



Central  
District  
Conference

A conference of  
Mennonite Church USA

# focus

December 2021

KNOWING CHRIST'S LOVE—ANSWERING GOD'S CALL

## Sacred Listening explores congregational stories

Central District Conference leaders are embarking on a Sacred Listening project. With the goal of visiting and hearing from all congregations in the conference in 2022, Sacred Listening will help us understand each other better and celebrate what God is doing in our congregations.

“We are confident that the stories shared will strengthen our faith in God as well as our relationships with one another across the

conference,” the orienting document says.

Using the approach of Appreciative Inquiry, Sacred Listening is a carefully designed process to ask questions of each congregation (see questions below) and listen to the stories that follow. Then taking several months to study the responses, the board of directors trusts that a stronger sense will emerge for how the conference can serve congregations and members. Sharing some of the stories—with

### Sacred Listening questions

These same questions will be asked in the same order during all of the congregational visits.

- 1** Tell a story about a time when you were especially excited or grateful to be a part of your church.
- 2** The mission of Central District Conference is summarized as “Knowing Christ’s love ... Answering God’s call.” Share a story or two that you feel demonstrates God’s love within your congregation.
- 3** We “support missional partnerships that make God’s reign visible.”\* How are you living out your congregation’s vision in the community around you? Can you share a story that demonstrates this?
- 4** We want to “call and nurture wise, dynamic and compassionate Anabaptist leadership.”\* How does your congregation nurture your gifts and the gifts of others?
- 5** We want to be communities in which “grace-filled relationships flourish.”\* Can you share an experience when your congregation was blessed by its relationships with other CDC churches, or other communities such as camps or colleges?
- 6** Our Mennonite Church USA vision calls us to be communities of God’s “healing and hope.” As you envision your future as such a Spirit-led community, what would that look like in your context?

\*From the Central District Conference Mission Statement: [mcusacdc.org/resources](https://mcusacdc.org/resources)

permission—will help all of us know and value each other along with the common threads, diverse views and distinct gifts within the conference.

### Background for Sacred Listening

CDC is more than 60 years old, formed from two conferences that were older yet. We are now 48 congregations in 11 states. While constantly changing, the conference has experienced more change than usual over the last decade and especially the last two or three years. Sacred Listening grows out of the awareness that these changes are shaping us and we want to better understand who we are now.

The changes identified by the CDC board of directors include:

- We have welcomed nine new congregations into CDC over the past five years.
- A number of potential emerging communities of faith have expressed interest in CDC, and we are exploring how best to nurture them.
- Our congregational polity allows for diversity, and in the conference we continue to recognize and appreciate different theological understandings, even as congregations increasingly affirm full participation of LGBTQ people in membership, marriage and ministry.
- We have all learned new ways to relate across distance during the pandemic, and we all continue to discern what to carry forward into whatever our “new normal” will be.

CDC’s theme for 2021-22 is “Tending Transformation.” This recognizes the many ways our denomination, conference, churches and communities are undergoing transformation. One way we “tend” is by paying “attention.” If we are Tending Transformation, we watch and listen attentively as we expect to be stretched. Sacred Listening is one way we pay attention to the movement of God’s Spirit among us.

### To participate in Sacred Listening

Each congregation will receive a letter with information about how to participate. The congregation will be asked to choose a Sunday in 2022 when two or three people representing CDC can join in worship and then spend time listening—ranging from one and a half hours

to two and a half hours. This is not only for congregational leaders; the hope is to hear from a wide variety of people in the congregation.

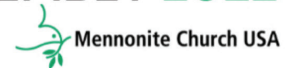
If you wish to be a part of a listening team that visits congregations, contact Emma Hartman in the CDC office: 800.662.2264 or [office@mcusacdc.org](mailto:office@mcusacdc.org). The project coordinators are looking for people to serve in one of three roles: facilitator, note taker or sacred listener.

### The CDC Board of Directors and Staff

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SPECIAL SESSION OF THE

## DELEGATE ASSEMBLY 2022



### Mennonite Church USA delegate session

Mennonite Church USA is planning a special delegate session, May 27-30, in Kansas City, Mo. This is an in-person meeting with no option for online participation. For information, including the four resolutions that are agenda for the meeting, visit [www.mennoniteusa.org/resource-portal/resource/delegate-resources-special-session-may-2022](http://www.mennoniteusa.org/resource-portal/resource/delegate-resources-special-session-may-2022)

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