

Paoli Mennonite Fellowship, Paoli, Indiana Budget overage blesses others

On November 1, 2021, the Pastor Elder Team and all interested persons at Paoli Mennonite Fellowship met to discuss the proposals for allocating funds from the budget overage of 2020. This discussion was the result of a discernment process that began almost a year ago.

The 2020 fiscal year had ended with a surplus of \$52,000. Church policy dictated that a plan be formulated for using this windfall instead of “stashing it away for a rainy day.” The leadership team emphasized congregation input, connecting to congregational core values and a spirit of generosity as they formulated the distribution proposal.

In keeping with PMF's commitment to creation care, the people present agreed to use the largest amounts of the overage to install solar panels for the church building and to fund

an intergenerational learning/service trip. Solar panels will reduce the church's carbon footprint, as well as provide surplus energy back to the community's energy cooperative. A learning/service intergenerational trip to Taos, Mexico, is being planned with Todd Wynward, who brings vision and experience in integrating faith, ethics and lifestyle in ways that inspire and energize. Use of water resources is a particular area of expertise for him.

The rest of the overage would then be designated to four other projects. During a worship service on November 21, congregational participants, including children, voted with stones. Participants even contributed \$6,000 additional dollars to be divided among the projects. Funds were then allocated to help the four organizations.



Deciding how to use an overage in funds from 2020 involved everyone in the Paoli Mennonite Fellowship, including children.

La Casa de Maria y Marta—\$6,489

This organization ministers to immigrants in San Antonio, Texas. La Casa provides a safe place to stay, basic necessities and a loving community. They have a free medical clinic operating in the church building, as well as legal services through The Migrant Center, which has offices in the church. Conversations with San Antonio Mennonite Church about a possible gift and their needs and work in relation to immigration have been the catalyst for an 11-person service group to head to San Antonio for a week during this winter.

Creation Care

Internship—\$6,888

Paoli Mennonite Fellowship will partner with the **Mennonite Creation Care Network** (MCCN), **Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary** and **Mennonite Men's JoinTrees** climate change mitigation effort.

This gift helps fund a new multi-year project of MCCN to provide a seminary intern to assist churches in thinking about land stewardship, creation care and climate change mitigation. The



Paoli congregational participants used stones to vote on the proposal for how to disburse their unused funds from 2020.

gift hopes to fund this new internship for its first two and into its third year, with a goal of making this a sustained effort.

Rest In Peace Medical Debt—\$7,528

RIP works with congregations, synagogues and other community groups to help eliminate the debts of those in most need of relief. As of today, RIP has eliminated over five billion dollars of medical debt throughout the U.S., addressing this significant economic injustice that affects many.

Love Never Fails—\$7,767

Love Never Fails is a United Christian Church led by Jason and Tracy Lindsey, located in West Baden Springs, a nearby community. This small church promotes recovery for people with addictions by offering daily meetings and providing welcoming space for them,

supporting them on their journey by testimonials and education on this issue. It also tackles the problem of food insecurity by delivering cooked meals and providing food boxes for those in need. The church also addresses bullying by their mentoring and youth programs to promote kindness and respect for each other.

Note: Doris Weaver, chair of the Pastor Elder Team until recently, sent this detail with the story: We are a small congregation with an average Sunday morning attendance from 50-70 people. Our yearly operating budget is usually between \$110,000 and \$120,000. She added, "It seems to me that I saw the work of the Spirit within the congregation in choosing how to allocate our unexpected budget surplus of \$52,000 plus."

focus is published by the Central District Conference, Mennonite Church USA. To be added to the email subscription list, contact the editor, Mary E. Klassen, at cdceditor@gmail.com.

Central District Conference
www.mcusacdc.org office@mcusacdc.org
800.662.2264

News notes

CDC Mid-year gathering: A second mid-year gathering, hosted through Zoom, is scheduled for Saturday, March 5, from 9:30 to 11:45 am. Join Zoom meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3378130650>. Meeting ID: 337 813 0650
One tap mobile +13017158592,,3378130650#

2022 CDC Annual Meeting: June 23-25, at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Search for assistant conference minister: A search committee has been formed to seek an assistance conference minister. Members are Jan Lugibihl, Valerie Showalter, Kay Bontrager Singer, Jorge Vielman and Brian Moll. Doug Luginbill, conference minister, also is part of the committee. For additional information, see page 4 of the November 2021 issue of *Reporter*,