



Conference Minister's Report 2021 CDC Virtual Annual Meeting

Spirit, bless our souls with yearning. As I reflect on this theme that has held us over the past two years, I am continually drawn to my yearning for fruitfulness; fruitfulness in our gardens and fruitfulness in our congregations, fruitfulness from the soil and fruitfulness from the Spirit, fruitfulness in our stillness and fruitfulness in our actions.

The pandemic has certainly invited us to tend the gardens of our souls and faith communities in new ways. As we have yearned for connections and searched for meaning in the midst of this global dis-ease, perhaps new or different fruit is being tended and harvested. Some fruit was sweet and satisfying and will be preserved for the future. Other fruit was displeasing, setting our teeth on edge and was tossed on the compost heap. **I pray that we have the wisdom to discern well the fruit which God is inviting us to tend and harvest among us.**

Our CDC Mission Statement envisions certain fruit being tended. Specifically, we say that we *answer God's call* as we:

❖ ***Promote a Christ-like community of hospitality.***

Central District Conference has welcomed 7 new churches in the last four years and will welcome Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship this year. We will also be introduced to Keller Park Church, an historically Missionary Church congregation. There are also conversations in two or three congregations about church planting or adding an additional worship service that might appeal to a different racial-ethnic community. **May our hospitality be genuine, generous, deep, and long-lasting.**

❖ ***Call and nurture wise, dynamic and compassionate Anabaptist leadership.***

In the past year I've had at least 21 serious conversations with individuals who are seeking pastoral leadership positions. Sixteen of these have come to know and value Anabaptism as adults. Some describe themselves as "recovering" from unhealthy faith experiences of their childhood and that an Anabaptist perspective has offered healing. Some describe the "added value" that they experience among Anabaptists and especially appreciate the emphases on non-violence, social justice, and radical hospitality. Some are testing the waters of their ecumenical seminary experience, wondering if the Anabaptist stream is right for them.

Across MC USA we also have more congregations seeking leadership than we have pastors to serve these congregations. The *Journey Program* is perfect for those for whom seminary is not the best next step in faith and leadership development. **May we call, affirm, support, encourage and bless leaders among us to serve in both traditional pastoral roles and new ways of providing congregational leadership.**

❖ ***Support missional partnerships that make God's reign visible and foster ministries of evangelism, peace, healing and hope.***

Many congregations are learning about and practicing racial-justice and racial reconciliation. As we share our failures and successes openly, we learn from one another. We also celebrate that two or more congregations working together provide opportunities for greater fruitfulness. Collaborations include such things as church planting, service projects, youth ministry, community justice, and faith formation .

May our activities be Spirit lead as we live into the beloved community. I am also grateful for the sabbatical granted to me from November 1-January 31 and especially thankful for all who helped cover responsibilities during that time including Emma Hartman, Lois Kaufmann, Ray Person and the rest of the ministerial committee. These times of dormancy, rest and renewal are essential for ongoing fruitfulness in pastoral ministry and leadership. I look forward to continuing to serve the pastors, other credentialed leaders, and congregations of CDC and celebrating the ways in which God continues to move among us.

In Christ's peace,
Doug Luginbill, Conference Minister