

CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE

Minutes

June 26, 2021 (via Zoom)

Spirit, bless our souls with yearning!

Worship service was shared as a [pre-recorded video](#)

Delegate Session I

Welcome

Anna Yoder Schlabach (Assembly), president of the CDC board, welcomed delegates to the 64th delegate session with the sounding of the gavel.

State of the Conference Address: Anna Yoder Schlabach (Assembly Mennonite Church) gave the State of the Conference address sharing the following highlights:

- *Finances continue to be stable due to congregational giving, reduced spending, and small staff.
- *We celebrate receiving new congregations into membership.
- *We celebrate the emerging new communities of faith.
- *We have been gathering by Zoom for all of our meetings.
- *We hosted two mid-year gatherings via Zoom sharing stories about how we are working on anti-racism.
- *Doug Luginbill, conference minister, was on sabbatical January - March.
- *On the denominational level, things are moving slowly toward more inclusion and the retiring of the membership guideline.
- *MC USA has provided excellent resources on dismantling patriarchy and defunding the police. You will notice contributors from CDC in those resources.
- *We welcome Betty Pries to CDC and thank her for the sermon in worship.
- *Recommend reading *focus* and the Reporter for news of the good work that is happening within the congregations of Central District Conference. It is encouraging to see all the ways that congregations are working to follow Jesus in our unique settings and ways.

Anna expressed her appreciation for the four years she spent on the board of directors.

Consent Agenda

A motion was made and seconded to affirm the consent agenda ([2020 annual meeting minutes](#), [2021-2022 spending plan](#), and the [2021-2022 slate of nominees](#)) as presented. (Tim Stair, Hively Avenue Mennonite Church; Trevor Bechtel, Shalom Community Church) The motion was affirmed.

Commissioning Prayer

Doug led a commissioning prayer for the incoming and continuing committee members.

Membership Vote

Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship was affirmed for membership with a unanimous vote from the delegates.

Introduction of Keller Park Church

Anna Yoder Schlabach (Assembly Mennonite Church) introduced Keller Park Church (KPC), who have expressed a desire to join Central District Conference. Delegates viewed a five minute video created to help them learn about KPC. [Introduction of Keller Park Church video](#)

David Cramer shared some live footage of their food distribution program. The church started as a community center. He thanked the conference for being so welcoming to them.

Missional Church Committee Report

Mark Rupp (Columbus Mennonite Church) and Kiva Nice-Webb (Chicago Community Mennonite Church) highlighted several things the Missional Church Committee worked on during the past year and shared some resources available to congregations.

*The committee hosted a webinar July 2020 to offer examples of how individuals and congregations are taking their next steps in anti-racism work and inviting others to consider the provocations in their contexts. Presenters were Tim Stair (Hivley Avenue), Valerie Showalter (Madison), Kiva Nice-Webb (Chicago Community), and Brian Sauder (Chicago Community and Faith in Place).

*The committee is gathering resources and engaging at various levels throughout the conference to promote and encourage this work. One example at the conference level involved the Leadership Council taking the Intercultural Development Inventory together. Another example included providing for CDC pastors to enroll in the WiderStand anti-racism training. For work at the congregational level, the Missional Church Committee is offering \$500 grants to congregations toward anti-racism work throughout the conference. For an application look on the CDC website or contact one of the Committee members.

*One focus of the committee is supporting new communities of faith. We have had some good conversations with those across the conference who are exploring what it might mean to plant new ministries or what it means to help nurture new communities that are finding their way.

*The committee has been exploring ways to support congregations who are asking questions about revitalization or “replanting.” This is an ongoing conversation, so look for updates on resources and ideas in the year ahead.

*The Reign of God grants are available for CDC congregations working together on missional initiatives related to worship, nurture, evangelism, education, peace and justice, and creation care. Applications may be submitted at any time. You can find more information on the CDC website or by contacting any of the Missional Church Committee members.

Ministerial Committee Report: Ray Person (First Mennonite Church Bluffton) shared via video recording that the committee has been examining the power dynamics in the church at different levels from congregations to MC USA. They have examined how the committee has participated in those dynamics in the past, how they continue to participate in them in the present, and how they can repent and transform themselves as they move into the future. The committee is pleased to bring Betty Pries to the delegates as a resource to help address power dynamics in the church.

Recognition of new pastors/credentialed leaders: Doug Luginbill (First Mennonite Church Bluffton) shared that it is a joy to meet with new pastors. He introduced pastors new to the conference:

- **Jan Croyle (First Mennonite Church Wadsworth), licensed for specific ministry
- **Jeff Boehr (Lima Mennonite Church and First Mennonite Church Bluffton), interim pastor, licensed for specific ministry
- **Paul Brubaker (Paoli Mennonite Church), licensed toward ordination
- **Brian Moll (Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship), ordination recognized from Independent Christian Church
- **Alison Casella Brookins (Chicago Community Mennonite Church), ordained
- **Laura Brenneman-Fullwood, (First Mennonite Church Urbana), ordained, chaplain
- **Sarah Werner (Columbus Mennonite Church), licensed toward ordination, Professor in Pathways Theological Education Program of United Church of Christ

Journey Recognition: Doug recognized Jan Croyle (First Mennonite Church Wadsworth) as a graduate of the Journey program.

Remembering pastors who have died: Brian Bolton (Shalom Mennonite Congregation) remembered former pastors and others connected to CDC who died in this past year.

- **Stanley Bohn , pastor of First Mennonite Church Bluffton (1968-1975) and was the conference minister of Central District Conference (1975-1979)
- **Stanley Maclin, Sr served as senior pastor of Joy Fellowship Mennonite Church. He was always organizing and motivating movements for God's love, justice, and peace.
- **Edgar J Metzler, a peacemaker who championed justice and non-violence throughout his life of ecumenical and inter-developmental work. He was a member of Assembly Mennonite Church.
- **Earl Roth served as missionary abroad for 32 years and upon returning to the U.S., served as an elder at Silverwood Mennonite Church.

Camp Friedenswald Highlights

Jenna Liechty Martin (Camp Friedenswald Executive Director) acknowledged the lands on which Camp Friedenswald is located. She shared that she is grateful for connections with CDC during the past year. A favorite image from the past year is the image of camp fires sprinkled throughout the camp as people connected through retreat at camp. Of the 23 summer staff about half came from CDC congregations. She shared some of the reflections from campers, from David Moser, camp pastor for one week, and from a summer staffer about what camp meant to them over the summer. Jenna thanked the conference and congregations for their support over the past year. They felt connected. She announced that Camp Friedenswald is seeking to hire a program director and invited recommendations.

Announcements

Anna invited participants to share an offering for the conference and to fill out the committee nominations form.

Break (art videos were shown during the break)

Delegate Session II

Membership Vote

A motion came to the delegates from the Board of Directors to receive Keller Park Church into membership. Anna opened for conversation from the delegates.

Doug Luginbill shared that the conversation with Keller Park actually began a couple of years ago when David Cramer met with leadership to inquire more about the conference. There was excellent participation in the recent Zoom meeting hosted by conference leadership for anyone who wanted to know more about Keller Park.

*Rachel Stolpe (Milwaukee) recognized that Keller Park has done a lot of discernment. She is excited about the work that KPC is doing in their community.

*Merv Hess appreciated the sincerity and humility of KPC leadership. He also recognized the discernment they went through.

*Lorraine Stoltzfus (Madison): Lorraine welcomed KPC to come home to CDC.

*Isaac Villegas (Chapel Hill): Echoed what others have said. He is grateful to CDC for the possibility to link this congregation to CDC congregations.

*Tim Stair (Hively Avenue): As someone who came from the same denominational background it is a delight to have KPC join us.

*Dave Edminster (St Paul): Dave is excited to welcome KPC to CDC. He asked to hear more about why KPC needed to leave the Missionary Church.

David Cramer cited three reasons for leaving that they voiced to the Missionary Church. The Missionary Church has been rewriting their articles of faith and practice and emphasizing some that KPC felt they could no longer support.

- 1). Women in leadership and the glass ceiling imposed on women.
- 2). Christian conscience relative to the State. The Missionary Church's stance was that one could follow anything the State asked in good conscience.
- 3). The stance on divorce and remarriage. The Missionary Church was unwilling to rule out situations of abuse as a valid cause for divorce.

Among the Missionary Church's discernment and stated reasons for breaking relationship with Keller Park was that KPC's approached pastoral ministry to and for LGBTQ people differently than they would. They also objected to David Cramer's scope and views of God's ministry.

KPC was hoping to leave the Missionary Church slowly and work within CDC's timeframe for membership, but was not able to do that.

Membership Vote

Keller Park Church was affirmed for membership with a unanimous vote from delegates.

Seminars (breakout sessions)

**Climate Justice is Pacifism* led by Nicole Litwiller from Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions

**New and Developing Communities of Faith: Engage the Possibilities!* led by Karla Minter (Open Table) and Tim Stair (Hively Avenue)

**Faith Formation* led by Shanna Peachy Boshart, MC USA

**Remembering our Congregational History* led by Lisa Weaver and J.Denny Weaver (Madison)

**Congregations and Reparations: Conversation and Action* led by Joel Miller (Columbus) and Trevor Bechtel (Shalom Community)

Lunch tables [participants choose their own breakout room]

Delegate Session III

Congregational Slide show

Credence & Company

Doug introduced Betty Pries, CEO of Credence and Company and an adjunct professor at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. Betty led a seminar, *Building Equitable, Diverse, and Inclusive Congregations*. The PowerPoint presentation is available [HERE](#).

Announcements/Closing

Anna thanked Emma Hartman (Faith) for her work as administrator of the conference. Anna officially closed the 2021 annual meeting with the sounding of the gavel. She passed the gavel to James Rissler (Atlanta) who is the incoming President of the Board. Doug thanked Anna for her four years of leadership. James closed the meeting with a prayer from Voices Together 1066.

Break

Mennonite Women

All were invited to join Melissa Florer-Bixler as she shared about her book, *How to Have an Enemy*.

Emma Hartman
Recorder