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

April 1, 2021

Dear Doug and Central District Conference friends,

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ from Keller Park Church in the heart of the Keller Park Neighborhood in South Bend, Indiana! We write on behalf of our congregation's fifty members, who by unanimous consent have requested that we initiate a discernment process with the CDC about joining your conference family.

Keller Park Church was founded in 1968 by a sibling church in the North Central District of Missionary Church denomination, of which Keller Park Church is currently a member church. The Missionary Church has roots in both the General Conference Mennonite Church and the (Old) Mennonite Church from the late nineteenth century but for several decades has been moving away from its Mennonite heritage toward a more generic American evangelicalism.

At Keller Park Church, we draw inspiration from our Mennonite heritage and Anabaptist theological identity and have thus found it no longer tenable to remain in the Missionary Church in its current form. Our church board therefore commissioned an exploratory committee on denominational alignment in September 2020, which has led a formal discernment process over the past six months. During this time, we studied our Mennonite history and Anabaptist theology, held numerous meetings with our current district leadership, explored various North American Anabaptist denominations, and met multiple times with CDC leadership, including a meeting with Doug and our entire congregation. Finally, at a members' meeting on March 31, the membership unanimously approved the following recommendation of the exploratory committee:

Keller Park Church disaffiliates from the North Central District of the Missionary Church, Inc., in order to begin a process of discerning affiliation with the Central District Conference of the Mennonite Church USA.

While we regret that it has become necessary to disaffiliate from our current denominational home, we view this decision not so much as a church split as it is a much-belated reconciliation with the denominational home from which our forebears split (or were removed) over a century ago.

We have spent much time learning about the CDC and MCUSA and believe that we would fit in well with your family. In particular, we have read and support the CDC constitution, polity statement, and membership criteria.

After talking with Doug and Anna Yoder Schlabach on a number of occasions, we understand that it is quite rare for a church from another denomination to transfer affiliation to the CDC. We are therefore attaching some documents that introduce our congregation and explain in greater detail the discernment process that led to this letter of intent. These include the following:

- (1) The cover pages of our membership documents, which include our mission and vision statements and core convictions.
- (2) The recommendation letter from our exploratory committee to our board, which includes the formal recommendation and further background.
- (3) The letter we have written our current district leadership, which is being sent out simultaneously with this letter.

We welcome your counsel on next steps for our congregation to take in this discernment process with the CDC.

Grace and peace,



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