Conference Minister:** Delegates affirmed the recommendation from the board of directors to renew Doug Luginbill's term for another three years.

**Congregational Story - Madison Mennonite Church:** J Denny Weaver shared the following story:

*Madison Mennonite is a predominantly white, middle class, relatively well-educated congregation. In recent conversations we have begun addressing white privilege and our role in it. The question is, "What does it mean for a congregation like ours to be welcoming, both in our worship services and in our daily lives?"*

*Conversations about these issues are difficult, and we are not all in the same place. However, our walk to "God knows where" includes a number of prophetic voices and examples that show a way forward. Pastor Tim's listening sessions at the beginning of his transition ministry surfaced this challenge. Alison Brookins, now pastor at Chicago Community Mennonite Church, brought her theatre piece to Madison and taught us about the Doctrine of Discovery. This race-based doctrine became the justification for the entire colonial enterprise around the world; we are still feeling its impact in our country. In their work with the University of Wisconsin, both Jocelyn and Ruth have made us aware of issues facing the indigenous people of Wisconsin. Valleri's husband came from El Salvador, which means that Valleri brings a diverse family to our congregation. She also has a ministry of befriending and bringing people to church with whom we might not otherwise worship. Jeremiah is leader of members of our congregation that do repair and remodeling with the Nehemiah Center, a black-led, anti-racist program in Madison. Lonna led a group in reading and discussing the book *White Fragility*. Miriam, who came from India but who has now left the country because her visa expired, challenged us to recognize our biases and blind spots and to take real steps to counter them. For myself, I am engaged in an ongoing conversation with an African American pastor about his experiences in making his congregation a satellite of a large evangelical church in Madison. He and I are working towards a conversation between members of his congregation and Madison Mennonite. Rather than seeking a lowest common denominator, our goal is to discover how we can learn from and be enriched by our distinct identities.*

*These examples are steps Madison Mennonite is taking along the path to "God knows where." We are discovering as we go where that path may lead, as we continue to ask how our congregation can be welcoming to people who do not look like us, in our worship services and in our daily walk.*

**Storytelling stations:** In keeping with the theme, *Come, walk with us. . . To God knows where!*, 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.

- \*Biblical Storytelling - Prophetic Voices: Moving toward right relationships with Karla Minter and Deron Brill Bergstresser
- \*How Camp Fridenswald 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

**Break** with snacks provided by Milwaukee Mennonite Church

**WORSHIP II:** Perseverance/Persistence

Hymnsing in MMC sanctuary

Song/worship leader: Andrea Welty Peachey

Offering for Central District Conference

Communion

## ***Dinner***

### ***Seminars***

- \*Looking Forward to #MennoCon19 led by Michael Danner
- \*Sanctuary for our undocumented neighbors led by Isaac Villegas and Joel Miller
- \*Faith Formation for Children and Families led by Lora Nafziger
- \*A Life in Story led by Jane Wood

## **Saturday, June 22**

### ***WORSHIP III: Thriving***

Speaker: Alison Brookins  
Text: Luke 19:1-10

***Break*** with snacks provided by St Paul Mennonite Fellowship

### ***Delegate Session III***

Steve Hartman Keiser (Milwaukee) led delegates in singing SS #39 *Will you come and follow me*.

Brenda Sawatzky Paetkau (Eighth Street) led a moment of centering. She invited participants to reflect on the following question, “When you hear God call your name, what energy accompanies that calling?” Following a period of silence, Brenda shared that joy is experiencing the energy of God’s realm. Desmond Tutu has said that “Joy is available right now without waiting for anything.” Participants engaged in a few moments of silence.

**Missional Church Committee Report:** Committee members introduced themselves: Karla Minter (Open Table), Tim Stair (Hively Avenue), Valerie Showalter (Shalom Mennonite Congregation), Matthew Yoder (Grace), Kiva Nice-Webb (Chicago Community), Mark Rupp (Columbus), Matthew Morin (Milwaukee)

Using a skit, the committee shared about their work:

#### **\*\*Reign of God grants:**

A grant of \$1200 was awarded to the northwest Ohio congregations of First Mennonite Bluffton, Grace Mennonite, Lima Mennonite and Salem Mennonite (Ohio Conference) to bring Bryan Suderman Moyer to the area for a weekend event that was free and open to the public. These events included a Friday night concert at one of the sponsoring churches, a Saturday workshop at a sponsoring church, and Sunday morning worship at one of the sponsoring churches.

Bringing Bryan to the Bluffton, Ohio area provided an opportunity for Anabaptist Mennonites and other people of Christian faith in our communities to re-ground their lives in a Christ-centered biblical approach to Christian faith that cuts through and rises above divisive political rhetoric in public discourse. This was an opportunity for Christians in our communities to remember who we are and whose we are. It was an opportunity to re-imagine better ways forward for individuals, families, communities and society than are being offered by the current political sector, and the 7-minute news cycle that provides an endless flow of commentary on the political sector. It was exciting to be with people who are imagining new ways of being church and implementing them already.

#### **\*\*SENT conference:**

Carolyn May (Columbus) shared what she experienced at the 2019 SENT conference. Carolyn attended the SENT conference because she is interested in exploring what it might be like to have a new congregation in the Columbus area. She learned that there is not a ten-step process to planting a church but that it is very contextual to the area. There are a lot of conversations, dreaming, and collaborations that will take place during the process. It was also valuable to Carolyn to meet a number of Mennonites who have done this work and to become aware of the resources that will be available to her in the church planting process.

#### **\*\*Racial, Ethnic, and Religious Reconciliation Task Group (Kiva Nice-Webb)**

People on the task group are: Annette Bergstresser (Faith), Charles Bontrager (First Wadsworth), Sandra Miller (Silverwood), Kiva Nice-Webb (Chicago Community, chair and committee rep), Cyneatha Millsaps

(Community), and Isaac Villegas (Chapel Hill)

The initial charge for the task group was to enhance the missional capacity of congregations and provide essential and needed resources for them to effectively minister in their contexts. The charge to the task group was to develop strategies for addressing racial, ethnic and religious reconciliation. Such strategies should include, but not be limited to, an assessment plan to determine where different congregations are on the journey to addressing racial, ethnic and religious reconciliation and providing congregations with four short provocations to begin, further or reignite conversations about racial, ethnic and religious reconciliation work in their contexts.

The task group was to be made up of five white people - one from the Missional Church Committee and four from CDC at large - and was to be accountable to two persons of color who would advise the task group without being required to attend all meetings. The rationale for this configuration was based on in the idea that white supremacy creates blind spots that greatly benefit from the checks and balances of accountability provided by folks of color.

### **What we have been doing**

The structure has been generally a check-in, sharing regarding the practice we tried in between the meetings (different each time), receiving feedback from the Accountability members, and setting a practice to try before the next meeting. Examples of practices have been gathering stories of transformation (no matter how small) in the area of RER reconciliation from within our CDC congregations, taking a personal inventory on ourselves and RER reconciliation work, and holding everyone in interculturally tense situations as “whole and complete” (including ourselves). Each of these practices has emerged from our conversations, as we’re trying to be careful to not posit ourselves as “experts” but as intentional explorers about how to scale RER reconciliation work so that we are not doing nothing or forgetting the ongoing nature of the work in our congregations, selves and world but are also not overwhelmed into inaction. Good guidelines from the Accountability members have been the reminder that the trust needed to do serious, deep racial reconciliation work takes years to develop, and that while white people figuring out their own depths of internalized racist behavior and thoughts is good, the work of this task group must eventually lead to action, not just more talking.

### **Goals**

We started out trying to figure out if an assessment tool was needed to do this work for CDC congregations, or how to gather information about all CDC congregations and their work (or gaps in work) towards Racial, Ethnic and Religious Reconciliation. But then we realized that we might need to slow down and get out of our heads, because an opportunity would be missed if we just recommend more “book learning” or trainings with just head knowledge about racial injustice.

So, we’re trying to figure out what happens when we develop trust and have real conversations about race, and how that feels, what works and what doesn’t, where we get stuck, and in so doing “practice” so that we can offer testimony and models from what we’re practicing. It’s turning into almost a small group model. I think a challenge for us moving forward will be to constantly be connecting our reflection practices with work out in the world. That’s usually where our individual reflections come from — us practicing out in our contexts and bringing that information back to our meetings, but I’m interested to see where we go from here, with an eye towards giving CDC congregations the four provocations that John Powell originally envisioned as a product from this Task Group. One might be the formation of small groups specifically focused around developing the trust needed for accountability, challenge and support as folks in congregations work towards racial, ethnic and religious reconciliation in their contexts, but it’s perhaps too early to tell.

### **Defining “The Problem”**

Isaac Villegas suggested that we name The Problem, model sharing vulnerably/transparently from our struggles/successes in grappling with The Problem, and invite folks to make commitments to work personally and systemically to address The Problem in their own contexts.

We see the core problem that our task group is addressing as understanding and naming that we are part of a

society that has been structured around (1) assigning value to people groups based on traits such as skin color, ethnic background, religion, ability, gender, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status (among others) and (2) giving benefits and power to those who are defined as being at the top of this hierarchy (the dominant group/s). The resulting power/principality of white supremacy is an economic, social, political and theological system that centers and privileges white (male/cisgender/heterosexual) bodies and the white (male/cisgender/heterosexual) experience and European expressions of Christianity and disempowers those who do not fit those identities (who are considered “other”). The problem is not primarily about individual bias or relationships, though both are important, but about the systemic and structural ways the whole world has been set up by white people to benefit white people. Whiteness is not a cultural category but a power relationship category.

Those of us who are white people within CDC acknowledge that our whiteness has let us ignore white supremacy. As mostly white congregations in mostly white areas, we’ve largely been able to talk about racism in terms of personal bias and offload it as a problem that other white people have. We often haven’t done, or felt a need to, or known how to do the hard work of confronting white supremacy in our lives and our communities. The lack of cultural and ethnic diversity in our conference could be seen as an external manifestation or symptom of this core problem — not the problem itself but a harmful outgrowth of the false superiority of whiteness as the norm for human lives, instead of God’s norm for human lives.

Whiteness as an ideology does harm and prevents right relationships between us and others and with ourselves, which is a justice problem and a spiritual problem within our own lives. Following Christ calls us to strive toward ways of relating that regard everyone as an equally beloved child of God and to challenge the racialized hierarchical categories and power structures that the U.S. was founded upon and that we have been steeped in through living in our place and time.

In *Trouble I’ve Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism* (Herald, 2016) Drew G.I. Hart writes, “Christians must do a better job of thinking, analyzing, discussing and ultimately transforming our racialized lives into anti-racist and anti-hierarchical ways of life that conform to the way of Jesus. We must learn to see and understand the racism all around us so that we can faithfully resist being complicit in its patterns. Once we are able to see it, we must engage in initiatives of deep metanoia, or repentance — initiatives that change us from racialized accommodation to resistance” (23).

### **Our struggles and successes**

The format of our meetings has generally consisted of those of us who identify as “white” grappling with whiteness and imagining what might constructively exist in its place if it were dismantled with accountability to communities of color. Our Accountability members have borne witness, gently calling out blind spots when they arise and offering perspectives and direction.

Through our conversations in our meetings and our relational/attentiveness experiments in between meetings, we have discovered a common thread of the disconnect between “book learning” about racial injustice and experiential transformation in our relationships to self, God and others through deconstructing our attachment to the lies of whiteness ideology or white supremacy.

Some of the lies of this ideology are that white people have to be right and to be in control of situations; there is only one good way to do things; results matter more than process; white people have boundless power; mistakes are the end of the world; etc. To expand our ability to resist these lies within ourselves and our relationships, we have been trying experiments in being wrong, making mistakes, exploring multiple good ways to do things, practicing humility, etc. This has required vulnerability and does not always feel good or clear — least of all, “productive.” But we have noticed the Spirit moving with us as we stumble and try experiments. We have given thanks for the grace of relationships across cultural differences. We have felt despair at how to shift something so large and harmful and have felt comfort in the reminder that we are not God.

We want to note that we’ve also struggled with how to write this report. We recognize that the work of dismantling white supremacy is primarily work that white people need to own, including white people within

CDC. But is our language in this report excluding people of color in CDC or somehow misrepresenting our conference? That's not our intention, and we need help in addressing this blind spot.

We note that we have focused more on racism than on the ethnic and religious portions of our group's mandate. We acknowledge that those of us who are white ethnic Mennonites have tended to use our ethnicity to shore up in-group status, identifying as white and using knowledge of Mennonite cultural traditions and "Mennonite last names" to show that we are "real Mennonites."

### **An invitation**

For those of us who are white and want to engage transformation in these areas, we find that being willing to spend time sitting with and exploring questions that feel difficult and uncomfortable is a necessary part of such a process.

"If we are to better interpret racialized situations and moments, we must begin to look for widespread patterns through history and society and to listen attentively to the voices of those at the bottom of the racial hierarchy in America," writes Hart (55). We've grown from and been humbled by seeking to understand history from the perspectives of those who have been oppressed and marginalized, acknowledging how we and others have benefitted from unjust actions. Here are some questions that have come up for us:

- \*Whose land am I/are we living and worshiping on? Have I/we repented of how we have benefitted from its unjust seizure from the Indigenous people who inhabited it?
- \*How could we or our parents afford to buy houses? (For example, housing acts in the 1930s and 40s prohibited African Americans from purchasing homes – and thereby from accumulating generational wealth through property value appreciation and inheritances – and also created greater racial segregation in housing.)
- \*Have I/we reflected on the Mennonite assumption of white identity in the wake of the anti-German sentiment during and after the World Wars?
- \*How am I and how are we in CDC holding to slave holder theology, which upholds unjust systems while simultaneously exonerating those of us who perpetuated and benefitted from these systems? What are we doing that allows us to separate our theology from the work of justice?
- \*Why is CDC such a comfortable conference for white churches?
- \*Why have non-white Mennonites not sought CDC out as a place where theological diversity is welcome?

We'd like to invite you, in your contexts, to:

- \*Give us your reactions to what you've heard from us (positive and negative).
- \*Commit to seek out and cultivate relationships of accountability where you can share in experiments in unlearning whiteness ideology in your contexts and in yourselves. (Build on existing relationships; don't try to use other people as new relationships for your own growth.)
- \*Commit to sharing with others about your experiences.

None of this work should be in place of action towards racial justice in a systemic way, but externally focused activism or education alone cannot be the whole project.

***Congregational Story - Covenant Mennonite Fellowship:*** Mary Etta King shared the following: Covenant Mennonite Fellowship in Sarasota, Florida is a Mennonite church dedicated to sharing the good news of God with our Sarasota community and to the broader world. Our mission is to follow the way of Jesus in the Anabaptist peace tradition.

Covenant Mennonite Fellowship believes that in our worship, our fellowship, and our every-day lives, the Spirit of Jesus meets us exactly where we are with healing, hope, and wholeness. Our hope is to provide a contemplative, welcoming, Anabaptist community that inspires people to joyful living, healing, peace, reconciliation, and mercy for all and for our natural world.

At Covenant, we seek to practice a spirituality of hands, hearts and minds. We sing hymns old and new, share about our vision for peace and justice, celebrate through intellectually engaging worship, and bless one another in authentic Christian community. We find spiritual meaning through our scriptures, silence, the arts, sacred symbols, thought-provoking discussion, and more! At Covenant Mennonite Fellowship, we find the encouragement to actively participate in a new culture of God – a culture of grace, peace, nonviolence, joy, and service in Jesus' name.

Covenant Mennonite Fellowship was the result of a vision for a nontraditional Anabaptist presence in the Sarasota community. Talk of forming the church began in the early 1990s with members of other local Mennonite congregations. They met as a small group for a few years and then disbanded.

In January of 2000, a remnant of the original group met to reorganize the effort. It was clear they wanted to identify with the Mennonite Church denomination because of their Anabaptist beliefs. On June 18, 2000, the church held its first public worship service. The fellowship was accepted into full membership in the Southeast Mennonite Conference in 2003. When Randy Spaulding came out as a gay pastor to the church community in 2009, the Southeast Mennonite Conference removed his credentials. After a couple years of dialogue and discussion with the Conference, Covenant withdrew its membership in 2011. Covenant reaffirmed a commitment to Christian Anabaptist and Mennonite values and requested membership with Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA. The church was accepted into CDC in 2014.

In 2017, the church outgrew its location and moved to 1400 S. Cattleman Road. Even there because of a swell of people who visit sunny Florida during the winter months and particularly those who want to be in a Mennonite Church, our numbers have grown even more. It's an unusual phenomena that a church of 40-50 people grows to 140 through the months of January-April. Because of this we met in a conference room at the Carlisle Inn. Attendance dips back to the usual size for the summer months.

The church has been served by several pastors and interim pastors throughout the years:

Barry Loop: 2000-2001  
Randy Spaulding: 2003-2011  
Jim Miller: 2012-2014  
Melissa Roth: 2014  
Tara Plank: 2014-2016  
Andrew Hudson: 2016-2017  
Linford and Mary Etta King: 2017-Present

Covenant Mennonite Fellowship is a peace church in the Anabaptist tradition. We are made up of a mixture of people of Mennonite and non-Mennonite backgrounds who bring various traditions together. Our model for living is the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, who called people to live lives that reflect the compassion, healing, peace, justice, and mercy of God to all peoples and nations, regardless of culture or creed, and to all creation.

Our values include:

Following God in the way of Jesus

Faith as a journey with intellectual and spiritual integrity  
Service, non-violence, reconciliation, and care of the environment  
The truth and vitality of Christianity while respecting the beliefs of other faiths  
Equality and the use of all people's gifts in the church  
The arts, music, symbolism, liturgy, and contemplation in worship  
Non-violent and inclusive language  
Broader Anabaptist relationships through Central District Conference and Mennonite Church USA

**Ministerial Committee Report:** [Committee members]

Jewel Gingerich Longenecker, Dean of Lifelong Learning at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), expressed appreciation for the opportunity to partner with Central District Conference to offer the Journey: A Missional Leadership Development Program. The Journey program is designed for people exploring a call to pastoral ministry, as well as for pastors and other congregational leaders called without specific training for ministry. Learners follow a curriculum focused on six guideposts: spiritual disciplines, theological and biblical studies, character development, mentoring and community, gift development, and leadership skills. An important part of the program is the mentor that each participant receives. They meet every other week and meet together twice a year with all the other mentor/mentee pairs in learning retreats. The Journey participants do online studies the rest of the year.

Currently, Dennis Miller (Silverwood) and mentor John Heyerly (Silverwood), JP Schumacher (First Bluffton) and mentor Gloria Hernandez Bucher (First Bluffton), and Jan Croyle (First Wadsworth) and mentor Marilyn Rossiter (Summit) are participating in the Journey program. Ardean Friesen (Silverwood) and Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton) serve on the Journey board and Donna Mast (Silverwood) is an online instructor.

Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton) introduced Dennis Miller (Silverwood) and presented a certificate of completion for the Journey program and a journey lamp. Jewel presented gifts from AMBS: a registration to Pastors and Leaders 2020 and a subscription to *Vision: A Journal of Church and Theology*. Dennis thanked Jewel and Doug for the opportunity to participate in the Journey program.

Doug Luginbill recognized those who have been newly licensed, ordained, or serving in new ministries the past year from July 1, 2018 - May 31, 2019.

Melissa Florer-Bixler (Raleigh) ordained  
Sally Weaver Glick (Open Table) licensed toward ordination  
Catherine Lee (Chapel Hill) licensed toward ordination  
Anna Yoder Schlabach (Assembly) licensed toward ordination  
Isaac Villegas (Chapel Hill) received and reactivated credential  
Matt Pritchard (Berea/Campus Ministry at Georgia Tech) received credential from Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference  
Jane Hooper Peifer (Shalom Mennonite Congregation) received credential from Atlantic Coast Mennonite Conference. Jane is assisting Eastern Mennonite Seminary with a pastor mentoring program as well as providing spiritual direction  
Janice Troyer (Silverwood) installed as a member of the pastoral team at Silverwood  
Rachel Taylor (Raleigh) installed as the intergenerational pastor at Raleigh  
Tom Kauffman (Assembly) commissioned as transitional pastor at Paoli  
Sarah Thompson, licensed for specific ministry (May 2018-May 2019) with the Mennonite Boomerang project

Doug thanked them for their leadership and ministry. He led in a prayer of affirmation.

Ardean Friesen (Silverwood) invited committee members forward. Ray Person (First Bluffton) recognized the pastors who were credentialed with CDC and have died this past year.

Alice Ruth Ramseyer, died November 25, 2018

Howard Habegger, died December 28, 2018

Buton Yost, January 7, 2019

Ardean directed participants to the committee report on p75 and encouraged them to read it. The committee has worked this year to create and update policies and procedures, including the Healthy Boundaries Training and have worked on the roles and responsibilities for the conference minister. The committee has decided not to do automatic credential reviews for pastors who perform same sex ceremonies if they do so with the backing of their congregation. They will only do a pastoral credential review if there is a complaint received.

He thanked Doug Luginbill on behalf of the ministerial committee for his work for the conference.

***ACTION: 2019-2020 Spending Plan:*** On behalf of the Board of Directors, Tim Lind (Florence) moved to adopt the 2019-2020 spending plan as presented. The motion was affirmed.

***Everence:*** Steve Bustos (Silverwood) shared some of the resources available to congregations at Everence. More information can be found on the website at [everence.com](http://everence.com)

\*Sharing Funds

\*End of life issues

\*Challenging capitalism

\*Lily grant to support pastors on their financial journey, debt relief, provide financial planning subsidy, and provide educational events

\*Endowments, long term planning

\*Online process to use pastor salary guidelines

***Open Mic:*** Arman Habegger (Grace) invited participants to share comments.

\**David Rensberger (Atlanta):* David has heard second hand comments from rural white Mennonite churches puzzling over what they can do in the way of racial reconciliation. He grew up in such a church in Indiana and remembered that in the early '60s his dad told him about Simmie Bontrager, who owned the local feed mill. Simmie wrote a letter to John Howard Griffin, who had written *Black Like Me* to come and talk at their church. Our rural churches are part of their community and their community is part of our country. Whatever you can say and do within that community, whoever you can invite to come in and speak at your church, whoever you can build relationships with can change and have an effect on, not only your congregation, but maybe on your community at large. It really is a process of small changes. The changes that happen in the smallest places can sometimes make the biggest difference.

\**Walter Sawatsky (Hively Avenue):* Walter shared that there were planes in the air for about an hour before the President cancelled the attack on Iran. Walter thinks it is a slight sign of hope that we may get back to appropriate treaties with Iran. He hoped we could say a prayer of thanks.

\**Russ Miller (Jubilee):* On behalf of Jubilee, Russ thanked everyone for the welcome they have received at CDC.

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

Twice a year, three representatives of each of the 17 MC USA conferences and other groups gather for the Constituency Leaders Council. The purpose of CLC is "to worship and pray together, to encourage faithfulness, to share ideas and resources, to process concerns, and to provide discernment and give counsel to MC USA Executive Board and to each other on issues of life and faith in MC USA."



Our CDC representatives are chosen based on position; President, President Elect and Conference Minister. The past two years this has been Anna Yoder Schlabach, Arman Habegger and Doug Luginbill. Observations from our October meeting in Chicago and our March meeting in Hesston:

\*Glen Guyton, our new Executive Director of MC USA, is committed to transparency, speaking the truth in love, and moving forward with those who are committed to MC USA.

\*There is a bit more focus on resourcing or equipping leaders at CLC. Michael Danner, Associate Executive Director for Church Vitality and Engagement, whom we met yesterday, thinks about organizational health. He wonders if leaders in MC USA have perhaps over functioned in “polity” and under functioned in “theology.” It is sometimes easier to think about and focus on right and healthy structures and relationships and sidestep the more difficult theological differences that are uncomfortable. Yet, tending to healthy structures and creating safe spaces allows us to have the harder theological conversations.

At the fall CLC meeting Michael also briefly summarized “The Five Disfunctions of a Team” by Patrick Lencioni, which are:

- \*\*Absence of Trust
- \*\*Fear of Conflict
- \*\*Lack of Commitment
- \*\*Avoidance of Accountability
- \*\*Inattention to Results

\*At the spring CLC meeting, Michael made the following observation:

*“Section III of the Membership Guidelines of MC USA continues to cause some tension, given the variety of opinion and practice related to pastors living in same-sex relationships, for credentialing pastors in such relationships, and to the permission for pastors to conduct same-sex marriages. There is a separation between what we say we believe, and the practice of some conferences and congregations in opposition. There is a call by some for the Executive Board of MC USA to take some kind of action... The ultimate question is, what are we going to do with the Membership Guidelines?”*

Michael then led a process to seek responses to the question, “What is the best way for MC USA to discern the future of the Membership Guidelines?” CLC participants engaged in a healthy conversation over two days and offered various ideas and suggestions for the MC USA executive board to consider. Ideas ranged from “setting aside” the guidelines to inviting every congregation to participate in a process of discernment regarding the guidelines. No decisions have yet been made by the Executive Board and there are no plans to engage delegates at Convention in Kansas City around this topic. Perhaps something will be brought to the delegates in 2021 in Cincinnati.

\*The possible merger of *The Mennonite* and *Mennonite World Review* is back on the table.

\*A final observation is that CLCs can be fun!

**Camp Friedenswald Highlights:** Jenna Liechty Martin (Emmaus Road, Executive Director)

Jenna brought greetings from Camp Friedenswald. She finds joy in hearing stories of Camp Friedenswald from others and how the camp impacts their lives. She shared there are 30 summer staff are helping, 11 of them from seven CDC congregations. She asked some of the staff why they said yes to serving at camp this summer. Some of the responses included:

- \*I really wanted to come and experience a chance to grow and develop as a leader.
- \*To spend some more time in a place that has been formative in my own life.
- \*I came because I felt called.

When she asked how they felt called, many responded that someone had tapped their shoulder or encouraged them to step into a role of leadership. Camp has been serving the church through the young people who give up their summer for service. Through their service they experience growth and development as leaders and many go on to serve the church in other capacities throughout their lifetimes.

She expressed gratitude for the pastors who have agreed to serve as camp pastors this summer, including Carrie Mast, First Bluffton; Matthew Yoder, Grace; Melissa Florer-Bixler, Raleigh; and Michael Crosby, First Urbana.

Jenna shared camp staff has taken time to tend to aging buildings and spaces that have been around for about 70 years. This past year areas that have been updated include: the main beach and new, natural sea wall that was put in, an amphitheater seating area, a new slip and slide where the tube run is, a new trail map and guide. Over the past two years, camp has been making strides towards becoming a more sustainable and resilient organization. She shared numbers and ways about how that has been happening. Jenna shared ways delegates can get involved:

- \*Mentor/mentee retreats
- \*Church retreats
- \*Sustainability retreats
- \*Making comforters and blankets for camp

***MCC Great Lakes Report:*** Eric Kurtz invited everyone who has served or volunteered with MCC to stand. He thanked them for all the ways they have participated in MCC. Eric gave a brief history of the formation of MCC and shared about the centennial celebration.

***Listening Committee Report:*** Arman Habegger (Grace) introduced the members of the Listening Committee: Brenda North Martin (Raleigh), Lori Nester (First Bluffton), and Tyler Klassen (Hively Avenue).

\*Brenda shared impressions of the delegate sessions. Through sessions punctuated by bodies and chairs falling, our songs, prayers, and laughter rising, the CDC delegate body and guests journeyed through our agenda. From the invitation to remember joy manifested in our lives to the challenge to recognize and address the self-segregation of our worshiping communities we walked together listening to the congregational, personal and organizational stories. We invited three new congregations to accompany us on our missional journeys. Our conversations at table helped us get acquainted and reacquainted along with further discussions about how we are being called to partner with diverse folk and organizations, specifically SEMILLA, the Anabaptist seminary in Guatemala. A significant vote of confidence came when the delegate body voted unanimously to extend Doug Luginbill's tenure as conference minister for an additional three years. She thanked Doug for his love for the congregations and pastors that make up the delegate body that is evident and word and deed. She thanked Arman for his wielding of the gavel so effectively these past two years. Brenda thanked Emma for keeping us organized beyond our wildest dream from Milwaukee to Sarasota and all points in between.

Tyler shared that our conference theme was "Come, walk with us... To God knows where?" In our worship, we walked through obstacles into thriving. Thursday's worship started our walk with the theme "Obstacles on our Journey." Litanies and hymns reminded us of the difficulties we face as we try to remain faithful to God's call. Anton Flores-Maisonet called us to recognize the Undocumentable in our midst and the Undocumentable inside of ourselves. He called us to live a Subversive and radical gospel. He reminded us that we may be on Journeys, not of our own choosing but that our journeys intersect with, and in ways that bring us closer to God's hopes for us and our church. He showed us the power of vulnerability as we live our call of radical community and witness. Let us not be so tired out! Let us sit by our own wells and practice good self-care.

Friday's hymn sing, was a reminder of the power of community: The light, colors and shape of this space guide our hearts and spirits toward God. Our soaring voices together brought us closer to God with hymns of praise, blessing, encouragement and, worship. The scripture called us to genuine love and to remember

the genuine steadfast love of God. And as the echoes of our singing and scripture rumbled in our souls, we took and broke the bread, and we took the cup as we remembered and celebrated the life of Jesus and his death for us. As our worship came to an end, once again our voices soared into song, this time *Praise God from Whom*, HWB #118.

Saturday, we were lifted into joy and God's good pleasure. We gratefully sang our praises, shared pipe cleaners and were bathed in glorious morning light. Alison Brookins shared with us her message: Bailing out Noah's ark with a teaspoon. Her message told us that joy is a "God thing." She spoke of the beauty of Jesus' face, and what can happen when we fully look at that face, how threading the needle of entering into hope of following the unexplainable. She spoke of living in the deepest and most profound joy, and how we thrive in joy not by what we know but by what we hold here... to follow the longing deep... that thing that just wants to be a little bit closer. To go and to find that thing that is the source of the deepest joy in your life. She called us to orient ourselves toward joy, with hope, with courage, with persistence, and with faith.

Tyler thanked the following people:

- \*Those leaving leadership positions in Central District for work, dedication and vision to CDC.
- \*Those coming into leadership positions for committing their time, energy and vision to the future work.
- \*Those who serve on boards and other committees.

Lori shared that they have heard many conversations. The analogy of Central District being like a family, that we are all adult siblings definitely feels very appropriate. This feels like a family reunion. Some have been coming for many years and others more recently. The hope is that those who are new do feel welcome. It has been a wonderful time to reconnect with friends. A common theme throughout the weekend was the weather and how much rain has been in our home areas. We are grateful for the beautiful weather we experienced here. We've heard many stories of what is happening in the different areas of the conference even during breaks and mealtimes. We have been open and honest in our sharing around tables and have been vulnerable with each other. We've heard stories of places such as Camp Friedenswald, which we have declared the best and stories of other projects. We've seen the knitted items from a prison ministry. We are excited to have intentional listening, being vulnerable and exploring the path of the journey together even though it may be difficult at times.

Lori thanked our hosting congregation of Milwaukee Mennonite and the other CDC West congregations who provided the snacks and helped care for the other details involved in hosting.

**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 25-27, 2020, meeting place TBD. Arman handed the gavel to president-elect Anna Yoder Schlabach, who closed the 63<sup>rd</sup> delegate session on Central District Conference with the sounding of the gavel. She thanked Milwaukee for hosting the annual meeting in their space.

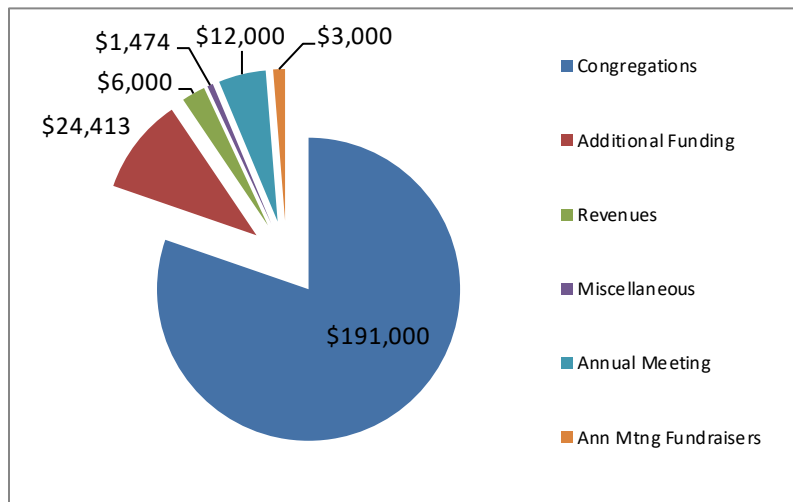
**Songs/Benediction:** Steve Hartman Keiser led in singing SS #40 *Som 'landela (We will follow)* Doug Luginbill ended with a benediction.

Close of Annual Meeting

Emma Hartman  
Recorder

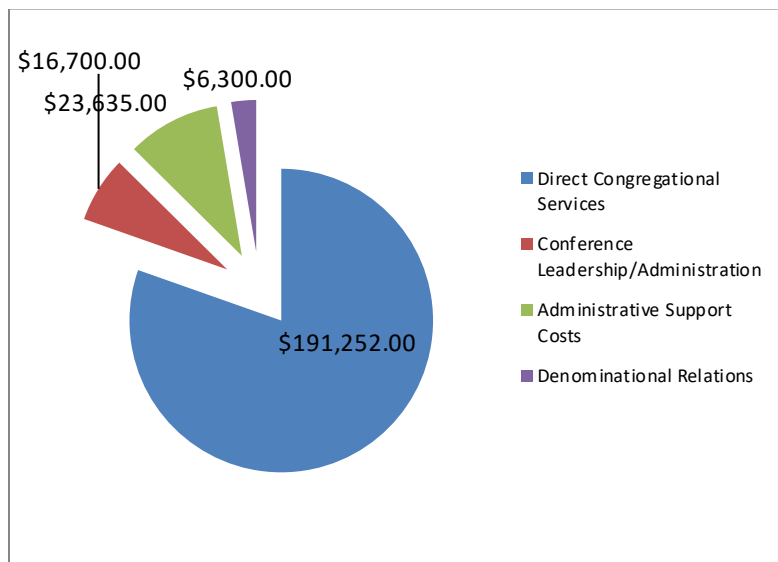
Central District Conference 2020-2021 Spending Plan								
		SP 2017-2018	Actual 2017-2018	SP 2018-2019	Actual 2018-2019	SP 2019-2020	YTD Actual As of 4/30/2020	SP 2020-2021
<b>INCOME</b>								
	Congregational giving	\$192,500.00	\$188,549.18	\$192,500.00	\$200,170.67	\$192,500.00	\$151,803.54	\$191,000.00
	Annual Meeting Registration/offe	\$11,000.00	\$17,343.00	\$11,000.00	\$12,877.00	\$12,000.00	\$0.00	\$12,000.00
	Ann Mtng Fundraisers	\$3,000.00	\$1,507.00	\$3,000.00	\$565.00	\$3,000.00	\$0.00	\$3,000.00
	Additional Giving	\$23,000.00	\$23,172.36	\$21,500.00	\$24,918.88	\$21,125.00	\$29,143.20	\$24,413.00
	Bequests		\$70,471.93		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
	Earned/Interest income	\$6,000.00	\$6,352.08	\$6,000.00	\$6,310.24	\$6,000.00	\$6,388.18	\$6,000.00
	Miscellaneous income	\$380.00	\$1,547.18	\$507.00	\$250.00	\$301.00	\$3,470.00	1474
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$235,880.00</b>	<b>\$308,942.73</b>	<b>\$234,507.00</b>	<b>\$245,091.79</b>	<b>\$234,926.00</b>	<b>\$190,804.92</b>	<b>\$237,887.00</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>								
<b>Direct Congregational Services/Networking</b>								
	Missional Church Committee	\$2,000.00	\$796.87	\$2,000.00	\$534.43	\$2,000.00	\$46.57	\$2,000.00
	Ministerial Committee	\$5,500.00	\$4,714.51	\$5,500.00	\$5,031.01	\$5,500.00	\$2,602.81	\$5,500.00
	Historian/* Archives	\$3,975.00	\$3,382.00	\$3,975.00	\$3,445.00	\$3,975.00	\$0.00	\$3,975.00
	Publications	\$5,000.00	\$5,118.11	\$5,000.00	\$5,168.60	\$5,000.00	\$3,770.09	\$5,000.00
	*Editor Stipend	\$5,500.00	\$5,500.00	\$5,571.00	\$5,571.00	\$5,671.00	\$4,725.84	\$5,807.00
	Regional Meetings/Congregational Listening	\$1,000.00	\$220.93	\$1,000.00	\$660.31	\$1,000.00	\$874.71	\$1,000.00
		\$22,975.00	\$19,732.42	\$23,046.00	\$20,410.35	\$23,146.00	\$12,020.02	\$23,282.00
<b>Denominational Relations</b>								
	Mid-States Conferences		\$199.49	\$250.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$46.79	
	*General Assembly Delegate Escrow	\$3,600.00	\$3,600.00	\$3,600.00	\$3,600.00	\$3,600.00	\$3,000.00	\$1,800.00
	Denominational Meetings	\$1,500.00	\$1,101.85	\$1,500.00	\$1,934.09	\$1,500.00	\$1,079.81	\$1,500.00
	Constituency Leaders Council	\$2,000.00	\$3,636.56	\$2,500.00	\$2,154.60	\$3,000.00	\$2,823.86	\$3,000.00
		\$7,100.00	\$8,537.90	\$7,850.00	\$7,688.69	\$8,100.00	\$6,950.46	\$6,300.00
<b>Conference Leadership/Administration</b>								
	Board of Directors Meetings	\$2,500.00	\$1,280.50	\$2,500.00	\$1,730.56	\$2,000.00	\$1,498.10	\$2,000.00
	Gift Discernment Committee	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
	Stewardship Committee	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$26.24	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
	Leadership Council	\$3,000.00	\$1,510.12	\$3,000.00	\$2,243.66	\$2,500.00	\$1,928.51	\$2,500.00
	Annual Meeting Expense	\$12,000.00	\$15,697.79	\$12,000.00	\$10,343.76	\$12,000.00	\$697.75	\$12,000.00
		\$17,700.00	\$18,488.41	\$17,700.00	\$14,344.22	\$16,700.00	\$4,124.36	\$16,700.00
<b>Central District Conference 2020-2021 Spending Plan</b>								
		SP 2017-2018	Actual 2017-2018	SP 2018-2019	Actual 2018-2019	SP 2019-2020	YTD Actual As of 4/30/2020	SP 2020-2021
<b>Administrative Support Costs</b>								
	*Sabbatical Coverage Escrow							
	*Liability Insurance	\$2,500.00	\$2,254.48	\$2,500.00	\$2,329.73	\$2,500.00	\$1,985.01	\$2,500.00
	*Rent	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,054.00	\$3,108.00	\$2,590.00	\$3,108.00
	Supplies	\$2,000.00	\$2,609.94	\$2,500.00	\$1,942.93	\$2,500.00	\$2,464.69	\$2,500.00
	Equipment	\$2,500.00	\$1,060.52	\$2,500.00	\$1,440.53	\$2,500.00	\$3,215.12	\$2,500.00
	Telecommunications	\$2,750.00	\$2,706.74	\$2,750.00	\$2,850.18	\$2,750.00	\$2,631.11	\$2,750.00
	Postage	\$750.00	\$930.50	\$1,000.00	\$906.21	\$1,000.00	\$732.35	\$1,000.00
	*Bookkeeping Services	\$3,100.00	\$3,100.00	\$3,140.00	\$3,140.00	\$3,200.00	\$2,666.68	\$3,277.00
	Staff Travel	\$5,000.00	\$5,897.91	\$6,000.00	\$6,006.73	\$6,000.00	\$4,534.29	\$6,000.00
	Misc.		\$210.00		\$657.00	\$0.00	\$309.00	
		\$0.00	\$21,770.09	\$23,390.00	\$22,327.31	\$23,558.00	\$21,128.25	\$23,635.00
	<b>Sub-total Expenses</b>	<b>\$47,775.00</b>	<b>\$68,528.82</b>	<b>\$71,986.00</b>	<b>\$64,770.57</b>	<b>\$71,504.00</b>	<b>\$44,223.09</b>	<b>\$69,917.00</b>
<b>Personnel</b>								
	*Salaries	\$121,911.00	\$121,911.50	\$123,013.00	\$124,239.12	\$128,475.58	\$107,063.00	\$132,417.76
	*Benefits	\$36,331.00	\$34,792.34	\$31,234.00	\$29,453.55	\$29,572.42	\$22,698.22	\$30,051.54
	*Payroll tax/Workman's Comp	\$5,263.00	\$5,142.22	\$5,274.00	\$5,259.35	\$5,374.00	\$4,466.48	\$5,501.08
		\$163,505.00	\$161,846.06	\$159,521.00	\$158,952.02	\$163,422.00	\$134,227.70	\$167,970.38
<b>Cash Reserves</b>								
		\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$214,280.00</b>	<b>\$233,374.88</b>	<b>\$234,507.00</b>	<b>\$226,722.59</b>	<b>\$234,926.00</b>	<b>\$178,450.79</b>	<b>\$237,887.38</b>

## 2020-2021 Proposed Spending Plan Income



**Congregations:** Makes up 80% of total spending plan  
**Additional Funding:** Makes up 10% of total spending plan  
**Miscellaneous:** Makes up <1% of total spending plan  
**Revenues:** Makes up 3% of total spending plan  
**Annual Meeting:** Makes up 6% of total spending plan

## 2020-2021 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

## 2020-2021 Slate of Nominees



*Position:* **\*\*Board of Directors**, Member-at-large  
*Name:* Mary Etta King  
*Congregation:* Covenant Mennonite Fellowship  
*Occupation:* Pastor and spiritual director



*Position:* **Ministerial Committee**  
*Name:* Brian Bolton  
*Congregation:* Shalom Mennonite Congregation  
*Occupation:* Pastor



*Position:* **Ministerial Committee**  
*Name:* Gayle Gerber Koontz  
*Congregation:* Assembly  
*Occupation:* Retired



*Position:* **Missional Church Committee**  
*Name:* \*Karla Minter  
*Congregation:* Open Table Mennonite Fellowship  
*Occupation:* MMN Church Relations Representative



*Position:* **Missional Church Committee**  
*Name:* \*Tim Stair  
*Congregation:* Hively Avenue Mennonite Church  
*Occupation:* Pastor, planning and transitions consultant/executive recruiter

primarily for faith-based not-for-profits and congregations, Spiritual Director.



*Position:* **Camp Friedenswald Board**  
*Name:* \*Pete Suter  
*Congregation:* First Mennonite Bluffton  
*Occupation:* Entrepreneur/Small business owner (Shirley's Popcorn, Bluffton)



*Position:* **Camp Friedenswald Board**  
*Name:* \*Matt Troyer  
*Congregation:* Silverwood Mennonite Church  
*Occupation:* CFO, Entech, Inc, Goshen



*Position:* **Camp Friedenswald Board**  
*Name:* Deanna Risser  
*Congregation:* Assembly Mennonite Church  
*Occupation:* VP for Finance at Goshen College



*Position:* **Bluffton University Board of Trustees**  
*Name:* TBD

\* = incumbent

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

March 13, 2020

To the Board of Directors of the Central District Conference,

On behalf of the Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship, we are writing to express our interest in joining the Central District Conference (CDC). For over a year now, our house church has been considering joining the Mennonite USA community and has been in a process of discernment as to which conference would best reflect our own values and vision. After meeting with Doug Luganibill and Karla Minter, our community voted unanimously to take the next steps in pursuing membership within CDC.

We have been greatly encouraged by the fellowship we experienced with Doug and Karla and look forward to continuing our conversations in the coming year.

Sincerely,

Alaina Dobkowski



Susan Kragt

Alaina Dobkowski, Adam Witt, and Susan Kragt



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

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

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

April 7, 2020

Dear friends of Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship,

Greetings to you in the name of Jesus Christ, Lord of the church. Over the past several months I (Doug) have enjoyed learning about your vision for Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship as we've exchanged emails and talked on the phone. On March 1, 2020, Karla Minter and I worshipped with you and shared a meal together. In a letter dated March 13, 2020, our Central District Conference (CDC) board of directors received your formal request to begin the process of joining CDC. And on April 3, 2020 the CDC board of directors unanimously affirmed your request to begin this process.

As a conference of 46 congregations, we recognize the importance of being connected with other congregations for support and accountability. We understand the purpose of being a conference is to provide encouragement and mutuality between congregations.

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

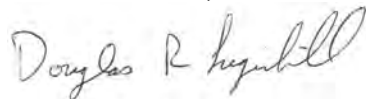
1. We invite you to consider the CDC membership criteria affirmed by delegates in June 2010. These criteria, which are enclosed, include the requirements established in our constitution. Please provide a written response indicating your understanding and support of the membership criteria by April 30 so we can print this in our report book for delegates. (Please include a statement of purpose/faith for GRMF in your response.) If this is not possible by April 30, we must receive it prior to our Annual Meeting on June 27, 2020.
2. We invite you to participate in our abbreviated Annual Meeting on Saturday morning, June 27 via video conference. (The details of this meeting are forthcoming.) At the meeting you will be introduced to the delegates. Either Anna Yoder Schlabach, CDC President, or I will contact Alaina in the coming weeks to talk more about this.
3. 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.



4. Assuming continued interest by both Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship and Central District Conference, the delegates at our June 2021 Annual Meeting would vote on membership.

Please don't hesitate to contact us 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



Anna Yoder Schlabach, CDC President



2020

REPORT BOOK  
of the

**Central District Conference**  
of  
Mennonite Church USA

*Spirit, bless our souls with yearning!*



*Part II*

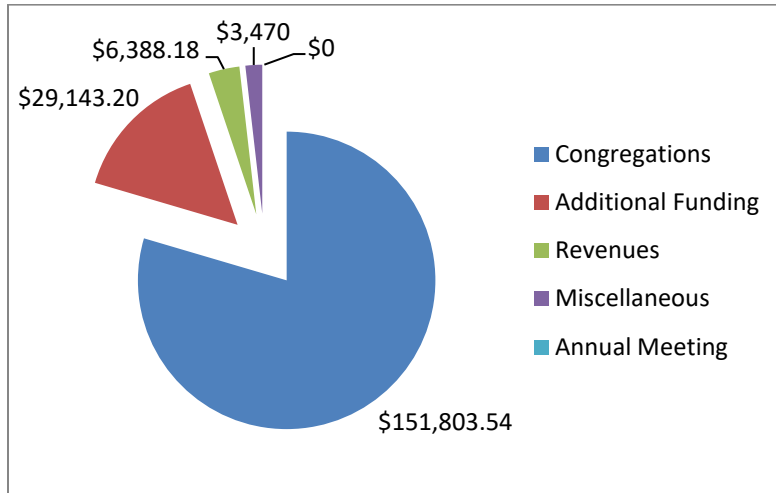
*Conference Financial and Staff Reports*





Central District Conference						
Income and Expense Statement						
As of April 30, 2020						
		Actual	SP	SP	Actual	SP
		2019-2020	2019-2020	2019-2020	2018-2019	2018-2019
		thru April 30	thru April 30	(12 months)	(12 months)	(12 months)
		(10 months)	(10 months)			
<b>INCOME</b>						
	Congregational Giving	\$151,803.54	\$160,416.66	\$192,500.00	\$200,170.67	\$192,500.00
	Annual Meeting Registration/Offering	\$0.00	\$10,000.00	\$12,000.00	\$12,877.00	\$11,000.00
	Annual Meeting Donations: Memorial/G	\$0.00	\$2,500.00	\$3,000.00	\$565.00	\$3,000.00
	Additional Funding	\$29,143.20	\$17,604.17	\$21,125.00	\$24,918.88	\$21,500.00
	Bequests	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
	Earned/Interest income	\$6,388.18	\$5,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$6,310.24	\$6,000.00
	Miscellaneous income	\$3,470.00	\$250.83	\$301.00	\$250.00	\$507.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$190,804.92</b>	<b>\$195,771.66</b>	<b>\$234,926.00</b>	<b>\$245,091.79</b>	<b>\$234,507.00</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>						
<b>Direct Congregational Services/Networking</b>						
	Missional Church Committee	\$46.57	\$1,666.67	\$2,000.00	\$534.43	\$2,000.00
	Ministerial Committee	\$2,602.81	\$4,583.33	\$5,500.00	\$5,031.01	\$5,500.00
	Historian/*Archives	\$0.00	\$3,312.50	\$3,975.00	\$3,445.00	\$3,975.00
	Publications	\$3,770.09	\$4,166.67	\$5,000.00	\$5,168.60	\$5,000.00
	*Editor Stipend	\$4,725.84	\$4,725.83	\$5,671.00	\$5,571.00	\$5,571.00
	Regional Gatherings	\$874.71	\$833.33	\$1,000.00	\$660.31	\$1,000.00
		\$12,020.02	\$19,288.33	\$23,146.00	\$20,410.35	\$23,046.00
<b>Denominational Relations</b>						
	Mid-States	\$46.79	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$250.00
	*General Assembly Delegate Escrow	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,600.00	\$3,600.00	\$3,600.00
	Denominational Meetings	\$1,079.81	\$1,250.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,934.09	\$1,500.00
	Constituency Leaders Council	\$2,823.86	\$2,500.00	\$3,000.00	\$2,154.60	\$2,500.00
		\$6,950.46	\$6,750.00	\$8,100.00	\$7,688.69	\$7,850.00
<b>Conference Leadership/Administration</b>						
	Board of Directors Meetings	\$1,498.10	\$1,666.67	\$2,000.00	\$1,730.56	\$2,500.00
	Gift Discernment Committee	\$0.00	\$83.33	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
	Stewardship Committee	\$0.00	\$83.33	\$100.00	\$26.24	\$100.00
	Leadership Council	\$1,928.51	\$2,083.34	\$2,500.00	\$2,243.66	\$3,000.00
	Annual Meeting Expense	\$697.75	\$10,000.00	\$12,000.00	\$10,343.76	\$12,000.00
		\$4,124.36	\$13,916.67	\$16,700.00	\$14,344.22	\$17,700.00
<b>Administrative Support Costs</b>						
	*Sabbatical Coverage Escrow					
	*Liability Insurance	\$1,985.01	\$2,083.33	\$2,500.00	\$2,329.73	\$2,500.00
	*Rent	\$2,590.00	\$2,590.00	\$3,108.00	\$3,054.00	\$3,000.00
	Supplies	\$2,464.69	\$2,083.34	\$2,500.00	\$1,942.93	\$2,500.00
	Equipment	\$3,215.12	\$2,083.33	\$2,500.00	\$1,440.53	\$2,500.00
	Telecommunications	\$2,631.11	\$2,291.67	\$2,750.00	\$2,850.18	\$2,750.00
	Postage	\$732.35	\$833.33	\$1,000.00	\$906.21	\$1,000.00
	*Bookkeeping Services	\$2,666.68	\$2,666.67	\$3,200.00	\$3,140.00	\$3,140.00
	Staff Travel	\$4,534.29	\$5,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$6,006.73	\$6,000.00
	Misc.	\$309.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$657.00	\$0.00
		\$21,128.25	\$19,631.67	\$23,558.00	\$22,327.31	\$23,390.00
<b>Personnel</b>						
	*Salaries	\$107,063.00	\$107,062.99	\$128,475.58	\$124,239.12	\$123,013.00
	*Fringe	\$22,698.22	\$24,643.67	\$29,572.42	\$29,453.55	\$31,234.00
	*Payroll tax/Workman's Comp	\$4,466.48	\$4,478.34	\$5,374.00	\$5,259.35	\$5,274.00
		\$134,227.70	\$136,185.00	\$163,422.00	\$158,952.02	\$159,521.00
<b>Cash Reserves</b>						
		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$178,450.79</b>	<b>\$195,771.67</b>	<b>\$234,926.00</b>	<b>\$226,722.59</b>	<b>\$234,507.00</b>
* = Fixed expenses						

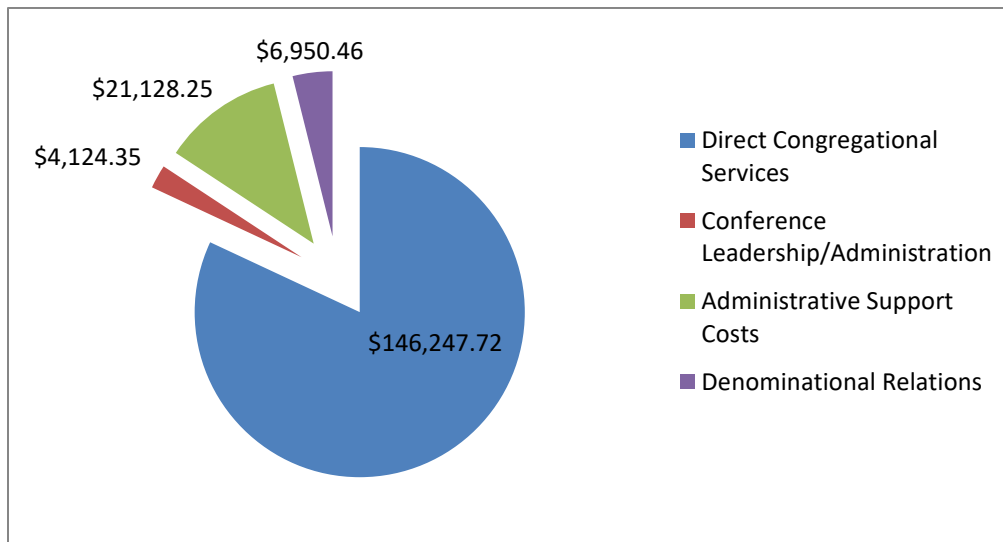
**2019-2020 Year-to-Date Actual Income (as of April 30)**



**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**

**2019-2020 Year-to-Date Actual Expenses (as of April 30)**



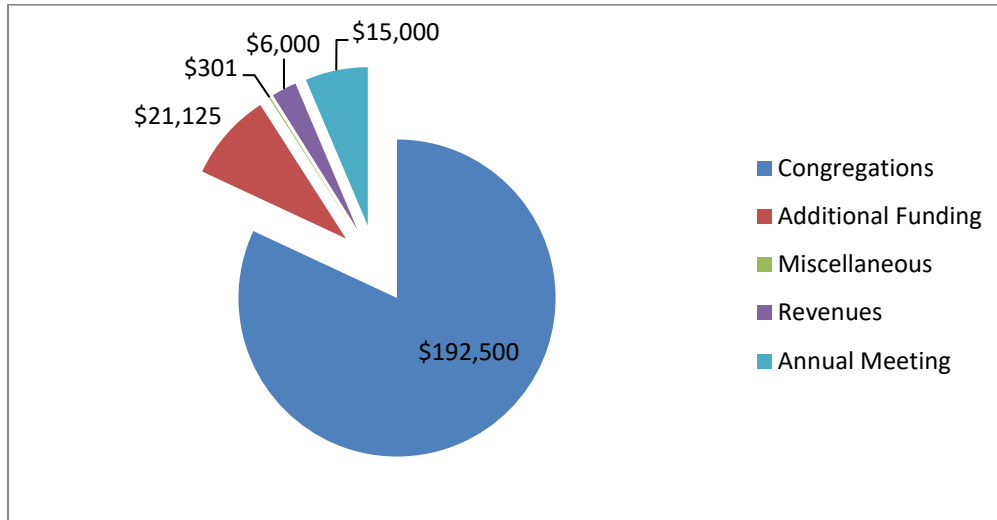
**Direct Congregational Services:** Includes Missional Church and Ministerial Committee expenses, archives, publications, editor stipend, regional gathering expenses, salaries, housing, social security, pension, continuing education, health insurance, health savings account, payroll taxes, and workman’s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

**2019-2020 Spending Plan Income**



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

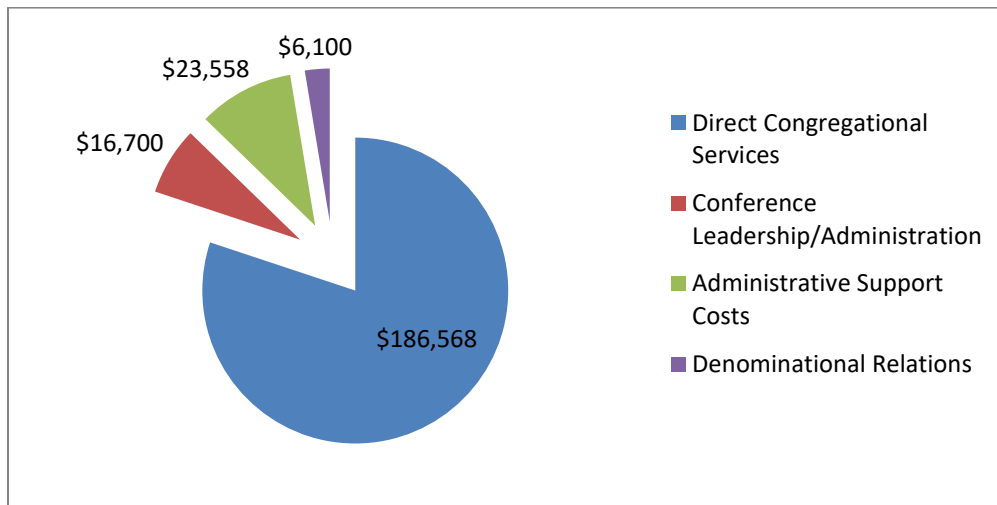
**Additional Funding:** Makes up 9% of total spending plan

**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 Spending Plan Expenses**



**Direct Congregational Services:** Makes up 79% of total spending plan

**Conference Leadership/Administration:** Makes up 7% of total spending plan

**Administrative Support Costs:** Makes up 10% of total spending plan

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



<b>Central District Conference</b>				
<b>Congregational Contributions</b>				
<b>Congregations</b>	<b>2019-2020</b>	<b>2018-2019</b>	<b>2017-2018</b>	<b>2016-2017</b>
	As of 4/30/20			
	10 months	12 months	12 months	12 months
Agora*		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Americus (13)	\$900.00	\$600.00		
Ames	\$100.00	\$250.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Ann Arbor*	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$500.00
Asian Mennonite Community	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$0.00
Assembly (137)	\$8,732.50	\$15,981.00	\$16,716.00	\$18,375.00
Atlanta (10)	\$1,743.68	\$1,915.38	\$1,997.88	\$1,608.06
Berea (12)	\$1,000.00	\$1,500.00		
Chapel Hill (25)	\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00		
Chicago Community (34)	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
Cincinnati (35)	\$4,860.00	\$6,690.00	\$6,825.00	\$8,310.00
Columbus (102)	\$11,687.00	\$14,865.00	\$14,180.00	\$13,890.00
Community Mennonite*(12)	\$0.00	\$2,000.00	\$750.00	\$0.00
Covenant (40)	\$0.00	\$5,500.00	\$5,800.00	\$2,300.00
Eighth Street (110)	\$14,093.59	\$18,500.00	\$18,500.00	\$18,350.00
Emmanuel (15)	\$3,000.00			
Emmaus Road (25)	\$1,820.00	\$3,015.00	\$3,380.00	\$5,482.50
Evanston*	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$5,000.00
Faith (29)	\$2,500.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,750.00
First, Bluffton (110)	\$17,496.00	\$20,992.00	\$21,196.00	\$21,000.00
First, Chicago	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
First, Sugarcreek (16)	\$2,500.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00
First, Urbana* (63)	\$4,875.00	\$6,500.00	\$6,500.00	\$6,375.00
First, Wadsworth (18)	\$300.00	\$300.00	\$350.00	\$726.75
Florence (22)	\$0.00	\$1,200.00	\$2,400.00	\$1,200.00
Grace Mennonite (44)	\$7,912.50	\$5,760.00	\$8,087.50	\$8,657.40
Hively Avenue (35)	\$4,950.00	\$6,600.00	\$6,892.50	\$5,647.52
Joy Fellowship*	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Jubilee (12)	\$1,360.00			
Lima* (16)	\$2,250.00	\$3,750.00	\$2,250.00	\$1,500.00
Madison (50)	\$6,100.00	\$7,200.00	\$6,640.00	\$7,760.00
Maplewood (28)	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$1,000.00
Mennonite Church of Normal* (125)	\$7,827.76	\$15,054.48	\$15,054.48	\$18,651.15
Milwaukee (20)	\$0.00	\$1,200.00	\$600.00	\$1,024.14
Morning Star*	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
North Danvers (63)	\$60.00	\$6,735.00	\$3,199.00	\$3,201.00
Oak Grove* (94)	\$6,312.50	\$5,813.00	\$4,812.00	\$8,058.00
Open Table Mennonite Fellowship (11)	\$1,145.73	\$1,500.00	\$300.00	\$0.00
Paoli* (29)	\$4,791.78	\$4,109.81	\$3,063.82	\$3,151.82
Raleigh (30)	\$6,800.00	\$2,000.00		
Shalom Community (40)	\$1,650.00	\$1,650.00	\$3,300.00	\$1,625.00
Shalom Mennonite Congregation (82)	\$5,110.50	\$8,190.00	\$4,875.00	\$4,875.00
Silverwood (74)	\$7,375.00	\$11,000.00	\$10,280.00	\$12,653.50
Southside (38)	\$2,750.00	\$5,500.00	\$5,500.00	\$5,500.00
St Paul (6)	\$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>\$151,803.54</b>	<b>\$200,170.67</b>	<b>\$188,549.18</b>	<b>\$198,271.84</b>
Number of giving units (as reported in 2019) is in parentheses				
*Dual Conference Congregations				



## Conference Minister's Report 2020 CDC Annual Meeting

*Spirit, bless our souls with yearning!*

This theme has captured the interest and imagination of many throughout the year. It has inspired a song and art. It has invited deep reflection and contemplation. It has engaged lively conversation around tables at Regional Gatherings. It was a centering theme as eight CDC representatives experienced a SEMILLA Learning Tour in January. God's Spirit does indeed bless/stir/move our souls with yearning as we witness both the incompleteness of God's Shalom and the many ways God's presence is visible today.

Yearning took on a new focus as we faced the COVID-19 pandemic. We yearned for protection from the virus for ourselves and our world. We yearned to sing and worship again in person. We yearned for the assurance of our financial wellbeing and that of our churches and church institutions. We yearned for flattened curves, enough PPE, social (physical) distancing and clear leadership. We yearned for a return to "normal."

Yet, as I observed the creativity and persistent love of our pastors and church leaders, I also heard a yearning NOT to return to normal. COVID-19 was "apocalyptic" in revealing more clearly the disparities between the rich and poor, the greater vulnerabilities of minority groups to be affected by the disease (many of them essential workers), and the extent to which our healthcare system is on life support. Our environment was able to take a deep, cleansing breath as air pollution levels fell. Crises also have a way of breaking down barriers and building coalitions across boundaries.

What have we learned about our yearnings during this prolonged Holy Saturday caused of COVID-19? How will our yearnings be transformed into practical, loving actions?

It has been a blessing getting to know the friends of Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship and I look forward to building this relationship as, together, we discern membership with CDC. They will be introduced to us "virtually" during our altered Annual Meeting. If you find yourself in Grand Rapids on a Sunday morning, look them up!

The spring Constituency Leaders Council meeting was cancelled. The main agenda item for the meeting was discernment regarding the recommendations of the MC USA Advisory Group on the Membership Guidelines. As I write this report, there is no clear plan forward regarding their recommendations or the guidelines.

I remain grateful for the strong financial support from congregations over the years. Because of strong giving in the past, our financial reserve allows us to continue providing the ministries and resources to fulfill our mission. Contingency plans are in place should this situation change. This is a time to practice whole-hearted generosity as we share our resources with one another!

In early April, as COVID-19 deaths were peaking in many communities, I was reminded of the prayer of Julian of Norwich that "all will be well." Likely written during an outbreak of the plague to which she succumbed, Julian was assured, through an appearance of Christ, that "all manner of things shall be well." Speaking or singing these hopeful words is paradoxical in the midst of so much death and unknown. Yet it remains the center of our faith. May the God of hope bless our spirits with an unending yearning that all will be well.

## A Report on the CDC SEMILLA Learning Tour January 16-26, 2020

Eight people participated in the first CDC SEMILLA Learning Tour on January 16-26; Anna Yoder Schlabach (pastor at Assembly, Goshen), Rachel Stolpe (CDC Board Member and member of Milwaukee), Ardean Friesen (Ministerial Committee chairperson and member of Silverwood, Goshen), David Moser (pastor at Southside Fellowship, Elkhart), Gretchen Geyer (member of Columbus Mennonite), Julia Gingerich (pastor at Eight Street Mennonite, Goshen), Cate Desjardins (CDC licensed chaplain from Cincinnati) and Doug Luginbill, conference minister. Here are some reflections:

- We were shown **incredible hospitality** and experienced a very full and well-coordinated schedule that included: meetings with SEMILLA staff and students including Rachel and Loren Johns; pastors of both conferences of Mennonites in Guatemala as well as El Salvador; MCC and MMN staff including Deb Byler who is ordained in CDC (Hively Avenue Mennonite Church); two congregations (one in Guatemala City and the other among the K'ekchi community); visits to partner agencies of MCC, MMN and congregations; visits to historical sights and cooperatives; seven zip-lines, free coffee samples, three movies, two boat rides, a sauna and a kayak excursion.
- The **stories of faithfulness in the midst of adversity** were moving, humbling and inspiring. Most of the Mennonite pastors aren't paid, yet are able to provide tremendous leadership in their congregations and communities.
- We were impressed by the way the pastors and students were able to articulate **Anabaptist core values** with passion and conviction. They are able to see the unique gifts they have to offer to their communities even though non-violence, justice and active peace-making stand in stark contrast to the Guatemala City culture. **Our faith was strengthened** through their witness!
- SEMILLA, MCC and MMN are each committed to **empowering, supporting and nurturing women in ministry**. Many were moved to tears when, at a Tuesday evening worship service, six K'ekchi women were commissioned to serve the broader church. It was a movement of the Spirit that Anna Yoder Schlabach preached a beautiful sermon that affirmed God's generous gifts to all God's people. Many women came up to Anna afterwards and expressed appreciation.
- Privilege, racism, sexism, patriarchy, USA power, climate change, roots of migration and other evils were seen and experienced from a different vantage point. **This was indeed a "learning tour."**
- Strong and positive relationships emerged between the eight participants representing eight different CDC congregations.

During several times of reflection, there were strong affirmations of SEMILLA and the experiences we had. There was also strong affirmation for continuing to build the relationship between SEMILLA and CDC. Opportunities for continuing to nurture the relationship include:

- Inviting a Guatemalan Mennonite pastor to an Annual Meeting and having them preach and participate in a seminar
- Continue offering CDC Learning Tours.
- Recruiting volunteers to fill the positions Rachel and Loren are holding. (This would best be coordinated through MMN or MCC.)
- Providing links to videos and resources about SEMILLA and Guatemalan Mennonite Churches and

agencies on our CDC web page.

- Promoting Spanish language study for CDC pastors and others in CDC. (Both online and at SEMILLA.)
- Providing scholarships for SEMILLA students for room, board, books, travel expenses, etc. (SEMILLA doesn't charge for tuition.) Receive an offering at Annual Meetings to help support this.
- Encouraging sister-church relationships between CDC congregations and the congregations SEMILLA serves.

In late March we learned that travel restrictions put in place because of COVID-19 has created considerable financial hardship for SEMILLA. In a March newsletter, it was reported, *"Seminary classes have had to be cancelled as borders in Latin America have closed, and North American groups have cancelled their plans to participate in CASAS programs as well as stays at the Casa Emaús guesthouse through July. Both CASAS and Casa Emaús provide important revenue for SEMILLA, so these cancellations create significant losses for all of its programs. In the meantime, SEMILLA is doing everything possible to reduce expenses, but help is still needed to sustain minimal operations during this time."*

In response, CDC provided a \$1,000 gift to SEMILLA from our Jubilee Fund.

Doug Luginbill, Conference Minister

# Ministerial Credential Report

June 1, 2019 – May 31, 2020

## ORDINATIONS

Mark Rupp (Columbus Mennonite Church), June 9, 2019, by Doug Luginbill  
Valerie Showalter (Shalom Mennonite Congregation), September 29, 2019, by Doug Luginbill

## LICENSINGS

Kiva Nice-Webb (Chicago Community Mennonite Church), June 23, 2019, by Doug Luginbill  
Scott Coulter (Assembly Mennonite Church), October 27, 2019, by Doug Luginbill  
Jan Croyle (First Mennonite Wadsworth), License for Specific Ministry, Mar 8, 2020 (began Sept 1, 2019)  
Elizabeth Kelly (First Mennonite Bluffton), License For Specific Ministry, Mar 15, 2020 by Doug Luginbill

## CREDENTIAL TRANSFERS

Ed Kauffman (Hively Ave) from Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, June 6, 2019  
Ken Seitz (Shalom Mennonite Congregation) from Virginia Conference, June 6, 2019  
Elaine Martin (Assembly) from Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, June 28, 2019  
Jonathan Larson (Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship) from MC USA, July 30, 2019  
Eve MacMaster (Emmanuel) from MC USA, August 9, 2019  
Conrad Mast (Silverwood Mennonite Church) from Allegheny Mennonite Conference, Nov 6, 2019  
Ross Erb (Shalom Mennonite Congregation) from Virginia Mennonite Conference, Nov 22, 2019  
Wesley Mast (Assembly) from Atlantic Coast Mennonite Conference, December 6, 2019  
Duane Beachey (Madison) from Western District Conference, December 12, 2019  
Cyneatha Milsaps (Community Mennonite) to Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, Feb 1, 2020

## INSTALLATIONS

Scott Coulter (Assembly), October 27, 2019, began Oct 1, 2019  
Valerie Showalter (Madison), Nov 17, 2019; began Oct 27, 2019  
Amy Aschilman (Community), Jan 12, 2020, began Jan 1, 2020  
Celeste Groff (Chicago Community), Feb 23, 2020 as Associate Pastor

## CHANGE OF CREDENTIAL

Jake Hess (Hively Avenue), license toward ordination extended until July 23, 2021 on July 26, 2019  
Mitch Brown, license changed to retired, Dec 1, 2019  
Sarah Thompson Nahar, license for specific ministry extended until Dec 31, 2021 on Nov 22, 2019  
Cate Desjardins, license toward ordination extended until Nov 20, 2020

## RESIGNATIONS

Renee Kanagy (Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship), June 5, 2019  
Charles Bontrager (First Mennonite Wadsworth), Aug 25, 2019  
Tim Schrag (Mennonite Church of Normal), Aug 31, 2019 (retired)  
Valerie Showalter (Shalom Mennonite Congregation), Sept 30, 2019  
Jane Roeschley (Mennonite Church of Normal), Nov 30, 2019 (retired)

#### ANNIVERSARIES / SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL EVENTS

Maplewood, 60 year celebration, April 26, 2020 (postponed)

#### INTERIM / TRANSITIONAL PASTORS

Tom Kauffman (Assembly) ended Oct 31, 2018. Began at Paoli Nov 1, 2018 as the transitional pastor, ended Dec 31, 2019

Jan Mohr Croyle (First Wadsworth) began Sept 1, 2019 at First Mennonite Church Wadsworth as the interim pastor

Randall Miller (Indiana-Michigan) began September 22, 2019 at Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship as the transitional pastor

Gary Martin (Faith) began January 1, 2020 at Mennonite Church of Normal as the transitional pastor

#### RETIREMENTS

Tim Schrag (Mennonite Church of Normal), Aug 31, 2019

Jane Roeschley (Mennonite Church of Normal), Dec 31, 2019

Tom Kauffman (Assembly)

John Kampen (Cincinnati), Feb 1, 2020

#### DEATHS

John Richard (J R) Burkholder, (Assembly), December 20, 2019

Anne Nuefeld Rupp, December 23, 2019 [First woman ordained in CDC, wrote *Holy Spirit, Come with Fire*]

David Habegger, (Hively Avenue), March 30, 2020

#### CONGREGATIONAL TRANSITIONS

Paoli Mennonite Fellowship affiliated solely with Central District Conference, Dec 31, 2019

In Search Processes

Covenant Mennonite Fellowship

First Mennonite Church, Wadsworth

Lima Mennonite Church

Paoli Mennonite Fellowship

## 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  
 2020 Via Zoom

## Conference Presidents, 1957-2020

1957-	Lotus E Troyer	2009-2011	Karl Shelly
1958	Ernest J Bohn	2011-2013	Joyce Schumacher
1959-1960	Harry Yoder	2013-2015	Ron Guengerich
1961-1962	Gordon J Neuenschwander	2015-2017	Lisa Weaver
1963-1964	Jacob T Friesen	2017-2019	Arman Habegger
1965-1966	Lorris A Habegger	2019-	Anna Yoder Schlabach
1967-1968	Claude F Boyer		
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		
2005-2007	Alice Roth		
2007-2009	Gordon Oyer		



2020

REPORT BOOK  
of the

**Central District Conference**  
of  
Mennonite Church USA

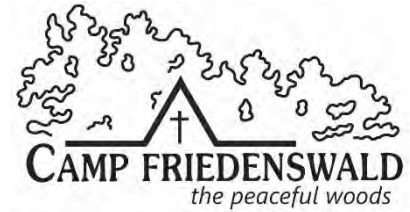
*Spirit, bless our souls with yearning!*



*Part III*

*Conference Committee Reports*





Throughout the past year over 9,000 people experienced the hospitality, community, nature, and peace of Camp Friedenswald. 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.

- **2019 Winter Retreats** brought together Junior and Senior High youth and sponsors for weekends of worship, play and fellowship. Over 250 youth and sponsors attended representing eleven CDC congregations including Assembly, FMC Bluffton, Cincinnati, Columbus, Eighth Street, Grace, Hively Avenue, Maplewood, Milwaukee, Paoli, and Silverwood
- **Summer 2019** brought 490 youth and family campers (40% of youth campers came from CDC congregations) to explore the theme *Making Peace*. Summer staff came from five CDC congregations including Assembly, Columbus, Eighth Street, FMC Bluffton, FMC Champaign-Urbana, and Silverwood.
- We drew upon the rich resources from within CDC for **summer camp pastors** including Carrie Mast, FMC Bluffton; Matthew Yoder, Grace; Melissa Florer-Bixler, Raleigh; Michael Crosby, FMC Champaign-Urbana.
- September's annual **Women's Retreat** brought women together from across the conference. The weekend, planned by women from Illinois congregations, focused on *Bridging Barriers: Following the spirit*, with guest speaker Shannon Dycus, Eastern Mennonite University.
- Hospitality was extended to eight CDC congregations for their **annual church retreat** including Assembly, Emmaus Road, Faith, Hively Avenue, Open Table, Mennonite Church of Normal, Southside, and Silverwood.
- CDC congregations and their members help with tasks that are **vital to the running of camp**. Mentor/mentee pairs from Assembly spent a weekend volunteering at Friedenswald, and Bluffton University SERVE students spent their spring break completing a variety of tasks. A total of 740 days of time were given by individuals throughout the year, many from CDC congregations.
- Camp Friedenswald hosted the **CDC Leadership Council** and committee meetings in the spring and fall, as well as a pastor peer gathering for area CDC pastors.
- Nearly \$38,000 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!
- In September, **180 solar panels** were installed on the Dining Hall roof which will provide approximately 20% of Camp's electricity. Throughout the project connections with CDC congregations (especially those who have pursued solar for their church) provided encouragement in way of expertise, volunteer hours, and financial support. Thank you!

We need "thin places" where we can go to listen. Places where the people and the butterflies and the beeches [trees] collaborate to teach us about God's enduring love, which goes on breathing like the eternal lifecycle of a forest perpetually resurrected through death and new growth.

*Reflection from Michael Crosby, Pastor, First Mennonite Church Champaign-Urbana, after serving a week as family camp pastor.*

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

Forty-seven people were involved in the Journey program during the 2019-2020 year, including nineteen participants and seventeen mentors in the North American program and twelve participants and one mentor in the newly launched Journey program in southeast Asia.

Four participants and two mentors were from Central District Conference, including Charles Baraka and Steve Mares and their mentor, Cyneatha Millsaps, Janet (JP) Schumacher and mentor Gloria Hernandez Bucher, and Jan Croyle, who was mentored by Marilyn Rossiter of Ohio Conference. Conference Minister Doug Luginbill, Journey board chair Nina Lanctot, along with other conference ministers, seminary staff, instructors and an additional pastor also participated. Janet (JP) expects to complete the program this spring.

Participants gathered at Amigo Centre for the fall Weekend Learning Event with AMBS professor Dr. Safwat Marzouk leading sessions on Biblical interpretation. Eleanor Kreider 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 (led by Doug Luginbill), and explore spiritual direction. Mentors and mentees also met together to work on and update their learning covenants.

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 with a Friday evening visit to Menno-Hof in Shipshewana. The theme for the weekend was “Anabaptism: Foundations and Future--A Way of Being Church.” with AMBS professor Dr. Jamie Pitts. Mentees and mentors in their final year of the program, including Jan Croyle, served as worship leaders for the weekend, stepping up as our regular worship leader, Eleanor Kreider, participated in an AMBS study tour to Egypt. 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, board chair, Doug Luginbill, conference minister, and Ardean Friesen, Central District Conference representative, for serving on the board. Nina completed four years of excellent service in February. We are excited to welcome Lois Kaufmann as the new board chair.

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 to 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

# Ministerial Committee Report



*Members: Michael Crosby (First Mennonite, Champaign-Urbana) Kay Bontrager-Singer (Faith, Goshen), Ardean Friesen (Silverwood, Goshen), Robin Walton (Columbus), Ray Person (First Mennonite, Bluffton), Brenda Sawatzky Paetkau (Eighth Street, Goshen), 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 continued 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 or during sabbatical.

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 second year of the **annual clergy report form**. There was over 90% of clergy who replied with the initial request. We appreciate the attention that all have given to this and hope this will encourage and strengthen 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. Two topics have received considerable attention over the past year. Much attention has been given to training about healthy boundaries for pastors and creating clear processes for investigations of pastors accused of misconduct. However, we recognize the need for greater training and awareness of how to respond when abuse or misconduct is committed by non-credentialed members of congregations. A second area of attention is recognizing how patriarchy and unhealthy power and authority structures within congregations can create pain and trauma that diminishes the ministries that pastors and congregations are committed to fulfilling. These are complex issues and we seek ways of addressing them which are helpful and hopeful for both pastors and congregations.

**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 workload and travel since we are increasingly spread around the country.

This year we also have helped plan his well-deserved sabbatical which is scheduled for November 1, 2020-January 31, 2021. We feel it is a privilege to accompany Doug in his work on behalf of the conference.

—Submitted by Ardean Friesen

## ***Missional Church Committee***



Members: Emily Hedrick (relocated, mid-year), Karla Minter, chair, Kiva Nice-Webb, Mark Rupp, Valerie Showalter, Tim Stair, Matthew Yoder  
Staff member: Emma Hartman

The Missional Church Committee meets regularly, using in-person and video conference calls. Our tasks and identified initiatives are as follows. This committee will...

### **❖ Encourage use of denominational and conference resources, nurturing congregations in developing and mobilizing their missional potential.**

#### *Racial, Ethnic and Religious Reconciliation focus/task group*

\*\*“In 2018, the Missional Church Committee of Central District Conference (CDC) charged a task group to develop provocations for fostering the ongoing work of racial, ethnic and religious reconciliation within the conference. This group was appointed and met during 2019 and submitted Provocations and a Resource List in early 2020.” (Executive Summary)

\*\*Three Provocations for Ongoing Work Toward Racial, Ethnic, and Religious Reconciliation (attached)

\*\*Resource List for Ongoing Work Toward Racial, Ethnic, and Religious Reconciliation within Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA (attached)

*Encouraged the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) for CDC Leadership Council to begin conversation around anti-racism, assess one’s approach to difference, and as a framework for finding anti-racism resources from the Anabaptist perspective. The April 4 half-day IDI retreat was postponed until fall due to COVID-19 restrictions for in-person meetings.*

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

\*\*Welcomed exploration of CDC membership with Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship. Doug Luginbill and Karla Minter visited with the congregation March 1, 2020.

\*\*Received updates from Doug Luginbill from individuals with interests and vision for creating new communities of faith within CDC.

*MennoCon19, “Journey Forward: Peacemaking,” Matthew Yoder attending.*

### **❖ Be alert to congregational needs and special interests, linking congregations to appropriate resources and to other congregations with similar interests.**

#### *We received and approved two Reign of God Grants*

\*\*\$2500 dollars to First Mennonite Church, Urbana, IL and Chicago Community Church, Chicago, IL for Ted & Co. production, “I’d like to buy an enemy.”

\*\*\$2500 dollars to Assembly, Eighth Street and Silverwood Mennonite Churches, Goshen, IN for a Youth Creation Care Summit, pending the rescheduling of the event from June 2020, due to COVID-19 limitations, to a time within the next 12 months.

### **❖ Encourage missional partnerships.**

Encouraged participation in the *SEMILLA Learning Tour*, Jan 16-26, 2020, with eight people participating from CDC.

*Submitted by Karla Minter*

**Summary - Ongoing Work Toward Racial, Ethnic, and Religious Reconciliation  
within Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA**

from the CDC Missional Church Committee's *Racial, Ethnic and Religious Reconciliation Task Group*

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In 2018, the Missional Church Committee of Central District Conference (CDC) charged a task group to develop provocations for fostering the ongoing work of racial, ethnic and religious reconciliation within the conference. This group was appointed and met during 2019, and submitted Provocations and a Resource List in early 2020.

**Task Group Structure:** five white people charged with primary responsibility of undoing white supremacy and two persons of color who participated in meetings as much as they elected to, in an accountability capacity to the white members.

**Process:** the task group met throughout the calendar year of 2019 and discussed resources and challenges to sustain anti-racist work within the Christian context of CDC.

**Provocations:** the task group has organized its provocations by level of conference, including targeted prompts for integrating sustained anti-racist work into the heart of the Christian life at the individual, congregational, and conference level. They fall into categories of “knowing, being, and doing.”

**Resources:** the task group offers resources to engage CDC people asking different questions and engaging different aspects of anti-racist work in their own contexts. These resources are not exhaustive and will likely need to be updated frequently as new resources emerge and contexts continue to shift. They are in response to requests for such resources from both the Missional Church Committee and individual CDC members over the past year.

**Next Steps:** task groups are a time-limited, appointed venture of CDC Committees. The Missional Church Committee and the leadership of Central District Conference are invited to consider the Provocations submitted by the task group, and to commit to on-going sustained anti-racist work as a key expression of the gospel in our broken world.

**Questions** may be directed to Task Group chair and Missional Church Committee member, Kiva Nice-Webb.

## **Three Provocations for Ongoing Work Toward Racial, Ethnic, and Religious Reconciliation within Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA**

from the CDC Missional Church Committee's *Racial, Ethnic and Religious Reconciliation Task Group*

### **Introduction and context**

In 2018, the Missional Church Committee of Central District Conference (CDC) charged a task group to develop provocations for fostering the ongoing work of racial, ethnic, and religious reconciliation within the conference. This task group was made up of five white people — one from the Missional Church Committee and four from throughout CDC — in addition to two persons of color who participated in meetings as much as they elected to, in an accountability capacity. This structure was intended to put the primary responsibility of undoing white supremacy on white people while acknowledging the importance of accountability to people of color.

Over the course of our time as a task group in 2019, we have heard from various CDC members about their individual and collective efforts to educate themselves about racism and systemic oppression, to build relationships across differences and to act for justice. We want to affirm the engagement with this work that is taking place and already has taken place among individuals, small groups, congregations, and CDC leadership groups. To build on this, we offer CDC the following three “provocations”; they are intended to inspire attentiveness to growth in racial, ethnic, and religious reconciliation and ultimately to result in more action for justice within and beyond Central District Conference.

Ultimately, our growth in racial, ethnic, and religious reconciliation results from our **commitment to continually take “the next step”** in three areas: **knowing, being and doing**.

- Examples of **knowing** include choosing to educate ourselves about perspectives, life experiences and realities different from our own; studying our local, regional, national, and international history from the perspective of those who have been systematically oppressed; and deepening our understanding of white supremacy and systemic oppression.
- Examples of **being** include cultivating awareness of our own (often unconscious) biases; developing appreciation for other cultural ways of being in addition to our own; understanding the power dynamics that are at play in our daily interactions; and prayerfully seeking to transform our attitudes so that we truly love our neighbor as ourselves and see each person as created in the image of God.
- Examples of **doing** include pursuing intercultural competence training and skill-building; developing mutual relationships across differences; and prayerfully seeking opportunities to act for God’s peace (physical, mental, spiritual, and relational well being) in our interpersonal relationships and communities and to speak out against systemic oppression.

Each of these areas is essential to our growth, and we need to actively tend to all three of them to experience real and lasting transformation in the journey of dismantling white supremacy.

### **Here are ways we envision this work being carried out across CDC**

#### **1) Provocation for CDC leaders and leadership groups**

While reconciliation is a gift given by God, our work is to engage fully in ending the system of white supremacy. At the conference level, we envision:



- CDC's leadership prayerfully commits time, resources, and budgeted funds toward continual "next steps" in areas of knowing, being, and doing regarding racial, ethnic and religious reconciliation for its staff members and leadership groups — making this topic a regular agenda item in meetings of the various leadership groups and setting concrete goals for engagement and growth. CDC leaders share about their efforts at conference meetings and gatherings across the wider Mennonite Church.
  - An existing example is how CDC's Missional Church Committee has committed to working through the Intercultural Development Inventory as a group.
- CDC members from underrepresented racial/ethnic backgrounds are appointed to leadership groups and have power within the leadership structure.
- CDC leaders provide incentives and resources for congregations to discern and carry out "next steps" in these areas, encouraging collaboration wherever possible to help increase accountability.
  - For example, additional "Reign of God"-type grants could be made available to congregations that partner in a joint educational or advocacy effort regarding racial, ethnic, and religious reconciliation; recipients could share with the wider conference about their learnings.
- CDC leaders create incentives and space for credentialed leaders to discern and carry out "next steps" — individually and in their congregations — perhaps building these regular conversations into the context of existing pastor-peer meetings or mentoring relationships.
  - Ministerial committee: include personal and theological reflection on and demonstrate on-going commitment to anti-racist work as a component of the credentialing process
- CDC leaders offer crowdsourcing channels through which CDC members and congregations can resource each other.
  - For example, a shared editable list of resources (linked to the CDC website and linked to from conference newsletters) could provide an accessible space where people could add resources, learnings and experiences they'd like to share with conference leadership groups and fellow congregations. These could be presented in a breakout group at an Annual Meeting.

## 2) Provocation for CDC congregations

Isaiah 1:10-20 reminds us that unless worship leads to enacting justice, it is meaningless. Our individual and collective relationship with God is inseparable from our relationship with each other and all of creation. At the congregational level, we envision:

- CDC congregations prayerfully commit time, resources, and budgeted funds toward continual "next steps" in areas of knowing, being, and doing regarding racial, ethnic, and religious reconciliation for their congregants, employees, and leadership groups — making this topic a regular agenda item in meetings of the various leadership groups and setting concrete goals for engagement and growth.
- People from underrepresented racial/ethnic backgrounds are appointed to leadership roles/groups in congregations and have power within the leadership structure.
- CDC congregations devote time and attention to these topics in worship, second hour themes, Sunday school curriculum (both adult and youth/children), small groups, etc., providing incentives and resources for their congregants to discern and carry out their own "next steps" in these areas and encouraging collaboration wherever possible.
  - An "appreciative inquiry"-type process of recognizing where intercultural connections are already being made and where growth and learning are already happening can be a

place to start if groups feel stuck; they can then consider together how to deepen or build upon what is already there.

- For example, a congregation could partner with another congregation to bring a resource person in for a shared intercultural competence training, or to learn about systemic oppression in their regional history together.
- CDC congregations create opportunities for stories of these “next steps” to be shared during worship (and potentially with fellow CDC congregations in other settings).

### 3) Provocation for individual members of CDC congregations

Because of the ubiquitous nature of racism and white supremacy, dismantling them requires that each of us challenge them actively. At the individual level, we envision:

- Members of CDC congregations take responsibility for and engage fully in their own growth and continual “next steps” in areas of knowing, being, and doing regarding racial, ethnic, and religious reconciliation — through prayer, repentance and openness to transformation, and by intentionally committing time, energy and resources to this work and to building relationships across differences.
  - An “appreciative inquiry”-type process of taking stock of where you are already making intercultural connections and what you have already learned about racism and oppression can be a place to start if an individual does not know where to begin or continue; then consider how to deepen or build upon what is already there.
- Members of CDC congregations prayerfully seek out partners for collaboration and accountability in this work (within and beyond their congregations), giving attention to fostering a culture of vulnerability, openness and honesty in which the range of emotions and thoughts that accompany this confronting work can be shared.
  - Our personal growth is cultivated in beloved and mutual community where we can engage fully, make mistakes or accidentally say a racist thing, get called on it, work through shame to enable repentance — claiming the unconditional love of Christ for each of us — and then keep pursuing God’s peace (physical, mental, spiritual and relational well being) for each person. Through naming our shared ownership of systemic oppression, we can begin to break destructive patterns of avoidance, inferiority or superiority, and blame.

### Conclusion

“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 I, Bylaws).

In considering how to encourage CDC in its work toward racial, ethnic, and religious reconciliation, our task group has focused on the importance of recognizing, exposing, and dismantling the oppressive systems that uphold white supremacy. We want to name that our Mennonite worship and charity has historically not only ignored or been oblivious to root causes of injustices, but also has upheld these injustices both locally and internationally.

We must continually ask: As a conference of Mennonite Church USA, and by extension Mennonite World Conference, are we as CDC leaders, congregations and individuals either dismantling or

*March 2020*

reinforcing white-supremacy-related issues of mass incarceration, police brutality, environmental racism, the legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery, and the ongoing slow violence of racism in which we are individually and institutionally complicit?

We urge CDC leaders to engage the work of our provocations above — as they correspond with the purpose of CDC — with commitments of time, attention, and funding to demonstrate that the work of racial, ethnic, and religious reconciliation is indeed a priority for CDC (... and not only to file this report away!). The members of the task force also recognize and are committed to the above provocations as our individual work. We look forward to the Missional Church Committee's response to these provocations.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**CDC Racial, Ethnic and Religious Reconciliation Task Group (2020)**

Kiva Nice-Webb (chair), Brian Sauder, Annette Brill Bergstresser, Charles Bontrager, Sandy Miller  
Accountability members: Cyneatha Millsaps, Isaac Villegas

**Resource List for Ongoing Work Toward Racial, Ethnic, and Religious Reconciliation  
within Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA**

from the CDC Missional Church Committee's *Racial, Ethnic and Religious Reconciliation Task Group*

### Introduction

This list is by no means complete; it is a sampling of ways to take “next steps” in the areas of knowing, being and doing in the work of racial, ethnic and religious reconciliation. Online and library searches for anti-racism and/or anti-discrimination resources will also yield bountiful results for your consideration. These resources would lend themselves well for both individual and group study.

### Books

- ***An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*** by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (Beacon, 2015)
- ***An African American and Latinx History of the United States*** by Paul Ortiz (Beacon, 2018)
- ***Becoming an Anti-Racist Church: Journeying Toward Wholeness*** by Joseph Barndt (Fortress, 2011)
- ***Between the World and Me*** by Ta-Nehisi Coates (Spiegel & Grau, 2015)
- ***Enter the River: Healing Steps from White Privilege Toward Racial Reconciliation*** by Jody Miller Shearer (Herald, 1994)
- ***How to be Black*** by Baratunde Thurston (Harper, 2012)
- ***It's the Little Things: Everyday Interactions That Anger, Annoy and Divide the Races*** by Lena Williams (Harcourt, 2000)
- ***Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*** by Bryan Stevenson (Spiegel & Grau, 2015)
- ***Let's Get Real: What People of Color Can't Say and Whites Won't Ask about Racism*** by Lee Mun Wah (Stir Fry Seminars, 2011)
- ***The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness***, anniversary edition, by Michelle Alexander (New Press, 2020); resources and study guides available at [newjimcrow.com](http://newjimcrow.com)
- ***Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism*** by Drew G.I. Hart (Herald, 2016)
- ***White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*** by Robin DiAngelo (Beacon, 2018)

### Videos

- **PBS Frontline: A Class Divided** (March 1985): The day after Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed, a teacher in a small town in Iowa tried a daring classroom experiment. She decided to treat children with blue eyes as superior to children with brown eyes. Frontline explores what those children learned about discrimination and how it still affects them:  
[www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/class-divided](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/class-divided)  
Teachers guide: [www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/teach/divided](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/teach/divided)
- **Race: The Power of An Illusion**: Award-winning documentary series by California Newsreel: contains episodes on The Difference Between Us; The Story We Tell; The House We Live In:  
[www.racepowerofanillusion.org/](http://www.racepowerofanillusion.org/)  
Accompanying resources: [newsreel.org/video/RACE-THE-POWER-OF-AN-ILLUSION](http://newsreel.org/video/RACE-THE-POWER-OF-AN-ILLUSION)
- **A Time for Burning** (1966, 58 min): Features an all-white Lutheran Church in Omaha, Nebraska, as their young pastor tries to get the congregation to reach out to their fellow black Lutherans. Commissioned by the Lutheran Church in America and nominated as Best Documentary Feature in the 1967 Academy Awards: [archive.org/details/atimeforburning](http://archive.org/details/atimeforburning)
- **Jesus Wasn't White**: Mennonite Mission Network resource; discussion questions appear in text below video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOzU4qFft3M&feature=emb\\_logo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOzU4qFft3M&feature=emb_logo)
- **The Future of Race in America**: Michelle Alexander at TEDx Columbus:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQ6H-Mz6hgw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQ6H-Mz6hgw)

- **What Would You Do? The Bike Thief:** Discussion starter about racial profiling: [www.thesociologicalcinema.com/videos/racial-profiling-the-bike-thief](http://www.thesociologicalcinema.com/videos/racial-profiling-the-bike-thief)

#### Articles/handouts/discussion starters

- Look for opportunities to learn about your local and regional history, especially from the perspective of non-white peoples.
  - Which indigenous peoples called the land home which you now occupy?
  - Which stories are the ones people didn't grow up hearing?
  - Which things did people avoid talking about?
  - An example of this type of work: **"Portrait of a Sundown Town: Coming to terms with racism in a 'Mennonite' community,"** in *Mennonite World Review*, Jan. 10, 2014, by Dan Shenk of Faith Mennonite Church, a CDC congregation: [www.menoworld.org/archived/2014/1/20/portrait-sundown-town/](http://www.menoworld.org/archived/2014/1/20/portrait-sundown-town/)
- **"Escaping the Web of White Supremacy: Our Most Urgent Task in the Work of Character Formation,"** in *The Cresset* (Advent-Christmas 2019, Vol. LXXXIII, No. 2, pp. 4-8) by Richard T. Hughes: [thecresset.org/2019/Advent/Hughes\\_A19.html](http://thecresset.org/2019/Advent/Hughes_A19.html)
- **"Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack"** by Peggy McIntosh: [www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/mcintosh.pdf](http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/mcintosh.pdf)
- **Diversity training discussion handouts** from StirFry Seminars / Lee Mun Wah in categories such as Exploring the Roots of Our Disconnections; Ways to Reconnect and Rebuild Trust; Mindful Techniques That Create Community. Examples include "21 Ways to Stop a Conversation About Diversity," "Unhealthy Ways of Communicating," and "The Art of Listening": [www.stirfryseminars.com/resources/handouts.php](http://www.stirfryseminars.com/resources/handouts.php)
- Teachingtolerance.org: **"My Family Journey"**: <https://www.tolerance.org/lesson/my-family-journey>

#### Consultants or experience-based learning

- **Intercultural competence consulting** through Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) with Nekeisha Alayna Alexis, M.A.: [ambs.edu/invite](http://ambs.edu/invite)
- **Work in Progress Choral Ensemble** of Mennonite Mission Network: This group is available to lead worship, preach, teach and provide contextualized workshops about diversity and holistic witness: [www.mennonitemission.net/about/staff/Work%20in%20Progress%20Ensemble](http://www.mennonitemission.net/about/staff/Work%20in%20Progress%20Ensemble)
- **Trail of Death: A Pilgrimage of Remembrance, Lament and Transformation**, a biennial summer course of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary that traces the route of the 1838 forced removal by the U.S. military of about 850 Potawatomi people from their ancestral homeland in northern Indiana to present-day Osawatimie, Kansas; likely to be held next in the summer of 2021; one can participate in the learning tour just as a trip, without academic credit: [ambs.edu/trailofdeath](http://ambs.edu/trailofdeath)
- **Sankofa: A Journey Toward Racial Righteousness** of the Evangelical Covenant Church, an intentional, cross-racial prayer journey that seeks to assist disciples of Christ on their move toward a righteous response to the social ills related to racism: [covchurch.org/justice/racial-righteousness/sankofa/](http://covchurch.org/justice/racial-righteousness/sankofa/)
- **The Ongoing White Supremacy of Our Everyday Lives: Consider, Confront, Change**, a symposium organized by Rainbow Mennonite Church, a Western District Conference congregation in Kansas City, Kansas, in 2018. While this event is past, it can serve as a model for congregations who would consider organizing events like this in CDC: [rainbowmennonite.org/symposium/](http://rainbowmennonite.org/symposium/)

## Central District Conference Mennonite Women

*Members: Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street), Barbra Gant (Columbus), Greta Holt (Cincinnati)*



Mennonite Women have been productive in 2019 and 2020! Thank you to Karla Minter (Mennonite Mission Network) for speaking at our Women's Banquet in 2019, and we look forward to Cyneatha Millsaps's speech this year. We are developing a **new database** for our women's groups. Here is a sample:

The Mennonite Women's group of **First Mennonite Bluffton** strives to be a hosting body to which all women feel welcome. The women have comforter knotting events twice a year, and they organize school and health kits. The MW USA devotional guide is used at meetings, where topics and events—such as supporting women in recovery, and invitations for volunteering—are integrated. Sharing of poetry and hobbies, as well as connecting with the church's mission partner families round out service opportunities.

The **Assembly Lunch Bunch, Goshen**, meets to discuss topics of interest, and to fellowship. Some topics covered have been the electoral process and issues facing Goshen, health center services to LGBTQ individuals, and Mennonite history. Coming up are the impact of politics on immigrant women, art and spirituality, and becoming acquainted with the spouse of a new pastor.

**Silverwood Mennonite Women, Goshen**, meet for sewing projects: comforter knotting, MCC kit bags, and quilting. Recently, they have offered learn-to-piece and learn-to-quilt evenings, where young people are welcome. This year, a comforter for the Michiana relief sale will be completed, along with MCC hygiene and school kits. The group participated in MCC's Great Winter Warm-Up comforter bash in January and invited the Berkey Avenue fellowship to join them.

The two Women's Circle groups at **Shalom Community Church, Ann Arbor**, gather in confidential spaces, where members can share and support each other. When sharing is finished, they consider a question (serious or lighthearted.) For example: 'What was your happiest moment and why?' or 'Which of your parents are/were you closer to and why?'

The **Mennonite Women of Normal** meet for projects, fellowship, devotions, and prayer. MCC was the beneficiary of 16 comforters, 9 sweaters, 48 hygiene kits and 128 school kits. Retiring pastors received quilts, and the women participated in donations for the Mennonite Relief Sale. Members attended the Fall Women's Retreat and Sister Care events.

Columbus Mennonite Women have six groups, in which some men participate: two book groups, a 'Brunch Bunch', and a Breakfast group (which meets in part to include Edith Espinal who is living at the church in sanctuary,) and Sowing Circle (a gardening club). In addition, its Piecemakers group is on track to complete over 225 comforters for MCC this year. Since starting in 2009, this group has donated over 1,500 comforters and raised over \$35,000 at relief sales.

The **Eighth Street Mennonite Women, Goshen**, knotted 12 comforters and, with its congregation's help in filling bags, finished 226 school kits and 63 hygiene kits for MCC. In January, they hosted the Great Winter Warm-up, an event that celebrated 100 years of MCC's work around the world. Social meetings

included Spring-, Summer-, and Winter Celebrations, which featured a speech on walking the U.S./Mexico border and a presentation by AMBS about its sustainability features.

**Threads of Grace, Pandora**, is a sewing ministry. Small comforters for new babies in the church are joined by comforters and school/hygiene kit bags for MCC and church fund-raising auctions. The women host a Labor of Love, during which families fill school/hygiene bags. Care packages for college students, as well as comforters that the children can knot, make the Labor of Love an event that many look forward to. Quilt and sewing themed outings in Indiana and Ohio, and participation in the Great Winter Warm-up, join comforter designing days. Friends who are not members at Grace are welcome at events.

Submitted by Greta Holt for Janeen Bertsche Johnson and Barb Gant: CDC Women

2020

REPORT BOOK  
of the

**Central District Conference**  
of  
Mennonite Church USA

*Spirit, bless our souls with yearning!*



*Part IV*

*Reports by Related Institutions*





## 2020 Report to Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA

*"Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'" John 20:19b*  
Highlights from Mennonite Church USA during 2019-2020.



**MennoCon19** took place in Kansas City, Missouri, July 2-6, 2019. The lively youth-adult joint services and Bible study session for delegates were among new additions that received positive feedback. Over 2,800 people attended.

**#BringThePeace**, a call to action for individuals and congregations to extend peace in our communities, was introduced. #BringThePeace is also the church's prayer inviting God to bring the peace that expands our capacity for empathy, compassion and love that actively seeks to dismantle oppression and violence.



The 2019 Delegate Assembly voted to change the bylaws to add **youth, ages 16-21, as official delegates**. Congregations may now nominate one youth, and area conferences and racial/ethnic groups may each nominate two, as additional delegates.

The 2019 Delegate Assembly passed the "**Churchwide Statement on the Abuse of Child Migrants**," which condemns the abuse of migrant families and children at the border and calls for a change in policy and action by the United States government. In response, a group of the MC



USA Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) visited Tucson, Arizona in Oct. 2019 to learn about **immigration initiatives and organizations**.

MC USA's Executive Board formed a **Membership Guidelines Advisory Group** to recommend a process for continuing the church's conversation on its Membership Guidelines. The 21-person group met for a one-time working session in Nov. 2019 and shared its recommendations with the board for further discernment.

**Peace Academic Center**, formerly Hopi Mission School, re-started classes for Kindergarten and pre-K students in Sept. 2019, Kykotsmovi, Arizona.

**MC USA Transformative Peacemaking** released several calls to action in 2019, urging prayer, conversation and individual and corporate action in response to the issues of gun violence, the death penalty and racism.



MC USA Archives launched an **oral history project** in July 2019 to collect interviews of young people ages of 24-40 within MC USA. Forty people participated in interviews recorded at MennoCon19.

MC USA held a "Learn, Pray, Join" initiative on **church planting**, together with Mennonite Mission Network, introducing the Sent Network process for equipping MC USA congregations and conferences for church planting.



MC USA relaunched **The Gathering Place**, a virtual space where Anabaptist faith formation leaders can gather, learn, share and grow. Webinars focused on baptism instruction, social media, and Anabaptism and American politics.

MC USA's Church Vitality office updated **Mennodata** and the **Ministerial Leader Information (MLI)** process with user-friendly interfacing and better access for church leaders and potential pastors.

### Stay Connected



**Subscribe to PeaceMail**, MC USA's weekly digest that highlights news and blogs from across the Church at [mennoniteusa.org/peacemail](http://mennoniteusa.org/peacemail).



**Save the date** for MennoCon21, the MC USA convention, in Cincinnati, Ohio on July 6-10, 2021.

## Informe del 2020 para la Conferencia Central District de la Iglesia Menonita de Estados Unidos (IMEU)

*“Entró Jesús y, poniéndose en medio de ellos, los saludó: ‘¡La paz sea con ustedes!’” Juan 20. 19b*  
*Lo más destacado de la Iglesia Menonita de EE. UU. en el 2019-2020.*



Se llevó a cabo la **MennoCon19** en Kansas City, Misuri, del 2 al 6 de julio del 2019. Los animados cultos conjuntos para juveniles y adultos y la sesión del estudio bíblico para delegados fueron algunas de las novedades que recibieron comentarios positivos. Asistieron más de 2800 personas.

Se presentó **#BringThePeace** (Traigan la paz), un llamado a la acción para individuos y congregaciones con el fin de extender la paz en nuestras comunidades. #BringThePeace es también la oración de la iglesia que invita a Dios a traer la paz que expande nuestra capacidad para la empatía, la compasión y el amor procurando desmantelar activamente la opresión y la violencia.



La asamblea de delegados del 2019 votó para modificar los estatutos con el fin de añadir a **los juveniles de 16 a 21 años como delegados oficiales**. Ahora, las congregaciones pueden nominar a un juvenil, mientras que cada conferencia regional y cada grupo racial/étnico puede nominar a dos de ellos como delegados adicionales.

La Asamblea de Delegados del 2019 aprobó la **“Declaración de toda la iglesia sobre el abuso a inmigrantes niños”**, la cual condena el abuso a familias y niños inmigrantes en la frontera y pide una modificación de las políticas y el accionar del Gobierno de Estados Unidos. En respuesta a esto, un grupo del Concilio de Líderes Constituyentes (CLC) de la IMEU visitó Tucson, Arizona en octubre del 2019 para aprender sobre las **iniciativas y las organizaciones vinculadas a la inmigración**.

La Junta Ejecutiva de la IMEU (siglas en español para MC USA) formó un **Grupo Consultor para los Lineamientos de Membresía** con el fin de recomendar un proceso para continuar las conversaciones de la iglesia en torno a los Lineamientos de Membresía. El grupo de 21 personas se reunió en noviembre del 2019 en una sesión de trabajo única y le compartió sus recomendaciones a la junta para que esta siga haciendo un discernimiento.

El **Peace Academic Center** (Centro Académico de Paz), anteriormente conocido como la Hopi Mission School (Escuela para la Misión Hopi), reinició las clases para los alumnos del jardín de infancia y preescolar en septiembre del 2019 en Kykotsmovi, Arizona.

El **Trabajo Transformador por la Paz de la IMEU** emitió varios llamados a la acción en el 2019, instando a la oración, la conversación y la acción individual y corporativa en respuesta a los temas de la violencia con armas de fuego, la pena de muerte y el racismo.



Archivos de la IMEU lanzó un **proyecto sobre historia oral** en julio del 2019 para recolectar entrevistas a jóvenes de entre 24 y 40 años dentro de la IMEU. Cuarenta personas participaron de las entrevistas grabadas en MennoCon19.

La IMEU organizó la iniciativa **“Learn, Pray, Join”** (Aprende, ora, únete) sobre **plantación de iglesias**, junto con la Red Menonita de Misión, introduciendo el proceso de Sent Network para equipar a las congregaciones y conferencias de la IMEU para la plantación de iglesias.



La IMEU relanzó **The Gathering Place** (El lugar de encuentro), un espacio virtual donde los líderes de la formación de fe anabautista pueden reunirse, aprender y crecer. Los seminarios web se enfocaron en la instrucción bautismal, las redes sociales, y el tema del anabautismo y las políticas estadounidenses.

La oficina de vitalidad de las iglesias de la IMEU actualizó **Mennodata** y el proceso de **Información de Liderazgo Ministerial** (MLI, por sus siglas en inglés) con una interfaz fácil de usar y un mejor acceso para líderes de la iglesia y potenciales pastores.

### Manténgase conectado



**Suscribase a PeaceMail**, el boletín semanal de la IMEU que destaca noticias y blogs de toda la iglesia en [mennoniteusa.org/peacemail](http://mennoniteusa.org/peacemail).



**Agende la fecha** de MennoCon21, la convención de la IMEU, a realizarse en Cincinnati, Ohio del 6 al 10 de julio del 2021.

*Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.*

– Proverbs 16:3 (NRSV)

# Invest in what lasts

## Everence 2020 report

Central District Conference Annual Meeting  
June 25-27, 2020  
Oak Grove Mennonite Church

### **Strong church partnerships a vital part of Everence mission**

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

We're celebrating our 75th anniversary in 2020 – three-quarters of a century of helping brothers and sisters in Christ “build up the common life” through decisions about their money and other resources.

We look forward to many more years of helping your church members create and implement plans tailored to their needs and their goals to share with others.

We value our connections and will continue to serve the faith community as partners in stewardship throughout 2020 and beyond.

### **Pastoral Financial Wellness Program extends its reach**



Everence expanded our Pastoral Financial Wellness Program in 2019 to credentialed and active

pastors from more than 30 affiliated Anabaptist and like-minded denominations and church networks.

A second \$1 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. – through its National Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders – helped make widening the program possible.

“Hopefully, through our expanded program, we can help more pastors find a healthy financial balance so they can continue following their calling in the ministry,” said Beryl Jantzi, D.Min., Everence Stewardship Education Director.

The program includes direct financial assistance grants, financial education events and subsidies for financial planning. More details are available at [everence.com/pastoral-financial-wellness](http://everence.com/pastoral-financial-wellness).

### **Is church management software right for you?**

A new resource from Everence can help you decide whether your church needs church management software for organizing and automating certain tasks.

Hundreds of options are available to help churches with:

- Membership management.
- Contributions/donor management.

- Accounting.
- Event/facilities management.
- Communications and outreach.
- Volunteer management.

Everence doesn't endorse any specific software in our new guide, *Church information management systems*, but we do identify some of the possibilities. Consider it a starting point for exploring your options.

Visit [everence.com/resources/church-finance-manual](http://everence.com/resources/church-finance-manual) and look under “additional resources” to download your own copy.

### **Take advantage of new webinars for churches**



Everence is offering your church new educational webinars in 2020.

They are designed as an easy-to-share stewardship education resource for pastors and others in your church.

Talk to your Everence stewardship consultant to make sure you're on the mailing list for invitations to these webinars.



Pon en manos del  
SEÑOR todas tus obras, y tus  
proyectos se cumplirán.

—Proverbios 16.3 (NVI)

# Invierta en lo que perdura

## Informe del 2020 de Everence

Conferencia del Distrito Central Reunion Anual  
25 a 27 de junio de 2020

### Fuertes sociedades con iglesias son parte vital de la misión de Everence

Everence® trabaja estrechamente con las iglesias y sus miembros, tal como ha sucedido desde los inicios de nuestra organización bajo el nombre de Mennonite Mutual Aid (Apoyo Mutuo Menonita) en 1945.

En el 2020 estaremos celebrando nuestro 75° aniversario, tres cuartos de siglo ayudando a hermanos y hermanas en Cristo a “desarrollar la vida en común” mediante decisiones sobre su dinero y otros recursos.

Nuestro anhelo es ayudar durante muchos años más a los miembros de su iglesia a crear e implementar planes a la medida de sus necesidades y objetivos de compartir con otros.

Valoramos nuestras conexiones y seguiremos sirviendo a la comunidad de fe como socios en la mayordomía a lo largo del 2020 y más allá.



### El Programa para el bienestar financiero de pastores extiende su alcance

En el 2019, Everence expandió el Programa para el bienestar financiero de pastores a pastores acreditados y activos de más de 30 denominaciones y redes de iglesias anabautistas afiliadas y afines.

Una segunda subvención de \$1 millón de Lilly Endowment Inc., otorgada a través de su Iniciativa Nacional para Abordar los Desafíos Económicos que los Líderes Pastorales Enfrentan, permitió ampliar el programa.

“Al expandir nuestro programa, esperamos poder ayudar a más pastores a hallar un equilibrio financiero saludable, de modo que puedan seguir respondiendo a su llamado en el ministerio”, dijo Beryl Jantzi, doctor en ministerio y director de educación sobre mayordomía de Everence.

El programa incluye subvenciones directas de asistencia financiera, eventos de educación financiera y subsidios para la planificación financiera. Para más detalles, vea [everence.com/pastoral-financial-wellness](http://everence.com/pastoral-financial-wellness).

### ¿Es el software para la gestión de iglesias adecuado para usted?

Un nuevo recurso de Everence puede ayudarle a decidir si su iglesia necesita de un *software* para la gestión de iglesias que permite organizar y automatizar ciertas tareas.

Hay cientos de opciones disponibles para ayudar a las iglesias con las siguientes tareas:

- Gestión de la membresía.
- Gestión de aportes/donantes.
- Contabilidad.
- Gestión de eventos/instalaciones.
- Comunicaciones y actividades comunitarias de extensión.
- Gestión de voluntarios.

Everence no respalda ningún *software* en particular en nuestra nueva guía, *Church information management systems* (Sistemas de gestión de información para iglesias), pero sí mencionamos algunas posibilidades. Considérelas como un punto de partida para explorar sus opciones.

Visite [everence.com/resources/church-finance-manual](http://everence.com/resources/church-finance-manual) y diríjase a “Additional Resources” (Recursos adicionales) para descargarse una copia.



### Aproveche los nuevos seminarios web educativos para iglesias

En el 2020, Everence estará ofreciéndole nuevos seminarios web educativos a su iglesia.

Los mismos están diseñados como recursos de educación sobre mayordomía fáciles de compartir para pastores y otras personas de su iglesia.

Hable con su asesor de mayordomía de Everence para asegurarse de que está en la lista de envío para las invitaciones a estos seminarios web.







Mission Statement: MEA will strengthen Mennonite education for restorative leadership, work, and service throughout the church and the world.

HIGHLIGHTS: from 2019 – present

Board of Directors

Nathan Alleman  
Western District Conference  
Professor

Addie Banks  
Atlantic Coast Conference  
Pastor and founder/CEO of the  
Groundswell Group

Lynette Bontrager – secretary  
Ohio Conference  
Registered Nurse, retired

Melissa Hofstetter  
Pacific Southwest Conference  
Minister and Professor

Alicia Manning  
Virginia Mennonite Conference  
Minister, Educational Consultant  
and Director

Linwood Rush – treasurer  
Pacific Northwest Conference  
Hospitality Services Director, retired

Richard Thomas – chair  
Atlantic Coast Conference  
Superintendent, retired

Roy Williams – vice chair  
Pastor

Strengthening Hispanic Ministries education programs

A new Instituto Bíblico Anabautista (Anabaptist Biblical Institute or IBA) study center opened in Omaha, Nebraska in August 2019. In November, we celebrated as five students from Mexico graduated from IBA. We are thankful for our creative supporters that help make these successes possible:

- Marco Güete, Director for Hispanic Ministries, and his sponsors raised \$17,695 for Hispanic Ministries during Marco's historic 161-mile pilgrimage on El Camino de Santiago in Spain.
- An anonymous donor challenged our current and former board and staff with a matching donation grant of \$5000, which raised a total of \$10,125 for Hispanic Ministries.

Collaborations at every level: There are strong collaborations and partnerships in place at all levels across Mennonite education, including a Collaborative MBA, Doctor of Nursing Practice, and the *Encounter* Anabaptist faith formation curriculum. MEA is proud to promote these school-led initiatives and hope they inspire similar learning collaborations and innovative partnerships, through both traditional and non-traditional learning opportunities.

MEC 2020: The biennial Mennonite Educators Conference took place February 6 – 8, 2020 at the National Conference Center in Leesburg, Virginia. The theme, “Unleashing Curiosity – Igniting Hope” resonated deeply with the 360 attendees from the Mennonite Schools Council. MEA is thankful for the work of the MEC planning committee to prepare a successful and inspiring event.

Social media webinar: Dr. Curt Bechler led two webinars on social media in February, one aimed at presidents/heads of schools and the other for communications staff. Dr. Bechler, a Goshen College alum, is the managing partner of Venture International and a specialist in crisis management and organizational change. MEA is continuing to look for opportunities to link industry experts with our schools to provide resources and support

in key areas facing our schools today.

Building a strong leadership team to carry us forward: **Carlos Romero completed his time as MEA's Executive Director in July 2019. We are grateful for Tom Stuckey's leadership, talents, and experience in the interim and ask for your prayers as we seek to build upon this strong leadership foundation.**

LOOKING AHEAD

Title IX webinar: Saundra Schuster, J.D., an expert in preventive and civil rights law for education and co-founder of ATIXA, will lead a webinar in the Spring on Title IX. She will also be reviewing the participating schools' policies concerning Title IX and Section 304 of the Clery Act.

Bridging the gap: At the Constituency Leaders Council gathering in October, we heard clearly the urgent call to build relationships between local congregations and students attending non-Mennonite schools. When 80% of Mennonite students aren't choosing Mennonite schools and universities, we feel this call keenly. We are pondering what MEA can do to help bridge this gap.

#### KEY GOALS FOR 2020

- Helping congregations provide student aid plans: We are looking at ways that MEA can partner with conferences and congregations to develop support plans for students from pre-K through seminary studies.
- Creating a human resources bank: MEA is creating a human resources “bank” of interested individuals who can help provide much-needed services to our schools.
- Sustainability: The MEA board and staff are committed to developing a sustainable financial model by Dec. 2020.

#### FOR YOUR PRAYERS

Earthquakes have impacted two of our partner schools in recent months. On November 26, a 6.4-magnitude earthquake hit Albania, with the epicenter not far from the town of Lezhë, where Lezha Academic Center (LAC), a Mennonite Schools Council (MSC) International Affiliate, is located. The LAC school building suffered some damage but was able to re-open in January.

Puerto Rico was rocked by series of strong earthquakes in January, which impacted Academia Menonita Betania near Aibonito, also an MSC member school. The damages to the school remain to be assessed, and the entire island is experiencing power outages.

Please join us in praying for these communities as they cope with trauma and fear, and for the rebuilding efforts.

*The MEA board and staff thank you for the many ways you support  
Mennonite education across the church!*

*Submitted by Tom Stuckey, Interim Executive Director  
March 2020*

# Be local. Be global. Be the Gospel.



Changes are the construction blocks of our lives. We exult when changes move in a positive direction of greater support and deepened

partnership. When changes are in a negative direction, we realize how much we appreciate the generosity of those whose support remains strong during the tough times. Mennonite Mission Network is

eager to strengthen our support of partners all around the world as they engage in advancing God's purposes for healing and hope. We cannot do this without you, so we're grateful for your sharing of prayers

and financial contributions that allow us to continue God's mission in the world. Thank you!

*Stanley W. Green*  
Stanley W. Green  
Executive Director

## Central District + 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**—

Worked with young adult leaders of *Iglesia Cristiana Menonita de Colombia* (IMCOL) to help develop youth programs and to recognize and nurture the spiritual gifts of young people.

» Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship  
» Silverwood Mennonite Church

**Bruce Yoder and Nancy Frey**—

Taught and supported local ministry within Burkina Faso and West Africa. In Ougadougou, they worked with the Mennonite university student hostel and church leaders.

» First Mennonite Church, Bluffton  
» Oak Grove Mennonite Church

**Mark and Mary Hurst**—Build Anabaptist Network 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 served 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.

» Trenton Mennonite Church  
» Paoli Mennonite Fellowship

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

» Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

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

» Oak Grove Mennonite Church

### Service participants



#### Service sites

#### Mennonite Voluntary Service units

» Madison, Wisconsin  
» Chicago

#### SOOP site

» Camp Friedenswald

#### Service Adventure

**Carissa Mast**, serving in Colorado Springs, Colorado

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

#### SOOP

**Bruce and Lorene Arnold**, Washington, Iowa

**Deron and Annette Bergstresser**, Americus, Georgia

**Ivan and Rachel Friesen**, Americus, Georgia

**Phyllis Hostetler**, Aibonito, Puerto Rico

**Titus King and Joy Kauffman King**, Tucson, Arizona

#### Ted Koontz and Gayle Gerber

**Koontz**, Tucson, Arizona

**James and Debra Miller**, Akron, Pennsylvania

**Lois Miller**, Washington, D.C., and Aibonito, Puerto Rico

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

**Lewis Naylor and Belle Duerksen**, Glendale, Arizona

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

**Keith and Kathleen Springer**, Washington, D.C.

**Ruth Stoltzfus**, Montreal, Quebec

#### Mennonite Voluntary Service

**Jonatan Moser**, Alamosa, Colorado

**Hannah Thill**, Alamosa, Colorado

#### Youth Venture

**Abby Hochstetler** served in Benin.

### Prayer partners



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

### Mission banks



Children from Grace Mennonite Church gave a total of **\$190.12** to missions.

### Congregational giving to Mission Network



During Mission Network's fiscal year, Aug. 1, 2018, through July 31, 2019, 32 of 45 Central District Conference congregations gave **\$215,367**. Thank you!



*Thank you for joining with Mission Network! May this partnership strengthen CDC's mission "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."*

*Karla J. Minter*

Karla J. Minter, Church Relations Representative

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



# Sé local. Sé global. Sé el evangelio.



Los cambios son los ladrillos con los cuales se construye nuestra vida. Nos regocijamos cuando los cambios avanzan en dirección positiva de mayor apoyo

y coparticipación más profunda. Cuando los cambios ocurren en sentido negativo, nos damos cuenta de cuánto valoramos la generosidad de quienes mantienen su apoyo firme aún en tiempos difíciles. La Red Menonita de Misión

busca fortalecer el apoyo de los coparticipantes alrededor de todo el mundo al comprometerse con los propósitos de Dios de sanación y esperanza. No podemos hacer esto sin usted, y por ello le agradecemos sus oraciones y aportes financieros

que nos permiten continuar la misión de Dios alrededor del mundo. ¡Gracias!

*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 de los pueblos originarios 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

**Eric y Kelly Frey Martin**—Trabajaron con líderes de jóvenes de la Iglesia Cristiana Menonita de Colombia (IMCOL) en el desarrollo de programas para jóvenes, para reconocer y nutrir los dones espirituales que manifestaban los mismos.  
» Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship  
» Silverwood Mennonite Church

**Bruce Yoder y Nancy Frey**—Enseñaron y apoyaron ministerios locales en la región de Burkina Faso y África Occidental. Además, en Ougadougou trabajaron con el albergue para estudiantes de la universidad menonita y con los líderes de iglesias.  
» First Mennonite Church, Bluffton  
» Oak Grove 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

**Neal y Janie Blough**—Capacitan a

líderes anabautistas y crean recursos para el culto en Francia.

» First Mennonite Church, Bluffton  
» Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

**Anne Kompaoré**—Como lingüista, trabajó en África Occidental en varias organizaciones y con la iglesia a través de la consultoría y enseñanza de manera independiente.

» First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana

**Brian y Noelia Fox**—Sirven como mentores y líderes de parejas jóvenes y apoyan el liderazgo 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 en los ministerios de música, educación, con niños y jóvenes.

» Trenton Mennonite Church  
» Paoli Mennonite Fellowship

**Deborah Byler**—Acompaña a mujeres líderes kekchi en Guatemala.  
» Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

**Individuo que trabaja en un área sin revelar**—Coordinó las logísticas para un programa de misión en África Occidental.

» Oak Grove Mennonite Church

### Participantes y lugares de servicio



#### Sitios de Servicio Cristiano

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

» Madison, Wisconsin  
» Chicago

#### Sitio de SOOP

» Camp Friedenswald

#### Service Adventure

**(Voluntarios Aventureros)**

**Carissa Mast**, sirve en Colorado Springs, Colorado

**Rudy and Michelle Moyer-Litwiller**, líderes de unidad en Albuquerque, New Mexico

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

**Bruce y Lorene Arnold**, Washington, Iowa

**Deron y Annette Bergstresser**, Americus, Georgia

**Ivan y Rachel Friesen**, Americus, Georgia

**Phyllis Hostetler**, Aibonito, Puerto Rico

**Titus King y Joy Kauffman King**, Tucson, Arizona

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

**James y Debra Miller**, Akron, Pennsylvania

**Lois Miller**, Washington, D.C., y Aibonito, Puerto Rico

**Herbert y Sarah Myers**, Akron, Pennsylvania

**Lewis Naylor y Belle Duerksen**, Glendale, Arizona

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

**Keith y Kathleen Springer**, Washington, D.C.

**Ruth Stoltzfus**, Montreal, Quebec

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

**Jonatan Moser**, Alamosa, Colorado

**Hannah Thill**, Alamosa, Colorado

#### Youth Venture

**(Jóvenes Aventureros/as)**

**Abby Hochstetler** sirvió en Benín.

### Oración



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

### Alcancias y misión



Los niños de Grace Mennonite Church ofrecieron un total de **\$190,12** para las misiones.

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

www.76mennonitemission.net Línea Gratuita: 1-866-866-2872



*¡Gracias por unirse a la Red de Misión! Que esta coparticipación fortalezca la misión de la Conferencia Central District de "reconocer el amor abundante de Cristo en quienes somos y cómo vivimos, y para responder al llamado persistente de Dios a compartir ese amor con el otro y con el mundo".*

*Karla J. Minter*

Representante de Relaciones con las iglesias



## 2020 REPORT TO Central District Conference

The mission of Mennonite Health Services (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

- The Values-based Leadership Program had 26 leaders in the 2019-2020 class. Participants gained self-awareness and an Anabaptist perspective on leadership. A new class will start in the fall. More information can be found online at <http://www.vblp.org/>
- The 2020 Mennonite Health Assembly (MHA) was cancelled out of concern for our sponsors and members with regard to coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Continuing in 2020, we are offering a series of free webinars for MHS member leadership and board members. These educational offerings are open to anyone interested in the topics; visit [www.mhsonline.org](http://www.mhsonline.org) to learn more.

### For Thanksgiving and Prayer

- Low unemployment in many communities means that finding and keeping qualified and compassionate employees is a significant concern for MHS member organizations and the vulnerable populations they serve 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.

Submitted by Karen Lehman, President/CEO

[www.mhsonline.org](http://www.mhsonline.org)

## REPORT TO CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE

Summer 2020

At MennoMedia we publish 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. Our curricula, periodicals, and hymnals reach a broad spectrum of evangelical, mainline, and Anabaptist readers and congregations, cultivating passion for faith formation and an active life of discipleship.

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



### Speak Your Peace

What the Bible Says about Loving Our Enemies  
Author Ronald J. Sider plumbs Scripture to build a persuasive case that Jesus meant what he said when he commanded us to love our enemies. Sider takes on enduring questions about nonviolence, showing how the church has largely set aside Jesus' call to love our enemies and traded its birthright in Christ for nationalism and militarism. In *Speak Your Peace*, Sider reminds the church of its true vocation in a world of hatred and war.



### This Is God's Table

Finding Church Beyond the Walls  
This is the story of what happens when people garden, worship, and eat together—and invite everyone to join them. Pastor Anna Woofenden describes how the wealthy and poor, the aged and young, the housed and unhoused become a community. Together they craft a place of authenticity where all are welcome. What would it take to carry the liturgy outside the gates? What if we discover that in feeding others, we are fed?



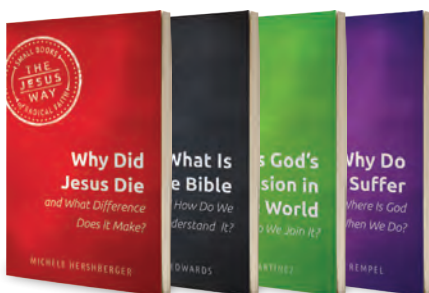
### Collateral Damage

Changing the Conversation about Firearms and Faith  
One hundred people die from gun violence every day in the United States. Yet many Christians say gun violence shouldn't be talked about in church. In *Collateral Damage*, pastor and activist James E. Atwood issues an urgent call to action to Christians to work together to stop gun violence. The church has a moral and spiritual obligation to side with life against death. Will we rise to the occasion?



### Signs of Life

Resurrecting Hope out of Ordinary Losses  
Whether it's the demise of expectations, beliefs, a relationship, or our image of ourselves: we all experience losses. In *Signs of Life*, pastor Stephanie Lobdell leads readers into the grand story of God's saving action and resurrection power. Hope isn't cheap, and there's no sense in pretending everything is fine. Yet through it all, God breathes life into what seems beyond redemption.



### The Jesus Way

Small Books of Radical Faith

The Jesus Way series delves into big questions about God's work in the world. These concise, practical books are deeply rooted in Anabaptist theology. Crafted by a diverse community of scholars, pastors, and practitioners, The Jesus Way series helps readers deepen their faith in Christ and enliven their witness.

## 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.



### Voices Together will offer:

- Pew Edition
- Large-Print Edition
- Projection Edition
- App Edition, available through the Hymnals app
- Accompaniment Edition
- Worship Leader Edition
- Audio recordings featuring choirs from Mennonite colleges and universities

Visit [VoicesTogetherHymnal.org](http://VoicesTogetherHymnal.org) for more information.



## 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. Our programs integrate academics, spiritual formation and practice. Join us — whether in person or at a distance — and deepen your understanding of Scripture, faith and Anabaptist theology!

- **Study at a distance**
  - **Master of Divinity Connect** (online and hybrid courses)
  - **Master of Arts: Theology and Global Anabaptism** (fully online)
  - **Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies** (fully or partially online; customizable)
- **Study on campus**
  - **Master of Divinity Campus**
  - **Master of Arts in Christian Formation**
  - **Master of Arts: Theology and Peace Studies**
  - **Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies**  
[ambs.edu/academics](https://ambs.edu/academics)
- **Financial aid:** AMBS offers generous need-based financial aid, grants and scholarships to help make your education affordable. [ambs.edu/financialaid](https://ambs.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: [ambs.edu/onecourse](https://ambs.edu/onecourse)
- **Experience AMBS:** Visit our campus to learn more about all that AMBS has to offer. [ambs.edu/visit](https://ambs.edu/visit)

### Lifelong learning

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

- **Online short courses:** Join the forum discussions in these annual six-week online courses and dig into Anabaptist history, thought and witness. No grades, no papers!
  - Exploring Anabaptist History and Theology
  - Exploring Peace and Justice in the Bible
  - Understanding Anabaptist Approaches to Scripture
  - Transforming Congregational Conflict and Communication[ambs.edu/shortcourses](https://ambs.edu/shortcourses)

### AMBS students from CDC congregations

- **Master of Divinity:** Billy Funk and Eric Frey Martin (Silverwood), Kajsa Herrstrom (First – Urbana), Febri Kristiani (Hively), Sibonokuhle Ncube (Eighth Street)
- **MA in Christian Formation:** Jon Zirkle (Assembly)
- **MA: Theology and Peace Studies:** Perdian Tumanan and Sandra Vielman (Hively)
- **Journey participants/mentors:** Charles Baraka/Cyneatha Millsaps (Madison), Jan Croyle/Marilyn Rossiter (First – Wadsworth), Steve Mares/Cyneatha Millsaps (Community), JP Schumacher/Gloria Hernandez Bucher (First – Bluffton)

### AMBS statistics

- In 2019–20, AMBS's graduate student body included 58 U.S. students, eight Canadian students and 22 international students.
- In 2019–20, 24 students are enrolled in Journey in Canada, Southeast Asia, Tanzania and the U.S.

- **Pastors and Leaders 2021** (March 1–4)
- **Leadership Clinics** (March 1, 2021)  
[ambs.edu/pastorsandleaders](https://ambs.edu/pastorsandleaders)
- **Journey: A Missional Leadership Development Program:** This three-year nondegree program offers mentor-mentee partnerships, distance-learning opportunities and community support.  
[ambs.edu/journey](https://ambs.edu/journey)
- **Invite AMBS!** Faculty and staff are available to come to you and speak on a variety of topics, including intercultural competence and undoing racism, Reading the Bible with Jesus workshops, improvisational leadership, healthy boundaries and more. [ambs.edu/invite](https://ambs.edu/invite)
- **Spiritual Direction Seminars:** Cultivate your ministry of spiritual direction through this supervised program. [ambs.edu/seminars](https://ambs.edu/seminars)
- **!Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth:** Students can explore ministry and develop their leadership gifts in this annual summer program. Tap a shoulder! [ambs.edu/explore](https://ambs.edu/explore)



The 2019-2020 academic year at Bethel College has provided times of celebration and times of introspection. As always, it is the hard work and dedication of our talented faculty and staff that makes it possible to provide students with a place that focuses on creating opportunities for their futures. Bethel's mission is to prepare students for meaningful lives of work and service, and our core values continue to guide us to make this happen:

**Creative approaches for living harmoniously.** In fall of 2019 we welcomed our largest freshman class in over 30 years. To help the increasing number of students coming from low-income backgrounds, we opened a food pantry so no student will have to go without a meal.

**Vocational discernment.** We continue to work toward a work-college model in which every student will leave college with vocational experience. This model will also help with our commitment to graduate students with less debt. Bethel was named one of the best colleges for financial aid by the website lendEDU.

**Dialogue that transforms conflict.** Recent convocations have opened up the conversation dealing with issues of sexual assault that the college, and the nation as a whole, must confront.

**Holistic wellness.** A group of students took the initiative to create the Bethel Worship Center, a Sunday morning ecumenical worship experience open to all students, faculty, staff, and community members. The services feature student-led music and student speakers. It is a welcome addition to weekly chapel services.

**Peace and justice.** We continue to welcome speakers and events that focus on peace and justice issues. Activist Michelle Vann spoke at the yearly Martin Luther King Day event, David Bailey and Urban Doxology presented at the 5th Worship and the Arts Symposium, Jasmyn Story presented the annual Peace Lecture series, and KIPCOR hosted another series of insightful documentary films.

**Community with global consciousness.** Students traveled to Mexico and eastern Europe during Interterm. Students at Bethel come from 13 different countries. An interfaith room was established so students from all faith backgrounds can have a place to worship.

**High standards and expectations.** Bethel took the steps necessary to avoid being put on probation in November after that recommendation had been made to our accrediting body in May. As we refocus on our core values we achieved a fall-to-spring retention rate of 90% among all students.

We thank you for your continued support and prayers.



## 2020 Report to Central District Conference

### BLUFFTON BLUEPRINT:

*A new general education program to prepare students for a future that will be different than anyone can imagine.*

Bluffton University is in its first year of implementing a new general education program designed to prepare students for today's challenges while remaining grounded in the arts and sciences. Through the Bluffton Blueprint, four foundational courses with experiential components woven into the curriculum, students will reflect on specific values and themes to help them discover their greater purpose in life. Taken in a sequence, each course relates to one of Bluffton's enduring values of Discovery, Community, Respect and Service.

#### YEAR 1

First-year students take *Becoming a Scholar*, a class which introduces young people to college-level learning. The course features **The Great Adventure**, a fall break experience mentored by faculty. Surrounded by the vast natural beauty of The Great Smoky Mountains, students reflect on the question **"Who am I?"**

#### YEAR 2

In their sophomore year, Bluffton students take **Learning in Community**. Hands-on community partnerships developed specifically for this class in nearby, Lima, Ohio, allow our students to get an early look at how they can make a difference in their field of study. During this experience students answer the question **"Who am I in community?"**

#### YEAR 3

A pivotal element of a Bluffton education, students often take their **cross-cultural experience** in their junior year of study. These explorations for growth and understanding allow students to reflect on the question **"Who am I in the world?"** as they explore a range of new locations from Appalachia to Israel/Palestine.

#### YEAR 4

A Bluffton education comes full-circle during the final course in the Bluffton Blueprint, **Christian Values in a Global Community**. In this course, students are challenged to answer the same question posed to John the Baptist, **"What then shall we do?"** Students graduate from Bluffton understanding how to use their talents to serve the greater global community.

In addition to the Bluffton Blueprint, students choose courses from a variety of core competencies to complete Bluffton's new general education curriculum.

### Thank you!

Bluffton University currently enrolls ten students from Central District Conference churches. **Lydia Lugibihl, Andrew Renner, Caitlyn Renner, Ben Weaver**, Grace Mennonite; **Nthathi Phetlhu, Therisanyo Phetlhu**, First Mennonite; **Jeffrey Strayer**, Columbus Mennonite; **Deborah Yoder**, Assembly Mennonite; **Phoebe Adams, Grace Zickafoose**, Lima Mennonite. Matching Scholarship support is \$8,000 for 2019-20.

CDC-appointed representatives on Bluffton's Board of Trustees include **Heather Reichenbach**, Eighth Street Mennonite, Goshen, Ind.; **Jane Roeschley**, Mennonite Church of Normal, Normal, Ill.; and **Kerry Strayer**, Columbus Mennonite, Columbus, Ohio.

Find us on the web  
and social media!  
[www.bluffton.edu](http://www.bluffton.edu)

For more information, contact  
**Hans Houshower**  
Vice president for advancement  
[houshowerh@bluffton.edu](mailto:houshowerh@bluffton.edu)

Things are happening at EMS! We are excited that Sarah Bixler, doctoral candidate at Princeton Theological Seminary, has joined our faculty, leading our Formation curriculum. The Seminary is now embedded in EMU's School of Theology, Humanities and the Performing Arts. This move maintains Seminary identity as we offer a full range of graduate theological programs, while strengthening connections to the undergraduate Bible, Religion and Theology department as well as undergraduate programs in music, language and literature, and history. The Seminary Dean, Sue Cockley, continues to lead the Seminary.

### **2020 School for Leadership Training: January 13-15**

January 13-15 marked the 51<sup>st</sup> annual SLT. The keynote speakers were Shannan Martin, author and speaker from Goshen Indiana; Rev. Dr. Leroy Barber, Director of Innovation for Engaged Church Greater NW Area of United Methodists Church and Co-Founder Voices Project; Pastor Jennifer Davis Sensenig with guests from Faith in Action; and Dr. Kenton Derstine with Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Alumni. The theme was “*Shalom in the Streets: Recapturing God’s Vision in Ordinary Places*” and provided participants with a worshipful and renewing encounter and to reimagine ministry in our communities from God’s desire. Jeremiah 29:7 was the focus scripture.

Visit <https://emu.edu/seminary/slt/> for more information

### **Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration**

The CPE Celebration was held on Tuesday, January 14. Following the celebration dinner attendees enjoyed honoring the Lena and Norman Yutzy family for the CPE Program Endowment, sharing memories and stories from ministry and the keynote address by former EMS associate dean, Dr. Sara Wenger Shenk.

Visit <https://emu.edu/seminary/cpe/anniversary> for more information

### **Seminary Course Options**

Consider pursuing seminary studies. We offer a Graduate Certificate in Christian Studies, Master of Divinity, MA in Christian Leadership, and MA in Religion. Check out the course options on our website. <https://emu.edu/seminary/courses/> for more information.

### **Graduation at EMS This Spring**

At the time of this writing, plans are underway for the 2020 Seminary Graduation. We plan to award 8 Master of Divinity and 4 Master of Christian Leadership degrees to the graduating class of 2020. Graduates from Eastern Mennonite Seminary will join those of Eastern Mennonite University for the ceremony at 1:00 p.m., May 3 on the campus front lawn. The Honorable Deanna Reed, mayor of Harrisonburg will deliver the commencement address. Seminary Class president, Nathanael Hofstetter Ressler, (MDiv) is scheduled as one of the student speakers for the commencement exercises. Seminary Baccalaureate will be held in Martin Chapel on Saturday, May 2 with the theme “Hope Born of Renewal: On to the Next Season!” and the scripture focus of Lamentations 3:21-24 and 2 Corinthians 5:16-21. Dr. David Evans is the baccalaureate speaker.

#### **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**

**Greetings from President Huxman**

Greetings to our many congregational communities across the Church. Here at EMU we take our educational mission seriously: “to prepare students to serve and lead in a global context” in the spirit of Scripture “to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.”

**Our Enrollment Success:** We are off to a great start this spring, with higher enrollment than over the past two years and an 85% retention rate, far above the national average. A larger group of transfer students has helped us to a significantly healthy budget margin. Mennonite students comprise one-quarter of our traditional undergraduate student body. Thank you for sending us students and for church matching grant programs—what a beautiful gift!

**Our Fundraising Success:** Our advancement team worked effectively to meet ambitious annual giving goals, exceeding 2018 contributions to the University Fund by 4 percent for a total of \$1,720,418. A prestigious CASE fundraising award recognized consistent performance and stewardship. I thank our church partners for contributing to this successful bottom line!

**Our Brand Refresh Campaign:** After extensive market research with hundreds of stakeholders, we discovered much congruence between what we think about ourselves and what outsiders do. EMU is known for superb academic and job placement but above all else as a caring and supportive campus. We graduate students who are not afraid of conflict, who know how to engage difference responsibly, and who can “serve and lead” teams in their workplace well.

Our new tagline, “Lead Together,” puts students at the center of our work and emphasizes our unique value proposition. It suggests “creative tension” congruent with an Anabaptist “Third Way.” The line takes two unusually paired words, one stressing independence and the other stressing dependence, and shows that “Lead Together” “Learn Together” “Live Together” and all the other things we do together (build, discover, grow, worship, play, achieve, etc.) is healthy, humane, and hugely important to the kind of “success” that truly matters in our highly fractured and polarized world. It’s a tagline well positioned for our times.

**In other news:** EMU was ranked by *U.S. News and World Report* and the *Wall Street Journal*. The *Sierra Club* rated us as a “Cool School” recognizing EMU’s strong commitment to environmentalism and sustainability ... We are pleased to confer the Distinguished Service Alumni Award at Homecoming and Family Weekend to Wu Wei MDiv ’06, president of all the Christian churches in China... This year several core programs celebrate anniversaries, including the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding, 25 years; the seminary’s Clinical Pastoral Education program, 20 years; and the Center for Interfaith Engagement, 10 years. Check out [www.emu.edu/news](http://www.emu.edu/news) to learn more about joining the celebrations.

Thank you for your partnership in prayer and support.

**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)

**Connecting to EMU**

- ▶ **Susan Schultz Huxman**,  
*president*
- ▶ **Kirk Shisler**, *vice president for advancement*
- ▶ **Jasmine Hardesty**, *director of development & planned giving*
- ▶ **Braydon Hoover**, *director of development & annual giving*
- ▶ **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.*



### Goshen College begins 125th anniversary year with focus on servant leadership

Goshen College President Rebecca Stoltzfus opened the 2019-20 academic year with an introduction to Goshen College's quasiquintennial, or 125th anniversary, and a message about servant leadership, this year's core value focus. President Stoltzfus encouraged students and faculty to discover the potential that they want to develop to help bring about change in both the world and in themselves, with the hopes that our leadership be grounded in goodness and creative non-violence, no matter the scale.

President Stoltzfus introduced the notion of the "seven generations," an Iroquois idea that each of us alive in this time are being shaped by the seven generations who came before us, and we will affect the seven generations who come after us. Following the convocation, students took part in the annual applause tunnel, a 19-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 everyone participated in a student-led cheer and snacks.

### Conference connections

This academic year we have 37 students enrolled from 11 Central District Conference congregations. Those churches generously pledged \$94,137 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. Christopher Harnish from First Mennonite Church of Bluffton, Lucas Bontrager from Silverwood Mennonite Church (Goshen) and Simon Graber Miller from Assembly Mennonite Church (Goshen) studied and served for a semester in Ecuador. Pamela Ortiz Ramirez from Eighth Street Mennonite Church (Goshen) and Clara Unzicker from Mennonite Church of Normal spent the semester in Peru.

### 2019-20 Campus ministries theme

This year's Goshen College core value is Servant Leadership from which we get our theme for the year: Serving God, Serving All.

Given our school motto, "Culture for service," students seek to live out this value on a daily basis. Whether this is through

volunteering on campus, serving through SST, or participating in community justice, we know that in serving all, we connect to and also serve God.

This causes us to reflect on our own spiritual journey of both serving and being served. Students are ready to respond and act, be that in campus leadership positions, their church communities, or in their dorm on campus. Students are well acquainted with the idea of "pitching in" and helping others when need be. A sense of community, connectedness, and holistic transcendence happens when we serve and act as God's hands and feet on this earth.

But what does it mean to be served? I think this is a more difficult question for us to answer as we live out our spirituality. It's not as easy to ask for help and allow others to be of service to you. We place value in our pride and independence, ready to tout "interdependence" when it comes to other people. When it comes to ourselves, we're not nearly as magnanimous.

There's a shift in students when they realize that in their serving, they will also one day be the ones served. This usually comes with a lot of apologizing, minimizing, and avoidance. But as we all seek to find our way in the world, we come to realize that Christian community is at the heart of service. Some days, we will serve others, other days, we will be the ones in need of service. Realizing this balance can be humbling and serves as a growth experience for many students.

Part of our development as adults and as Christians is pulling ourselves out of the trap of self-centeredness and sufficiency and into the community of helpful believers. This also means finding your "niche" of service; the intersection of the world's needs and your unique passions, gifts, and talents. It is an honor to help students walk the way of faith while bearing these things in mind. It is my hope that this year we endeavor to serve God, and by serving God, serve all.

-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).

### **Goshen college empieza el año con su aniversario 125, con un enfoque en liderazgo de servicio.**

La Presidenta de Goshen College, Rebecca Stoltzfus, abrió el año académico 2019-20, con una introducción al cuasiquicentenario de Goshen College, o el 125 aniversario, y un mensaje acerca de el liderazgo de servicio, el enfoque de valor central de este año. La Presidenta Stoltzfus animo a los estudiantes y al profesorado a descubrir el potencial que quieren desarrollar, para poder traer un cambio en el mundo y en sí mismos, con la esperanza de que el liderazgo se base en la bondad, y en la no violencia creativa, sin importar la magnitud.

La Presidenta Stoltzfus introdujo, la noción de las “siete generaciones,” una idea Iroquesa, de que cada uno de nosotros, que vivos en este momento, somos formados por las siete generaciones que estuvieron antes que nosotros, y que nosotros afectaremos a las siete generaciones, que nos siguen. Después de la convocatoria, los estudiantes participaron, en el túnel anual de los aplausos, una tradición de 19 años con un túnel alentador formado por profesores y personal, los estudiantes de último año, los de tercer año, los de segundo y finalmente los estudiantes de primer año. La procesión condujo a Schrock-Plaza, donde participaron en animaciones, dirigido por un estudiante, y comieron un refrigerio.

### **Conexiones de conferencia**

Este año académico se han inscrito 37 estudiantes de 11 congregaciones de la Conferencia del Distrito Central. Esas iglesias amablemente prometieron \$94,137 dls, en apoyo congregacional, para ayuda estudiantil de este año académico. El programa de Goshen College Church Aid Matching Grant ofrece la igualación de dolar por dolar, de los primeros \$1,000 por estudiante y una igualación de 1:4 después de eso, hasta llegar a una matrícula total.

Estudiantes de la conferencia, están involucrados dentro y fuera de campus en muchas maneras edificantes, pero nosotros específicamente reconocemos a estudiantes que hayan estudiado y servido fuera del país por un semestre mediante el programa de Goshen College Study Service Term (SST). Christopher Harnish de First Mennonite Church de Bluffton, Lucas Bontrager de Silverwood Mennonite Church (Goshen), y Simon Graber Miller de Assembly Mennonite Church (Goshen) estudiaron y sirvieron por un semestre en Ecuador. Pamela Ortiz Ramirez de Eighth Street Mennonite Church (Goshen) y Clara Unzicker de Mennonite Church de Normal pasaron un semestre en Perú.

### **2019-20 Tema del Ministerio del Colegio**

El valor central de Goshen College este año, es el liderazgo de servicio, del cual obtenemos nuestro tema para año: servir a Dios, Servir a todos.

Dado nuestro lema escolar, “Cultura para el servicio”, los estudiantes buscan vivir este valor diariamente. Ya sea a través

del voluntariado en el campus, sirviendo a través de SST or participando en la justicia comunitaria, sabemos que al servir a todos nos conectamos y también servimos a Dios.

Esto nos hace reflexionar sobre nuestro propio viaje espiritual de servir y ser servido. Los estudiantes están listos para responder y actuar, ya sea en posiciones de liderazgo en el campus, en las comunidades de su iglesia o en su dormitorio en el campus. Los estudiantes conocen bien la idea de “participar” y de ayudar a otros cuando sea necesario. Un sentido de comunidad, conexión, y trascendencia holística; ocurre cuando servimos y actuamos como las manos y los pies de Dios, en esta tierra.

Pero qué significa ser servido? Yo creo que esto, es una pregunta más difícil para responder, mientras vivimos nuestra espiritualidad. No es tan fácil pedir ayuda y permitir que otros te sirvan. Ponemos valor en nuestro orgullo e independencia, listos para promocionar la “interdependencia: cuando se trata de otras personas. Cuando se trata de nosotros mismos, no somos tan magnánimos.

Hay un cambio en los estudiantes, cuando se dan cuenta de que en su servicio, ellos también serán los que algun día seran atendidos. Esto generalmente viene con muchas disculpas, minimizaciones y evitaciones. Pero a medida que todos buscamos nuestro camino en el mundo, nos damos cuenta de que la comunidad cristiana, está en el centro del servicio. Algunos días serviremos a otros, otros días, seremos los que necesites servicio. Llegar a darse cuenta de este equilibrio, puede ser humillante y sirve como una experiencia de crecimiento para muchos estudiantes.

Parte de nuestro desarrollo como adultos y como cristianos, es sacarnos de la trampa del egocentrismo y la suficiencia y llevarnos a la comunidad de creyentes serviciales. Esto también significa encontrar su “nicho” de servicio; la intersección de las necesidades del mundo y tus pasiones, dones, y talentos únicos. Es un honor ayudar a los estudiantes a caminar, por el camino de la fe, mientras se tienen en cuenta estas cosas. Espero que este año nos esforcemos por servir a Dios, y al servir a Dios, servir a todos.

-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**  
**ANNUAL ASSEMBLY REPORT**  
Spring 2020

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**2019-20 snapshot** – For the 2019-20 academic year, 386 students represent 32 U.S. states and territories and 25 countries. The college welcomed 192 new students in August, up eight from the previous year, swinging the new student number back in a positive direction. The domestic student population includes 51% from Kansas and 35% from other states and territories. Domestic minority students are 25% of the population. International students comprise 14% of the population. Mennonite students represent 19% of the campus' more than 25 Christian denominations and global faith traditions.

**New in 2019-20**

- A bachelor of science degree in aviation-professional pilot. With the aviation industry facing a world-wide pilot shortage, Hesston College responded by offering more robust pilot training in its 49-year-old program. This year, the program is flying 47 students, including 15 first-year students and four juniors part of the first bachelor's degree class.
- Vision 2025 is the institutional plan that will add four-year degree programs in select in-demand programs that not only provide a strong foundation, but also upper-level curriculum linked to industry partners. Nursing and aviation are current bachelor degree programs, with research and development underway for possibilities in business and engineering.
- Hesston College welcomed its first cohort of students in a new Intensive English Language Program in the fall. The semester-long program allows the college to offer more services and support for English language learners. Other new programs: Honors Degree Program, Quiz Bowl team and transcultural bridge year experiences.

**Center for Anabaptist Leadership and Learning** – Hesston College's Center for Anabaptist Leadership and Learning (CALL) will launch in Fall 2020. CALL is a new ministry program geared towards pastors and other adult learners who desire more training as church leaders. It will be a hybrid of online and in-person learning that seeks to equip leaders for ministry and discipleship in daily life as ambassadors of Jesus Christ. CALL will operate with a variety of educational experiences. The primary experience will be a hybrid online certificate in missional leadership, well-suited for those interested in church leadership education and for pastors with advanced degrees interested in further missional training. The program also offers Weekend College, a short-term non-credit educational opportunity geared towards congregational or other group learning. Weekend College focuses on specific topics, such as Hesston's famous Biblical Literature course, Five-fold Church Leadership or peacemaking and justice. For more information, go to [hesston.edu/call](http://hesston.edu/call).

**Capital campaign** – During the fall 2019 semester, Hesston College completed construction of three projects part of the \$6.5 million Be Greater capital campaign. Elements included the addition of the nearly 10,000 square foot Bonnie Sowers Nursing Center, a gym renovation of the Yost Center athletic facilities, as well as additions of a building entrance and lobby and fitness center/weight training facility, and a new on-campus Bess Mullet Softball Field. 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 facilities were dedicated during Homecoming, Sept. 27 to 29.

**Peacing It Together** – Hesston College recently partnered with internationally-acclaimed baritone, Tony Brown, on a program called Peacing It Together, that uses music and the spoken word to spread the messages of peace and social justice. Resourced primarily by Brown and Hesston College students, the programming uses individual's stories to build increased understanding between diverse people, cultures and faith traditions. Learn more at [hesston.edu/peacing-it-together](http://hesston.edu/peacing-it-together).

**Congregational student aid** – Hesston College offers a match grant for scholarships provided by student churches. During the 2018-19 year, 48 churches contributed \$74,792 in student scholarships to 60 recipients. Hesston College matched a total of \$53,785. The average church aid per student was \$1,247 while the average church-and-college aid per student was \$2,143. **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.

**2019-20 campus theme verse** – The parable of the mustard seed. Mark 4:30-32, NIV

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

**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  
Phyllis Weaver, Development Officer  
Dallas Stutzman, Director of Alumni and Church Relations  
Kathryn Roth, Admissions Representative

# Anabaptist Disabilities Network

Resources that nurture inclusive faith communities

**Report to Central District Mennonite Conference - 2020**



ADN supports Anabaptist congregations, families, and persons touched by disabilities to nurture inclusive communities.

*So that*

Faith communities are transformed when individuals with disabilities and their God-given gifts  
Enjoy full inclusion  
In the body of Christ.

Barrier-Free Grants help congregations facilitate barrier-free community life, mutual awareness, caring support, and accessibility education.

Applications available at [AnabaptistDisabilitiesNetwork.org](https://AnabaptistDisabilitiesNetwork.org)

## In 2019

- ADN launched the Barrier-Free Grant program with four congregations receiving grants.
- Connections Newsletters published: Hidden Disabilities – Spring 2019, Blessings of Disability – September 2019, Trauma and Disability – November 2019
- Monthly worship bulletin inserts on disability awareness
- Provided accessibility services and suicide prevention workshops at MennoCon 2019.
- Completed expanded staffing plan with three part-time staff in place: Eldon Stoltzfus, executive director; Jeanne Davies, program director; and Emily Hunsberger, office administrator.

## In 2020

ADN will make systematic contacts with individuals, pastors, and congregational leaders to:

- Share and gather stories about removing barriers to belonging in faith communities.
- Provide resources: grants, speakers, books, web-based articles and accessibility surveys.
- Offer consulting and workshops by staff and field associates to build communities of belonging for all.
- Build relationships and connections that will facilitate congregational action, future giving, and communication with ADN.

For assistance with barriers to inclusion in your congregation, please contact us.

[adnet@adnetonline.org](mailto:adnet@adnetonline.org)

574-343-1262



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

## 2020 Report to Central District Conference

Since 1920, Mennonite Central Committee has worked with the church, partner organizations and supporters to share God's love and compassion by responding to basic human needs and working for peace and justice.

### Our connections

- 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.
- Groups from Faith Mennonite (Goshen) and Oak Grove Mennonite (Smithville) volunteered with MCC's Sharing With Appalachian People (SWAP) program in Kentucky and West Virginia working to make homes safe, warm and dry.
- Thank you to the individuals and churches that took part in the Great Winter Warm-up events in January, where volunteers across two continents completed more than 9,400 comforters for MCC.
- MCC speakers shared at Florence Church of the Brethren-Mennonite (Constantine), Maplewood Mennonite (Fort Wayne), Emmaus Road Mennonite (Berne) and Faith Mennonite (Goshen).
- First Mennonite (Wadsworth) took part in the Loss of Turtle Island, a participatory learning experience that depicts the historic relationship between European settlers - including Mennonites - and the Indigenous nations, the original inhabitants, of the land we now call the United States of America.
- Families at Faith Mennonite (Goshen) and Assembly Mennonite (Goshen) hosted International Volunteer Exchange Program (IVEP) participants in 2019. Greg Suderman, from Hively Avenue Mennonite (Elkhart), helps with driving, overnight hosting and meeting with local IVEPers often.
- Individuals from CDC congregations play integral roles in helping with meat canning, volunteering in thrift shops and assembling material resources kits and blankets.
- The MCC Great Lakes Board visited Columbus Mennonite Church during their meeting in February 2020. They met the Piecemakers (comforter knotting) group and learned more about the congregation providing sanctuary for Edith Espinal.
- 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's centennial

- MCC started by helping families affected by war and famine in southern Russia (present-day Ukraine) 100 years ago. We now work in more than 50 countries and here at home. We are grateful to our supporters like you who continue to give generously of your time, talents, prayers and financial gifts to make this work possible.
- We hope you will join us in giving thanks to God for the chance to be part of God's work in the world for the past 100 years. As we look to the future, we continue to seek to build right relationships with God, one another and creation.
- 100 Stories for 100 Years: Explore images and stories from the breadth of MCC's work – from a graphic story on the 1920 trip that began MCC's ministry to accounts of women peacemakers now. Go to [mcc.org/centennial/100-stories/email](http://mcc.org/centennial/100-stories/email) to sign up for monthly emails highlighting stories from the project.

### 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 for the past 100 years and into the future,

- Eric Kurtz, Executive Director for MCC Great Lakes



# Mennonite Men

Engaging men to grow, give and serve.

## 2020 Annual Report to Area Conferences

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

Thanks to generous contributions from individuals and congregations, Mennonite Men has granted over 2 million dollars through its JoinHands program to assist new congregations in acquiring their first church building.

In 2019 we extended grants to three Mennonite churches.

\$30,000 to Eden Life International Church in Kansas City, Missouri. This congregation in South Central Mennonite Conference serves four language communities: Amharic (Ethiopia), Anouk (Sudan, Ethiopia), English (second generation immigrants), and Swahili/French (Congo).



\$40,000 to Unity Church of God in Homestead, Florida (pictured to the left). This Haitian Mennonite congregation in Southeast

Conference is active serving their community.

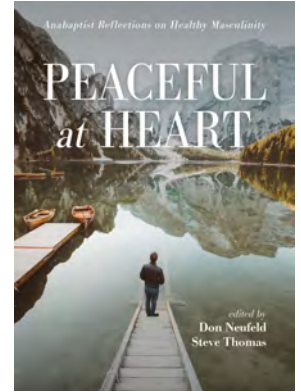
\$40,000 to Centro de Alabanza in Philadelphia, PA (below). This Mennonite congregation in Franconia Conference has a rich diversity of members from Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Puerto Rico, the United States and Venezuela. The church is active with Instituto Bíblico Anabautista (Anabaptist Biblical Institute) and engaged in several ministries in their neighborhood.



These racial-ethnic congregations represent a significant growth edge in our Mennonite church. We are grateful to share our resources with these churches and receive their witness of dynamic engagement in mission.

### JoinMen: Resources and Retreats for Men

What does Anabaptism have to teach us about healthy masculinity? Our new book, *Peaceful at Heart: Anabaptist Reflections on Healthy Masculinity*, seeks to answer this question. Working with the Institute of Mennonite Studies, this project of Mennonite Men is by and for men, promoting an Anabaptist Christian perspective on masculinity.



Mennonite Men had the opportunity to lead retreats with



men in Shirati, Tanzania (pictured to the left) and Cradock, South Africa (below).

These were rich interchanges, addressing traditional expressions of masculinity and their impacts and what it means to be men following Jesus and serving God’s peace.



### Join Us: Individual and Congregational Support

Mennonite Men invites contributions to support our projects and grants for church buildings. 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

# **2019 Mennonite Women USA Report**

Cyneatha Millsaps, MW USA Executive Director

December 2, 2019

OUR MISSION: Mennonite Women USA is a sisterhood of Anabaptist women following Jesus.

OUR VISION: Engaging the prophetic voices of all women as we honor our stories, share grace, practice justice and embrace healing.

## **Executive Summary**

Mennonite Women USA (MW USA) is amidst transformation. We are living into our new vision at a time in church history where the denomination is experiencing major changes. MW USA is prime to lead and empower women throughout the church to assist the broader church in carving a new path.

### **I. Cooperation with Churches and Agencies**

1. MW USA has visited 20 Mennonite churches as a guest and speaker.
2. MW USA met with female church leaders across the United States and internationally to discuss our work.
3. MW USA sponsored several gatherings encouraging women in the church to connect across traditional divides through our Choosing Sisterhood initiative. Women in Conversation has provided a platform for women to address issues facing our families and communities. These gatherings have been well attended.
4. MW USA has prioritized listening to young women in the church. We have visited three Mennonite Colleges with the sole purpose of listening to the needs of our younger sisters.
5. MW USA also met with international students at Hesston College, listening to the needs of women of color on campus. Together we brainstormed ways in which women throughout MW USA might be of service.
6. MW USA continues to provide over 20 scholarships annually to international students through our International Women's Fund. These scholarships assist women studying in the field of theology, Anabaptist and church history, ministry and pastoral care and counseling.
7. MW USA attended the Everence Development Conference obtaining useful material to support our work.
8. MW USA is currently working with Rhoda Blough, Everence stewardship consultant, to provide financial webinars for MW USA beginning January 2020.
9. MW USA attends the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) gathering where conference and constituency groups reported on their connection with MC USA.

### **II. Next Steps**

1. Website. Our primary means of communication with constituents is through our website. Watch for our new interactive website that allows engagement in a timely manner and will enliven our communication and connection with the broader church.
2. Social Media. The focus will be on two social media platforms: Facebook and Instagram.
3. Fundraisers. We are working on fundraisers for MW USA in 2020:
  - a. Annual Golf outing, September 2020
  - b. 5k and 10k walk/runs at one or more women's retreats, 2020

### **III. Conclusion**

I am encouraged by the many connections we are making with women and agencies within the Mennonite church. In addition to our faithful constituents, Mennonite Women USA is supported by pastors and leaders of the church. As we continue to live into our vision, these connections and others will become stronger. This is good for the church, but even more so for women and girls throughout the church.

2020

REPORT BOOK  
of the

**Central District Conference**  
of  
Mennonite Church USA

*Spirit, bless our souls with yearning!*



*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

1015 Division Street Goshen, IN 46528-2000

E-mail: [cdcoffice@hoosierlink.net](mailto:cdcoffice@hoosierlink.net)

Telephone: (574)534-1485 FAX: (574)534-8654

(800)662-2264 [www.centraldistrict.mennonite.net](http://www.centraldistrict.mennonite.net)

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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

### 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.

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



### 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.

## 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**

<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

## Mennonite Church USA<sup>1</sup>

### Rationale and Objectives

There has been a growing recognition of the value of transitional pastor ministry in congregations throughout Mennonite 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 Mennonite congregations;
2. Addressing employment issues peculiar to transitional pastors;
3. Working relationships between transitional pastors and conferences, among conferences, and between conferences and Mennonite 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, Mennonite 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 Mennonite 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.  
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## 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.  
333

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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*



2020

REPORT BOOK  
of the

**Central District Conference**  
of  
Mennonite Church USA

*Spirit, bless our souls with yearning!*



*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 next 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.

*Affirmed by delegates June 22, 2012*



## 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