

Webinar highlights a conference priority

A growing friendship with SEMILLA

For the last two years, leaders of Central District Conference and SEMILLA, the Latin American Anabaptist Seminary in Guatemala City, Guatemala, have been building a relationship, exploring how we can be helpful to each other. In January 2020, eight members of the conference participated in a learning tour to SEMILLA and several shared reflections in the March issue of *Reporter*. Because the CDC Annual Meeting was conducted online, an in-person seminar to report on the growing friendship could not happen, so a late August webinar gave more people the opportunity to learn about this exploration. To view this webinar, visit mcusacdc.org/annual-meeting-2020/talking-together/

As the webinar began, Willi Hugo Pérez, president of SEMILLA, reported on the many avenues of education available from the Latin American seminary. It was founded in 1984, he noted, to “provide biblical, theological and sociocultural education for Anabaptist Mennonite churches and organizations in Latin America and all of America.”

SEMILLA's mission is to “prepare men and women to follow Jesus Christ faithfully and, in this way, to live out the kingdom of God with justice and peace today,” being sensitive and responsive to the present context, Pérez emphasized.

A biblical and theological education program trains pastors and leaders, many of whom are already involved in ministry. Serving 750 churches and faith communities in Latin America, this program offers three levels:

- a certificate in Bible and pastoral studies;
- a bachelor's degree in Bible and theology;

- licenciatura in Bible, theology and practical ministry for people pursuing advanced study.

The goal is “to prepare men and women to demonstrate through their lives, words, actions and signs the gospel of the kingdom of God amid the reality, needs and challenges of their context,” Pérez said. Several forms of teaching and learning are involved: seminars, distance learning, online education and tutorials.

The peace and justice school supports the ministry and work of peace churches and organizations, offering education and training in nonviolence, peace, reconciliation, social and restorative justice, trauma healing, conflict transformation and creation care. Bluffton (Ohio) University works with this program in offering a certificate in justice and peace. Currently 40 students are involved.

CASAS, a study and service program, is designed for people who want to learn Spanish and to develop relationships with brothers and sisters in Central America. In addition to Spanish classes, participants have opportunities to live with local families and participate in service ventures in the nearby communities. CASAS hosts more than 250 people annually.

The guesthouse, Casa Emaús, hosts around 7,000 people each year. These are visitors to Guatemala, students who come to study at SEMILLA and missionaries and friends who come to Latin America. The income from the guesthouse helps to support SEMILLA's educational programs.

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In addition, SEMILLA has a **publishing house** that provides Spanish-language ministry and theological resources, and SEMILLA works with other organizations to support an **Anabaptist biblical library**.

The pandemic has had a mixed impact on SEMILLA. Income from CASAS and the guesthouse has declined, so cuts have been necessary. Several pastors and church leaders have died as a result of the virus, and SEMILLA staff has worked to support their families and congregations. At the same time, more students are participating in online classes, and SEMILLA is working to offer more online courses. Pérez said, “For the future, SEMILLA will have to work to reinvent itself and continue its mission according to the new reality.”

Learning tour reports

During the webinar, several participants in the January learning tour shared what was meaningful to them. Find several of these same reflections in the March issue of *Reporter*.

David Moser, whose reflections were not available for that issue, shared in the webinar. He began by noting that the beautiful garden on the campus reminded him of how closely connected we are. “Every morning I was delighted to hear a Nashville warbler’s sweet song,” Moser said. “Every spring this little warbler leaves its winter home in SEMILLA and makes its long journey to its summer home in

northern Michigan or Canada.”

Moser said, “It’s easy to let birds pass through unnoticed. It’s easy to let chords of history tying Guatemala and North America go unnoticed.” He then recounted instances in which the U.S. government’s actions were detrimental to the country and people of Guatemala. We can ignore this, Moser noted, but the people of Guatemala “must live with the past and rise above it every day.”


Through the hospitality of the Guatemalan people who hosted the learning tour participants, “we learned something of the song in their hearts. I see hope in SEMILLA and CDC participating with one another, learning songs of hope for healing and peace that can be sung in both places.”

How we can be involved with SEMILLA

The webinar concluded with a list of ways we can be involved at SEMILLA, both supporting its programs and benefiting from them ourselves:

- Give to SEMILLA through their website: semillagt.org
- Follow SEMILLA on Facebook
- Participate in a learning tour. Check Facebook for opportunities
- Encourage someone to take Spanish classes online or spend a gap year at SEMILLA
- Take Spanish online with SEMILLA 







SEMILLA Numbers and Interesting Facts

- ❑ *Over 760 students are enrolled in the theological programs*

Bible Institute	460 (61%)
Bachelor and Licenciatura	290 (39%)
- ❑ *15 study centers offer Bachelor and Licenciatura*
- ❑ *16 Bible Institutes offers basic formation (Certificate)*
- ❑ *There centers are located in various countries (Mexico, Belize, Central America, Ecuador).*





Screen capture from the webinar

Willi Hugo Pérez, president of SEMILLA, (upper right corner) outlined its programs in the August 26 webinar.

2020 graduates from Central District Conference congregations

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary graduates

Three members of Central District Conference congregations participated in the commencement and commissioning service of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., on August 22.

Eric Frey Martin of Goshen, Ind., graduated in May with a Master of Divinity with a major in Theological Studies: Peace Studies. Frey Martin received this year's Award for Excellence in Missional Leadership from the seminary's Church and Ministry Department. He plans to continue to serve as a Recruiter and Church Relations Representative for Mennonite Mission Network; he began working there in February. He attends Silverwood Mennonite Church in Goshen. He is married to Kelly Frey Martin, and his parents are Daryl and Karen Martin of Berne, Indiana.



"My time at seminary overlapped with my time as both a pastor and international service worker," Frey Martin reflected. "My classes, professors and fellow students helped to energize my ongoing ministry as I was continually learning and exploring new ways to view my faith."

Febri Cahya Kristiani of Klaten, Central Java, Indonesia, anticipates graduating in December 2020 with a Master of Divinity with a major in Chaplaincy. She received this year's Award for Excellence in Preaching from the seminary's Church and Ministry Department.



This fall, Kristiani will complete her degree by doing a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) internship at Elkhart (Ind.) General Hospital

while taking a CPE class at Bronson Methodist Hospital in Kalamazoo, Mich. She and Nicholas Gehman, her spouse, are exploring opportunities for mission/service assignments abroad following her graduation from seminary.

Kristiani, is the daughter of Suminingsih, also of Klaten. While studying at AMBS, she attended Hively Avenue Mennonite Church in Elkhart.

"AMBS has indeed nurtured my faith, shaped my identity and affirmed my calling through the integration of courses, internships and community life that are rooted in Jesus Christ," she reflected. "Majoring in chaplaincy at AMBS has certainly equipped me to engage with ministry fields inside and outside of the church and helped me develop my competence in intercultural and interfaith ministry contexts. My experiences awaken my passion for life and my calling; bring forth my courage; and challenge me to work towards truth, healing, reconciliation and justice."

Perdian Koeswanto Magelhaens Tumanan of Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia, graduated in August 2020 with a Master of Arts: Theology and Peace Studies. He received a Commendation in Peace Studies from the seminary's History, Theology and Ethics Department.



Tumanan is pursuing Ph.D. studies in Systematic Theology and Ethics at Villanova University in Philadelphia, Pa. Tumanan is a member of Indonesian Christian Church (GKI) in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia. While studying at AMBS, he attended Hively Avenue Mennonite Church. Tumanan is married to Hilda Melani, and they have two children.

"The MA: Theology and Peace Studies is a rigorous multidisciplinary academic program," Tumanan noted. "Here at AMBS, I have learned
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2020 graduates (continued)

how to integrate theology with tools from history, sociology and even political science. The program has equipped me with various lenses to analyze conflict and violence, and to engage in such issues as a disciple of Christ committed to justice and peace. AMBS has been the right place for me to grow spiritually, too.

Even though I don't come from a Mennonite congregation, AMBS has provided me with plenty of opportunities to develop, and space to share my stories and concerns. Last but not least, the professors are not only dedicated scholars; they are also caring pastors and delightful friends."

Bluffton University graduates

Lydia Lugibihl of Pandora, Ohio, earned a bachelor's degree in food and nutrition with business administration and marketing minors from Bluffton University. Lugibihl was the recipient of the Food and Nutrition Distinguished Scholar Award. Lugibihl graduated as a member of the Honors Program

and the 2019-20 Pi Delta Society. She is a member of Grace Mennonite Church.

Andrew Renner of Cairo, Ohio, earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Bluffton University. He is a member of Grace Mennonite Church.

Goshen College graduates


Mia Bei Graber Miller, Goshen, Ind., graduated with an interdisciplinary degree in art, communication film production. She is the daughter of Keith and Ann Graber Miller and attends Assembly Mennonite Church.

Ian Paul Keim, Goshen, graduated with a degree in molecular biology/biochemistry. He is the son of Paul and Julie Keim and attends Assembly Mennonite Church.

Benjamin Meyer Reimer, Goshen, graduated with degrees in theater, music and film production. He is the son of Kathryn and Paul Meyer Reimer and attends Assembly Mennonite Church.

Luke Miller Rush, Goshen, graduated with a degree in physics and minors in Spanish, global economics and mathematics. He is the son of Phil Rush and Karen Miller Rush and attends Eighth Street Mennonite Church.

Seth Dyck Weaver, Madison, Wisc., graduated with a degree in molecular biology/biochemistry. He is the son of Jonathan Dyck and Lisa Weaver and attends Madison Mennonite Church.

Annelise Joy Wiebe, Goshen, graduated with a degree in nursing. She is the daughter of Brian and Brenda Wiebe and attends Eighth Street Mennonite Church. 

Financial report
August 31, 2020

Year-to-date contributed support .	\$36,589
Year-to-date plan	\$38,402
Difference between giving and plan	-\$1,813
Year-to-date expenses	\$30,924
Year-to-date spending plan	\$39,648
Difference between expenses and plan	-\$8,724

After two months of activity in the new financial year, contributed support to CDC from member congregations is close to our spending plan, while year-to-date expenditure is about 25% under budget. We are grateful for continued strong congregational support despite the ongoing challenges we are all facing as a result of the pandemic. This allows us to maintain our staffing levels, which in turn makes possible continued services to CDC congregations.

Report provided by Timothy Lind, conference treasurer

Doug's Mug: Troubled water

by Doug Luginbill, Conference Minister

I started my college career (Bluffton) as a chemistry major. I loved the labs, which allowed us to take the book learning and apply it to real life. One day Professor Bob Suter came to class with a jar of clear liquid. Then he shook it vigorously and it turned pink. Then, as the



troubled water calmed down, it returned to its clear state. He offered extra credit if we could determine the reason for this transformation. I'm not sure if it was lack of curiosity, insufficient brain capacity or simply comfort with my current grade,

but I didn't pursue the offer of extra credit. (Bob, if you're reading this, I'm now sufficiently curious!)

Mennonite Church USA leadership and the Central District board of directors has invited our congregations and each of us individually to a season of curiosity, brain/spirit-expanding capacity and, perhaps, some holy discomfort that leads to transformation.

MC USA, in partnership with Widerstand Consulting (www.widerstandconsulting.org/), is providing each congregation an opportunity to better understand the history, prevalence and transformation of racism in our society, institutions (including churches) and ourselves. This excellent resource is one tool that can help us "Be anti-racist in all areas of church life and program." (MC USA Bylaws, Article II.1.k¹)

This journey towards transformation is an invitation we can accept or reject. It requires curiosity on our part. Where did the idea of "race" come from? What does it mean to be anti-racist? How is racism manifest in our culture, our institutions and ourselves? How do BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of

Color) individuals experience racism in our communities and churches? How am I complicit in racial injustices? When I think of a biblical image for curiosity, I think of "Ask, and it will be given you; search and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you." (Matt. 7:7) Transformation begins with asking, seeking and knocking.

This journey also requires an openness to learning something new, both intellectually and spiritually. Reading books, watching movies, understanding the statistics, and hearing stories all help expand our minds and open our spirits to new perspectives. The Apostle Paul calls us to "equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ." (Eph. 4:12-13) I am grateful to MC USA and our CDC Missional Church Committee for equipping us with resources.

Finally, this journey will likely lead through some holy discomfort. During my first sabbatical in 2001, I completed a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). It was a small cohort of four students and two supervisors; five identified as white, one identified as black. Over the course of the months we were able to build trust and risk vulnerability. I will never forget the courage the black colleague mustered to call out the racism within me that I didn't (or chose not to) see. It was a holy uncomfortable moment ... that helped me see with new eyes. I am far from my hope of being an anti-racist disciple of Christ. I find myself putting my foot in my mouth too often. My point of view is limited and most often from the position of privilege that makes it difficult to see the racial injustices around me. I hold tightly to the things that comfort me. "Be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God." (Romans 12:2)

I am in no position to offer "extra credit" for participating in the anti-racism training offered through Widerstand or other training resource.

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¹ <https://www.mennoniteusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Bylaws-Approved-by-Delegate-Assembly-July-2019-1.pdf>

Doug's Mug: Troubled water (continued)

But I hope your curiosity is piqued. Accept the challenge and study the troubled water. Read more about the training². Ask your pastor or congregational leader how to participate in the Widerstand anti-racism “lab experiment.” I’m anxious to hear what you discover; about yourself, your congregation and our world.

² <https://www.mennoniteusa.org/news/anti-racism-training-accessible/>

Installation



Jan Croyle was installed as pastor of First Mennonite Church, Wadsworth, Ohio, on September 6. She previously was interim pastor for the congregation. With Jan (center) are Doug Luginbill, conference minister (left), and Warren, Jan’s spouse (right).

Licensing



Jeff Boehr (center) was licensed for specific ministry as interim pastor at Lima Mennonite Church on August 16 by Doug Luginbill, conference minister. Present for the service are the pastors of First Mennonite Church in Bluffton, the deacons, Jeff’s wife, Beth, and his father, Dick.

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