

Conference Minister's Report

The past year has been a season of transition and transformation within Central District Conference. When we selected our biennial theme, "Tending Transformation," we had no idea how well it would reflect the shifting, expanding, shaking, and releasing experiences across the conference. Here are some examples of this transformation.



- Fourteen of our 46 congregations have experienced some type of pastoral transition in the past year: retirements, resignations, new pastors starting, etc.
- Congregations continue to reimagine themselves through the pandemic. Many continue to live stream their services and continue to reflect on the opportunities and losses of the pandemic. What does "active participation" and "membership" mean now?
- There have been conversations with eight "emerging Anabaptist communities of faith." A support team was developed for one of these emerging communities which can serve as a model for others. Leaders of emerging communities were also connected with one another for peer support. While all of these are in the very early stages of development, they have invited CDC to imagine new ways of resourcing, supporting, and encouraging them.
- We are seeking an associate conference minister for emerging communities of faith to support and walk with these emerging Anabaptist communities.
- A \$350,000 *Tending Transformation Campaign* was approved by the CDC Board of Directors with support from the Leadership Council in December 2021. This will provide a subsidy for the associate conference minister (\$100,000), create an Emerging Communities grant (\$170,000), support missional activities (\$40,000) and support pastor leadership development including seminary scholarships (\$40,000).
- Some congregations have experienced conflict and invited wise counsel from outside the church to facilitate healing and imagination.
- In March we bid farewell to Trenton Mennonite Church as they joined Ohio Mennonite Conference.
- Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship and Berea Mennonite Church have come together to form Atlanta Mennonite Church.
- *Voices Together* has been added to many of our hymnal racks.
- We are gathering wonderful stories of God's faithfulness from congregations through our *Sacred Listening* process.

Someone once said to me that because there is so much change going on in the world, they want something that doesn't change and that's why they go to church! My observation is that change remains a constant in the church as well. Even as I sing with gusto, "God of the Bible . . . you do not change," I observe both subtle and major changes happening across CDC. And I've been impressed with the resiliency and creativity of pastors and lay leaders in response to the challenges life presents. God does indeed remain faithful in the midst of changing circumstances around us. Our hope is that we are able to attend to God's shalom – vision for our world and "tend transformation" in ways that bring glory and praise to God our Creator, Redeemer and Friend.

Doug Luginbill, Conference Minister