

2021

REPORT BOOK  
of the

**Central District Conference**  
of  
Mennonite Church USA

*Spirit, bless our souls with yearning!*



June 26,2021



# CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE

Schedule

June 26, 2021

*Spirit, bless our souls with yearning!*

9:00 am    **WORSHIP I** [Pre-recorded video]

Gathering songs

Welcome

Music: Holy Spirit, bless us with a yearning

Introduction of Credence

Scripture

Song

Speaker: Betty Pries

Song of Response

Closing/Announcements

10:00 am    **Communion**

10:10 am    *Delegate Session I*

**Welcome/State of the Conference Address**

**Consent Agenda**

**2020 Annual Meeting Minutes**

**2021-2022 Spending Plan**

**2021-2022 Slate**

**Commissioning Prayer** for incoming and continuing committee members

**Voting to receive Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship (GRMF)**

**Introduction of Keller Park Church**

**Reports**

Missional Church Committee Report

Ministerial Committee Report

Camp Friedenswald Highlights

**Announcements**

11:05 am    **Break** (art videos)

11:15 am    *Delegate Session II*

**Welcome**

**Seminars** (breakout sessions)

*\*Climate Justice is Pacifism* - AJ Delgadillo and Nicole Litwiller from Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions

*\*New and Developing Communities of Faith: Engage the Possibilities!* - Missional Church Committee

*\*Faith Formation* - Shanna Peachy Boshart

*\*Remembering our Congregational History* - Lisa Weaver and J.Denny Weaver  
*\*Congregations and Reparations: Conversation and Action* - Joel Miller and Trevor Bechtel

- 12:10 pm    Closing
- 12:15 pm    **Lunch** tables (You have the option of eating while sharing in breakout rooms)
- 1:15 pm    *Delegate Session III*  
              **Congregational Slide show**
- 1:30 pm    **Credence & Company**
- 4:15 pm    **Announcements/Closing**
- 4:45 pm    ***Mennonite Women***  
              Melissa Florer-Bixler, speaker



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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 second virtual Central District Conference gathering and 65th annual meeting. It is a joy to gather with you.

This year we want to extend a particular welcome to Betty Pries from Credence & Co. It is a gift to be able to have her with us for worship this morning and for resourcing this afternoon around resilient and healthy congregations. We are grateful for her willingness to join us. We also have several great seminar opportunities.



CDC hosted two mid-year gatherings this year instead of regional gatherings, and they were a wonderful way to connect across the conference, to worship together and to share ideas and stories. Both of those gatherings included recordings of congregations singing from the new *Voices Together* hymnal. We will include more of those in our worship at this gathering. What a delight to be able to see and hear our congregations singing, even though we can't sing all together just yet.

Throughout this year we have continued to live into our commitments to keep taking the "next steps" to become more anti-racist. The Board worked through the WiderStand training, and the Leadership Council met with Darin Short who guided our discussion about the group results of the Intercultural Development Inventory that members took. I continue to be encouraged by the good and hard work that is happening in many of your congregations around reparations, truth telling, Doctrine of Discovery, police reform and more.

As a conference we continue to grow and welcome new folks. At this meeting we are delighted to introduce Keller Park Missionary Church, a close-knit, intergenerational church in a diverse neighborhood in South Bend, Indiana. We will hear more about them and their desire to join Central District Conference. We are also pleased to welcome Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship. They were introduced at last year's annual meeting and we will vote to receive them into membership this year.

It has been a joy to serve as president of the board for these two years. While I never got a chance to bang the gavel in person, I am hopeful that my successor James Rissler will have the opportunity to do so.

May you feel 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 2021 delegate report)

<b>***Agora Ministries</b> 614.280.1212 <i>Richard/Rebecca Bartholomew, Pastors</i> 400 W Broad St, Columbus, OH 43215 rich@agoraministries.org	<b>Americus Mennonite Fellowship (30)</b> 229.815.1034 <i>Brian Kilheffer, Contact Person</i> bk.ck1@hotmail.com 409 E Hill St, Americus, GA 31709 https://www.facebook.com/AmericusMennoniteFellowship
<b>Ames Mennonite Church (6)</b> 515.231.1557 <i>Keith Schrag, Contact Person</i> kgschrag@gmail.com meets at Ames Friends Church, 121 S Maple Mail to: 1211 N 3 <sup>rd</sup> St, Ames, IA 50010	<b>*Ann Arbor Mennonite Church (10)</b> 734.996.9198 <i>Chibuzor Ozor, Pastor</i> ozotas@aol.com meets in homes Mail to: 1455 Kelly Green Dr, Ann Arbor, MI 48103
<b>Assembly Mennonite Church (223)</b> 574.534.4190 <i>Karl Shelly, Pastor</i> karlss@assemblymennonite.org <i>Lora C Nafziger, Pastor</i> loracn@assemblymennonite.org <i>Anna Yoder Schlabach, Pastor</i> annays@assemblymennonite.org <i>Scott Coulter, Pastor</i> scotte@assemblymennonite.org 727 New York St, Goshen, IN 46526 office@assemblymennonite.org http://assemblymennonite.org	<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 amf@atlantamennonite.org http://atlantamennonite.org
<b>Berea Mennonite Church (17)</b> 404.244.0289 <i>Kathleen Kennel, Contact Person</i> kathleen_kennel@yahoo.com 1088 Bouldercrest Dr SE, Atlanta, GA 30316 Website: http://www.bereamennonitechurch.org/ Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/BereaMennoniteChurch	<b>Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship (45)</b> 919-357-5496 chmennonite@gmail.com <i>Isaac Villegas, Pastor</i> isaac.villegas@gmail.com 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 http://mennonit.es/chmf/ Twitter: @CHmennonite Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/ChapelHillMennonite/
<b>Chicago Community Mennonite Church (87)</b> 773.343.4251 <i>Alison Caella Brookins, Pastor</i> pastor@ccmcil.org <i>Celeste Groff, Associate Pastor</i> celestegracesg@gmail.com meets at First Church of the Brethren, 425 S Central Park Blvd, Chicago, IL 60624 http://www.ccmcil.org	<b>Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship (45)</b> 513.871.0035 <i>Brian Moll, Pastor</i> brianthomasmoll@gmail.com meets at 4229 Brownway Ave, Cincinnati, OH Mail to: 3046 Minot Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45209 office@cincinnati-mennonite.org http://www.cincinnati-mennonite.org

<b>Columbus Mennonite Church (183)</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	<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
<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	<b>Eighth Street Mennonite Church (196)</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
<b>Emmanuel Mennonite Church (31)</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> gnvmenno@bellsouth.net www.gainesvillemennonites.org	<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
<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	<b>Faith Mennonite Church (80)</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/
<b>First Mennonite Church (200)</b> 419.358.5766 <i>Wanda Stopher, Pastor</i> wanda@fmcbluffton.org <i>Jeff Boehr, Interim Pastor</i> jefeboehr@gmail.com 101 S Jackson St, Bluffton, OH 45817 fmc@fmcbluffton.org http://www.fmcbluffton.org	<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
<b>First Mennonite Church (50)</b> 330.852.2822 <i>Mike Gehman, Pastor</i> mgehman3@gmail.com 113 W Main, PO Box 250, Sugarcreek, OH 44681 pastor@firstmennonitesugarcreek.com	<b>**First Mennonite Church (180)</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
<b>First Mennonite Church (60)</b> 330.334.1863 <i>Jan Croyle, Pastor</i> jancroyle2@gmail.com 405 Trease Rd, Wadsworth, OH 44281 fmcwadsworth@gmail.com www.firstmennonite.com	<b>****Florence Church of the Brethren-Mennonite (65)</b> <i>Devon Miller, Pastor</i> 574.361.9536 17975 Centreville-Constantine Rd, Constantine, MI 49042 florence.brethren.mennonite@gmail.com florencechurch.blogspot.com

<b>Grace Mennonite Church (150)</b> 419.384.3038 <i>Matthew Yoder, Pastor</i> <i>pastor@gracepandora.org</i> 502 W Main St, PO Box 387, Pandora, OH 45877 gmc@bluffton.edu www.gracepandora.org https://www.facebook.com/gracemennonitepandora	<b>Hively Avenue Mennonite Church (100)</b> 574.294.3423 <i>Tim Stair, Co-pastor</i> <i>stair.tim@gmail.com</i> <i>Jake Hess, Co-pastor</i> <i>jhess@hivelymennonite.org</i> 800 E Hively Ave, Elkhart, IN 46517 office@hivelymennonite.org www.hivelymennonite.org
<b>**Joy Fellowship Mennonite Church (15)</b> 309.637.8424 <i>Phil Maclin, Pastor</i> <i>pmaclin@ci.peoria.il.us</i> 2918 W Montana, Peoria, IL 61605	<b>Jubilee Mennonite Church (25)</b> 937-592-8101 <i>Russ Miller, Contact Person</i> <i>russbeth1471@gmail.com</i> 169 County Hwy 32N, Bellefontaine, OH 43311 https://www.jubileemennonite.com/ jubileemenno@gmail.com
<b>Lima Mennonite Church (54)</b> 419.222.2120 <i>Jeff Boehr, Interim Pastor</i> <i>jefeboehr@gmail.com</i> 1318 N Main St, Lima, OH 45801 limamc1318@gmail.com www.facebook.com/limamennonite	<b>Madison Mennonite Church (180)</b> 608.276.7680 <i>Valerie Showalter, Pastor</i> <i>pastor@madison-mennonite.org</i> 1501 Gilbert Rd, PO Box 44522, Madison, WI 53744 mmc@madison-mennonite.org www.madison-mennonite.org
<b>Maplewood Mennonite Church (56)</b> 260.485.8512 <i>Russell Jensen, Pastor</i> <i>uskiwi2016@gmail.com</i> 4129 Maplecrest Rd, Fort Wayne, IN 46815 maplemenno@gmail.com	<b>**Mennonite Church of Normal (298)</b> 309.452.6622 <i>Gary Martin, Transitional Pastor</i> <i>gmartin5@comcast.net</i> 805 S Cottage Ave, Normal, IL 61761 church@normalmennonite.org www.normalmennonite.com
<b>Milwaukee Mennonite Church (42)</b> 414.232.8823 <i>Rachel Stolpe, Contact Person</i> <i>rachelstolpe@gmail.com</i> meets at Martin Luther Lutheran Church, 9235 Bluemound Rd, Milwaukee, WI 53226 www.milwaukeeemennonite.org	<b>*Morning Star Church (25)</b> 765.287.0021 <i>Gladys Maina, Pastor</i> <i>gladgem2@gmail.com</i> <i>Simon Mungai, Pastor</i> <i>maina.mungai@gmail.com</i> 2000 S Hoyt St, Muncie, IN 47302
<b>North Danvers Mennonite Church (151).</b> 309.963.4554 <i>Brian Johnson, Pastor</i> <i>brian.johnson67@gmail.com</i> 5517E 1950 North Rd, Danvers, IL 61732 northdanversch@gmail.com www.northdanverschurch.com	<b>***Oak Grove Mennonite Church (294)</b> 330.669.2697 <i>Doug Zehr, Pastor</i> <i>pastor@oakgrovemc.org</i> <i>Miriam Zehr, Assoc Pastor</i> <i>miriamzehr@oakgrovemc.org</i> 7843 Smucker Rd, Smithville, OH 44677 office@oakgrovemc.org <i>www.oakgrovemc.org</i>
<b>Open Table Mennonite Fellowship (25)</b> 574.534.1537 <i>Sally Weaver Glick, Pastor/doula</i> <i>swglick@gmail.com</i> meets at 413 S 7 <sup>th</sup> St, Goshen, IN 46526 http://www.opentablemennonite.org/	<b>Paoli Mennonite Fellowship (40)</b> 812.723.2414 <i>Paul Brubaker, Pastor</i> <i>paul.brubaker.lm@gmail.com</i> 2589 N County Road 100 W, Paoli, IN 47454 mennos.paoli@gmail.com
<b>Raleigh Mennonite Church (60)</b> 919. 833.1182 <i>Melissa Florer-Bixler, Pastor</i> <i>melissa@raleighmennonite.org</i> <i>Rachel Taylor, Intergenerational Pastor</i> <i>taylor.rachel.e@gmail.com</i> 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/	<b>****Shalom Community Church (72)</b> 734.761.7366 <i>Trevor Bechtel, Co-pastor</i> <i>trevor.bechtelt@gmail.com</i> meets at 1001 Green Road, Ann Arbor Mail to: PO Box 8080, Ann Arbor, MI 48105 pastors@shalomcc.org www.shalomcc.org

<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 (160)</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 www.silverwoodmc.org</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-1591825197704822/</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://spmfmennolink.org/</p>
<p><b>Trenton Mennonite Church (68)</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>	



## ***2020-2021 CDC LEADERSHIP***

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

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

Anna Yoder Schlabach    Assembly Mennonite Church

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

James Rissler    Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship

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

Jamie Pitts    Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

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

Tim Lind    Florence Church of the Brethren-Mennonite

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

Rachel Stolpe    Milwaukee Mennonite Church

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

Phil Martens    First Mennonite Urbana

#### **Member-at-large (2023)**

Mary Etta King    Covenant Mennonite Fellowship

### ***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 (2023)**    First Mennonite Church Bluffton

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

**Carrie Phillips**    phillipsc@bluffton.edu

Musselman Library, 1 University Dr, Bluffton, OH 45817    419.358.4226

### ***Resolutions Committee***

**Sueann VonGunten (2021)**

Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

**George Lehman (2022)**

First Mennonite Church Bluffton

### ***Gifts Discernment Committee***

**Ruth Guengerich (2021)**

Silverwood Mennonite Church

**Brenda North Martin (2021)**

Raleigh Mennonite Church

**Peter Eash-Scott (2022)**

Milwaukee Mennonite Church

**Sally Weaver Glick (2022)**

Open Table Mennonite Fellowship

**Jon Hilty (2023)**

Grace Mennonite Church

**Joel Miller (2023)**

Columbus Mennonite Church

### ***Stewardship Committee***

**Sharon Rensberger (2021)**

Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship

**Tim Lind (2022)**

Florence Church of the Brethren-Mennonite

### ***Ministerial Committee***

**Robin Walton (2021)**    Columbus Mennonite Church

**Michael Crosby (2021)**    First Mennonite Urbana

**Ray Person (2022)**    First Mennonite Bluffton

**Kay Bontrager-Singer (2022)**

Faith Mennonite Church

**Brian Bolton (2023)**

Shalom Mennonite Congregation

**Gayle Gerber Koontz (2023)**

Assembly Mennonite Church

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

**Valerie Showalter (2021)**

Madison Mennonite Congregation

**Matthew Yoder (2021)**    Grace Mennonite Church

**Mark Rupp (2022)**    Columbus Mennonite Church

**Kiva Nice-Webb (2022)**

Chicago Community Mennonite Church

**Xaris Martinex (2022)**

Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship

**Karla Minter(2023)**

Open Table Mennonite Fellowship

**Tim Stair (2023)**    Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

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

**Rick Buterbaugh (2021)**

Evanston Mennonite Church

**Todd Kirton (2021)**    Eighth Street Mennonite Church

**Anita Rediger (2021)**

Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship

**Jerry Nussbaum (2022)**

Columbus Mennonite Church

**Teresa Dutchersmith (2022)**

Faith Mennonite Church

**Alita Yoder Funk (2022)**

Silverwood Mennonite Church

**Peter Suter (2023)**    First Mennonite Church Bluffton

**Matt Troyer (2023)**    Silverwood Mennonite Church

**Deanna Risser (2023)**    Assembly Mennonite Church

## ***AUXILIARY GROUPS***

### ***Mennonite Men***

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

### ***Mennonite Women***

**Janeen Bertsche Johnson (2021)**, President  
Eighth Street Mennonite Church  
**Greta Holt (2021)**, Vice-president  
Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship  
**TBD**, Treasurer

## ***CONFERENCE RELATED MINISTRIES***

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

**Heather Bachman Reichenbach (2021)**  
Eighth Street Mennonite Church  
**Jane Roeschley (2022)** Mennonite Church of Normal  
**Tim Stried (2023)** Columbus Mennonite Church  
**Annette Heslep (2024)**  
First Mennonite Church Bluffton

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

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

**Sueann VonGunten**  
Hively Avenue Mennonite Church  
**Sara Reschly**  
Chicago Community Mennonite Church  
**Libby Hostetler** Lima Mennonite Church  
**Richard Rutschman** Evanston Mennonite Church

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

**Peter Martin (2021)**  
Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship

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

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

**Janeen Bertsche Johnson**, Campus Pastor  
Eighth Street Mennonite Church  
**Rachel Miller Jacobs**  
Asst Professor of Congregational Formation  
Faith Mennonite Church

## ***CDC STAFF***

### ***Conference Minister***

**Doug Luginbill** First Mennonite Church Bluffton

### ***Administrator***

**Emma Hartman** Faith Mennonite Church

### ***Editor, Reporter and focus***

**Mary E Klassen** Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

### ***Bookkeeper***

**Beth Yoder**

2021

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 27, 2020 (via Zoom)

***Spirit, bless our souls with yearning!***

Worship service was shared as a [pre-recorded video](#)

### ***Delegate Session I***

#### ***Welcome***

Anna Yoder Schlabach (Assembly), president of the CDC board, welcomed delegates to the 64<sup>th</sup> delegate session with the sounding of the gavel. She thanked those who participated in the pre-recorded worship service:

- Kay Bontrager-Singer (Faith), Anita Lehman (First Bluffton), Rachel Horst Lehman (First Urbana), and Eugene Stutzman (Covenant), who created pieces focused on the theme,
- Glen Guyton, MC USA executive director, speaker,
- and to all who shared music videos.

Anna thanked Jewel Gingerich Longknecker, who served as the Zoom host for the meeting.

Anna welcomed guest Heidi Regier Krieder, conference minister of Western District.

***State of the Conference Address:*** Anna Yoder Schlabach (Assembly Mennonite Church) shared the following:

*One year ago we gathered in Milwaukee at the beautiful Martin Luther Lutheran Church. We enjoyed meaningful worship, beautiful singing, engaging seminars, and most of all, being together.*

*But because of the pandemic, we have had to adapt and pivot as a conference. Here we are on Zoom. Looking at a screen. And yet, it is good to be with you, even in this less-than-satisfying way. And of course we know that God's spirit is with us, filling the spaces between us, from St. Paul to Sarasota, from Bluffton to Chapel Hill, from Goshen to Grand Rapids, from Atlanta to Champaign-Urbana. God's spirit is always with us, blessing our souls with yearning. These days, that yearning is for connection, for wisdom, for justice, for predictability, for singing together.*

*Each of our congregations has had to adapt and pivot in surprising ways. What does worship look like in a pandemic? How do we screen share on Zoom? How do we provide pastoral care? How shall we respond to the killing of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor? How shall we join our voices with the chorus of voices calling for racial justice, defunding the police, taking a hard look at our past. This is not business as usual. What is the state of our conference? How are we living out Christ's ongoing invitation to make manifest the reign of God?*

*Last August the Board and others met for our annual visioning day and developed our two-year theme, "Spirit, Bless our Souls with Yearning." In the fall, our Leadership Council met at Camp Friedenswald*

*committed to completing the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). We also saw Camp Friedenswald's new solar panels and learned about the innovative ways the camp is reducing waste and developing native habitats.*

*In the fall, Doug traveled many miles to install and ordain pastors. In October, the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) met in Tucson, Arizona, and some of us traveled afterwards on an abbreviated immigration learning tour to better understand immigration and the organizations that are working to support migrants and refugees.*

*Then in December, an MC USA Advisory Group met in Chicago to discuss the MC USA membership guidelines. Their recommendations, published in January, called for:*

*\*Retiring the membership guidelines,*

*\*Including guidelines to be sure LGBTQ people are at the table when policies are made that affect them, representation on the CLC and truth telling about the harm done.*

*It felt like there might have been some real momentum for change, except that the Spring CLC meetings were cancelled, and so that forward momentum regarding the membership guidelines has come to a halt.*

*In January, eight of us from the Central District Conference traveled to Guatemala to visit SEMILLA, the Anabaptist seminary in Guatemala City. We did this as a way to learn about how Anabaptists in Central America live out their faith, to learn about immigration and to build a friendship with SEMILLA. It was a wonderful trip! We learned a lot about Guatemala and met some wonderful people, and were able to build relationships with each other across the conference. We hope that you join us for a webinar on Aug. 26 at 7:30 p.m., where we will share our experiences and you all have a chance to meet Willi Hugo, President of SEMILLA. Willi was a wonderful and gracious host for our time there.*

*In February, we celebrated with Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship as they learned that Rosa Cruz, a woman who had sought sanctuary in their church for almost two years, had the deportation orders against her lifted. Many of us also gathered in February with Raleigh Mennonite Church to hear Dr. Malinda Berry speak about communion, identity and ritual. It was a wonderful gathering.*

*And, of course, March arrived and with it a global pandemic, which altered the course of all our work. Throughout this year, the Spirit has been at work among us. Each of us in our contexts are discerning how to follow the spirit's surprising and unpredictable stirrings. And if you love the Holy Spirit, then let me just take a moment to highlight another webinar opportunity that will be happening in September. Jamie Pitts, associate professor of Anabaptist studies at AMBS, will be leading a webinar on Anabaptism as a Spiritual Tradition. This webinar introduces Anabaptist history as a Spirit-oriented tradition and discusses the difference that might make for our lives and congregations.*

*In spite of the disruption of the pandemic, Central District Conference's finances continue to be strong. After ten months of activity, our balances are similar to—perhaps slightly stronger than—April balances in recent years. In part this is because our expenditures reflect reduced activity and travel expenses, but to date our congregational giving remains on track. As always, we are grateful for continued faithful congregational and individual giving.*

*It has been a challenge for our staff and board of directors to discern a responsible financial plan for the coming year in light of the global health crisis. We realize every member congregation is facing new*

*needs and opportunities for community engagement, and none of us knows what the coming year will bring for our congregations and our conference.*

*The spending plan before the delegates for 2020-2021 is very similar to last year's plan. Staff have also prepared a contingency spending plan reflecting a 20-25% across-the-board reduction. Given ongoing uncertainty, the CDC Board of Directors has taken the following steps:*

- In the event of reduced contributions, the conference will spend down its reserve fund.*
- If the reserve fund is reduced below \$60,000 we will consider adopting the contingency spending plan for 2020/2021. A contingency plan reflecting a 20-25% across the board reduction has already been prepared by staff. The current amount in the reserve fund is \$117,000.*
- We will consider using the Sabbatical Escrow funds for the Conference Minister salary before reducing time.*
- We will consider using Leadership Development and Missional Activity funds to assist congregations if needed. Specific questions about the contingency plan should be directed to Tim Lind, who is our treasurer.)*

### ***Introduction of Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship***

Anna Yoder Schlabach (Assembly Mennonite Church) introduced Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship (GRMF), who have expressed a desire to join Central District Conference. In keeping with the conference bylaws, GRMF is being introduced and we will learn to know them this year, and next year delegates will vote to receive them. Delegates viewed a five minute video created to help them learn about GRMF. [Introduction of GRMF pre-recorded video](#)

***Summary Review of 2019 Annual Meeting Minutes:*** Jamie Pitts (Hively Avenue) summarized the minutes of the 2019 annual meeting. Anna invited delegates to share any corrections to the minutes. Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street) noted that Burton Yost's name was spelled incorrectly in the Ministerial Committee report. The minutes were approved as revised.

***Highlight Actions in 2020 Agenda:*** Jamie Pitts (Hively Avenue) reviewed the agenda and highlighted actions and agenda for the delegate session.

***Treasurer's Report and Presentation of 2020-2021 Spending Plan:*** Tim Lind (Florence Church of the Brethren - Mennonite) shared the following report:

*One of many things that we have to be grateful for in Central District Conference is that for a number of years it has not been necessary to allocate much of our meeting time to the Treasurer's report. There are two reasons for this: first, the consistent strong support from our member congregations, and second, the care exercised by our administrative staff in implementing our annual spending plans. It is a testimony to both member congregations and staff that even this year, in which our congregations have been without in-place Sunday morning services for a full quarter, it is still the case that I can do this report in well under five minutes.*

*The report on income and expenditure for the 2019-2020 year, as of 30 April, shows that there is little to draw attention to here; our contributions are close to the spending plan projections and our expenses are well under budget. We can look forward to another balanced budget for this fiscal year, which ends in just a few days.*

*For 2020-2021 (page 36-37), we have put before you a plan that differs very little from the 2019-2020*

*plan. It proposes increases of about \$3000 in both income and expenses, accounted for primarily by mandated increases in staff salaries and benefits. The Stewardship Committee recommends this plan to you for adoption.*

*As you heard earlier, the staff have prepared a contingency spending plan that would guide us in reducing our program in the event it becomes necessary during the coming year.*

Anna Yoder Schlabach (Assembly Mennonite Church) opened the floor for discussion of the spending plan. As there was no discussion, Anna called for a vote to adopt the 2020-2021 Spending Plan. It was affirmed by a show of hands.

**Presentation of 2020-2021 Slate:** On behalf of the Gifts Discernment Committee, Peter Eash-Scott (Milwaukee Mennonite Church) presented the 2020-2021 Slate of Nominees. Anna Yoder Schlabach opened the floor for discussion. As there was no discussion, Anna called for a vote to adopt the 2020-2021 slate. The slate was affirmed by a show of hands.

**Commissioning Prayer:** Doug Luginbill (First Mennonite Church Bluffton) led the commissioning prayer.

**Missional Church Committee Report:** The Missional Church Committee shared a pre-recorded video available here [Missional Church Committee Report Video](#)

**Webinars:** The following webinars will be presented over the summer in place of the seminars that are usually held during the delegate sessions:

- \*Taking Each Next Step: Anti-racism in Our Homes, Churches, and Conference - July 16 (Missional Church Committee)
- \*Climate and Community, July 30, (Amy Huser)
- \*SEMILLA, Aug 26, (SEMILLA Learning Tour Group)
- \*Anabaptism as Spiritual Practice, Sept 16, (Jamie Pitts)

Anna Yoder Schlabach (Assembly) encouraged delegates to read the reports provided from Mennonite schools, churchwide agencies and ministries that are posted on the CDC website in the 2020 Report Book. She expressed gratitude for the work they are doing.

**Camp Friedenswald Report:** Jenna Liechty Martin (Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship) shared that life at Camp Friedenswald has been hard during this pandemic. They have said goodbye to two staff members, cancelled summer camp, and felt the disappointment and loss over what the 70<sup>th</sup> summer at Camp Friedenswald might have been. They have felt financial pressure from three months of being closed.

In spite of that the camp staff and board are encouraged because:

- \*Eight families from Eighth Street Mennonite Church are currently at the camp for a camp getaway experience. This is the first of eight planned getaway days at camp.
- \*There as been an outpouring of support from churches and individuals from across CDC.



\*Camp Friedenswald is being held by the community that is CDC.

Camp Friedenswald will continue to rely on their bond with the conference during this time when they must find new ways of creatively living into their mission. Jenna shared four ways individuals and congregations can support camp right now:

\*Consider an additional gift to Camp Friedenswald this year, perhaps giving money that would have typically be given as camper scholarships,

\*When it is safe to do so, consider using camp to gather with your small group or family for a camp getaway or consider gifting a camp getaway to someone who needs it,

\*Attend the webinar that will be led by Amy Huser, sustainability director, to learn more about what has been happening at camp and about how you might take some of the camp's learning and apply it in your congregation or community,

\*Continue to hold the camp staff and board in your prayers.

**Ministerial Committee Report:** Ardean Friesen (Silverwood) reported that in the past year the committee has

\*Worked on a new document outlining roles and responsibilities of the conference minister. The purpose of the document is to assist in times of transition, sabbatical, or other unexpected absences.

\*Assisted Doug Luginbill in planning for his sabbatical,

\*Conducted the annual clergy renewal. We appreciated the high percentage of persons who returned the forms.

\*Assisted Doug in his responsibilities as needed as we monitor his work load and make sure he has an outlet for his busy schedule.

Ardean highlighted the Journey Program that is part of the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in collaboration with Central District Conference, Ohio Conference, and Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference. He encouraged delegates to let people know about the Journey Program if they are interested in church leadership.

Ardean remembered former pastors and others connected to CDC who died in this past year:

\*John Richard (J.R.) Burkholder died on December 20, 2019. He was a member of Assembly Mennonite Church. J.R. was an educator and held many roles within the Mennonite Church.

\*Ann Neufeld Rupp died on December 23, 2019. Ann wrote the hymn *Holy Spirit, Come with power*. She was ordained in 1976 and she was first woman ordained in Central District Conference.

\*David Habegger died on March 30, 2020. He was a member at Hively Avenue Mennonite Church and served 42 years as a pastor in various locations, including Hively Avenue.

\*Jacob T (Jake) Friesen died June 6, 2020 at the age of 100.

\*Gilberto Guytan died in 2015. He was the pastor of the former Grace Community Church in Chicago.

\*Eileen June Kehler died July 31, 2019. Eileen worked as office manager for 21 years for Central District Conference.

He led in prayer.

Ardean closed the report by introducing the members of the Ministerial Committee: Robin Walton (Columbus), Brenda Sawatzky Paetkau (Eighth Street), Kay Bontrager-Singer (Faith), Michael Crosby (First Mennonite Urbana), and Ray Person (First Mennonite Bluffton).

**Announcements:** Anna Yoder Schlabach (Assembly Mennonite Church) invited delegates to donate to the conference and to send suggestions of people to serve on conferences committees using the online form on the conference website.

**Communion:** Doug Luginbill (First Mennonite Church Bluffton) led delegates in the following Communion service:

*Creator God, thank you for your constant presence with us. Thank you for each person gathered across our conference. We know love because you loved us first. We flourish in your love, as we express your love among ourselves and with our neighbors. We find safety and peace in the beloved community of faith. Loving God, we give you thanks.*

*Too often we have concealed our sorrow, anger and pain. Too often we have neglected to offer prayers of kindness, and to give words of hope and signs of care. Too often we have spoken or kept silence in ways that hurt ourselves or another. Loving God, forgive us.*

*Prepare us now to receive the wonderful gift of Christ's presence among us. Amen.*

*\*Anticipating that he would be killed for offering life and liberation;*

*\*Anticipating that his crucifixion would be an attempt to silence and discourage his followers, to erase his name from their lips;*

*\*Anticipating that those who had him crucified expected to demonstrate their strength by taking control of his body and the divine energy pulsing in the blood of his veins;*

*\*Anticipating this, on the night when he was betrayed Jesus took a loaf of bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body for you. When you share bread together, remember me."*

*In the same way, he took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; when you drink it together, remember me." In choosing to entrust his body to those who loved him, Jesus denied crucifixion the ability to destroy him fully. In giving the energy of his veins to many, Jesus denied crucifixion the ability to drain that energy from the world. The presence of his body and the energy in his veins lives on in the relationships of those who share bread and cup together. Christ lives in you! The powers of destruction failed to erase Christ's message of love, for as often as you share this bread and cup you proclaim that message until he comes.*

*I invite you to hold your bread and then we will eat together.*

*Doug sang Sing the Journey #84, v. 1*

*Jesus, offered up as bread,  
Jesus, on this table spread,  
In our empty hands we take you,  
Broken as the bread.*

*Let us eat together and be glad.*

*I invite you to hold your cup and then we will drink together.*

*Doug sang Sing the Journey #84, v. 2*

*Jesus, offered up as wine,  
Jesus, from the heavy vine,  
On our thirsting tongues we take you,  
Poured out as the wine.*

*Let us drink together and remember.*

*Doug sang Sing the Journey #84, v. 3*

*Jesus, maker of this feast,  
Jesus, lover of the least,  
At your table, no one hungers;  
Thank you for this feast.*

*Prayer: God of the feast, we give you thanks for the simple, everyday, life-giving elements that remind us of your unending love. We are a broken people made whole in you. Pour us out from your chalice of grace, that by our very lives we might be drink for the thirsty. May this celebration, this commemoration of Jesus, draw us together in spirit, and send us out as disciples of Christ's reconciling mission throughout your broken and beautiful world. Amen.*

## **Break**

### ***Delegate Session II***

Welcome/Song: [Holy Spirit, bless us with a yearning](#)

Doug Luginbill (First Mennonite Church Bluffton) thanked Adam Tice (Faith Mennonite), Katie Graber (Columbus) for the text and music for this song and Dr. Maria Eugenia Cornou for the Spanish translation. He also thanked all the musicians across CDC who their your voices to create the video of the song.

### ***Q&A with Glen Guyton***

Doug Luginbill (First Mennonite Church Bluffton) welcomed Glen Guyton, Executive Director of MC USA. He thanked him for his message to CDC as part of the worship service. Doug expressed appreciation for Glen's leadership of Mennonite Church USA, his continued call to #bringthepeace in our communities, and his courage to address important justice issues of our day including the environment, racial injustice, and economic inequality. Doug thanked Glen for pointing us back to scripture and to Christ as the one who calls us to greater discipleship.

Doug invited Glen to share some of his yearnings for MC USA and how he imagines the church changing given the last three months.

After Glen shared his thoughts, participants were invited to share questions with Glen.

***Breakout Session:*** Delegates were placed in breakout rooms and asked to focus on the following question: As you reflect on the events of the past three months brought about by COVID-19, the murder of George Floyd, and the systemic racism that both of these events have highlighted, what have you learned about yourself and your church that you hope will guide us toward greater faithfulness?

Participants were invited to record their responses and send them to the conference office

***Closing Prayer/Blessing***

Anna Yoder Schlabach (Assembly Mennonite Church) closed the delegate session with the following words from Rosemarie Freeney Harding:

“There is no scarcity. There is no shortage. No lack of love, of compassion, of joy in the world.

There is enough. There is more than enough.

Only fear and greed make us think otherwise.

No one need starve. There is enough land and enough food. No one need die of thirst. There is enough water. No one need live without mercy. There is no end to grace. And we are all instruments of grace. The more we give it, the more we share it, the more we use it, the more God makes. There is no scarcity of love. There is plenty and always more.”

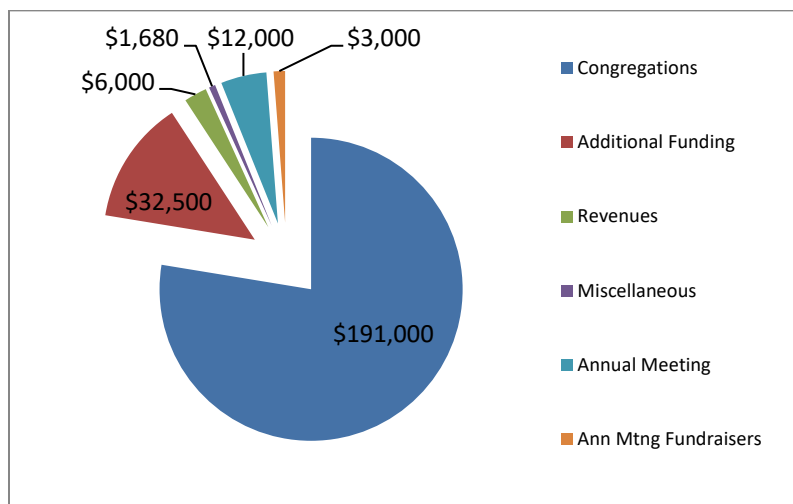
Anna officially closed the 2020 annual meeting with the sounding of the gavel.

Emma Hartman

Recorder

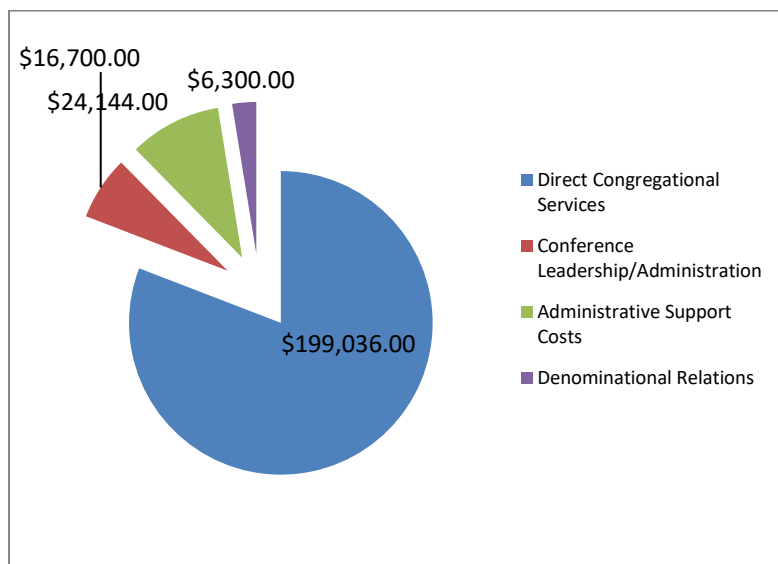
Central District Conference 2021-2022 Spending Plan									2021-2022 Proposed Spending Plan
			SP 2018-2019	Actual 2018-2019	SP 2019-2020	Actual 2019-2020	SP 2020-2021	YTD Actual As of 4/26/2021	
<b>INCOME</b>									
		Congregational giving	\$192,500.00	\$200,170.67	\$192,500.00	\$187,302.38	\$191,000.00	\$169,992.16	\$191,000.00
		Annual Meeting	\$11,000.00	\$12,877.00	\$12,000.00	\$306.68	\$12,000.00	\$100.00	\$12,000.00
		Ann Mtng Offering/Fundraisers	\$3,000.00	\$565.00	\$3,000.00	\$0.00	\$3,000.00		\$3,000.00
		Additional Giving	\$21,500.00	\$24,918.88	\$21,125.00	\$31,663.20	\$24,413.00	\$29,470.46	\$32,500.00
		Bequests		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00			
		Earned/Interest income	\$6,000.00	\$6,310.24	\$6,000.00	\$3,570.00	\$6,000.00	\$4,907.56	\$6,000.00
		Miscellaneous income	\$507.00	\$250.00	\$301.00	\$7,796.17	\$1,474.00	\$125.00	\$1,680.00
		<b>Total</b>	\$234,507.00	\$245,091.79	\$234,926.00	\$230,638.43	\$237,887.00	\$204,595.18	\$246,180.00
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>									
<b>Direct Congregational Services/Networking</b>									
		Missional Church Committee	\$2,000.00	\$534.43	\$2,000.00	\$46.57	\$2,000.00	\$1,964.67	\$2,000.00
		Ministerial Committee	\$5,500.00	\$5,031.01	\$5,500.00	\$2,742.81	\$5,500.00	\$1,399.09	\$7,500.00
		Historian/*Archives	\$3,975.00	\$3,445.00	\$3,975.00	\$3,458.00	\$3,975.00	\$0.00	\$4,200.00
		Publications	\$5,000.00	\$5,168.60	\$5,000.00	\$4,641.54	\$5,000.00	\$3,652.84	\$5,000.00
		*Editor Stipend	\$5,571.00	\$5,571.00	\$5,671.00	\$5,671.00	\$5,807.00	\$4,839.18	\$5,912.00
		Regional Meetings/Congregational Listening	\$1,000.00	\$660.31	\$1,000.00	\$874.71	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00
			\$23,046.00	\$20,410.35	\$23,146.00	\$17,434.63	\$23,282.00	\$11,855.78	\$25,612.00
<b>Denominational Relations</b>									
		Mid-States Conferences	\$250.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$46.79		\$0.00	\$0.00
		*General Assembly Delegate Escrow	\$3,600.00	\$3,600.00	\$3,600.00	\$3,600.00	\$1,800.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,800.00
		Denominational Meetings	\$1,500.00	\$1,934.09	\$1,500.00	\$1,079.81	\$1,500.00	\$0.00	\$1,500.00
		Constituency Leaders Council	\$2,500.00	\$2,154.60	\$3,000.00	\$2,823.86	\$3,000.00	\$0.00	\$3,000.00
			\$7,850.00	\$7,688.69	\$8,100.00	\$7,550.46	\$6,300.00	\$1,500.00	\$6,300.00
<b>Conference Leadership/Administration</b>									
		Board of Directors Meetings	\$2,500.00	\$1,730.56	\$2,000.00	\$1,498.10	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	\$2,000.00
		Gift Discernment Committee	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
		Stewardship Committee	\$100.00	\$26.24	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
		Leadership Council	\$3,000.00	\$2,243.66	\$2,500.00	\$1,928.51	\$2,500.00	\$0.00	\$2,500.00
		Annual Meeting Expense	\$12,000.00	\$10,343.76	\$12,000.00	\$1,919.31	\$12,000.00	\$1,014.07	\$12,000.00
			\$17,700.00	\$14,344.22	\$16,700.00	\$5,345.92	\$16,700.00	\$1,014.07	\$16,700.00
<b>Adminstrative Support Costs</b>									
		*Sabbatical Coverage Escrow							
		*Liability Insurance	\$2,500.00	\$2,329.73	\$2,500.00	\$2,386.95	\$2,500.00	\$1,849.56	\$2,500.00
		*Rent	\$3,000.00	\$3,054.00	\$3,108.00	\$3,108.00	\$3,108.00	\$2,590.00	\$3,108.00
		Supplies	\$2,500.00	\$1,942.93	\$2,500.00	\$2,938.02	\$2,500.00	\$1,702.32	\$2,500.00
		Equipment	\$2,500.00	\$1,440.53	\$2,500.00	\$3,215.12	\$2,500.00	\$1,467.97	\$2,500.00
		Telecommunications	\$2,750.00	\$2,850.18	\$2,750.00	\$2,995.28	\$2,750.00	\$2,901.23	\$3,000.00
		Postage	\$1,000.00	\$906.21	\$1,000.00	\$768.33	\$1,000.00	\$1,101.69	\$1,200.00
		*Bookkeeping Services	\$3,140.00	\$3,140.00	\$3,200.00	\$3,200.00	\$3,277.00	\$2,730.84	\$3,336.00
		Staff Travel	\$6,000.00	\$6,006.73	\$6,000.00	\$4,534.29	\$6,000.00	\$370.12	\$6,000.00
		Misc.		\$657.00	\$0.00	\$309.00		\$11.00	
			\$23,390.00	\$22,327.31	\$23,558.00	\$23,454.99	\$23,635.00	\$14,724.73	\$24,144.00
		<b>Sub-totel Expenses</b>	\$71,986.00	\$64,770.57	\$71,504.00	\$53,786.00	\$69,917.00	\$29,094.58	\$72,756.00
<b>Personnel</b>									
		*Salaries	\$123,013.00	\$124,239.12	\$128,475.58	\$128,475.60	\$132,417.76	\$110,348.20	\$135,760.00
		*Benefits	\$31,234.00	\$29,453.55	\$29,572.42	\$27,960.70	\$30,051.54	\$24,036.86	\$32,162.00
		*Payroll tax/Worker's Comp	\$5,274.00	\$5,259.35	\$5,374.00	\$5,359.57	\$5,501.08	\$4,523.24	\$5,502.00
			\$159,521.00	\$158,952.02	\$163,422.00	\$161,795.87	\$167,970.38	\$138,908.30	\$173,424.00
<b>Cash Reserves</b>			\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
		<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$234,507.00	\$226,722.59	\$234,926.00	\$215,581.87	\$237,887.38	\$168,002.88	\$246,180.00

## 2021-2022 Proposed Spending Plan Income



**Congregations:** Makes up 78% of total spending plan  
**Additional Funding:** Makes up 13% 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

## 2021-2022 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

## 2021-2022 Slate of Nominees



*Position:* **Board of Directors,**  
President-elect  
*Name:* Jan Luginbuhl  
*Congregation:* Chicago Community  
Mennonite Church  
*Occupation:* Retired



*Position:* **Board of Directors,** Member-at-large  
*Name:* \*Rachel Stolpe  
*Congregation:* Milwaukee Mennonite  
Church  
*Occupation:* Special Education Assistant



*Position:* **Board of Directors,** Member-at-large  
*Name:* \*Phil Martens  
*Congregation:* First Mennonite Church Urbana  
*Occupation:* IT Consultant



*Position:* **Ministerial Committee**  
*Name:* \*\* Robin Walton  
*Congregation:* Columbus Mennonite Church  
*Occupation:* Retired



*Position:* **Ministerial Committee**  
*Name:* \* Michael Crosby  
*Congregation:* First Mennonite Church  
Urbana  
*Occupation:* Pastor



*Position:* **Bluffton University Board of  
Trustees**  
*Name:* \*Heather Bachman Reichenbach  
*Congregation:* Eighth Street Mennonite Church



*Position:* **Missional Church Committee**  
*Name:* \*Valerie Showalter  
*Congregation:* Madison Mennonite Church  
*Occupation:* Pastor



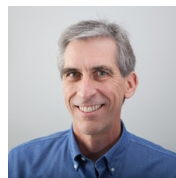
*Position:* **Missional Church Committee**  
*Name:* Matt Pritchard  
*Congregation:* Berea Mennonite Church  
*Occupation:* Missional Pastor



*Position:* **Camp Friedenswald Board**  
*Name:* \*Todd Kirkton  
*Congregation:* Eighth Street  
Mennonite Church  
*Occupation:* Math teacher (Goshen  
High School), Adjunct Professor  
(Goshen College)



*Position:* **Camp Friedenswald Board**  
*Name:* Kendra Yoder  
*Congregation:* Southside Mennonite  
Fellowship  
*Occupation:* Associate Professor of  
Sociology, Goshen College



*Position:* **Camp Friedenswald Board**  
*Name:* Evan Miller  
*Congregation:* Open Table Mennonite  
Fellowship  
*Occupation:* Pathways Retreat Co-Director,  
Spiritual Companion

\* = 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, 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@mcusacdc.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.

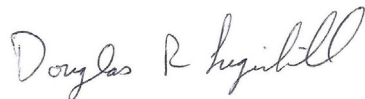
Below are steps that we believe will help foster good process and relationships as we discern together the Spirit's leading.

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,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Douglas R. Luginbill". The script is cursive and fluid.

Doug Luginbill, Conference Minister

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Anna Yoder Schlabach". The script is cursive and fluid.

Anna Yoder Schlabach, CDC President

Draft as of 2/13/21 (still a work in progress)

## **Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship**

*A Jesus-centered community committed to peacemaking and doing life together.*

We seek to be a peace community, sharing the faith perspectives of the Mennonite USA [‘What is A Peace Church?’](#) document.

### **An Inclusive, Justice Seeking, Peacemaking Community:**

We are a community that seeks to be a place where all people experience God’s justice, peace and joy. We denounce white supremacy and seek to root out its ideology from within ourselves and our systems. We are committed to the work of antiracism and pursuing liberation for all people from oppression. We strive to use inclusive language in our gatherings together. We invite everyone, without qualification, to full participation in our community and life together. We welcome and affirm LGBTQ persons for membership, marriage, ministry, and leadership.

### **Life Together**

We embrace the mystery of faith, freeing us from thinking we have arrived or have it all together. The rituals and sacraments we practice together help us engage God, but they are not the be all or end all. They are parts of our community life together that serve as an invitation to life with Jesus and to God’s grace. At their best these practices help us connect with God and each other. At their worst they are used to exclude or harm one another. Together we ask ourselves, “What is the fruit of our life together? Are we becoming more like the God who is love?” We adjust when we are not. We are cautious to not change for the sake of change, but acknowledge that we can and have and will get it wrong.

Life together looks messier than the list of rituals and the living sacraments below. It often looks more like text messages with prayer requests, silly pictures shared to bring joy, and the chaos of kids playing in the backyard. At times it looks like a friend coming over to fix a plumbing problem, a meal dropped off during a tough week, or a needed conversation. Community is not contained, but it grows through shared life and love for one another.

### *Sunday Gatherings & Potluck*

Every Sunday we gather together for a time of singing, reading scripture, reflection, discussion, sharing life, prayer, and a meal together. Everyone brings their gifts, stories, and food to share as they are able to that day.

### *Communion*

When we gather together around communion all are welcome. The bread and wine represent Christ’s body broken for all with no qualifiers. At the Last Supper, Jesus dined with die-hard followers, doubters, and betrayers. He invited all to take and eat. There is no “litmus test” of

dogma or doctrine. There are no requirements. There is no wrong or right way to come to the table, just the questions: are you hungry? Are you thirsty? We understand the communion table to be an invitation to reconciliation not just with the living Christ, but also with each other.

### *Baptism*

Baptism is an outward sign of someone's joyful decision to follow Jesus. This sacrament symbolizes that we are dying to self and living with Jesus by the Spirit. This is not a qualifier for membership or communion. It is the emphatic "yes!" to God's covenant love which births within us a desire to love God and others in return. It is in baptism that we enter the global Church and become connected to every believer past, present, and future.

### *Membership*

Membership to a particular church community is about committing to the collective life of a particular group of people, at a particular time. It is in this type of fellowship that we find ourselves challenged by the God who loves specifically and not theoretically. We are called to work through our disagreements, baggage, failures as well as celebrate our strengths, victories, and reconciliations here and now and in doing so, demonstrate the possibility of God's kingdom coming to earth. Baptism is not required for membership. Rather, anyone wishing to join makes a public commitment to the community.

### *Decision-Making:*

Currently we have a three person lay leadership team that coordinates and organizes our time together, yet everyone is actively engaged- leading worship, kids lessons, and more. We seek the Spirit's guidance in all decisions that we make together. Decisions are brought to the group at community meetings and made by consensus. Members may vote on decisions, non-members can attend community meetings and participate freely in discussion.

### **Sources used for Inspiration and Guidance:**

- Confession of Faith from a Mennonite Perspective, Article 11. Baptism: <http://mennoniteusa.org/confession-of-faith/baptism/>
- Open Table Fellowship's Membership Guidelines and Structure: <https://www.opentablemennonite.org/>
- Milwaukee Mennonite Church Approved Statements and Who We Are  
<https://www.milwaukeeemennonite.org/what-we-do>  
<https://www.milwaukeeemennonite.org/who-we-are>
- Columbus Mennonite Church LGBTQ Inclusiveness  
<http://www.columbusmennonite.org/who-we-are/lgbtq-inclusiveness>
- Jonathan Martin and the Congregation at The Table: <https://www.thetableokc.com/>
- Sarah Bessy: <https://sarahbessey.com/blog/>
- [Vision: Healing and Hope](#)

April 22, 2021

Dear Central District Conference,

On behalf of Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship, we have reviewed the document "Central District Conference Polity: History and Current Understanding" and are writing to affirm our support. We desire to walk in faith together with The Central District Conference and are looking forward to all that God will do through our relationship and connections with the conference.

Grand Rapids Mennonite currently has ten adult members, representing five families with nine children.

Please let us know if you would like to connect further or have any additional questions about Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship.

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alaina Dobkowski".

Alaina Dobkowski  
GRMF Co-Leader

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Kragt".

Susan Kragt  
GRMF Co-Leader



1003 W Bryan St. • South Bend, IN 46616 • 574.233.7901

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,



Carrie Badertscher  
Community Pastor  
KellerParkCarrie@gmail.com



David Cramer  
Teaching Pastor  
david.c.cramer@gmail.com



Joel Boehner  
Board Chair  
joel.boehner@gmail.com



Chad Campbell  
Exploratory Committee Co-chair  
chad.campbello4@gmail.com



Dana Strait  
Exploratory Committee Co-chair  
dana.strait@gmail.com



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### *Mission*

Seeking the peace of our neighborhood by sharing God's love with our neighbors.

### *Vision*

To become a church that follows Jesus, the prince of peace, and embodies God's peaceable kingdom in the Keller Park neighborhood, the city of South Bend, and beyond.

### *Convictions*

We believe that Jesus, the prince of peace, is the [risen Lord](#), [Word of God](#), [Son of God](#), [messiah and suffering servant](#), [new human](#), [savior of the world](#), [sender of the Spirit](#), [liberator of the oppressed](#), [authoritative teacher and healer](#), [victor over sin and death](#), [head of the church](#), and [initiator of the kingdom](#).

We believe that God's peaceable kingdom is the realm of God's [love](#), [joy](#), [peace](#), [patience](#), [kindness](#), [goodness](#), [faithfulness](#), [gentleness](#), [holiness](#), [righteousness](#), [justice](#), [generosity](#), [truth](#), and [freedom](#).\*

### *Story*

[Keller Park Church](#) (KPC) is a close-knit, intergenerational church in a diverse neighborhood in South Bend, Indiana. KPC was founded in 1968 by nearby Redeemer Missionary Church who bought a neighborhood grocery store, Barkley's Supermarket, and transformed it into the Christian Community Center.

Over time, we changed our name to Agape Missionary Church (after the New Testament word for self-sacrificial love) as we transitioned from a community center to a church. But our original vision as a community center to the Keller Park neighborhood was never lost, as is reflected in our current name—Keller Park Church.

Today KPC combines the mission of the church with the heart of a community center. From worship services to Jubilee meals, prayer gatherings to block parties, koinonia (fellowship) groups to a food pantry, KPC ministers to both the spiritual and the material needs of the Keller Park neighborhood and the surrounding South Bend community.

KPC is a member of the Missionary Church, an evangelical denomination with Mennonite roots, Wesleyan-holiness influences, and a legacy of "ministering sisters." We honor these rich traditions through our Anabaptist emphasis on discipleship and peacemaking, our Wesleyan emphasis on the holy love at the heart of God, and our active embrace and empowerment of all people's gifts, including people with disabilities. (See our inclusivity policy in [Appendix A](#).)

*\*See hyperlinks for extended reflections on each of our convictions and how we embody them in our communal life and worship.*



## *Membership*

At KPC, we take a centered-church approach to membership. This means that we regularly proclaim Jesus and God's kingdom as the center of everything we do, and we invite everyone to consider their relationship to that center. Anyone who is committed to being drawn by the Spirit and the community toward the center is welcome to become a member of the church. (For more on this approach to membership, see [Appendix B.](#))

Being a member doesn't mean that you've signed off on a list of doctrines and practices, nor does it mean that you won't ever have days when you are pulled away from the center rather than toward it. What it does mean is that you freely commit to being part of a community that defines itself by who and what is at its center and that you freely commit to being drawn closer to the center as part of that community.

At KPC, membership is open to anyone who commits to following Jesus and embracing God's kingdom as part of our local community of believers, whose commitment is (1) enacted through believer's baptism, (2) memorialized through the regular practice of communion, and (3) upheld through mutual counsel, discernment, admonition, and accountability from within the community.

We ask that anyone considering membership at KPC interact with the following questions to discern their relationship to Jesus, God's kingdom, and the church:

- (1) Where do I currently stand in relation to Jesus?
- (2) Where do I currently stand in relation to the kingdom of God?
- (3) What might it mean for me to be drawn closer to Jesus?
- (4) What might it mean for me to be drawn closer to the kingdom of God?
- (5) How might KPC be a context for being drawn closer to Jesus and the kingdom of God?
- (6) How might I help others at KPC, the Keller Park neighborhood, and beyond move closer to Jesus and the kingdom of God?
- (7) Do I freely commit to a fellowship of people who are being drawn ever closer to Jesus and the kingdom of God in the context of the Keller Park community?
- (8) Have I enacted my commitment to Jesus, the kingdom of God, and the church through baptism (at KPC or another Christian church)?
- (9) Do I regularly memorialize my commitment to Jesus, the kingdom of God, and the church through the practice of communion at KPC?
- (10) Am I willing to uphold my commitment to Jesus, the kingdom of God, and the church by (a) offering and (b) receiving mutual counsel, discernment, admonition, and accountability at KPC regarding our shared commitments?



1003 W Bryan St. • South Bend, IN 46616 • 574.233.7901

February 19, 2021

Dear KPC board members,

On Tuesday, August 18, 2020, the board met with the two of us to discuss the creation of an Exploratory Committee on denominational alignment. We are happy to report that, six months to the day of that meeting—and after consistent work and collective discernment as a committee—the Exploratory Committee came to a unanimous, formal recommendation at our February 18 meeting.

The Exploratory Committee makes the following recommendation to the board and the members of KPC, which we hope the board will convey to the members after follow-up with the committee and discernment as a board. The Exploratory Committee unanimously recommends that:

*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.*

As the board representative on the committee, Chad will be happy to elaborate on the process that led to our recommendation and the reasoning behind it. As *ex officio* members, the pastors are also able to speak to the board on behalf of the committee. Here is just a brief summary of our considerations for the board:

- From the outset, we heard that KPC did not desire to become a nondenominational church. Our dual recommendation to leave our current denomination *in order to* pursue affiliation with another denomination is therefore intended to avoid having a limbo period for our congregation. We want the congregation to know where we're heading as we leave.
- After the February 4 congregational meeting with the North Central District leaders and their response to that meeting shared with the pastors in a separate meeting on February 16, we see no path forward with the Missionary Church.
- From our many conversations with congregants, both formally and informally, we discerned that the congregation widely supports the board's desire to pursue changing denominational affiliation.
- We early on determined that we wanted to stay true to who we are and to find a home that would help us to become more faithful to our mission and vision. We determined that the Anabaptist theological tradition is the most central to our

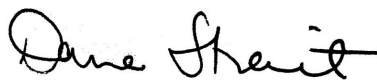
church's identity and mission, and so we limited our research to the dozens of Anabaptist denominations in North America.

- Using criteria we heard from congregants regarding denominational size and resourcing, we identified three major denominational options: the Brethren in Christ, the Church of the Brethren, and the Mennonite Church USA.
- After reviewing statements of faith and practice, we ruled out the Brethren in Christ based on fundamental doctrinal differences and set meetings with regional leadership from the other two whose theology matches KPC's more closely.
- After meeting with the executive minister of the Northern Indiana District of the Church of the Brethren, we determined that they are currently experiencing internal discord and would not be a good fit for KPC at this time.
- After meeting with the conference minister and president of the conference board of the Central District Conference of the Mennonite Church USA, we unanimously agreed it was a natural potential home that could enhance KPC and encourage us in our beliefs, behaviors, and belongings.
- The Central District Conference leaders expressed willingness to meet with the board and with the congregation, either jointly or in quick succession.
- We ask the board to vet this recommendation until it is comfortable conveying it to the membership. We believe time is of the essence, in terms of both disaffiliating from the Missionary Church and conveying our intentions to the Central District Conference. In particular, the Central District Conference would need to receive a letter of intent from the pastors by no later than April 9 in order to begin a year-long discernment process this calendar year.
- We recommend that during this discernment process, the board further explore the financial and practical implications of this potential affiliation.
- We ask that the board communicate to the committee when our work is completed or what our ongoing role in the discernment process should be. We are willing, for example, to assist in negotiations with the North Central District regarding church properties, if the board would find such assistance helpful.

Grace and peace,



Chad Campbell  
[chad.campbell04@gmail.com](mailto:chad.campbell04@gmail.com)  
Ph: 574-596-9951



Dana Strait  
[dana.strait@gmail.com](mailto:dana.strait@gmail.com)  
Ph: 509-863-8537



1003 W Bryan St. • South Bend, IN 46616 • 574.233.7901

Joe Wenger, District Superintendent  
North Central District  
3301 Benham Ave.  
Elkhart, IN 46517

April 1, 2021

Dear Joe and North Central District leadership,

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ from Keller Park Church. We write on behalf of our congregation's members, who at a members' meeting last night unanimously voted to disassociate from the Missionary Church, Inc. This decision followed a six-month formal discernment process led by an exploratory committee on denominational alignment commissioned by our church board.

Our decision to disassociate was made in response to the denomination's recent changes to the Articles of Faith and Practice in ways that our members could no longer affirm in good conscience. It was not made lightly but only after our pastors repeatedly expressed concerns about these changes in personal conversations and written correspondence with denominational leadership and in public comments at district and denominational conferences.

Of particular concern to our members are (1) that ministry roles are determined not by gender but by the gifts of the Spirit, which are distributed irrespective of gender; (2) that Christian ethics (for example, with respect to war or immigration) are determined not by what governing authorities authorize but by the Christian community and Christian conscience; and (3) that God has particular concern for the well-being of the oppressed, including victim-survivors of intimate-partner violence to whom we would counsel divorce to remove themselves from such violence. After consulting with members of the Constitution Committee and district leaders, including a February 4 meeting between the district superintendent and our members, it is our understanding that our biblically informed convictions on these matters put us at odds with the denomination's Constitution. Since the MC Constitution describes the duty of its pastors to include "personal commitment without reservation to each of the Articles of Faith and Practice" and the duty of its churches to "be fully informed of and in agreement with the Missionary Church Articles of Faith and Practice," our members have acknowledged that we are no longer able to simultaneously discharge our duty faithfully to the denomination and our consciences.

We regret that our conscientious decision to disassociate from the denomination entails disassociation from the North Central District, with whom we have had a warm relationship and mutually beneficial ministry partnership for many years. In particular, we recognize and appreciate the ways the district office and district churches supported our church after a destructive flood in 2018, provided grants to support our ministries in the community, and supported our food distribution ministry during the pandemic. Likewise, we value the opportunities we were given to support our sibling NCD churches in their times of need.

Our desire is to disassociate in a way that is honoring to Christ and to our bonds within the body of Christ, which run deeper and hold firmer than any denominational affiliation. We therefore propose making our disassociation effective at or before the spring 2022 NCD conference in order to provide both parties adequate time to properly honor our commitments to one another and work out the logistics of disassociation together with thoughtfulness and care.

We were encouraged by a meeting our pastors had on March 9 with the current and incoming district superintendent, who each affirmed the importance of our church's ministry in the Keller Park Neighborhood and expressed their desire and commitment to see our ministry in the neighborhood continue to thrive regardless of the decision of our members regarding affiliation with the denomination. In light of our shared desire to disassociate in a mutually affirming and amicable way, we make the following commitments:

- (1) Keller Park Church will continue to contribute to the district financially according to our 2021 assessment until disassociation with the denomination is finalized.
- (2) Our pastors will continue to participate in regional, district, and denominational conferences, discharging their duties as pastors and delegates, until disassociation with the denomination is finalized.
- (3) Pastor David and Andrea will continue to sponsor the child of our fellow NCD pastor during the process of disassociation and after it is completed.
- (4) Keller Park Church will pay any city, county, state, or federal fees associated with transfer of deeds from the district to the church as well as any fees associated with legal name change, transfer of pastoral licenses, and the like.
- (5) Keller Park Church will continue to pray for the NCD, its leaders, its churches, and its members and will seek to maintain warm and amicable personal and professional relationships for many years to come.

Please feel free to share this letter with all relevant parties. We welcome your response and your counsel on the most appropriate immediate course of action.

Grace and peace,



Carrie Badertscher  
Community Pastor



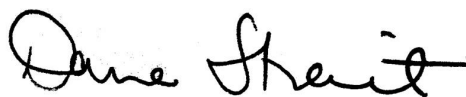
David Cramer  
Teaching Pastor



Joel Boehner  
Board Chair



Chad Campbell  
Exploratory Committee Co-chair



Dana Strait  
Exploratory Committee Co-chair



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

**Doug Luginbill**  
**Conference Minister**  
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Goshen, IN 46528-2000  
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***Knowing  
Christ's love...  
Answering  
God's Call***

April 14, 2021

Keller Park Church  
1003 W. Bryan St.  
South Bend, IN 46616

Dear friends of Keller Park Church,

Greetings to you in the name of Jesus Christ, our risen Lord. Over the past couple of years, Anna Yoder Schlabach (CDC president) and I (CDC conference minister) have enjoyed learning about Keller Park Church and your discernment regarding denominational affiliation, mostly through conversations with Pastors Carrie and David. More recently, we appreciated meeting with your denominational exploration committee (Feb. 18), board of trustees (Mar. 3), and members of the congregation (Mar. 17) through various Zoom meetings. We affirm your careful, transparent, and faithful discernment and keeping us informed along the way.

We received your formal request to join Central District Conference in a letter dated April 1, 2021. At a CDC board of directors meeting on April 9, the board unanimously and enthusiastically affirmed moving forward with your membership request.

As one of the 16 conferences of Mennonite Church USA, and as a conference of 46 congregations, we recognize the importance of being connected with other conferences and congregations for support and accountability. We understand the purpose of being a conference is to provide encouragement, share resources, and build mutually beneficial relationships between congregations.

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

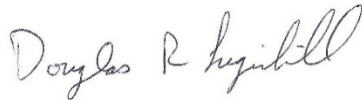
1. All congregations seeking membership with CDC are expected to be familiar with and support the ["Membership Criteria"](#) of the conference. In your letter dated April 1, 2021, you stated, "We have read and support the CDC constitution, polity statement, and membership criteria." Thank you for your support.
2. We invite you to participate in our Annual Meeting on Saturday, June 26 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 Pastors David and Carrie in the coming weeks to talk more about this. Perhaps a prerecorded video of no more than 4 minutes could be used as a way of introducing the congregation to delegates and guests.

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. Our CDC ministerial committee will be in conversation with Pastors Carrie and David regarding credentialing in CDC and Mennonite Church USA.
5. Assuming continued interest by both Keller Park Church and Central District Conference, the delegates at our June 2022 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





2021

REPORT BOOK  
of the

**Central District Conference**  
of  
Mennonite Church USA

*Spirit, bless our souls with yearning!*



*Part II*

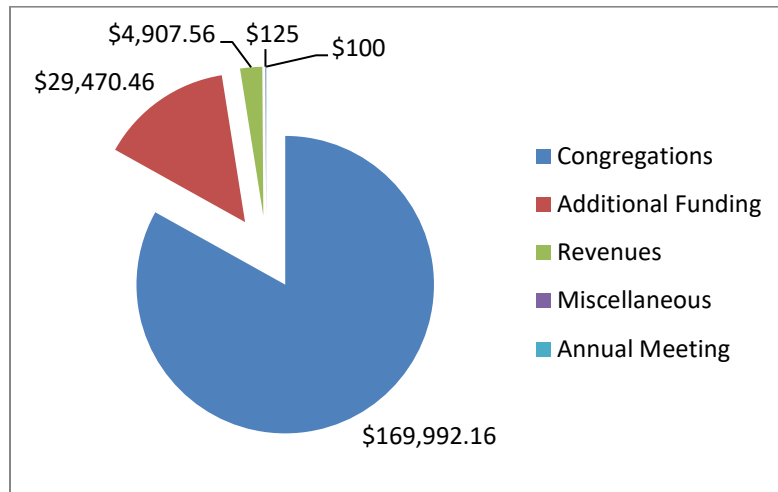
*Conference Financial and Staff Reports*



			CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE		
			Balance Sheet		
			As of April 26, 2021		
		<b>Checking</b>			173,366.96
		<b>Savings</b>			145,235.12
					318,602.08
		<b>Undeposited Funds</b>			0.00
		<b>Prepaid expenses</b>			1,944.98
		<b>Missional Fund</b>			196,347.94
					198,292.92
					516,895.00
					<b>516,895.00</b>
		<b>Accounts Payable</b>			0.00
		<b>Other Agency Transfer</b>			14,078.18
		<b>Other Current Liabilities</b>			1,311.16
		<b>Funds/Escrows</b>			
			<b>General Assembly Escrow</b>		14,149.29
			<b>Cash Reserve Escrow</b>		117,243.39
			<b>Conference Minister's Sabbatical Escrow</b>		13,343.74
			<b>Leadership Development</b>		10,566.41
			<b>Ministerial Committee</b>		0.00
			<b>Ministry Inquiry Program</b>		319.75
			<b>Mennonite Women</b>		2,754.41
			<b>Missional Church Committee</b>		0.00
			<b>Jubilee Fund</b>		8,797.56
			<b>Transitional Pastors Sabbatical</b>		11,114.27
			<b>Reign of God Grant</b>		1,250.00
			<b>Surplus Reserve Fund</b>		3,311.10
			<b>Missional Activities Fund</b>		21,007.87
			<b>Healthy Boundaries</b>		336.49
			<b>Celtic Pilgrimage</b>		34,937.65
		<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>			254,521.27
					254,521.27
		<b>Equity</b>			
				<b>Equity</b>	177,168.79
				<b>Net Income</b>	85,204.94
		<b>Total Equity</b>			262,373.73
					<b>516,895.00</b>

Central District Conference						
Income and Expense Statement						
As of April 26,2021						
		Actual	SP	SP	Actual	SP
		2020-2021	2020-2021	2020-2021	2019-2020	2019-2020
		thru April 26	thru April 26	(12 months)	(12 months)	(12 months)
		(10 months)	(10 months)			
<b>INCOME</b>						
	Congregational Giving	\$169,992.16	\$159,166.68	\$191,000.00	\$187,302.38	\$192,500.00
	Annual Meeting Registration/Offering	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$12,000.00	\$306.68	\$12,000.00
	Annual Meeting Donations: Memorial/C	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,000.00	\$0.00	\$3,000.00
	Additional Funding	\$29,470.46	\$20,344.18	\$24,413.00	\$31,663.20	\$21,125.00
	Bequests	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$0.00	\$0.00
	Earned/Interest income	\$4,907.56	\$1,228.34	\$6,000.00	\$3,570.00	\$6,000.00
	Miscellaneous income	\$125.00	\$5,000.00	\$1,474.00	\$7,796.17	\$301.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$204,595.18</b>	<b>\$185,739.20</b>	<b>\$237,887.00</b>	<b>\$230,638.43</b>	<b>\$234,926.00</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>						
<b>Direct Congregational Services/Networking</b>						
	Missional Church Committee	\$1,964.67	\$1,666.68	\$2,000.00	\$46.57	\$2,000.00
	Ministerial Committee	\$1,399.09	\$4,583.34	\$5,500.00	\$2,742.81	\$5,500.00
	Historian/*Archives	\$0.00	\$3,975.00	\$3,975.00	\$3,458.00	\$3,975.00
	Publications	\$3,652.84	\$4,166.68	\$5,000.00	\$4,641.54	\$5,000.00
	*Editor Stipend	\$4,839.18	\$4,839.18	\$5,807.00	\$5,671.00	\$5,671.00
	Regional Gatherings	\$0.00	\$833.34	\$1,000.00	\$874.71	\$1,000.00
		\$11,855.78	\$20,064.22	\$23,282.00	\$17,434.63	\$23,146.00
<b>Denominational Relations</b>						
	Mid-States	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$46.79	\$0.00
	*General Assembly Delegate Escrow	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,800.00	\$3,600.00	\$3,600.00
	Denominational Meetings	\$0.00	\$1,250.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,079.81	\$1,500.00
	Constituency Leaders Council	\$0.00	\$2,500.00	\$3,000.00	\$2,823.86	\$3,000.00
		\$1,500.00	\$5,250.00	\$6,300.00	\$7,550.46	\$8,100.00
<b>Conference Leadership/Administration</b>						
	Board of Directors Meetings	\$0.00	\$1,666.68	\$2,000.00	\$1,498.10	\$2,000.00
	Gift Discernment Committee	\$0.00	\$83.34	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
	Stewardship Committee	\$0.00	\$83.34	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
	Leadership Council	\$0.00	\$2,083.34	\$2,500.00	\$1,928.51	\$2,500.00
	Annual Meeting Expense	\$1,014.07	\$10,000.00	\$12,000.00	\$1,919.31	\$12,000.00
		\$1,014.07	\$13,916.70	\$16,700.00	\$5,345.92	\$16,700.00
<b>Adminstrative Support Costs</b>						
	*Sabbatical Coverage Escrow					
	*Liability Insurance	\$1,849.56	\$2,083.34	\$2,500.00	\$2,386.95	\$2,500.00
	*Rent	\$2,590.00	\$2,590.00	\$3,108.00	\$3,108.00	\$3,108.00
	Supplies	\$1,702.32	\$2,083.34	\$2,500.00	\$2,938.02	\$2,500.00
	Equipment	\$1,467.97	\$2,083.34	\$2,500.00	\$3,215.12	\$2,500.00
	Telecommunications	\$2,901.23	\$2,291.68	\$2,750.00	\$2,995.28	\$2,750.00
	Postage	\$1,101.69	\$833.34	\$1,000.00	\$768.33	\$1,000.00
	*Bookkeeping Services	\$2,730.84	\$2,730.84	\$3,277.00	\$3,200.00	\$3,200.00
	Staff Travel	\$370.12	\$5,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$4,534.29	\$6,000.00
	Misc.	\$11.00	\$0.00		\$309.00	\$0.00
		\$14,724.73	\$19,695.88	\$23,635.00	\$23,454.99	\$23,558.00
<b>Personnel</b>						
	*Salaries	\$110,348.20	\$110,348.16	\$132,417.76	\$128,475.60	\$128,475.58
	*Fringe	\$24,036.86	\$23,939.49	\$30,051.54	\$27,960.70	\$29,572.42
	*Payroll tax/Workman's Comp	\$4,523.24	\$4,584.24	\$5,501.08	\$5,359.57	\$5,374.00
		\$138,908.30	\$138,871.89	\$167,970.38	\$161,795.87	\$163,422.00
<b>Cash Reserves</b>						
		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$168,002.88</b>	<b>\$197,798.69</b>	<b>\$237,887.38</b>	<b>\$215,581.87</b>	<b>\$234,926.00</b>
	* = Fixed expenses					

## 2020-2021 Year-to-Date Actual Income (as of April 26)



### Income Sources

**\*Congregational Contributions**

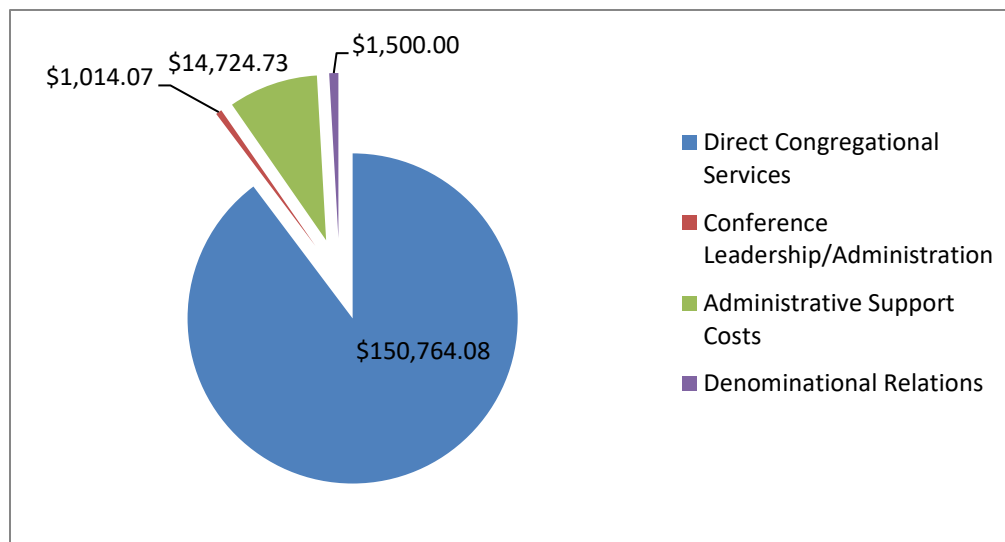
**\*Additional Funding:** Individual donations, Leadership Council pledges, Fundraising letters, Conference leadership donating back expenses

**\*Revenues:** Interest from checking/savings, Distributions from Missional Fund

**\*Annual Meeting Registration/Fundraising**

**\*Miscellaneous**

## 2020-2021 Year-to-Date Actual Expenses (as of April 26)



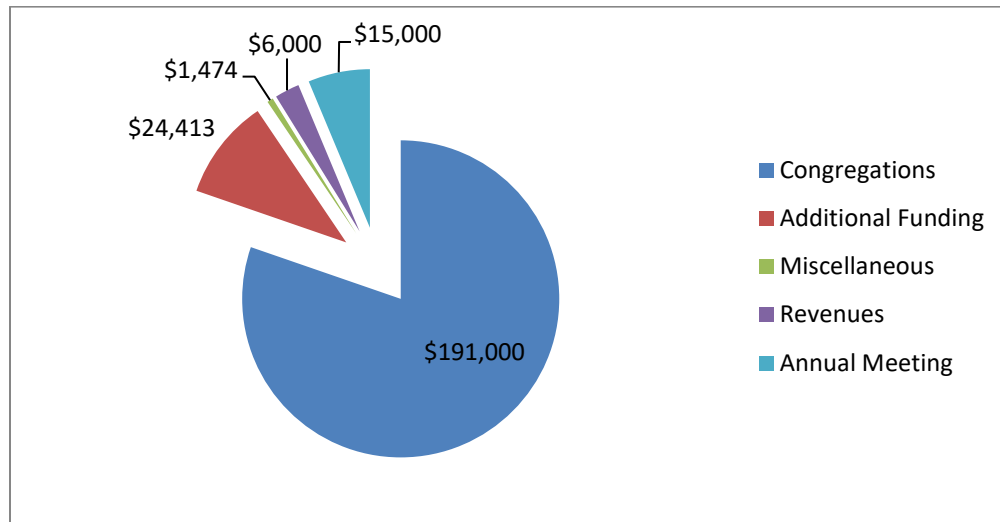
**Direct Congregational Services:** Includes Missional Church and Ministerial Committee expenses, archives, publications, editor stipend, regional gathering expenses, salaries, housing, social security, pension, continuing education, health insurance, health savings account, payroll taxes, and workman's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

## 2020-2021 Spending Plan Income



**Congregations:** Makes up 80% of total spending plan

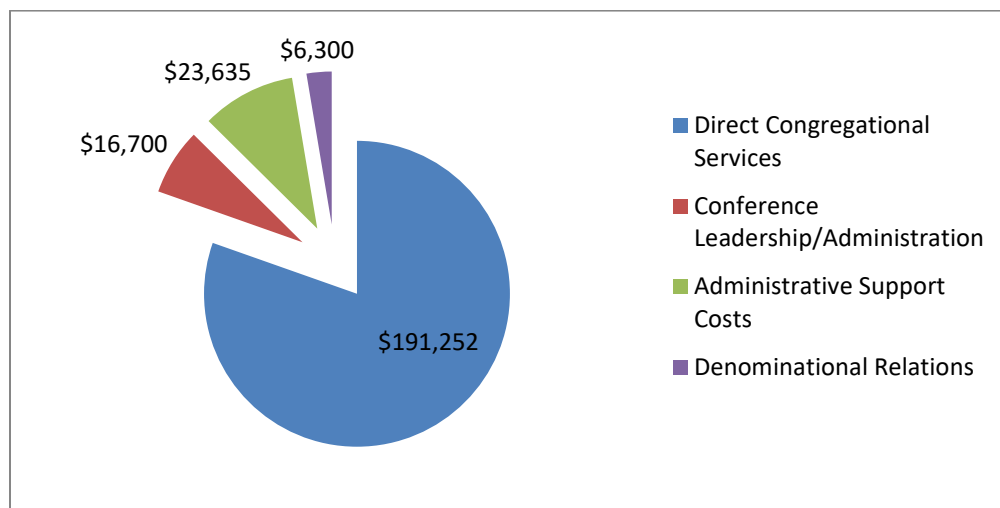
**Additional Funding:** Makes up 10% of total spending plan

**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 Spending Plan Expenses



**Direct Congregational Services:** Makes up 80% 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

Central District Conference				
Congregational Contributions				
Congregations	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
	As of 4/26/21			
	10 months	12 months	12 months	12 months
Agora*		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Americus (13)	\$1,000.00	\$1,100.00	\$600.00	
Ames	\$150.00	\$100.00	\$250.00	\$0.00
Ann Arbor*	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$0.00
Asian Mennonite Community	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$500.00
Assembly (133)	\$6,352.50	\$10,850.00	\$15,981.00	\$16,716.00
Atlanta (10)	\$1,750.96	\$2,090.52	\$1,915.38	\$1,997.88
Berea (12)	\$500.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,500.00	
Chapel Hill (25)	\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00	
Chicago Community (37)	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
Cincinnati (30)	\$5,336.00	\$6,480.00	\$6,690.00	\$6,825.00
Columbus (100)	\$16,271.00	\$15,749.00	\$14,865.00	\$14,180.00
Community Mennonite*(10)	\$1,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$750.00
Covenant (57)	\$6,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,500.00	\$5,800.00
Eighth Street (97)	\$19,169.23	\$14,093.59	\$18,500.00	\$18,500.00
Emmanuel (23)	\$2,000.00	\$3,000.00		
Emmaus Road (25)	\$1,365.00	\$2,275.00	\$3,015.00	\$3,380.00
Evanston*	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$500.00
Faith (30)	\$2,500.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00
First, Bluffton (110)	\$13,820.00	\$20,996.00	\$20,992.00	\$21,196.00
First, Chicago		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
First, Sugarcreek (16)	\$2,500.00	\$3,500.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00
First, Urbana* (70)	\$4,875.00	\$6,500.00	\$6,500.00	\$6,500.00
First, Wadsworth (17)	\$650.00	\$300.00	\$300.00	\$350.00
Florence (19)	\$1,400.00	\$1,400.00	\$1,200.00	\$2,400.00
Grace Mennonite (55)	\$4,065.00	\$9,945.00	\$5,760.00	\$8,087.50
Hively Avenue (31)	\$5,500.00	\$6,050.00	\$6,600.00	\$6,892.50
Joy Fellowship*	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Jubilee (10)	\$850.00	\$1,785.00		
Lima* (18)	\$2,250.00	\$2,250.00	\$3,750.00	\$2,250.00
Madison (50)	\$6,250.00	\$7,350.00	\$7,200.00	\$6,640.00
Maplewood (34)	\$500.00	\$1,250.00	\$1,000.00	\$3,000.00
Mennonite Church of Normal* (98)	\$15,341.01	\$11,743.26	\$15,054.48	\$15,054.48
Milwaukee (23)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,200.00	\$600.00
Morning Star*	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
North Danvers (46)	\$445.00	\$1,439.00	\$6,735.00	\$3,199.00
Oak Grove* (88)	\$8,312.50	\$6,312.50	\$5,813.00	\$4,812.00
Open Table Mennonite Fellowship (13)	\$750.00	\$2,545.73	\$1,500.00	\$300.00
Paoli* (23)	\$4,032.96	\$4,791.78	\$4,109.81	\$3,063.82
Raleigh (26)	\$6,440.00	\$6,800.00	\$2,000.00	
Shalom Community (40)	\$1,650.00	\$1,650.00	\$1,650.00	\$3,300.00
Shalom Mennonite Congregation (72)	\$5,791.00	\$6,906.00	\$8,190.00	\$4,875.00
Silverwood (75)	\$7,875.00	\$10,000.00	\$11,000.00	\$10,280.00
Southside (40)	\$5,500.00	\$2,750.00	\$5,500.00	\$5,500.00
St Paul (6)	\$600.00	\$600.00	\$600.00	\$600.00
Trenton (36)	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$169,992.16</b>	<b>\$187,302.38</b>	<b>\$200,170.67</b>	<b>\$188,549.18</b>
Number of giving units (as reported in 2020) is in parentheses				
*Dual Conference Congregations				



## 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

# Ministerial Credential Report

June 1, 2020 – May 31, 2021

## ORDINATIONS

Laura Brenneman-Fullwood (First Urbana), ordained June 28, 2020 via Zoom by Doug Luginbill  
Alison Casella Brookins (Chicago Community), ordained April 4, 2021 via Zoom by Doug Luginbill

## LICENSINGS

Jeff Boehr (First Bluffton), licensed for specific ministry at First Mennonite Church Bluffton, August 16, 2020 by Doug Luginbill  
Paul Brubaker (Paoli), licensed toward ordination at Paoli Mennonite Fellowship, October 11, 2020 via Zoom by Doug Luginbill

## CREDENTIAL TRANSFERS

Norman Kauffmann (Assembly) from Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, July 28, 2020  
Brad Miller (Silverwood) from Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, July 28, 2020  
Stephen Intagliata (First Bluffton) to Virginia Mennonite Conference, October 1, 2020  
Tim Schrag (Mennonite Church of Normal) to Western District, Dec 8, 2020

## INSTALLATIONS

Jeff Boehr (First Mennonite Bluffton), installed as ½ time interim pastor at Lima Mennonite Church, June 14, 2020, by Doug Luginbill via Zoom  
Jan Croyle (First Wadsworth), installed as pastor at First Mennonite Wadsworth, September 6, 2020 by Doug Luginbill  
Jeff Boehr (First Bluffton), installed as ½ time interim pastor at First Mennonite Bluffton, October 4, 2020 by Doug Luginbill  
Paul Brubaker (Paoli), installed as pastor at Paoli Mennonite Fellowship, October 11, 2020 by Doug Luginbill. Starting date: October 1, 2020.

## CHANGE OF CREDENTIAL

Cate Desjardins (Cincinnati), license toward ordination extended until December 31, 2021  
Eliza Wertenberger (Columbus), license toward ordination extended until April 22, 2022  
Devon Miller (Florence), license toward ordination extended until May 1, 2022  
Peter Martin (Emmaus Road), license toward ordination extended until May 5, 2022  
Brian Johnson (North Danvers), license toward ordination changed to license for specific ministry  
Sally Weaver Glick (Open Table), license toward ordination extended until June 10, 2022

## RESIGNATIONS

Doug Reichenbach (Eel River Church of the Brethren), resigned Sept 1, 2020  
Theda Good (First Mennonite Bluffton), resigned Sept 30, 2020

## ANNIVERSARIES / SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL EVENTS

Madison Mennonite Church celebrated 60 years on April 18, 2021  
Maplewood Mennonite Church celebrated 60 years on April 25, 2021 (postponed from 2020 due to pandemic)

#### INTERIM / TRANSITIONAL PASTORS

Jeff Boehr (First Bluffton), installed as interim pastor at Lima Mennonite Church, June 14, 2020, by Doug Luginbill, starting date, June 7, 2020

Jeff Boehr (First Bluffton), installed as interim pastor at First Mennonite Bluffton, October 4, 2020, by Doug Luginbill, starting date, October 1, 2020

#### RETIREMENTS

Stephen Itagliata (First Bluffton) from Campus Pastor at Bluffton University, May 8, 2020

Doug Reichenbach (Eel River Church of the Brethren), Sept 1, 2020

#### DEATHS

Earl Roth (Silverwood), Oct 30, 2020

Ed Metzler (Assembly), May 12, 2021

#### CONGREGATIONAL TRANSITIONS

##### *In Search Processes*

Covenant Mennonite Fellowship

Shalom Mennonite Congregation

Shalom Community Church

## 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
2021	Via Zoom

## Conference Presidents, 1957-2021

1957-	Lotus E Troyer	2007-2009	Gordon Oyer
1958	Ernest J Bohn	2009-2011	Karl Shelly
1959-1960	Harry Yoder	2011-2013	Joyce Schumacher
1961-1962	Gordon J Neuenschwander	2013-2015	Ron Guengerich
1963-1964	Jacob T Friesen	2015-2017	Lisa Weaver
1965-1966	Lorris A Habegger	2017-2019	Arman Habegger
1967-1968	Claude F Boyer	2019-2021	Anna Yoder Schlabach
1969-1970	Leonard Wiebe	2021-	James Rissler
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		



2021

REPORT BOOK  
of the

**Central District Conference**  
of  
Mennonite Church USA

*Spirit, bless our souls with yearning!*

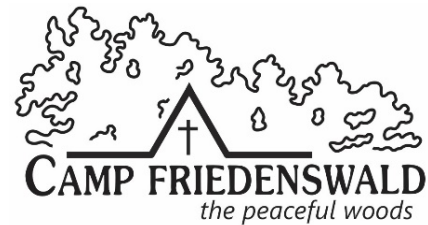


*Part III*

*Conference Committee Reports*







2020 will forever be a different year in Camp Friedenswald's story, as it will be in each of our lives. The COVID-19 pandemic quickly brought to a halt the retreats and gatherings that have traditionally fulfilled our mission. After months of closure in the spring, we reopened and adapted our programming to focus on individual retreats and small family/friend groups. This "Getaway" program provided people of all ages from across the conference (over 880 people in total) to come to Camp for a weekend of retreat and renewal. As part of the Getaway experience, people were invited to rest, and be renewed through time spent outdoors and in nature. With the dining hall closed, participants enjoyed hospitality of home cooked meals delivered directly to the cabin door. It was a bright spot in a challenging year and provided retreat experiences that people craved.

In order to remain open and provide retreats, 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.

- Before COVID-19 brought retreats and gatherings to a halt, we hosted **2020 Winter Retreats** for CDC youth and sponsors. Participating congregations included Assembly Mennonite, Columbus Mennonite, Eighth Street Mennonite, First Mennonite Bluffton, Hively Avenue, Milwaukee Mennonite, and Silverwood Mennonite churches.
- **Hospitality was extended to CDC congregations** in various ways throughout the year. Several churches utilized the "Getaway" retreat as a time of connecting with others in their congregation – formally or informally. Other churches spent an afternoon or full day at Camp, enjoying outdoor activities and connecting with one another, while others held small lake-side baptismal services. Churches who, in some form or other, gathered at Camp in 2020 include: Assembly, Hively Avenue, Open Table, Mennonite Church of Normal, Silverwood, and Southside Fellowship.
- In January, Camp staff Amy Huser and Skye McKinnell spent a weekend with Columbus Mennonite Church as part of their Winter Seminar, leading discussion on the topics of creation care and sustainability.
- CDC congregations and their members helped with tasks that are **vital to the running of camp**. While limited groups participated in volunteer days, many individuals representing a variety of CDC churches were instrumental in keeping Camp running during the past year. Volunteers assisted with cooking and delivering meals, splitting firewood, organizing archives, removing invasive species, and other important work in the life of Camp.
- Over \$55,000 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!

## Journey: A Missional Leadership Development Program

Forty-one people participated in the Journey program in 2020-2021, including 17 participants and 17 mentors in the North American program, and six participants and one mentor in the Journey Southeast Asia program. Three participants and one mentor are from Central District Conference: **Charles Baraka** (Madison Mennonite) and mentor **Lavon Welty** (Eighth St. Mennonite); **Steve Mares** (Community Mennonite, Markham), and **Jan Croyle** (First Mennonite-Wadsworth).



Participants gathered via Zoom for the fall Weekend Learning Event. Despite the change to a virtual format, the weekend successfully served to connect and resource participants. Dan Schrock, AMBS adjunct professor and long-time spiritual director and pastor, led sessions on developing and deepening our spiritual practices. In separate sessions, cohort groups met to work on their personal timelines, take personality inventories, and explore spiritual direction. Mentors participated in a mentoring workshop and mentors and mentees met together to work on and update their learning covenants.

Following the fall gathering, participants joined online classes developed by David B. Miller, Teaching Associate of the AMBS Church Leadership Center, and taught by Roland Kuhl, Journey Instructor. As part of these studies, they also carried out a wide variety of ministry assignments in their congregations and communities. Throughout the session they also met with their mentors, typically bi-weekly, to discuss their classes and ministry experiences.

The winter Weekend Learning Event was also held virtually. The theme for the weekend was “Leadership for God’s Reconciling Mission,” with David Miller. One of the unique features of this online weekend was the inclusion of extended time for conversation with David in interactive sessions. Several sessions also featured mentor-mentee breakout room conversations.

Worship at both the fall and winter gatherings was planned and led by Eleanor Kreider and Julia Schmidt. Mentees in their final term of the program, including Jan Croyle, shared reflections and received blessings. This winter, for the first time, Journey alumni were invited to “come back” to join the Saturday evening worship session, followed by an alumni reunion breakout.

Following the winter Weekend Learning Event, participants again joined online classes and continued to meet bi-weekly in mentor-mentee pairs, typically in virtual formats during this time.

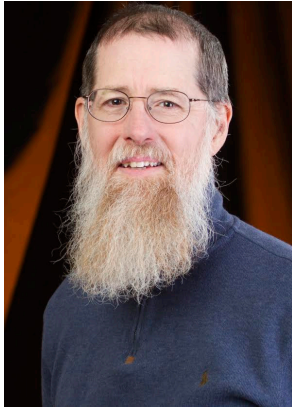
The Journey Board plays a vital role in helping to oversee and shape the program and is made up of representatives of Journey’s three sponsoring conferences. Many thanks to **Lois Kaufmann**, board chair; **Doug Luginbill**, conference minister; and **Gayle Gerber Koontz**, CDC Ministerial Committee representative, for their service to the board. Sincere thanks also to **Nina Lanctot** (previous chair) and **Ardean Friesen** (previous Ministerial Committee representative), who completed their time on the board in 2020. Last year we were excited to welcome Ohio Conference as a new sponsoring conference for the program, also with representation on the board. They join CDC and Indiana-Michigan Conference, who collaborated with AMBS to launch the program in 2003.

Journey participants and alumni frequently tell us that Journey is a tremendous learning opportunity for lay leaders, pastors, church planters, and other emerging leaders! If someone you know wants to develop or deepen 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: Brian Bolton (Shalom, Harrisonburg), Kay Bontrager-Singer (Faith, Goshen), Michael Crosby (First, Champaign-Urbana), Gayle Gerber Koontz (Assembly, Goshen), Ray Person (chair; First, Bluffton), Robin Walton (Columbus), Doug Luginbill, Conference Minister (ex officio).*

Typically, the Ministerial Committee meets in person twice a year at Camp Friedenswald once in the Spring and then in the Fall. Due to the pandemic, all of our monthly meetings have been by Zoom. Throughout the year we have continued to discuss the challenges that power dynamics pose in the church, especially with regards to patriarchy and racism, and hope that we can continue to find ways to support CDC congregations as they explore these challenges more in the future.

**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.

This year we formalized a process for **Clergy Development Grants** as a resource for clergy to help them fund continuing education and other projects. We provide up to \$400.00 and encourage congregations to provide some of the funding for the projects we approve, whenever possible. For more information, see CDC's website.

In October, we held a **Pastor +1 Retreat** at Camp Friedenswald in partnership with Allegheny Mennonite Conference and Eastern Mennonite Seminary. Based on the positive feedback we received, we are planning on repeating it on October 22-24, 2021.

As a committee, we joined other sponsors of the **"Resolution for Repentance and Transformation,"** which was prepared by the Inclusive Mennonite Pastors.

We developed a **Record Retention Policy for Credential Files** to guide us as a committee concerning maintaining confidentiality of these files and clarifying which files will be preserved in the CDC Archives at Bluffton University and which files should be destroyed. These discussions have also included when and with whom do we share information about results of investigations of clergy sexual abuse, when we are notified by other conferences of actions they have taken with clergy who have some past or present connections to CDC. Our policies were clear on how to proceed when we undertake the investigation and now we have more clarity for how we related to cases investigated elsewhere in MCUSA.

Our continuing discussions concerning power dynamics in congregations led us to recommend programming for our **annual meeting led by Credence & Co.** and we are pleased to partner with the CDC Board in sponsoring their work with us at this annual meeting. We encourage pastors and congregational lay leaders to participate in the workshops as we strive to manage better the conflicts that occur in our congregations and conference.

Submitted by Ray Person

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



Members: Karla Minter (chair), Xaris Martinez, Kiva Nice-Webb, Mark Rupp, Valerie Showalter, Tim Stair, Matthew Yoder  
Staff member: Emma Hartman

Over the last year, CDC's Missional Church Committee has met regularly via video conferencing. We have focused on living into our mission of nurturing congregations through resourcing and encouragement in three key areas.

### **\*\*Taking the next step as an anti-racist conference, congregations, and individuals**

In early 2020, the Missional Church Committee gratefully accepted the work, discernment, and provocations from the Racial, Ethnic, and Religious (RER) Reconciliation Task Force. In July 2020, committee members Kiva Nice-Webb, Tim Stair, and Valerie Showalter, alongside Brian Sauder of Faith in Place (and member at Chicago Community Mennonite Church), hosted a webinar to share about the RER's three provocations. The provocations--to take the next step of "being, knowing, and doing" the work of dismantling white supremacy--were explained, and the webinar hosts offered suggested applications for what this work might look like at the conference level, in congregations, and in individuals lives.

In this way, the Missional Church Committee has become a resource for the conference and our congregations for racial justice issues, and we are hearing many are taking these provocations seriously. At the conference level, the Leadership Council took and reflected together on the Intercultural Development Inventory. CDC pastors have been enrolled in the WiderStand Consulting anti-racism training, for which the conference has covered all costs. The Missional Church Committee has also developed a grant that congregations can access for anti-racism initiatives that facilitate their community taking a "next step." Grants are available for up to \$500.

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

We continue to keep our ears and eyes open for the Spirit's movement in emerging communities and expressions of faith and peace. Two CDC congregations are exploring the possibility of supporting new faith communities, and Missional Church Committee members are available to support them in their discernment. Another CDC congregation is exploring offering a new expression of faith through supporting a second worship community with missional intentions.

### **\*\*Congregational Revitalization**

In the midst of a rapidly changing world, the Missional Church Committee is excited by the questions some CDC faith communities are asking about what it means to be the body of Christ. There is a vision within MC USA to support congregations that are interested in processes of revitalization or replanting, specifically those communities who are interested in doing church differently than has been done in the past. As we enter into a post-pandemic world, committee members Karla Minter and Tim Stair are developing ideas to nurture congregations who are proactively asking these questions.

*--Submitted by Valerie Showalter*

## Central District Conference Mennonite Women's Report



Because of the pandemic, CDC Mennonite Women did not have a gathering at conference in 2020, nor was there a Women's Retreat at Camp Friedenswald. However, many congregational women's groups were active throughout the year, adjusting to different kinds of activities because of the pandemic. Here are some reports from some of those groups. Our thanks to Jan Croyle of First Mennonite Wadsworth, Marlene Suter of Columbus Mennonite, Lori Nester of First Mennonite Bluffton, Jill Hilty of Grace Mennonite, Amy Kauffman of Assembly Mennonite, and Jeannette Bechtel of Eighth Street Mennonite for contributing to the contents of this report. I have used their own words as often as possible.

As Jan Croyle of First Mennonite Wadsworth says: **“Nothing is normal during this pandemic, but growth and renewal can still happen. We are Mennonite women finding our way.”**

**Columbus Mennonite:** As COVID restrictions hit, *Piecemakers* began sewing tops, knotting and binding comforters at home. They retrieved fabric from the church and started delivering projects to people around the city. A table just inside the church held sewing projects, comforters to bind, and bins of knotting thread for people to take. Last year at this time, they had completed 117 comforters. This year, even though working from home, they have completed 218.

**First Mennonite Wadsworth:** The Wadsworth women's group is hosting zoom meetings titled *Mennonite Women's Coffee and Conversations*. They have read and discussed one of the MW blogs, “Affirm: The Lowly Boast,” by Cyneatha Millsaps. Articles from the *Anabaptist World*, such as “Running on Empty, yet with something to give” by Meghan Larissa Good and “Be like rain (but not a thunderstorm)” by Jenny Gehman have been discussed, and the group is now adding music and lyrics that tie in with the articles.

**First Mennonite Bluffton:** FMC Mennonite Women's meetings are open to all women. They have been using the MW devotional guide. Before COVID restrictions, they met in small groups due to winter weather. In February, the group helped support Cyneatha Millsaps' visit to Bluffton University and utilized her as a speaker with the topic ‘How Do We Care for Young White Males?’ Before activities shut down in March, the group hosted speakers from *Crime Victim Services* to talk about their program, ‘Day One’, which focuses on violence prevention and providing direct services to survivors of sexual violence and human trafficking. During COVID, FMC women have made materials available for comforter sewing at home: fabric to be cut and kits of squares to be sewn. Those with space may knot and finish comforters. Work continues on school and health kit bags.

**Grace Mennonite, Pandora:** The year 2020 started out much the same as other years for *Threads of Grace*, with twelve comforters knotted and sent to MCC to be counted for the Great Winter Warm-up as a part of MCC's 100th Anniversary Celebration. In addition, 125 school kits and 125 hygiene kits were made. Care packages were put together for college students. When COVID hit, the women made masks for the staff at Mennonite Memorial Home, as well as family members and friends. Later, they made washable gowns for the Mennonite Memorial Home staff. Comforter kits were put on a table in the fellowship hall to be picked up and taken home to knot. Twenty-two comforters were knotted during the pandemic and sent to MCC. Four baby comforters were presented to members of Grace.

**Assembly Mennonite, Goshen:** *Lunch Bunch* at Assembly Mennonite Church has continued to meet by Zoom during COVID. They have learned more about the work of 'The Window' in feeding the homeless in their community, about resilience, and about each other. They have enjoyed meaningful conversations together and staying connected safely.

**Eighth Street Mennonite, Goshen:** On January 18, 2020, the *Eighth Street Women* hosted the 'Great Winter Warm-up', completing 35 comforters in one day with the help of 53 people. When COVID rules demanded a cessation of all further in-person activities, events such as the Women's Celebration, comforter working days, and the June and Christmas celebrations had to be canceled. The group continued to fill school and hygiene bags and to sew and knot comforters at home. At least 113 school and hygiene bags were completed for MCC.

Central District Conference Women received generous donations and contributed to AMBS Scholarships for International Women and Camp Friedenswald. My thanks to Jeannette Bechtel of Eighth Street Mennonite for her help in this process.

Greta Holt for Janeen Bertsche Johnson and Central District Conference Mennonite Women

2021

REPORT BOOK  
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*Spirit, bless our souls with yearning!*



*Part IV*

*Reports by Related Institutions*







## 2021 Report to Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA

*Give strength to your people, God! Bless your people with peace! Psalm 29:11*

Here are some of the ways Mennonite Church USA worked to #BringThePeace of Christ to our conferences, congregations and communities amid the challenges of 2020.

### Our Mission

The mission of Mennonite Church USA Executive Board is to equip and empower leaders to share with others the gift of God's peace and transformative love.

### Our 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.



Dismantling racism was a key focus in 2020 that included a webinar series on race, change and the church, a resource [portal](#) and access to affordable antiracism training for congregations.

MC USA created [several new funds](#) to engage the church in its racial justice work. The Justice Fund assists MC USA congregations working in their communities to address racism, police brutality and poverty. The Grace Fund supports Hispanic congregations and ministries impacted by COVID-19 and natural disasters.



Leaders of color gathered in January 2020 for MC USA's annual [Hope for the Future](#) meeting in Dallas, Texas, to discuss ways to press forward for peace and justice throughout the church.



MC USA urged and equipped congregations to deepen understanding and engagement around climate justice and immigration justice through two ["Learn, Pray, Join" initiatives](#).

The MC USA Executive Board initiated an [eight-step process to gather feedback](#) on a recommendation from the Board-appointed advisory group to retire the denomination's Membership Guidelines.



The [Women in Leadership ministry](#) held its 2020 Women Doing Theology conference online, with a series of webinars that focused on the wisdom and experiences of church elders on dismantling patriarchy and race and intersectionality.

MC USA faith formation leaders gathered in January 2020 for the joint [Pastors and Leaders/Deep Faith Conference](#) at AMBS. The conference focused on "Shaping Faith in a Digital Culture."

MC USA launched a [redesigned website](#) with expanded content, robust search capability and easy navigation. The website now also includes Anabaptist Faith Formation, a collaborative collection of online faith formation resources.



[MC USA Archives](#) provided users with single-point access to an online database of 14 Anabaptist partners by collaborating with the Mennonite Archive Information Database.

MC USA and Hispanic Ministries of Mennonite Education Agency launched [MenoTicias](#), the new denominational Spanish-language digital newsletter.



PeaceMail  
Mennonite Church USA



#MennoCon21



Subscribe to PeaceMail, MC USA's weekly digital news magazine. With the official retiring of *The Mennonite* magazine, MC USA Communications developed PeaceMail to offer the only source for all the denomination's news and blogs.

Experience the excitement of [MennoCon21](#), July 6-10, 2021 in Cincinnati, Ohio. Visit the convention website at [convention.mennoniteusa.org/](#)



## Informe del año 2021 Conferencia Central District de la Iglesia Menonita de EE. UU.

*El Señor fortalece a su pueblo, el Señor bendice a su pueblo con la paz. Salmos 29.11*

Aquí presentamos algunas de las maneras en que la Iglesia Menonita de EE. UU. trabajó para #TraerlaPaz de Cristo a nuestras conferencias, congregaciones y comunidades en medio de los desafíos del año 2020.

**Nuestra misión:** La misión de la junta ejecutiva de la Iglesia Menonita de EE. UU. es equipar y empoderar a los líderes para compartir con otros el don de la paz de Dios y su amor transformador.

**Nuestra visión:** Dios nos llama a ser seguidores de Cristo Jesús, y por el poder del Espíritu Santo, a crecer como comunidades de gracia, gozo y paz, de modo que la sanación y esperanza de Dios fluyan a través nuestro al mundo.



Desmantelar el racismo fue el foco clave en el año 2020 que incluyó un seminario en línea compuesto por varios módulos abordando la raza, el cambio y la iglesia, [un portal de recursos](#) y el acceso a capacitación en antirracismo a bajo costo para las congregaciones.

La Iglesia Menonita de EE. UU. (MC USA por sus siglas en inglés) creó [varios fondos nuevos](#), para involucrar a la iglesia con su trabajo por la justicia racial. El Fondo de Justicia asiste a las congregaciones de MC USA que trabajan en sus comunidades abordando el racismo, la brutalidad policial y la pobreza. El Fondo de Gracia apoya a las congregaciones y ministerios hispanos que padecieron el impacto de COVID-19 y los desastres naturales.



Líderes de color se reunieron en enero 2020 para el encuentro anual de [Esperanza para el Futuro](#) de MC USA en Dallas, Texas, para dialogar sobre las maneras de avanzar el trabajo por la paz y la justicia en toda la iglesia.



MC USA alentó y equipó a las congregaciones a profundizar su comprensión y compromiso en torno a la justicia climática y la justicia inmigratoria a través de dos iniciativas de ["Aprende, ora y únete."](#)

La junta ejecutiva de MC USA inició [un proceso de ocho pasos para recopilar devoluciones](#) en relación a una recomendación del grupo asesor designado por la junta para retirar los Lineamientos de Membresía de la denominación.



[El ministerio de Mujeres en Liderazgo](#) llevó a cabo su conferencia 2020 en línea de Mujeres Haciendo Teología, con una serie de varios módulos de seminarios en línea que se focalizó en la sabiduría y las experiencias de ancianos de la iglesia sobre desmantelar el patriarcado y la raza, y la interseccionalidad.

Líderes de formación en la fe de MC USA se reunieron en enero 2020 para [la conferencia conjunta Fe Profunda, de pastores y líderes](#) en el Seminario Bíblico Menonita Anabautista. La conferencia se centró en "Moldear la fe en una cultura digital".

MC USA lanzó [un sitio web rediseñado](#) con más contenido, capacidad de búsqueda más robusta y navegación más fácil. El sitio en internet incluye ahora Formación de fe anabautista, una colección colaborativa de recursos en línea de formación de la fe.



[Los archivos de MC USA](#) en colaboración con la Base de Datos de Información de los Archivos Menonitas, trabajaron para brindar a los usuarios con punto de acceso único una base de datos en línea que representa a 14 coparticipantes anabautistas.

MC USA y los Ministerios Hispanos de la Agencia Menonita de Educación lanzaron [MenoTicias](#), el periódico de noticias digital en español de la denominación.



PeaceMail  
Mennonite Church USA

#MennoCon21



[Solicite su periódico Peacemil](#), la revista de noticias digital y semanal de MC USA. Al discontinuar oficialmente la revista *The Mennonite*, el departamento de Comunicaciones de MC USA desarrolló PeaceMail para ofrecer una fuente única para todas las noticias y blogs de la denominación.

Experimente la emoción de [MennoCon21](#), en Cincinnati, Ohio, del 6 al 10 de julio del 2021.

**MennoniteUSA.org**

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

– Proverbs 16:3 (NRSV)

# Invest in what lasts

## Everence 2021 report

Central District Conference Annual Meeting  
June 27, 2021

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

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

We started our year-long 75th anniversary observance in July 2020 – somewhat differently than planned because of safety precautions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While adapting to changes related to the pandemic, Everence holds true to our commitment to help our brothers and sisters in Christ “build up the common life” through decisions about their money and other resources.

We’ll continue serving the faith community as partners in stewardship throughout 2021 and beyond.

### Sharing Fund is part of special pandemic response

The Everence Sharing Fund has distributed millions of dollars to our partner congregations over the years, and we added COVID-19 relief to the mix in 2020.



Everence doubled the amount of eligible Sharing Fund grant money available to congregations with Everence stewardship advocates for a large portion of last year.

In addition to the Sharing Fund, Everence joined with Mennonite Disaster Service and Mennonite Central Committee U.S. to establish the COVID-19 Congregational Relief Fund, providing grants to help racially and ethnically diverse churches facing financial crises because of the pandemic.

### Broaden your knowledge with informative webinars

Webinars are a convenient way to learn, and they became even more useful when the COVID-19 pandemic kept many of us in our homes.

Even as we hope that gathering in person for seminars or workshops becomes more common again, webinars can inform you anytime you’re ready, day or night.

So grab your favorite digital device and head to [everence.com](https://everence.com), where you can find webinars on stewardship education and other topics – several available in Spanish – designed to help pastors, church leaders and the people who attend your church.

And we introduce new live webinars periodically to help you and your

church, so talk to your Everence stewardship consultant to make sure you’re on the mailing list for invitations.

### You can support your church by using the My Neighbor card

The MyNeighbor credit card from Everence Federal Credit Union has helped people generate money for their favorite nonprofits since the card was launched in the spring of 2017.

Members use the MyNeighbor MasterCard the same way they’d use any credit card, and Everence donates 1.5% of each transaction total to the charity the cardholder chooses from thousands of possibilities, including churches.



“The MyNeighbor card gives people a simple and effective way to support the charities dear to their hearts,” said Kent Hartzler, President and CEO of Everence Federal Credit Union.

Visit [everence.com/myneighbor](https://everence.com/myneighbor) for details.



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

– Proverbios 16.3 (NVI)

# Invierta en lo que perdura

## Informe de Everence del 2021

Conferencia del Distrito Central Reunion Anual  
27 de junio de 2021

### Las sociedades fuertes con las iglesias son una parte vital de la misión de Everence

Everence Financial® trabaja de cerca con iglesias y sus miembros, tal como lo hemos hecho desde el inicio de nuestra organización como Mennonite Mutual Aid en 1945.

Comenzamos con los festejos por nuestro 75° aniversario en julio del 2020, algo un poco distinto a lo que habíamos planificado, debido a las precauciones de seguridad relacionadas con la pandemia de la COVID-19.

Mientras nos adaptamos a los cambios vinculados a la pandemia, desde Everence nos aferramos a nuestro compromiso de ayudar a nuestros hermanos y hermanas en Cristo a "construir la vida en común" mediante decisiones sobre su dinero y otros recursos.

Seguiremos sirviendo a la comunidad de fe como socios en la mayordomía a lo largo del 2021 y más allá.

### El Fondo Compartido es parte de la respuesta especial a la pandemia



A través de los años, el Fondo Compartido de Everence (Sharing Fund) ha repartido millones de dólares a nuestras congregaciones socias, y en el 2020 añadimos al paquete una asistencia por la COVID-19.

Durante gran parte del año pasado, Everence duplicó el monto de dinero disponible para subvenciones del Fondo Compartido a través de promotores de mayordomía de la organización.

Además de brindar el Fondo Compartido, Everence se unió al Servicio Menonita ante Desastres y al Comité Central Menonita de EE. UU. para instaurar el Fondo de Asistencia Congregacional por la COVID-19, otorgando subvenciones a fin de ayudar a iglesias con diversidad racial y étnica que afrontan crisis financieras a raíz de la pandemia.

### Amplíe su conocimiento con seminarios web informativos

Los seminarios web son un modo práctico de aprender. Se han vuelto más útiles aún en estos tiempos, en que la pandemia de la COVID-19 nos mantuvo a muchos en nuestros hogares.

Si bien esperamos que encontrarnos en persona para los seminarios o talleres vuelva a ser algo común, los seminarios web pueden brindarle información en cualquier momento en que usted esté listo, ya sea de día o de noche.

Por eso, agarre el dispositivo digital que más le guste y vaya a everence.com, donde encontrará seminarios web sobre educación en mayordomía y otros temas, muchos de ellos disponibles en español y diseñados para ayudar a los pastores, los líderes de la iglesia y las personas que asisten a su iglesia.

Incorporamos nuevos seminarios web de manera periódica para ayudarlo a usted y a su iglesia. Hable

con su consultor de mayordomía de Everence y asegúrese de que figura en la lista de contactos para el envío de las invitaciones.

### Usted puede apoyar a su iglesia usando su tarjeta My Neighbor

Desde su lanzamiento en la primavera del 2017, la tarjeta de crédito MyNeighbor de Everence Federal Credit Union ha ayudado a la gente a generar dinero para sus organizaciones sin fines de lucro preferidas.

Los miembros utilizan la tarjeta MyNeighbor MasterCard del mismo modo en que usarían cualquier otra tarjeta de crédito, y Everence dona el 1.5% del total de cada transacción



a la organización benéfica que el titular de la tarjeta elige entre miles de posibilidades, incluyendo iglesias.

"La tarjeta MyNeighbor les brinda a las personas una forma simple y eficaz de apoyar a las organizaciones de beneficencia que aprecian", dijo Kent Hartzler, presidente y director ejecutivo de Everence Federal Credit Union.

Visite [everence.com/myneighbor](https://everence.com/myneighbor) para obtener mayor información.





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

## **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**

*Mosaic Mennonite Conference  
Pastor*

## **Prayer requests for a weary land**

As we all know, the hardships from 2020 have shaken us deeply. Race-based brutality and injustice, political unrest and violence, and a year of quarantine, masks, sickness and death. Our very souls cry out in fear and weariness. For Anabaptist Christians, Jesus is our rock in a weary land, a chorus I remember well from my childhood. In these weary times, we are more grateful than ever for the Anabaptist-Mennonite ties that bind us together as a community of believers. Our schools are forming students in ways that are distinctively Anabaptist, following the **Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective** and the **Shared Convictions of Global Anabaptists**. We believe these foundations will be a rock in a weary land for our students throughout their lives. Join us in prayer for our students and schools, that they would seek God, our shelter in this time of storm. To join us in praying in specific ways for our schools, consider subscribing to MEA's monthly **Prayers for Mennonite Education** by emailing [JoleneV@MennoniteEducation.org](mailto:JoleneV@MennoniteEducation.org)

## **Connections**

**Bethany Christian Schools and Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana**, have strong student populations from CDC congregations, such as Assembly, Faith and Silverwood Mennonite churches in the Goshen area. A highlight is the "farm to cafeteria table" experience in which biology students from Bethany spent a day in October at Goshen College's Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center to engage with local farming and explore sustainable food systems. This included butchering chickens for a farm-to-table meal!

**Eastern Mennonite School (EMS) in Harrisonburg, Virginia**, has been in close partnership with Shalom Mennonite Church, a CDC congregation known for its deep stewardship commitments to human and material resources. Shalom has used the EMS dining hall for worship and they have partnered together on a number of mutually beneficial projects: building shared storage spaces, purchasing chairs, sound systems and pianos. EMS' solar energy project was a particular highlight for this relationship. This solar "barn-raising" was coordinated by a Shalom member and installed 357 panels in less than five hours. The array offsets nearly one-third of the total electricity used by the school's facilities. It also generates enough clean energy to run the equivalent of 15 average homes and avoids more than 141 tons of carbon dioxide pollution per year. Shalom members gave generously to this project.

## **Cross-Agency Action with Mennonite Mission Network (MMN)**

We know that when young people participate in Mennonite service opportunities and/or attend Mennonite schools, they are more likely to attend Mennonite congregations as adults. Mennonite education and service work are formational opportunities, as many leaders in the church can attest from personal experience. **MEA and MMN are partnering to promote both Mennonite education and service as a recommended vocational path.** Toward this goal, we are exploring how to pool resources and share this message, not only with Mennonite youth and their families, but also with the schools and congregations. This joint venture includes securing college credit for service and reviving the Youth Census:

- MEA has coordinated with the schools' admissions staff and registrars to help three participants with MMN's Service Adventure program complete the necessary enrollment requirements at MEA-affiliated schools. MEA and MMN will be sharing more about how to earn college credit through service at the MC USA convention this summer.

- The schools and service programs rely on data from MEA's congregational Youth Census to communicate critical information and opportunities to students and families. The Census is a family's gateway to formational opportunities in Mennonite education and service, so **please communicate with your congregations the importance of sharing youth data with MEA.**

### **Hispanic Ministries Education partnerships**

MEA operates the Seminario Bíblico Anabautista Hispano (SeBAH) program, which offers strong biblical and Anabaptist-based theological education for Hispanic leaders in the Mennonite church that is both affordable and accessible. In the past year, SeBAH has secured partnerships with Hesston (Kansas) College and Palm Beach (Florida) Atlantic University (PBA), enabling SeBAH graduates to earn transfer credits and automatic admission. PBA is also offering scholarships of up to \$1,100 per semester. SeBAH is pursuing a similar agreement with Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Indiana, an MEA-affiliated seminary. These partnerships strengthen the Hispanic Ministries program and offer Hispanic students access to broader educational opportunities within the denomination and beyond, many of whom pay their own way at great sacrifice.

### **Mennonite Higher Education Agency (MHEA)**

**Board chair gatherings:** At their request, MEA is facilitating virtual, quarterly gatherings of the higher ed board chairs. MEA is uniquely positioned to offer connection and support to this group, both individually and collectively.

**Theological Education committee:** Some Conference Ministers have raised concern about the waning interest in biblical and ministry studies. They asked, “**From where will our pastors and church leaders come?**” This committee is studying the barriers to ministry and how to create new and accessible pathways to strong Anabaptist theological and biblical education. The committee includes the following people: **David Boshart**, president of AMBS; **John Powell**, pastor and teacher; **Jolene VonGuten**, executive assistant for MEA (recorder and administrative support); **Marco Güete**, director of Hispanic Ministries Education for MEA; **Michael Danner**, associate executive director of Church Vitality for MC USA; **Michele Hershberger**, professor and department chair of Bible and Ministry at Hesston College; **Nancy Heisey**, associate dean of Eastern Mennonite Seminary; **Sarah Nahar**, doctoral student of religion and environmental studies; **Tom Stuckey**, interim executive director and CEO for MEA.

### **Mennonite Schools Council (MSC)**

The administrators for preK-12 schools are being regularly resourced, both individually and collectively, by MEA Interim Director for preK-12 Schools Dawn Graber. Dawn offers a background in executive coaching to help leaders clarify their values and vision and to test and discern next steps to meet their personal and organizational goals. There has been strong interest in individual coaching sessions with Dawn. In addition, she has helped plan and coordinate virtual professional development experiences on a bi-monthly basis about relevant and emergent subjects, such as navigating polarization on campuses, emotional Intelligence, and how self-aware leaders can help create effective and influential relationships.

### **Washington Community Scholars' Center (WCSC)**

MEA is partnering with the Washington Community Scholars' Center to draw more interest and enrollment from students across Anabaptist-Mennonite education. WCSC is a cross-cultural urban studies, internship, and community living experience located in the nation's capital, operated by Eastern Mennonite University. For a semester or the summer, the Center offers career building and vocational reflection through local internships, interactive coursework engaging with the city and the forces that shape it, living in intentional community and building social leadership skills, and navigating new experiences in a diverse urban setting. **The program is not limited to EMU students;** in fact, Bethel College and Bluffton University regularly send students to WCSC. MEA is helping to extend the invitation to all of the Anabaptist-Mennonite higher ed schools as well as high schools.

### **Anti-racism and Anti-Oppression**

The MEA staff and board are committed to dismantling racism and oppression. As a step in our individual journeys and to broaden our understandings collectively, the MEA staff studied the book **Who Will Be A Witness?** by **Drew Hart** and published

by Herald Press. Studying this book together has been meaningful and illuminating for the MEA staff, and we would encourage your congregations – small groups, Sunday school classes – to consider a similar book study.

### **Executive Director Search**

A search committee is working to find the next Executive Director/CEO. Dick Thomas, the MEA Board chair and chair of the committee, worked to include a broad and inclusive range of voices: **Addie Banks**, MEA Board member; **Jon Carlson**, MC USA Executive Board member and Pastor of Forest Hills Mennonite Church; **Marco Güete**, Director of MEA's Hispanic Ministries Education programs; **Glen Guyton**, MC USA Executive Director (ex officio); **Lisa Heinz**, MEA Staff; **Joe Manickam**, President of Hesston College and representing the Mennonite Higher Education Association; **Carol Roth**, Moderator of the Racial Ethnic Council; **Conrad Swartzentruber**, Superintendent at Dock Mennonite Academy and representing the Mennonite Schools Council; **Dick Thomas** (Chair), MEA Board Chair; **Jolene VonGunten** (Committee Staff), MEA Staff. We hope to have a candidate selected by the summer. **Please join us in praying for the committee and ask God to call the right person to lead the agency.**

**On behalf of the MEA board and staff, thank you for the many ways you support Mennonite education.**

*Submitted by Tom Stuckey, Interim Executive Director and CEO  
March 2021*

*TS/jvg*

Be local. Be global.  
**Be the Gospel.**



## Central District Conference + Mennonite Mission Network

### Worker support around the world



#### Sent Network training

» Berea Mennonite Church

#### 1 Missional Discipleship Initiative

» Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

#### Worker support

**2 Neal and Janie Blough**, former mission workers in France

» First Mennonite Church, Bluffton  
» Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

**3 Deborah Byler**, serving in San Pedro Carchá, Guatemala

» Hively Avenue Mennonite Church,

**4 Brian and Noelia Fox**, serving in Burgos, Spain

» Maplewood Mennonite Church

**5 Alisha and Joshua Garber**,

serving in Barcelona, Catalonia

» Oak Grove Mennonite Church

**6 Jane and Jerrell Ross Richer**,

serving in the Eastern Rain Forest

Region in Ecuador

» Eighth Street Mennonite Church

**7 Delicia Bravo Aguilar and Peter**

**Wigginton**, serving in Quito, Ecuador

» Paoli Mennonite Fellowship

» Trenton Mennonite Church

**8 Rebekah York**, serving in Bogotá, Colombia

» Silverwood Mennonite Church

### Prayer partners

36

### Service participants



#### Service sites

Mennonite Voluntary Service

» Chicago

#### SOOP

» Camp Friedenswald

**9 Service Adventure**

**Luisa Dutchersmith**, serving in Johnstown, Pennsylvania

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

#### SOOP

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

**Philip and Julianne Hart**, San Antonio, Texas

**Vernon and Shirley King**, Tucson, Arizona

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

**John and Kay Reimer**, Goth, Florida

**Barbara Thuma**, Americus, Georgia

### Congregational giving to Mission Network



During Mission Networks' past fiscal year, Aug. 1, 2019, through July 31, 2020, Central District Conference congregations gave **\$167,806. Thank You!**



It is an honor to be in partnership with you, as we pursue God's calling on our church together. Navigating the unprecedented challenges of a pandemic, we may draw encouragement from God's promise in Isaiah 43:19 (NIV): "I am making a way in the wilderness." These are words of hope we can count on. God is working in our world, in our church, and in each of us. Thank you so much for your generous support and partnership in prayer. The Lord's grace, peace and wellness be with you!

*Mike Sherrill*

Mike Sherrill  
Executive Director



Thank you for joining together to make a difference in the world!

*Karla J. Minter*

Karla Minter  
Church Relations Representative

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

[www.MennoniteMission.net](http://www.MennoniteMission.net) Toll-free: 1-866-866-2872



Sé local. Sé global.  
Sé el evangelio.



## Conferencia Central District + Red Menonita de Misión

### Apoyo a obreros alrededor del mundo



#### La Red Sent

» Berea Mennonite Church

#### 1 Iniciativa de Discipulado Misional

» Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

#### Apoyo a obreros

2 Neal y Janie Blough, sirvieron en Francia

» First Mennonite Church, Bluffton  
» Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

3 Deborah Byler, sirve en San Pedro Carchá, Guatemala

» Hively Avenue Mennonite Church,

4 Brian y Noelia Fox, sirven en Burgos, España

» Maplewood Mennonite Church

5 Alisha y Joshua Garber, sirven en Barcelona, Catalonia

» Oak Grove Mennonite Church

6 Jane y Jerrell Ross Richer, sirven en la Región Amazónica del Ecuador  
» Eighth Street Mennonite Church

7 Delicia Bravo Aguilar y Peter Wigginton, sirven en Quito, Ecuador

» Paoli Mennonite Fellowship  
» Trenton Mennonite Church

8 Rebekah York, sirve en Bogotá, Colombia

» Silverwood Mennonite Church

### Comprometidos en oración

36

### Participantes y lugares de servicio



#### Sitios de Servicio Cristiano

Unidad de Mennonite Voluntary Service (Servicio Voluntario Menonita)

» Chicago

#### Sitio de SOOP

» Camp Friedenswald

#### 9 Service Adventure (Voluntarios Aventureros)

Luisa Dutchersmith, sirve en Johnstown, Pennsylvania

Rudy y Michelle Moyer-Litwiller, sirven en Albuquerque, New Mexico

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

Roger y Linda Clemmons, Gotha, Florida

Philip y Julianne Hart, San Antonio, Texas

Vernon y Shirley King, Tucson, Arizona

Ted Koontz y Gayle Gerber

Koontz, Tucson, Arizona

John y Kay Reimer, Goth, Florida

Barbara Thuma, Americus, Georgia

### Aporte congregacional a la Red Menonita



Durante el último año fiscal de la Red de Misión, desde el 1 de agosto de 2019 hasta el 31 de julio de 2020, las congregaciones de la Conferencia Central District donaron **\$167.806**. ¡Gracias!



Es un privilegio participar con usted y responder juntos al llamado de Dios a nuestra iglesia. Al lidiar con los desafíos sin precedentes de una pandemia, podemos tomar ánimo de la promesa de Dios en Isaías 43.19 (NVI): "Estoy abriendo un camino en el desierto." Estas son palabras de esperanza en las cuales podemos confiar. Dios está obrando en nuestro mundo, en nuestra iglesia y en cada uno de nosotros. Estamos muy agradecidos por sus aportes generosos y apoyo en oración. ¡Que la gracia del Señor, su paz y bienestar estén con ustedes!

*Mike Sherrill*

Mike Sherrill, Director Ejecutivo



¡Gracias por unirse a nosotros en hacer la diferencia en el mundo!

*Karla J. Minter*

Karla Minter  
Representante de Relaciones  
Eclesiales

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

[www.MennoniteMission.net](http://www.MennoniteMission.net) Línea Gratuita: 1-866-866-2872

## 2021 REPORT TO CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE

### MHS Vision

MHS is the go-to leader for integrating faith and work in health and human services.

### MHS Mission

Anchored in Anabaptist values, MHS inspires and strengthens health and human service ministries to fulfill their missions.

MHS serves members in the following states where CDC congregations are located:

- Florida
- Illinois
- Indiana
- Iowa
- Michigan
- Ohio
- Virginia

### Activities

- Our 2020 Mennonite Health Assembly had to be cancelled due to the pandemic and our 2021 Mennonite Health Assembly was held online from Tuesday, March 9 – Thursday, March 11. Sessions were from noon to 3:00 p.m. daily. Keynote speakers included Laura van Dernoot Lipsky, founder and director of The Trauma Stewardship Institute and author of *Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others*, Ted Swartz, playwright and actor, and Philip Gulley, a Quaker pastor, writer and speaker.
- The pandemic has been a disruptive force for everyone, but our member organizations have been hit particularly hard. They have faced increased costs for personal protective equipment, testing and changes in staffing. They have also faced challenges in staff retention and recruitment as well as the stress of constant vigilance. In some places, they've faced cases of COVID including deaths of residents and/or staff.
- In 2020, MHS added a strategic initiative to advance diversity, equity and inclusion.
- MHS Consulting continues to serve MHS members and nonmembers in the health and human services arena; primarily providing resources in governance, executive search, executive coaching, interim placement, strategic planning and positioning and operational, financial and market assessments.
- MHS provides monthly webinars on a variety of topics. These webinars are free and open to anyone that is interested [in the topic](#).
- In 2020, MHS began a monthly video podcast on *Leading*, and added a monthly emailed periodical called *The Brief* which provides resources for professional development.

### For Thanksgiving and Prayer

- Continued prayer for staffing retention and recruitment in the pandemic environment. 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 financial gifts, gifts in kind, prayer and volunteer support of community members who have supported our member organizations during this incredibly challenging time of pandemic.

Submitted by Karen Lehman, President/CEO

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



## 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, matching 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% off! Check out our upcoming offerings: [ambs.edu/onecourse](https://ambs.edu/onecourse)
- **Experience AMBS:** Talk with students, faculty and staff and learn what AMBS has to offer! [ambs.edu/visit](https://ambs.edu/visit)

### Center for Faith Formation and Culture

- **!Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth:** Students in grades 10–12 can explore ministry and theology, grow in spiritual practices and listen for God's call through a summer congregational internship and a Group Experience. Participants receive a \$1,000 stipend. Tap a shoulder! [ambs.edu/explore](https://ambs.edu/explore)

### AMBS students from CDC congregations

- **Master of Divinity:** Debbie Bledsoe (Raleigh), Billy Funk (Silverwood), Kajsa Herrstrom (First – Urbana), Sibonokuhle Ncube (Eighth Street)
- **MA in Christian Formation:** Jon Zirkle (Assembly)
- **MA: Theology and Global Anabaptism:** Sandra Vielman (Hively)
- **Journey participants/mentors:** Charles Baraka/Duane Beachey (Madison), Jan Croyle (First – Wadsworth)/Marilyn Rossiter (Summit), Steve Mares/Cyneatha Millsaps (Community)

**AMBS Board member:** John Daniels (Covenant)

**AMBS statistics:** In September 2020, 128 graduate students were enrolled at AMBS — 92 admitted students and 36 guest students. Eighty-two were from the U.S., nine were Canadian, and 37 were international students. The Journey program has 24 students in Canada, the U.S. and Southeast Asia.

### Lifelong learning

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

- **Online short courses:** Join the forum discussions in these six-week online courses:
  - Exploring Anabaptist History and Theology
  - Exploring Peace and Justice in the Bible
  - Understanding Anabaptist Approaches to Scripture: What's Different and Why?
  - Transforming Congregational Conflict and Communication
  - A Worship Leader's Intro to *Voices Together*[ambs.edu/shortcourses](https://ambs.edu/shortcourses)
- **Pastors and Leaders 2022** (Feb. 21–24)  
[ambs.edu/pastorsandleaders](https://ambs.edu/pastorsandleaders)
- **Journey: A Missional Leadership Development Program:** This two-and-a-half-year nondegree program offers mentor-mentee partnerships, distance-learning opportunities and community support. [ambs.edu/journey](https://ambs.edu/journey)
- **Spiritual Direction Seminars:** Cultivate your ministry of spiritual direction. [ambs.edu/seminars](https://ambs.edu/seminars)
- **Invite AMBS!** Faculty and staff are available to interact with you via videoconference on topics such as trauma-informed caregiving, intercultural competence, undoing racism, leadership for God's reconciling mission, and more. [ambs.edu/invite](https://ambs.edu/invite)



## 2021 Report to Central District Conference

Bluffton University is excited to launch our 2020-25 strategic plan. This work is vital to Bluffton's mission commitments to faith development, peace building and social justice as we prepare our students to lead and serve in our region and the world.

At the core is a vision statement which frames our overarching goals for the next five years.

### VISION STATEMENT

*"Bluffton University will become a leader in community-responsive academic programs and experiential learning that focus on well-being and emotional intelligence; our students will graduate as discerning thinkers with resilient hearts for social justice and advocacy."*

This year, we are focusing on four key initiatives:

### THE BLUFFTON BLUEPRINT

These four general education experiences are carefully crafted to help our students develop resiliency and emotional intelligence. Featuring both traditional learning and experiential components, each course supports one of Bluffton's enduring values of Discovery, Community, Respect and Service.

### VIRTUE-DRIVEN ATHLETICS

As an NCAA DIII school, Bluffton coaches and student athletes not only perform well in competition, but focus their team culture around character building, community and service. As part of our Virtue-Driven Athletics program, we will lift up habits of excellence and develop a shared framework that all of our athletes will encounter.

### DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Tyson Goings '01 was recently appointed to the newly created role of director of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). He, along with a faculty/staff committee, are developing priorities to support our student-focused, peace-filled mission. For this academic year, they are especially focused on providing a welcoming environment and increasing support and advocacy for Black students, faculty and staff.

### CORPORATE AND EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

We are growing a network of Corporate and Education Partnerships in northwest Ohio to support the workforce development needs of our region with values-based education. These partnerships provide 20% tuition discounts to benefit-eligible employees (and their immediate family members) of our partner corporations and K-12 schools for degree-completion and master's degree programs.

### Thank you!

Bluffton University currently enrolls **seven students from Central District Conference churches**. Church Matching Scholarship support is \$4,000 for 2020-21.

CDC representatives on Bluffton's Board of Trustees include **Annette Heslep**, First Mennonite, Bluffton, Ohio; **Heather Reichenbach**, Eighth Street Mennonite, Goshen, Ind.; **Jane Roeschley**, Mennonite Church of Normal, Normal, Ill.; and **Tim Stried**, Columbus Mennonite, Columbus, Ohio.

## ENDURING VALUES

DISCOVERY  
COMMUNITY  
RESPECT  
SERVICE

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

For more information, contact  
**Hans Houshower**  
Special Assistant to the  
President for Grants, Church  
Relations and Major Gifts  
[houshowerh@bluffton.edu](mailto:houshowerh@bluffton.edu)

Our academic year started out different than usual with a high-flex delivery of courses. Faculty and students participate in a combination of in-person, and virtual formats. We hold a weekly virtual lunch to maintain community when we can't be physically together. Our Tuesday seminary chapel gatherings are live streamed at 11:00 a.m. on the Seminary Facebook page. Please join us for our chapel gathering!

### **2021 School for Leadership Training: January 11-15**

We held our first virtual School for Leadership Training (SLT) the week of January 11. This was our 52<sup>nd</sup> annual SLT. The theme was “*From Surviving to Thriving...God Breathes Fresh Hope*” with speakers Meghan Larissa Good, David Fitch and Michael Gulker. Having “breath” in the theme drew both on COVID (how it spreads) and the movement for racial justice (“I can't breathe”). God's breath brings hope as the church works and responds to both.

Visit <https://emu.edu/seminary/slt/> to view the keynote recordings

### **Seminary Options**

Consider pursuing seminary studies. We offer a Graduate Certificate in Christian Studies, MDiv, MA in Christian Leadership, and MA in Religion.

### **Join a fall seminary course**

(join virtually; face-to-face options to be determined)

#### **Book of Isaiah**

#### **Formation in God's Story**

#### **Missio Dei**

#### **Living Theology**

#### **Anabaptism Today**

#### **Introduction to Spiritual Guidance**

#### **Youth Ministry**

#### **Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)**

Visit <https://emu.edu/seminary/courses/> for more information about classes.

### **Spring Graduation**

EMS awarded Master of Divinity, Master of Arts in Religion and Master of Arts in Christian Leadership degrees to the graduation class of 2021 in an online service May 9. The honorable Deanna Reed, mayor of Harrisonburg delivered the commencement address. Seminary Class president, Carmen Miller, (MDiv) was one of the commencement student speakers.

Seminary Baccalaureate was held in a high flex model on Saturday, May 8 with the theme “Drawn by love, Jesus calls us” and the scripture focus of John 13:34-35, John 15:15. Seminary associate dean, Dr. Nancy Heisey, was 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**





*Prepared to serve and  
lead in a global context*

SUMMER 2021

CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE

EMU ANNUAL REPORT

## Greetings from President Huxman

Greetings to our many congregational communities across the Church. I write these reflections in the last week of January. Winter is on the wane. Light is replacing darkness, and our Spring Semester has begun with signs of health, beauty and wonder.

Last week dozens of students, faculty and staff responded to the question: “What is your greatest hope for 2021?” Their heart felt words, accompanied by beautiful photos of the EMU campus, can be found [here](#). Enjoy this reflective and spirited anthem of hope from our EMU community.

We are blessed with some key indicators of good health in 2021:

- Our COVID antigen testing of all residential students was a tremendous success two weeks ago-- 99% tested negative on successive move-in days. And yet we are ever mindful and humbled by the ability of the virus to change course in a moment's notice. Our basketball teams are taking a 10-day pause in games as per NCAA guidelines due to some new positive cases this week. All 19 sports are in action this spring.
- Our student retention rate from fall to spring is exceptionally strong (91%). Students have voiced great enthusiasm to be returning to campus after 7 weeks away.
- Our sense of community and care for one another in spring and fall 2020 was rated well ahead of many of our peer colleges and universities on a recent national student survey that measured campus connectedness.
- Our calling as a peace and justice university is on display in robust ways. We hired our first executive director of diversity, equity and inclusion, Dr. Jackie Font-Guzman. You can learn more about her [here](#). Our MLK Day activities were robust (12 events) and well attended by the campus community and beyond. Next week, as we enter Black History month, we continue our important education around racial justice.
- Our fundraising efforts are running ahead of last year-- 4% overall and 3% annual fund—and we had a good year last year! This is just amazing in the midst of a pandemic. We are so thankful for our many generous supporters who choose to invest in us with joy and enthusiasm. I invite you to check out our [Forward Together campaign](#).

Indeed, “*hope springs eternal*,” as poet Alexander Pope first penned. The holiness of hope can be found in the courageous call of the Magi—our theme for Opening Convocation. It is an enduring story of light over darkness—of God's inbreaking love for us—if we just pay attention. It is a counter-cultural story as relevant to our day as to the day wise stargazers followed a bright light to worship the Christ child and chose another path home.

May the God of hope fill you with joy and peace.

## 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.*

### College in pandemic times

Students returned to the Goshen College campus with new procedures and guidelines for preventing the spread of COVID-19. President Rebecca Stoltzfus welcomed students - some in the church-chapel, but most joining virtually - to the 2020-21 academic year during a convocation, in which she spoke about passionate learning during a pandemic.

She spoke about her experience as a new student at Goshen College 42 years ago, waffling between majors, but ultimately learning that whatever she chose, it would involve hard work. She talked about her passions, including keeping students safe, anti-racism work, creating honest conversations in our community, and cultivating a deep sense of joy, vibrant faith and fun. She also discussed what the upcoming year will look like, and how it is the responsibility of everyone in the community to keep each other safe. Following the convocation, students took part in a physically-distanced version of the annual applause tunnel, a 20-year tradition with a cheering tunnel formed by faculty and staff, then seniors, juniors, sophomores and finally the first-year students.

### Conference connections

This academic year we have 40 students enrolled from 15 Central District Mennonite Conference congregations. Those churches generously pledged \$116,187 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.

### 2020-21 Campus ministries theme

Upon reflecting on this academic year's campus-wide core value, passionate learners, I gave some thought about how that could be applied to our faith. At Goshen College, we want our students, faculty, and staff to learn, listen, work, and pray with passion. What does all this passion lead to? I believe it leads to something vibrant, or rather, a vibrant sort of faith, which is the Campus Ministries theme for 2020-2021.

John 10:10 says "The thief only comes to steal and destroy, but I come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (NIV) In an academic year that is surely like none other, what does it mean to have life "to the full?"

This is where I make the connection to vibrant faith. Many of us are looking for a faith that is able to withstand

obstacles, overcome adversity, and weather storms. However, to truly have that kind of spirituality one would almost need to have a "perfect" faith. I don't think that's what God is looking for. A vibrant faith adapts to adversity. A vibrant faith looks to community for help in overcoming obstacles. And when storms come, a vibrant faith knows when to take shelter, or "lie low to the ground" as John O'Donoghue says, and wait until the tumult has passed.

A vibrant faith isn't perfect, but we aren't a perfect people. A vibrant faith is passionate, strong, courageous, and has endurance. This doesn't mean it never falters, never grows weak, or is never strained. A vibrant faith is a commitment to keep coming back.

As we move forward in this academic year, may our "passionate" learning give way to vibrant faith, and in its vibrance, serve as a light to others.

-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).

### **Colegio en Tiempos de Pandemia**

Los estudiantes regresaron al campus con nuevos procedimientos y pautas para prevenir el propagamiento de Covid-19. La Presidenta Rebecca Stoltzfus le dio la bienvenida a los estudiantes - algunos dentro de la iglesia, pero la mayoría fue virtualmente- al año académico 2020-21, con una convocatoria, en la que ella habló sobre la pasión a la educación durante una pandemia.

Ella habló sobre su experiencia como una estudiante en Goshen College hace 42 años, parlotando entre carreras, pero ultimadamente aprendiendo que cualquier cosa que ella decidiera, iba a involucrar trabajo duro. Ella habló sobre sus pasiones, incluyendo la seguridad de los estudiantes, trabajo antirracista, creando conversaciones honestas en nuestra comunidad, y cultivando un sentimiento profundo de alegría, una fe vibrante, y diversión. Ella también discutió cómo se vería el año entrante, y como la responsabilidad es de todos en la comunidad para mantener a cada uno seguro. Después de la convocatoria, los estudiantes participaron en una versión con distancia física del túnel de los aplausos formado por la facultad y empleados, y luego los estudiantes de último año, luego los de tercer año, los de segundo año, y finalmente los de primer año.

### **Conecciones de la conferencia**

Este año académico tenemos 40 estudiantes de 15 congregaciones de la Conferencia del Distrito Central Menonita. Estas iglesias generosamente prometieron \$116,187 en ayuda estudiantil congregacional para este año académico. El programa de Goshen College Church Aid Matching Grant provee la igualación de dólar-por-dólar por los primeros \$1,000 por estudiante y una igualación de 1 a 4 después de eso, hasta una matrícula completa.

### **Tema del campus para el 2020-21**

Después de reflexionar sobre el tema central del campus este año, aprendices apasionados, pensé un poco sobre cómo podría aplicarse a nuestra fe. En Goshen College, nosotros queremos que nuestros estudiantes, facultad, y trabajadores aprendan, que escuchen, que trabajen, y que recen con pasión. ¿A que conduce toda esta pasión? Creo que conduce a algo vibrante, o más bien, un tipo de fe vibrante, que es el tema del ministro del campus para 2020-21.

Juan 10:10 dice "El Ladrón no viene sino para hurtar y matar y destruir; yo he venido para que tengan vida, y

para que la tengan en abundancia" (NIV) En un año académico que no es como otros, que significa tener vida "en abundancia"?

Aquí es donde hago la conexión a la fe vibrante. Muchos de nosotros estamos buscando una fe que pueda resistir obstáculos, superar adversidad, y aguantar tormentas. Sin embargo, para poder tener ese tipo de espiritualidad uno tendría que tener una fe "perfecta". No creo que eso sea lo que Dios está buscando. Una Fe vibrante se adapta a la adversidad. Una fe vibrante busca ayuda en la comunidad para superar obstáculos. Y cuando las tormentas vienen, una fe vibrante sabe cuándo buscar refugio, o "Acostarse cerca del suelo" como John O'Donoghue dice, y esperar hasta que el tumulto haya pasado.

Una fe vibrante no es perfecta, pero tampoco somos personas perfectas. Una fe vibrante es apasionada, fuerte, valiente, y tiene resistencia. Esto no significa que nunca pueda dudar, que nunca se vuelve débil, o que nunca se vuelva tenso. una fe vibrante es un compromiso que regresaremos.

A medida que avancemos en este año académico, nuestro apasionado aprendizaje ceda a una fe vibrante, y que en su vibrancia, sirva como luz para otros.

-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).



# Anabaptist Disabilities Network

## Annual Report 2020



In 2020, Anabaptist Disabilities Network:

- Continued to provide matching funds for congregations to increase accessibility through our Barrier-Free Grant program. Projects have included adaptive playground equipment and restroom renovation.
- Provided food relief for people with disabilities during pandemic in the Madurai district of the Tamil Nadu province in India.
- Offered a webinar in October on *Mutual Care in Difficult Times*.
- Published a new *Mental Health Resource for Congregations*, PDF available for download.

In addition, we published:

- *Connections* Newsletter (Spring – Disability across Cultures, Summer – Aging and Disability, Fall – Disability, Racism, and Privilege)
- *Opening Doors* blog articles

We have 10 field associates (3 new), professionals who bring their wisdom and experience to our organization. *Staff and associates are available for congregational accessibility assessments, consultations, preaching, classes or workshops.*

We said “goodbye” with appreciation to our executive director, Eldon Stoltzfus, who resigned for health reasons.

Jeanne Davies was named our new executive director.

Hannah Thompson was hired as program director and will begin January 5, 2021.

We are looking forward to:

- *Do We Want to Get Well? Healing What Divides Us*, a webinar with Amy Julia Becker co-sponsored with the Church of the Brethren Discipleship Ministries on January 21.
- Providing accessibility coordination at MennoCon 21

2020 annual budget: \$79,000. We’re grateful for support from individuals and congregations.

We invite congregations interested in increasing their accessibility to consider designating a congregational disability advocate or becoming a partner congregation.

<http://www.anabaptistdisabilitiesnetwork.org> • 574-323-1362 • [adnet@adnetonline.org](mailto:adnet@adnetonline.org)



## MCC and Central District Conference Connections

- MCC speakers shared during virtual worship services at Milwaukee Mennonite and Silverwood Mennonite (Goshen)
- Congregations used online resources to host virtual celebration Sundays for MCC's centennial in 2020
- Individuals and congregations supported relief sale activities in Goshen, Kidron and the Twin Cities
- A family from Hively Avenue Mennonite (Elkhart) hosted an International Volunteer Exchange Program (IVEP) participant in 2020

Women from Sinisingi village, Odisha state, **India**, are adapting well to COVID-19 precautions by maintaining appropriate social distancing and wearing face masks while waiting to get drinking water in April 2020. MCC's partner Institute of Social Action and Research Activities (ISARA) installed a spring water harvest system in communities in Odisha state in 2014 using nearly 3,000 meters of piping. Later in 2018, communities had taken initiative to set up a water collection tank with a fixed tap system for easy access to the water. The water is mainly used for irrigation purposes, but communities also purify it with chlorine tablets before using the water for cooking and drinking. (ISARA photo/Jajati Pandit)



Upon receiving 550 gallons of hand sanitizer and 270,000 cloth face masks through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Kristin Overstreet, MCC Appalachia program coordinator, coordinated the distribution of these much-needed resources to the vulnerable communities in Kentucky and West Virginia where MCC's Sharing With Appalachia People (SWAP) program does home repair work. (Photo/Hannah Overstreet)



KENTUCKY

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. —Psalm 46:1 (NRSV)*



**We [now] have water in our village.**

*“Otherwise this pandemic could have had a more adverse impact on our lives.”*

—Padma Pradhan

Since 1920, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) 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.

While this past year didn't look like what any of us imagined, MCC is grateful for the many people like you who continue to support MCC in lots of ways.

Relief sales transitioned to online auctions and came up with creative ways to raise money like drive-thru food events and outdoor concerts. Thrift shop volunteers adapted to new guidelines to re-open safely.

Meat canning committees restructured their sites to can meat during a shortened season. People knotted comforters and put together kits at home to send to our material resources centers.

In a time when finances are uncertain for many, those of you who were able still gave generously to support MCC's programs around the world. MCC is grateful for the ongoing gifts of funds from CDC churches, whether through the conference office, My Coins Count, directly from individuals to MCC or by estate bequests.

Thanks to your generosity, MCC continues to address the threats of COVID-19 for some of the world's most vulnerable people through ongoing water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), health and food programs.

Thank you for partnering with MCC,  
Eric Kurtz,

MCC Great Lakes executive director  
Peter Martin,

MCC Great Lakes Board Representative  
for Central District Conference

**51**  
countries

**511**  
partners

**619**  
projects

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), a worldwide ministry of Anabaptist churches, shares God's love and compassion for all in the name of Christ by responding to basic human needs and working for peace and justice. MCC envisions communities worldwide in right relationship with God, one another and creation.





## 2020 Annual Report to Area Conferences

Mennonite Men is the men's organization of Mennonite Church USA. All men in MC USA congregations are members of this body and are invited to participate in our ministries. Through the COVID-19 pandemic we found ways of joining God's restorative work in the world.

### Supporting New Churches with *JoinHands*

Despite the pandemic, we had our biggest year ever with JoinHands to help new churches acquire their first building. Thanks to the remarkable generosity of our donors, we extended \$170,000 to five congregations! Mennonite churches we assisted this year were all ethnic-racial congregations serving our African, Chin, Haitian and Latinx sisters and brothers. To learn more, visit [mennonitemen.org/joinhands](https://mennonitemen.org/joinhands)



### Promoting Healthy Masculinity with *JoinMen*

We continue to have positive responses to our book *Peaceful at Heart: Anabaptist Reflections on Healthy Masculinity*, produced with the Institute of Mennonite Studies. The Ontario office of

Mennonite Central Committee produced a study guide for this book and a video series based on *Peaceful at Heart* is being developed to help promote healthy masculinity.

For copies of this book and study guide, and to see other resources and retreats we provide for men, visit [mennonitemen.org/joinmen](https://mennonitemen.org/joinmen)



### Restoring God's Earth with *JoinTrees*

Last fall we launched our JoinTrees campaign to plant one million trees by 2030 to help restore the earth. Targeting the problem of climate change with



its harmful impacts on God's creation and people, we call on all ages and genders to participate in this campaign. We're working with households, congregations, and Mennonite organizations for this creation care campaign. Visit [MennoniteMen.org/JoinTrees](https://MennoniteMen.org/JoinTrees) for more information and how to get involved.

Thank you for supporting and participating in our ministries to serve God's restoration of the world.

Steve Thomas, U.S. Coordinator



## 2020 Informe Anual a las Conferencias Regionales

Mennonite Men es la organización de hombres de la Iglesia Menonita de EE. UU. Todos los hombres de las congregaciones de MC USA son miembros de este organismo y están invitados a participar en nuestros ministerios. A través de la pandemia de COVID-19, encontramos formas de unirnos a la obra restauradora de Dios en el mundo.

### Apoyando a las nuevas iglesias con *UnirManos*

A pesar de la pandemia, tuvimos nuestro año más grande con UnirManos, el programa para ayudar a las nuevas iglesias a adquirir su primer edificio. Gracias a la generosidad extraordinario de nuestros donantes, ¡otorgamos \$ 170,000 a cinco congregaciones! Las iglesias menonitas a las que asistimos este año fueron todas congregaciones étnico-raciales que sirven a nuestras hermanas y hermanos africanos, chin, haitianos y latinos. Para aprender más, visita [mennonitemen.org/joinhands](https://mennonitemen.org/joinhands)



### Promoviendo masculinidad saludable con *UnirHombres*

Seguimos recibiendo retroalimentación positiva a nuestro libro Peaceful at Heart: Anabaptist Reflections on Healthy Masculinity, producido con el Instituto de Estudios Menonitas. La oficina de Ontario de El Comité Central Menonita produjo una guía de estudio para este libro y se está desarrollando una serie de videos basados en Peaceful at Heart para ayudar a promover una masculinidad saludable.



Para obtener copias de este libro y guía de estudio, y para ver otros recursos y retiros que ofrecemos para hombres, visite [mennonitemen.org/joinmen](https://mennonitemen.org/joinmen).

### Restaurando la Tierra de Dios con *UnirArboles*

El otoño del año pasado lanzamos nuestra campaña UnirArboles para plantar un millón de árboles para 2030 para ayudar a restaurar la tierra. Para abordar



el problema del cambio climático con sus impactos dañinos a la creación de Dios y las personas, hacemos un llamado a personas de todas las edades y géneros a participar en esta campaña.

Estamos trabajando con familias, congregaciones y organizaciones menonitas para esta campaña de cuidado de la creación. Visite [MennoniteMen.org/JoinTrees](http://MennoniteMen.org/JoinTrees) para obtener más información y ver cómo participar.

Gracias por apoyar y participar en nuestros ministerios para servir a la restauración del mundo por parte de Dios.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Steve Thomas'.

Steve Thomas, U.S. Coordinator



2021

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 disclosure.
  - (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 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

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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



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.

CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE of MENNONITE CHURCH USA

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

**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.mennoworld.org/archived/2014/1/20/portrait-sundown-town/](http://www.mennoworld.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/)

## **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**

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<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 Scottdale 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](#), Scottdale, 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).

## **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.  
111

## 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

are not eligible for Continuation.) The process for Continuation is: The congregation must cancel Corinthian Plan coverage by submitting a completed Cancellation Form to Everence when the pastor ends employment (best to submit cancellation in advance of actual date), and then Continuation will be offered directly to the pastor. If the pastor elects Continuation they will be directly invoiced until their next assignment begins, they begin other coverage, become eligible for Medicare, or the maximum period of Continuation (18 months) is reached, whichever is earliest (if the pastor does not elect Continuation, medical coverage will end on the last day of the month in which the pastor ends employment). If the new congregation is participating with The Corinthian Plan, then coverage can be transferred to the new assignment. Otherwise, the pastor on Continuation may choose to remain on Continuation until they begin other coverage/is Medicare eligible, or the 18 month maximum for Continuation ends. Congregations will cover the cost of one month of insurance premium for Continuation of Coverage under The Corinthian Plan or coverage under another plan-after the congregational assignment is completed for the Transitional Pastor.

- 4) *Sabbatical*: In addition to the salary and benefit extension that covers regeneration time between assignments, congregations served by a transitional pastor will provide an amount equal to one month of regular salary for each 12 months of ministry, or fraction thereof, and prorated accordingly. Unused years toward a sabbatical in a long term congregation do not accrue when such a pastor becomes an II/T pastor, but years do accrue when an II/T pastor moves to the next assignment. This money will be placed in a sabbatical fund to be held in trust by the area conference office for that particular transitional pastor. The funds will be available for a sabbatical after several transitional assignments, based on actual accumulated service of 4 years. The home credentialing area conference will issue a 1099 for tax reporting purposes at the end of the tax year when sabbatical fund monies are disbursed to a transitional pastor. Sabbatical planning is to be done by the transitional pastor in consultation with the conference minister where his/her credential is held. In situations where these monies are not fully vested or claimed, the monies shall be forwarded to the Transitional Pastor Fund, referred to in item 3, B, 5 below.

5) *Expense Coverage*:

- a) Congregations are encouraged to recognize that above budget expenses will often be incurred during a transitional period for such items as curricular supplies, consultants' fees, specialized training, etc.
- b) Transitional pastors are expected to attend conference and denominational meetings, as are long-term pastors. The congregation will cover the expenses of attendance.
- c) In addition to travel costs of carrying out the pastoral duties, there are times when the transitional pastor will need to travel longer distances from home in order to carry out the assignment and incur additional travel/lodging expense. The receiving congregation should assume responsibility for these extra expenses.
- d) When a long distance commuting situation emerges, the congregation being served by the transitional pastor will assume responsibility for seeing that everything possible is done to limit commuting stressors. A transitional pastor should not incur financial liabilities for lodging or commuting costs, and should have a realistic work schedule that allows adequate time at home with family.

### **3. Conference Responsibilities**

#### **A. Employment Negotiations**



Conference leaders will serve in an advocacy role for the transitional pastor in salary and benefit negotiations. In situations where congregation/conference relationships are strained, conference leaders will advocate for the transitional pastor. When advocacy is absent, the transitional pastor needs to utilize her/his own resources to educate the congregation on the transition process. Conferences will encourage congregations to realize that interim periods are not the time to attempt to save financial resources by understaffing, since that results in transitional pastors devoting an inordinate amount of time to routine pastoral tasks.

#### **B. Inter Conference Cooperation**

Cooperating conferences are encouraged to communicate freely with each other so as to maximize stewardship of the limited availability of transitional pastors. This includes the following understandings:

- 1) Conferences may **contact** transitional pastors in other conferences regarding potential assignments.
- 2) Conferences will keep each other informed, upon request, of **availability dates** of their transitional pastors.
- 3) **Credential** recognition: see p. 2.
- 4) Conferences, in consultation with the transitional pastors group, will **establish criteria** to determine who is qualified to be included in a list of recommended transitional pastors.

##### **Possible criteria:**

- a) completion of a training experience deemed adequate by the conference minister in consultation with the transitional pastors group.
- b) completion of Interim Ministry Network's basic training or a year of supervised transitional ministry experience along with quarterly transitional pastors group participation which results in a recommendation by the supervisor who is an experienced/trained transitional pastor;
- c) regular participation in a transitional pastors support group;
- d) a commitment to continue in transitional pastor ministry, vis-à-vis using transitional ministry as an entry point into regular pastoral ministry or as a means of income between long term assignments.

#### **4. Development and Promotion**

##### **1) Constituency Education**

Transitional pastors, their support groups, conferences and the denomination are encouraged to make constituency education a priority through seminars and other conference and denominational venues. This includes helping congregations acknowledge the wisdom in seeking objective, outside counsel as a matter of basic congregational health at all times. Congregations are usually not the best judge in discerning their need regarding a transitional pastor or interim pastor assignment.

##### **2) Recruitment**

Transitional pastors, their support groups, conference and denominational leaders are encouraged to develop a specific plan for recruitment to increase the ranks of qualified transitional pastors. This will include a strategy for utilizing bi-vocational transitional pastors.

##### **3) Training**

The Transitional Pastor Group will be encouraged to provide regional training opportunities. Conferences and the denomination will work cooperatively in funding, promoting and recruiting, potential candidates for transitional pastor training events.

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

of insurance to a) the congregation where serving, or b) when the transitional pastor is between assignments, directly to the transitional pastor.]

8. In addition to the salary and benefit extension that covers regeneration time between assignments, congregations served by a transitional pastor will provide an amount equal to one month of regular salary for each 12 months of ministry, or fraction thereof, and prorated accordingly. This money will be placed in a sabbatical fund to be held in trust by the transitional pastor's home conference office for that particular transitional pastor.
9. Congregations are encouraged to recognize that above budget expenses will often be incurred during a transitional period for such items as curricular supplies, consultants' fees, specialized training, etc.
10. Provide space and priority for the transitional pastor to consult with your Conference Minister and to attend conference events, appropriate churchwide meetings, and pastor-peer meetings. The congregation will cover the expenses of attendance.
11. When a long distance commuting situation emerges, the congregation being served by the transitional pastor will assume responsibility for seeing that everything possible is done to limit commuting stressors. A transitional pastor should not incur financial liabilities for lodging or commuting costs, and should have a realistic work schedule that allows adequate time at home with family.
12. Congregations need to realize that transitional periods are not the time to attempt to save financial resources by understaffing, since that results in the transitional pastor devoting an inordinate amount of time to routine pastoral tasks.
13. Be willing to postpone or delay the pastoral search process until adequate attention is given to the issues at hand. The transitional pastor will be able to assist this discernment, and suggest a process for the congregation during its search. The Conference Minister should be brought in for this process.
14. The transitional pastor will not transfer membership to your congregation. They may become associate members for the period they serve your congregation. The TP's ordination will remain with their home conference.

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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 supportWe 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***

2021

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 net 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.

## 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