



Central  
District  
Conference

A conference of  
Mennonite Church USA

# focus

August 2022

KNOWING CHRIST'S LOVE—ANSWERING GOD'S CALL

## Congratulations to 2022 graduates from CDC congregations

Two members of Central District Conference congregations completed the Journey program and were honored at the Annual Meeting in June. Journey: A Missional Leadership Development Program prepares people for ministry in their congregational contexts. CDC is one of the sponsoring conferences and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary administers the program. For information, visit [www.ambs.edu/journey-a-missional-leadership-development-program/](http://www.ambs.edu/journey-a-missional-leadership-development-program/)

**JP Schumacher** (above) is a member of First Mennonite Church, Bluffton, Ohio. Her mentor in the Journey program is Gloria Bucher.

**Charles Baraka** is part of Madison (Wisc.) Mennonite Church. His mentor is Lavon Welty.



*JP Schumacher is congratulated by David Miller, who represented AMBS.*



*Charles Baraka presented one of the storytelling sessions at the CDC Annual Meeting.*

The commencement service of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., was April 30. Three graduates are participants in Central District Conference congregations.

**Esther Amos Muhagachi** of Dodoma, Tanzania, and the town of Tarime in the Mara Region of Tanzania, was honored during the service. She was selected to receive the Award for Excellence in Missional Leadership. She anticipates graduating in December 2022 with a Master of Divinity with a major in Christian Faith Formation.



In her role with the Christian Council of Tanzania, Muhagachi is empowering women and girls in gender justice; offering capacity-building training for women who are leaders and pastors; and advocating for women in leadership.

Muhagachi's home congregation is Shirati Congregation Tanzania of the Shirati Conference of Tanzania Mennonite Church. While studying at AMBS, she was part of Hively Avenue Mennonite Church in Elkhart. Muhagachi is married to Amos Joseph Muhagachi, and they have four children.

"I am so grateful to God for taking me along this journey," Muhagachi reflected. "I have learned a lot through integrating being, knowing and doing. The seminary has equipped me with a lot of spiritual practices and disciplines."



**AMBS**

Anabaptist Mennonite  
Biblical Seminary

**Kajsa Herrstrom** of Champaign, Illinois, graduated with a Master of Divinity with a major in Christian Faith Formation. She will join the staff of the library at AMBS.

Herrstrom previously earned a Bachelor of Arts in Germanic Languages and Literature and a Master of Library Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her home congregation is First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana. She attends Hively Avenue Mennonite Church.



**Kristen Swartley** of Cedar Falls, Iowa, graduated with a Master of Divinity with a major in Theological Studies: Peace Studies. She was selected to receive the Award for Excellence in Theological Studies. She is seeking a pastoral ministry assignment.

Swartley previously earned a Bachelor of Arts from Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va. She earned a Master of Music in Instrumental Performance from Oklahoma City (Okla.) University.

Swartley's home congregation is Cedar Falls Mennonite Church. While at AMBS, she attended Assembly Mennonite Church in Goshen. She is married to Luis Tapia Rubio.

"I have had the opportunity to engage in all kinds of wonderful learning, from writing academic theology research papers to practical CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) chaplaincy experiences in the hospital to intercultural learning with people from all over the world," Swartley reflected.



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**B**luffton University held its commencement ceremony on May 7. More than 150 students were honored in the ceremony. The following indicated their affiliation with CDC congregations.

**Jeffery Strayer** of Columbus, Ohio, earned a bachelor's degree in economics with minors in marketing and psychology from Bluffton University. He was named the Distinguished Scholar in Accounting. Strayer attends Columbus Mennonite Church.

**Kyle Gregory Schmidt** of Goshen, Indiana, earned an MBA from Bluffton University. Schmidt attends Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship.

**Kathleen Villegas** of Durham, N.C., earned a Collaborative MBA from Bluffton University. Villegas attends Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship.



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## News notes

**Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary** offers online short courses for personal enrichment. Participants do not write papers or take exams.

### Upcoming offerings

Exploring peace and justice in the Bible, Sept. 14 to Oct. 5. Instructors: Drew Strait and Jackie Wyse-Rhodes.

Exploring Anabaptist History and Theology, Oct. 26 to Dec. 13. Instructor: Jamie Pitts.

Visit [www.ambs.edu/online-short-courses/](http://www.ambs.edu/online-short-courses/)

**Bluffton University** offers a twenty percent tuition discount for master's degree programs for all who earned a Bluffton undergraduate degree. This includes the Master of Business Administration (MBA), Master of Arts in Organizational Management (MAOM) and Master of Arts in Education (MAEd). For information, contact Shelby Koenig, [koenigs@bluffton.edu](mailto:koenigs@bluffton.edu) or 419-358-3684.