

Seminary honors Leonard Wiebe with Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition

Leonard Wiebe, of Goshen, Ind., is one of two to receive the 2021 Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. Leonard, a credentialed leader in Central District Conference, is a retired pastor and church planter.

The Elkhart, Ind., seminary of Mennonite Church USA honored Leonard and the second recipient, Frederick Speckeen of Prince George, British Columbia, with Zoom receptions in early December.

Leonard grew up on a farm in Whitewater, Kan. He studied at the University of Kansas in Lawrence and Bethel College in North Newton, with two years in between for alternative service at a polio hospital in California. While at Bethel, Leonard met Joan, now his wife, and they became friends with Erland Waltner, a Bible professor at Bethel who later served as professor and president of Mennonite Biblical Seminary. Waltner officiated the Wiebes' wedding—the day after their graduation—and encouraged them to attend the seminary, which was located in Chicago at that time.

It wasn't the first time someone had identified Leonard's gifts for ministry. While at the polio hospital, a young woman he had taken care of told him he ought to become a pastor. His older sister, Gertrude Roten (who later taught Greek at AMBS), used to call him "her little preacher boy," he recalled. The Wiebes followed this call and enrolled at MBS in Chicago in fall 1957.



In 1958, when Mennonite Biblical Seminary and Goshen (Ind.) Biblical Seminary began a cooperative program known as Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries in Elkhart, the Wiebes relocated there. During their third year of seminary studies, they got a call from First Mennonite Church of Berne (Ind.) to plant a church in Fort Wayne, Ind. They accepted the invitation and began commuting to Fort Wayne on weekends, holding worship services and summer Bible school in a parsonage purchased by the Berne congregation.

Following Leonard's graduation in 1960, the Wiebes moved to the parsonage to continue forming Maplewood Mennonite Church (now a CDC congregation). The Wiebes pastored there until 1974. During this time, Leonard also completed a Master of Sacred Theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York (1970), and they had three children.

A pastorate at Faith Mennonite Church, Newton, Kan., and church planting in Aurora, Colo., followed. With the financial and prayerful support of many congregations (including Berne and Maplewood), they established Peace Mennonite Community Church in Aurora, serving there until 1998.

After returning to northern Indiana, Leonard served as a congregational coach for several Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference churches. The Wiebes now are members of Eighth Street Mennonite Church in Goshen.

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AMBS honors Leonard Wiebe (continued)

The AMBS annual recognition honors alumni with an outstanding record of faithful ministry and service. “As we looked through this year’s nominations, we were impressed by the rich service that Fred and Leonard have given over their lifetimes,” Janeen Bertsche Johnson, AMBS alumni director, reflected. “We hope their stories inspire others to see seminary education as a vital gift for whatever professional path they may take.”

Located in Elkhart, Indiana, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary is a learning community with an Anabaptist vision, offering theological education for learners both on campus and at a distance, including a wide array of lifelong learning programs—all with the goal of educating followers of Jesus Christ to be leaders for God’s reconciling mission in the world.

www.ambs.edu 

This article is adapted from a release by Annette Brill Bergstresser/AMBS. Photo by Annette Brill Bergstresser.

Syracuse faith community members call attention to deaths by U.S. drones

Sarah and Jonathan Nahar and members of their household in Syracuse, N.Y., joined in coordinated actions across New York state, witnessing to recent deaths of innocent people on the day of the Feast of the Holy Innocents (December 28).


In their Facebook post, they noted that the Feast of the Holy Innocents “is a day that remembers the young children of Bethlehem slaughtered by Herod soon after Jesus’ birth because Herod felt threatened that another king would arise to challenge him.”

The December 28 activities remembered “Holy Innocents that have died from US drone attacks. Multiple media outlets covered the coordinated actions across New York as well as recent information from the Pentagon about the patterns of immense failure in the U.S. drone program. Whistleblower Daniel Hale made public some documents about the huge numbers of innocent people (including many children) slaughtered in their homes or yards.”

Sarah added that being 39.5 weeks pregnant helped her feel “with all the mothers who have lost children to drone attacks.”

More information about the deaths due to drones is available at bankillerdrones.org. A section of the website includes suggestions of what others can do with actions, petitions and donations.

Sarah and Jonathan are part of a new community of faith in Syracuse, N.Y., while Sarah is completing doctoral studies there.

Their faith community is one of several emerging and new faith communities with whom Central District Conference is in conversation as they seek counsel and consider linking with the conference. 



On December 28, the Feast of the Holy Innocents, Sarah Nahar (left) and Jonathan Nahar (right), together with Tomi Nagai-Rothe and Jeanne Kambara, witness to deaths by U.S. drones.

Advent vignettes

Atlanta (Ga.) Mennonite Church

December 19, 2021

Excerpts of sermon by Anton Flores

Mary's song says, "My soul magnifies the Lord. My spirit rejoices in God, my savior, for God has looked with favor on the lowliness of God's servant.

"God scatters the proud. God brings down the powerful from their thrones; God lifts up the lowly. God fills up the hungry with good things. God sends the rich away empty."

Is this good news? Is it good news depending on which side of the equation you are on; which end of the spectrum you fall on? Is it good news for everyone?


I would say that the salvation that comes for those who have known layers upon layers of both external and internalized oppression is a glorious thing. But it also is good for those of us who are caged by our privilege by being both active and passive beneficiaries of the systems

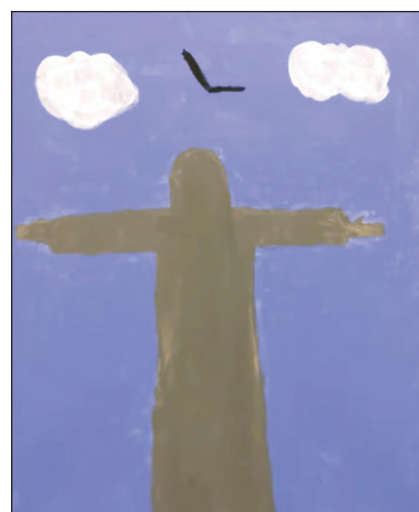
of oppression. It requires humility It sounds like God emptying Godself and taking on the humble form of a servant.

When I taught social work, I would teach a whole class on cultural competence. Now we understand the shortcomings of cultural competence, and instead what we need to practice is cultural humility. The National Institutes of Health defines cultural humility as a life-long process of self-reflection and self-critique whereby the individual not only learns about another culture, but starts with an examination of one's own beliefs and cultural identities.



Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Silverwood Mennonite Church invited youth in the congregation to dare to imagine, following the theme of Advent worship resources in *Leader*. During a painting night, they imagined God's robe—what it might look like and what it means for us. Here are several examples. For more, watch the video on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYXzmzdV1UQ> 



Mid-year meetings planned as Zoom gatherings

Two mid-year meetings for the conference will be hosted via Zoom. The focus will be on the theme of Tending Transformation as we hear from several congregations about how they are paying attention to how God is calling them to be transformed in their communities. We will talk together about exciting things happening in the conference.

Participants may choose to join a Zoom video session on either **February 5 or March 5, 9:30–11:30 am**, Eastern time. More information and a link for registration will be sent soon.



Annual Meeting planned for June in Goshen, Ind.

Central District Conference is planning to host the Annual Meeting in Goshen, Ind., on **June 23 to 25**. The site will be College Mennonite Church and Goshen College.

Local hosts will be some of the CDC congregations in the region: Florence Church of the Brethren Mennonite, Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship, Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, Keller Park Church, and Southside Fellowship.

Plans are for an in-person gathering; however, if necessary due to COVID concerns, the meeting will be switched to Zoom.

Mennonite Church USA calls special delegate session

Mennonite Church USA (MC USA) is calling a special session for delegates, May 27–30, 2022, in Kansas City, Mo. This session will be conducted only in person; online participation will not be available.

Each congregation that is part of Central District Conference—and thus part of Mennonite Church USA—may send one delegate for each 100 members or portion of 100 members. Each congregation also may send an additional youth delegate (between the ages of 16 and 21). Mutual aid funds are available to help with costs for congregations with fewer than 100 members who have been part of the denomination for at least five years.


Four resolutions are scheduled for deliberation:

- Clarification on Mennonite Church USA

Polity and the Role of the Membership Guidelines of Mennonite Church USA

- MC USA For Justice Resolution
- MC USA Accessibility Resolution
- A Resolution for Repentance and Transformation

Copies of the resolutions and additional information about the session are available on the MC USA website: www.mennoniteusa.org/resource-portal/resource/delegate-resources-special-session-may-2022/

MC USA plans webinars on the four resolutions, the role of delegates in MC USA, expectations for the Special Session of the Delegate Assembly and more. Watch for announcements of the dates and times for these webinars. 

Doug's Mug: Emotions

by Doug Luginbill, Conference Minister

I'm not one to make New Year's resolutions. Yet I've had an occasional nudge to become better attuned to my emotions. I shared this at one of our Pastor Peer gatherings recently. I noted that we seem to be living in anxious times, with the pandemic, political polarization,



extreme weather, etc. More personally, I am working with five active pastoral search committees. An additional four or five will begin sometime this year. The number of pastoral candidates is small. This causes a bit of anxiety as I wonder how to advise and

support search committees. As I was sharing this, Eliza Wertenberger, one of our licensed chaplains serving at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, asked if I had heard of the "Feelings Wheel." (www.simplemost.com/feeling-wheel-will-help-better-describe-emotions) I had heard of it but wasn't familiar with it. So, I checked it out. (I encourage you to do so as well.)

I learned that anxiety is considered a secondary emotion which is connected to "scared" as the primary emotion. On the wheel, "overwhelmed" is a tertiary emotion, connected to both scared and anxious. Makes some sense. I'm a bit scared about the future; the future of the church, the future of democracy, the future of our climate, etc. Sometimes that fear spills over to anxiety and occasionally to feeling overwhelmed.

As I was scanning the feelings wheel, two things suddenly jumped out to me. First, if you switch two letters in "scared" you get "sacred." In our sacred wisdom text, the Bible, when angels show up, often the first words out of their mouths are, "Do not fear!" Our Advent and Christmas texts are filled with these words. Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, the shepherds—they are all told, "Do not fear." God's presence is

a non-anxious presence. Perhaps one of the greatest gifts we, as people of faith, can offer the world right now is a non-anxious presence. This isn't a put-your-head-in-the-sand approach to the things that might overwhelm us. Rather, it is an expectation that God is indeed present and on this journey with us. That's what the incarnation, the birth of Christ, is all about! Part of the sacred work of God is transforming fear into the non-anxious presence of God. God is with us on this journey as we engage with the challenges before us.

The second thing that jumped out at me as I perused the feeling wheel was that the primary emotion "scared" is right next to "joyful." And, at the second level, "anxious" is next to "excited." And finally, at the third level, "overwhelmed" is next to "daring."

Joyful, excited, daring—these are some feelings that I'm also experiencing. I'm joyful to be part of the Anabaptist and Mennonite stream of faith. I believe our focus on generous hospitality, non-violence rooted in the life and teachings of Jesus, and a "true evangelical faith (which) cannot lie dormant..." (see *Voices Together* #921 or Google it) are gifts for which the world longs. I'm excited to enter into a Sacred Listening process with our CDC congregations over the next year. I'm feeling daring as we seek to add a conference minister position that will give focus to new and emerging communities of faith. I'm also feeling daring as we seek additional funding to support the new position as well as providing financial support for emerging communities of faith.

I don't know how intentional it was of the creator of the feeling wheel to put these emotions side by side, but I find wisdom in recognizing that joy and fear often walk side by side, accompanying us along life's journey.

May God's constant presence, sacred fear, non-anxious joy, and daring faith fill and overflow your mug! ☺

Licensing and installations



Paula Luginbill

On Sunday, December 19, Shalom Mennonite Congregation, Harrisonburg, Va., installed two members of the pastoral team.

Krista Showalter Ehst (left) was installed as Pastor of Pastoral Care. She was previously ordained in the Mosaic Conference.

Georgia Metz (right) was licensed toward ordination and installed as Pastor of Formation.

Both pastors began their service on December 1. ☉

Financial report

December 31, 2021

Year-to-date contributed

support \$134,588

Year-to-date plan \$119,250

Difference between giving and plan \$15,338

Year-to-date expenses \$107,995

Year-to-date plan \$123,525

Difference between expenses
and plan -\$15,530

The Central District Conference financial report at the end of the 2021 calendar year is very positive, with giving substantially ahead of and expenditure comfortably under budgeted amounts. Both congregational and individual giving have been strong for the first half of the fiscal year.

Report provided by Timothy Lind, conference treasurer

Review of Doug Luginbill's ministry

As we prepare to renew Doug Luginbill's contract as Conference Minister, we customarily do a review of his past years of service. Clergy and lay leaders identified as having worked closely with Doug recently will receive a Google form in the coming days. A review team of James Rissler (CDC president), Phil Martens (CDC board member), Ray Person (CDC Ministerial Committee chair), and Karla Minter (CDC Missional Committee chair) will review responses and prepare a report to be shared with the conference at our June annual meeting. Anyone is welcome to contribute thoughts to this review process. If you do not receive the Google form directly by the end of January and would like to respond, please email James Rissler at jamesrissler@gmail.com.

Central District Reporter
Volume 66, Number 1, January 2022

Editor: Mary E. Klassen

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Reporter is published six times a year. It is the official organ of communication among the churches of Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA. It is distributed free to CDC congregations through the CDC spending plan.

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