



Central
District
Conference

A conference of
Mennonite Church USA

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***Knowing
Christ's love...
Answering
God's Call***

Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ in whom we find our hope, our unity, and our salvation.

The CDC Board of Directors and staff invite your congregation to participate in a *Sacred Listening* conversation during the year 2022.

The CDC leadership has recognized that our conference is different than it was just six years ago and continues to change. Nine congregations have joined CDC in the last six years. Several emerging communities of faith are exploring affiliation with CDC. Many of our congregations have become more fully welcoming and affirming of individuals who identify as LGBTQ+. We have experienced a pandemic. Our nation continues to wrestle with issues of justice, privilege, culture, power, environment, race, and more. We are curious about how our congregations are tending to the ongoing transformation that God calls us to. We want to hear your stories.

We are asking you to choose a Sunday in 2022 when two or three people representing CDC can join you for worship and spend some time with you, listening to your stories. Ideally, we would like to spend 1 ½ to 2 ½ hours engaging in this process. Perhaps this could happen during or after a meal. Maybe the best time for you is prior to worship. We want it to be convenient for you.

We know that all ages of people have stories to tell about their church experience so we hope there is good representation across ages. This isn't only for leadership. It is for anyone who is able to participate.

We are ready to begin scheduling for visits from February through December. Please contact Emma at office@mcusacdc.org or call 574 536 3540 with your preferred date. If your preferred date is not available, she will work with you to find another date that will work for you. We realize that we may need to make adjustments due to Covid and are willing to meet with you in whatever setting you are most comfortable with.

You are encouraged to video record these sessions as you may find the stories beneficial in a variety of ways; visioning, historical record, new members classes, etc. This is up to you. We would like your permission to share some of your stories with others across the

conference. During our visit, if there are stories told that should not be shared across the conference, please let us know.

We are using an *Appreciative Inquiry* approach to the questions we are asking. This approach is designed to highlight the positive and life-giving experiences of the congregation. The questions that will be asked are below. It is ok to share these questions with your congregation prior to our conversation together.

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?

Thank you for your participation in this *Sacred Listening* conversation. We look forward to hearing your stories.

The CDC Board of Directors and Staff

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