

2022

REPORT BOOK
of the

Central District Conference
of
Mennonite Church USA



June 23-25, 2022

CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE

Detailed Schedule

June 23-25, 2022

College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana

Tending Transformation

Thursday, June 23

Family Day events are open to everyone! You don't need to be registered for the annual meeting to attend.

- 11:00 am Golf Outing at Black Squirrel Golf Course
- 1:00 pm Bike/run/walk - maps available at the registration table
- 2:00 pm Registration begins at College Mennonite Church in the hall outside the fellowship hall
- 3:00 pm Pre-conference seminar in the sanctuary: Brenda Sawatzky Paetkau and Kay Bontrager-Singer
- 5:00 pm Pastor Appreciation Dinner at Assembly Mennonite
- 7:30 pm WORSHIP I: College Mennonite Church
Theme: Tending Transformation
Text: Romans 12:1-10, Galatians 6:14-18
Speaker: David Cramer
Offering: Natural Helpers
- 9:00 pm Ice Cream Social in College Mennonite Church fellowship hall

Friday, June 24

- 8:30 am *Delegate Session I* in the fellowship hall
 - *Song: *Come, all you people*, Voices Together 2
 - *Welcome
 - *Getting acquainted around tables
 - *State of the Conference Address
 - *Centering, silent reflection, and prayer
 - *Congregational Story: Hively Avenue Mennonite Church
 - *Introduction of Resolutions and Listening Committees, and Parliamentary
 - *Summary Review of 2021 Annual Meeting Minutes
 - ACTION: 2021 Annual Meeting Minutes
 - *Highlight Actions in 2022 Agenda
 - *Treasurers Report/Presentation of 2022-2023 Proposed Spending Plan
 - *Presentation of Gifts Discernment Committee and Slate
 - ACTION: 2022-2023 Slate
 - Recognition of members ending their terms on committees
 - *Commissioning Prayer: Incoming and continuing committee members
- 9:45 - 10:15 am Break/Snacks in hall outside the fellowship hall, provided by Goshen College
- 10:15 am *Song: *Come, all you people*, VT 2
 - *Missional Church Committee Report
 - *Word from MC USA
- 10:45 am *Song: *Faith begins by letting go* VT 585
 - Centering
 - *Sharing around tables/open mic - Dwelling in the Word/Visioning
 - *Blessing Trenton Mennonite Church
 - *Blessing cup to Keller Park Church
 - *Introduction of Guests

*Announcements

11:45 am Lunch on your own. A list of local restaurants can be found in your delegate packet.

1:30 pm *Delegate Session II*

*Song: Come, all you people, VT 2

*Centering

*Term Review of Conference Minister

*Camp Friedenswald Highlights

*Congregational Story: Southside Fellowship

2:00 pm Storytelling stations: 2:00-2:20; 2:25-2:45; 2:50-3:10; 3:15-3:35

*Pilgrimage as Spiritual Practice with Jane Roeschley

*The Great Adventure with Bluffton University

*Journey/Amahoro Ministries - Charles Baraka/Lavon Welty

*65 Years with CDC - Janeen and Perry

3:35 pm Break in hall outside the fellowship hall, snacks provided by GC

4:00 pm WORSHIP II: "Swords to Plowshares: Story and Song"
Offering: Ukraine

5:15 pm Dinner

A list of area restaurants is available (in delegate packets and at the registration table)

7:00 pm Free Time or Seminars at CMC

*Faith in Place: ecological Crisis is a Spiritual Crisis with Brian Sauder

*The War in Ukraine: History, Memory and Peace Church Responses with Perry Bush

*Let the Children Come to Me with Lisa Weaver

*Called to be Bad with Mariah Martin

*Natural Helpers with Julia Schmidt

Saturday, June 25

8:30 - 9:30 am WORSHIP III: CMC sanctuary
Theme: Tending Transformation
Speaker: Susannah Larry
Text: Ezekiel 47:1, 7-12, Revelation 22:1-2 or 1-6
Offering for Central District Conference
Communion

9:30 am Break: In the hall outside the fellowship hall, provided by GC

10:15 am *Delegate Session III* in CMC fellowship hall

*Song: Come, all you people, VT 2

Centering

*Congregational Story: Shalom Mennonite Congregation

*Ministerial Committee Report

Leaders in Training

Recognition of new pastors/credentialed leaders

Remembering pastors who have died

*ACTION: 2022-2023 Spending Plan
*Everence: Resources available
*Open Mic

11:00 am *Song: Faith begins by letting go VT 585
*CLC Report
*MCC Great Lakes Report
*Listening Committee Report

11:40am *Evaluations/Committee Nominations

*Close of Delegate Sessions

11:50am *Songs/Benediction
Prayer

12:00 pm Close of Annual Meeting

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Discussion Guidelines for Delegates

The delegate assembly is designed to tend the church's business in a timely manner that allows for due consideration. When we need to process decisions, we invite our delegates into a corporate discernment process. One goal of the discernment process is to avoid tyranny of the majority and to avoid tyranny of the minority. In order to accomplish the goal of tending to the decision-making process in a timely manner, we will use the following guidelines:

Basic Guidelines for Conversation

So that all who seek to be heard may be heard:

- Do not speak more than twice in a day on any one topic.
- Before you speak a second time on one topic, make sure that no one else who has not yet spoken on that topic wishes to do so.
- When you go to the microphone to address the assembly, wait to be recognized by the moderator. Once recognized, state your name and (if appropriate) the group you represent before making your remarks.
- In order to keep the discussion from becoming personal, always address the moderator rather than a previous speaker or someone else in the meeting.
- Always speak respectfully. If you disagree with another person who has spoken, please describe that point of view with respect.
- So that the group can put your remarks in context, always indicate whether you are speaking in favor or against the proposal that is being discussed.
- Only delegates may make motions or vote on them.

Welcome to the delegates from the CDC Board President



Welcome to Goshen for our 66th Annual Meeting. It is good to be back in person! As we discern how we will be church and conference together after covid, we are also leaning into being accessible for those who do not travel to Goshen. Most of our programming will be available live via zoom and recorded. Thank you to the local congregations who have helped to plan our worship, and to those helping with the technology that makes a hybrid Annual Meeting possible.

This is an exciting time in Central District Conference! Our two-year theme is “Tending Transformation,” and it has felt increasingly apt since we chose it last August. How is the Church being transformed as we emerge from the pandemic? How is the body of Christ different today than it was a generation ago? How is CDC being called to change as we know Christ’s love and answer God’s call? We want to pay attention to these questions and tend the transformations we see God’s Spirit leading.

CDC has changed over the past few years. We have grown, we are now 46 congregations in 11 states. Many of our congregations now offer hybrid services that can be joined remotely, and all of us have found new ways to connect with our congregants. We have learned to be conference together even when we don’t gather in the same physical space; we are likely to continue online mid-year gatherings into the future.

As we are changing, volunteers are visiting each of our congregations this year as part of an appreciative inquiry “Sacred Listening” process to hear the stories of how our congregations are faithfully sharing God’s love in our communities. Next year, we will wonder together about how the stories we share might inform the ways in which we are conference to one another.

Some of the most exciting transformations that we are tending are the emerging communities of faith that have interest in relating to us. A handful of small groups or individuals have expressed hopes for beginning communities of faith in areas from Syracuse, New York to Miami, Florida. We don’t know which of these seeds will grow, but we want to tend them well, and so are hiring a new Associate Conference Minister for Emerging Communities of Faith. This person may also tend some part of Doug’s current responsibilities, as we recognize that it is increasingly difficult for one Conference Minister to tend all our congregations.

In order to support this position, provide grants to emerging communities of faith, and fund new missional work and leadership development, we are launching a fundraising campaign to raise \$350,000 over three years. We’ll announce at this Annual Meeting how much of this amount has already been pledged by foundational donors, and hope that all of us will support these commitments as we’re able.

It is a joy to serve as your president along with so many gifted people faithfully committed to sharing God’s love in a changing world. Blessings for our time together this weekend, and for all the ways that we are Christ’s body in our local communities.

James Rissler

CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE CONGREGATIONS

Church listing codes:

- * Congregation is a member of both Central District and Indiana-Michigan Mennonite conferences
- ** Congregation is a member of both Central District and Illinois Mennonite conference
- *** Congregation is a member of both Central District and Ohio Mennonite conferences
- **** Congregation is a member of Central District Conference and the Church of the Brethren

Where there are two addresses listed, the **bold type** refers to the **mailing address**

Membership/Covenanted attendee numbers are in parentheses (as reported on the 2021 delegate report)

***Agora Ministries 614.280.1212 <i>Richard/Rebecca Bartholomew, Pastors</i> 400 W Broad St, Columbus, OH 43215 rich@agoraministries.org	Americus Mennonite Fellowship (30) 229.815.1034 <i>Brian Kilheffer, Contact Person</i> bk.ck1@hotmail.com 409 E Hill St, Americus, GA 31709 https://www.facebook.com/AmericusMennoniteFellowship
Ames Mennonite Church (6) 515.231.1557 <i>Keith Schrag, Contact Person</i> kgschrag@gmail.com meets at Ames Friends Church, 121 S Maple Mail to: 1211 N 3 rd St, Ames, IA 50010	*Ann Arbor Mennonite Church (10) 734.996.9198 <i>Chibuzor Ozor, Pastor</i> ozotas@aol.com meets in homes Mail to: 1455 Kelly Green Dr, Ann Arbor, MI 48103
Assembly Mennonite Church (223) 574.534.4190 <i>Karl Shelly, Pastor</i> karlss@assemblymennonite.org <i>Lora C Nafziger, Pastor</i> loracn@assemblymennonite.org <i>Anna Yoder Schlabach, Pastor</i> annays@assemblymennonite.org <i>Scott Coulter, Pastor</i> scotte@assemblymennonite.org 727 New York St, Goshen, IN 46526 office@assemblymennonite.org http://assemblymennonite.org	Atlanta Mennonite Church (32) 404.590.1344 <i>Elizabeth Kelly, Transitional Pastor</i> ekelly.2018@gmail.com 1088 Bouldercrest Dr SE, Atlanta, GA 30316 Website: http://www.atlmenno.org/ Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/ATLMenno/
Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship (45) 919-357-5496 chmennonite@gmail.com <i>In Pastoral Search Process</i> Meets at Church of Reconciliation: 110 N. Elliott Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27514 (no mail here) PO Box 2145, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-2145 Website http://mennonit.es/chmf/ Twitter: @CHmennonite Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/ChapelHillMennonite/	Chicago Community Mennonite Church (87) 773.343.4251 <i>In Pastoral Search Process</i> meets at First Church of the Brethren, 425 S Central Park Blvd, Chicago, IL 60624 http://www.ccmcil.org
Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship (45) 513.871.0035 <i>Brian Moll, Pastor</i> brianthomasmoll@gmail.com meets at 4229 Brownway Ave, Cincinnati, OH Mail to: 3046 Minot Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45209 office@cincinnati-mennonite.org http://www.cincinnati-mennonite.org	Columbus Mennonite Church (183) 614.784.9002 <i>Joel Miller, Pastor</i> joel@columbusmennonite.org <i>Mark Rupp, Pastor of Christian Formation</i> mark@columbusmennonite.org 35 Oakland Park Ave, Columbus, OH 43214 office@columbusmennonite.org www.columbusmennonite.org
**Community Mennonite Church (25) 708.333.1358 <i>In Pastoral Search Process</i> 16200 S Kedzie Ave, Markham, IL 60428 cmc-markham@sbcglobal.net www.communitymennonite.us	Covenant Mennonite Fellowship (100) 941.366.3545 <i>Jason Kuniholm, Pastor (as of May 15)</i> 5420 Ashton Rd, Sarasota, FL 34233 covenantmennonite@gmail.com www.covenantmennonite.com https://www.facebook.com/mennonites

<p>Eighth Street Mennonite Church (196) 574.533.6720 <i>Brenda Sawatzky Paetkau, Pastor</i> <i>bpaetkau@8thstmennonite.org</i> <i>Julia Gingrich, Pastor</i> <i>jgingrich@8thstmennonite.org</i> 602 S 8th St, Goshen, IN 46526 office@8thstmennonite.org www.8thStMennonite.org</p>	<p>Emmanuel Mennonite Church (31) 352-377-6577 <i>Eve MacMaster, Pastor</i> gnvmenno@bellsouth.net (thru Aug 31, 2022) meets at 1236 NW 18th Ave, Gainesville, FL 32609 (no mail here) 4130 NW 19th Place, Gainesville, FL 32605 gnvmenno@bellsouth.net www.gainesvillemennonites.org</p>
<p>Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship (65) <i>Peter Martin, Pastor</i> 260.301.6498 meets at South Adams Senior center, 825 Hendricks St, Berne, IN 46711 Mail to: PO Box 22, Berne, IN 46711 redigerfarm@gmail.com http://emmausroadmennonite.org</p>	<p>**Evanston Mennonite Church (9) 312.502.7660 <i>Mitchell Brown, Contact Person</i> <i>mitchellbrown211@gmail.com</i> meets at Hemenway United Methodist Church, 933 Chicago Ave, Evanston, IL 60202 Mail to: PO Box 6397, Evanston, IL 60204-6397 http://evanston.il.us.mennonite.net</p>
<p>Faith Mennonite Church (80) 574.533.6622 <i>Deron Brill Bergstresser, Pastor (thru June 30, 2022)</i> <i>deronbbergstresser@gmail.com</i> <i>Kay Bontrager-Singer, Pastor</i> <i>kay.bsinger@gmail.com</i> meets at Assembly Mennonite Church 727 New York St, Goshen, IN 46526 Mail to: 413 S 7th St, Goshen, IN 46526 faithmennogoshen@gmail.com https://faithmennonitegoshen.org/</p>	<p>First Mennonite Church (200) 419.358.5766 <i>Phil Yoder, Pastor (as Sept, 2022)</i> <i>Jeff Boehr, Interim Pastor</i> <i>jefeboehr@gmail.com</i> 101 S Jackson St, Bluffton, OH 45817 fmc@fmcbluffton.org http://www.fmcbluffton.org</p>
<p>First Mennonite Church (50) 708.870.5260 <i>Alfreda Burke, Contact Person</i> <i>dibupe@aol.com</i> meets at 1477 W 73rd St, Chicago, IL 60636 (no mail here) Mail to: 11014 Deblin Lane, Oak Lawn, IL 60453</p>	<p>First Mennonite Church (50) 330.852.2822 <i>Mike Gehman, Pastor</i> <i>mgehman3@gmail.com</i> 113 W Main, PO Box 250, Sugarcreek, OH 44681 pastor@firstmennonitesugarcreek.com</p>
<p>**First Mennonite Church (180) 217.367.5353 <i>Michael Crosby, Pastor</i> <i>michael.crosby@fmc-cu.org</i> <i>Debra Sutter, Associate Pastor</i> <i>debra.sutter@fmc-cu.org</i> 902 W Springfield Ave, Urbana, IL 61801 office@fmc-cu.org www.fmc-cu.org</p>	<p>First Mennonite Church (60) 330.334.1863 <i>Jan Croyle, Pastor</i> <i>jancroyle2@gmail.com</i> 405 Trease Rd, Wadsworth, OH 44281 fmcwadsworth@gmail.com www.firstmennonite.com</p>
<p>****Florence Church of the Brethren-Mennonite (65) <i>Conrad Mast, Transitional Pastor</i> <i>conrad57@gmail.com</i> 17975 Centreville-Constantine Rd, Constantine, MI 49042 florence.brethren.mennonite@gmail.com florencechurch.blogspot.com</p>	<p>Grace Mennonite Church (150) 419.384.3038 <i>Matthew Yoder, Pastor</i> <i>pastor@gracepandora.org</i> 502 W Main St, PO Box 387, Pandora, OH 45877 gmc@bluffton.edu www.gracepandora.org https://www.facebook.com/gracemennonitepandora</p>
<p>Grand Rapids Mennonite Church (25).. 616 729 4882 grmennonitefellowship@gmail.com <i>Alaina Dobkowski, Contact Person</i> <i>alaina.dobkowski@gmail.com</i> meets at: unlisted (please email for address) Mail to: 1344 Portland Ave NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505</p>	<p>Hively Avenue Mennonite Church (100) 574.294.3423 <i>Tim Stair, Co-pastor</i> <i>stair.tim@gmail.com</i> <i>Jake Hess, Co-pastor</i> <i>jhess@hivelymennonite.org</i> (thru June 30, 2022) 800 E Hively Ave, Elkhart, IN 46517 office@hivelymennonite.org www.hivelymennonite.org</p>

**Joy Fellowship Mennonite Church (15) 309.637.8424 <i>Phil Maclin, Pastor</i> <i>pmaclin@ci.peoria.il.us</i> 2918 W Montana, Peoria, IL 61605	Jubilee Mennonite Church (25) 937-592-8101 <i>Russ Miller, Contact Person</i> <i>russbeth1471@gmail.com</i> 169 County Hwy 32N, Bellefontaine, OH 43311 https://www.jubileemennonite.com/ <i>jubileemenno@gmail.com</i>
Keller Park Church (125). 574-233-7901 <i>David Cramer, Teaching Pastor</i> <i>david.c.cramer@gmail.com</i> 1003 W Bryan St, South Bend, IN 46616 <i>kellerparkchurch@gmail.com</i> FB: facebook.com/kellerparkchurch/	Lima Mennonite Church (54) 419.222.2120 <i>Jeff Boehr, Interim Pastor</i> <i>jefeboehr@gmail.com</i> 1318 N Main St, Lima, OH 45801 <i>limamc1318@gmail.com</i> www.facebook.com/limamennonite
Madison Mennonite Church (180) 608.276.7680 <i>Valerie Showalter, Pastor</i> <i>pastor@madison-mennonite.org</i> 1501 Gilbert Rd, PO Box 44522, Madison, WI 53744 <i>mmc@madison-mennonite.org</i> www.madison-mennonite.org	Maplewood Mennonite Church (56) 260.485.8512 <i>Russell Jensen, Pastor</i> <i>uskiwi2016@gmail.com</i> 4129 Maplecree Rd, Fort Wayne, IN 46815 <i>maplemenno@gmail.com</i>
**Mennonite Church of Normal (298) 309.452.6622 <i>Interim Pastoral Team</i> <i>Lynette Miller..... lynette.miller.k@gmail.com</i> <i>Ron Ropp..... rjroppbarn@gmail.com</i> <i>Lauren Satchwell..... satchwell.lauren@gmail.com</i> <i>Holly Zehr..... hmzehr@hotmail.com</i> 805 S Cottage Ave, Normal, IL 61761 <i>church@normalmennonite.org</i> www.normalmennonite.com	Milwaukee Mennonite Church (42) 414.232.8823 <i>Peter Eash-Scott, Contact Person</i> <i>eashscott@gmail.com</i> <i>Rachel Stolpe, Contact Person</i> <i>rachelstolpe@gmail.com</i> meets at Martin Luther Lutheran Church, 9235 Bluemound Rd, Milwaukee, WI 53226 www.milwaukeeemennonite.org
*Morning Star Church (25) 765.287.0021 <i>Gladys Maina, Pastor</i> <i>Simon Mungai, Pastor</i> <i>maina.mungai@gmail.com</i> 2000 S Hoyt St, Muncie, IN 47302	North Danvers Mennonite Church (151). 309.963.4554 <i>Brian Johnson, Pastor</i> <i>brian.johnson67@gmail.com</i> 5517E 1950 North Rd, Danvers, IL 61732 <i>northdanversch@gmail.com</i> www.northdanverschurch.com
***Oak Grove Mennonite Church (294) 330.669.2697 <i>Doug Zehr, Pastor</i> <i>pastor@oakgrovemc.org</i> <i>Miriam Zehr, Assoc Pastor</i> <i>miriamzehr@oakgrovemc.org</i> 7843 Smucker Rd, Smithville, OH 44677 <i>office@oakgrovemc.org</i> <i>www.oakgrovemc.org</i>	Open Table Mennonite Fellowship (25) 574.534.1537 <i>Sally Weaver Glick, Pastor/doula</i> <i>swglick@gmail.com</i> meets at 413 S 7 th St, Goshen, IN 46526 http://www.opentablemennonite.org/
Paoli Mennonite Fellowship (40) 812.723.2414 <i>Paul Brubaker, Pastor</i> <i>paul.brubaker.lm@gmail.com</i> 2589 N County Road 100 W, Paoli, IN 47454 <i>mennos.paoli@gmail.com</i>	Raleigh Mennonite Church (60) 919. 833.1182 <i>Melissa Florer-Bixler, Pastor</i> <i>melissa@raleighmennonite.org</i> <i>Rachel Taylor, Intergenerational Pastor</i> <i>taylor.rachel.e@gmail.com</i> Meets at Church of God Good Shepherd, 121 Hillsborough St , Raleigh NC 27603 (919) 831-2000 Mail to: PO Box 25545, Raleigh, NC 27611 Website: https://www.raleighmennonite.org Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/RaleighMennonite/

<p>****Shalom Community Church (72) 734.761.7366 <i>Trevor Bechtel, Co-pastor</i> <i>trevor.bechtel@gmail.com</i> meets at 1001 Green Road, Ann Arbor Mail to: PO Box 8080, Ann Arbor, MI 48105 <i>pastors@shalomcc.org</i> <i>www.shalomcc.org</i></p>	<p>Shalom Mennonite Congregation (153) 540.432.1659 <i>Brian Bolton, Pastor</i> <i>brian@shalommc.org</i> <i>Krista Showalter Ehst.</i> <i>krista@shalommc.org</i> <i>Georgia Metz.</i> <i>georgia@shalommc.org</i> meets at Eastern Mennonite High School, 801 Parkwood Dr, Harrisonburg, VA 22802 Mail to: EMU Campus Box 8, Harrisonburg, VA 22802 <i>office@shalommc.org</i> <i>www.shalommc.org</i></p>
<p>Silverwood Mennonite Church (160) 574.533.1922 <i>Clayton Gladish, Pastor</i> <i>clayton@silverwoodmc.org</i> <i>Donna Mast, Pastor</i> <i>donna@silverwoodmc.org</i> <i>Janice Troyer, Pastor</i> <i>janice@silverwoodmc.org</i> <i>Aimee Weishaupt, Pastor</i> <i>aimee@silverwoodmc.org</i> <i>Jon Weishaupt, Pastor</i> <i>jon@silverwoodmc.org</i> 1745 W Lincoln, Goshen, IN <i>info@silverwoodmc.org</i> <i>www.silverwoodmc.org</i></p>	<p>Southside Fellowship (106) 574.293.2825 <i>David Moser, Pastor</i> <i>2davidmoser@gmail.com</i> meets at AMBS Sermon on the Mount Chapel, 3003 Benham Ave, Elkhart, IN 46517 Mail to: 140 W Mishawaka Ave, Elkhart, IN 46517 <i>ssfelkhart@gmail.com</i> https://www.facebook.com/Southside-Fellowship-1591825197704822/</p>
<p>St Paul Mennonite Fellowship (12) 651-291-0647 <i>David Edminster, Contact Person</i> <i>brodaahoud@gmail.com</i> meets at Cherokee Park United Church, 371 West Baker Street, St. Paul, MN 55107 http://spmfmennolink.org/</p>	<p>New Community of Faith **Asian Mennonite Community Church 630.801.5060 <i>Jai Prakash (JP) Masih, Pastor</i> <i>pastorjpamcc@gmail.com</i> meets at Lombard Mennonite Church, 528 E Madison St, Lombard, IL 60148</p>

2021-2022 CDC LEADERSHIP

Board of Directors

President (2023):

James Rissler Atlanta Mennonite Church

President-elect (2023)

Jan Lugibihl Chicago Community Mennonite Church

Secretary (2022)

Jamie Pitts Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

Treasurer (2022)

Tim Lind Florence Church of the Brethren-Mennonite

Member-at-large (2023)

Mary Etta King Covenant Mennonite Fellowship

Member-at-large (2024)

Rachel Stolpe Milwaukee Mennonite Church

Member-at-large (2024)

Phil Martens First Mennonite Urbana

Leadership Council

The Leadership Council is comprised of the Board of Directors, Ministerial Committee, Missional Church Committee, Stewardship Committee, Conference Minister and Administrator.

Historian/Archives

Historian

Perry Bush (2023) First Mennonite Church Bluffton

Archives & Special Collections Coordinator

Carrie Phillips phillips@bluffton.edu

Musselman Library, 1 University Dr, Bluffton, OH 45817 419.358.4226

Resolutions Committee

George Lehman (2022)

First Mennonite Church Bluffton

Kiva Nice-Webb (2023)

Chicago Community Mennonite Church

Rich Preheim (2024)

Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

Gifts Discernment Committee

Peter Eash-Scott (2022)

Milwaukee Mennonite Church

Sally Weaver Glick (2022)

Open Table Mennonite Fellowship

Jon Hilty (2023)

Grace Mennonite Church

Joel Miller (2023)

Columbus Mennonite Church

Janeen Bertsche Johnson (2024)

Eighth Street Mennonite Church

Brenda North Martin (2024)

Raleigh Mennonite Church

Stewardship Committee

Tim Lind (2022)

Florence Church of the Brethren-Mennonite

Doug Luginill (Staff), Ex-officio

Emma Hartman (Staff), Ex-officio

Ministerial Committee

Ray Person (2022)

First Mennonite Bluffton

Kay Bontrager-Singer (2022)

Faith Mennonite Church

Brian Bolton (2023)

Shalom Mennonite Congregation

Gayle Gerber Koontz (2023)

Assembly Mennonite Church

Robin Walton (2024)

Columbus Mennonite Church

Michael Crosby (2024)

First Mennonite Urbana

Missional Church Committee

Mark Rupp (2022)

Columbus Mennonite Church

Kiva Nice-Webb (2022)

Chicago Community Mennonite Church

Xaris Martinex (2022)

Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship

Karla Minter(2023)

Open Table Mennonite Fellowship

Tim Stair (2023)

Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

Valerie Showalter (2024)

Madison Mennonite Congregation

Matthew Pritchard (2024)

Atlanta Mennonite Church

Camp Friedenswald Board

Jerry Nussbaum (2022)

Columbus Mennonite Church

Teresa Dutchersmith (2022)

Faith Mennonite Church

Alita Yoder Funk (2022)

Silverwood Mennonite Church

Peter Suter (2023)

First Mennonite Church Bluffton

Matt Troyer (2023)

Silverwood Mennonite Church

Deanna Risser (2023)

Assembly Mennonite Church

Evan Miller (2024)

Open Table Mennonite Fellowship

Todd Kirton (2024)

Eighth Street Mennonite Church

Kendra Yoder (2024)

Southside Fellowship

AUXILIARY GROUPS

Mennonite Men

Steve Thomas, Coordinator
steveforpeace@gmail.com 574.202.0048

Mennonite Women

Greta Holt, President
Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship

Advisory Team

Janeen Bertsche Johnson
Eighth Street Mennonite Church
Barbra Gant Columbus Mennonite Church
Lori Nester, First Mennonite Church Bluffton

CDC STAFF

Conference Minister

Doug Luginbill First Mennonite Church Bluffton

Administrator

Emma Hartman Faith Mennonite Church

Editor, Reporter and focus

Mary E Klassen Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

Bookkeeper

Beth Yoder

CONFERENCE RELATED MINISTRIES

Bluffton University Board of Trustees

Jane Roeschley (2022) Mennonite Church of Normal
Tim Stried (2023) Columbus Mennonite Church
Annette Heslep (2024)
First Mennonite Church Bluffton
Heather Bachman Reichenbach (2025)
Eighth Street Mennonite Church

Chicago Mennonite Learning Center (CMLC)

Board of Directors

Sueann VonGunten
Hively Avenue Mennonite Church
Sara Reschly
Chicago Community Mennonite Church
Libby Hostetler Lima Mennonite Church
Richard Rutschman Evanston Mennonite Church

Mennonite Central Committee Great Lakes Board

Peter Martin (2024)
Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS)

Credentialed Faculty

Janeen Bertsche Johnson, Campus Pastor
Eighth Street Mennonite Church
Rachel Miller Jacobs
Assistant Professor of Congregational Formation
Faith Mennonite Church
David Cramer, Managing Editor, Institute of
Mennonite Studies, Core Adjunct Professor
Keller Park Church
Susannah Larry,
Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies
Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

2022

REPORT BOOK
of the

Central District Conference
of
Mennonite Church USA



Part I

Action/Discussion

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

2022-2023 Slate of Nominees



Position: **Board of Directors,**
Treasurer
Name: *Tim Lind
Congregation: Florence Church of the
Brethren/Mennonite
Occupation: Retired



Position: **Board of Directors,**
Secretary
Name: Christine Guth
Congregation: Eighth Street Mennonite
Church
Occupation: Retired



Position: **Ministerial Committee**
Name: Ruth Guengerich
Congregation: Eighth Street Mennonite
Church
Occupation: Retired



Position: **Ministerial Committee**
Name: Drew Strait
Congregation: Keller Park Church
Occupation: Asst Professor of New
Testament and Christian Origins,
AMBS



Position: **Bluffton University Board of
Trustees**
Name: *Jane Roeschley
Congregation: Mennonite Church of Normal
Occupation: Retired



Position: **Missional Church Committee**
Name: David Voth
Congregation: Grace Mennonite Church
Occupation: Retired



Position: **Missional Church Committee**
Name: Brian Moll
Congregation: Cincinnati Mennonite
Fellowship
Occupation: Pastor



Position: **Camp Friedenswald Board**
Name: **Mark Roeschley
Congregation: Mennonite Church of Normal
Occupation: Farmer



Position: **Camp Friedenswald Board**
Name: Sarah Werner
Congregation: Columbus Mennonite
Church
Occupation: Prof in Pathways Theological
Ed Program, United Church of Christ



Position: **Camp Friedenswald Board**
Name: *Alita Yoder Funk
Congregation: Silverwood Mennonite
Church
Occupation: Nurse



Position: **Camp Friedenswald Board**
Name: Steve Hartman Keiser
Congregation: Milwaukee Mennonite Church
Occupation: Director of Undergraduate
Studies and Associate Professor of English

* = incumbent

**=appointed to complete a term following a resignation,
first elected term

Central District Conference 2022-2023 Spending Plan									2022-2023 Proposed Spending Plan
			SP 2019-2020	Actual 2019-2020	SP 2020-2021	Actual 2020-2021	SP 2021-2022	YTD Actual As of 4/30/2022	
									w new hire
INCOME									
		Congregational giving	\$192,500.00	\$187,302.38	\$191,000.00	\$200,933.38	\$191,000.00	\$169,823.05	\$211,111.00
		Annual Meeting	\$12,000.00	\$306.68	\$12,000.00	\$1,348.07	\$12,000.00	\$0.00	\$12,000.00
		Ann Mtng Offering/Fundraisers	\$3,000.00	\$0.00	\$3,000.00	\$1,704.00	\$3,000.00		\$3,000.00
		Additional Giving	\$21,125.00	\$31,663.20	\$24,413.00	\$34,612.96	\$32,500.00	\$40,277.50	\$45,000.00
		Bequests	\$0.00	\$0.00					
		Earned/Interest income	\$6,000.00	\$3,570.00	\$6,000.00	\$4,961.90	\$6,000.00	\$6,612.09	\$6,000.00
		Miscellaneous income	\$301.00	\$7,796.17	\$1,474.00	\$125.00	\$1,680.00	\$550.00	\$1,266.00
		Sub-total	\$234,926.00	\$230,638.43	\$237,887.00	\$243,685.31	\$246,180.00	\$217,262.64	\$278,377.00
		Tending Transformation							\$116,667.00
		Total							\$395,044.00
EXPENDITURES									
Direct Congregational Services/Networking									
		Missional Church Committee	\$2,000.00	\$46.57	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	\$2,000.00
		Ministerial Committee	\$5,500.00	\$2,742.81	\$5,500.00	\$2,639.07	\$7,500.00	\$4,924.16	\$7,500.00
		Historian/*Archives	\$3,975.00	\$3,458.00	\$3,975.00	\$6,916.00	\$4,200.00	\$0.00	\$4,200.00
		Publications	\$5,000.00	\$4,641.54	\$5,000.00	\$4,178.96	\$5,000.00	\$3,091.04	\$5,000.00
		*Editor Stipend	\$5,671.00	\$5,671.00	\$5,807.00	\$5,807.00	\$5,912.00	\$4,926.68	\$5,983.00
		Regional Meetings/Congregational Listening	\$1,000.00	\$874.71	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00
			\$23,146.00	\$17,434.63	\$23,282.00	\$21,541.03	\$25,612.00	\$12,941.88	\$25,683.00
Denominational Relations									
		Mid-States Conferences	\$0.00	\$46.79		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
		*General Assembly Delegate Escrow	\$3,600.00	\$3,600.00	\$1,800.00	\$1,800.00	\$1,800.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,800.00
		Denominational Meetings	\$1,500.00	\$1,079.81	\$1,500.00	\$0.00	\$1,500.00	\$0.00	\$2,500.00
		Constituency Leaders Council	\$3,000.00	\$2,823.86	\$3,000.00	\$0.00	\$3,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,000.00
			\$8,100.00	\$7,550.46	\$6,300.00	\$1,800.00	\$6,300.00	\$1,500.00	\$9,300.00
Conference Leadership/Administration									
		Board of Directors Meetings	\$2,000.00	\$1,498.10	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	\$2,000.00	\$755.24	\$2,000.00
		Gift Discernment Committee	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
		Stewardship Committee	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
		Leadership Council	\$2,500.00	\$1,928.51	\$2,500.00	\$0.00	\$2,500.00	\$0.00	\$2,500.00
		Annual Meeting Expense	\$12,000.00	\$1,919.31	\$12,000.00	\$1,082.81	\$12,000.00	\$2,549.79	\$12,000.00
			\$16,700.00	\$5,345.92	\$16,700.00	\$1,082.81	\$16,700.00	\$3,305.03	\$16,700.00
Adminstrative Support Costs									
		*Sabbatical Coverage Escrow							
		*Liability Insurance	\$2,500.00	\$2,386.95	\$2,500.00	\$2,433.06	\$2,500.00	\$2,105.85	\$2,500.00
		*Rent	\$3,108.00	\$3,108.00	\$3,108.00	\$3,108.00	\$3,108.00	\$2,590.00	\$3,108.00
		Supplies	\$2,500.00	\$2,938.02	\$2,500.00	\$1,979.32	\$2,500.00	\$2,122.73	\$3,500.00
		Equipment	\$2,500.00	\$3,215.12	\$2,500.00	\$1,467.97	\$2,500.00	\$1,644.60	\$3,500.00
		Telecommunications	\$2,750.00	\$2,995.28	\$2,750.00	\$3,484.86	\$3,000.00	\$2,816.56	\$3,000.00
		Postage	\$1,000.00	\$768.33	\$1,000.00	\$1,137.67	\$1,200.00	\$1,086.90	\$1,500.00
		*Bookkeeping Services	\$3,200.00	\$3,200.00	\$3,277.00	\$3,277.00	\$3,336.00	\$2,780.00	\$3,376.00
		Staff Travel	\$6,000.00	\$4,534.29	\$6,000.00	\$434.98	\$6,000.00	\$2,602.58	\$9,000.00
		Misc.	\$0.00	\$309.00		\$385.69		\$324.94	
			\$23,558.00	\$23,454.99	\$23,635.00	\$17,708.55	\$24,144.00	\$18,074.16	\$29,484.00
Personnel									
		*Salaries	\$128,475.58	\$128,475.60	\$132,417.76	\$132,417.84	\$135,760.00	\$113,132.78	\$175,614.00
		*Benefits	\$29,572.42	\$27,960.70	\$30,051.54	\$30,319.35	\$32,162.00	\$25,363.23	\$51,094.00
		*Payroll tax/Worker's Comp	\$5,374.00	\$5,359.57	\$5,501.08	\$5,501.17	\$5,502.00	\$4,698.57	\$5,502.00
			\$163,422.00	\$161,795.87	\$167,970.38	\$168,238.36	\$173,424.00	\$143,194.58	\$197,210.00
									**
Cash Reserves			\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
		Sub-totel Expenses	\$234,926.00	\$215,581.87	\$237,887.38	\$210,370.75	\$246,180.00	\$179,015.65	\$278,377.00
Tending Transformation Campaign									
		Emerging Communities of Faith							\$58,333.00
		Staff							\$35,000.00
		Leadership Development							\$11,667.00
		Missional Activities							\$11,667.00
									\$116,667.00
		Total Expenses	\$234,926.00	\$215,581.87	\$237,887.38	\$210,370.75	\$246,180.00	\$179,015.65	\$395,044.00
			** Total number is less the Tending Transformation proposed staff amount of \$35,000						

Central District Conference

Conference Minister Review for Doug Luginbill (2022)

The Review Team: James Rissler (CDC President), Karla Minter (Missional Church Committee), Ray Person (Ministerial Committee), Phil Martens (CDC Board)

We have been privileged to see the overwhelmingly positive, appreciative, and affirming tone of the responses to Doug's tenure as Conference Minister. Suggestions for improvement were uniformly aspirational, often with comments about how helpful an Associate Conference Minister will be. We want to note that Doug's self-evaluation (including strengths and areas for growth) and the results of the survey overlap significantly. The value, respect, and love for Doug evinced in the survey and Doug's honest self-evaluation gives us confidence that Doug is the right person for this role, and that he has the flexibility, grace, and maturity to carry this good work forward into the future.

We wish to thank everyone who took the time to respond to the survey with such genuine, heart-felt and helpful comments.

The Survey Process

The CDC Board of Directors invited credentialed ministers within CDC, members of CDC's Leadership Council, congregational lay leaders with whom Doug has worked (especially on search committees), and peer conference ministers to respond to questions regarding Doug's tenure. Respondents were asked to reflect on Doug's gifts as well as any areas of growth. An additional question asked respondents to identify challenges and opportunities for CDC. The CDC weekly announcements also extended an invitation for feedback from anyone who would like to share that had not been directly invited to do so by the board. Sixty-six responses were received, with good representation from all of these groups.

Affirmation of Doug's Gifts and Ministry

"Every interaction I have had with Doug has left me grateful for his ministry."

This observation by one respondent provided an excellent summary of the tone and quality expressed nearly universally throughout the responses. A significant majority of folks mentioned Doug as a skilled listener, calm and calming presence, and thoughtful counselor whose wisdom has been appreciated in multiple instances of congregational conflict and tension. Doug's ability to listen attentively and respond in a Christ-like way was highlighted by many. As one pastor commented, *"Doug provided welcome experience and a larger perspective as we grappled with what could have become sticky interpersonal grievances."* His

skill at rethinking and reframing a contentious issue into a “win-win” scenario was also repeatedly mentioned in these responses.

Many survey participants mentioned their appreciation for Doug's ability to achieve a high level of availability despite the demands of frequent long-distance travel, nearly constant Zoom meetings and challenging logistics. Phrases like *“cares deeply about the church,”* *“wonderfully supported by Doug,”* and *“warm and consistent support”* sum up his ability to provide a pastoral presence to his constituents. This attentive stance is accentuated by his administrative competence, timely communication, and willingness to be highly available to the pastors, pastoral candidates, search committees, and other congregational leaders.

Another recurring theme in the survey was Doug's transparency and personal faithfulness. *“Doug is the real deal”* was one typical response. Another person wrote, *“He practices what he preaches.”* The responses make clear that Doug is someone that CDC constituents respect and trust.

Opportunities for Continued Growth and Development

Survey responders had few suggestions for ways in which Doug might continue to develop. Numerous examples of statements like *“Doug is already functioning at a high level”* and *“Doug seems to have a healthy level of self-awareness, so I trust him to follow the Spirit as she so moves”* lead us to understand that Doug is already challenging himself to continuous improvement. A search committee member noted, *“I can't honestly identify any particular area where growth is needed on his part.”*

Doug acknowledged in his self-review that he has less experience with emerging communities of faith and does not have sufficient time to tend them well, but that this will be addressed with the addition of the Associate Conference Minister. Several commenters suggested that Doug is well prepared to mentor the new Associate Conference Minister in ways that they believe will benefit Doug, the new associate, and CDC.

One comment from a peer conference minister stands out to our review committee. He stated that *“Doug has gifts that can someday serve the denomination at even higher levels. I would encourage honing those leadership gifts/skills with CEO level development, which will serve CDC well (as well as other endeavors Doug might engage in the future).”*

Challenges/Opportunities for the Conference

Survey participants were also asked about their thoughts on challenges and opportunities for CDC. The gist of these responses can be summarized in a handful of broad themes. First,

respondents overwhelmingly stated that staying connected after COVID, especially with our recent geographical growth, is a challenge. A pastoral search committee member commented, *“(we) need to stay connected as we continue to spread out regionally. How do we ensure that those of us who are far flung feel connected?”* Secondly, a strong need for attention to new communities of faith came out of the responses. One pastor wrote, *“New emerging congregations are exciting and help to stir excitement of newness even in older congregations.”* Desires for increasing diversity, promoting anti-racism, LGBTQIA+ inclusion, and bringing young people into church leadership also figured prominently in survey statements as opportunities for growth within CDC.

We are grateful for Doug’s many gifts, his self-awareness, and his openness to where God’s Spirit might be leading us. Thank you, Doug, for your leadership and service as our Conference Minister.

2022

REPORT BOOK
of the

Central District Conference
of
Mennonite Church USA



Part II

Conference Financial and Staff Reports

CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE
Balance Sheet
As of April 30, 2022

Checking	282,358.85
Savings	142,222.55
	<hr/>
	424,581.40

Undeposited Funds	37.87
Prepaid expenses	2,084.15
Missional Fund	204,047.67
	<hr/>
	206,169.69
	<hr/>
	630,751.09
	<hr/>
	630,751.09

Accounts Payable	-2,851.77
Other Agency Transfer	15,815.82
Other Current Liabilities	3,889.57
Funds/Escrows	
General Assembly Escrow	10,301.24
Cash Reserve Escrow	117,243.39
Conference Minister's Sabbatical Escrow	13,343.74
Leadership Development	9,477.73
Ministry Inquiry Program	319.75
Mennonite Women	3,261.61
Jubilee Fund	8,022.56
Transitional Pastors Sabbatical	11,114.27
Reign of God Grant	1,250.00
Surplus Reserve Fund	23,367.54
Missional Activities Fund	16,593.20
Healthy Boundaries	309.76
Celtic Pilgrimage	83,290.29
Total Current Liabilities	<hr/>
	314,748.70
	<hr/>
	314,748.70

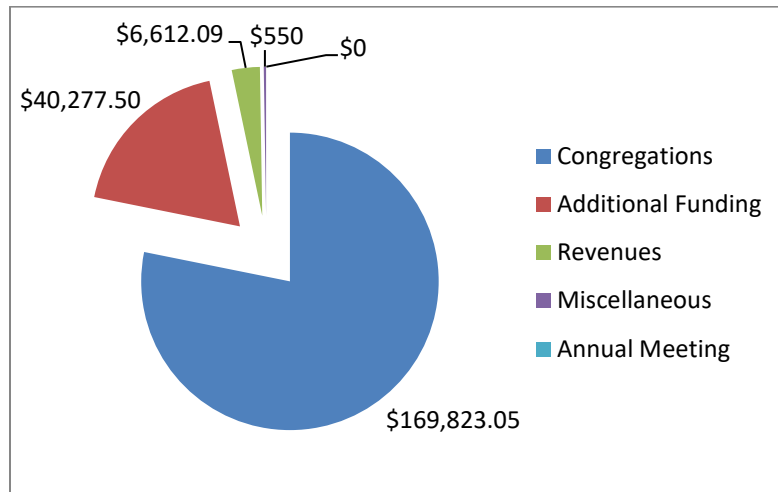
Equity	
Equity	233,102.76
Net Income	82,899.63
Total Equity	<hr/>
	316,002.39
	<hr/>
	630,751.09

**Central District Conference
Income and Expense Statement
As of April 30,2022**

	Actual 2021-2022 thru April 30 (10 months)	SP 2021-2022 thru April 30 (10 months)	SP 2021-2022 (12 months)	Actual 2020-2021 12 months	SP 2020-2021 (12 months)
INCOME					
Congregational Giving	\$169,823.05	\$159,166.67	\$191,000.00	\$200,938.38	\$191,000.00
Annual Meeting Registration/Offering	\$0.00	\$10,000.00	\$12,000.00	\$1,348.07	\$12,000.00
Annual Meeting Donations: Memorial/C	\$0.00	\$2,500.00	\$3,000.00	\$1,704.00	\$3,000.00
Additional Funding	\$40,277.50	\$27,083.33	\$32,500.00	\$34,612.96	\$24,413.00
Bequests	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$0.00	
Earned/Interest income	\$6,612.09	\$2,124.39	\$6,000.00	\$4,961.90	\$6,000.00
Miscellaneous income	\$550.00	\$5,000.00	\$1,680.00	\$125.00	\$1,474.00
Total	\$217,262.64	\$205,874.39	\$246,180.00	\$243,690.31	\$237,887.00
EXPENDITURES					
Direct Congregational Services/Networking					
Missional Church Committee	\$0.00	\$1,666.67	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00
Ministerial Committee	\$4,924.16	\$6,250.00	\$7,500.00	\$2,639.07	\$5,500.00
Historian/*Archives	\$0.00	\$3,500.00	\$4,200.00	\$6,916.00	\$3,975.00
Publications	\$3,091.04	\$4,166.67	\$5,000.00	\$4,178.96	\$5,000.00
*Editor Stipend	\$4,926.68	\$4,926.66	\$5,912.00	\$5,807.00	\$5,807.00
Regional Gatherings	\$0.00	\$833.33	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00
	\$12,941.88	\$21,343.33	\$25,612.00	\$21,541.03	\$23,282.00
Denominational Relations					
Mid-States	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$0.00	
*General Assembly Delegate Escrow	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,800.00	\$1,800.00	\$1,800.00
Denominational Meetings	\$0.00	\$1,250.00	\$1,500.00	\$0.00	\$1,500.00
Constituency Leaders Council	\$0.00	\$2,500.00	\$3,000.00	\$0.00	\$3,000.00
	\$1,500.00	\$5,250.00	\$6,300.00	\$1,800.00	\$6,300.00
Conference Leadership/Administration					
Board of Directors Meetings	\$755.24	\$1,666.67	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	\$2,000.00
Gift Discernment Committee	\$0.00	\$83.34	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
Stewardship Committee	\$0.00	\$83.33	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
Leadership Council	\$0.00	\$2,083.33	\$2,500.00	\$0.00	\$2,500.00
Annual Meeting Expense	\$2,549.79	\$10,000.00	\$12,000.00	\$1,082.81	\$12,000.00
	\$3,305.03	\$13,916.67	\$16,700.00	\$1,082.81	\$16,700.00
Adminstrative Support Costs					
*Sabbatical Coverage Escrow					
*Liability Insurance	\$2,105.85	\$2,083.33	\$2,500.00	\$2,433.06	\$2,500.00
*Rent	\$2,590.00	\$2,590.00	\$3,108.00	\$3,108.00	\$3,108.00
Supplies	\$2,122.73	\$2,083.33	\$2,500.00	\$1,979.32	\$2,500.00
Equipment	\$1,644.60	\$2,083.34	\$2,500.00	\$1,467.97	\$2,500.00
Telecommunications	\$2,816.56	\$2,500.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,484.86	\$2,750.00
Postage	\$1,086.90	\$1,000.00	\$1,200.00	\$1,137.67	\$1,000.00
*Bookkeeping Services	\$2,780.00	\$2,780.00	\$3,336.00	\$3,277.00	\$3,277.00
Staff Travel	\$2,602.58	\$5,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$434.98	\$6,000.00
Misc.	\$324.94	\$0.00		\$385.69	
	\$18,074.16	\$20,120.00	\$24,144.00	\$17,708.55	\$23,635.00
Personnel					
*Salaries	\$113,132.78	\$113,132.75	\$135,760.00	\$132,417.84	\$132,417.76
*Fringe	\$25,363.23	\$26,815.65	\$32,162.00	\$30,319.35	\$30,051.54
*Payroll tax/Workman's Comp	\$4,698.57	\$5,296.00	\$5,502.00	\$5,501.17	\$5,501.08
	\$143,194.58	\$145,244.40	\$173,424.00	\$168,238.36	\$167,970.38
Cash Reserves					
	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total	\$179,015.65	\$205,874.40	\$246,180.00	\$210,370.75	\$237,887.38

* = Fixed expenses

2021-2022 Year-to-Date Actual Income (as of April 30)



Income Sources

***Congregational Contributions**

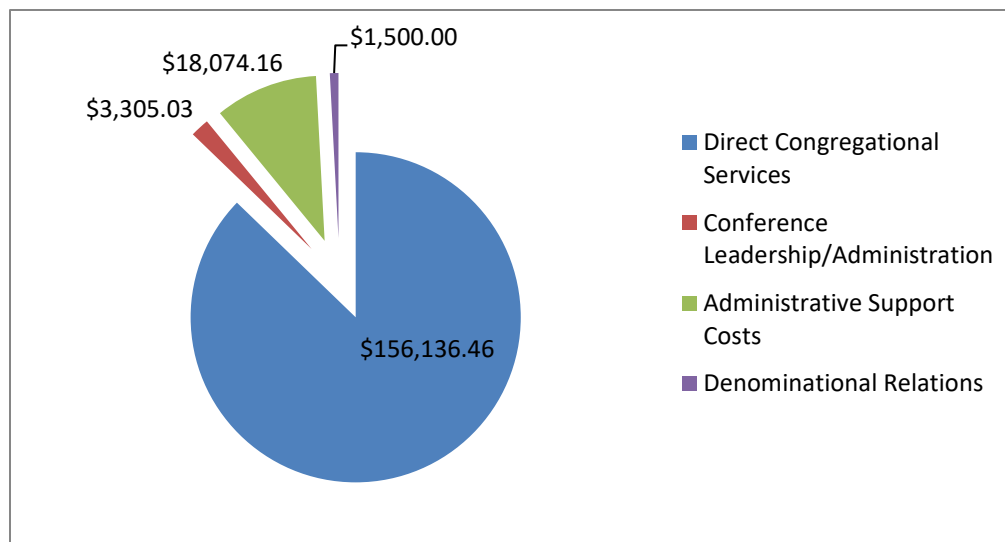
***Additional Funding:** Individual donations, Leadership Council pledges, Fundraising letters, Conference leadership donating back expenses

***Revenues:** Interest from checking/savings, Distributions from Missional Fund

***Annual Meeting Registration/Fundraising**

***Miscellaneous**

2021-2022 Year-to-Date Actual Expenses (as of April 30)



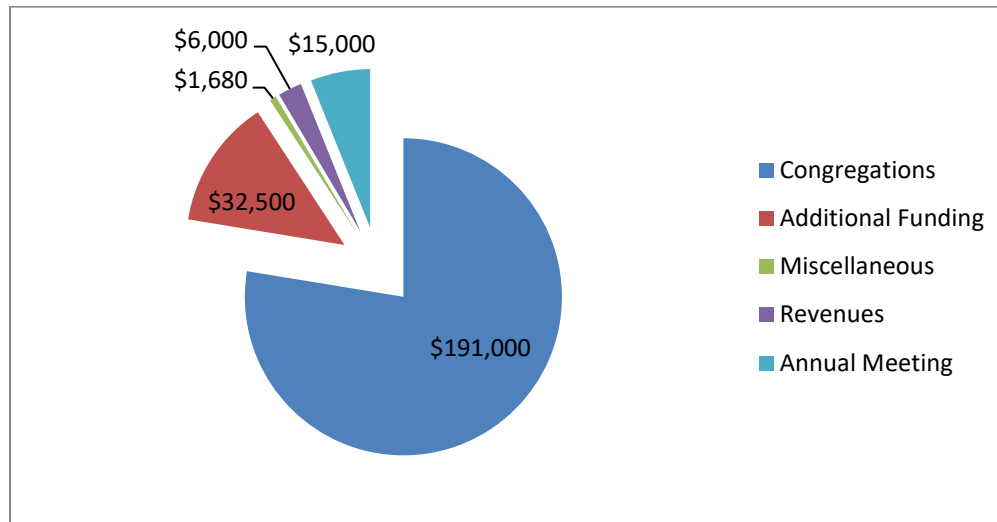
Direct Congregational Services: Includes Missional Church and Ministerial Committee expenses, archives, publications, editor stipend, regional gathering expenses, salaries, housing, social security, pension, continuing education, health insurance, health savings account, payroll taxes, and workman's comp.

Conference Leadership/Administration: Includes Board of Directors, Gifts Discernment Committee, Stewardship Committee, Leadership Council, and Annual Meeting expenses

Administrative Support Costs: Includes Cash Reserve Escrow, Liability/Directors & Officers Insurance, Office Expenses, Bookkeeping Services, Staff Travel, and Miscellaneous expenses.

Denominational Relations: Includes Mid-States Conferences, General Assembly/Convention Escrow, Conference Ministers or other denominational meetings, Constituency Leaders Council

2021-2022 Spending Plan Income



Congregations: Makes up 78% of total spending plan

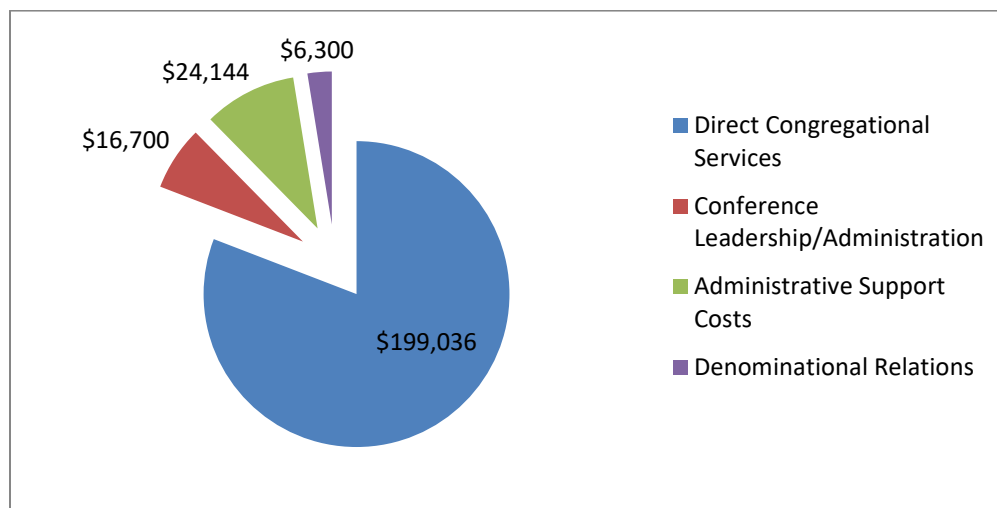
Additional Funding: Makes up 13% of total spending plan

Miscellaneous: Makes up <1% of total spending plan

Revenues: Makes up 2% of total spending plan

Annual Meeting: Makes up 6% of total spending plan

2021-2022 Spending Plan Expenses



Direct Congregational Services: Makes up 81% of total spending plan

Conference Leadership/Administration: Makes up 7% of total spending plan

Administrative Support Costs: Makes up 10% of total spending plan

Denominational Relations: Makes up 2% of total spending plan

Central District Conference Congregational Contributions

Number of giving units (as reported in 2021) is in parentheses

*Dual Conference Congregations

Congregations	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019
	As of 4/30/22 10 months	12 months	12 months	12 months
Agora*	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Americus (13)	\$1,000.00	\$1,200.00	\$1,100.00	\$600.00
Ames (6)	\$250.00	\$150.00	\$100.00	\$250.00
Ann Arbor*	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$500.00
Asian Mennonite Community	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$500.00
Assembly (121)	\$6,352.50	\$8,470.00	\$10,850.00	\$15,981.00
Atlanta (23)	\$2,405.94	\$2,106.18	\$2,090.52	\$1,915.38
Berea (12)	\$1,000.00	\$500.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,500.00
Chapel Hill (25)		\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00
Chicago Community (32)		\$10,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
Cincinnati (32)	\$7,432.00	\$5,336.00	\$6,480.00	\$6,690.00
Columbus (106)	\$16,294.00	\$16,271.00	\$15,749.00	\$14,865.00
Community Mennonite*(13)	\$1,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00
Covenant (54)	\$8,500.00	\$6,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,500.00
Eighth Street (88)	\$19,641.09	\$19,169.23	\$14,093.59	\$18,500.00
Emmanuel (15)	\$2,400.00	\$2,000.00	\$3,000.00	
Emmaus Road (22)	\$2,275.00	\$1,820.00	\$2,275.00	\$3,015.00
Evanston*	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	\$0.00
Faith (30)	\$2,500.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00
First, Bluffton (129)	\$13,648.00	\$17,144.00	\$20,996.00	\$20,992.00
First, Chicago	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
First, Sugarcreek (11)	\$1,500.00	\$2,500.00	\$3,500.00	\$1,500.00
First, Urbana* (61)	\$4,875.00	\$6,500.00	\$6,500.00	\$6,500.00
First, Wadsworth (20)	\$800.00	\$650.00	\$300.00	\$300.00
Florence (10)		\$1,400.00	\$1,400.00	\$1,200.00
Grace Mennonite (43)	\$8,130.00	\$6,097.50	\$9,945.00	\$5,760.00
Hively Avenue (34)	\$6,050.00	\$6,600.00	\$6,050.00	\$6,600.00
Joy Fellowship*	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Jubilee (7)	\$500.00	\$1,350.00	\$1,785.00	
Lima* (16)	\$1,500.00	\$3,750.00	\$2,250.00	\$3,750.00
Madison (48)	\$6,250.00	\$7,500.00	\$7,350.00	\$7,200.00
Maplewood (31)	\$1,000.00	\$500.00	\$1,250.00	\$1,000.00
Mennonite Church of Normal* (85)	\$14,783.52	\$15,341.01	\$11,743.26	\$15,054.48
Milwaukee (10)		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,200.00
Morning Star*		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
North Danvers (40)	\$470.00	\$445.00	\$1,439.00	\$6,735.00
Oak Grove* (93)	\$5,000.00	\$12,312.50	\$6,312.50	\$5,813.00
Open Table Mennonite Fellowship (14)		\$1,607.00	\$2,545.73	\$1,500.00
Paoli* (32)	\$4,116.00	\$4,032.96	\$4,791.78	\$4,109.81
Raleigh (29)	\$5,000.00	\$6,440.00	\$6,800.00	\$2,000.00
Shalom Community (40)	\$3,850.00	\$1,650.00	\$1,650.00	\$1,650.00
Shalom Mennonite Congregation (75)	\$6,950.00	\$5,791.00	\$6,906.00	\$8,190.00
Silverwood (67)	\$8,250.00	\$10,500.00	\$10,000.00	\$11,000.00
Southside (33)	\$2,500.00	\$8,000.00	\$2,750.00	\$5,500.00
St Paul (6)	\$600.00	\$600.00	\$600.00	\$600.00
Trenton (33)	\$500.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
Total	\$169,823.05	\$200,933.38	\$187,302.38	\$200,170.67

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

Ministerial Credential Report

June 1, 2021 – May 31, 2022

ORDINATIONS

Anna Yoder Schlabach, ordained by Doug Luginbill, March 6, 2022

LICENSINGS

Brian Moll (Cincinnati), recognition toward acceptance of previous ordination, June 20, 2021

Sarah Werner (Columbus), licensed toward ordination, June 13, 2021 by Doug Luginbill

Susannah Larry (Hively Avenue), licensed toward ordination, Nov 14, 2021 by Doug Luginbill

David Cramer (Keller Park), licensed toward ordination, Jan 9, 2022

Carrie Badertscher (Keller Park), licensed toward ordination, Jan 9, 2022

Georgia Metz (Shalom Mennonite Congregation), licensed toward ordination, December 19, 2021

CREDENTIAL TRANSFERS

John and Barbara Lehman from Virginia Mennonite Conference, July 21, 2021

Krista Showalter Ehst (Shalom Mennonite Congregation), ordination transferred from Mosaic Conference, Dec 6, 2021

Peter Janzen (Maplewood), from Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, December 14, 2021

Clayton Gladish (Silverwood), from Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, April 26, 2022

Jason Kuniholm (Covenant), from Virginia Mennonite Conference, May 16, 2022

INSTALLATIONS

Brian Moll (Cincinnati), June 20, 2021, began June 1, 2021

Georgia Metz (Shalom Mennonite Congregation), Dec 19, 2021

Krista Showalter Ehst (Shalom Mennonite Congregation), Dec 19, 2021

Clayton Gladish (Silverwood Mennonite Church), April 24, 2022, began Mar 28, 2022

Jason Kuniholm (Covenant), May 15, 2022

CHANGE OF CREDENTIAL

Hillary Watson (Shalom Community) active to inactive, June 30, 2021

Sally Weaver Glick (Open Table) license toward ordination to licensed for specific ministry, September 14, 2021

James Rissler (Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship) active to active without charge, October 3, 2021

Jeremy Shue (Silverwood), license for specific ministry ended October 31, 2021

Bruce Martin (Shalom Community Church), active to active without charge, December 10, 2021

Devon Miller (Florence), license toward ordination to licensed for specific ministry, Dec 31, 2021

Cate Desjardins (Cincinnati), license toward ordination extended to Dec 31, 2023

Ron Wenzel (Trenton), license for specific ministry ended, March 5, 2022

SunJu Moon (Korean Anabaptist Center), license toward ordination extended thru 2024

RESIGNATIONS

Hillary Watson (Shalom Community Church), June 30, 2021

Wanda Stopher (First Bluffton), August 31, 2021

James Rissler (Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship), October 3, 2021

Jeremy Shue (Silverwood), October 31, 2021

Alison Casella Brookins (Chicago Community), Dec 21, 2021

Celeste Groff (Chicago Community), Dec 21, 2021
Devon Miller (Florence), Dec 31, 2021
Amy Aschliman (Community Mennonite) Dec 2021
Isaac Villegas (Chapel Hill), May 2022
Carrie Badertscher, Keller Park Church, May 31, 2022

ANNIVERSARIES / SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL EVENTS

INTERIM / TRANSITIONAL PASTORS

Gary Martin finished as transitional pastor at Mennonite Church of Normal, Oct 3, 2021
Jodi Boyer Hatlem, Kitchner, Ontario, interim pastor at Shalom Community Church, September 12, 2021
Randy Miller finished as transitional pastor at Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship, June 1, 2021
Conrad Mast, interim pastor at Florence Church of the Brethren Mennonite, began Feb 1, 2022

RETIREMENTS

Wanda Stopher (First Bluffton), August 31, 2021
June Mears Driedger (Florence), Dec 31, 2021
Keith Graber Miller (Assembly, Goshen College), April 30, 2022
Linford King (Covenant), May 8, 2022
Mary Etta King (Covenant), May 8, 2022

DEATHS

Robert Coon (Silverwood), July 28, 2021

CONGREGATIONAL TRANSITIONS

Trenton Mennonite Church transferred to Ohio Conference, March 5, 2022

In Search Processes

Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship
Community Mennonite Church
Faith Mennonite Church
Mennonite Church of Normal
Shalom Community Church
Southside Fellowship

Locations of Central District Conference Annual Sessions

1957	First Mennonite Church, Normal, Illinois
1958	First Mennonite Church and Founders Hall, Bluffton, Ohio
1959	Eighth Street Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana
1960	First Mennonite Church, Berne, Indiana
1961	Calvary Mennonite Church, Washington, Illinois
1962	Grace Mennonite Church, Pandora, Ohio
1963	Wayland Mennonite Church, Wayland, Iowa
1964	Salem Mennonite Church, Kidron, Ohio
1965	First Mennonite Church, Normal, Illinois
1966	Fairview Mennonite Church (OM), Fairview, Michigan
1967	First Church of the Nazarene and Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana
1968	First Mennonite Church, Wadsworth, Ohio
1969	Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio
1970	East Bay Camp, Lake Bloomington, Illinois
1971	First Mennonite Church, Berne, Indiana
1972	Camp Windermere, Lake of the Ozarks, Roach, Missouri
1973	Goshen College Campus, Goshen, Indiana
1974	East Bay Camp, Bloomington, Illinois
1975	Ottumwa, Iowa
1976	Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio
1977	Calvary Mennonite Church, Washington, Illinois
1978	First Brethren Church, Wooster, Ohio
1979	Maplewood Mennonite Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana
1980	First Mennonite Church, Berne, Indiana
1981	Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois (Joint with Illinois Mennonite Conference of the Mennonite Church)
1982	First Mennonite Church (MC), Middlebury, Indiana
1983	Grace Mennonite Church, Pandora, Ohio
1984	Kidron Mennonite Church (MC), Kidron, Ohio (Joint with Ohio Conference of the Mennonite Church)
1985	Wayland Mennonite Church, Wayland, Iowa
1986	Calvary Mennonite Church, Washington, Illinois
1987	College Mennonite Church (MC), Goshen, Indiana (Joint with Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference of the Mennonite Church)
1988	Oak Grove Mennonite Church, Smithville, Ohio
1989	Camp Windermere, Lake of the Ozarks, Roach, Missouri
1990	Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio
1991	Summit Christian College, Fort Wayne, Indiana (Joint with Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference of the Mennonite Church)
1992	Fairview Mennonite Church (MC), Fairview, Michigan
1993	Trinity Mennonite Church (MC), Morton, Illinois (Joint with Illinois Mennonite Conference of the Mennonite Church)
1994	College Mennonite Church (MC), Goshen, Indiana
1995	Mennonite Church of Normal, Normal, Illinois
1996	Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio (Joint with Ohio Conference of the Mennonite Church)
1997	First Mennonite Church, Berne, Indiana
1998	Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio
1999	Iowa Wesleyan College, Mt Pleasant, Iowa
2000	Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana (Joint with Illinois Mennonite Conference, Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, and Ohio)

	Conference of the Mennonite Church)
2001	Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio
2002	Meadows Mennonite Church, Chenoa, Illinois
2003	Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio
2004	Oak Grove Mennonite Church, Smithville, Ohio
2005	Maplewood Mennonite Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana
2006	Bluffton University, Bluffton, Ohio
2007	First Mennonite Church, Berne, Indiana
2008	Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois
2009	First Mennonite Church, Sugarcreek, Ohio
2010	Bluffton University, Bluffton, Ohio
2011	Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana
2012	Mennonite Church of Normal
2013	Bluffton University, Bluffton, Ohio
2014	Madison Mennonite Church, Madison, Wisconsin
2015	Southside Fellowship (on AMBS campus)
2016	Columbus Mennonite Church, Columbus, Ohio
2017	Bluffton University, Bluffton, Ohio
2018	College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana
2019	Milwaukee Mennonite Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
2020	Via Zoom
2021	Via Zoom
2022	Goshen College, College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana

Conference Presidents, 1957-2021

1957-	Lotus E Troyer	2005-2007	Alice Roth
1958	Ernest J Bohn	2007-2009	Gordon Oyer
1959-1960	Harry Yoder	2009-2011	Karl Shelly
1961-1962	Gordon J Neuenschwander	2011-2013	Joyce Schumacher
1963-1964	Jacob T Friesen	2013-2015	Ron Guengerich
1965-1966	Lorris A Habegger	2015-2017	Lisa Weaver
1967-1968	Claude F Boyer	2017-2019	Arman Habegger
1969-1970	Leonard Wiebe	2019-2021	Anna Yoder Schlabach
1971-1973	Larry Voth	2021-	James Rissler
1974	Lloyd L Ramseyer		
1975-1976	Howard Raid		
1977-1978	James Dunn		
1979-1980	Roger Siebert		
1981-1984	James Waltner		
1985-1986	Vyron Schmidt		
1987-1988	Howard Baumgartner		
1989-1991	Ruth Naylor		
1991-1993	Jake Elias		
1993-1995	Barry Schmell		
1995-1997	Larry Wilson		
1997-1999	Stan Clemens		
1999-2001	Janeen Bertsche Johnson		
2001-2003	Kevin Farmwald		
2003-2005	Mick Sommers		

2022

REPORT BOOK
of the

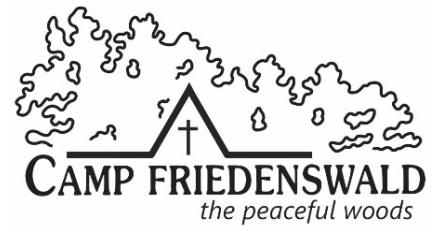
Central District Conference
of
Mennonite Church USA



Part III

Conference Committee Reports

CDC Annual Report



The past year brought a return to more “normal” operations at Camp Friedenswald after a year that held cancellations and closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While we continued to experience the impact of the pandemic throughout the year, we creatively adapted our programs in order to welcome people of all ages back to the peaceful woods of Camp Friedenswald. It was especially meaningful to gather for Camp’s 70th summer of camp after a year without.

Amid the continued uncertainty and challenges in providing camp and retreat experiences to guests and campers, the support and care provided by congregations and their members helped to sustain and encourage our efforts. The following highlights provide a glimpse into the year and illustrate the interactions between Camp Friedenswald, Central District Conference, and its congregations.

- **Over 2,400 hours of volunteer time and skill were given by 50 individuals of CDC congregations!** From the kitchen to maintenance tasks, to housekeeping and office work, people across the conference truly helped to carry out the mission of Camp throughout the year! Camp Friedenswald could not operate without the faithful support of these people.
- **Half of the 2021 summer staff came from CDC congregations** and brought their stories of how Camp and their churches have shaped their lives. Eleven of the summer staff came from six congregations including Assembly, Eighth Street, Hively Avenue, FMC Bluffton, Milwaukee, and Silverwood.
- After a summer without youth and family programs, we were excited to **welcome 400 campers (youth and family) to our 2021 program!** The summer theme focused on sharing our deepest longings with God through prayer. **Camp pastors from CDC congregations** helped to shape our times of worship. Pastors included David Moser (Southside Fellowship), Lora Nafziger (Assembly), Anna Yoder Schlabach (Assembly), Jane Roeschley (retired, Mennonite Church of Normal), Janeen Bertsche Johnson (8th Street Mennonite/AMBS) and Sibonokuhle Ncube (8th Street Mennonite/AMBS).
- **Hospitality was extended to seven CDC congregations** for a day or weekend of retreat. For many, after a year of meeting virtually, the retreat provided a refreshing and much needed time for reconnecting with one another. Congregations who gathered at Camp in 2021 included: Assembly, Emmaus Road, Faith, Hively Avenue, Keller Park, Silverwood, and Southside Fellowship.
- **Women’s Retreat**, an annual retreat hosted at Camp and planned by women across CDC, brought together 46 women from across the conference and beyond. The speaker was Sibonokuhle Ncube (8th Street Mennonite/AMBS) and focused on the theme of Hope for Healing; Hope for the Earth.
- **Camp provided hospitality to the CDC “Pastor+1 Retreat”** in the fall for CDC pastors and a spouse or friend.
- Over \$44,000 of **financial support** was given from congregations towards Camp’s programs. Thank you for continuing to partner with Camp in our shared ministry and for giving generously!

Submitted by Jenna Liechty Martin, executive director

Journey: A Missional Leadership Development Program

Thirty-eight people participated in Journey in 2021-2022, including 17 participants and 14 mentors in the North American program and six participants and one mentor in the Journey Southeast Asia program. One participant, **Charles Baraka** (Madison, Madison Mennonite) and his mentor, **Lavon Welty** (Goshen, Eighth Street Mennonite) are from Central District Conference.

Participants gathered at Amigo Centre in Sturgis, Michigan, for the fall Weekend Learning Event. Worship sessions laid the foundation for our time together and took place four times throughout the weekend. Learning sessions, led by **Isaac Villegas**, focused on spiritual disciplines and character formation for ministry. Others led sessions on developing personal timelines, including significant points of spiritual and vocational growth; personality inventories; and exploring spiritual direction. Mentors participated in a mentoring workshop (co-led by **Conference Minister Doug Luginbill**); and mentors and mentees met together to develop and update their learning covenants, which help to guide mentees through the program.

Following the fall gathering, participants joined online missional leadership development classes developed by David B. Miller, Teaching Associate of the AMBS Church Leadership Center, and taught by Roland Kuhl, Journey Instructor. As part of these studies, students also carried out a wide variety of ministry assignments in their congregations and communities. Throughout the session they also met with their mentors, typically bi-weekly, to discuss their classes and their ministry experiences.

The winter Weekend Learning Event was held on the AMBS campus. On arriving, mentees submitted a reflection paper focused on their learnings from the previous online study unit, and mentors submitted reflections on the learnings of their mentees. These reflection papers are shared with mentees' conference ministers to help conference ministers stay informed of mentees' growth and development in the program.

The theme for the Weekend Learning Event was reading and interpreting scripture, and again included worship sessions, learning sessions led by **Susannah Larry**, mentor and mentee workshops, and work on learning covenants. During the Saturday evening worship time, mentees in their final term of the program, including Charles Baraka, shared a reflection, and conference ministers, including Doug Luginbill, provided a blessing and prayer.

Following the winter gathering, participants again joined online classes and continued to meet bi-weekly in mentor-mentee pairs.

The Journey Board plays a vital role in shaping and guiding the program. Many thanks to Doug Luginbill and **Gayle Gerber Koontz**, CDC Ministerial Committee representative, for serving on the board.

Journey participants and alumni frequently tell us that Journey is a tremendous learning opportunity for pastors, lay leaders, church planters, and other emerging leaders! If you or someone you know wants to develop or deepen ministry gifts or is exploring a call to ministry, please speak to Doug Luginbill about whether the Journey program might be the right next step.

Respectfully submitted,

Jewel Gingerich Longenecker
AMBS Dean of Lifelong Learning

Ministerial Committee

Members: Brian Bolton (Shalom, Harrisonburg), Kay Bontrager-Singer (Faith, Goshen), Michael Crosby (First, Champaign-Urbana), Gayle Gerber Koontz (Assembly, Goshen), Ray Person (chair; First, Bluffton), Robin Walton (Columbus), Doug Luginbill, Conference Minister (ex officio).



For a second year, the Ministerial Committee has held all of its monthly meetings by Zoom due to the pandemic. We continue to discuss issues concerning the corrosive effect of patriarchy and racism in the church and we continue to seek ways to be more open to diversity in the clergy leadership in CDC and its congregations.

Credentialing for ministry is a significant part of our work as a committee. We work with the Conference Minister in credentialing interviews, for both licensing and ordination. It is a joy to interact with so many gifted and well-qualified candidates for ministry. Although Zoom is often more practical for these interviews, in the past in most cases we have had some members join with those we are interviewing in-person. Hopefully, we will be able to do more of this safely in the coming months.

Last year we formalized a process for **Clergy Development Grants** as a resource for clergy to help them fund continuing education and other projects, including counseling. We have approved some of these grants and are pleased with reports we have received from those who benefited. We are also pleased to be a part of the fundraising campaign that will include \$40,000 for the purpose of clergy development, not only supporting the kinds of things this grant funds but also providing some scholarship opportunities for seminary. For more information about the grants and the fundraising campaign, see CDC's website.

We continue to seek **ways to support CDC pastors and congregations**. We have agreed to participate in an Employee Assistance Plan (EAP) for credentialed pastors and interested church staff members. This EAP is being coordinated across Mennonite Church USA with the assistance of Duncan Smith who is the Director of the Corinthian Plan. We have also scheduled a webinar with David Brubaker of Eastern Mennonite University for CDC pastors and congregational leaders concerning best practices for staff relations committees, personnel committees, pastor relations committees, etc. for November 12, 2022, 9:30-11:00 am. Congregations and pastors will be receiving more information about these opportunities soon.

As a committee, we joined other sponsors of the **"Resolution for Repentance and Transformation,"** which was prepared by the Inclusive Mennonite Pastors. This is just one way that we are trying to support the LGBTQ+ people and their congregations as we strive to live into the values of this resolution regardless of how the vote may go in Kansas City.

Members of the Ministerial Committee have also participated in Doug's three-year evaluation and the search for an associate conference minister.

Submitted by Ray Person

Missional Church Committee

Members: Xaris Martinez (Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship), Karla Minter, Chair (Open Table Mennonite Fellowship), Kiva Nice-Webb (Chicago Community Mennonite Church), Matthew Pritchard (Atlanta Mennonite Church), Mark Rupp (Columbus Mennonite Church), Valerie Showalter (Madison Mennonite Church), Tim Stair (Hively Avenue Mennonite Church), Emma Hartman, CDC Administrator, ex officio (Faith Mennonite Church)



All six committee meetings, regional gatherings, and two Leadership Council meetings were held on-line. At the conclusion of Matthew Yoder's term, we welcomed Matthew Pritchard to the committee. The Conference's two-year theme, Tending Transformation, shaped the naming and work of our two task groups.

Tending Transformation: Racial, Ethnic, Religious (RER) Reconciliation task group members Xaris, Kiva, Valerie and Emma engaged in integrative work:

Turning anti-racism reports into narratives to share with the wider CDC community;

Ensuring there are questions in the sacred listening tour that elicit information about racial, ethnic, and religious work the congregations are already doing, tried to do or would like to do;

Seeking ways to amplify and support the work of Inclusive Pastors group in anticipation of the MC USA special delegate session in Kansas City;

Considering ways to welcome and introduce new communities of faith to available grants and existing RER work of the conference while also highlighting the RER work already being done as part of the introduction/welcoming process to the conference.

Tending Transformation: Growing Communities of Faith and Peace task group members Karla, Matthew, Mark, Tim and Emma engaged in collaborative, generative work:

Affirming an emerging communities of faith fund with the CDC Board of Directors;

Contributing to the "Emerging Communities of Faith Grant, Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA" application form and process;

Participating in the peer support group for emerging communities of faith, facilitated by Doug; Tim Stair, representing the task group on a support team created by Doug to specifically walk alongside the Charlotte, NC emerging community of faith;

Providing feedback and revisions to the new position description for "CDC Associate Conference Minister for Emerging Communities of Faith;"

Referring to the existing "Supporting New and Developing Communities of Faith" for precedence and practice in guiding the conference's current work.

Submitting "Tending Transformation: New and Emerging Communities of Faith" by Karla, and "Emerging faith communities help my faith emerge" by Tim, for the November CDC *Reporter*.

The committee reviewed Reign of God grant applications and approved a \$500 dollar grant to Raleigh Mennonite Church for attendance at an anti-racism curriculum workshop offered by the Durham-based nonprofit, "we-are" (Working to Extend Anti-Racism Education).

The committee appointed Valerie Showalter to the conference minister search committee for the new position of Associate Conference Minister for Emerging Communities of Faith.

Submitted by Karla Minter

CDC Mennonite Women

Hello, Central District Conference Women.

We had a wonderful Women's Retreat at Camp Friedenswald this year with our inspiring speaker Sibonokuhle Ncube, an AMBS student from Zimbabwe who attends Eighth Street Mennonite Church. The next Women's Retreat offered by Camp Friedenswald will be September 16-18, 2022. Mark your calendars!



At the retreat, the officers of Central District's Mennonite Women organization asked attendees if there was a perceived need for Mennonite Women to continue at the area conference level. At this point, the only task being done by the officers is to plan and lead a banquet for women at the Annual Meeting and distribute contributions sent in by congregational groups. We recognize that the shape of women's organizations has changed dramatically, that many congregations no longer have women's groups, and the extra level of a conference structure no longer serves the original purpose of empowering women. Many other area conferences have already disbanded their Mennonite Women structure.

Attendees at Women's Retreat agreed that Central District should disband its Mennonite Women group at the conference level. We have communicated that decision to the CDC office and Mennonite Women USA and have received their support.

Both Emma Hartman of Central District Conference and Cyneatha Millsaps of Mennonite Women USA have assured us that we are following proper guidelines for this decision. Cyneatha assures us that our decision is 'in line with many other groups across the church' and that 'MC USA has another structure for keeping women connected.' She invites us each to consider being 'ambassadors' in that structure. See these sites for more information:

<https://mennonitewomenusa.org>

<https://www.facebook.com/mwusa>

Cyneatha asks us to remember that we are 'not done, just shifting.' That is a blessed reminder.

We encourage those CDC congregations who still have women's groups to continue their wonderful work. Please see recent reports of CDC Women in the Annual Meeting minutes to read about the variety of ways these groups are engaging in mission and fellowship. We also encourage these groups (and individuals) to continue to post their activities and reflections on the Central District Conference Mennonite Women Facebook group.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1384467135142745>

There will no longer be a women's banquet at the annual conference sessions, unless a local hosting group wants to plan one.

Now that the CDC Mennonite Women is dissolving, congregational women's groups may give contributions to causes of their choice. We encourage you to continue support to Mennonite Women USA, Camp Friedenswald, and scholarships for women students at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary—the primary recipients of our recent giving.

The CDC Women's officers will allocate the remaining conference funds to groups such as those above and those suggested by Doug Luginbill:

- Emerging Communities of Faith Fund: Provides financial support to new and emerging communities of faith for training, program support, etc. This is a new fund.
- Missional Activities Fund: financial support to congregations that are working toward racial, ethnic and religious reconciliation.
- Leadership Development Fund: Provides financial resources to credentialed leaders for continuing education, especially around intercultural competency and anti-racism training.

If you have any questions about these changes, please contact one of the recent officers.

Thank you.

Greta Holt, current president (gholt1@me.com)

Janeen Bertsche Johnson, past president (jbjohnson@ambs.edu)

Barbara Gant, board member (gantbarbra@gmail.com)

2022

REPORT BOOK
of the

Central District Conference
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Part IV

Reports by Related Institutions



2022 Report to Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA

So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! 2 Corinthians 5:17

Ways MC USA equipped conferences, congregations and communities to #BeTransformed in 2021

Our Mission

The mission of Mennonite Church USA Executive Board is to equip and empower leaders to share with others the gift of God's peace and transformative love.

Our Vision

God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

Our Renewed Commitments

- Follow Jesus
- Witness to God's peace
- Experience transformation



More than 1,000 people participated in [MennoCon21](#), MC USA's first hybrid convention, held online and in-person in Cincinnati, Ohio, July 6-10. Revitalization was a key focus, with Executive Director Glen Guyton introducing *Be Transformed* as the theme for the next biennium.

[Church Vitality](#) staff coached faith formation leaders during a difficult year through cohorts, roundtable discussions and webinars. At-home worship guides for Lent and Advent resourced families, while a [Bible-based curriculum about policing](#) helped congregations discuss important social justice issues.



MC USA supported new missional churches, awarding its second round of [Thrive Church Planting Grants](#) to three congregations: Community of Hope, Summit Street Church and Wild Church.



The first "Learn, Pray, Join" initiative of 2021, in collaboration with the Mennonites Against Militarism project, focused on the ["Cost of War,"](#) highlighting resistance to war as a core peace church value.

["Learn, Pray, Join: Cost of Poverty"](#) explored the topic of poverty from theological and practical perspectives, addressing its intersectional nature and the impact of the pandemic, through prayers, blogs and resources.

In response to rising gun violence, MC USA partnered with [RAWtools](#), an organization that teaches nonviolence and turns guns to gardening tools, which are sold to support the denomination's peace and justice work.

Twenty congregations received [Justice Fund](#) grants for their efforts to combat poverty, dismantle racism, seek immigration justice or reimagine policing. This work was supported by Allegheny Mennonite Conference, which provided a [\\$45K donation](#) and \$15K matching grant, and by giving from across the church.

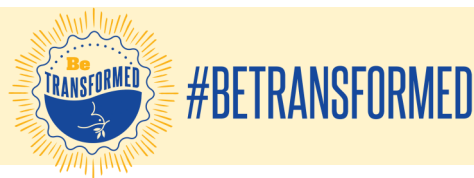


Glen Guyton began his second four-year term as executive director in April 2021 and [Jon Carlson](#), pastor, Forest Hills Mennonite Church, was affirmed as moderator-elect at the Delegate Assembly in July.

MC USA's Women in Leadership ministry created ["Laboring Toward Wholeness,"](#) a Bible-based curriculum for dismantling patriarchy in the church, and relaunched its Holding It(,) Together podcast.



PeaceMail
Mennonite Church USA



[Subscribe to PeaceMail](#), MC USA's weekly digital news magazine and the only source for all of the denomination's news, blogs, upcoming events and resources.

MennoCon23, MC USA's biennial convention will be held in Kansas City, Missouri, July 4-8, 2023. Save the date for this transformative experience!



Informe 2022 a la Conferencia Central District de la Iglesia Menonita de EE. UU.

De modo que si alguno está en Cristo, nueva criatura es; las cosas viejas pasaron; he aquí todas son hechas nuevas. 2 Corintios 5.17

Las maneras en que MC USA equipó a las conferencias, congregaciones y comunidades

Nuestra misión

La misión de la Junta ejecutiva de la Iglesia Menonita de EE. UU. es equipar y empoderar a los líderes para compartir con otros el don de la paz y el amor transformador de Dios.

Nuestra visión

Dios nos llama a ser seguidores de Cristo Jesús y por el poder del Espíritu Santo, crecer como comunidades de gracia, gozo y paz, para que la sanación y la esperanza de Dios fluyan a través nuestro al mundo.

Nuestros compromisos renovados

- Seguir a Jesús
- Ser testimonio de la paz de Dios
- Experimentar transformación



Más de 1.000 personas participaron de [MennoCon21](#), la primera convención híbrida de MC USA, que se realizó en línea y presencialmente en Cincinnati, Ohio, del 6 al 10 de julio. El enfoque clave fue la revitalización. El director ejecutivo Glen Guyton presentó [#SerTransformado](#) como temática para el próximo bienio.

Vitalidad de la iglesia: El personal capacitó a líderes de formación de la fe durante este año difícil a través de cohortes, conversaciones en mesas redondas y seminarios en línea. Recursos como guías de adoración en el hogar para la cuaresma y el advento acompañaron a las familias, mientras que un programa sobre la [vigilancia policial](#) ayudó a las congregaciones a conversar sobre asuntos importantes de justicia social.

MC USA apoyó a nuevas iglesias misionales, premiando con su segunda ronda de donaciones denominadas [Thrive Church Planting Grants](#), a tres congregaciones: Community of Hope, Summit Street Church y Wild Church.



La primera [iniciativa de "Aprende, ora y únete"](#) del año 2021, en colaboración con el proyecto Menonitas en contra del militarismo, se centró en el "Costo de la guerra", destacando la resistencia a la guerra como un valor central de una iglesia de paz.

["Aprende, ora, únete: el costo de la pobreza"](#) explora la pobreza desde perspectivas teológicas y prácticas, abordando su naturaleza de entrecruzar temáticas y el impacto de la pandemia, a través de oraciones, blogs y recursos.

Para responder al aumento de la violencia armada, [MC USA coparticipó con RAWtools](#), una organización que enseña la no violencia y transforma las armas en herramientas de jardinería, que se venden para apoyar el trabajo de paz y justicia de la denominación.

Veinte congregaciones recibieron [donaciones del Fondo de justicia](#) por sus esfuerzos de combatir la pobreza, dismantelar el racismo, buscar la justicia migratoria o la reimaginación de la vigilancia policial. Este trabajo [recibió el sustento de la Conferencia Menonita Allegheny Mennonite Conference](#), que proveyó una donación de \$45.000 y una bonificación adicional de \$15.000, y de dádivas de toda la iglesia.

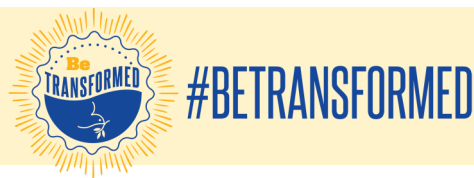


Glen Guyton comenzó su segundo período de cuatro años como director ejecutivo en abril del 2021, y [Jon Carlson](#), pastor de Forest Hills Mennonite Church, recibió la afirmación como moderador electo en la asamblea de delegados en julio.

El ministerio de Mujeres en liderazgo de MC USA creó ["Trabajo de parto hacia la plenitud"](#), un programa basado en la Biblia para la dismantelación del patriarcado en la iglesia, y se enfocó en las voces de mujeres en una serie de seminarios en línea sobre la escritura y la publicación.



[Suscríbese a PeaceMail](#), la revista de noticias digital semanal de MC USA, y la única fuente de todas las noticias, blogs, adelantos de eventos y recursos de toda la denominación.



MennoCon23, la convención bienal de MC USA, se realizará en Kansas City, Misuri, del 4 al 8 de julio, 2023. ¡Reserve la fecha para esta experiencia transformadora!

I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

– John 15:5

Grow your financial future with purpose

Everence 2021 report

Central District Conference Annual Meeting
June 23-25, 2022

Everence partners with churches to encourage good stewardship

Everence Financial® has been a reliable stewardship partner for churches since our start in 1945 as a mutual aid organization.

We continue working closely with churches and their members, and that will always be at the core of what we do.

We not only encourage generosity among our members – we help them find effective ways to be more generous, as part of our focus on stewardship as a spiritual discipline.

Our service to the faith community takes many forms, including stewardship education resources for pastors and church leaders. Learn more at everence.com/financial-services/for-churches.

Your MyNeighbor card can help you support your church



Everence Federal Credit Union created the MyNeighbor card to make it easy for members to support nonprofits, including their home congregations.

The credit card, launched in 2017, has generated more than \$1.5 million for charitable organizations so far.

Members use the MyNeighbor card just as they would any credit card. Everence donates 1.5% of each transaction total to the charity the member chooses from thousands of possibilities, including churches.

“The MyNeighbor card provides a simple and effective way for people to support the charities they care about most,” said Matt Gehman, Everence Federal Credit Union President and CEO.

Visit everence.com/myneighbor for details.

Sharing Fund helps churches boost benevolence

The Everence Sharing Fund helps thousands of families every year through matching grants to churches.

Millions of dollars have gone to our partner congregations over the years, with churches contributing millions more to help people with basic, everyday needs.

Sharing Fund grants often help people pay their rent, put food on the table or take care of medical bills. Over the last couple of years, some of that relief has gone to people directly affected by COVID-19, as well.

Churches with an Everence stewardship advocate can access matching Sharing Fund grants. Check out everence.com/sharing-fund for more information.

Financial wellness program is helping hundreds of pastors

More than 400 pastors have received a total of \$2 million in grants through the Everence Pastoral Financial Wellness Program in the last five years.



The financial assistance grants are part of an initiative funded, in part, by Lilly Endowment Inc. to help pastors tackle medical, credit card and educational debt.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added to the challenges faced by pastors and faith communities, as many churches had to endure a decline in giving.

Everence recognizes that pastors' financial health is important, both in terms of their own holistic well-being and as a component of a thriving ministry.

More info is available at everence.com/pastoral-financial-wellness.



Yo soy la vid; ustedes son las ramas. El que permanece en mí, como yo en él, dará mucho fruto; separados de mí no pueden ustedes hacer nada.

– Juan 15:5

Crezca su futuro financiero con propósito

Informe Everence 2021

Conferencia del Distrito Central Reunion Anual
23 a 25 de junio de 2022

Everence se asocia con iglesias para fomentar una buena mayordomía

Everence Financial® ha sido un socio confiable de mayordomía para las iglesias desde nuestros inicios en 1945 como una organización de ayuda mutua.

Continuamos trabajando estrechamente con las iglesias y sus miembros, y siempre estaremos enfocados en lo que hacemos.

No solo alentamos la generosidad entre nuestros miembros, sino que les ayudamos a encontrar formas efectivas de ser más generosos, como parte de nuestro enfoque en la mayordomía como disciplina espiritual.

Nuestro servicio a la comunidad de fe toma muchas formas, incluyendo recursos de educación de mayordomía para pastores y líderes de la iglesia. Obtenga más información en everence.com/serviciosfinancieros/para-iglesias.

Su tarjeta MyNeighbor puede ayudarle a apoyar a su iglesia



Everence Federal Credit Union creó el programa MyNeighbor para facilitar el proceso de que los miembros apoyen a organizaciones sin fines de lucro, incluyendo sus propias congregaciones.

La tarjeta de crédito, lanzada en 2017, ha generado más de \$1.5 millones para organizaciones caritativas hasta ahora.

Los miembros usan la tarjeta MyNeighbor como lo harían con cualquier tarjeta de crédito. Everence dona el 1.5% del total de cada transacción a la organización benéfica que el miembro elige entre miles de posibilidades, incluyendo las iglesias.

<<La tarjeta MyNeighbor proporciona una forma simple y efectiva para que las personas apoyen a las organizaciones benéficas que les importan,>> dijo Matt Gehman, presidente y CEO de Everence Federal Credit Union.

Viiste everence.com/myneighbor para obtener más detalles.

El Fondo Compartido ayuda a las iglesias a aumentar la benevolencia

El Fondo Compartido de Everence ayuda a miles de familias cada año a través de subvenciones equivalentes a las iglesias.

Millones de dólares han ido a nuestras congregaciones asociadas a lo largo de los años, con iglesias que contribuyen con millones más para ayudar a las personas con necesidades básicas y cotidianas.

Las subvenciones del Fondo Compartido a menudo ayudan a las personas a pagar su alquiler, poner comida en la mesa o hacerse cargo de las facturas médicas. En los últimos años, parte de ese alivio se ha destinado a las personas directamente afectadas por COVID-19 también.

Las iglesias con un defensor de la mayordomía de Everence pueden acceder a subvenciones equivalentes del Fondo Compartido. Consulte everence.com.

everence.com/fondoscompartidos para obtener más información.

El programa de Bienestar Financiero está ayudando a cientos de pastores



Más de 400 pastores han recibido un total de \$2 millones en subvenciones a través del programa de Bienestar Financiero Pastoral everence en los últimos cinco años.

Las subvenciones de asistencia financiera son parte de una iniciativa financiada, en parte, por Lilly Endowment Inc. para ayudar a los pastores a abordar la deuda médica, de tarjetas de crédito y educativa.

La pandemia de COVID-19 se ha sumado a los desafíos que enfrentan los pastores y las comunidades de fe, ya que muchas iglesias tuvieron que soportar una disminución en las donaciones.

Everence reconoce que la salud financiera de los pastores es importante, tanto en términos de su propio bienestar holístico como como un componente de un ministerio próspero.

Más información está disponible en everence.com/pastoral-financial-wellness.



Everence®

Mission Statement: MEA will strengthen Mennonite education for restorative leadership, work, and service throughout the church and the world.

A season of change at MEA

Greetings from Elkhart, Indiana, as the seasons begin to transform from winter to spring. MEA is also entering a



season of change. On September 1, 2021, [Rev. Dr. Michael Danner](#) (left) was named Executive Director and CEO of MEA. Michael serves as part of a shared staffing arrangement between MEA and Mennonite Church USA Executive Board. In this shared staffing role, Michael provides leadership to MEA as the Executive Director and leadership to the church vitality team of MC USA as the Associate Executive Director. **The goal of the shared staffing arrangement is to reimagine the education ministry of the church to better serve the needs of MC USA members, congregations, and conferences.**

[Shana Peachey Boshart](#) (above right) was appointed Faith Formation Minister as of November 1, 2021. In this new role, Shana serves in partnership with the Mennonite Schools Council (preK through grade 12 schools) and is expanding "Mennonite education" to include faith formation at the congregational level as well.

The goal of MEA going forward is to build on what continues to be vital from the past, while considering the educational needs of the whole church, including local congregations and area conferences, non-degree educational programming, and resources for church-based leadership development.



CFO and Senior Director Lisa Heinz (right) retired at the end of December after 23 years of service. [Janice Eigsti Miller](#) (left), a Goshen College graduate, began as the new CFO on January 1, 2022. Heinz' retirement marks the end of an era at MEA. Over the past three years, two other long-term MEA leaders retired: Carlos Romero and Elaine Moyer. With three new staff in leadership roles, we are excited about MEA's future! It is an opportunity to reimagine how MEA can best serve the education needs of Mennonite Church USA, congregations, conferences, and the schools.

MEA's Hispanic Ministries Education programs: SeBAH & IBA

MEA's Hispanic Anabaptist Biblical Seminary (**SeBAH - Seminario Bíblico Anabautista Hispano**) and the Hispanic Anabaptist Bible Institute (**IBA - Instituto Bíblico Anabautista**) continue to offer strong theological and biblical teaching from a uniquely Hispanic and Latino/a Anabaptist perspective. These programs always strive to be accessible and affordable. MEA's Hispanic Ministries also produces [MenoTicias](#), a digital magazine in Spanish, produced in collaboration with Mennonite Church USA Executive Board staff.

IBA (Instituto Bíblico Anabautista):

- [IBA student Josué González](#) has been named moderator-elect of *Iglesia Menonita Hispana*, the Hispanic/Latino/a constituency group of MC USA. Josué will graduate from IBA this Spring. **One of the best affirmations of our work is when our students emerge as leaders in the church.** We are very proud of Josué!
- **More than thirty IBA students are expected to graduate this Spring** from three study centers in the Bronx and Brooklyn, NY, and from one study center in Miami, FL.

SeBAH (*Seminario Bíblico Anabautista Hispano*):

- Fourteen SeBAH students are participating this trimester in the Pastoral Accompaniment course.
- Six new students will be enrolling in SeBAH in the upcoming summer term.
- The SeBAH graduation ceremony will be held at Hesston College on Labor Day weekend, September 2022, in combination with the IBA Tutor Training.

To learn more about IBA or SeBAH, or to enroll, visit <https://hispanicmennoedu.org/>.

MEA's Investment Fund

[The MEA Investment Fund](#) serves over twenty MC USA-affiliated schools, congregations, area conferences, and other education-related programs. **MEA has contracted with Everence Financial to provide administrative support to the Investment Fund Committee**, a role previously held by the MEA CFO. Everence brings particular expertise and resources, which will contribute to the continued success of the fund. Taylor Caouette, a Goshen College graduate, has been appointed by Everence as the MEA Investment Fund Facilitator. As of February 28, 2022, the Total Fund was valued at **\$204.7 million**.

Other ways MEA is supporting Anabaptist values in education

- **Reporting:** The [2021-2022 Enrollment Report](#) is an annual compilation of enrollment data from all member educational institutions and programs from early childhood through continuing education. Based on headcount in the fall 2021:
 - Mennonite educational institutions are touching the lives of **9,101 students**: a decrease of 249 (2.7%) students from the 2020 total of 9,350.
 - In higher education, the total headcount decreased by 108 students (with decreases of 13 in adult degree-completion, 108 in graduate, and 13 in seminary and increases of 26 in undergraduate).
 - Preschool, elementary, and secondary education levels showed a decrease of 127 students (2.5%).
- **Electronically:** MEA works through social media and other digital promotions to amplify the work of the schools and to emphasize Anabaptist values. We encourage you to “follow” MEA and the affiliated schools!
- **Prayer:** The [MEA prayer newsletter](#) is a monthly prayer resource that continues to be a blessing to the schools and local congregations. These prayer requests come directly from the schools across all levels of Mennonite education to help congregations and individuals know how best to pray for the schools and the work being done towards faith formation. The prayer requests can be shared in bulletins each week and/or printed or emailed to congregants each month for home use.
- **Human resources:** MEA publishes a weekly [Job Board](#) and distributes it to congregations, schools, constituents, and donors across the denomination and beyond. Schools affiliated with MEA can list their job openings at no charge. There are a significant number of vacancies at all levels across Mennonite education, including several principal/head of school positions. MEA is providing support to several search committees.

The MEA board and staff thank you for the many ways you support Mennonite education across the church!

Submitted by Michael Danner
Executive Director, CEO
April 2022

MD/jvg

Be local. Be global. Be the Gospel.

Note: Underlined words indicate active links.



Central District Conference + Mennonite Mission Network

Worker support around the world



Church Planting

Mauricio Chenlo is part of the Emerging Leaders group that is coaching a start up with folks from Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Worker support

- 1** Deborah Byler, serving in San Pedro Carchá, Guatemala
» Hively Avenue Mennonite Church,
- 2** Brian and Noelia Fox, serving in Burgos, Spain
» Maplewood Mennonite Church
- 3** Alisha and Joshua Garber, serving in Barcelona, Catalonia
» Oak Grove Mennonite Church
- 4** Joseph and Rachel Givens, serving in Calais, France
» Grace Mennonite Church

- 5** Jane and Jerrell Ross Richer, serving in the Eastern Rain Forest Region in Ecuador
» Eighth Street Mennonite Church
- 6** Christy and Peter Sensesig, serving in Paris, France
» Berea Mennonite Church
» First Mennonite Church
- 7** Delicia Bravo Aguilar and Peter Wigginton, serving in Quito, Ecuador
» Lima Mennonite Church
» Paoli Mennonite Fellowship
» Trenton Mennonite Church
- 8** Rebekah York, serving in Bogotá, Colombia
» Silverwood Mennonite Church

Prayer partners

37

Service participants



Service sites

Mennonite Voluntary Service unit

» Chicago

SOOP site

» Camp Friedenswald

Service Adventure

9 Sam Setiawan, serving in Anchorage, Alaska

Mennonite Voluntary Service

10 Pamela Ortiz, serving in Chicago, Illinois

SOOP

Roger and Linda Clemmons, Gotha, Florida

John and Kay Reimer, Gotha, Florida
Greg Springer, Barcelona Spain

Congregational giving to Mission Network



During Mission Network's past fiscal year, August 1, 2020, through July 31, 2021, Central District Conference congregations gave **\$194,147. Thank You!**



The collaboration between Central District Conference and Mission Network encourages transformation across the street and around the world! Thank you so much for your vital partnership in support and prayer. "I pray that God, the source of all hope, will infuse your lives with an abundance of joy and peace in the midst of your faith so that your hope will overflow through the power of the Holy Spirit" Romans 15:13 (VOICE). Especially in this time of pandemic, we stand together in prayer for God's generous grace and mercy in our families, in our church and in our world.

Mike Sherill

Mike Sherill, Executive Director and CEO



Thank you for your generous support toward the work of Mennonite Mission Network. Blessings to each congregation and your ministries!

Eric Frey Martin

Eric Frey Martin
Constituent Engagement
Representative

Thank you for your continued partnership in God's mission!

www.MennoniteMission.net Toll-free: 1-866-866-2872

Sé local. Sé global. Sé el evangelio.

Nota: Las palabras subrayadas indican enlaces activos.



Conferencia *Central District* + Red Menonita de Misión

Apoyo a obreros/as alrededor del mundo



Church Planting

Mauricio Chenlo forma parte de un grupo de líderes nuevos que acompaña un emprendimiento en Chattanooga, Tennessee

Apoyo a obreros/as

1 Deborah Byler, sirve en San Pedro Carchá, Guatemala

» Hively Avenue Mennonite Church,

2 Brian y Noelia Fox, sirven en Burgos, España

» Maplewood Mennonite Church

3 Alisha y Joshua Garber, sirven en Barcelona, Cataluña

» Oak Grove Mennonite Church

4 Joseph y Rachel Givens, sirven en Calais, Francia

» Grace Mennonite Church

5 Jane y Jerrell Ross Richer, sirven en la Región Amazónica del Ecuador

» Eighth Street Mennonite Church

6 Christy y Peter Sensesenig, sirven en París, Francia

» Berea Mennonite Church

» First Mennonite Church

7 Delicia Bravo Aguilar y Peter Wigginton, sirven en Quito, Ecuador

» Lima Mennonite Church

» Paoli Mennonite Fellowship

» Trenton Mennonite Church

8 Rebekah York, sirve en Bogotá, Colombia

» Silverwood Mennonite Church

**Comprometidos
en oración**

37

Participantes y lugares de servicio



Sitios de Servicio Cristiano

Unidad de *Mennonite Voluntary Service* (Servicio Voluntario Menonita)

» Chicago

Sitio de SOOP

» Camp Friedenswald

Service Adventure (Voluntarios Aventureros)

9 Sam Setiawan, sirve en Anchorage, Alaska

Mennonite Voluntary Service (Servicio Voluntario Menonita)

10 Pamela Ortiz, sirve en Chicago, Illinois

SOOP (Oportunidades de Servicio con Nuestros Hermanos)

Roger y Linda Clemmons, Gotha, Florida

John y Kay Reimer, Gotha, Florida

Greg Springer, Barcelona Spain

Aporte congregacional a la Red Menonita



Durante el último año fiscal de la Red de Misión, desde el 1 de agosto de 2020 al 31 de julio de 2021, las congregaciones de la Conferencia *Central District* ofrendaron **\$194,147. ¡Gracias!**



La colaboración entre la Conferencia *Central District* y la Red de Misión incentiva la transformación del otro lado de la calle y alrededor del mundo. Estamos muy agradecidos por su significativa coparticipación en oración y su apoyo económico. "Que el Dios de la esperanza los llene de toda alegría y paz a ustedes que creen en él, para que reboten de esperanza por el poder del Espíritu Santo" (Romanos 15.13). Especialmente en estos tiempos de pandemia, nos unimos en oración pidiendo la gracia generosa de Dios y su misericordia para nuestras familias, nuestra iglesia y nuestro mundo.

Mike Sherrill

Mike Sherrill, Director Ejecutivo y CEO



Gracias por su generoso apoyo al trabajo de la Red Menonita de Misión. Bendiciones a cada iglesia y sus ministerios.

Eric Frey Martin

Eric Frey Martin
Representante de Relaciones Eclesiales

¡Gracias por su continua colaboración en la misión de Dios!

www.MennoniteMission.net Línea Gratuita: 1-866-866-2872

2022 REPORT TO CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE

MHS Vision

MHS is the go-to leader for integrating faith and work in health and human services.

MHS Mission

Anchored in Anabaptist values, MHS inspires and strengthens health and human service ministries to fulfill their missions.

Mennonite Health Services (MHS) is a network of Anabaptist health and human services ministries located throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. MHS has members in the following states where CDC congregations are located:

- Florida
- Illinois
- Indiana
- Iowa
- Michigan
- Ohio
- Virginia

Activities

- The 2022 Mennonite Health Assembly will be held Wednesday, March 23 – Saturday, March 26, in Greenville, SC. Registration will begin on January 5, 2022. For more information and to Register please visit <https://www.mhsonline.org/health-assembly>
- MHS provides monthly webinars on a variety of topics. The 2022 themes include leadership, governance, and workforce development. These webinars are free and open to anyone that is interested [in the topic](#).
- MHS members continue to appreciate tools and resources to support their ministries. For more information on MHS member services, [please view our on-going member benefits video series](#).
- MHS Consulting continues to serve MHS members and nonmembers in the health and human services arena; primarily providing resources in governance, executive search, executive coaching, interim placement, strategic planning and positioning and operational, financial and market assessments.
- The MHS Board of Directors and MHS Staff continue to advance diversity, equity, justice and inclusion initiatives.

For Thanksgiving and Prayer

- Continued prayer for staffing retention and recruitment in the pandemic environment. Finding and keeping qualified and compassionate employees is a significant concern for MHS member organizations and the vulnerable populations they serve across the country.
- We are grateful for the financial gifts, gifts in kind, prayer and volunteer support to MHS member organizations throughout these challenging times.

Submitted by Karen Lehman, President/CEO

www.mhsonline.org

Resources for faith formation and leadership development

Academic programs

AMBS serves the church as a learning community with an Anabaptist vision, educating followers of Jesus Christ to be leaders for God's reconciling mission in the world. Our programs integrate academics, spiritual formation and practice. Join us — whether in person or at a distance — and deepen your understanding of Scripture, faith and Anabaptist theology!

- **Study at a distance**
 - **Master of Divinity Connect** (online and hybrid courses)
 - **Master of Arts: Theology and Global Anabaptism** (fully or partially online)
 - **Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies** (fully or partially online; customizable)
- **Study on campus**
 - **Master of Divinity Campus**
 - **Master of Arts in Christian Formation**
 - **Master of Arts: Theology and Peace Studies**
 - **Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies**
ambs.edu/degrees-and-programs
- **Yes, you *can* afford seminary!** We offer generous need-based financial aid, matching grants and scholarships for both full- and part-time students. ambs.edu/tuition
- **Want to explore seminary study?** Take an online, campus or blended class, even if you're not yet admitted to AMBS, and your first three credit hours are 50% off! Check out our offerings: ambs.edu/upcoming-courses
- **Experience AMBS:** Talk with students, faculty and staff and learn what AMBS has to offer! ambs.edu/visit

Center for Faith Formation and Culture

- **!Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth:** Students in grades 10–12 can explore ministry and theology, grow in spiritual practices and listen for God's call through a summer congregational internship and a Group Experience. Participants receive a \$1,000 stipend. Tap a shoulder! ambs.edu/explore

AMBS students from CDC congregations

- **Master of Divinity:** Debbie Bledsoe (Raleigh, Keller Park), Alaina Dobkowski (Grand Rapids), Billy Funk (Silverwood), Kajsia Herrstrom (First – Champaign-Urbana), Melika Kauffman Hershberger (Normal), Kristen Swartley (Assembly)
- **MA in Christian Formation:** Jon Zirkle (Assembly)
- **Grad Certificate:** Carrie Mast (First – Bluffton)
- **Journey participant/mentor:** Charles Baraka (Madison) / Lavon Welty (Eighth St)

AMBS Board member: John Daniels (Covenant)

AMBS statistics: In 2021–22, 127 graduate students were enrolled at AMBS; 11 of them were guest students. Sixty-four were from the U.S., nine were Canadian, and 54 were international students. The Journey program had 18 students in the U.S., Canada, Southeast Asia and Uganda.

Lifelong learning

AMBS's Church Leadership Center offers various nondegree options for you to continue your education and strengthen your leadership skills:

- **Online short courses:** Join the forum discussions in these six-week online courses:
 - Exploring Peace and Justice in the Bible
 - Exploring Anabaptist History and Theology
 - Understanding Anabaptist Approaches to Scripture: What's Different and Why?
 - Transforming Congregational Conflict and Communication
 - The Bible and Christian Nationalism: Faithful Leadership in a World of Political Idolatryambs.edu/online-short-courses
- **Pastors & Leaders 2023:** Feb. 13–16
ambs.edu/pastors-and-leaders
- **Journey: A Missional Leadership Development Program:** This two-and-a-half-year nondegree program offers mentor-mentee partnerships, distance-learning opportunities and community support. ambs.edu/journey
- **Spiritual Direction Seminars:** Cultivate your ministry of spiritual direction. ambs.edu/seminars
- **Invite AMBS!** Faculty are available to speak on trauma-informed caregiving, undoing racism, intercultural competence, improvisational leadership, and more. Ask about virtual visits! ambs.edu/invite

In our senior capstone course, Basic Issues of Faith and Life, students are studying the book *The God Who Sees* by Karen González. In the book, González uses the words “immigrants,” “strangers,” and “others” almost interchangeably as she explores issues of acceptance and inclusion through her own migration story, stories others have shared with her, and biblical migration stories. Caring for the “others” is the highest of callings, she states: “I had never realized how much the scriptures tell the stories of people who began as strangers and then became part of the family of God. Welcome and belonging are overarching narratives of the Bible.” Whether the individuals we welcome to campus are literal immigrants or not, all students will feel “other” at some point, and we at Bethel continue to strive to make our campus a place where everyone can feel that they are a part of the family of God.

As Bethel continues to move in the direction of becoming a federally designated work college, areas of focus continue to be student success, retention, and career preparation. We are currently in the pilot year of the Career Pathways Program, a work-learning-service program intended to help full-time, residential students reduce their student loan debt and graduate with high employability skills. Open forums will take place this spring for anyone interested to learn more about the program and ask questions of the Strategic Planning Committee members. The committee is set to conclude its process in October 2022 at which time there will be staff in place to continue the work. Several positions have already been redefined to fit into the new model, such as a director of career and leadership development and a director of student success and retention. The retention rate for all students for fall 2021 to spring 2022 was 93.2%, the highest rate in over ten years, after welcoming our second-largest freshman class in recent history. We were also able to celebrate being removed from “on notice” by our accrediting body.

Faith formation has been another topic of discussion, discernment, and study on campus. A task force was formed in the fall of 2020 to ensure that our faith formation efforts are relevant, effective, and peerless. Results of discussions and a survey were presented in the fall of 2021, but it was clear that more work and dialogue was needed. As faith becomes more personalized and individualistic, it is important for the college to reexamine how it can bring all into the family of God. In the survey, students ranked religion courses and personal conversations as highly formative activities. Bethel continues to provide many opportunities for worship and prayer, both formal and informal, including an interfaith room. The annual Staley Lectures in March will be presented by Karen González. In the fall, the postponed Worship and the Arts Symposium will take place with a focus on the new Mennonite hymnal, *Voices Together*. The Student Life office was able to reopen the campus food pantry after closing it due to pandemic concerns. Food is donated by local individuals and available to any student who is experiencing need. Bethel was also one of 78 colleges nationwide invited to participate in the 2021 Institute on Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) Campus Centers.

We are not able to accomplish these things and provide students with a space to find their place in the family of God alone. Thank you for your contributions.

Ben Lichti, Coordinator of Church Relations



2022 Report to Central District Conference

KNOWLTON SCIENCE CENTER

Bluffton University held a groundbreaking celebration for the Austin E. Knowlton Science Center on Oct. 1 during the 2021 Homecoming and Alumni Weekend celebration. The \$10 million building features several teaching labs and will transform science education at Bluffton as we prepare leaders equipped to address the pressing science, technology, math and health care needs of the region.

The building is expected to open in time for the 2023 academic year.

DESIGN YOUR LIFE

During the 2020-21 academic year, two sections of Bluffton's first-year Becoming a Scholar class piloted a new program called Design Your Life (DYL). This year, the curriculum is being fully implemented on campus.

Originally developed at Stanford University and modified for Bluffton undergraduates, lessons help students:

Engage—explore, prototype and develop an action mindset

Reflect—learn by taking stock of experiences after they happen

Storytell—articulate a point of view to gain clarity and create opportunities

The goal is for students to get more out of (instead of just cramming more into) their college experience. Senior students will come full circle with the DYL process as they transition the framework from getting more out of their college experience to getting more out of life.

PRESIDENT WOOD REAPPOINTED

During their June 2021 meeting, Bluffton University's Board of Trustees completed a presidential review process and reappointed President Jane M. Wood, Ph.D., for a five-year term. The board noted her areas of strength as mission and planning, administrative management, budget and finance, enrollment management, student life and representing the institution. President Wood came to Bluffton in summer 2018.

NEW CAMPUS PASTOR

Chalsi Campbell, a 2012 Bluffton graduate, is now serving as campus pastor. After studying religion and youth ministry in her undergrad, Campbell earned her master's in theological studies from Conrad Grebel University College. Since then, she has worked in a range of church and teaching positions. As a Bluffton student, Campbell was instrumental in the creation of the university's Prayer Labyrinth and served as Spiritual Life Week Coordinator.

Thank you!

Bluffton University currently enrolls eight students from Central District Conference churches: **Theodore Andreas**, First Mennonite Church, Bluffton, Ohio; **Rilynn Kauffman**, Assembly Mennonite Church; **Grace Liechty-Zickafoose**, Lima Mennonite Church; **Caitlyn Renner**, Grace Mennonite Church; **Kyle Schmidt**, Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship; **Jeff Strayer**, Columbus Mennonite Church; **Katie Villegas**, Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship; **Deborah Yoder**, Assembly Mennonite Church.

Church Matching Scholarship support is \$7,216 for 2021-22.

The Bluffton trustees from Central District Conference are **Annette Heslep '89**, First Mennonite Church; **Heather Reichenbach '99**, Eighth Street Mennonite Church; **Jane Roeschley '77**, Mennonite Church of Normal; **Tim Stried '98**, Columbus Mennonite Church.

Save the date

**Voices Together art exhibit
at Bluffton University**

Jan. 11-Feb. 19, 2023
Sauder Visual Arts Center

Exhibit includes 12 works of original visual art by Mennonite artists included in the new hymnal—Voices Together

For more information, contact

Gerald Mast

*Church relations coordinator and
professor of communications*
mastg@bluffton.edu

New Associate Dean and New Director of Curriculum and Assessment

Rev. Dr. Sarah Ann Bixler has taken on the role as associate dean of the Seminary. She will oversee the seminary's graduate degree programs, guide the development of new programs for pastors and laypersons involved in a wide range of ministries, and serve as director of the seminary's formation program. Dr. Bixler received her PhD in practical theology with a specialization in Christian education and formation from Princeton Theological Seminary.

Old Testament associate professor, Dr. Andrea Dalton Saner has taken on the role as director of seminary curriculum and assessment. Dr. Saner is an Old Testament scholar who works within the theological disciplines, and a lay theologian whose primary text is Scripture. Through her teaching she helps students to read the biblical text slowly, using historical and literary scholarship, and to recognize how their theological commitments and ecclesial communities inform and motivate continual return to reading Scripture. Dr. Saner has taught in the seminary and undergraduate Bible and religion department since 2013.

Spring Graduation

EMS awarded five Master of Arts in Christian Leadership, four Master of Divinity degrees and one Theological Certificate to the graduating class of 2022. Seminary Baccalaureate was held on Saturday, May 6 with the theme "Finding Your Voice" and the scripture focus of Ephesians 4:11-13. Speakers included Dorothy Jean Weaver, professor emeritus; Lonnie Yoder, professor emeritus; and David Evans, associate professor of history and mission.

Visit <https://emu.edu/seminary/courses/> for more

New Graduate Certificate

We are offering a New Graduate Certificate in Faith Based Peacebuilding. This certificate is designed for faith community leaders who want to more effectively respond to social conflicts as they arise in their community and those who seek faith-informed social engagement in the complex justice issues of their communities. Overall requirements are 9-10 SH from the Seminary and 8-9 SH from Center for Justice and Peacebuilding, for a total of 18 credits.

Seminary Options

Consider pursuing seminary studies. We offer the following degrees: Master of Divinity, Master of Arts in Religion, and Master of Arts in Christian Leadership. Scholarships are available for half-time (6SH) and full-time study (12+ SH). Most classes can be joined via Zoom. You are welcome to take a course for academic credit or participation audit.

Visit <https://emu.edu/seminary/courses/> for more information about Fall classes.

Statement of Purpose

Eastern Mennonite Seminary prepares servants of Christ to minister together locally and globally. In response to God's gracious call, we invite students to embody and bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of God's Spirit as wise interpreters, mature practitioners, discerning communicators, and transformational leaders.

- ▶ **Susan Schultz Huxman**, president
- ▶ **Sue Cockley**, seminary dean
- ▶ **Sarah Ann Bixler**, associate dean
- ▶ **Veva Mumaw**, director of seminary student services & church relations

For the most up-to-date information on EMS, give us a call, visit us on the web, "Like" us on Facebook!

emu.edu/seminary
540-432-4257



*Prepared to serve and
lead in a global context*

SUMMER 2022

CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE

EMU ANNUAL REPORT

Greetings from President Huxman

We have many “leaves of springtime” to savor this time of year at EMU. In concert with our campus community, I am honored and humbled to serve EMU—a world-renowned faith-informed peace and justice university. We have an inspiring mission: “*to prepare students to serve and lead in a global context*” in the spirit of Micah 6:8: “*to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God.*”

Here are some examples of our fortitude, resilience and reliance on our faith-informed values (Christian discipleship, community, service and peacemaking) in these challenging times:

In Academics—We received a “clean slate” from our accreditation bodies in the last year (Engineering, Nursing, Teacher Education, Social Work, Seminary) including the biggest and the most important of all: the Southern Association of Colleges and Universities (SACS). In all major categories, we received superb reviews: finance, governance, academics, faculty, student outcomes, and campus engagement.

In Advancement—We are so very thankful that philanthropic giving is up over last year—and we had a good year last year! We are thrilled to see growth in special giving categories in the area of student scholarships, tuition relief, and estate gifts, even as our “bread and butter” the university annual fund continues to grow as well.

In Enrollment—Our retention from Fall to Spring remained strong in the midst of layers of COVID challenges. Deposits are on pace with last year (which was a very good year!) for Fall 22.

In Budget—We are very pleased to announce that we will close out the 2022 budget with margin (significant income) again for the 4th year in a row.

Thank you for your support in prayers, advocacy and giving. What a gift our churches and conferences are to EMU! Our Mennonite students comprise a strong component of our overall student body success. And it is still true: students who attend Mennonite schools are more likely to join or stay connected to the Mennonite Church than those who attend elsewhere. Recently a sophomore student shared with me: “*I thought since I had already attended a Mennonite high school, I should go somewhere else; but I am so glad I gave EMU a second look. It has made all the difference!*”

In gratitude, Susan Schultz Huxman, Ph.D.

Harrisonburg, Virginia

www.emu.edu

How can EMU serve you?

Contact the church relations office
to schedule the president or a
faculty guest speaker:
540-432-4597 or
ChurchRelations@emu.edu

Central District Conference Connections to EMU

Students

Fifteen undergraduate students, two graduate students and one seminary student from Central District Mennonite Conference are enrolled in the spring 2022 semester.

Giving

Central District Mennonite Conference churches gave \$34,176 in matching church grants during the fiscal year ending June 2021.

- ▶ **Susan Schultz Huxman**,
president
- ▶ **Kirk Shisler**, *vice president for advancement*
- ▶ **Braydon Hoover**, *director of advancement & annual giving*
- ▶ **Matthew Ruth**, *director of admissions*

Our Vision

We will open new pathways of access and achievement for all students who aspire to grow as unifying leaders equipped with intercultural competence, oriented toward peace and justice, and rooted in an active faith modeled on the life and teachings of Jesus.

churchrelations@emu.edu

Compassionate Peacemaking is focus of 2021-22 academic year at Goshen College

Goshen College President Rebecca Stoltzfus opened the 2021-22 academic year with a message about compassionate peacemaking, this year's core value focus.

Using the metaphor of the rifted rock, she encouraged students and faculty to find the rifted rocks we need to provide us sanctuary in the turbulence of these times, and to be rifted rocks for one another, building strong foundations of peace, protecting each other's backs, opening ourselves to one another and holding our boundaries, in the ways of peace.

Following the convocation, students took part in the annual applause tunnel, a 21-year tradition with a cheering tunnel formed by faculty and staff, then seniors, juniors, sophomores and finally the first-year students. The procession led out to Schrock Plaza, where everyone participated in a student-led cheer.

Conference connections

This academic year we have 38 students enrolled from 12 Central District Conference congregations. Those churches generously pledged \$106,514 in congregational student aid for the academic year. The Goshen College Church Aid Matching Grant program provides a dollar-for-dollar match of the first \$1,000 per student and a 1:4 match after that, up to full tuition.

Students from the conference are involved on- and off-campus in many edifying ways, but we specifically recognize students who studied and served through GC's Global Education program. Caroline Robling-Griest from Chicago Community Mennonite Church is spending the semester studying and serving in the U.S and Indonesia. Carissa Mast from Faith Mennonite Church (Goshen, IN) and Sophia Smucker and Jackson Steinmetz from Grace Mennonite Church (Pandora, OH) are studying and serving in Ecuador.

2021-22 Campus ministries message

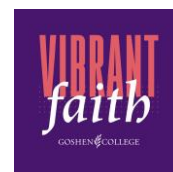
At the end of the academic year 2020-21 our outgoing campus pastor hired four Student Ministry Team (SMT) Leaders. SMT leaders serve in the campus ministries office and offer spiritual support to fellow students, coordinate chapel services, and publish a prayer booklet for the campus community.

The prayer booklet is filled with campus ministries resources such as centering prayer, GC prayer booklet, Inquiry programs, local churches directory, small groups, vigils, and Taizé worship services.

The academic year 2021-22 has started with an opening in campus pastor position. Despite not having a campus pastor, SMT leaders continue to meet regularly with their assigned student life leader.

One of the SMT leaders participated in a workshop at orientation week for first-year students and shared their personal faith journey while at Goshen College. Also, SMT leaders have already offered their first chapel service and everyone participated in the delivery of the service. SMT leaders are eager for the new campus pastor to be hired and they are looking forward to implementing several new campus ministries programs that create spaces for faith formation and study of the Bible. For example, one of the SMT leaders is particularly interested in leading a Bible study with their fellow students. SMT leaders are planning for ways to engage more students on joining them for SMT through attending the Club Day Fair and being available to talk with students in the residence halls, commuter lounge, and other places on campus.

-Dr. Gilberto Perez, Jr, Vice-President of Student Life



For more information, contact Dan Koop Liechty, Director of Alumni Relations & International Student Adviser. Call (574) 535-7002 or e-mail churchrelations@goshen.edu.

La Pacificación Compasiva es el enfoque de Goshen College del año académico 2021-2022

La presidenta de Goshen College Rebecca Stoltzfus abrió el año académico 2021-2022 con un mensaje sobre la pacificación compasiva, el valor central de este año.

Utilizando la metáfora de la roca fisurada, ella alentó a los estudiantes y a la facultad a encontrar las rocas fisuradas que necesitamos para proporcionarnos un santuario en la turbulencia de estos tiempos, y a ser rocas fisuradas unos para otros, construyendo bases sólidas de paz, protegiendo las espaldas de los demás, abriéndonos unos a otros, y manteniendo nuestros límites en estos caminos de la paz.

Después de la convocatoria, los estudiantes participaron en el túnel anual de aplausos, una tradición de 21 años con un túnel de entusiastas formado por profesores, personal, estudiantes de cuarto año, tercer año, segundo año y, finalmente, los estudiantes de primer año. La procesión se condujo a Schrock Plaza, donde todos finalmente participaron en animaciones dirigidas por estudiantes.

Conecciones de la conferencia

Este año académico tenemos a 38 estudiantes inscritos de 12 congregaciones de Central District Conference. Estas iglesias generosamente han prometido \$106,516 en ayuda congregacional a los estudiantes para este año académico. El programa de Goshen College Church Aid Matching Program provee la igualación de dólar-por-dólar por los primeros \$1,000 por estudiante y una igualación de 1 a 4 después de eso, hasta una matrícula completa.

Los estudiantes de la conferencia están involucrados dentro y fuera del campus de muchas maneras edificantes, pero nosotros específicamente reconocemos a los estudiantes que han estudiado y servido mediante el programa de educación global de GC. Caroline Robling-Griest de Chicago Community Mennonite Church está pasando el semestre estudiando y sirviendo en EE.UU e Indonesia. Carissa Mast de Faith Mennonite Church (Goshen, IN), Sophia Smucker, y Jackson Steinmetz de Grace Mennonite Church (Pandora, OH) están estudiando y sirviendo en Ecuador

Tema del campus para el 2021-22

Al final del año académico 2021-2022, nuestro pastor del campus contrató a cuatro líderes del Equipo de Ministerio Estudiantil (SMT). Los líderes del ministerio estudiantil sirven en la oficina de ministerios del campus

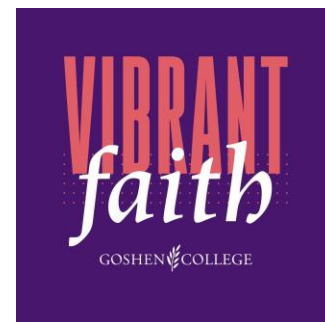
y ofrecen apoyo espiritual a sus compañeros de estudios, coordinan los servicios de la capilla, y publican un folleto de oración para la comunidad del campus.

El folleto de oraciones está lleno de recursos del ministerio de campus, tales como oración centrada, folleto de oración de GC, programas de investigación, directorio de iglesias locales, grupos pequeños, vigias y servicios de adoración taizé.

El año académico 2021-2022 ha comenzado con una apertura en el puesto de pastor del campus. A pesar de no tener un pastor en el campus, los líderes del ministerio estudiantil continúan reuniéndose regularmente con su líder de vida estudiantil asignado.

Uno de los líderes del ministerio estudiantil participó en un taller en la semana de orientación para estudiantes de primer año y compartió su viaje de fe personal mientras estaba en Goshen College. Además, los líderes del ministerio estudiantil ya ofrecieron su primer servicio de capilla y todos participaron en la presentación del servicio. Los líderes están ansiosos por contratar al nuevo pastor del campus y están ansiosos por implementar varios programas nuevos de ministerio en el campus que crean espacios para la formación en la fe y el estudio de la biblia. Por ejemplo, uno de los líderes está particularmente interesado en dirigir un estudio bíblico con sus compañeros de estudios. Los líderes están planeando formas de involucrar a más estudiantes para que se unan a SMT a través de su participación en la Feria del Club y estando disponibles para hablar con los estudiantes en las residencias estudiantiles, el área de estudiantes no residentes, y otros lugares del campus.

-Dr. Gilberto Perez, Jr, Vicepresidente de la Vida Estudiantil



Para más información, contacte Dan Koop Liechty, Director de Graduados y Red de Carreras Académicas. Llame al (574) 535-7002 o mande un correo electrónico a churchrelations@goshen.edu.

Anabaptist Disabilities Network

Annual Report 2021



In 2021, Anabaptist Disabilities Network:

- Co-sponsored the [MC USA Accessibility Resolution](#) along with four congregations. The resolution came before the delegate body in May of 2022.
- Gave matching funds to congregations to increase accessibility through our [Barrier-Free Grant program](#). Projects have included accessible restrooms, renovation of a camp bathhouse, and a summer church camp for Deaf children.
- Published a [Disability Language Guide](#) which was included in the new style guide for MennoMedia.
- Offered three **webinars**:
 - *Do We Want to Get Well? Healing What Divides Us* with Amy Julia Becker in January
 - *Providing Mutual Support when People Experience Mental Illness* (part 1) with Janelle Bitikofer in June
 - *Churchwide Change: Reducing Stigma and Supporting People who Experience Mental Illness* (part 2) with Janelle Bitikofer in October
- Presented at multiple conferences:
 - Led a presentation on inclusive mission trips for youth/young adults with disabilities at the Faith Inclusion Network Community for All Conference
 - Led an ADN networking group at the 2021 Church of the Brethren Annual Conference
 - Coordinated accessibility at MennoCon 21
 - Presented 2 workshops on disability and hosted an online virtual exhibit booth at MennoCon 21
 - Led a workshop on aging and disability at the Church of the Brethren National Older Adult Conference
- Published:
 - **Connections Newsletter** (Spring – Transitioning to Adulthood, Summer – Hearing Loss and Deafness, Fall – Including Children with Disabilities in Congregational Life)
 - **Opening Doors blog** articles

Our Staff: Jeanne Davies, executive director
Kate Szambecki, resource director (hired in August 2021)
Emily Hunsberger, office administrator

Field Associates are volunteer professionals who bring their wisdom and experience to ADN. *Staff and Field Associates are available for accessibility assessments, consultations, preaching, classes, or workshops.*

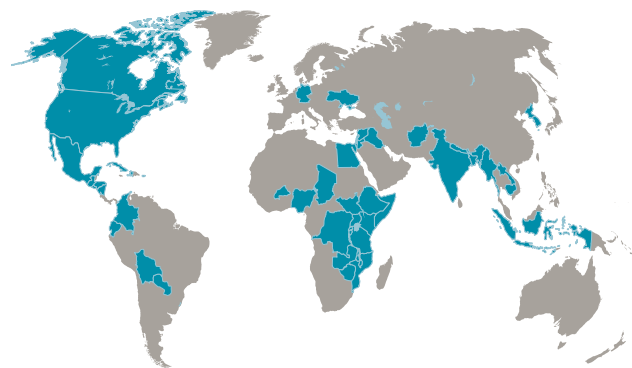
Our expense budget for 2021 is \$87,200. We rely on support from both individuals and congregations. In May of 2021, we began our Building the Future Partners campaign, asking ADN friends for a commitment of \$1000/year for 3 years. So far, we have 34 partners and are hoping for 6 more.

We invite congregations interested in increasing their accessibility to consider designating a congregational disability advocate or becoming a partner congregation.

2022 report for Central District Conference

MCC U.S. and MCC Great Lakes

(574) 534.4133 • GreatLakes@mcc.org • mcc.org



47

countries

385

partners

508

projects



In Niniongo, Burkina Faso, Adama Sawadogo and her child Adjara Zabre are participants in an MCC-supported maternal and child health project. Using care group models, the project has resulted in major improvements to maternal and child health, including an 83% reduction in infant mortality since the project started in 2018. (MCC photo/ Paul Shetler Fast)

MCC's 2022 guiding scripture

I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15:5 (NRSV)

All that we do at MCC, we do in the name of Christ. Thanks to your generosity, MCC is able to continue responding to basic human needs and working for peace and justice around the world. From maternal and child health in Burkina Faso to short and long-term relief for displaced people in Ukraine to mass incarceration in Chicago, MCC strives to share God's love and compassion for all. We are so grateful for the creativity of our supporters and partners in the midst of a challenging past couple of years. Whether you donate financially, pray for MCC, volunteer at an MCC thrift shop, pack kits and comforters, help can meat or bid on items at a relief sale, you are part of the MCC story and we thank you.

With thanksgiving,

Eric Kurtz, MCC Great Lakes executive director

Peter Martin, MCC Great Lakes Board representative for Central District Conference

MCC and Central District Conference connections

- CDC congregations play important roles in MCC relief sales, thrift shops, My Coins Count fundraisers, material resources drives and meat canning.
- Various congregations hosted MCC speakers, either virtually or in person.
- Bluffton University students volunteered with the SWAP home repair program in Harlan, Kentucky.
- Juan Sebastian Pacheco Lozano led the Loss of Turtle Island learning experience at Camp Friedenswald and a Borderlands Learning Tour to the U.S./Mexico border, which both included CDC participants.
- Thank you to the CDC churches who have served as hosting congregations for International Volunteer Exchange Program (IVEP) participants.

“When we partner together to live out our faith, our collective impact can reach around the world.”

- Eric Kurtz

MCC's Sharing With Appalachian People (SWAP) program in Kentucky and West Virginia has the important goal of making homes in the region safe, warm and dry. But it's the relationships that develop between staff, volunteers and homeowners that are priceless. Homeowner Annette Hawkins had been living for

years in a deteriorating house in Bishop, West Virginia. Despite many barriers, including distance and the extensive repairs needed, SWAP was able to complete the project. Annette (right) spent many hours working side-by-side with volunteers like Allison Carlisle (left) and enjoyed visiting with volunteers and staff.

Photo/Mark Heil



2021 has been full of exciting work and meaningful connections as the work of Mennonite Men continues to benefit our communities and congregations. Our three programs—JoinTrees, JoinMen, and JoinHands—continue to thrive as we invite men to grow, give and serve as followers of Jesus.

To learn more about our work, download resources, or contribute to our programs, visit mennonitemen.org.

Steve Thomas, U.S. Coordinator



JoinTrees

Planting Trees to restore the earth

JoinTrees is our campaign to plant one million trees by 2030. This campaign targets climate change—an existential threat to life on our planet. By increasing tree and forest cover with this JoinTrees campaign, our goals are to help: (1) mitigate global warming, (2) serve climate justice, and (3) sustain biodiversity.

Our vision is a healthy, thriving planet where God's abundant life of shalom is enjoyed by all from generation to generation.

A recent grant given to Landisville Mennonite Church in Pennsylvania contributed to the planting

of over 600 trees on 3.65 acres as the land is turned from farmland back to forest and meadow as part of the congregation's efforts to improve water quality, expand pollinator and wildlife habitat, and address climate change.

Communities like La Paz, Honduras are planting seedlings granted in 2021 to restore land in local watersheds and assist farmers incorporate trees into crop and animal farming systems for a variety of benefits. These projects improve local communities, assist vulnerable populations, support biodiversity and will help mitigate the increasingly negative effects of global warming.

Learn more and contribute to this program at mennonitemen.org/jointrees



JoinHands

Sharing resources for new church buildings

JoinHands is our program for giving and grantmaking. Through our JoinHands Mennonite Church Building Program, we provide grants to help new congregations acquire their first church building. Mennonite Men has given over 2 million dollars to new congregations for this purpose.

We invite individuals and congregations to give to JoinHands. We especially ask churches pursuing building projects to give as a way of sharing resources and serving "fair balance" with congregations in need.

Our current project is raising \$40,000 for the Hmong Mennonite Church in Westminster, CO. Since 2015, members of Hmong Mennonite Church have been planning and searching for a place of their own to accommodate their growing ministry. Once funded, the grant will assist this congregation in finding space of their own to carry out their growing ministry.

Help us accomplish this fair balance. We can extend grants only as donors give to this program. For more details about this program, visit mennonitemen.org/joinhands.



JoinMen

Gathering men and promoting their growth

JoinMen provides retreats and resources from an Anabaptist perspective to promote healthy masculinity, Christian formation and community. We desire that all men find a place of belonging among men who are strong, loving and wise as we follow Jesus in building God's shalom.

Retreats provide opportunities for men to gather together and engage issues in community. More than an event, these experiences are also meant to encourage participants to be part of an ongoing men's group and growth process. A full list of

retreat themes we offer can be found at mennonitemen.org/joinmen.

In addition to retreats, a study guide and audio book are now available for Peaceful at Heart: Anabaptist Reflections on Healthy Masculinity. A video series based on this book will soon be released. This video series featuring interviews with each of the 19 contributors can be viewed by groups who are reading and discussing the book together. We are also anticipating the release of Strong, Loving, and Wise: Joining Conversations for Men. This book is a guide for men covering topics such as male formation, personal challenges, sexual wholeness, conflict tools, and life roles, just to name a few.

Engaging men to grow, give and serve as followers of Jesus

2022

REPORT BOOK
of the

Central District Conference
of
Mennonite Church USA



Part V

Reference

**CONSTITUTION
of the
CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE**

(Who We Are)

Article I. Name and Purpose

The name of this organization shall be “Central District Conference,” an affiliation of congregations that covenant together in common life and mission. Central District Conference is a member conference of Mennonite Church USA.

The purpose of Central District Conference, a member conference of Mennonite Church USA, is to promote community among congregations, to serve as a resource for pastors and congregations, and to facilitate the reign of God by providing channels through which congregations and pastors may work.

Article II. Our Common Faith and Mission

Vision:

God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God’s healing and hope flow through us to the world. *(Adopted November 15, 2003)*

Mission Statement

The mission of Central District Conference is to know Christ’s abundant love in who we are and how we live, and to answer God’s persistent call to share that love with one another and the world by:

- Promoting a Christ-like community of hospitality where all are welcome and where grace-filled relationships flourish, and patience and generosity are practiced,
- Calling and nurturing wise, dynamic and compassionate Anabaptist leadership,
- Supporting missional partnerships that make God’s reign visible and foster ministries of evangelism, peace, healing and hope.

KNOWING CHRIST’S LOVE . . . ANSWERING GOD’S CALL

As members of Mennonite Church USA (MC USA), we are guided by the statement of faith as addressed in the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, 1995* and MC USA approved documents.

Article III. Membership

Section A: Expectations:

Every member congregation shall meet the following requirements:

- (a) It shall have a statement of purpose/faith in keeping with this constitution and vision of MC USA.
- (b) It shall have a viable strategy and leadership appropriate for the above purpose.
- (c) It shall demonstrate a commitment to become an established congregation in the community.
- (d) It shall have a definitive membership.

Conference expectations of congregations include regular participation in conference, giving and receiving counsel, providing regular financial support and willingness for members to serve in leadership positions.

Section B: Application for membership

A congregation which has made application to join the Conference and has met the above requirements and has been visited by a Conference representative(s) may be recommended by the Board of Directors to the Conference for membership. Congregations attain membership upon Conference delegate approval of the Board of Directors’ recommendation.

A group which desires to relate to the Conference, but does not yet meet the requirements, or does not desire

congregational status, is encouraged to participate in conference activities, but does not have voting privileges.

Section C: Change or Withdrawal

1. *Changing Conference relationship:* When a CDC congregation wishes to alter conference membership within MC USA, the CDC Conference Minister and Board of Directors will process with that congregation on the basis of MC USA Guidelines.
2. *Ending Conference relationship:* If a congregation wishes to end membership in CDC and MC USA, the Conference Minister, in consultation with the Board of Directors, will establish with the congregation the appropriate steps that provide for giving and receiving counsel, for communication within the congregation and with the congregations of CDC, and for delegate recognition of the congregation's decision to leave the Conference.

Article IV: Amendments

Section A: Amendment

This constitution may be amended at any regular meeting of the Conference by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast. Notice and a copy of such proposed amendment shall be given to the congregation at least 30 days before the time of meeting.

Section B: Review

This document shall be reviewed every five years.

Article V: Purposes and Limitations of Corporate Authority

Section A: Purposes

Central District Conference (the Corporation) is organized and operated exclusively for religious purposes in accordance with section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or a corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue law, referred to below as the "Code"). More specifically, the Corporation, as a subordinate organization of Mennonite Church USA, is organized to promote community among congregations, to serve as a resource for pastors and congregations, and to facilitate the reign of God by providing channels through which congregations and pastors may work.

Section B: Limitations of Corporate Authority

- A. The Corporation, being organized exclusively for religious purposes, may make distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Code.
- B. No part of the net earnings of Corporation shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to its members, directors, officers, or other private persons, except that the Corporation shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Article 5 above.
- C. No substantial part of the activities of the Corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the Corporation shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.
- D. Notwithstanding any other provision of these articles, the Corporation shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (1) by a corporation exempt from Federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Code or (2) by a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under section 170(c)(2) of the Code.
- E. Upon dissolution of the Corporation, the Board of Directors shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all of the liabilities of the Corporation, dispose of all of the assets of the Corporation, exclusively for the purposes of the Corporation in such manner, or to such organization or organizations organized and operated exclusively for religious purposes, as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Code, as the Board of Directors shall determine. Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by the appropriate court of law of the county in which the principal office of the Corporation is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for exempt purposes.

BYLAWS OF CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE

(How We Are Organized)

Bylaw 1. Delegate Assembly

Section A: Meetings

Conference shall meet in regular session annually in response to invitation from congregations or as arranged by the Board of Directors. Special meetings may be called by the Board of Directors upon thirty days' notice.

All meetings shall be conducted in accordance with generally accepted parliamentary procedure.

Section B: Delegates, Voting and Floor Privileges

1. Representation and Voting: Every member congregation of the Conference shall have the right to be represented by one vote for every thirty members or fractional part of that number, with a minimum of two delegates from each congregation. In addition to the above delegates, every member congregation is encouraged to appoint one high school age youth delegate who is an active participant of the congregation and youth group. This will be an additional voting delegate.
2. Delegate Forms: Proper delegate forms shall be sent to all member congregations by the Conference administrator, and these forms shall be returned to the Conference administrator designating all delegates before or by the opening session of the annual meeting.
3. Floor Privileges: Any member of a constituent congregation present at Conference sessions may participate in discussion on the conference floor. Other guests present are welcome to join open discussion in the spirit of Christian love and mutual helpfulness.

Section C: Annual Reports

All boards, committees, appointed positions, Conference ministry staff, and the Treasurer shall present written reports of their work to the Conference at the regular annual meeting.

Section D: Gifts Discernment Committee, Nominations, Elections and Appointments

1. Gifts Discernment Committee: This committee shall consist of six members appointed by the Board of Directors. Two shall be appointed each year for a term of three years. The Conference Minister shall be an ex-officio member of the committee. The committee shall prepare a slate of available positions for presentation to delegates at the annual meeting after it has been approved by the Board of Directors. The committee shall assist the Board of Directors and other committees as requested to make appointments, both within the conference and for denominational roles.
2. Nominations/Elected Positions: A studied effort shall be made to maintain a proper continuity in the overall organization of the Conference in its various aspects and at the same time to effect a reasonable rotation of personnel. Nominations should be made with sensitivity and balance with regard to the makeup of the conference. Two successive terms for elected positions is the usual maximum. No one shall be elected to more than one standing committee at the same time.
3. Appointments: For vacated positions needing to be filled between annual meetings, the Board of Directors shall appoint persons, who will serve the remainder of the term. Persons appointed to complete a vacated term are eligible to be elected to two full terms.

Section E: Resolutions Committee

This committee shall consist of two or more members appointed by the Board of Directors. One member shall be appointed each year for a term of three years. The committee shall seek to determine the most salient matters on which, or to which, the Conference should speak; then formulate and submit a proposed statement of the Conference position in relation thereto.

Section G: Conference Year

The conference year shall begin with the close of the annual meeting and extend through the annual meeting the following year. All elected positions shall be governed by the conference year. The fiscal year begins July 1 and extends through June 30 of the following year.

Bylaw 2. Conference Leadership and Structure

Section A: Incorporation and Officers.

Central District Conference of the Mennonite Church USA, is a corporation now existing and incorporated under the laws of the State of Illinois. The purpose of Central District Conference is to promote community among congregations, to serve as a resource for pastors and congregations, and to facilitate the reign of God by providing channels through which congregations and pastors may work.

Section B: Legal Authorities and Responsibilities.

1. Said Conference in its corporate capacity shall have the power to hold title to property, receive and hold intangibles in all forms, dispose of properties when the interests of the Conference are served by doing so, and have such powers and privileges granted under the General Not-For-Profit Corporation Act of the State of Illinois, as amended from time to time.
2. All conveyances of real estate shall be executed at the direction of the corporation by the president and attested by the secretary, and when the corporate seal has been attached thereto any such conveyance shall be sufficient to convey title to corporation property without further authorization.
3. The Corporation will not participate in "activities in question" as determined by the Internal Revenue Service, specifically:
 - Providing housing through a partnership, joint venture or similar arrangement with any entity that is not described in IRC 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4);
 - Functioning as a title-holding organization described in IRC 501(c)(2) or 501(c)(25);
 - Participating in gaming as its primary activity;
 - Credit counseling as a primary function;
 - Operating donor advised funds;
 - Functioning primarily for the benefit of fundraisers;
 - Being involved in down-payment assistance;
 - Functioning as a private foundation;
 - Being organized and operated in a foreign country.

Section C: Officers of Conference. The officers of the Conference shall consist of president, president-elect, secretary and treasurer.

1. Duties
 - a. The president shall preside at all meetings of the Conference, Board of Directors, Leadership Council and any specially called meetings.
 - b. The president-elect shall perform the duties of the president in the absence or upon request of the latter.
 - c. The secretary shall see that a correct record of all meetings and proceedings is kept and that conference reports and minutes are published in such manner as the Conference may direct.
 - d. The treasurer shall oversee the operational funds of the Conference and see that necessary payments are made on behalf of the Conference.
2. Elections and terms of office. The election of officers shall be by ballot at the regular meeting of Conference. A two-thirds majority of all delegates present shall decide. A president-elect shall be elected every two years, and upon completion of a two-year term of office as such shall automatically become the president for two years. The secretary and treasurer shall be elected for terms of three years. All officers shall take office at the close of the annual meeting at which elected and shall remain in office until their successors take office. (For tenure of officers refer to Bylaw 1, Section D.2.)

Section D: The Board of Directors. The affairs of Central District Conference shall be managed by a Board of Directors which shall consist of the officers of the Conference and three Members-at-Large. The Conference officers shall serve in their various capacities as the respective officers of the Board of Directors.

1. Duties. The duties of the Board of Directors shall include but shall not be limited to the following:
 - a. It shall serve as custodians, or investors, of surplus or reserve funds which may accrue to Conference committees or auxiliaries, until such funds may be needed for the furtherance or expansion of the work of the committee or auxiliary concerned.
 - b. It shall meet and act upon matters as needed between annual Conference sessions.
 - c. It shall have power to fill vacancies in the Conference organization or on committees and boards, such

- persons to serve the remainder of the unexpired term.
- d. It shall keep informed regarding the various phases of the work of the Conference and its auxiliary organizations with a view of correlating and facilitating those activities.
- e. It shall see that Conference finances are audited on a regular basis.
- f. It shall appoint the editor of the Conference publication, which shall be made available to all the congregations in the Conference. The Board of Directors shall have general supervision of the publication work of the Conference.
- g. It shall make appointments to churchwide and other bodies as needed, including delegates to the MC USA Assembly.
- h. It shall receive and review the reports of the activities of the Conference Minister.
- i. It shall encourage and monitor relationships with other conferences, especially those conferences with geographic overlap with CDC.
- j. It shall appoint a Historian who shall relate to the archival system of CDC and MC USA.
- 2. Elections and terms of office.
 - a. The three Members-at-Large are to be elected by the Conference, one each year for a term of three years.
 - b. See Section C. 2. for election and terms of office for the officers of the Conference.

Section E: Committees. The Ministerial, Missional Church, and Stewardship Committees provide leadership and resources to carry out the priorities and ministries of Central District Conference. These committees shall be elected or appointed in the manner and for the purposes hereinafter defined. Task groups may be appointed by these committees in such manner, for such purpose, and at such times as the Conference shall see fit. (For tenure of committee members refer to Bylaw 1, Section D.2.)

- 1. Ministerial Committee
 - a. Election. This committee shall consist of six members, at least three of whom shall be pastors. Two shall be elected each year for a term of three years. The Conference Ministry staff will serve as ex-officio member(s).
 - b. Duties.
 - (1) It shall be the duty of the Ministerial Committee to be available to churches and pastors in their church-pastor relationship, offering their counsel, support, and service as needed.
 - (2) The committee shall counsel with congregations seeking pastoral leadership with pastors called to serve congregations in the District. In cooperation with congregations they shall examine candidates for pastoral, chaplaincy, and missionary service, grant licenses, and perform ordinations (see *A Mennonite Polity for Ministerial Leadership* for procedures), and assist in a service marking the beginning of a person's ministry.
 - (3) The committee shall provide opportunities for personal growth and professional improvement for pastors.
 - (4) The committee shall give attention to the call and nurturing of Anabaptist leadership. It shall link with the MC USA Ministerial Leadership and Congregational Life Team.
- 2. Missional Church Committee
 - a. Election. This committee shall consist of seven members, two or three elected each year for three year terms. The Conference Ministry staff are ex-officio members. Individual committee members may have experience and expertise in various facets of congregational life, such as worship, nurture, evangelism, education, peace and justice. It will intentionally link with MC USA resources.
 - b. Duties.
 - (1) This committee will encourage use of denominational and conference resources, nurturing congregations in developing and mobilizing their missional potential.
 - (2) This committee will be alert to congregational needs and special interests, linking congregations to appropriate resources and to other congregations with similar interests.
 - (3) This committee will encourage missional partnerships.
- 3. Stewardship Committee
 - a. Appointment. This committee shall consist of the Treasurer (ex-officio), Conference Ministry staff (ex-officio), and additional members appointed by the Board of Directors. Additional members shall be

- appointed for four-year terms.
- b. Duties.
- (1) Recommend financial policy and direction to the Board of Directors which includes: management of funds, bookkeeping, auditing procedures, salary levels, formulating the annual spending plan, and monitoring conference income and expenditures.
 - (2) Create and manage a long-range development plan.
 - (3) Develop and promote a vision of stewardship for the conference and link with denominational resources to meet that vision in the local congregations.

Section F: The Leadership Council. The Leadership Council shall be composed of the Board of Directors, the Ministerial Committee, the Missional Church Committee, and the Stewardship Committee.

Duties

- a. It shall meet periodically to provide discernment and give counsel to the Board of Directors and to each other on issues of life and faith in the Conference.
- b. The Board of Directors and chairs of the committees in the Leadership Council shall meet annually to assess the vision, mission, and goals of the Conference.

Bylaw 3. Conference Staff

Section A: Conference Minister

1. The Conference Minister shall be employed by the Board of Directors of the Conference, following consultation with chairpersons of committees and the pastors of the District. The Board of Directors shall determine a contract utilizing the guidelines set by MC USA. Subsequent renewals of the contract shall be the responsibility of the Board of Directors upon utilization of appropriate review procedures and such renewal shall be brought to the Conference for affirmation. The Conference Minister shall be responsible to the Conference through the Board of Directors and Ministerial Committee.
2. It shall be the duty of the Conference Minister to assist congregations in discerning and realizing their mission, and in securing pastors.
3. The Conference Minister shall serve as a representative of CDC to denominational and intra-conference meetings as requested by the Board of Directors.
4. The Conference Minister shall have general supervision of all conference staff.

Section B: Associate Conference Minister(s): The Board of Directors may employ Associate Conference Minister(s) to perform specified duties of the Conference Minister in certain capacities. The Associate Conference Minister(s) shall be employed in the same manner and as set out above for the Conference Minister.

Section C: Support Staff: Support staff may be employed as deemed necessary by the Board of Directors.

Bylaw 4: Conference Auxiliaries and Related Boards

Auxiliaries of the Conference are chapters of denominational organizations operating under their own organizational structure, which is approved by the Conference. Annual reports of such organizations shall be submitted to the Conference. Currently, such auxiliaries are Mennonite Men and Mennonite Women. In addition, CDC appoints board members to Chicago Mennonite Learning Center, MCC Great Lakes and Adriel School.

Section 1: Camp Friedenswald Board

A. Election.

1. The Camp Friedenswald Board shall consist, in part, of nine members elected by the Conference, three to be elected each year for a term of three years.
2. The Camp Friedenswald Board may also consist of an additional one to six at-large members, to be appointed by the Camp Friedenswald Board. At-large members shall serve a term of three years. All at-large appointments are to be approved by the Central District Conference Board of Directors, prior to their being asked to serve.

B. Duties

1. The Board shall be responsible for the care, maintenance, and development of the Camp

- Friedenswald property.
2. The Camp Friedenswald Board shall also formulate policies, plan overall program schedule, and appoint leaders to carry out the program.

Section 2: Bluffton University Trustees: CDC representatives to the Bluffton University Board of Trustees are elected by the Conference in accordance with the Bluffton University Board of Trustees policy and represent the university in the Conference and its constituent congregations.

Section A: Amendment

These bylaws may be amended at any regular meeting of the Conference by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast. Notice and a copy of such proposed amendment shall be given to the congregation at least 30 days before the time of meeting.

Section B: Review

This document shall be reviewed every five years.

Adopted June 2004

Updated June 2007

Updated June 2009

Updated June 2011

Updated June 2016

Policies and Procedures:

Membership Criteria

The CDC Board of Directors proposes the following criteria for all congregations seeking membership in CDC, namely that they shall:

- Keep Jesus Christ at the center of their faith and action
- Affirm commitment to congregational discernment that is biblically based, Christ-centered, and Spirit-led
- Be guided by the Mennonite Church USA *Vision: Healing and Hope* and *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (1995) [See CDC Constitution, Article II: Statement of Faith].
- Affirm the CDC statement on Conference Polity
- Meet the CDC constitutional requirements for membership (see Art. III, Section A)
(Includes being an established congregation with a definitive membership, participating regularly in conference, providing financial support, giving and receiving counsel, and willingness for members to serve in leadership positions).
- When applicable, follow MC USA guidelines for changing conference affiliation

Affirmed by delegates, June 2010

Task Group Formation Process

In response to special needs or interests Task Groups may be formed/created through an application process for the purpose of performing special duties and assignments. The purpose of task groups is to provide a venue for work that benefits and is shared among congregations within the conference.

****The application, including measurable goals will be approved by the Missional Church Committee.**

****A member of the Missional Church Committee will serve as a link between the Task Group, committee, and the Leadership Council of CDC.**

****The outcome of the work done by the task group will be shared with conference leadership and may be distributed among conference congregations.**

****If funds are requested, the Missional Church Committee will determine the means to procure funding needed, i.e., access funds through the Missional Fund, initiate fundraising.**

****Task Group assignments may run as long as needed to complete a task. If the assignment continues beyond three years, a renewal must be requested. The task group assignment will expire if no request for renewal is received.**

****Task Group members are encouraged to connect using technology of video (such as YouTube), telephone video**

conferencing (SKYPE) and internet using email, website links, etc, and other presentation methods such as Power Point.

Missional Church Committee

May 2010

Reign of God Grants

Since a key purpose of conference is to facilitate our work together in mission, the Missional Church Committee designed *Reign of God Grants* to encourage missional activity among congregations. This Missional Church Committee program will match (1-1) money raised at the grassroots level to give the extra financial boost necessary for a new, cooperative missional initiative between two or more congregations. A missional initiative is any activity capturing and honoring God's continuing creative energy in establishing God's reign in the world.

Grant proposals may be submitted at any time during the fiscal year. Proposals should be no more than three pages in length and may be submitted online, by fax, or by postal mail. Individual grants will range from \$500 to \$2,500 will be given. Our goal is to distribute \$5,000 annually.

Grants must be used for:

- Missional initiatives based in the Central District region of the United States by Central District Conference congregations,
- Missional initiatives related to worship, nurture, evangelism, education, peace and justice, and creation care,
- New initiatives, or significantly new additions to current programs. Operating funds for existing programs will not qualify.

Decisions for funding will be made by the Missional Church Committee at the regularly scheduled committee meeting following submission of the application and funds will be distributed after receiving information that the matching funds have been raised.

Missional Church Committee

February 2011

Updated December 2015

Planning for Annual Meetings

Staff members will meet to orient local coordinators and worship planners from hosting congregations in the region in which the annual meeting is held. The planning day includes a review of logistical details and an on-site facilities tour. Staff members also orient the local worship planners and help to begin the planning process. Planning is then turned over to the local coordinators and worship planners. Staff members collaborate with them throughout the planning process.

Affirmed by delegates, June 2016

Conflicts of Interest Policy

Section 1. Purpose. The purpose of the conflict of interest policy is to protect this tax-exempt Corporation's interest when it is contemplating entering into a transaction or arrangement that might benefit the private interest of an officer or director of the Corporation or might result in a possible excess benefit transaction. This policy is intended to supplement but not replace any applicable state and federal laws governing conflict of interest applicable to nonprofit and charitable organizations.

Section 2. Definitions.

- (a) **Interested Person.** Any director, principal, officer, or member of a committee with delegated powers from the Board of Directors, who has a direct or indirect financial interest, as defined below, is an interested person.
- (b) **Financial Interest.** A person has a financial interest if the person has, directly or indirectly, through business, investment, or family:
 - (i) An ownership or investment interest in any entity with which the Corporation has a transaction or arrangement;

- (ii) A compensation arrangement with the Corporation or with any entity or individual with which the Corporation has a transaction or arrangement; or
 - (iii) A potential ownership or investment interest in, or compensation arrangement with, any entity or individual with which the Corporation is negotiating a transaction or arrangement.
- Compensation includes direct and indirect remuneration as well as gifts or favors that are not insubstantial.

A financial interest is not necessarily a conflict of interest. Under Section 2, a person who has a financial interest may have a conflict of interest only if the appropriate Board of Directors or committee decides that a conflict of interest exists.

Section 3. Procedures.

- (a) Duty to Disclose. In connection with any actual or possible conflict of interest, an interested person must disclose the existence of the financial interest and be given the opportunity to disclose all material facts to the Board of Directors and members of committees with delegated powers from the Board of Directors considering the proposed transaction or arrangement.
- (b) Determining Whether a Conflict of Interest Exists. After disclosure of the financial interest and all material facts, and after any discussion with the interest person, he/she shall leave the Board of Directors or committee meeting while the determination of a conflict of interest is disclosed and voted upon. The remaining Board of Directors or committee members shall decide if a conflict of interest exists.
- (c) Procedure for Addressing the Conflict of Interest.
 - (i) An interested person may make a presentation at a Board of Directors or committee meeting, but after the presentation, he/she shall leave the meeting during the discussion of, and the vote on, the transaction or arrangement involving the possible conflict of interest.
 - (ii) The chairperson of the Board of Directors or committee shall, if appropriate, appoint a disinterested person or committee to investigate alternatives to the proposed transaction or arrangement.
 - (iii) After exercising due diligence, the Board of Directors or committee shall determine whether the Corporation can obtain with reasonable efforts a more advantageous transaction or arrangement from a person or entity that would not give rise to a conflict of interest.
 - (iv) If a more advantageous transaction or arrangement is not reasonably possible under circumstances not producing a conflict of interest, the Board of Directors or committee shall determine by a majority vote of the disinterested Board of Directors whether the transaction or arrangement is in the Corporation's best interest, for its own benefit, and whether it is fair and reasonable. In conformity with the above determination, it shall make its decision as to whether to enter into the transaction or arrangement.
- (d) Violations of the Conflicts of Interest Policy.
 - (i) If the Board of Directors or committee has reasonable cause to believe a member has failed to disclose actual or possible conflicts of interest, it shall inform the member of the basis for such belief and afford the member an opportunity to explain the alleged failure to disclosure.
 - (ii) If, after hearing the member's response and after making further investigation as warranted by the circumstances, the Board of directors or committee determines the member has failed to disclose an actual or possible conflict of interest, it shall take appropriate disciplinary and corrective action.

Section 4. Records of Proceedings. The minutes of the Board of Directors and all committees with delegated powers from the Board of Directors shall contain:

- (a) The names of the persons who disclosed or otherwise were found to have a financial interest in connection with an actual or possible conflict of interest was present, and the Board of Directors' or committee's decision as to whether a conflict of interest in fact existed.
- (b) The names of the persons who were present for discussions and votes relating to the transaction or arrangement, the content of the discussion, including any alternatives to the proposed transaction or arrangement, and a record of any votes taken in connection with the proceedings.

Section 5. Compensation.

- (a) A voting member of the Board of Directors who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from the Corporation for services is precluded from voting on matters pertaining to that member's compensation.
- (b) A voting member of any committee whose jurisdiction includes compensation matters and who receives compensation matters and who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from the Corporation for services is precluded from voting on matters pertaining to that member's compensation.

- (c) No voting member of the Board of Directors or any committee whose jurisdiction includes compensation matters and who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from the Corporation, either individually or collectively, is prohibited from providing information to any committee regarding compensation.

Section 6. Annual Statements. Each director, principal officer and member of a committee with delegated powers from the Board of Directors shall annually sign a statement which affirms such person:

- (a) Has received a copy of the conflicts of interest policy;
- (b) Has read and understands the policy;
- (c) Has agreed to comply with the policy; and
- (d) Understands the Corporation is charitable and in order to maintain its federal tax exemption it must engage primarily in activities which accomplish one or more of its tax-exempt purposes.

Section 7. Periodic Reviews. To ensure the Organization operates in a manner consistent with charitable purposes and does not engage in activities that could jeopardize its tax-exempt status, periodic reviews shall be conducted. The periodic reviews shall, at a minimum, include the following subjects:

- (a) Whether compensation arrangements and benefits are reasonable, based on competent survey information, and the result of arm's length bargaining.
- (b) Whether partnerships, joint ventures, and arrangements with management organizations conform to the Corporation's written policies, are properly recorded, reflect reasonable investment or payments for goods and services, further charitable purposes and do not result in inurement, impermissible private benefit or in an excess benefit transaction.

Section 8. Use of Outside Experts. When conducting the periodic reviews as provided for in Section 7 above, the Corporation may, but need not, use outside advisors. If the outside experts are used, their use shall not relieve the Board of Directors of its responsibility for ensuring periodic reviews are conducted.



Central District Conference

OF MENNONITE CHURCH USA

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CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE POLITY:

History and Current Understanding

Report of the Polity Articulation Task Force

(Accepted by the CDC Board of Directors January 23, 1999)

I. WHY WE NEED TO BE AND WANT TO BE A CONFERENCE

Conference for the congregations in Central District is something like a family of adult sisters and brothers. We love each other and are concerned about each other. We want to help each other but we do not feel a need to control each other. We share a common faith heritage and commitment, as well as a desire for common mission. Being together helps us strengthen those commitments, continue discovering God in significant ways, and define what it means for our walk as Jesus' disciples and Anabaptist Mennonites today.

For us conference is a place for fellowship, for discussion, and for mutual counseling as we seek to hear what the Spirit is saying to us about what it means to follow Christ. It is a place where relationships are vital. Conference is also a means for organizing so that we can work together in mission and church planting, for providing resources such as Camp Friedenswald and Bluffton College, for help in choosing and supporting pastoral leadership, and for keeping us responsive to the needs in the world around us.

Although our conference is part of what church is and does, it is not analogous to or a substitute for our congregations. It is in our congregations that we commit ourselves to participation as members of the body of Christ, a commitment which encompasses our total lives. The congregations' commitment to conference is different and more specific, defined by what we have come to understand the purpose of conference to be.

We confess we have often failed at being our best as conference. We talk of being family, but have sometimes failed in incorporating new members as full participants in the family. We talk of mutual accountability but have often failed to responsibly give and receive counsel, hindering the work of God's Spirit among us. We talk of unity but disunity has sometimes disrupted our conference efforts in witness, mission, and service. At times we have been left with a sense of scatteredness and weakened in our ability as a group to proclaim important understandings of faith and in our witness to Christ in the broader public arena. Yet conference continues to be very important, enhancing and facilitating God's work among us so that God's healing and hope will flow through us to the world.

II. THE FORMAL CONGREGATION-CONFERENCE RELATIONSHIP

Article II of our Central District Conference constitution defines the purpose of our conference as follows:

1. To promote community among member churches in our commitment to Christ.
2. To serve as a resource for, and to offer guidance to, pastors and congregations in matters of faith and life.
3. To facilitate the reign of God by providing channels through efforts in mission, evangelism, church planting, Christian education, nurture, and peacemaking.

Our conference, then, is intended to be a resource: to promote, serve, offer, and facilitate. Conference is congregations working *together*, it is not a separate body *over* congregations. Conference is formed by congregations coming together voluntarily for specific purposes. The constitution (Article IX) describes the steps which a congregation takes to join the conference and also notes that congregations may choose to leave the conference. The constitution does not grant the conference authority to remove a congregation from membership.

III. OUR HISTORY AS A CONFERENCE

According to Harold S. Bender, writing in the *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, congregational autonomy was the form of church government for virtually all groups in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition until the 19th century, when some conferences in North America began to develop “into authoritative ecclesiastical bodies with power over the local congregation and ministers.” (Vol. I, p. 669)

The roots of our own Central District Conference lie in the formation of the General Conference in 1860. The Central District Conference was organized in 1957 with the merger of the Central Conference Mennonite Church (organized in 1908) and the Middle District Conference (organized in 1888). These conferences carried on the Anabaptist tradition of congregational autonomy while enabling congregations to come together for fellowship and mutual encouragement and to organize for work which congregations could do best in cooperation with each other. These conferences did not simply evolve, but were deliberately organized for specific objectives. A major objective was the inclusion of all who shared the same purpose and wanted to walk together following Christ.

Walking Together in Faith, our conference history, speaks directly to the congregation - conference relationship and to the purposes for which conference was formed. Writing about the formation of the Central District Conference, conference historian Steve Estes observes, “each group [Middle District Conference and Central Conference] shared an essential commitment to the congregation as the central focus of church life — an independent congregationalism with the conference as a place for working together toward common ministry goals in Christian fellowship (and not as the locus of authority for the church).” (p. 8)

A mistaken assumption has been that Central District Conference polity developed in reaction to more authoritative practices in some other Mennonite conferences. This assumption is often based on the rather large number of Central District leaders who transferred to the Central Conference and Middle District Conference in the first half of this century from these other Mennonite conferences where, in some cases, they had been the objects of what they considered to have been harsh discipline.

The historical record shows that these leaders came to us long after our polity had been decided. They came to us precisely because we had a congregational autonomy clearly in place. It is probably fair to say, however, that many of our attitudes toward church discipline, particularly “harsh discipline,” were influenced significantly by the coming of these leaders. In that sense, the attitudes toward discipline in many of our congregations today may be a reaction to practices found in other Mennonite bodies.

IV. THE AUTHORITY OF CONFERENCE

The authority of Central District Conference lies in our coming together to seek God’s will and embrace God’s ultimate authority in our lives. As congregations in relationship, we do this seriously, humbly, and prayerfully, and then agree to share our understanding with each other in conference. The authority comes, or emerges, as our conference decisions are recognized as the will of God. It is not coercive, does not threaten, and comes without sanctions.

Conference statements reflecting the majority position on issues are to be taken seriously and studied carefully and prayerfully. At the same time we also humbly recognize that a majority can be mistaken and a minority may be nearer the mind of God.

We also understand that this kind of authority means that everyone within the conference has the responsibility both to give and receive counsel honestly and clearly. Unless we are engaged in this way, our conference will not discover authority as a reflection of God’s ultimate authority and we will find ourselves going in many different individualistic directions.

V. DISCIPLINE AND DISCIPLING IN CENTRAL DISTRICT

We believe that *discipline*, as that is usually understood (sanctions), belongs in the congregation and is not a function of conference. Discipline is, after all, part of discipling and care which the church, the family of God, gives to each Christian. As such it needs to be done in the setting where the person has made a membership commitment, is best known, and the situation understood. That is the local congregation.

The relationship between conference and congregation is not the same as the relationship between the congregation and its individual members. When Paul speaks of the body of Christ, it is a body of which individuals (I Corinthians 12:27) are members, not a conference of which congregations are members.

Along with the congregations, the conference participates in the universal Christian mission of forming disciples (Matt. 28:18-20). The conference *disciples* by providing opportunities for people to come together and seek the meaning of discipleship in our time and by providing resources for helping us to actually walk as disciples.

VI. THE CONFERENCE ROLE IN PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

We consider the role of conference in the selection and credentialing of pastoral leadership to be very important. Our conference ministers and Ministerial Committee play a vital role in the call, credentialing, and ongoing accountability (and discipline, when necessary) of pastoral leadership. We recognize the heavy responsibility this places upon the Ministerial Committee and conference ministers.

We also see pastoral mentoring and pastor-peer groups as essential ways of giving and receiving counsel, of strengthening our conference as a family, and of discipling all of us.

VII. IN CONCLUSION

The relationship of conference to congregations in resourcing and mutual discernment is very important in Central District. It also calls us to engage each other responsibly. Every person in Central District Conference is called upon to actively seek God's will, to listen to the Holy Spirit, and to share what we have heard with our brothers and sisters in our congregations and in the wider conference. In Central District we are not passive followers. We are all called and invited to take responsibility, together with our sisters and brothers, to seek God's will on what it means concretely for us to be disciples of Jesus today.

We understand this individual responsibility, this call to mutual accountability — difficult as it may be — to be at the heart of Anabaptism. This is what baptism on confession of faith means. The Anabaptists rejected the idea of church as a traditional community which relied on tradition and the authority of traditional leaders. The church is a voluntary community which each person enters on the basis of his or her own individual decision and confession of faith — an individual, responsible, adult decision, which calls us into mutual relationship with each other. The Anabaptists believed that this is what the New Testament clearly teaches.

We face the future transition with some uncertainty, but also with anticipation, believing that, as we continue walking together in faith as responsible disciples, our Lord will continue to transform us in ways wonderful and new.

Respectfully submitted:

Task Force Members

Robert Ramseyer, Chair
Rich Bucher
Janeen Bertsche Johnson
Lynn Liechty
Elmer Neufeld
Jane Roeschley

Observer-Participants

Willis Sutter, Illinois Mennonite Conference
David Sutter, Indiana-Michigan Menn. Conference
Allen G. Rutter, Ohio Mennonite Conference

Staff

Lloyd L. Miller
Carol M. Morales

December 1998

Central District Conference Membership Criteria

All congregations seeking membership in CDC shall:

- Keep Jesus Christ at the center of their faith and action
- Affirm commitment to congregational discernment that is biblically based, Christ-centered, and Spirit-led
- Be guided by the Mennonite Church USA *Vision: Healing and Hope* and *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (1995) [See CDC Constitution, Article III: Statement of Faith].
- Affirm the CDC statement on Conference Polity
- Meet the CDC constitutional requirements for membership (see Art. IX, sections 1 and 2)
(Includes being an established congregation with a definitive membership, participating regularly in conference, providing financial support, giving and receiving counsel, and willingness for members to serve in leadership positions).
- When applicable, follow MC USA guidelines for changing conference affiliation

Affirmed by delegates/June 2010



A conference of Mennonite Church USA

Mission Statement:

The mission of Central District Conference is to know Christ's abundant love in who we are and how we live, and to answer God's persistent call to share that love with one another and the world by:

- ▶ Promoting a Christ-like community of hospitality where all are welcome and where grace-filled relationships flourish, and patience and generosity are practiced
- ▶ Calling and nurturing wise, dynamic and compassionate Anabaptist leadership
- ▶ Supporting missional partnerships that make God's reign visible and fostering ministries of evangelism, peace, healing and hope.

KNOWING CHRIST'S LOVE. . .ANSWERING GOD'S CALL

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.

—Luke 10:27

CDC Core Values:

As Anabaptist Christians who received God's grace we affirm the following core values:

- ▶ Christ-centeredness through worship, discipleship and prophetic witness
- ▶ Sharing the good news of Jesus through a lifestyle which includes simple living, non-violence, service, evangelism, peacemaking, and justice
- ▶ Faithfulness to the way of Jesus through community discernment of Scripture by the guidance of the Holy Spirit
- ▶ Trust in congregational discernment
- ▶ Creating healthy and healing relationships within and among congregations and conferences
- ▶ Stewardship of God's gifts and resources
- ▶ Dismantling of racism, economic disparities and gender and disability biases.
- ▶ Nurturing and celebrating the faith of all ages within diverse contexts
- ▶ Trained and capable Anabaptist ministers and lay leaders
- ▶ Openness and commitment to learning from others throughout the world.

God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

--CDC Vision Statement



CDC Core Program Strategies:

Support congregations by:

- ▶ Fostering 'grace, joy and peace' within and among congregations of CDC
- ▶ Facilitating and providing resources which empower congregations and promote missional partnerships
- ▶ Encouraging the call and development of Anabaptist leadership
- ▶ Providing resources in the placement and care of pastors
- ▶ Ministering in times of congregational transition and/or conflict
- ▶ Cultivating the Anabaptist vision as expressed in our confession of faith
- ▶ Acting as a liaison with the agencies and leadership groups of MC USA
- ▶ Effective communication flow within the conference and with MC USA conferences and agencies

CDC Critical Success Factors:

- ▶ Robust congregations
- ▶ New Anabaptist outreach ministries and/or congregations within CDC
- ▶ Leadership development among all ages
- ▶ Generous financial stewardship
- ▶ Nurture and care of pastors
- ▶ Increased involvement of young adults
- ▶ Shared CDC/MC USA identity
- ▶ Vital Camp Friedenswald ministry
- ▶ Viable Anabaptist educational institutions

DOING TOGETHER WHAT WE CANNOT DO ALONE AS INDIVIDUAL CONGREGATIONS

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.

—Matthew 28:19-20 a

For more information about CDC, visit our website at www.centraldistrict.mennonite.net

Delegate Expectations

Title: Central District Conference Delegate

Function

Acting on behalf of members of their respective congregations in any meetings of the conference, delegates determine major policy issues, evaluate the work of the Board of Directors, and discern the voice of the Spirit in the midst of the conference.

Responsibilities and Duties

1. Prepare in advance of conference meetings.*
 - a. Read carefully all the materials distributed to delegates before conference meetings.
 - b. Seek clarification from the Board of Directors on materials or statements that are not understood.
 - c. Ask for the advice and opinions of other persons in your congregation or the conference about policy issues for Central District Conference.
 - d. Formulate your opinions in advance based on input from others, prayerful discernment, and your own best thinking.
2. Participate actively in the Annual Meeting.
 - a. Be present and on time for each session.
 - b. Listen carefully to input from the moderator, conference leaders, and other delegates.
 - c. Participate assertively and intelligently in deliberations, respecting the needs of others to speak and be heard as well as your own.
 - d. Work cooperatively with other delegates to discern the voice of the Spirit in the conference, and to articulate God's desired future for Central District Conference.
 - e. Offer suggestions on ways to improve the various programs and services of Central District Conference.
 - f. Experience the conference sessions as worshipful work that honors God.
3. Serve as a conduit for information between conference sessions.
 - a. Receive and respond to requests for information and counsel from the Board of Directors.
 - b. Register new ideas, advice and suggestions focused on improving the outcomes and effectiveness of Central District Conference.
 - c. Suggest qualified candidates to the Gifts Discernment Committee to fill delegate-elected positions.
4. Communicate to congregation regarding conference decisions and activities.
 - a. Report back to your congregation the highlights and important issues discussed at annual meeting sessions or specially called delegate meetings.
 - b. Share other conference information distributed to delegates between annual meeting sessions.
5. Provide for continuity with newly appointed delegates.
 - a. Pass along past information of interest to the next delegate before the end of term.
 - b. Provide assistance as needed to orient newly appointed delegates to their work.

Qualifications

1. Active participation in a member congregation of Central District Conference.
2. A commitment to discerning God's desired future for Central District Conference.
3. Interest in dealing with systems, values, and vision.
4. Willingness to make policy decisions in the best interests of the whole conference.
5. Personal commitment of time and necessary resources to attend each conference meeting for a minimum of two years.

Congregational Responsibilities to Delegates

1. Appoint delegates immediately after the annual meeting in June, asking them to serve for the next two years.
2. Provide discernment in the delegate selection process to appoint capable and interested participants as their delegates.
3. Properly orient delegates regarding their role and responsibilities.
4. Assure that delegates are selected and delegate forms are filed with the conference office on a timely basis to permit their participation in annual meeting sessions.
5. Provide economic support of delegate attendance at conference gatherings as congregational finances permit.
6. Provide adequate venues and support for delegates to report back to the congregation on conference matters.

*Conference meetings include the annual meeting held the fourth weekend of June and any other specially called meetings.

Note: Central District Conference does not necessarily expect delegates to be the same people who serve as delegates to the General Assembly of MC USA.

The function of delegate representation as outlined in the Central District Conference Bylaws Bylaw 1, Section B is as follows:

Section B: Delegates, Voting and Floor Privileges

1. Representation and Voting: Every member congregation of the Conference shall have the right to be represented by one vote for every thirty members or fractional part of that number, with a minimum of two delegates from each congregation. In addition to the above delegates, every member congregation is encouraged to appoint one high school age youth delegate who is an active participant of the congregation and youth group. This will be an additional voting delegate.
2. Delegate Forms: Proper delegate forms shall be sent to all member congregations by the Conference administrator, and these forms shall be returned to the Conference administrator designating all delegates before or by the opening session of the annual meeting.
3. Floor Privileges: Any member of a constituent congregation present at Conference sessions may participate in discussion on the conference floor. Other guests present are welcome to join open discussion in the spirit of Christian love and mutual helpfulness.

Adopted by the Board of Directors, February 6, 2004

Developing resolutions for Central District Conference

Purpose of resolutions

Resolutions are tools of the church intended to:

- **Educate** – Resolutions can provide information about issues facing the church and can help our congregations and members better understand viewpoints and experiences beyond their current awareness.
- **Build consensus** – While it is not necessary for us to arrive at unanimous approval in order to pass a resolution, careful work toward common understandings and language can build unity in the church. Resolutions will not be considered binding on members and congregations of Central District Conference unless identified as having that intent from the beginning of the process.
- **Provide a conference understanding, while acknowledging dissenting voices** – Resolutions offer church members as well as those beyond our denomination a better understanding of our conference's positions. When we are not united in our viewpoints, resolutions can name both our areas of agreement and areas of differing views, in hopes of fostering better understanding and ongoing discernment.
- **Provide a foundation for member advocacy to government** – Rather than viewing the primary purpose of resolutions as statements our conference or denomination sends to the government on our behalf, resolutions can be more effective as resources for individuals and congregations as they address legislative bodies.

The role of the Resolutions Committee

At each Annual Meeting, a Resolutions Committee appointed by the Board of Directors has the role and authority to receive and edit ideas for resolutions. A proposal given to the Resolutions Committee should come from a congregation(s) with enough time allowed for processing by congregations as outlined below.

When it is important to respond to a situation of more immediacy, some aspects of this preferred approach might not be appropriate. In these times, the Resolutions Committee may present resolutions for delegate discernment without going through a congregational study process. Such resolutions must be received by the Resolutions Committee by the end of the worship service on the first day of the Annual Meeting. However, if it is determined that delegates are significantly divided by an issue, the resolution may be tabled until more study and discernment are possible.

Preferred process for developing resolutions

The Resolutions Committee, after consultation as needed with the framers of the original resolution, will discern which resolutions should be developed for future consideration, which resolutions should be dealt with during the current Annual Meeting, and which perspectives should be shared with the Board of Directors for their awareness and discernment.

Suggested format for resolutions

We recommend that resolutions be crafted with the following theological framework:

- **Faith** – what we believe and affirm.
- **Hope** – our vision of God's intention for members, congregations, conferences, our denomination, and/or the world.
- **Love** – what compassion, justice, and righteousness require of us.

This framework may not serve the purposes of all resolutions, but where possible, the use of this framework can help keep the focus on God's work in our world and in our midst.

In order to best accomplish the purpose described above, we are committed to:

1. **Begin with a careful study process involving congregations** – Major issues will be processed best if study documents are developed and distributed – *before* resolutions are crafted.
2. **Create a safe space for all voices to be heard** – Honest discernment will not shut off differing viewpoints.
3. **Seek to understand the stories behind our differing viewpoints** – Rather than arguing positions, we will search for common ground through hearing how we have come to our various perspectives.
4. **Involve significant delegate discussion in groups** – We will commit adequate time for hearing each other's viewpoints and giving feedback to the whole delegate body.
5. **Allow for segmented consideration** – If delegates agree on most parts of a resolution but not on a particular part, the Board of Directors will have the option of testing delegate response on a section-by-section basis.
6. **Set a high threshold for adoption** – The more important we consider a decision to be, the higher our level of agreement should be. If a simple majority vote does not seem appropriate, the Board of Directors will suggest a percentage needed to adopt a particular resolution.

Adapted from "Developing Resolutions for Mennonite Church USA"
Approved by the Board of Directors, May 11, 2007

**Expectations for Credentialed Leaders Regarding
Healthy Boundaries Training
Central District Conference Ministerial Committee
Approved September 21, 2018**

Background:

Credentialed clergy throughout MC USA are responsible for participating in a Healthy Boundaries Training. This training identifies the complexity of the relationships we have in our ministries and provides essential understandings and practical ways to manage these relational and ethical boundaries with integrity and faithfulness. Ultimately, the goal is to enhance our ministries through tending to appropriate, safe and healthy boundaries.

A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership provides the theological and biblical foundation for how Mennonite Church USA and Central District Conference understand credentialed leadership in the church. Specifically, it states,

The congregation and the person ordained enter a covenant of a mutual accountability, support, respect and care. The person covenants to live a life that has moral integrity, to be a faithful steward of the gospel, to lead with humility, to respect others, and to grow in ministry. The congregation covenants to pray for the ordained person, to give and receive counsel, to support the person's leadership ministry, and to recognize the authority of the office into which the pastor has been ordained. (p.20)

The Ministerial Committee of the Central District Conference has identified *Healthy Boundaries Training* as an essential training for all credentialed leaders actively serving in ministry. *Healthy Boundaries Training* provides tools, practices and examples for how “accountability, support, respect and care” can be authentically lived out as ministering individuals.

Expectations:

It is the expectation of the CDC Ministerial Committee that all credentialed leaders actively serving in ministry receive *Healthy Boundaries Training*.

1. All newly credentialed leaders will complete *Healthy Boundaries Training* within one year of their credential date (licensed or ordained).
2. After an initial *Healthy Boundaries Training* course, all credentialed leaders will complete a refresher course within three years of their initial training and every three years thereafter.
3. Should a credentialed leader be unable to complete the above training expectations within the timeframe given, the credentialed leader may request an extension of no more than one year in order to complete the training.
4. Should a credentialed leader not complete the training expectations outlined above, their credential shall be considered suspended for up to one additional year. At the end of that year, if the credentialed leader has not completed the training, their license shall be terminated. Credentialed leaders are aware that such termination of their credential may have employment consequences as well.

Definitions:

Actively Serving- A credentialed leader is considered “actively serving” in ministry if they are currently providing leadership (paid or volunteer) in a church or other organization that either requires a credential for their position or if the ministering person expects to utilize the privileges of their credential to serve their community. (Example: A chaplain may not be required by their employer to hold a credential for their continued employment but the chaplain wishes to maintain their credential as active and considers their place of employment as their place of ministry.)

Credentialed- As defined on pages 43-44 of *A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership*

Credential Date- The date of the public credentialing service in which the credentialed leader was licensed or ordained.

Healthy Boundaries Training- This is the specific name for a training offered by *Faith Trust Institute*. CDC relies on several individuals who have been trained by *Faith Trust Institute* to provide training to credentialed leaders. The *Healthy Boundaries 101- Fundamental's* course provides the basic guidelines and expectations by which other trainings will be considered as fulfilling the requirement. A *Request for Recognition of Alternative Training for Healthy Boundaries* form is available to credentialed leaders who would like the ministerial committee to consider other trainings as sufficient for this requirement. *Healthy Boundaries Training 101* will address the following primary topics:

- Christian Biblical and Theological Foundations for Maintaining Boundaries
- Boundary Basics for Clergy and Spiritual Teachers
- Dating, Friendships, and Dual Relationships
- The Pulpit, Transference, Hugging and Touch, Intimacy
- Preserving Boundaries: Personal and Professional Health
- Understanding Cultural Differences Related to Boundaries

Refresher Course- This can include participation in at least three hours of the *Healthy Boundaries 101* course, participation in *Healthy Boundaries 201*, or other continuing education of at least three hours that addresses the primary topics identified above.

CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE of MENNONITE CHURCH USA

CODE OF ETHICS FOR MINISTERS

A. Ministerial Sexual Ethics

1. Ministers are representatives of God and the church, and as such are to be agents of healing and redemption. They are aware that sexual exploitation or abuse of spouse, family members, colleagues, congregational members, employees or counselees is an abuse of trust, an abuse of power and an abuse of the authority of a pastoral position. They accept their responsibility to define and maintain appropriate boundaries within their ministerial relationships.
2. Ministers are aware that their personal relationships and lives must also reflect healthy morals and sexuality. Spouse or child abuse, domestic violence, use of pornography, or other forms of immorality may also lead to discipline.
3. Ministers are aware that discipline for sexual misconduct and immorality may involve the loss of both their ministerial credentials and their vocational status.
4. Ministers are aware of and willing to abide by church policies and disciplinary procedures to address sexual misconduct including *Pastoral Sexual Abuse Policies and Procedures* which is available on the MC USA website; <http://mennoniteusa.org/resource/sexual-misconduct/>.
5. Ministers accept responsibility to call each other to account and to exercise biblical responsibility to confront colleagues concerning perceptions of inappropriate sexual relationships.
6. Ministers are aware of their calling as servants of God under the lordship of Jesus Christ, and from that they accept their responsibility for and accountability to people entrusted to their care.
7. Ministers accept the obligation to disclose information regarding previous sexual misconduct for which they have been called to account prior to formal candidacy for a new ministry position.

B. Other Ethical Standards

1. Ministers are aware of the harm that may be caused to themselves and others by engaging in addictive behaviors such as alcohol and drug abuse, gambling, and use of pornography. Ministers accept responsibility to seek help and receive counsel regarding such addictions.
2. Ministers will comply with ethical and legal standards regarding congregational finances.
3. Ministers are expected to be truthful when representing their education, training, experience, and ministerial performance.
4. Ministers are expected to keep and maintain strict confidentiality, unless that confidentiality will result in physical harm to a child and in the case of other threats that mandate reporting.
5. In addition to the above affirmations, ministers are expected to have read and comprehended Section IV, Ethics in Ministry, in *A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership* (MennoMedia, 2017), *Expectations for Credentialed Leaders Regarding Healthy Boundaries Training* (CDC Ministerial Committee September 21, 2018).

**As a minister of Jesus Christ and as a representative of the church within its office of ministry,
I accept and subscribe to these affirmations.**

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Witness: _____

Witness: _____

**Summary - Ongoing Work Toward Racial, Ethnic, and Religious Reconciliation
within Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA**
from the CDC Missional Church Committee's *Racial, Ethnic and Religious Reconciliation Task Group*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2018, the Missional Church Committee of Central District Conference (CDC) charged a task group to develop provocations for fostering the ongoing work of racial, ethnic and religious reconciliation within the conference. This group was appointed and met during 2019, and submitted Provocations and a Resource List in early 2020.

Task Group Structure: five white people charged with primary responsibility of undoing white supremacy and two persons of color who participated in meetings as much as they elected to, in an accountability capacity to the white members.

Process: the task group met throughout the calendar year of 2019 and discussed resources and challenges to sustain anti-racist work within the Christian context of CDC.

Provocations: the task group has organized its provocations by level of conference, including targeted prompts for integrating sustained anti-racist work into the heart of the Christian life at the individual, congregational, and conference level. They fall into categories of “knowing, being, and doing.”

Resources: the task group offers resources to engage CDC people asking different questions and engaging different aspects of anti-racist work in their own contexts. These resources are not exhaustive and will likely need to be updated frequently as new resources emerge and contexts continue to shift. They are in response to requests for such resources from both the Missional Church Committee and individual CDC members over the past year.

Next Steps: task groups are a time-limited, appointed venture of CDC Committees. The Missional Church Committee and the leadership of Central District Conference are invited to consider the Provocations submitted by the task group, and to commit to on-going sustained anti-racist work as a key expression of the gospel in our broken world.

Questions may be directed to Task Group chair and Missional Church Committee member, Kiva Nice-Webb.

Three Provocations for Ongoing Work Toward Racial, Ethnic, and Religious Reconciliation within Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA

from the CDC Missional Church Committee's *Racial, Ethnic and Religious Reconciliation Task Group*

Introduction and context

In 2018, the Missional Church Committee of Central District Conference (CDC) charged a task group to develop provocations for fostering the ongoing work of racial, ethnic, and religious reconciliation within the conference. This task group was made up of five white people — one from the Missional Church Committee and four from throughout CDC — in addition to two persons of color who participated in meetings as much as they elected to, in an accountability capacity. This structure was intended to put the primary responsibility of undoing white supremacy on white people while acknowledging the importance of accountability to people of color.

Over the course of our time as a task group in 2019, we have heard from various CDC members about their individual and collective efforts to educate themselves about racism and systemic oppression, to build relationships across differences and to act for justice. We want to affirm the engagement with this work that is taking place and already has taken place among individuals, small groups, congregations, and CDC leadership groups. To build on this, we offer CDC the following three “provocations”; they are intended to inspire attentiveness to growth in racial, ethnic, and religious reconciliation and ultimately to result in more action for justice within and beyond Central District Conference.

Ultimately, our growth in racial, ethnic, and religious reconciliation results from our **commitment to continually take “the next step”** in three areas: **knowing, being and doing**.

- Examples of **knowing** include choosing to educate ourselves about perspectives, life experiences and realities different from our own; studying our local, regional, national, and international history from the perspective of those who have been systematically oppressed; and deepening our understanding of white supremacy and systemic oppression.
- Examples of **being** include cultivating awareness of our own (often unconscious) biases; developing appreciation for other cultural ways of being in addition to our own; understanding the power dynamics that are at play in our daily interactions; and prayerfully seeking to transform our attitudes so that we truly love our neighbor as ourselves and see each person as created in the image of God.
- Examples of **doing** include pursuing intercultural competence training and skill-building; developing mutual relationships across differences; and prayerfully seeking opportunities to act for God's peace (physical, mental, spiritual, and relational well being) in our interpersonal relationships and communities and to speak out against systemic oppression.

Each of these areas is essential to our growth, and we need to actively tend to all three of them to experience real and lasting transformation in the journey of dismantling white supremacy.

Here are ways we envision this work being carried out across CDC

1) Provocation for CDC leaders and leadership groups

While reconciliation is a gift given by God, our work is to engage fully in ending the system of white supremacy. At the conference level, we envision:

- CDC's leadership prayerfully commits time, resources, and budgeted funds toward continual "next steps" in areas of knowing, being, and doing regarding racial, ethnic and religious reconciliation for its staff members and leadership groups — making this topic a regular agenda item in meetings of the various leadership groups and setting concrete goals for engagement and growth. CDC leaders share about their efforts at conference meetings and gatherings across the wider Mennonite Church.
 - An existing example is how CDC's Missional Church Committee has committed to working through the Intercultural Development Inventory as a group.
- CDC members from underrepresented racial/ethnic backgrounds are appointed to leadership groups and have power within the leadership structure.
- CDC leaders provide incentives and resources for congregations to discern and carry out "next steps" in these areas, encouraging collaboration wherever possible to help increase accountability.
 - For example, additional "Reign of God"-type grants could be made available to congregations that partner in a joint educational or advocacy effort regarding racial, ethnic, and religious reconciliation; recipients could share with the wider conference about their learnings.
- CDC leaders create incentives and space for credentialed leaders to discern and carry out "next steps" — individually and in their congregations — perhaps building these regular conversations into the context of existing pastor-peer meetings or mentoring relationships.
 - Ministerial committee: include personal and theological reflection on and demonstrate on-going commitment to anti-racist work as a component of the credentialing process
- CDC leaders offer crowdsourcing channels through which CDC members and congregations can resource each other.
 - For example, a shared editable list of resources (linked to the CDC website and linked to from conference newsletters) could provide an accessible space where people could add resources, learnings and experiences they'd like to share with conference leadership groups and fellow congregations. These could be presented in a breakout group at an Annual Meeting.

2) Provocation for CDC congregations

Isaiah 1:10-20 reminds us that unless worship leads to enacting justice, it is meaningless. Our individual and collective relationship with God is inseparable from our relationship with each other and all of creation. At the congregational level, we envision:

- CDC congregations prayerfully commit time, resources, and budgeted funds toward continual "next steps" in areas of knowing, being, and doing regarding racial, ethnic, and religious reconciliation for their congregants, employees, and leadership groups — making this topic a regular agenda item in meetings of the various leadership groups and setting concrete goals for engagement and growth.
- People from underrepresented racial/ethnic backgrounds are appointed to leadership roles/groups in congregations and have power within the leadership structure.
- CDC congregations devote time and attention to these topics in worship, second hour themes, Sunday school curriculum (both adult and youth/children), small groups, etc., providing incentives and resources for their congregants to discern and carry out their own "next steps" in these areas and encouraging collaboration wherever possible.
 - An "appreciative inquiry"-type process of recognizing where intercultural connections are already being made and where growth and learning are already happening can be a

place to start if groups feel stuck; they can then consider together how to deepen or build upon what is already there.

- For example, a congregation could partner with another congregation to bring a resource person in for a shared intercultural competence training, or to learn about systemic oppression in their regional history together.
- CDC congregations create opportunities for stories of these “next steps” to be shared during worship (and potentially with fellow CDC congregations in other settings).

3) Provocation for individual members of CDC congregations

Because of the ubiquitous nature of racism and white supremacy, dismantling them requires that each of us challenge them actively. At the individual level, we envision:

- Members of CDC congregations take responsibility for and engage fully in their own growth and continual “next steps” in areas of knowing, being, and doing regarding racial, ethnic, and religious reconciliation — through prayer, repentance and openness to transformation, and by intentionally committing time, energy and resources to this work and to building relationships across differences.
 - An “appreciative inquiry”-type process of taking stock of where you are already making intercultural connections and what you have already learned about racism and oppression can be a place to start if an individual does not know where to begin or continue; then consider how to deepen or build upon what is already there.
- Members of CDC congregations prayerfully seek out partners for collaboration and accountability in this work (within and beyond their congregations), giving attention to fostering a culture of vulnerability, openness and honesty in which the range of emotions and thoughts that accompany this confronting work can be shared.
 - Our personal growth is cultivated in beloved and mutual community where we can engage fully, make mistakes or accidentally say a racist thing, get called on it, work through shame to enable repentance — claiming the unconditional love of Christ for each of us — and then keep pursuing God’s peace (physical, mental, spiritual and relational well being) for each person. Through naming our shared ownership of systemic oppression, we can begin to break destructive patterns of avoidance, inferiority or superiority, and blame.

Conclusion

“The purpose of Central District Conference, a member conference of Mennonite Church USA, is to promote community among congregations, to serve as a resource for pastors and congregations, and to facilitate the reign of God by providing channels through which congregations and pastors may work” (Article I, Bylaws).

In considering how to encourage CDC in its work toward racial, ethnic, and religious reconciliation, our task group has focused on the importance of recognizing, exposing, and dismantling the oppressive systems that uphold white supremacy. We want to name that our Mennonite worship and charity has historically not only ignored or been oblivious to root causes of injustices, but also has upheld these injustices both locally and internationally.

We must continually ask: As a conference of Mennonite Church USA, and by extension Mennonite World Conference, are we as CDC leaders, congregations and individuals either dismantling or

reinforcing white-supremacy-related issues of mass incarceration, police brutality, environmental racism, the legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery, and the ongoing slow violence of racism in which we are individually and institutionally complicit?

We urge CDC leaders to engage the work of our provocations above — as they correspond with the purpose of CDC — with commitments of time, attention, and funding to demonstrate that the work of racial, ethnic, and religious reconciliation is indeed a priority for CDC (... and not only to file this report away!). The members of the task force also recognize and are committed to the above provocations as our individual work. We look forward to the Missional Church Committee's response to these provocations.

Respectfully submitted,

CDC Racial, Ethnic and Religious Reconciliation Task Group (2020)

Kiva Nice-Webb (chair), Brian Sauder, Annette Brill Bergstresser, Charles Bontrager, Sandy Miller

Accountability members: Cyneatha Millsaps, Isaac Villegas

Resource List for Ongoing Work Toward Racial, Ethnic, and Religious Reconciliation
within Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA
from the CDC Missional Church Committee's *Racial, Ethnic and Religious Reconciliation Task Group*

Introduction

This list is by no means complete; it is a sampling of ways to take “next steps” in the areas of knowing, being and doing in the work of racial, ethnic and religious reconciliation. Online and library searches for anti-racism and/or anti-discrimination resources will also yield bountiful results for your consideration. These resources would lend themselves well for both individual and group study.

Books

- ***An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*** by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (Beacon, 2015)
- ***An African American and Latinx History of the United States*** by Paul Ortiz (Beacon, 2018)
- ***Becoming an Anti-Racist Church: Journeying Toward Wholeness*** by Joseph Barndt (Fortress, 2011)
- ***Between the World and Me*** by Ta-Nehisi Coates (Spiegel & Grau, 2015)
- ***Enter the River: Healing Steps from White Privilege Toward Racial Reconciliation*** by Jody Miller Shearer (Herald, 1994)
- ***How to be Black*** by Baratunde Thurston (Harper, 2012)
- ***It's the Little Things: Everyday Interactions That Anger, Annoy and Divide the Races*** by Lena Williams (Harcourt, 2000)
- ***Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*** by Bryan Stevenson (Spiegel & Grau, 2015)
- ***Let's Get Real: What People of Color Can't Say and Whites Won't Ask about Racism*** by Lee Mun Wah (Stir Fry Seminars, 2011)
- ***The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness***, anniversary edition, by Michelle Alexander (New Press, 2020); resources and study guides available at newjimcrow.com
- ***Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism*** by Drew G.I. Hart (Herald, 2016)
- ***White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*** by Robin DiAngelo (Beacon, 2018)

Videos

- **PBS Frontline: A Class Divided** (March 1985): The day after Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed, a teacher in a small town in Iowa tried a daring classroom experiment. She decided to treat children with blue eyes as superior to children with brown eyes. Frontline explores what those children learned about discrimination and how it still affects them:
www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/class-divided
Teachers guide: www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/teach/divided
- **Race: The Power of An Illusion**: Award-winning documentary series by California Newsreel: contains episodes on The Difference Between Us; The Story We Tell; The House We Live In:
www.racepowerofanillusion.org/
Accompanying resources: newsreel.org/video/RACE-THE-POWER-OF-AN-ILLUSION
- **A Time for Burning** (1966, 58 min): Features an all-white Lutheran Church in Omaha, Nebraska, as their young pastor tries to get the congregation to reach out to their fellow black Lutherans. Commissioned by the Lutheran Church in America and nominated as Best Documentary Feature in the 1967 Academy Awards: archive.org/details/atimeforburning
- **Jesus Wasn't White**: Mennonite Mission Network resource; discussion questions appear in text below video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOzU4qFfT3M&feature=emb_logo
- **The Future of Race in America**: Michelle Alexander at TEDx Columbus:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQ6H-Mz6hgw

- **What Would You Do? The Bike Thief:** Discussion starter about racial profiling: www.thesociologicalcinema.com/videos/racial-profiling-the-bike-thief

Articles/handouts/discussion starters

- Look for opportunities to learn about your local and regional history, especially from the perspective of non-white peoples.
 - Which indigenous peoples called the land home which you now occupy?
 - Which stories are the ones people didn't grow up hearing?
 - Which things did people avoid talking about?
 - An example of this type of work: **"Portrait of a Sundown Town: Coming to terms with racism in a 'Mennonite' community,"** in *Mennonite World Review*, Jan. 10, 2014, by Dan Shenk of Faith Mennonite Church, a CDC congregation: www.mennoworld.org/archived/2014/1/20/portrait-sundown-town/
- **"Escaping the Web of White Supremacy: Our Most Urgent Task in the Work of Character Formation,"** in *The Cresset* (Advent-Christmas 2019, Vol. LXXXIII, No. 2, pp. 4-8) by Richard T. Hughes: thecresset.org/2019/Advent/Hughes_A19.html
- **"Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack"** by Peggy McIntosh: www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/mcintosh.pdf
- **Diversity training discussion handouts** from StirFry Seminars / Lee Mun Wah in categories such as Exploring the Roots of Our Disconnections; Ways to Reconnect and Rebuild Trust; Mindful Techniques That Create Community. Examples include "21 Ways to Stop a Conversation About Diversity," "Unhealthy Ways of Communicating," and "The Art of Listening": www.stirfryseminars.com/resources/handouts.php
- Teachingtolerance.org: **"My Family Journey"**: <https://www.tolerance.org/lesson/my-family-journey>

Consultants or experience-based learning

- **Intercultural competence consulting** through Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) with Nekeisha Alayna Alexis, M.A.: ambs.edu/invite
- **Work in Progress Choral Ensemble** of Mennonite Mission Network: This group is available to lead worship, preach, teach and provide contextualized workshops about diversity and holistic witness: www.mennonitemission.net/about/staff/Work%20in%20Progress%20Ensemble
- **Trail of Death: A Pilgrimage of Remembrance, Lament and Transformation**, a biennial summer course of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary that traces the route of the 1838 forced removal by the U.S. military of about 850 Potawatomi people from their ancestral homeland in northern Indiana to present-day Osawatomie, Kansas; likely to be held next in the summer of 2021; one can participate in the learning tour just as a trip, without academic credit: ambs.edu/trailofdeath
- **Sankofa: A Journey Toward Racial Righteousness** of the Evangelical Covenant Church, an intentional, cross-racial prayer journey that seeks to assist disciples of Christ on their move toward a righteous response to the social ills related to racism: covchurch.org/justice/racial-righteousness/sankofa/
- **The Ongoing White Supremacy of Our Everyday Lives: Consider, Confront, Change**, a symposium organized by Rainbow Mennonite Church, a Western District Conference congregation in Kansas City, Kansas, in 2018. While this event is past, it can serve as a model for congregations who would consider organizing events like this in CDC: rainbowmennonite.org/symposium/

Outline of Common Assumptions Regarding Mid-States “Preferred Resource Provider” Relationships for Pastoral Searches

Objectives:

- Simplify the process of pastoral search for dual conference congregations
- Limit conference duplication of resources in pastoral searches
- Mutually supporting the relationship of each conference to the congregation

At beginning of search, both conferences:

- Assure that the congregation is aware of the PRP process
- Encourage congregation to choose one conference as “preferred resource provider” [PRP] for conducting the search
- Reinforce that the integrity of two separate, equal conference relationships with the congregation remain intact though working through a single conference

During the search, the PRP will periodically report back to the other conference minister:

- At least quarterly if the search takes an extended time period
- Promptly if difficulties or problems surface during the search
- At the point a preferred candidate is identified:
 - Who it is
 - When the congregation will meet with the candidate
 - When the vote is scheduled
 - Whether the call is issued and if so, if accepted

Once acceptance occurs, the PRP status ends and the process becomes equally collaborative, which includes the two conferences, candidate, and congregation jointly determining:

- Dates for credentialing interviews
- Dates for installation

Note: Different conferences may have different processes and expectations for how the scheduling of these meetings occurs. It may require in some cases one of the conferences adjusting normal practice to make the process equally collaborative. Whenever a dual conference congregation search is underway, the credentialing groups of both conferences need to make sure they are familiar with the process of the other conference to avoid misunderstanding.

February 12, 2008

Mid-States MC USA Area Conference Statement on Congregational Dual Conference Affiliation

When Mennonite Church USA formed in 2002, approximately 51 congregations chose to retain pre-existing affiliation with more than one area conference. During the subsequent six years, many of these congregations ceased their dual affiliation, either through new area conference formation (Mountain States) or by choosing single affiliation. Currently, only 26 congregations in MC USA retain this status. Twenty-one of the 26 are located in the mid-states region; all 21 of these affiliate with Central District Conference and either Illinois Mennonite Conference (9), Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference (7), or Ohio Mennonite Conference (5).

Regarding dual affiliation, Mennonite Church USA Membership Guidelines (Part II, Section 11) indicate that:

“Congregations will hold membership in only one area conference. Where dual affiliation of a congregation with more than one conference already exists and it is perceived to be in the best interests of the congregation and their conference at this time, dual conference membership may be retained as long as mutually agreed upon. We also recognize that certain congregations may find it beneficial to maintain ties to other denominational bodies.” (Adopted July 5, 2001)

This position is affirmed in the Bylaws of the Mennonite Church USA (Article III, Section 3a: 2003).

More recently, in looking to the future of our denomination, the Executive Director of MC USA reported to the Constituency Leadership Council that “the long term intention is for congregations to hold membership in only one area conference.” [Distributed “Highlights” of the CLC gathering at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, March 6-8, 2006.]

Given these denominational perspectives, the four mid-states area conferences jointly encourage and support dual conference congregations in their own discernment processes as they consider, when ready, what conference affiliation would enable them to best carry out the ministries they find themselves in or feel called to develop. Although some may wish to retain dual affiliation at this time, others may find that single affiliation can free them in their missional calling and enable stronger, mutually beneficial relationships with their area conference of choice. When engaged in this discernment process, we ask congregations to inform and work with both conferences regarding their deliberations.

Should a dual conference congregation decide to affiliate solely with one area conference, we will respect and support their participation in the conference of their choosing. Regardless of affiliation, we encourage all of our congregations to pursue ongoing fellowship, mission cell formation, and other missional collaboration with congregations of other area conferences. We also welcome continued attendance at each of our area conference gatherings by congregations affiliated with other area conferences. We are together called to build God’s Kingdom as God leads, and a congregation’s choice of which area conference will formally connect them to MC USA need not impact their relationship with other congregations.

In saying this, we recognize the varied circumstances that originally led these congregations to obtain dual affiliation, and we celebrate the vision for unity and spirit of collaboration these congregations have embodied. Some are dual because of the church planting process used at the time, and some chose to be dual with the goal of including Mennonites of diverse backgrounds and ultimately of bringing two denominations together. Two (Lima Mennonite and Mennonite Church of Normal) chose to be dual because two singly affiliated congregations merged to form a new congregation.

Although we remain committed to collaboration and fellowship among our conferences and congregations, as conference leaders we are not currently addressing larger questions of conference merger. We recognize that over time, as our area conferences and congregations follow God’s call to missional transformation of our world, God may also transform our structures and forms—in God’s time the mid-states region will undoubtedly look very different. In the meantime, we encourage our congregations to also devote their energy to God’s missional call.

September 18, 2007

Central District Conference

Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference

Illinois Mennonite Conference

Ohio Mennonite Conference of Mennonite Church USA



Churchwide Statement on Immigration

2014 Revision of 2003 Statement

Feb. 15, 2014

Vision: Healing and Hope

God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world. (*Mennonite Church USA Vision Statement*)

Mennonite Church USA's 10-year Purposeful Plan (2011) calls the church to pursue the priorities of Christian Formation, Holistic Christian Witness, Undoing Racism and Advancing Intercultural Transformation, among others.¹

Millions of people are painfully caught in the web of the structures that comprise the United States' broken immigration system. Long wait lists keep families separated for years and tempt people to circumvent the system; workplace raids create a culture of fear and harm entire communities; and lax oversight of guest worker programs leaves a system ripe for exploitation and worker abuse.² Societal discord on the issue has risen and also polarized people within the Church.

As Mennonite Christians, we are moved by the healing and hope that God offers through Jesus Christ to join with sisters and brothers from other faith traditions in offering our faith-filled responses to this suffering and injustice. We claim our identity as citizens of God's kingdom, and therefore, as "aliens" and "exiles" in the country in which we reside. We renounce the indifference to and mistreatment of undocumented and documented immigrants that has occurred and continues to occur in our congregations, our communities, and this country. We are committed to joining God's reconciling mission (Isa. 58:6-9, 2 Cor. 5:16-19) and to live and act as sisters and brothers in Christ regardless of our legal status.

As such, we advocate for just and humane immigration policies for immigrants and refugees, and we empower congregations, area conferences and denominational staff to serve as advocates for these vulnerable groups of people.

We commend all levels of the Church in efforts to welcome immigrants: providing mutual aid and social service resources, building intercultural relationships and diverse worshiping communities, and treating immigrants with dignity and respect.

We commit to grow in understanding our context—to comprehend the root causes of immigration and examine how the U.S. immigration system operates—so that we can better understand each other's stories. We also commit to grow in cross-cultural competency to advance our goal of being an intentional community for Christ.

We seek to join in God's healing work regarding immigration, trusting that God goes before us and desires wholeness and well-being for all people.

Supporting documents are available that include recommended actions, the biblical basis for this document, a statement on identity, a brief exploration of the issues, and a list of resources.

¹ Mennonite Church USA's seven churchwide priorities: Christian Formation, Christian Community, Holistic Christian Witness, Stewardship, Leadership Development, Undoing Racism and Advancing Intercultural Transformation, and Church-to-Church Relationships.

² These descriptive statements come from "Immigration Policy Principles," a document compiled by Mennonite Central Committee U.S. and updated in April 2009. See mcc.org/media/resources/664. Additionally, some immigrants without documents are considered to be "undocumentable" because for them to reside in the U.S. legally, they would first have to return to their home countries for three or 10 years (depending on how long they had been in the U.S.) before they would be eligible to apply for legal re-entry.

Appendix A: Actions

The following action steps are grouped into two sections:

- The first section (A) has five specific action steps; two are educational and three are ministry actions. The Executive Board calls congregations and area conferences to engage at whatever level possible in *at least one educational action* and *one ministry action* in the next two years (2014–2016).
- The second section (B) offers suggestions for additional educational and ministry actions, which congregations and area conferences are encouraged to engage in as they are able.

Depending on the action, congregations, area conferences and/or the denomination will be in a position to take the lead, facilitate and/or provide resources. Some actions may best be served by ecumenical partnerships in local and/or regional areas.

Appendix C contains a list of resources that support the actions.

A. Actions for 2014–2016

Educational

1. Learn skills to help facilitate intercultural competency and/or undoing racism processes in congregations through the Communities of Hope process.
2. Plan Bible studies, sermons and worship services on themes of hospitality to immigrants.

Ministry

3. Advocate for just and humane immigration policies for immigrants and refugees by contacting our local, state and national elected officials. (See “Immigration Policy Principles,” a document compiled by Mennonite Central Committee U.S.: mcc.org/media/resources/664)
4. Offer church facilities and volunteers for documentation services, language classes, mental health support, cultural celebrations, after-school homework help and other ministries.
5. Engage in mutual aid to offer food, shelter, clothing, housing, transportation and other resources to immigrants regardless of their status.

B. Additional suggested actions

Educational

1. Learn about the political and economic situations that push and pull people’s migration to the U.S.

and how U.S. consumer culture and policies such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) have helped to create these dynamics.

2. Plan local and/or regional learning tours in our communities.
3. Join study tours to the U.S./Mexico border, refugee camps or detention centers to learn more about U.S. immigration and refugee policies. Share our learnings.
4. Learn about the process and timing of legally becoming a U.S. citizen.
5. Learn about the detention centers across the U.S. that hold undocumented immigrants, and locate the ones nearest our congregations.
6. Attend a *Bienvenido* training to provide support for immigrants in our congregations and/or communities.
7. Study and learn about the U.S.’s prison industry and how private prison corporations profit from their role in the current immigration system.

Ministry

8. Support immigrants in navigating the legal system to become U.S. citizens. Offer information about the available alternative oath for those who are not willing to bear arms. Help connect immigrants with attorneys and/or with financial assistance for legal support.
9. Advocate for a fair and living wage for all low-wage workers and immigrants in our workplaces and communities.
10. Build relationships among newcomers and long-term residents in our communities. Facilitate the mutual sharing of stories in our congregations and neighborhoods.
11. Partner with immigrant congregations to plan church services or community events.
12. Plan and join public ecumenical or interfaith witness events for immigrant justice.
13. Pray for just and humane immigration reform and policies for all immigrants and refugees; for immigrants in our communities and across the globe; and for all parts of Mennonite Church USA as we seek to discern and follow the Spirit’s leading.

Appendix B: Background

1. What does the Bible say?

We hold in the Light of God's Word the complex realities of today's undocumented migration. With our hearts, minds and might, we desire to walk in the wisdom, witness and humility of Jesus Christ.

- **God creates humankind “in our image, according to our likeness” (Gen. 1:26).**

Despite the restrictions, permissions and requirements that the United States' immigration laws have assigned to newcomers at different times throughout history, we hold to the biblical understanding that *all* persons are sacred. According to the Genesis 1 creation story, each woman and each man is a gift of our Creator. The Bible calls us to view and to treat one another as persons created in the image of the Holy One, regardless of our status under immigration laws.

- **God covenants with people “on the move.”**

The Hebrew Scriptures are full of stories of migration! The stories of Abraham and Sarah, Joseph, Moses, the Israelites escaping Egypt, Naomi and Ruth, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther and others are faith stories of immigrants. We claim our immigrant biblical ancestors as spiritual guides who teach us about struggle, failure, vulnerability, perseverance and God's faithfulness in their risky journeys with God and with their communities.

- **God's Law compassionately provides for immigrants.**

In the ancient world of the Old Testament, foreigners were extremely vulnerable due to their lack of extended family and lack of access to land, which was passed on through inheritance. More laws regarding treatment of immigrants appear in the Hebrew Torah than in any other law code known in the ancient world.³ God repeatedly urges God's people to remember their own salvation history: “You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt” (Exod. 22:21). God loves the stranger and commands God's people also to love and give consideration to the stranger (Deut. 10:17-19).

- **God sent Jesus, who embraced outsiders.**

Jesus, whose parents fled with him as political refugees to Egypt after his birth (Matt. 2), was consistently

attentive to and compassionate with people who were ostracized from society. Jesus taught his disciples to welcome strangers, to minister to prisoners and to provide for anyone who was hungry, thirsty or in need of clothing, because through these actions his disciples would minister directly to him (Matt. 25:31-46). He described his mission as bringing good news to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives, giving sight to the blind and freeing the oppressed (Lk. 4:18-21). He consistently violated social norms, sharing God's love by spending time with and eating with those on the margins of society, such as “sinners,” tax collectors, Gentiles and Samaritans (Matt. 8:5-14; Mk. 7:24-30; Lk. 5:29-32, 7:1-10, 10:25-37, 17:11-19; Jn. 4). The Apostle Paul taught the first churches how Christ's giving up his life for all because of love, and then being raised up through the power of God's love, broke down dividing walls and created peace between hostile peoples (Eph. 2:11-22).

2. Who are “we”?

We are Mennonite Church USA, and we come from many places. Some of us are recent immigrants to this country. Some of us have ancestors who migrated here generations ago. Some of us are living especially vulnerably in the United States, without documentation.

Through the Holy Spirit's transforming presence and power, we are on a journey of healing and hope to become a Church in which “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female, for all are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:27-28; Eph. 2:11-22).

Together, on this journey, we affirm that:

- we are beloved children of God. This is our fundamental identity. Therefore, each one of us is a sacred image of God, created in God's likeness (Gen. 1:26-27). Yet we are all sinners, all falling short of the glory of God, receiving the grace of Jesus Christ as a gift (Rom. 3:21-26).
- we are “aliens” and “exiles” in the United States, an identity freely chosen in our baptisms, given to us by

³ In the Law, God provided for the needs of the foreigner, addressing fair labor practices (Exod. 20:10, 23:12; Deut. 5:14, 24:14-15), justice (Deut. 1:16-17, 24:17-18, 27:19), food sharing (Lev. 19:9-10; Deut. 14:28-29, 24:19-22), inclusion in worship (Exod. 12:45-49; Lev. 16:29) and love for neighbor, including the foreigner (Lev. 19:18 with 19:33-34). The content of this teaching about God's law and the Scripture references are taken from “Immigration: Today's Civil Dilemma and Theological Challenge—What Does the Bible Say?,” a keynote presentation to the Mennonite Church USA 2013 Delegate Assembly in Phoenix by M. Daniel Carroll R., Ph.D., Denver (Colo.) Seminary, on July 2, 2013.

the Spirit who forms us as God's own people. Our first loyalty is to God and to live as citizens in God's Kingdom (1 Pet. 2:9-11).

- we are residents of the United States whose roots are *all* connected to migration in one of three ways:⁴
 1. those of us whose ancestors were original inhabitants of this land, and who have suffered a continuing legacy of displacement.
 2. those of us whose ancestors were *forced* to come here by economic and political forces such as slavery, war or colonization, and those who continue to come because of push factors such as economic hardship and/or fear of danger in our countries of origin.
 3. those of us whose ancestors *chose* to migrate here to seek religious freedom and economic opportunity—in many cases, without documentation.

We acknowledge that we come from diverse cultural backgrounds and hold a variety of perspectives as we prayerfully discern how God is calling us to respond to the complex issues of immigration before us. Our biblical and theological understandings, as well as our own stories, unify us as we respond with our prayers, words and actions to the United States' broken immigration system and to the injustices that undocumented immigrants are suffering.

We lament the reality that injustice in how we treat each other happens not only outside the Church but also in our congregations. It is urgent that those among us with privileges gained through U.S. citizenship, education, lighter skin color, gender and/or socioeconomic status find the courage and will to recognize and renounce

the individual and systemic racism in ourselves, in our church and in this society. May those of us who have benefited from the unfair treatment of immigrants—historically or currently—be able to see and confess our complicity, allowing God to transform us and use us as agents of reconciliation.

3. What issues are we facing?

Among the factors that displace people in vulnerable communities across the globe and lead to migration are natural disasters, floods and droughts caused by climate change, economic instability, violence and war. People from places all over the world—from Asia, Africa, Latin America and elsewhere—come to the U.S. hoping to start a new life, some as refugees.

Another factor is U.S. trade agreements,⁵ which have focused on consumer goods crossing borders but have neglected to take into account the human needs of workers, in many cases displacing small farmers and other small businesses. Facing poverty, millions of people have chosen to migrate from their homes, hoping and praying to be able to provide for their families and earn a living wage.

However, a broken U.S. immigration system often makes it difficult to migrate to the U.S. for work or to reunite with family.⁶ Families are kept separated by an unjust and outdated quota system that discriminates against citizens from some countries, and by long delays in document processing.⁷ Family separation causes emotional pain and stress as well as economic hardship and motivates spouses and children to face extremely dangerous conditions to cross the borders in the hope of reuniting in the U.S.

⁴ These categories are attributed to Ched Myers, *Our God is Undocumented* (Orbis Books, 2012), pp. 63–64.

⁵ One essential part of addressing the root causes of migration is the renegotiation of trade agreements. For example, over the last 20 years, the largest root cause of undocumented migration to the United States from Mexico and other Latin American countries has been the economic push/pull dynamics between our countries. According to the Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Policy Principles (2009), one way to address this is for the United States to seek foreign policy solutions and trade agreements that promote economic opportunity and stability in migrants' home countries.

⁶ Mennonite Central Committee U.S. [Immigration Policy Principles](#) (2009) suggest what just and humane immigration policy could look like. These include (1) ensuring a legal pathway to citizenship for immigrants currently living in the U.S., without requiring unworkable fines or "touchback" provisions; (2) maintaining the current family-based immigration system and increasing the number of available family visas, so that families can reunite and immigrate together in a legal and timely way; (3) creating just and fair guest worker programs, along with appropriate oversight mechanisms, to protect labor rights such as fair wages, employer choice and due process protections; and providing the opportunity for immigrant workers to apply for permanent status and, eventually, citizenship; (4) ensuring access to basic benefits and services for those lawfully present, while avoiding policies that seek to deter access to public health and safety services and lead to a culture of fear and isolation in immigrant communities; (5) choosing border security strategies that protect community rights, human dignity and the natural environment while opposing policies that contribute to deaths and increased fear in immigrant communities; (6) addressing political instability and economic disparity in migrants' home countries caused, in part, by U.S. foreign policies and trade agreements; and creating incentives for sustainable development; (7) ending indiscriminate raids and detention for non-dangerous immigrants, while targeting enforcement efforts on drug, weapon and people smugglers.

⁷ To legally immigrate to the U.S. with a work visa, a person needs to have an adult family member in the U.S. or an employer who is willing

Although the U.S. depends economically and culturally on the contributions of immigrant laborers,⁸ entrepreneurs, professionals and artists, many immigrants experience hardship, discrimination and abuse. Many undocumented immigrants work difficult and often dangerous jobs for very low pay. They are vulnerable to being cheated out of wages and denied compensation for work-related injuries. Undocumented immigrants in poverty cannot receive most welfare and healthcare benefits. Millions of children of undocumented immigrants live in poverty in the U.S.⁹

Many U.S. citizens view immigrants as a threat to safety and economic security. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security, whose stated vision is “to ensure a homeland that is safe, secure and resilient against terrorism and other hazards,” also handles immigration enforcement and services.¹⁰ Racial profiling, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids on workplaces, and increased collaboration between local police and ICE agents cause high stress and fear in immigrant communities. Also, the increasing militarization of the border between the U.S. and Mexico has led to hundreds of deaths in the Arizona Sonoran Desert each year¹¹ and to reports of abuse by border patrol agents.

While thousands of immigrants of many nationalities await deportation in detention centers across the nation, the private corporations that own and operate the prisons

earn large yearly profits paid from taxes. This is a rapidly growing part of the lucrative U.S. prison industry that incarcerates people with brown and black skin at rates far exceeding those of people with lighter skin.

Many teenagers and young adults who were brought to the U.S. as young children by their parents have grown up experiencing the stress and fear of living without documentation. Known as “DREAMers,”¹² some have organized themselves politically, asking for a path to legal status so that they can work and attend college without the fear of deportation. Many DREAMer organizations are asking for protection for their families as well.

As Mennonite Christians, we prayerfully discern, “What does it mean for Jesus to be the center of our faith, community the center of our lives, and reconciliation the center of our work?” If we truly “see the misery, hear the cries and know the sufferings”¹³ of undocumented immigrants among us, our authentic response will be to choose, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to walk the difficult and sometimes risky journey of growth in confronting these complex immigration issues. As people who look to Scripture for guidance, we believe that the stories of our spiritual ancestors in the Old Testament and Jesus’ teachings in the New Testament are clear: we are to welcome the stranger.

to sponsor him or her. Immigrants who enter the U.S. without documents or inspection or who overstay their visas are subject to “three- and ten-year bars” that require them to return to their home country for three or ten years before they can legally apply for a visa to enter the U.S. (www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/so-close-and-yet-so-far-how-three-and-ten-year-bars-keep-families-apart)

⁸ History shows that business interests during the past half century have invited workers from Mexico and Central America to come to the U.S. because their labor was needed. However, their presence was not consistently welcomed.

⁹ More Latino/a children are living in poverty in the U.S.—6.1 million in 2010—than children of any other racial or ethnic group. Of these, more than two-thirds (4.1 million) are the children of immigrant parents (not necessarily undocumented), and 86.2 percent of the 4.1 million were born in the U.S. The other 2 million are the children of parents born in the U.S. Data from “Childhood Poverty Among Hispanics Sets Record, Leads Nation,” Pew Research Center Hispanic Trends Project, Sept. 28, 2011, www.pewhispanic.org/2011/09/28/childhood-poverty-among-hispanics-sets-record-leads-nation.

¹⁰ The U.S. Department of Homeland Security defines its five core missions as follows: to prevent terrorism and enhance security, to secure and manage our borders, to enforce and administer our immigration laws, to safeguard and secure cyberspace and to ensure resilience to disasters. See www.dhs.gov/our-mission.

¹¹ University of Arizona researchers report that the Pima County Office of the Medical Examiner processed the remains of 2,238 migrants from 1990 to 2012, of which more than 750 remain unidentified. “Migrant deaths are still very high in Southern Arizona,” said Robin Reineke, coordinator of the Missing Migrant Project at the Pima County Office of the Medical Examiner. “(There are) hundreds each year, and that hasn’t changed despite the fact that there are fewer migrants crossing [according to Border Patrol apprehension statistics].” The report, “A Continued Humanitarian Crisis at the Border,” shows that the majority of bodies recovered in the desert are those of Mexican citizens. However, there has been an increase in people from Central American countries being apprehended by Border Patrol or dying along the international border.

¹² DREAMers take their name from the DREAM (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) Act, proposed legislation that has historically had bipartisan support, through which qualifying undocumented youth would be eligible for a conditional path to citizenship. In 2010, the DREAM Act was passed in the U.S. House of Representatives but fell five votes short in the Senate.

¹³ This sequence of seeing, hearing and knowing comes from Yahweh’s own self-description of compassion culminating in “coming down to deliver” the Israelites suffering in Egypt (Exod. 3:7-12). In the Phoenix 2013 convention workshop “Take Off Your Sandals,” Anton Flores-Maisonet of the Alterna Community in Georgia named these steps as ones that are taken in one’s journey toward compassionate action.

Appendix C: Resource list [in process]

Many of these resources come from the Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office website and are reprinted with permission: washingtonmemo.org/immig and mcc.org/learn/what/migration

A. Pray

1. Prayers, faith reflections, sermon resources and worship resources:
washingtonmemo.org/immig/for-churches
2. Faith statements:
washingtonmemo.org/immig/in-brief
3. Guides for organizing vigils in your church or community:
washingtonmemo.org/immig/take-action

B. Learn

1. General information about immigration issues, in-depth resources for border issues, DREAM Act, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA):
washingtonmemo.org/immig/topics
2. State immigration policies:
washingtonmemo.org/immig/state-policy
3. *People on the Move*, an MCC migration exhibit that can be reserved: mcc.org/learn/what/categories/immigration/exhibit
4. Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Listening Project
The Immigration Listening Project was launched by MCC U.S. in order to assess attitudes about immigration among Anabaptist churches across the U.S. MCC staff organized listening sessions with 36 groups from Anabaptist churches. The project intentionally included a diverse spectrum: people of color and white people; new and long-time immigrants. Download PDF: washingtonmemo.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/mcc-us-listening-project-pdf.pdf

C. Advocate for justice

1. "Principles for U.S. Immigration Policy," (*Mennonite Central Committee Washington Office Memo, Spring/Summer 2013*):
mcc.org/media/resources/664
washingtonmemo.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/immigration-fact-sheet-2013.pdf

2. Sign up to receive MCC Action Alerts:
org2.salsalabs.com/o/5764/signup_page/signup
3. Guides to letter-writing and visiting officials; op-eds: washingtonmemo.org/immig/take-action
4. Larger interfaith campaigns:
www.interfaithimmigration.org
5. Resources for monitoring state policies:
washingtonmemo.org/immig/state-policy

D. Teach

1. *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible*
M. Daniel Carroll R., Ph.D., Baker Academic: 2008, 176 pp., ISBN: 080103566X
www.bakerpublishinggroup.com/books/christians-at-the-border-2nd-edition/283513
(also available in [Spanish](#))
2. *Strangers in the Land*, a six-week study guide based on *Christians at the Border*, from Sojourners
amzn.com/B00FL2VH40
3. *Missio Dei 19: Immigration and the Bible / La inmigración y la Biblia*, M. Daniel Carroll R., Ph.D.,
Purchase: store.mpn.net/productdetails.cfm?PC=1873
Download: [English](#) | [Español](#)
4. *Loving Strangers as Ourselves: Biblical Reflections*
This resource, in the form of a booklet, reflects on God's view of the strangers in the biblical text. Seven lessons written by seven different Anabaptist authors address biblical texts in which God reminds his people about how to treat the strangers who live among us.
mcc.org/media/resources/696
5. Video: *Dying to Live*; 33-minute DVD (2-hour session): dyingtolive.nd.edu
Download resources for a group process:
 - *Dying to Live* schedule: mennoniteusa.org/resource/dying-to-live-schedule/
 - *Dying to Live* questions: mennoniteusa.org/resource/dying-to-live-questions/
 - Circle process instructions: mennoniteusa.org/resource/circle-process/
 - Reflection guide: dyingtolive.nd.edu/DyingtoLiveREFLECTION%20GUIDE1.pdf

6. Materials for group presentations (Sunday school, workshops):
washingtonmemo.org/immig/for-churches
7. Videos related to immigration:
washingtonmemo.org/immig/for-churches/videos
8. Books related to immigration:
washingtonmemo.org/immig/for-churches/books
9. Stories related to immigration:
washingtonmemo.org/immig/for-churches
10. Speakers
 - Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
 - Saulo Padilla, coordinator, immigration education, (717) 859-1152, sp@mcc.org
 - Tammy Alexander, senior legislative associate, MCC Washington Office, (202) 544-6564, TammyAlexander@mcc.org
 - Mennonite Central Committee East Coast
 - Curtis Book, peace and justice coordinator (Philadelphia), (215) 535-3624, cbook@mcc.org
 - Andrew Bodden, diverse constituency coordinator (Miami), (305) 249-3477, apb@mcc.org
 - Mennonite Central Committee Great Lakes
 - Jorge Vielman, peace and justice coordinator (Goshen), (574) 534-4133, jorge@mcc.org
 - Mennonite Central Committee West Coast
 - Gloria James, legal services advisor (Calif.), (909) 945-0809, gjames@mcc.org

If your congregation has found a particular resource helpful, please let Iris de León-Hartshorn, director of transformative peacemaking for Mennonite Church USA, know: irisdh@mennoniteusa.org.

E. Engage

1. Communities of Hope Process
Communities of Hope is a process for assisting congregations in becoming more culturally competent and working at undoing racism.
mennoniteusa.org/what-we-do/undoing-racism/communities-of-hope/
2. *Bienvenido* Program
The *Bienvenido* Program began as a mental health promotion intervention for adult Latino/a immigrants and has expanded to reach adolescents in community settings, schools, churches, jails and juvenile correctional settings.
bienvenidosolutions.org
3. Mennonite Church USA DREAMer Fund
To help undocumented persons who qualify for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program pay the application fee.
mennoniteusa.org/resource/dreamer-fund/
 - [DREAMer Fund Guidelines](#)
 - [DREAMer Fund Covenant](#)
 - [DREAMer Fund Application](#)
4. Resources for finding partners:
washingtonmemo.org/immig/state-list
5. Opportunities for volunteering and resources for teaching English as a second language:
washingtonmemo.org/immig/take-action
6. Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement (CIVIC)
The official national network of the U.S. immigration detention visitation movement.
www.endisolation.org/
7. Immigrant detention watch network
immigrantdetentionwatch.blogspot.com/2013/02/visitation-guide-published-by-civic-to.html
8. Guides to visiting detention facilities:
washingtonmemo.org/immig/take-action



Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love

"Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph.4:3), as both individual members and the body of Christ, we pledge that we shall:

In Thought

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Accept conflict | 1. Acknowledge together that conflict is a normal part of our life in the church. <i>Romans 14:1-8, 10-12, 17-19; 15:1-7</i> |
| Affirm hope | 2. Affirm that as God walks with us in conflict, we can work through to growth. <i>Ephesians 4:15-16</i> |
| Commit to prayer | 3. Admit our needs and commit ourselves to pray for a mutually satisfactory solution (no prayers or my success or for the other to change but to find a joint way). <i>James 5:16</i> |

In Action

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Go to the other... | 4. Go directly to those with whom we disagree; avoid behind-the-back criticism.* <i>Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-20</i> |
| ...in the spirit of humility | 5. Go in gentleness, patience and humility. Place the problem between us at neither doorstep and own our part in the conflict instead of pointing out the others'. <i>Galatians 6:1-5</i> |
| Be quick to listen | 6. Listen carefully, summarize and check out what is heard before responding. Seek as much to understand as to be understood. <i>James 1:19; Proverbs 18:13</i> |
| Be slow to judge | 7. Suspend judgments, avoid labeling, end name calling, discard threats and act in a nondefensive, nonreactive way. <i>Romans 2:1-4; Galatians 5:22-26</i> |
| Be willing to negotiate | 8. Work through the disagreements constructively. <i>Acts 15; Philippians 2:1-11</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify issues, interests, and needs of both (rather than take positions).• Generate a variety of options for meeting both parties' needs (rather than defending one's own way).• Evaluate options by how they meet the needs and satisfy the interests of all sides (not one side's values).• Collaborate in working out a joint solution (so both sides gain, both grow and win).• Cooperate with the emerging agreement (accept the possible, not demand your ideal).• Reward each other for each step forward, toward agreement (celebrate mutuality). |

In Life

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Be steadfast in love | 9. Be firm in our commitment to seek a mutual solution; be stubborn in holding to our common foundation in Christ; be steadfast in love. <i>Colossians 3:12-15</i> |
| Be open to mediation | 10. Be open to accept skilled help. If we cannot reach agreement among ourselves, we will use those with gifts and training in mediation in the larger church. <i>Philippians 4:1-3</i> |
| Trust the community | 11. We will trust the community and if we cannot reach agreement or experience reconciliation, we will turn the decision over to others in the congregation or from the broader church. <i>Acts 15</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In one-to-one or small group disputes, this may mean allowing others to arbitrate.• In congregational, conference district or denominational disputes, this may mean allowing others to arbitrate or implementing constitutional decision-making processes, insuring that they are done in the spirit of these guidelines, and abiding by whatever decision is made. |
| Be the body of Christ | 12. Believe in and rely on the solidarity of the Body of Christ and its commitment to peace and justice, rather than resort to the courts of law. <i>1 Corinthians 6:1-6</i> |

*Go directly if you are European-North American; in other cultures disagreements are often addressed through a trusted go-between. Mennonite Church USA (adopted by the General Conference Mennonite Church Triannual Session and Mennonite Church General Assembly, Wichita, KS July 1995)

Christians are not immune to conflict. We face it in our homes and churches, in our neighborhoods and work places. Wherever we interact with other people, we experience conflict.

Too often conflict becomes destructive, because we try to avoid it, or because we don't know how to face it well. But we can make it an opportunity to grow, to become more faithful to Jesus, to model Christ-like love for one another.

To work constructively with conflict, we need skills. "Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love" outlines approaches to conflict that will help us live out our calling to be Christian peacemakers.

Biblical Foundation

The Bible guides us to seek reconciliation when we disagree. Scripture teaches us that conflict can be an arena for God's revelation.

- Reconciliation is at the heart of the gospel. Through Christ we are reconciled to God, who gives us the ministry of reconciliation. *Romans 5:1-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20*
- Reconciliation with others in the church is a prelude to genuine worship. *Matthew 5:23-24*
- Jesus describes a process for addressing conflict and restoring relationships in the church. *Matthew 18:15-22*
- Groups in the early church came together to talk about their differences, to seek the Spirit's leading as they worked for consensus. *Acts 6:1-6; Acts 15:1-3*
- The church needs each person's gifts and perspectives; no one has a corner on truth. *1 Corinthians 12-14*
- God's chosen ones are to bear with one another, to forgive each other and to clothe themselves "with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." *Colossians 3:12-17*
- We are to grow in unity and maturity by speaking the truth in love. *Ephesians 4:1-16*
- God calls us to act and speak with respect for each other despite differences of culture or conviction. *Romans 14:1-7; James 1:19; John 7:51; Ephesians 4:25-32; Matthew 7:1-5; 1 Peter 3: 8, 16*
- God's people do not seek the absence of conflict but the presence of shalom, a peace based on justice. *Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8; Isaiah 58; Matthew 23:23-24; Luke 4:18-19*

Adopting the Guidelines

We encourage congregations, area conferences, church boards and agencies to adopt the guidelines for agreeing and disagreeing in love, and to use them. The process you use to consider adopting the guidelines can itself be a model for working through differences together.

Design a process to study the guidelines and decide whether to adopt them. Your written process design could include these pieces:

- A. Define the issue: Should our group adopt these guidelines?
- B. Identify goals: To enhance our commitment and ability to deal constructively with conflict. (Add your goals.)
- C. Clarify steps and timeline:
 1. Approve the process design. The appropriate decision-making body acts to do this.
 2. Study the guidelines and the biblical foundations.
 - a. Offer a Sunday school class on conflict resolution skills for congregations.
 - b. Invite an outside resource person to present a Saturday workshop on the topic.
 - c. Encourage committees and small groups to study the guidelines.
 3. Talk together about using the guidelines.
 - a. Discuss ways to use the guidelines in your context.
 - b. Integrate the guidelines into constitutions, bylaws, personnel policies.
 - c. Note concerns that arise and work to resolve them.

4. Implement the decision rule (see below).

D. State the decision rule: Identify who will make the decision, and how it will be made

Using the Guidelines

After your group has adopted the guidelines, you can:

- Display the "Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love" poster in rooms where committees meet.
- Include training on the guidelines in new member classes or orientation sessions.
- Use reconciliation and conflict resolution as a focus for worship from time to time.
- Include articles in your newsletter about the guidelines and your experience with them.
- Appoint a process observer for your meetings, to monitor your group's use of the guidelines.
- Every year evaluate how your group is working with conflict.

Several Cautions

The guidelines should not be used as a substitute for the proper exercise of authority. When laws have been broken or people abused, mediation would only be appropriate at later stages, when offenders have taken responsibility for their actions and victims are requesting face-to-face meetings as a step toward their own healing.

The guidelines may inform disciplinary or grievance procedures, but they are not intended to be a substitute for such procedures. In cross-cultural settings, the guidelines should be adapted to fit the context.

The guidelines were primarily adopted to help parties in conflict, not as instructions for groups pursuing God's will in matters of church practice or theology. For such purposes, it is recommended that groups seek additional guidance in processes of Biblical/communal discernment.

Some Basic Principles

In interpersonal and group conflicts, people can take many of the steps identified in the guidelines without the help of an impartial third party. But when conflict escalates and the principal parties cannot resolve it by negotiating together, they should seek outside help.

In mediation, disputing parties come to their own agreement with the assistance of an objective third party. Those serving as mediators should be trained; attempting to mediate a dispute without having the necessary skills can make matters worse. Trained mediators can help people come to agreement on issues and also aid in healing broken relationships.

If mediation fails to resolve a dispute, arbitration could be sought. The disputing parties would agree in advance to abide by whatever decision the arbitrators make. The arbitrators listen to each party's case, consult with each other, and agree on a win-win decision that attempts to address the interests of all the parties.

For more information, contact:

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Guidelines for Biblical/Communal Discernment

Commended by the Executive Board for use in settings across Mennonite Church USA

What is Biblical/Communal Discernment?

Discernment is a means by which people of faith come to understand God's will. It is one way to practice the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples: "May your kingdom come, and your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). It is a process by which believers . . .

- ✚ anticipate God's presence,
- ✚ seek for God's guidance, and
- ✚ listen for God's call.

In both Old and New Testaments, the people of God sought out those who were wise and discerning among them. The church as described in the New Testament calls the people of God to come together for discernment *as a fellowship of believers*. Jesus promised to be present among even two or three believers gathered in his name (Matthew 18:20).

As Anabaptist Christians, we believe that *we make our best decisions when we gather in the name of Jesus around the Word of God, prayerfully seeking the leading of the Holy Spirit for our shared life in the world*. That is why we call it Biblical/Communal Discernment. Such discernment involves

- ✚ the intent to live faithfully in the world
- ✚ critical reflection on important matters of faith and life
- ✚ obedience to God's will as revealed in scripture.

Discernment is one of the functions of a congregation when it gathers for worship or fellowship (see Rom. 12:2, 1 Cor. 6:1-9; 12:8-10, Heb. 5:14, and Phil. 1:10). Groups may seek to discern God's will on a wide range of questions, from the broadest issues of moral and ethical behavior to very specific practical decisions in the life of an individual or group.

Who can use a Biblical/Communal Discernment process?

Any Christ-centered community may engage in Biblical/Communal Discernment. Congregations often serve as the best place for believers to give and receive counsel on matters of discernment. However, Mennonite Church USA encourages small groups, leadership teams, committees, task forces, and boards at all levels in the church to engage in Biblical/Communal Discernment as appropriate. The group must agree on the best process for making significant decisions. The nature of the process and the outcome will be shaped by the group's level of authority and responsibility, as well as its relationship with others who have an important stake in the decision.

Communal Discernment works best in small groups that have come to know and trust one another. The larger the group, the greater will be the challenge for coming to a satisfactory group decision. Therefore, if the group is larger than twenty persons, it is helpful to divide into smaller groups. We recommend the use of table groups or circle processes where everyone can readily see and hear each other.

When a large group divides into subgroups, a group facilitator is needed for the large group as well as the smaller groups. These facilitators must work together to assure that all participants have the same information at hand, along with clear instructions. At appropriate times, the smaller groups should report their process to the larger group. Matters of importance to everyone should be posted for all to see. If and when a facilitator seeks to make a statement on behalf of the whole, it must be readily available to all participants.

Why do we use Biblical/Communal Discernment?

We engage in Biblical/Communal Discernment as a form of worshipful work, seeking to make decisions that align with God's work in the world. To truly demonstrate our allegiance to the reign of God, the church must sometimes stand as a contrast society. In other words, we must make decisions which reflect our commitment to God and scripture rather than the prevailing culture. It requires careful discernment to determine the best way to live "in the world," yet not "of the world." In this way, communal processes can provide guidance and protection for believers in an individualistic, pluralistic society.

When is Biblical/Communal Discernment most helpful?¹

Not all matters call for the same level of discernment. Certain group processes work better than others, depending on the decision to be made. For example:

Biblical/Communal Discernment may be most helpful when

- ✎ Dealing with significant matters that affect the whole body
- ✎ A sizeable minority or range of views is present
- ✎ More voices or ideas need to be included
- ✎ Sufficient time is available to explore more options and build consensus
- ✎ A diversity of cultural backgrounds is present
- ✎ Persistent and substantial differences exist
- ✎ Facing a question that defies simple answers

Parliamentary procedure may be most helpful when

- ✎ Dealing with routine organizational matters
- ✎ An issue has near or full consensus
- ✎ Clear alternatives have been identified and further discussion is not likely to surface more options
- ✎ Delaying a decision is not a good option
- ✎ Participants are comfortable with parliamentary procedure
- ✎ The group is willing to accept majority rule when a common direction cannot be found.

Some believe that the parliamentary procedures defined in *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised (RONR)* are antithetical to discernment, but that is not accurate.² The intent of *RONR* is a carefully structured discernment of ideas. There are various methods for using discernment available within *RONR*. One can be as simple as the moderator beginning a discussion by only taking questions until everyone has the information they need to proceed. Section 52 of *RONR*

describes two processes, “committee of the whole” and “informal consideration,” that can allow for a wider discussion. “Aids to the Crystallization of Opinion”³ establishes small breakout groups with appointed moderators. Input from the small groups may be reported directly to the body after it has reconvened or it may be conveyed to a committee that attempts to report a consolidated response to the body. A more formal procedure that allows for considering multiple options is “Filling Blanks.”⁴ This process allows the body to view all the options at one time. *Robert’s Rules of Order* and discernment can be partners when church bodies come together to seek the leading of the Holy Spirit.

What are the essential elements for Biblical/Communal Discernment?

To truly function as a community of faith, we must be committed to God and to each other. Good group discernment is enhanced by a common commitment to Jesus Christ as the center of our faith, community as the center of our lives, and reconciliation as the center of our work.

A good group discernment process requires the same kind of mutual respect and caring regard for each other that builds any community of faith. The many “One Another” appeals of scripture give instructions for building up the body of Christ. Many of these appeals are deeply familiar—“love one another,” “bear one another’s burdens,” “be kind and compassionate to one another,” “bear with one another and forgive each other.” Most importantly, group discernment requires a willingness to give up one’s own personal preferences for the good of whole.

In order to truly hear God in the midst of the group, individuals must be experienced in listening for God in their personal lives. Personal discernment is learned over time as one engages in spiritual disciplines and practices that help one to notice God’s work in the world—in oneself as well as in others. The quality and depth of communal discernment depends on the spiritual maturity and discernment capacity of the individuals that make up the group. It also depends on the group members’ familiarity with and understanding of scripture. The true message in scripture is learned over time as individuals persist and delight in reading, studying, and meditating on the scriptures.⁵ Some individuals are particularly gifted by God’s Spirit to be prophetic—seeing and/or hearing messages from God. Others have a particular gift from God for discernment of spirits (Romans 12:6, 1 Corinthians 12:10). Such individuals do well to submit their sense of God’s direction for the group to discern together.

Another basic element in Communal Discernment is the willingness to give and receive counsel as members of the body of Christ, expressed in a spirit of cooperation or collaboration with the others in the group. Many groups benefit from the use of a written covenant which names the commitments that group members are willing to make to one another as part of the process.

Good group discernment processes also benefit from good facilitation, or leadership, in at least two designated roles:

Facilitator: Depending on the setting, this individual might be designated as a moderator, a clerk, or even a “discernmentarian.” The facilitator holds the group accountable to its covenant, guides the group process, calls for prayer as appropriate, and identifies the emerging direction.

Recorder: The recorder keeps a record of comments, suggested options, emerging direction or “trial balloons,” and the final decision that is made by a group. This material must generally be available in ways that all can see, such as a chalkboard, newsprint, screen projection, or electronic post.

Perhaps the necessary element that is most difficult to find is sufficient meeting time. Yet when time is too limited, it can diminish the completeness and effectiveness of a discernment process. The movement of the Spirit cannot be manipulated or controlled, and it often takes more time than groups envision to discern God’s will at a deep level. But when groups take sufficient time to make a good decision, it generally takes less time to implement the decision. This is particularly true when the decision to be made is complex, involving a diversity of stakeholders with strong differences of opinion.

What are the steps in Biblical/Communal Discernment?

In its simplest form, Biblical/Communal Discernment means that we gather in the name of Jesus, seek God’s guidance through prayer and scripture, and then discern God’s will together. Those simple steps will be considered in more detail as follows.

I. Gather in the Name of Jesus

A. Build community. The stronger the relationships among the group that is gathered for discernment, the better they can make communal decisions. When people gather who hardly know each other, they must give attention to building relationships. For example, they should use name tags, introduce themselves to each other, and share about their lives. The group facilitator can help group members as individuals, not just in the roles or positions that they carry. By taking time to help participants know each other’s interests and concerns, they can help them move to a deeper level of group participation.

B. Adopt a group covenant. A written covenant can help group members to understand the commitments that help the group to do its best work. Taking enough time to discuss the covenant can help the group to avoid misunderstandings that can arise when people come with conflicting assumptions about what is expected. We urge groups to make at least the following commitments:

- ✞ to assume the best intentions of all persons who participate in the group
- ✞ to pray for one another and the group leaders
- ✞ to be patient and kind
- ✞ to speak honestly and directly
- ✞ to practice humility and be willing to change or be corrected
- ✞ to listen actively and carefully
- ✞ to respect the views of those who may not agree with the majority
- ✞ to respect the wisdom of the larger group

C. Agree on the matter for discernment. Since groups can easily be distracted by a discussion of many things, it is helpful to clarify the specific decision to be made. This should generally be done by a person or group appointed for this task. Sometimes, the

matter for discernment may be put in the form of a question, such as “What is God’s will for our congregation regarding the needs of undocumented immigrants in our community?” In this case, the goal of group discernment would be to generate different options, and come to a decision.

At other times, the matter for discernment may be stated in the form of a proposal. If so, it should be stated as a simple declarative sentence that represents a change from the status quo, such as: “God is calling our congregation to help sponsor a new community outreach to meet the needs of recent immigrants.” In this case, the goal of group discernment would be to affirm, deny, or “improve” the proposal for acceptance. In some cases, groups may come to the conclusion that it is not the right time to make the decision, and choose to drop the matter.

II. Seek God’s Guidance Through Prayer and Scripture

- A. Pray together.** Since prayer is an essential element of the discernment process, the facilitator should call the group to prayer not only at the beginning of the meeting but throughout the process. Prayer and silence can help group members refocus when they get sidetracked or overly committed to personal aims. Prayer is a way to assure that our focus remains on discovering God’s will, not achieving individual desires.
- B. Let go.** Most group members bring to the group process their personal needs, desires, wounds, interests, and preferences or convictions regarding the outcome of the group decision. They may also bring spiritual issues such as broken relationships, besetting sins, and resentment towards God. Depending on the strength of these “personal agendas,” they can block that individual’s ability to sense or flow with the Spirit’s leading in the group. Even though these “personal agendas” may remain hidden to the group, they may prevent the group from being able to have a fruitful and open-handed discussion. For this reason, it is helpful for group members to seek a “holy indifference” to everything but God’s will. That was the attitude expressed by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, when he prayed, “Not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). Similarly, the Apostle Paul urged the Philippians to pray that the Spirit would give him sufficient courage to face whatever was in store for him, whether to live or to die (Philippians 1:19-25).

It may be helpful for group members to write down on paper any concerns that might block their ability to listen to God or others, and then to place that paper into an offering basket or at the foot of a cross as a ritual act of worship.

- C. Reflect on scripture.** We acknowledge Scripture as the authoritative source and standard for distinguishing truth from error, for discerning good from evil, and for guiding prayer and worship.⁶ Therefore, we believe that scripture should guide our decision making on important matters. Reflection on scripture can help us to align our thoughts with those of the Spirit who inspired the writing of scripture.

The group may choose to designate one or more scriptures for individual study in preparation for the group meeting. Again, during the discernment process, it is helpful to

allow times for both individual and group reflection on scriptures that specifically relate to the matter for discernment. Or they could reflect on an overarching theme that runs through many scriptures, such as God's love for the poor and oppressed. Dwelling in the Word is a particular approach to Scripture. It is designed to help groups engage with the same scripture in multiple settings over time. People are encouraged to listen to the reading of a passage of scripture in the manner of *Lectio Divina*, share their insights with each other in dyads, and then report to larger groups what they heard someone else say. It aims to enhance our listening to both God and others, for the purpose of learning about God's mission in the world.

- D. Share information.** In order to properly engage in a discussion about the matter for discernment, groups need to have sufficient background. In most cases, it is necessary for a designated leader or facilitation group to consider all of the information that the group must have in hand to make a good decision, and how it should be distributed. If the issue is complex and involves many stakeholders, the facilitation group must represent a sufficient range of perspectives to enable them to anticipate the questions and concerns that will be expressed in the larger group.

Since individuals grasp information in different ways, it is helpful to share information orally as well as in written form, and to allow plenty of time for questions of clarification. Participants often feel most comfortable sharing their initial questions and concerns in small groups, with perhaps as few as two or three persons. The questions that arise in smaller settings may signal the need for additional information to be provided for everyone.

- E. Listen to each other.** Listening to each other does not happen in only one step of a larger process; it is an essential part of the entire discernment process. Careful listening will strengthen relationships from the time when participants introduce themselves to each other, to the time that they make a final decision. The goal of a discernment process is to make sure everyone has a chance to be heard, even though some will have more to share than others.

The role of listening is highlighted during this step because it is the time when group members move toward direct engagement with each other on the matter for discernment. To assure that everyone has a chance to speak, facilitators may choose to use a circle process⁷ or similar means. The facilitator may also call for times of prayer, silence, or meditation on scripture during this step in the process. If the discerning group is larger than 20 persons, this is a time to use smaller groups to enable everyone's perspective to be heard.

III. Discern God's Will Together

- A. Consider the options for discernment.** After participants have sufficient clarity on the matter for discernment, the group may be ready to explore specific options for a decision. If the matter for discernment was stated as a proposal, participants will do well to consider both the cons and the pros of accepting the proposal. The separation of the

discussion into cons and pros assures that everyone has adequate opportunity to explore all good reasons for one side of the issue at a time. Otherwise, the discussion can be divisive, turning the discernment process into a debate between members of the group who argue from opposite sides of the issue. Further, experience has shown that it is helpful to consider together all of the reasons *against* accepting a proposal before considering the reasons *for* accepting the proposal. Negative reasons can easily lead to strong negative feelings or aggressive behavior, so it is important to provide an opportunity to release those feelings in an atmosphere of careful listening and opportunity to ask questions for clarification. After all of the reasons for *not* accepting the proposal are posted for all to see, the group can then generate a comprehensive list of reasons to adopt the proposal. At this stage, the group must not debate the merits of any of the reasons. It is simply a time to list them for all to see.

If the matter for discernment was written as a question, the group can begin by brainstorming various ways to answer the question. Sometimes it is helpful to begin with small groups of two or three, so individuals can feel free to share their ideas. These small groups can then choose which ideas should be posted for all to see. When the list of ideas for responding to the question for discernment is complete, the group may be ready to weigh the options for moving forward together.

- B. Weigh the options.** If the group has been considering a proposal, now is the time to weigh the list of cons and pros. It is important to take adequate time for prayer and individual reflection on the cons and pros before entering a group discussion.

If the matter for discernment was written as a question, the groups can begin to weigh the various ideas on the brainstorming list. It is helpful for groups to consider the good in each idea, seeking for the ones with the greatest merit in the eyes of all. Depending on the desired outcomes of the discernment process, it may be sufficient to end the process once the participants have identified the ideas with the strongest merit. However, if the group intends to come to a decision on the very best idea to implement as a group, they would do well to state the decision as a proposal in a simple declarative sentence. They could then test the proposal by weighing the cons and pros as outlined above.

- C. Seek consensus on a decision.** There are a number of ways for a facilitator to enable participants to weigh the options and come to a decision. Groups may use various means to read the emerging consensus of a group. For example, when a “trial balloon” is launched, some groups use a three-finger exercise to show the level of support for an emerging solution: Three fingers raised means strong support for the proposed solution, two fingers means partial support or a willingness to live with it, and one finger stands for an unwillingness to support it. Some groups use various colored cards to indicate essentially the same dispositions as the above.

Consensus is the goal of Communal Discernment in most groups, although they seldom reach complete unanimity on a matter. Consensus means that the group has listened carefully to all voices, majority and minority together, and sought the unity of the Spirit. Consensus is reached when the group has come to a common mind on a matter, or when

those who dissent have indicated a readiness to accept the group decision, even though it may not represent their preference. A statement of consensus may acknowledge minority points of view.

However, the goal of Biblical/Communal Discernment goes beyond group consensus. It reaches for the joyous convergence of our desires with our sense of God's will. It longs for the sense of God's presence and power among us, showing the way forward. It aspires to arrive at the outcome expressed in Acts 15:28: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...."

The quality of a good discernment process is tested over time, as it often leads to a settled sense of peace, consolation by the Holy Spirit, and the flowing of God's healing and hope from us to the world.

Additional resources:

1. Barton, Ruth Haley. Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups, Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2012.
2. Curtiss, Victoria G. Guidelines for Communal Discernment, Louisville, Kentucky: Presbyterian Peacemaking Program.
3. Fendall, Lon, Jan Wood and Bruce Bishop. Practicing Discernment Together: Finding God's Way Forward in Decision Making, Newberg, Oregon: Barclay Press, 2007.
4. Glick, Sally Weaver. In Tune with God: The Art of Congregational Discernment. Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Faith and Life Resources, 2004.
5. Morris, Danny E. and Charles M. Olsen. Discerning God's Will Together: A Spiritual Practice for the Church, Nashville, Tennessee: Upper Room Books, 1997.
6. Stutzman, Ervin R. Discerning God's Will Together: Biblical Interpretation in the Free Church Tradition, Telford, Pennsylvania: Cascadia Publishing House, 2013.

Notes

¹ The majority of the following two lists are drawn from Victoria G. Curtiss in *Guidelines for Communal Discernment* produced by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, which extends permission for adaptation of the material.

² Ibid. pp. 9-10 This paragraph is taken in its entirety from *Guidelines for Discernment* by Victoria G. Curtiss.

³ Robert, op. cit. pp. 524-25.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 155-60

⁵ See page 22, *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*

⁶ See page 21, *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*

⁷ A Circle Process involves a Talking Stick or similar method, where participants pass a stick or other object around the circle, and only the one who has the stick in hand can speak. Participants are given the freedom to "pass" on the first round, knowing they will have the first opportunity to speak after the stick has made its way around the entire circle the first time.

Ervin R. Stutzman
Executive Director
Mennonite Church USA
May 1, 2013
Updated June 5, 2015

Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, 1995

Mennonite Church USA

Summary Statement

1. We believe that **God** exists and is pleased with all who draw near by faith. We worship the one holy and loving God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit eternally. God has created all things visible and invisible, has brought salvation and new life to humanity through Jesus Christ, and continues to sustain the church and all things until the end of the age.

2. We believe in **Jesus Christ**, the Word of God become flesh. He is the Savior of the world, who has delivered us from the dominion of sin and reconciled us to God by his death on a cross. He was declared to be Son of God by his resurrection from the dead. He is the head of the church, the exalted Lord, the Lamb who was slain, coming again to reign with God in glory.

3. We believe in the **Holy Spirit**, the eternal Spirit of God, who dwelled in Jesus Christ, who empowers the church, who is the source of our life in Christ, and who is poured out on those who believe as the guarantee of redemption.

4. We believe that all **Scripture** is inspired by God through the Holy Spirit for instruction in salvation and training in righteousness. We accept the Scriptures as the Word of God and as the fully reliable and trustworthy standard for Christian faith and life. Led by the Holy Spirit in the church, we interpret Scripture in harmony with Jesus Christ.

5. We believe that God has **created the heavens and the earth** and all that is in them, and that God preserves and renews what has been made. All creation has its source outside itself and belongs to the Creator. The world has been created good because God is good and provides all that is needed for life.

6. We believe that God has **created human beings** in the divine image. God formed them from the dust of the earth and gave them a special dignity among all the works of creation. Human beings have been made for relationship with God, to live in peace with each other, and to take care of the rest of creation.

7. We confess that, beginning with Adam and Eve, humanity has disobeyed God, given way to the tempter, and chosen to **sin**. All have fallen short of the Creator's intent, marred the image of God in which they were created, disrupted order in the world, and limited their love for others. Because of sin, humanity has been given over to the enslaving powers of evil and death.

8. We believe that, through Jesus Christ, God offers **salvation** from sin and a new way of life. We receive God's salvation when we repent and accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. In Christ, we are reconciled with God and brought into the reconciling community. We place our faith in God that, by the same power that raised Christ from the dead, we may be saved from sin to follow Christ and to know the fullness of salvation.

9. We believe that the **church** is the assembly of those who have accepted God's offer of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. It is the new community of disciples sent into the world to proclaim the reign of God and to provide a foretaste of the church's glorious hope. It is the new society established and sustained by the Holy Spirit.

10. We believe that the **mission** of the church is to proclaim and to be a sign of the kingdom of God. Christ has commissioned the church to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all things he has commanded.

11. We believe that the **baptism** of believers with water is a sign of their cleansing from sin. Baptism is also a pledge before the church of their covenant with God to walk in the way of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Believers are baptized into Christ and his body by the Spirit, water, and blood.

12. We believe that the **Lord's Supper** is a sign by which the church thankfully remembers the new covenant which Jesus established by his death. In this communion meal, the church renews its covenant with God and with each other and participates in the life and death of Jesus Christ, until he comes.

13. We believe that in **washing the feet** of his disciples, Jesus calls us to serve one another in love as he did. Thus we acknowledge our frequent need of cleansing, renew our willingness to let go of pride and worldly power, and offer our lives in humble service and sacrificial love.

14. We practice **discipline** in the church as a sign of God's offer of transforming grace. Discipline is intended to liberate erring brothers and sisters from sin, and to restore them to a right relationship with God and to fellowship in the church. The practice of discipline gives integrity to the church's witness in the world.

15. We believe that **ministry** is a continuation of the work of Christ, who gives gifts through the Holy Spirit to all believers and empowers them for service in the church and in the world. We also believe that God calls particular persons in the church to specific leadership ministries and offices. All who minister are accountable to God and to the community of faith.

16. We believe that the church of Jesus Christ is **one body** with many members, ordered in such a way that, through the one Spirit, believers may be built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

17. We believe that Jesus Christ calls us to **discipleship**, to take up our cross and follow him. Through the gift of God's saving grace, we are empowered to be disciples of Jesus, filled with his Spirit, following his teachings and his path through suffering to new life. As we are faithful to his way, we become conformed to Christ and separated from the evil in the world.

18. We believe that to be a disciple of Jesus is to know **life in the Spirit**. As the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ takes shape in us, we grow in the image of Christ and in our relationship with God. The Holy Spirit is active in individual and in communal worship, leading us deeper into the experience of God.

19. We believe that God intends human life to begin in **families** and to be blessed through families. Even more, God desires all people to become part of the church, God's family. As single and married members of the church family give and receive nurture and healing, families can grow toward the wholeness that God intends. We are called to chastity and to loving faithfulness in marriage.

20. We commit ourselves to tell the **truth**, to give a simple yes or no, and to avoid the swearing of oaths.

21. We believe that everything belongs to God, who calls the church to live in faithful **stewardship** of all that God has entrusted to us, and to participate now in the rest and justice which God has promised.

22. We believe that **peace** is the will of God. God created the world in peace, and God's peace is most fully revealed in Jesus Christ, who is our peace and the peace of the whole world. Led by the Holy Spirit, we follow Christ in the way of peace, doing justice, bringing reconciliation, and practicing nonresistance, even in the face of violence and warfare.

23. We believe that the church is God's holy nation, called to give full allegiance to Christ its head and to witness to every **nation, government, and society** about God's saving love.

24. We place our hope in the **reign of God** and its fulfillment in the day when Christ will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. He will gather his church, which is already living under the reign of God. We await God's final victory, the end of this present age of struggle, the resurrection of the dead, and a new heaven and a new earth. There the people of God will reign with Christ in justice, righteousness, and peace for ever and ever.

Adopted by the delegates of Mennonite Church General Assembly, and of the General Conference Mennonite Church Triennial Session, July 28, 1995, Wichita, Kansas. [Mennonite Church USA](#), formed by the merger of these two groups, has adopted this confession as its statement of faith. Copyright © 1995 by Herald Press Scottdale PA 15683. Used by permission. Order print copies of *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, and *Summary Statement, Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, From [Herald Press](#), Scottdale, Pa. [Worship resources](#) based on this confession, and [translations](#) are also available.



Renewed Commitments for MC USA

A Living Document for the Journey Forward Process¹

God invites us to experience and bear witness to the belovedness of all creation. We yearn to know and share in the mystery of God's unending love.

We confess that sin fragments our wholeness and strains our relationships with God, each other and the world. Confronted with the misuses of power in our lives, communities and institutions, we seek to tell the truth and repent.

The Holy Spirit beckons us toward the restoration of all things in Christ. God continually calls us beloved.

² On this journey together, we commit to:

Follow Jesus

As an Anabaptist community of the living Word, we listen for God's call as we read Scripture together, guided by the Spirit. Through baptism we commit ourselves to live faithfully as Jesus' disciples, no matter the cost.³

Witness to God's peace

We are called to extend God's holistic peace, proclaiming Christ's redemption for the world with our lives. Through Christ, God frees the world from sin and offers reconciliation. We bear witness to this gift of peace by rejecting violence and resisting injustice in all forms, and in all places.⁴

Experience transformation

The Holy Spirit dwells in and among us, transforming us to reflect God's love. Through worship the Spirit gathers the body of Christ, where our diversity reveals God's beauty. The Spirit empowers our communities to embody the grace, joy and peace of the gospel.⁵

¹ *Journey Forward* refers to a two-year process of church-wide discernment growing out of the Future Church Summit held in Orlando in 2017. JF has two primary documents for church use: this living document and an interactive study guide. The feedback gathered from congregations, conferences, constituency groups and church agencies will shape future improvements to this document in preparation for delegate engagement in Kansas City in 2019.

² Genesis 1, Psalm 24:1, Luke 15:11-31, John 3:16-17, Ephesians 3:19, Romans 5:8

³ 2 Kings 23:1-3, Isaiah 61:1-2, Mark 8:34, Luke 4:17-19, Ephesians 4:1-6, Hebrews 1:1-4

⁴ Isaiah 9:6, Micah 6:6-8, Matthew 5:38-48, 2 Corinthians 5:19, Ephesians 4:32

⁵ Psalm 133:1, John 14:16, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Ephesians 3:10, Revelation 7:9

Transitional Pastor Policy

Mennonite Church USA¹

Rationale and Objectives

There has been a growing recognition of the value of transitional pastor ministry in congregations throughout Mennonite Church USA. At the same time, there has been an increasing shortage of qualified transitional pastors. To encourage existing transitional pastors to continue and to add significantly to their ranks, attention needs to be given to:

1. The establishment of common practices in transitional pastor ministry in Mennonite congregations;
2. Addressing employment issues peculiar to transitional pastors;
3. Working relationships between transitional pastors and conferences, among conferences, and between conferences and Mennonite Church USA.

Definitions

Transitional pastors (sometimes referred to as intentional interim pastors), serve congregations during interim times, typically between long-term pastors or lead pastors. They are specialists who provide leadership that enables a congregation to work at focused agenda which results in healing, clarifying identity, discerning new vision, and setting a fresh tone for the next long-term pastor/s. Transitional pastors see that normal pastoral ministry continues through their own efforts and through empowering others to assist so that they have adequate time to devote to transitional objectives. Transitional pastors may come into conflicted settings or follow a long-term pastor that has been highly respected and loved.

Interim pastors provide maintenance pastoral ministry in congregations that have chosen to begin searching for long term leadership immediately after a pastor has announced a resignation or has left, or is on a sabbatical. The interim pastor is not expected to provide leadership focused on self-study and vision work.

1. Common practices

A. Qualifications

1) Emotional maturity

Transitional pastors have an opportunity to model healthy pastoral ministry performance in specific areas: being self-differentiated—a non-anxious presence, practicing healthy self-care, exiting, avoiding over-functioning, enabling the congregation to make crucial decisions without interjecting personal preferences.

2) Theological orientation

In situations of theological conflict, transitional pastors have a unique opportunity to clarify what it means to be Anabaptist/Mennonite in ecclesiology, and facilitate healthy congregational decisions regarding theological identity and ecclesiological understandings.

3) Specialized training

- a) Specialized training in transitional ministry is encouraged. Recommended opportunities include Interim Ministry Network's training, Mennonite Church USA training, and certification through a regional support group and supervision.
- b) Due to the shortage of trained transitional pastors, new transitional pastors without specialized training or experience are encouraged to pursue training during an interim assignment.
- c) All transitional pastors are minimally required, when logistically possible, to participate in quarterly educational and support programs (similar to those in northern Indiana, Ohio Mennonite Conference and Franconia Conference).

B. Context and Calling

1) Length of transitional pastor assignments

The length of an interim period is determined by congregational objectives. The majority range from 12-24 months. Interim periods longer than two years are not advisable, and should only happen when specific objectives warrant it.

2) Non-availability for long term candidate status

All transitional pastors are required to explain the rationale for non-availability for long term candidate status during the negotiation phase, and to include in their employment contract a statement similar to the following: *The transitional pastor will not be considered as a candidate for long term pastoral leadership in this congregation.*

3) Timing and role of the transitional pastor in the search process

- a) Congregations are best served when they wait to begin their pastoral search process until several other items have been addressed. These include, at a minimum, work at grief, healing and reconciliation, but ideally also include clarification of the congregation's vision. The pastoral search usually occurs in the last half or third of the transitional period. Embarking on the search process before that point is counterproductive for accomplishing objectives for the transitional period.
- b) If adequate education and consultation about the search *process* is provided by the conference, the transitional pastor's role is usually limited to reminding the search committee to communicate adequately with the congregation. In cases where this resource is not provided, the transitional pastor should provide *process* education and consultation to the search committee. The transitional pastor should not be involved in providing or evaluating candidate profiles. The transitional pastor should not attend candidate interviews or candidate presentation weekends.

C. Church Membership and Ministerial Credentials

- 1) Transitional pastors (as well as spouse and family where applicable) are encouraged to select one local congregation in which to maintain long term membership. (This is similar to the practice of many international missionaries.) The transitional pastor's ministerial credential will remain lodged in the conference with which the transitional pastor's home congregation is affiliated.
- 2) The conference minister(s) of the transitional pastor's home conference is responsible to oversee *long term pastoral care* of the transitional pastor, e.g. sabbatical planning, vocational direction, ministerial ethics, etc.
- 3) Responsibility for addressing issues of pastoral misconduct would be assumed by the home conference in close relationship with the conference where the accusations are made.
- 4) The ministerial credential would be recognized by (but not transferred to) the conference the transitional pastor is currently serving. The ministerial leadership of the current conference is responsible for oversight of *short term pastoral care* of the transitional pastor: illness, crises, support for ministry, etc. The congregation in which the transitional pastor is serving will provide associate membership status for the transitional pastor.

D. Supervision and Accountability

- 1) The transitional pastor is encouraged to respect and fully participate in the supervision and accountability structures in place in each congregation being served.

- 99 2) In addition to accountability in the local congregation, the transitional pastor is expected to
100 identify and/or clarify supervision and accountability relationships within the conference
101 structure in which the transitional pastor is currently serving.
102 3) The area conference being served by the transitional pastor is encouraged to provide a
103 coaching relationship or a transitional pastor peer support group to help the transitional
104 pastor navigate the resources and culture of the conference.
105 4) The participation of transitional pastors in current conference functions and relationships is
106 valuable to the congregation being served, the transitional pastor, and the conference.
107 However, the transitional pastor is constantly challenged by time limitations and sometimes
108 might, in consultation with congregational and conference leadership, need to make unique
109 arrangements to meet this need. In maintaining adequate support levels, he/she is
110 sometimes not able to attend all conference and ecumenical pastors groups.
111

112 2. Employment issues peculiar to transitional pastors

113 A. Salary

114 The complete Mennonite Church USA guidelines will be followed for salary calculations. In
115 addition, the congregation being served will continue salary and benefits for one month beyond
116 the conclusion of the transitional period in recognition of the irregular nature and higher
117 intensity level of this particular kind of ministry. This practice will provide time for
118 regeneration and retooling for the transitional pastor before taking on the next assignment. In
119 situations of great complexity or intense conflict which call for exceptional emotional and
120 physical effort, congregations are encouraged to compensate accordingly by exceeding
121 Mennonite Church USA salary guidelines, or regeneration or sabbatical recommendations. In
122 these settings, conference ministers will advocate on behalf of the transitional pastor.
123

124 B. Benefits

- 125 1) Benefits shall include continuing education and retirement, as per Mennonite Church USA
126 guidelines. In addition:
127
128 2) *Vacation*: Mennonite Church USA guidelines for accumulated years in ministry will be
129 followed. The transitional pastor is generally encouraged to take short breaks of 3-7 days
130 duration rather than a long multiple-week break.
131
132 3) *Health Insurance*: Congregations and conferences are encouraged to be flexible in
133 insurance matters in recognition of the unique stressor dealing with health insurance places
134 on the transitional pastor and family. An additional month of insurance coverage will be
135 provided by the congregation at the end of the assignment. **For congregations with**
136 **Corinthian Plan coverage see 3b. below**
137

138 Other Health Insurance Options:

- 139 a. The transitional pastor could be considered employed ministry staff of his/her home
140 conference. This would insure that coverage is as seamless as possible for the
141 transitional pastor, and would avoid underwriting that could occur in changing insurance
142 providers. The home conference could invoice the cost of insurance to a) the
143 congregation where serving, or b) when the transitional pastor is between assignments,
144 directly to the transitional pastor.
145
146 b. Most Corinthian Plan participants have the option to continue their medical coverage for
147 an additional 18 months after congregational employment is completed, through
148 Continuation of Coverage. (Pastors who are Medicare eligible or enrolled in Medicare

are not eligible for Continuation.) The process for Continuation is: The congregation must cancel Corinthian Plan coverage by submitting a completed Cancellation Form to Everence when the pastor ends employment (best to submit cancellation in advance of actual date), and then Continuation will be offered directly to the pastor. If the pastor elects Continuation they will be directly invoiced until their next assignment begins, they begin other coverage, become eligible for Medicare, or the maximum period of Continuation (18 months) is reached, whichever is earliest (if the pastor does not elect Continuation, medical coverage will end on the last day of the month in which the pastor ends employment). If the new congregation is participating with The Corinthian Plan, then coverage can be transferred to the new assignment. Otherwise, the pastor on Continuation may choose to remain on Continuation until they begin other coverage/is Medicare eligible, or the 18 month maximum for Continuation ends. Congregations will cover the cost of one month of insurance premium for Continuation of Coverage under The Corinthian Plan or coverage under another plan-after the congregational assignment is completed for the Transitional Pastor.

- 4) *Sabbatical*: In addition to the salary and benefit extension that covers regeneration time between assignments, congregations served by a transitional pastor will provide an amount equal to one month of regular salary for each 12 months of ministry, or fraction thereof, and prorated accordingly. Unused years toward a sabbatical in a long term congregation do not accrue when such a pastor becomes an II/T pastor, but years do accrue when an II/T pastor moves to the next assignment. This money will be placed in a sabbatical fund to be held in trust by the area conference office for that particular transitional pastor. The funds will be available for a sabbatical after several transitional assignments, based on actual accumulated service of 4 years. The home credentialing area conference will issue a 1099 for tax reporting purposes at the end of the tax year when sabbatical fund monies are disbursed to a transitional pastor. Sabbatical planning is to be done by the transitional pastor in consultation with the conference minister where his/her credential is held. In situations where these monies are not fully vested or claimed, the monies shall be forwarded to the Transitional Pastor Fund, referred to in item 3, B, 5 below.

5) *Expense Coverage*:

- a) Congregations are encouraged to recognize that above budget expenses will often be incurred during a transitional period for such items as curricular supplies, consultants' fees, specialized training, etc.
- b) Transitional pastors are expected to attend conference and denominational meetings, as are long-term pastors. The congregation will cover the expenses of attendance.
- c) In addition to travel costs of carrying out the pastoral duties, there are times when the transitional pastor will need to travel longer distances from home in order to carry out the assignment and incur additional travel/lodging expense. The receiving congregation should assume responsibility for these extra expenses.
- d) When a long distance commuting situation emerges, the congregation being served by the transitional pastor will assume responsibility for seeing that everything possible is done to limit commuting stressors. A transitional pastor should not incur financial liabilities for lodging or commuting costs, and should have a realistic work schedule that allows adequate time at home with family.

3. Conference Responsibilities

A. Employment Negotiations

Conference leaders will serve in an advocacy role for the transitional pastor in salary and benefit negotiations. In situations where congregation/conference relationships are strained, conference leaders will advocate for the transitional pastor. When advocacy is absent, the transitional pastor needs to utilize her/his own resources to educate the congregation on the transition process. Conferences will encourage congregations to realize that interim periods are not the time to attempt to save financial resources by understaffing, since that results in transitional pastors devoting an inordinate amount of time to routine pastoral tasks.

B. Inter Conference Cooperation

Cooperating conferences are encouraged to communicate freely with each other so as to maximize stewardship of the limited availability of transitional pastors. This includes the following understandings:

- 1) Conferences may **contact** transitional pastors in other conferences regarding potential assignments.
- 2) Conferences will keep each other informed, upon request, of **availability dates** of their transitional pastors.
- 3) **Credential** recognition: see p. 2.
- 4) Conferences, in consultation with the transitional pastors group, will **establish criteria** to determine who is qualified to be included in a list of recommended transitional pastors.

Possible criteria:

- a) completion of a training experience deemed adequate by the conference minister in consultation with the transitional pastors group.
- b) completion of Interim Ministry Network's basic training or a year of supervised transitional ministry experience along with quarterly transitional pastors group participation which results in a recommendation by the supervisor who is an experienced/trained transitional pastor;
- c) regular participation in a transitional pastors support group;
- d) a commitment to continue in transitional pastor ministry, vis-à-vis using transitional ministry as an entry point into regular pastoral ministry or as a means of income between long term assignments.

4. Development and Promotion

1) Constituency Education

Transitional pastors, their support groups, conferences and the denomination are encouraged to make constituency education a priority through seminars and other conference and denominational venues. This includes helping congregations acknowledge the wisdom in seeking objective, outside counsel as a matter of basic congregational health at all times. Congregations are usually not the best judge in discerning their need regarding a transitional pastor or interim pastor assignment.

2) Recruitment

Transitional pastors, their support groups, conference and denominational leaders are encouraged to develop a specific plan for recruitment to increase the ranks of qualified transitional pastors. This will include a strategy for utilizing bi-vocational transitional pastors.

3) Training

The Transitional Pastor Group will be encouraged to provide regional training opportunities. Conferences and the denomination will work cooperatively in funding, promoting and recruiting, potential candidates for transitional pastor training events.

248 4) The Transitional Pastor Management Group shall be composed of:

- 249 a. The director of denominational ministry or designee
- 250 b. Two (2) conference ministers
- 251 c. Two (2) transitional pastors

252 Terms for the conference ministers and transitional pastors will be three (3) years with eligibility
253 for an additional term for a total of six (6) years. This Group shall give a report at the annual area
254 conference ministers meeting.
255
256

257 **Expectations of Congregations Using Transitional Pastors**

- 259 1. It is often difficult for congregations to admit the need for specialized leadership during times
260 of transition, such as between long-term pastors or lead pastors, or during difficult periods of
261 congregational life. There is a sense that they can handle these periods on their own.
262 Therefore, it is very helpful, indeed imperative, that a congregation requests assistance during
263 these times.
264
- 265 2. Congregations are expected to consult often with their conference leaders, and utilize the
266 expertise of the Conference Minister. Keep the Conference Minister apprised of
267 developments within the congregation, progress made, and needs which arise. Your
268 Conference Minister wants to rejoice with you as progress is made.
269
- 270 3. The goal of a transitional period is to develop a focused agenda which speaks to the issues at
271 hand. This agenda is often developed with the transitional pastor, and the transitional pastor
272 will then give this agenda priority in his / her work. This agenda may include: working
273 through grief, healing of congregational hurts, clarifying the identity of the congregation,
274 discerning new vision, or setting a fresh tone for the next long-term pastor/s.
275
- 276 4. Be willing to work hard and to be very focused for an interim period of 12-24 months. This is
277 intended to be a temporary period, and the transitional pastor is not to be seen as the long-term
278 pastor.
279
- 280 5. Provide the budget necessary for the transitional pastor to bring in the needed resources to
281 work at the agenda. This includes an adequate salary, benefits, and expenses for the
282 transitional pastor, suggested to be, at a minimum, the guidelines of Mennonite Church USA.
283 Benefits shall include continuing education, vacation time, and retirement.
284
- 285 6. In addition to their salary, the congregation being served will set aside one month of additional
286 salary and benefits at the conclusion of the transitional period in recognition of the irregular
287 nature and higher intensity level of this particular kind of ministry.
288
- 289 7. Congregations and conferences are encouraged to be flexible in all such insurance matters in
290 recognition of the unique stressor dealing with health insurance places on the transitional
291 pastor and family. An additional month of insurance coverage will be provided by the
292 congregation at the end of the assignment.
293

294 [One possible way of dealing with medical insurance coverage is for the transitional pastor to
295 be considered employed ministry staff of his/her home conference. This would insure that
296 coverage is as seamless as possible for the transitional pastor, and would avoid underwriting
297 that could occur in changing insurance providers. The home conference could invoice the cost

of insurance to a) the congregation where serving, or b) when the transitional pastor is between assignments, directly to the transitional pastor.]

8. In addition to the salary and benefit extension that covers regeneration time between assignments, congregations served by a transitional pastor will provide an amount equal to one month of regular salary for each 12 months of ministry, or fraction thereof, and prorated accordingly. This money will be placed in a sabbatical fund to be held in trust by the transitional pastor's home conference office for that particular transitional pastor.
9. Congregations are encouraged to recognize that above budget expenses will often be incurred during a transitional period for such items as curricular supplies, consultants' fees, specialized training, etc.
10. Provide space and priority for the transitional pastor to consult with your Conference Minister and to attend conference events, appropriate churchwide meetings, and pastor-peer meetings. The congregation will cover the expenses of attendance.
11. When a long distance commuting situation emerges, the congregation being served by the transitional pastor will assume responsibility for seeing that everything possible is done to limit commuting stressors. A transitional pastor should not incur financial liabilities for lodging or commuting costs, and should have a realistic work schedule that allows adequate time at home with family.
12. Congregations need to realize that transitional periods are not the time to attempt to save financial resources by understaffing, since that results in the transitional pastor devoting an inordinate amount of time to routine pastoral tasks.
13. Be willing to postpone or delay the pastoral search process until adequate attention is given to the issues at hand. The transitional pastor will be able to assist this discernment, and suggest a process for the congregation during its search. The Conference Minister should be brought in for this process.
14. The transitional pastor will not transfer membership to your congregation. They may become associate members for the period they serve your congregation. The TP's ordination will remain with their home conference.

¹The Mid-States Conferences (IL, IN-MI, OH, and CDC) developed a prototype of this policy in 2008. Members of the task force were Cliff Brubaker, Gary Martin, Dan Miller, Larry Wilson, Lavon Welty, Sherm Kauffman, Tim Lichti, Wayne Nitzsche, Willie Kanagy, and Wayne Hochstetler (Chair).

The Task Force was formed at the initiative of the Leadership Meeting of the Mid-States Conferences on October 12, 2006. It met for the first time on January 22, 2007. This proposal was approved as revised at the January 28, 2008, meeting of the Mid-States Conferences. The proposal was presented and briefly processed at the December 2008 annual area church/conference ministers' meeting. With feedback from that meeting, a draft Mennonite Church USA policy was developed by Lee Lever, Director of Denominational Ministry, for discussion at the 2009 annual area church/conference ministers' meeting at AMBS. Conference ministers approved and adopted the policy with minor changes.

Minor edits were made by the Intentional Interim/Transitional Ministry Task Group (MC USA) in December, 2016: 2.A. Salary; 2.B.3.b Corinthian Plan; 2.B.4 Sabbaticals.

April 2017



Congregations Considering Leaving Current Conference or Mennonite Church USA

1. Withdrawal from Mennonite Church USA

- a. Process - Building on the Membership Guidelines which encourages mutual respect for one another when a relationship is ending we suggest the following steps:
 - i. Congregational leadership will share with conference leadership that they are considering leaving the Area Conference and Mennonite Church USA
 - ii. A conversation between congregational leaders and Area Conference leadership will happen before any decision has been made
 - iii. When a congregational decision is made, a letter stating this decision will be sent to the Area Conference office.
 - iv. The Area Conference office will notify Leadership Development that the congregation has officially left Mennonite Church USA
 - v. A public service of acknowledgement of the end of relationship
- b. Implications for credentialed leaders - Here are some basic understandings and steps to follow in these instances.
 - i. When a congregation leaves an area conference, that area conference will no longer hold and is no longer responsible for the credentials of persons associated with that congregation. This will include those serving within the congregation and those who are serving outside of the congregation.
 - ii. For archival reasons, the conference will enter documentation into the credentialed person's file and then transfer the credential to the Leadership Development Office. The credential will be considered by the denomination as "inactive" (A Mennonite Polity for Ministerial Leadership, p. 90).
 - iii. According to the Mennonite Polity for Ministerial Leadership this credential is not valid for performing ministerial functions nor does Mennonite Church USA and its member conferences have responsibility for the person holding an inactive.
 - iv. The congregation may recognize this credential as valid, but they should know that they are alone responsible for the credential.
 - v. When a congregation leaves a conference, the conference minister should communicate these understandings to the congregation and the person(s) whose credentials were formerly held by the conference. A copy of this communication should be sent to Leadership Development. (A sample letter is attached.)
 - vi. Record of the credential will remain in Leadership Development database for archival purposes.

- vii. If the congregation has no intention of remaining with Mennonite Church USA, the pastor's credentials are terminated effective with the date of departure.
 - a. If the pastor is not in agreement with the decision to leave, s/he is encouraged to join another Mennonite Church USA congregation.
 - b. If "a" is not an option, credential can be held with some continuing accountability plan in place. Length of such holding is indeterminate. (Office of Ministerial Leadership Office 2002ff)
- 2. Seeking to move to another conference within Mennonite Church USA
 - a. Process - The Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA has outlined the following process (Article III, 3.b of the Mennonite Church USA Bylaws and Membership Guidelines, Part II, No. 12).
 - i. A congregation is required to follow a process of discernment with their conference of origin before another conference may formally consider their application for membership.
 - a. Normally this process will require several meetings of the congregation's leaders with leaders of the conference they wish to leave (at least three meetings is suggested).
 - b. With their application for membership in the new conference the congregation will present a joint congregation/conference of origin statement to the receiving conference which states reasons why the congregation wants to change area conference affiliation
 - c. When the congregation/conference of origin meetings were held, with a summary of the discussion of the meetings
 - d. How or if this affects any other matters in the conference of origin
 - e. The matters that have been resolved in the congregation, Conference of origin relationship along with those that may remain unresolved
 - ii. In the event that a conference has taken disciplinary action that separates a congregation, and that congregation subsequently applies to another conference for membership, the conference to which the congregation applies for membership is required to follow a process of discernment with the congregation's conference of origin. The conference to which the congregation is making application for membership will initiate several meetings with the conference of origin to discuss the congregation's dismissal, and their application for membership into the receiving conference.
 - a. The conference of origin will supply the conference to which the congregation is making application, a written statement of reasons why and how they separated the congregation.
 - b. The receiving conference will supply a statement to the conference of origin explaining why, and on what time frame; they are considering accepting the congregation into membership.
 - iii. Both conferences will notify the Executive Director of Mennonite Church USA when either of these processes begins and will supply copies of the statements named above. The executive director reserves the right of

counsel throughout the process, but will respect the polity of Mennonite Church USA that rests final discretion of membership of congregations with area conferences (Bylaw Article IV, 2.a).

Adopted by Mennonite Church USA Executive Board, June 26, 2004

b. Implications for credentialed leaders

- i. When the intention of the congregation is to join another Mennonite Church USA Area Conference, the original area conference will hold the credential for up to one year while the congregation is in the process of transferring.
- ii. If the process of transferring to another conference takes longer than a year, the credential may be transferred to the Leadership Development Office.
- iii. During this transition process the pastor is expected to be in active relationship with the conference they are moving towards. The pastor will be accountable to the leadership of this conference during this exploratory phase.
- iv. If after two years, the congregation has not joined an area conference within Mennonite Church USA the credential will become inactive. According to the Mennonite Polity for Ministerial Leadership this credential is not valid for performing ministerial functions nor does Mennonite Church USA and its member conferences have responsibility for the person holding an inactive.

December 13, 2013

Leadership Development Office

Terry Shue and Nancy Kauffmann

This document is the result of looking at existing Mennonite Church USA documents, building on the Membership Guidelines and receiving input from Area Church/Conference Ministers' Meeting in Phoenix 2012.

(Today's date)

Dear *(credentialed minister and congregational name)*:

SUBJECT: CREDENTIAL STATUS OF *(CREDENTIAL MINISTER)*

This letter is to officially recognize your congregation's desire to leave *(said)* conference of Mennonite Church USA. This affects the credential our denomination holds for your pastor, *(name)*.

As a result of the congregation's choice to leave the conference and choosing not to be part of Mennonite Church USA, our area conference will no longer hold and is no longer responsible for the ministerial credentials of persons associated with your congregation. This includes those serving within the congregation and those who are serving outside of the congregation.

The credential of *(said minister)* is now considered invalid for performing ministerial functions and Mennonite Church USA and its member conferences have no responsibility or liability for the actions of the person holding this invalid credential. Your congregation may recognize this credential as valid, but you should know that you alone are responsible and liable for the credential.

If the credential was in good standing *(you may want to comment case by case on this)* when the congregation left, the denomination will acknowledge and transfer the credential should another recognized credentialing body request it.

Sincerely,

(Conference Minister)

cc: Leadership Development, Mennonite Church USA

Executive Board Criteria
For application of Article III, 3.b of the Mennonite Church USA Bylaws and
Membership Guidelines, Part II, No. 12.

A congregation is required to follow a process of discernment with their conference of origin before another conference may formally consider their application for membership.

- a. Normally this process will require several meetings of the congregation's leaders with leaders of the conference they wish to leave (at least three meetings is suggested).
 - b. With their application for membership in the new conference the congregation will present a joint congregation/conference of origin statement to the receiving conference which states
 - i. Reasons why the congregation wants to change area conference affiliation
 - ii. When the congregation/conference of origin meetings were held, with a summary of the discussion of the meetings
 - iii. How or if this affects any other matters in the conference of origin
 - iv. The matters that have been resolved in the congregation/conference of origin relationship along with those that may remain unresolved
2. In the event that a conference has taken disciplinary action that separates a congregation, and that congregation subsequently applies to another conference for membership, the conference to which the congregation applies for membership is required to follow a process of discernment with the congregation's conference of origin.

The conference to which the congregation is making application for membership will initiate several meetings with the conference of origin to discuss the congregation's dismissal, and their application for membership into the receiving conference.

- a. The conference of origin will supply the conference to which the congregation is making application, a written statement of reasons why and how they separated the congregation.
 - b. The receiving conference will supply a statement to the conference of origin explaining why, and on what time frame; they are considering accepting the congregation into membership.
3. Both conferences will notify the Executive Director of Mennonite Church USA when either of these processes begins and will supply copies of the statements named above. The executive director reserves the right of counsel throughout the process, but will respect the polity of Mennonite Church USA that rests final discretion of membership of congregations with area conferences (Bylaw Article IV, 2.a).

Adopted by Mennonite Church USA Executive Board, June 26, 2004



Membership Guidelines

(Approved by the Nashville 2001 Delegate Assembly July 5, 2001)
(Distributed as an administrative update to the Delegate Assembly July 2013)

I. Basis for membership

Mennonite Church USA desires to be a people of God committed to biblical foundations and to Anabaptist perspectives. While our church was formed out of various backgrounds and formations, we believe the Holy Spirit has called us to unite in faith and mission (Acts 1, 2).

Membership signifies a mutual commitment to build on the true foundation, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11); to become "a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22); to be "salt of the earth" and "light of the world" (Matthew 5:13, 14).

Covenant

Membership is a voluntary covenant between and among four inter-related communities of faith: congregations, area conferences, national church bodies, and international fellowships. Congregations are formed of individual members; area conferences are constituted by member congregations; area conferences with their member congregations join to form national church bodies; national church bodies join to form international affiliations. Once made, a covenant of membership is nurtured in a spirit of mutual commitment to Jesus Christ and to the body of Christ, the church.

Accountability

Membership assumes accountability before God and toward one another. Accountability has an inward and an outward dimension, with a biblical commission supporting both aspects. Looking inward, the church is commissioned to be a "binding and loosing" fellowship (Matthew 16:13-20; 18:15-20; John 20:23; Ephesians 4:15-16). The joyful obligation of membership includes the calling to build up the body of Christ through mutual discernment of the will of God. Looking outward, the church is commissioned to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 10; Acts 1:8). Membership includes the invitation to become a community engaged in mission and service.

Unity

Members are called to unity in Spirit, "so that the world may believe that [the Father] has sent [the Son]" (John 17:21; see also Ephesians 2:14-22). The church is called to practice humility, gentleness, patience, and love, as it strives to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1-6). As witness to God who is one, and to Jesus Christ who was sent to reveal the will of God, Mennonite Church USA desires that members give faithful expression to their unity as the body of Christ. The Mennonite churches have heard this call to unity ever more clearly in recent years.

Diversity

Within the context of unity, Mennonite Church USA celebrates the rich diversity among its constituent entities (Ephesians 4:7; 1 Corinthians 12). The church is an interdependent and diverse body of believers who together form the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12; Galatians 3:25-29; Colossians 3:11; 1 Peter 2:9-10). This body includes people "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" (Revelation 7:9), creating a colorful multicultural family of God.

"No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11).

II. Policy and practice of membership

1. The foundation for Mennonite Church USA as a developing denomination is the following: • our common vision statement (currently “Vision: Healing and Hope”)
 - our common mission statement
 - our common *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (1995) as the “statement of faith for teaching and nurture in the life of the church.” (COF, introduction, p. 9)
 - a commitment “to seek to understand and interpret Scripture in harmony with Jesus Christ as we are led by the Holy Spirit in the church.” (COF, article 4)
 - a commitment to participate in discerning and living out statements of Christian faith and life made by Mennonite Church USA
 - a commitment to participate in the denomination’s life and mission through delegate representation and financial supportWe expect member area conferences to share the vision and commitments listed here, and to ask the same of their member congregations.
2. Where area conferences with their congregations are committed to the vision, mission, and teaching positions of the denomination, they have the freedom to seek God’s wisdom and discernment as to how to apply these principles in a life-giving way in the many chaotic, broken and/or sinful situations which present themselves to the church. This should be done in consultation with the broader church, in a spirit of mutual accountability.
3. Congregations have the authority to determine the criteria and the responsibility to implement the process for membership of persons joining their congregation, as well as leaving. They do so in consultation with their area conference and in consideration of expectations for membership in Mennonite Church USA.
4. Area conferences have the authority to determine the criteria and the responsibility to implement the process for membership of congregations within their area conference, either to join or to leave. They do so in consideration of expectations for membership in Mennonite Church USA. Congregations forfeit their membership in Mennonite Church USA if and when they are no longer affiliated with an area conference.
5. Mennonite Church USA has the authority to determine the criteria and the responsibility to implement the process whereby area conferences join or leave as member conferences of Mennonite Church USA. They do so in consideration of the expectations for membership in Mennonite Church USA (see II.1).
6. Charter membership in Mennonite Church USA consists of all member area conferences and congregations who were part of the General Conference Mennonite Church or the Mennonite Church at the effective date of the original Bylaws, and who indicated their decision to join, either by their vote on the Plan of Merger or by a reaffirmation of their commitment to be part of Mennonite Church USA before February 1, 2002. This includes those congregations who joined area conferences during the time of area conference deliberations on whether or not to reaffirm their membership in Mennonite Church USA.
7. The official number of members in Mennonite Church USA shall be the sum of members reported to the Executive Directors by each area conference. This shall also be the membership number submitted to Mennonite World Conference.
8. New area conferences may apply for membership through the Constituency Leaders Council. Such application for membership will be reviewed by the Constituency Leaders Council and forwarded to the Executive Board with their counsel. These new conferences may attain membership in Mennonite Church USA through action of the Delegate Assembly upon recommendation from the Executive Board.
9. New congregations attain membership in Mennonite Church USA through their membership in an area conference.
10. Congregations will generally hold membership in only one area conference. Where dual affiliation of a congregation with more than one area conference existed prior to the merger and continues to be perceived to serve the best interests of the congregation and their conferences, dual conference membership may be retained as long as mutually agreed upon. We also recognize that certain congregations may find it beneficial to maintain ties to other denominational bodies.

11. We recognize the possibility that from time to time a congregation may seek a new area conference relationship. Out of mutual respect for one another, no congregation shall separate or be separated from one area conference and subsequently be accepted by another area conference without consultation among the area conferences and congregations involved, according to criteria established by the Executive Board.
12. Our vision for Mennonite Church USA includes the invitation to Christian church bodies of common faith and mission to affiliate with Mennonite Church USA in order to support and strengthen the fellowship and mission of an Anabaptist witness in North America and around the world.

III. Clarification on some issues related to homosexuality and membership

Introduction

For the last several years, issues of same-sex orientation and lifestyle have been the source of deep controversy in our nation and in the church. More particularly, the process of bringing together our two denominations was complicated by differing responses to congregations who have accepted persons in same sex relationships as members. There are several congregations, formerly members of two conferences, who were removed from membership by one of the conferences while retaining membership in the other. In various and significant ways, these disciplinary actions touch other congregations, area conferences, and the entire church. Many people are asking for clarification regarding the beliefs and practice of the Mennonite Church USA regarding the matter of homosexuality, particularly as it touches on issues of church membership. The following commitments and polity guide our discernment and practice:

Commitments

Our hearts belong to God, God's word and God's church. We will follow Jesus.

We know what it is like to be misunderstood and misjudged. We have within our own history misunderstood and misjudged others, resulting in alienation and exclusion. Nevertheless, we hold the church as God's gift; and we hold the church's teaching as our best human understanding of God's way.

We hold the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (1995) to be the teaching position of Mennonite Church USA. "We believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life" (Article 19).

We hold the Saskatoon (1986) and Purdue (1987) statements describing homosexual, extramarital and premarital sexual activity as sin to be the teaching position of Mennonite Church USA.

We hold the Saskatoon and Purdue statements calling for the church to be in dialogue with those who hold differing views to be the teaching position of Mennonite Church USA.

We hold the abuse of power, in its many forms, to be against the teaching position of Mennonite Church USA. Our passion for the church remains undiminished. Our search for the truth finds answer in the scriptures. Our love for God through Christ lifts us up. Our vision for God's people is healing and hope.

Polity

Pastors holding credentials in a conference of Mennonite Church USA may not perform a same-sex covenant ceremony. Such action would be grounds for review of their credentials by their area conference's ministerial credentialing body. (See *A Mennonite Polity for Ministerial Leadership*, p. 125 for a list of other actions that may prompt such a review.

Clarification on Mennonite Church USA Polity and the Role of the Membership Guidelines of Mennonite Church USA

For consideration by the Delegate Assembly, May 2022, Kansas City, Missouri

Background

1. The Membership Guidelines for the formation of Mennonite Church USA were created to define the expectations for member conferences as they joined MC USA. Denominations had differing polity around the roles of area conferences that led to how each denomination handled pastors' officiating same-sex marriages.
2. In 1999, the Membership Guidelines failed to pass due to a lack of clarity around the status of dual conference congregations disciplined by one denomination but not the other for allowing openly gay members.
3. For integration to move forward, section III was added to the Membership Guidelines to clarify MC USA's expectations for area conferences on these matters. Both delegate bodies approved these guidelines in 2001.
4. The Membership Guidelines for the formation of MC USA were created to facilitate the integration of Mennonite Church and General Conference into a new denomination. The guidelines were to be reviewed for their ongoing usefulness in six years (2007).
5. In 2007, the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) began a review of the Membership Guidelines. Still, conflict over gay persons in the church made the review process difficult, and it didn't move forward.
6. In 2013, the Executive Board (EB) submitted a revised version of the guidelines to the delegate body as an administrative update. No delegate vote was taken.
7. In 2015, the Kansas City 2015 Delegate Assembly adopted [The Resolution on the Status of the Membership Guidelines](#), stating, "The Membership Guidelines, adopted by the delegates in 2001 and updated in 2013, shall continue to serve Mennonite Church USA as the guiding document for questions regarding church membership and same-sex relationships/marriages, alongside the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective."

The resolution *Forbearance in the Midst of Differences* affirmed that "While acknowledging different interpretations, we affirm the centrality of Jesus Christ and the authority of Scripture as an essential part of our collective discernment. We also affirm the goodness of marriage, singleness, celibacy, sexual intimacy within a marriage covenant, and fidelity for all people..." The resolution also acknowledged that "...there is currently no consensus within MC USA on whether it is appropriate to bless Christians who are in same-sex covenanted unions." Therefore, "...we call on all those in MC USA to offer grace, love, and forbearance toward conferences, congregations, and pastors in our body who, in different ways, seek to

be faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ on matters related to same-sex covenanted unions.” Since 2015, conferences, congregations, and pastors have lived into this resolution resulting in varied practices concerning same-sex marriage and the credentialing of same-sex married persons.

The delegate assembly also passed the three-part resolution On the Status of the Membership Guidelines. The resolution explained that sections I and II of the MG “...provide a biblical foundation for church membership...” and “...explain the multi-faceted policy and practice of membership now embodied in the Mennonite Church USA bylaws (Articles III and IV).” The resolution also explained that the MC USA Constituency Leaders Council recommended the inclusion of section III in 2001 to clarify “some issues related to homosexuality and membership.” The 2015 resolution sought delegate feedback on the ongoing relevance of the MG for MC USA. The relevance of the MG was tested by this statement, affirmed by the delegate body, “The Membership Guidelines, adopted by the delegates in 2001 and updated in 2013, shall continue to serve Mennonite Church USA as a guiding document for questions regarding church membership and same-sex relationships/marriages, alongside the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*.” This resolution also stated that “...the delegate assembly will not entertain changes to the Membership Guidelines for the next four years.” That moratorium ended at the delegate assembly at MennoCon19.

These two resolutions are in tension. As MC USA conferences, congregations and pastors live into the freedom granted by the resolution *Forbearance in the Midst of Differences*, section III of the Membership Guidelines has ceased to be actively enforced policy within MC USA.

There has been a consistent articulation from the LGBTQ members of MC USA that section III of the Membership Guidelines has caused them harm.

The prohibition against credentialed MC USA pastors performing same-sex marriages in the Membership Guidelines is not an actively enforced policy in all congregations and conferences. The polity statement in the Membership Guidelines states, “Pastors holding credentials in a conference of Mennonite Church USA may not perform a same-sex covenant ceremony. Such action would be grounds for review of their credentials by their area conference’s ministerial credentialing body.” Neither the original ***Membership Guidelines for the formation of Mennonite Church USA***, nor the current version, nor ***A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership: A Polity Manual for Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA*** outline the review process or gives authority to the Executive Board of MC USA to supersede the governance authority of the area conference or local congregation.

Pastoral accountability is a function of the area conference which holds the credential. It is not the responsibility of the Executive Board. Pastors, congregations, and area conferences discern the appropriateness of performing same-sex marriages in their contexts. Congregations are accountable to area conferences. Conferences have broad latitude in determining membership and credentialing. The original ***Membership Guidelines for the formation of Mennonite Church USA*** states that disputes related to section III be resolved by area conferences, not the Executive Board. In that spirit, we commit to the difficult work of being church together amidst our differences working at Biblical justice and reconciliation where there is conflict.

Resolution: Therefore, we retire the Membership Guidelines as the active polity in Mennonite Church USA.

Approved by the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board, April 16, 2021

A Resolution for Repentance and Transformation

Current policies of Mennonite Church USA do *violence*¹ to **LGBTQIA** people by failing to affirm their full, God-given identities and by restricting their full participation in the life, ministries and rituals of the broader church. The rejection of LGBTQIA people by MC USA has silenced and denied ministry callings, torn apart families, forced parents to choose between their church and their child, and caused many LGBTQIA people to leave the church. In some cases, rejection by their faith community is a factor in LGBTQIA people self-harming or even dying by suicide.²

The 2001 Membership Guidelines, especially Section III,³ are the basis for many of these wounds, and also for harm done to the ministry and witness of our denomination and congregations. The Guidelines were not created for the benefit of LGBTQIA people. The Guidelines' purpose was to facilitate denominational integration, and, in the process, the church willingly offered up LGBTQIA people, their families, their congregations, and pastors as scapegoats for the sake of a false peace and unity.

The legacy of the 2001 Membership Guidelines is in direct contradiction to the vision and calling of MC USA; they have given us conflict and loss, not "healing and hope."⁴

Excluding LGBTQIA people from the church is a rejection of God's joyous delight in the diversity of creation and a denial of the Divine image and breath animating all humankind.⁵ It is unfaithful to the calling and ministry of Jesus who, as "the visible image of the invisible God" and the one through whom "God reconciled everything to God's self," offers radical hospitality to those traditionally despised and rejected by religious institutions and teaches that love is the fulfillment of the law.⁶ It is a denial of the work of the Holy Spirit who empowers LGBTQIA Christians to give and receive every gift in the body of Christ.

Excluding LGBTQIA people harms not only LGBTQIA people and *allies*, but it also harms the full body of Christ. Such exclusion is a rejection of the witness of individuals, congregations, and conferences who live out God's life-giving love in and through full affirmation of the lives of LGBTQIA people. It is a failure to realize the denominational vision of "healing and hope" and therefore restricts the life and mission of MC USA. It is a rejection of spiritual gifts that God longs to share through LGBTQIA people with the Mennonite church.

¹ Bolded, italicized words appear in the Glossary at the end of this document.

² For example, see Ron Adams, *The Rule of Love*, The Mennonite, Nov. 2013; also Roberta Showalter Kreider, *The Cost of Truth: Faith Stories of Mennonite and Brethren Leaders and Those Who Might Have Been*. 2004 Strategic Press.

³ Section III of the "Membership Guidelines" reads, in part, "We believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life.;" and, "We hold the Saskatoon (1986) and Purdue (1987) statements describing homosexual, extramarital and premarital sexual activity as sin to be the teaching position of Mennonite Church USA;" and, "Pastors holding credentials in a conference of Mennonite Church USA may not perform a same-sex covenant ceremony."

⁴ MC USA Vision: Healing and Hope at <http://mennoniteusa.org/resource/vision-for-healing-and-hope/>

⁵ Genesis 1-2

⁶ Colossians 1.15-20, Romans 13.8-10, NLT

In our denominational discussions about inclusion, many Mennonites have falsely claimed that LGBTQIA exclusion is necessary for MC USA to remain in fellowship with people of color. This tactic of pitting *marginalized groups* against each other falsely assumes uniformity of thought among and within diverse groups of people, even as it denies the existence of LGBTQIA people of color within the church.

Our calling as disciples of Jesus compels us to “[c]onfront the misuses of power in our... institutions” by “seek[ing] to tell the truth and repent.”⁷

Therefore, be it resolved that, as members of Mennonite Church USA committed to *truth-telling*, repentance, and transformation in the Way of Jesus:

We confess that:

- Our denomination’s policies, structures, practices, and theologies have excluded LGBTQIA persons from fully sanctioned participation in the denomination and have caused great *harm* to LGBTQIA Mennonites and their families.
- We have failed to offer the Good News of God’s “grace, joy and peace”⁸ to LGBTQIA Mennonites and their families.
- Our denomination and congregations are diminished in vitality and faithfulness by the loss of our siblings who have chosen to leave because of exclusionary practices and policies.
- We have not affirmed the full status and worth of LGBTQIA people as fully beloved by God.
- We have scapegoated people of color as the reason for discrimination against LGBTQIA people, and blamed LGBTQIA people for the loss of some people of color in the church.⁹
- LGBTQIA Mennonite people of color are virtually erased.
- We have not taken seriously “every human grouping [being] reconciled and united in the church.”¹⁰
- As a result of the polity implications of the Membership Guidelines Section III, we have driven wedges of mistrust between MC USA pastors and their congregations, and between congregations and conferences.

⁷ Renewed Commitments for MC USA, 2018

⁸ Mennonite Church USA *Vision: Healing and Hope*

⁹ Quoted from Advisory Group report p. 11. This scapegoating is one way that we name how Mennonite institutions have done and do violence to people in the church. While not the focus of this resolution, we hope that dealing honestly with one form of oppression in the church is also a call to engage more seriously with others, like White Supremacy.

¹⁰ Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, Article 9

We commit to:

- **Rescind** the Membership Guidelines, Section III.¹¹
- Include LGBTQIA people and/or representative allies in the creation of any resource, document, or policy produced or distributed by the denomination that specifically affects LGBTQIA people.
- Require that the Executive Board consult with LGBTQIA leaders¹² to create an LGBTQIA constituency group with representation on the Constituency Leaders Council and/or other denomination-wide leadership groups.
- Provide denominational resources for individuals, congregations, and conferences to engage with repentance and reconciliation in their own contexts. Such resources should explore historic harms, encourage *truth-telling*, and address areas of *intersectionality*.
- Follow the leadership of LGBTQIA Mennonites to provide support and resources for LGBTQIA leaders in the church. This should involve investment of denominational time and money.
- Formalize and publicize policies for MC USA's Executive Board, staff, and church-wide program agencies that prohibit the use of sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status as criteria to restrict a person's full participation in the ministries, activities, roles, and committees at the denominational level.
- Embody a theology that honors LGBTQIA people and relationships with all future MC USA theological statements, including but not limited to future revisions of *The Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* and *A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership*. When MC USA partners with other denominations or faith groups, its input into the process will advocate for this theology.

GLOSSARY

Allies - Within the context of the LGBTQIA community, allies are individuals who are not LGBTQIA (i.e., they are heterosexual and cisgender), but who support the LGBTQIA community. Being an ally means: sharing power, taking risks, taking responsibility, being open to the unknown, becoming part of addressing injustice, leveling the playing field, accepting differences, making allowances, and leading by action. It is important for an ally to join LGBTQIA persons in solidarity, and not play a patronizing role in the journey towards equality. [Definition adapted from *Safe Zone* (2016) by the Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests.]

Harm - Here used broadly to mean the diminishment of physical, mental, and/or spiritual health as a result of beliefs, policies, and practices that reject the faithful witness of LGBTQIA people and their faith communities. Harm is related to *violence* (see definition below).

¹¹ This will effectively eliminate section III of the Guidelines. Sections I and II are part of the MC USA bylaws.

¹² Many LGBTQIA Mennonite leaders are affiliated with advocacy groups including Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests, Pink Menno, and Inclusive Mennonite Pastors.

Intersectionality - A lens that helps us understand the overlapping dimensions of identity, privilege, and oppression. A community whose theology and structures tend to intersectionality will recognize the interlocking nature of each person's identity markers (such as gender, sexual orientation, race, economic status, age, etc.) and how they are granted the space to belong and the power to thrive.

LGBTQIA - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual. The acronym is one generally accepted way of representing a diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities. Sometimes "queer" is used as an umbrella term for LGBTQIA.

Marginalized groups - Those who are denied access to institutional power because of one or more aspect/s of who they are. Because the dominant cultural norms in MC USA, as in wider U.S. culture, have been established by those who are predominantly white, heterosexual, cisgender, and male, marginalized groups in our context include Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color, LGBTQIA people, and women.

Rescind - "take back, cancel" (*Merriam-Webster*). At the time of writing "A Resolution for Repentance and Transformation," MC USA leadership is proposing to "retire" the Membership Guidelines with little or no mention of the pain the Guidelines have caused. "Rescind" represents a stronger rejection of the painful legacy of the Membership Guidelines in the formation and life of our denomination.

Truth-telling - Following the practitioners of restorative and transformative justice, publicly telling the truth about harm is an essential step toward healing. Truth-telling centers the stories of those who have been harmed, reveals the impact of past actions, and opens the door to accountability and change.

Violence - Occurs when the actions of individuals, institutions, or structures of power intentionally or unintentionally hurt, damage, or destroy the value of an individual or a group. Exclusion is a threatening act that enforces the experience of othering -- treating some people in the church as essentially different and generally inferior -- and continues the cycle of marginalization. Othering and marginalization are forms of violence; they cause emotional, physical, and spiritual harm.

Submitted by Michael Crosby, Joanna Harader and Randy Spaulding, on behalf of the Inclusive Mennonite Pastors Leadership Team.

DELEGATE ASSEMBLY 2022



STAFF SUMMARY AND IMPACT STATEMENT

This summary is the opinion of the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board staff on the impact of the proposed resolution if passed by the delegate board. This summary does not necessarily reflect the views of resolution writers or the Executive Board. Delegates are encouraged to consult other resources, engage the writers of the resolution and discern within their context. This summary is based on the staff's understanding of the current bylaws and policies of Mennonite Church USA (MC USA).

TITLE: A RESOLUTION FOR REPENTANCE AND TRANSFORMATION

[Link to the resolution.](#)

TYPE OF RESOLUTION: CHURCH STATEMENT

WHAT IS A CHURCH STATEMENT RESOLUTION?

A church statement gives direction to the church on matters of Christian faithfulness, often concerning current issues or issues where current church documents or previous statements fail to adequately address current questions/challenges. Church statements are approved by the delegate body and are implemented by the national body, area conferences, local congregations and individual followers of Jesus according to the rights and responsibilities provided to each body. ***Church statements should be developed to further God's mission, as defined by our statement of vision and purpose as well as our Renewed Commitments.***

Please read: [Developing Resolutions for Mennonite Church USA](#) for a more detailed overview of resolutions in MC USA.

WHAT DOES THE RESOLUTION ADDRESS IN MC USA?

FROM THE WRITERS

"Our denomination's policies, structures, practices and theologies have excluded LGBTQIA persons from fully sanctioned participation in the denomination and have caused great harm to LGBTQIA Mennonites and their families."

STAFF SYNOPSIS

This resolution is a response to a variety of practices and policies in MC USA and seeks to have the delegate body acknowledge harm done to the LGBTQIA members of MC USA. The resolution is also positioned as a commitment to live into **forbearance** by "doing the difficult work of being church together."

The Executive Board recognizes that Section III of the Membership Guidelines have been applied differently by the various MC USA area conferences, which has resulted in a diversity of practices that have led to confusion and conflict. Find a timeline of events related to this resolution here: [A timeline of the resolution process](#)

Please check out [Delegate Resources: Special Session May 2022](#) for more information.

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Prepared by: Glen Guyton, Executive Director, MC USA

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CURRENT POLICIES OR PROGRAMS RELATED TO THIS CHURCH STATEMENT

1. In September 2020, the Executive Board took action on the Membership Guidelines Advisory Group recommendations, which addresses some of the actions requested in this resolution.
2. This resolution aligns with the intent of **MC USA's Renewed Commitments**. "God invites us to experience and bear witness to the belovedness of all creation. We yearn to know and share in the mystery of God's unending love. We confess that sin fragments our wholeness and strains our relationships with God, each other and the world. Confronted with the misuses of power in our lives, communities and institutions, we seek to tell the truth and repent. The Holy Spirit beckons us toward the restoration of all things in Christ. God continually calls us beloved."
3. Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, **Article 6. Creation and Calling of Human Beings**: *"We believe that human beings were created good, in the image of God. As creatures according to the divine likeness, we have been made stewards to subdue and to care for creation out of reverence and honor for the Creator. As creatures made in the divine image, we have been blessed with the abilities to respond faithfully to God, to live in harmony with other human beings, and to engage in meaningful work and rest."*
4. **Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, Article 19. Marriage**: *"We believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life. Christian marriage is a mutual relationship in Christ, a covenant made in the context of the church. According to Scripture, right sexual union takes place only within the marriage relationship. Marriage is meant for sexual intimacy, companionship, and the birth and nurture of children."*
5. A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership: Polity Manual for Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA. Sexuality. "Celibacy is the standard for single persons and a monogamous, heterosexual relationship for married persons, as reflected in Article 19 of our Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective."
6. **Bylaws of Mennonite Church USA, Article III.4.a-b: "Rights and Privileges**. The congregation shall retain or be given certain rights and privileges as a member of the Mennonite Church USA.
 - a. "The congregation shall have the authority to determine the criteria and the responsibility to implement the process for membership of persons joining their congregation, and which shall be done in consultation with their area conference and in consideration of expectations for membership in Mennonite Church USA.
 - b. "The congregation shall retain the right to manage its own affairs, including but not limited to its organization, personnel, program and management of property."
7. **Bylaws of Mennonite Church USA, Article IV.2.a-c & 3c-d**
 2. **"Rights and Privileges**. Each area conference shall retain or be given certain rights and privileges as a member of the Mennonite Church USA.
 - a. "Each area conference shall have the authority to determine the criteria and responsibility to implement the process for membership of congregations within their area conference, including procedures for withdrawal and dismissal.

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- b. "Each area conference shall retain the right of final decision to manage its own affairs of its organization, personnel, program and management of property.
- c. "Each area conference shall retain the privilege of withdrawing from the Mennonite Church USA, and in so doing shall withdraw all of its member congregations from Mennonite Church USA, provided that a withdrawing area conference shall discharge its financial commitments to Mennonite Church USA as part of such withdrawal.
- 3. **"Duties.** As a member of the Mennonite Church USA, each area conference shall have a responsibility to be loyal to and support the work of the church. Specifically:
 - c. "Each area conference shall establish provisions and procedures for the credentialing of ministers.
 - d. "Each area conference shall make its own determinations as to membership of congregations, taking into account the common vision, commitments, and membership guidelines of Mennonite Church USA."
- 8. **Bylaws of Mennonite Church USA, Article VI.1.f:** "Ensure that anti-racist and culturally competent principles are practiced throughout church structures and programs."

ACTIONS PROPOSED IN THE RESOLUTION

Summary of Actions	Division of MC USA Responsible	Financial Impact
1. There is a general call to confession, truth-telling and repentance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All members of Mennonite Church USA. 	This action is aspirational. There is no direct financial impact.
2. Rescind Section III of Membership Guidelines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Board staff. Area conference. 	There is no direct financial impact in rescinding a section of the Membership Guidelines.
3. Executive Board will consult with LGBTQIA leaders to create a constituency group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Board. 	No details are listed. Constituency groups in MC USA are responsible for their own funding. MC USA EB staff may incur additional meeting costs of \$2,000-\$5,000 annually.
4. Provide denominational resources for individuals, congregations, and conferences to engage with repentance and reconciliation in their own contexts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Board staff. 	Existing resources could be distributed in our system at minimal cost. Programs in MC USA without dedicated staff support may cost \$15,000-\$25,000 annually to have any meaningful impact.

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5. Follow the leadership of LGBTQIA Mennonites to provide support and resources for LGBTQIA leaders in the church.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Board staff. 	Existing resources could be distributed in our system at minimal cost. Programs in MC USA without dedicated staff support may cost \$15,000-\$25,000 annually to have any meaningful impact.
6. Formalize and publicize policies for MC USA's Executive Board, staff, and church-wide program agencies that prohibit the use of sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status as criteria to restrict a person's full participation in the ministries, activities, roles and committees at the denominational level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Board staff. Program agencies. 	This is already current practice, so there is no additional cost.
7. Embody a theology that honors LGBTQIA people and relationships with all future MC USA theological statements, including, but not limited to, future revisions of The Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective and A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Board staff. 	Some aspects of this action are aspirational. In addition, MC USA would need to hold numerous consultations to set clear expectations for a theology that honors LGBTQIA people and relationships.
8. When MC USA partners with other denominations or faith groups, its input into the process will advocate for this theology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Board staff. 	This action is not defined well enough to attribute a cost.

ADDITIONAL NOTES CONCERNING IMPACT

PROCESS FOR A RESOLUTION FOR REPENTANCE AND TRANSFORMATION

MC USA delegates will determine if this resolution will be discussed and voted on at the Special Session of the Delegate Assembly.

The first delegate vote related to this resolution will ask MC USA delegates whether they will process and vote on "A Resolution for Repentance and Transformation" at this Special Session of the Delegate Assembly.

DELEGATE ASSEMBLY 2022



- Regarding “A Resolution for Repentance and Transformation,” delegates will be asked to choose one of the following options:
 - I choose to add the “Repentance and Transformation” resolution to the agenda of this meeting for delegates to discuss and vote on.
 - I choose not to add the “Repentance and Transformation” resolution to the agenda of this meeting.
 - I abstain.

Full details are available at: [Delegate process for May 2022 Special Session of the Delegate Assembly](#).

MC USA EXECUTIVE BOARD STAFF

The Executive Board of MC USA has directed the staff to address many of the actions requested in the resolution. Please read: [Mennonite Church USA Executive Board processes Membership Guidelines Advisory Group report](#)

Action #3. The action calls for the Executive Board to consult with LGBTQIA leaders to create a constituency group. This action would be stronger with a change in the Bylaws of Mennonite Church USA, [Article IX.2.e](#). The bylaws grant the power to form constituency groups to the Executive Board and not to the Delegate Assembly: “The Executive Board may, in its discretion, identify new constituency groups and determine the number of representatives therefrom to the Constituency Leaders Council.” It is not clear how this action impacts the “discretion” the Executive Board has moving forward or the number of representatives appointed to CLC.

Action #7. MC USA currently has no plans to create a new Confession of Faith.

Our polity manual, A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership, is a joint document shared with Mennonite Church Canada and cannot be unilaterally changed by Mennonite Church USA.

Action #8. Staff would need more clarity to understand how to execute these actions. As written, the actions are more aspirational than substantive.

MC USA PROGRAM AGENCIES

Action #5. While hiring policies vary by agency, no program agency, nor the Executive Board staff restricts employment based on sexual orientation, gender identity or marital status. Currently, any member in good standing in an area conference can serve in MC USA. Agencies may also hire people who are not members of MC USA. Each agency is different and may be subject to different state and national employment laws.

DELEGATE ASSEMBLY 2022



MC USA AREA CONFERENCES

Action #1. The resolution calls members of MC USA to truth-telling, repentance and transformation in the Way of Jesus and outlines that confession. Conferences would be responsible for how they engage this action in their contexts.

Action #2. Currently, area conferences vary in how they enforce the membership guidelines in their contexts.

MC USA CONGREGATIONS

Action #1. The resolution calls members of MC USA to truth-telling, repentance and transformation in the Way of Jesus and outlines that confession. Congregations would be responsible for how they engage this action in their contexts.

Action #2. Currently, congregations vary in how they enforce the membership guidelines in their contexts.

For Justice in the U.S. Criminal Legal System

Updated May 28, 2021

Summary

As a historic peace church, Mennonite Church USA is called to resist “injustice in all forms, and in all places.”¹ Many aspects of the current United States’ criminal legal system cause pain and suffering for many, especially poor people and people of color.

The U.S. criminal legal system, at its core, promotes violence and punishment, not reconciliation and peace. We hear this from the voices of those currently and formerly incarcerated, calling for justice; from their families, who yearn to be made whole; and from people of color, who are discriminated against and hurt by this system.² The violence of the U.S. criminal legal system will not, and cannot, bear the fruits of justice and peace.

A just world will only come through following the life and teachings of Jesus. For too long, we have ignored the teachings of Jesus as they apply to the criminal legal system. Jesus calls us to help the poor, the sick and the oppressed. “I was in prison and you visited me,” Jesus tells the righteous in Matthew 25:36. We confess that too often, we have ignored that call.

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus reads from the prophet Isaiah, saying, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Then, Jesus declares, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” Luke 4:18-21

As Christians, we are called to look to Jesus and the prophetic tradition of the Bible for our vision of justice. We, like every generation of the church before us, are called to do our part, empowered by the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, to advance God’s all-encompassing shalom, on earth as it is in heaven.

¹ MCUSA Renewed Commitments

² For more on the injustices of the U.S. criminal legal system, see Appendix A.

26

27 **Resolution**

28 We as a church body commit to confronting the injustice within the current U.S. criminal legal
29 system. There are many ways individual congregations, conferences, institutions and agencies of
30 the denomination can participate. We will call on them to report back to the delegate body at the
31 next biennial convention. The following are a starting place to begin this work together:
32

- 33 1. Learning about the injustices of the U.S. criminal legal system through conversations,
34 book groups, guest speakers and other means
- 35 2. Speaking with, and learning from, current and former prisoners, as well as others whom
36 the U.S. criminal legal system has harmed
- 37 3. Utilizing curricula addressing the injustices of the U.S. criminal legal system, such as
38 those developed by Mennonite Central Committee, MC USA, and Healing Communities
39 USA to guide local churches through discussions about the U.S. criminal legal system
40 and ways to help those hurt by it
- 41 4. Supporting the families of those who have been incarcerated
- 42 5. Learning about how our legal system has been shaped by racist assumptions and
43 committing to dismantle racism
- 44 6. Divesting from all private prisons, as an organization and as individuals within the church
- 45 7. Advocating for just treatment of people at all levels of the U.S. criminal legal system by
46 petitioning representatives at every level of government to enact necessary reforms
47 including ending cash bail, enacting policies mandating reductions in police violence,
48 ending mandatory minimum sentencing and others³
- 49 8. Continuing to call for a ban on the death penalty at the state and federal levels ⁴
- 50 9. Working for reform of the criminal legal system to promote accountability and
51 rehabilitation
- 52 10. Seeking out alternatives to the current legal system through restorative justice practices,
53 creating new systems of justice that reflect God's love and care for our world

54 Original Authors & Sponsors Team (Please note that this resolution has been modified by MC
55 USA Executive Board staff and the Resolutions Committee):

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Appendix A

Policing

Policing originated to control various “threatening” peoples. In the Southern United States, many police forces were borne out of slave patrols, formed to maintain the institution of slavery. In the Northern states, Indian Constables controlled Native Americans, and in cities, such as St. Louis, Mo., police forces were formed to protect residents specifically from Native Americans.³

The racial elements of early police can still be seen today. When stopped by police, a person of color is more likely to have their vehicle searched.⁴ Body camera footage also shows police officers clearly interacting with Black community members differently than their white counterparts.⁵ The rate at which Black people are arrested is higher than white people for both juveniles and adults. Additionally, Black people are five times more likely than white people to be stopped by police without just cause.⁶ The statistics for death by police are alarming as well, as Black and Hispanic people are disproportionately impacted. While white people make up more than 60% of the population, they only make up about 41% of fatal police shootings. Black people make up 13.4% of the population but make up 22% of fatal police shootings.^{7 8}

³ Victor E Kappeler, “A Brief History of Slavery and the Origins of American Policing,” A Brief History of Slavery and the Origins of American Policing | Police Studies Online (Eastern Kentucky University, January 7, 2014), <https://plsonline.eku.edu/insidelook/brief-history-slavery-and-origins-american-policing>.

⁴ Emma Pierson et al., “A Large-Scale Analysis of Racial Disparities in Police Stops Across the United States,” Nature Human Behavior, May 2020, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-0858-1>.

⁵ Rob Voigt et al., “Language from Police Body Camera Footage Shows Racial Disparities in Officer Respect,” PNAS (National Academy of Sciences, June 20, 2017), <https://www.pnas.org/content/114/25/6521.short>.

⁶ “Criminal Justice Fact Sheet,” NAACP, accessed October 1, 2020, <https://www.naacp.org/criminal-justice-fact-sheet/>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ “U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States,” Census Bureau QuickFacts, 2020, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219>.

Police brutality is a well-documented phenomenon. Over the past five years, police officers have killed more than 5,000 people.⁹ These statistics do not include other forms of police brutality in which the victim lives, as these are harder to document. Additionally, police officers have become increasingly militarized, and the number of SWAT and other militarized units has increased. These units use weapons, body armor and vehicles designed for war. As these units grow in numbers, there has been no corresponding increase in officer safety or decrease in crime.¹⁰

Ultimately, many issues in policing are rooted in the fact that police in the United States have become overtasked and overburdened. Municipalities look to the police to handle issues of homelessness, mental health crises, food insecurity and addiction.¹¹ These issues are better addressed by increased funding for education,¹² social services, medicine, transportation infrastructure and other public works.¹³

Cash Bail

The cash bail system is one of the most fundamentally unjust tenets of the American legal system. The state charges a cash bail, which is either a standard amount for a particular offense, or an amount adjusted by a judge, trying to guarantee that the defendant will return for their trial or hearing. If they do show up, the bail money is returned; if they don't, it is forfeited to the government. This system creates a divide based on economic status and incarcerates people based on their economic status.¹⁴ Close to 90% of people being held in jails pre-trial are there because they cannot afford to pay the bail.¹⁵ Additionally, being held before sentencing raises the likelihood of being convicted.¹⁶ The idea of cash bail was to avoid people fleeing, but it has become about how much money you have instead of whether or not you will show up to court.¹⁷ Being held on bail can mean loss of job, housing and even custody of children before a person is

⁹ "The Other Epidemic: Fatal Police Shootings in the Time of COVID-19," American Civil Liberties Union, 2020, <https://www.aclu.org/report/other-epidemic-fatal-police-shootings-time-covid-19>.

¹⁰ Nsikan Akpan, "Police Militarization Fails to Protect Officers and Targets Black Communities, Study Finds," PBS (Public Broadcasting Service, August 21, 2018) <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/science/police-militarization-fails-to-protect-officers-and-targets-black-communitiesstudy-finds>.

¹¹ "What Police Are For: A Look Into Role Of The Police In Modern Society," NPR (NPR, June 10, 2020), <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/10/874340093/what-police-are-for-a-look-into-role-of-the-police-in-modern-society>.

¹² Randi Hjalmarsson, Helena Holmlund, and Matthew J. Lindquist, "The Effect of Education on Criminal Convictions and Incarceration: Causal Evidence from Micro-Data," *The Economic Journal* 125, no. 587 (2015): pp. 1290-1326, <https://doi.org/10.1111/eoj.12204>.

¹³ Daniel Sansfaçon, "Investing Wisely in Crime Prevention: International Experiences," *Investing Wisely in Crime Prevention: International Experiences* § (2000), pp. 1-15.

¹⁴ Stephanie Wykstra, "Bail Reform, Which Could Save Millions of Unconvicted People from Jail, Explained," Vox (Vox Media, October 17, 2018), <https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2018/10/17/17955306/bail-reform-criminal-justice-inequality>.

¹⁵ Cherise Fanno Burdeen, "How Money Bail Traps the Poor," *The Atlantic* (Atlantic Media Company, April 12, 2016), <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/04/the-dangerous-domino-effect-of-not-making-bail/477906/>

¹⁶ Udi Ofer, "We Can't End Mass Incarceration Without Ending Money Bail," American Civil Liberties Union (American Civil Liberties Union, July 9, 2018), <https://www.aclu.org/blog/smart-justice/we-cant-end-mass-incarceration-without-ending-money-bail?redirect=blog>

¹⁷ "Bail Reform," American Civil Liberties Union, 2015, <https://www.aclu.org/issues/smart-justice/bail-reform>.

proven to have committed a crime.¹⁸ Cash bail also disproportionately affects Black, Latinos and Native American people, as they are twice as likely to be held in jail for failing to post bond.¹⁹ These same groups also face higher bail rates than white people when charged with similar crimes.²⁰

Legal Counsel and Sentencing

The court system itself is also unjust. Ninety-four percent of prisoners do not stand trial, but instead are pressured into plea deals, forfeiting their chance to be proven innocent or guilty by a jury.²¹ The plea deal has become a way for the legal system to save time and money, at the expense of those being charged. People who have been charged are encouraged to take plea deals, with prosecutors threatening extraordinarily inflated charges if the case is taken to trial.

Additionally, mandatory sentencing laws have increased both the number of people incarcerated and the length of their incarceration.²² These include “three strikes” laws, which increase the length of sentence for the third offense, no matter the charge, and mandatory minimum sentencing laws, which force judges to impose certain sentences on specific crimes. Their stated goal was to reduce drug use, but they have generally failed to do so. Instead, these mandatory minimums increase the number of people in jail and are one of the major reasons why the U.S. has the highest incarceration rate in the world.²³

The death penalty is another area of problematic and unjust sentencing. Studies show that the death penalty is used in a racially biased way, as a defendant is more likely to be sentenced to death for killing a white person than for killing a non-white person.²⁴ MC USA has already resolved to oppose the injustice of the death penalty on numerous occasions.²⁵

¹⁸ Cherise Fanno Burdeen, “How Money Bail Traps the Poor,” The Atlantic (Atlantic Media Company, April 12, 2016), <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/04/the-dangerous-domino-effect-of-not-making-bail/477906/>.

¹⁹ Stephen Demuth, “Racial and Ethnic Differences in Pretrial Release Decisions and Outcomes: A Comparison of Hispanic, Black and White Felony Arrestees*,” *Criminology* 41, no. 3 (August 2003): pp. 873-908, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.2003.tb01007.x>.

²⁰ Cherise Fanno Burdeen, “How Money Bail Traps the Poor,” The Atlantic (Atlantic Media Company, April 12, 2016), <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/04/the-dangerous-domino-effect-of-not-making-bail/477906/>.

²¹ Duffy Rice, Josie, Smith III. “The 94% - Plea Deals”. Justice in America (podcast). August 1, 2018. <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/episode-2-the-94-plea-deals/id1410847713?i=1000417011518>

²² James Cullen, “Sentencing Laws and How They Contribute to Mass Incarceration,” Brennan Center for Justice, October 5, 2018, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/sentencing-laws-and-how-they-contribute-mass-incarceration>.

²³ Rob Montz, “How Mandatory Minimums Helped Drive Mass Incarceration,” Vox (Vox Media, September 3, 2015), <https://www.vox.com/2015/9/3/9254545/mandatory-minimums-mass-incarceration>.

²⁴ “Race,” Death Penalty Information Center, June 21, 2019, <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/policy-issues/race>. “Race and the Death Penalty,” American Civil Liberties Union, accessed October 1, 2020, <https://www.aclu.org/other/race-and-death-penalty>.

²⁵ “Response to the Federal Government Reinstating the Death Penalty,” Mennonite Church USA (Mennonite Church USA, July 26, 2019), <https://www.mennoniteusa.org/menno-snapshots/death-penalty-reinstatement-response/>. “A Resolution on The Death Penalty - 2001,” Mennonite Church USA (Mennonite Church USA, August 3, 2020), <https://www.mennoniteusa.org/resource-portal/resource/a-resolution-on-the-death-penalty-2001/>.

Finally, a lack of access to legal counsel makes it difficult for those charged with crimes to prove their innocence or fight for a more just sentence.²⁶ Public defenders are overworked, and as a result, many of their clients are unable to receive the attention that they deserve.²⁷

Incarceration

The U.S. system of incarceration has many flaws. One of the most notable is the increasing use of private prisons, which are designed to profit from those serving time. These prisons do not save the government money.²⁸ Instead, they make money for their shareholders and help foster a culture of predatory legal action. Both private prisons and government-run prisons practice numerous inhumane policies.²⁹ Prisoners can be hired out to private companies that contract with the government, and the prisoners are often paid less than a dollar a day.³⁰

Additionally, the experience of living in a prison can be incredibly traumatic, and PTSD as a result of incarceration is not uncommon.³¹ Women are especially vulnerable, as they are more likely than men to experience both inmate-on-inmate and staff-on-inmate sexual violence.³² After being released, formerly incarcerated individuals are often excluded from public housing and considered ineligible for many jobs. In some states, they are barred from voting.

Incarceration hurts more than the person incarcerated. Eighty percent of women in jail are mothers, and the majority of them are their child's primary caretaker.³³ Visitation policies often discourage visits from families because of the cost of phone or video calls, limited visitation hours and diminished quality of contact.³⁴ In addition, parents often have difficulty regaining custody of children after they are released.³⁵ The effects of incarceration make it difficult for both the individual and their family to live full and healthy lives.

²⁶ Richard A. Oppel and Jugal K. Patel, "One Lawyer, 194 Felony Cases, and No Time," The New York Times (The New York Times, Jan. 31, 2019), www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/01/31/us/public-defender-case-loads.html.

²⁷ Richard A. Oppel and Jugal K. Patel, "One Lawyer, 194 Felony Cases, and No Time," The New York Times (The New York Times, Jan. 31, 2019), www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/01/31/us/public-defender-case-loads.html.

²⁸ Mika'il DeVeaux, "The Trauma of the Incarceration Experience," Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review 48 (2013): 257-277.

²⁹ "Prison Conditions," Equal Justice Initiative (Equal Justice Initiative, May 20, 2020), <https://eji.org/issues/prison-conditions/>.

³⁰ Whitney Bennis, "Prison Labor in America: How Is It Legal?" The Atlantic (The Atlantic, September 21, 2015), <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/09/prison-labor-in-america/406177/>.

³¹ Mika'il DeVeaux, "The Trauma of the Incarceration Experience," Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review 48 (2013): 257-277.

³² Elizabeth Swavola, Kristine Riley, and Ram Subramanian, "Overlooked: Women and Jails in an Era of Reform" (Vera Institute of Justice, 2016), pp. 6-34, https://storage.googleapis.com/vera-web-assets/downloads/Publications/overlooked-women-and-jails-report/legacy_downloads/overlooked-women-in-jails-report-web.pdf.

³³ Aleks Kajstura, "Women's Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2017," October 17, 2017, <https://www.aclu.org/report/womens-mass-incarceration-whole-pie-2017>.

³⁴ Elizabeth Swavola, Kristine Riley, and Ram Subramanian, "Overlooked: Women and Jails in an Era of Reform" (Vera Institute of Justice, 2016), pp. 6-34, https://storage.googleapis.com/vera-web-assets/downloads/Publications/overlooked-women-and-jails-report/legacy_downloads/overlooked-women-in-jails-report-web.pdf.

³⁵ Ibid.

153 **Other Concerns**

154 These areas of concern – policing, cash bail, legal counsel and sentencing, and incarceration –
155 are – not the only injustices in the U.S. criminal legal system. Other concerns include the
156 criminalization and incarceration of immigrants, e-carceration, treatment of children accused of
157 crimes, and many others. These are significant tools of injustice that run counter to Jesus’ call,
158 and congregations and individuals within MC USA may wish to honor this resolution by
159 engaging one or more of the areas of concern not listed in this appendix.

DELEGATE ASSEMBLY 2022



STAFF SUMMARY AND IMPACT STATEMENT

This summary is the opinion of the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board staff about the impact of the proposed resolution if passed by the delegate board. This summary does not necessarily reflect the views of resolution writers or the Executive Board. Delegates are encouraged to consult other resources, engage the writers of the resolution and discern within their context. This summary is based on the staff's understanding of the current bylaws and policies of Mennonite Church USA (MC USA).

TITLE: FOR JUSTICE IN THE U.S. CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM

[Link to the resolution.](#)

TYPE OF RESOLUTION: CHURCH STATEMENT

WHAT IS A CHURCH STATEMENT RESOLUTION?

A church statement gives direction to the church on matters of Christian faithfulness, often concerning current issues or issues where current church documents or previous statements fail to adequately address current questions/challenges. Church statements are approved by the delegate body and are implemented by the national body, area conferences, local congregations and individual followers of Jesus, according to the rights and responsibilities provided to each body. ***Church statements should be developed to further God's mission, as defined by our statement of vision and purpose as well as our Renewed Commitments.***

This resolution is not scheduled for a vote. It has been designated as a study resolution.

A STUDY PROCESS FOR RESOLUTIONS

a. Proposed resolutions, approved by the Constituency Leaders Council, may be posted on the Mennonite Church USA website and printed for distribution.

b. Proposed resolutions may be promoted by the writers/sponsors via blogs or opinion pieces, as appropriate.

c. The constituency may provide feedback to proposed resolutions via email or postal mail to the Executive Director, CLC, Executive Board or the Resolutions Committee.

Please read: [Developing Resolutions for Mennonite Church USA](#) for a more detailed overview of resolutions in MC USA.

DELEGATE ASSEMBLY 2022



WHAT DOES THE RESOLUTION ADDRESS IN MC USA?

FROM THE WRITERS

"We, as a church body, commit to confronting the injustice within the current U.S. criminal legal system. There are many ways individual congregations, conferences, institutions and agencies of the denomination can participate. We will call on them to report back to the delegate body at the next biennial convention."

STAFF SYNOPSIS

This resolution provides members of MC USA an opportunity to explore core Anabaptist beliefs in a modern context, especially in the contexts of the church's relationship to the state and the use of violence by the state. The church statement calls for study, education and action. Several options are given for members to choose from.

CURRENT POLICIES OR PROGRAMS RELATED TO THE CHURCH STATEMENT RESOLUTION

1. This resolution aligns with **Renewed Commitments for MC USA**, particularly the call to Witness to God's peace: "We are called to extend God's holistic peace, proclaiming Christ's redemption for the world with our lives. Through Christ, God frees the world from sin and offers reconciliation. We bear witness to this gift of peace by rejecting violence and resisting injustice in all forms, and in all places."
2. Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, **Article 22. Peace, Justice, and Nonresistance**: "Led by the Spirit, and beginning in the church, we witness to all people that violence is not the will of God. We witness against all forms of violence, including war among nations, hostility among races and classes, abuse of children and women, violence between men and women, abortion, and capital punishment."
3. Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective: **Article 23. Church's Relation to Government and Society**: "The church is the spiritual, social, and political body that gives its allegiance to God alone. As citizens of God's kingdom, we trust in the power of God's love for our defense. The church knows no geographical boundaries and needs no violence for its protection. The only Christian nation is the church of Jesus Christ, made up of people from every tribe and nation, called to witness to God's glory. "In contrast to the church, governing authorities of the world have been instituted by God for maintaining order in societies. Such governments and other human institutions as servants of God are called to act justly and provide order."
4. **Bylaws of Mennonite Church USA, Article II.1.a-g**:
 - a. "Share the good news of Jesus Christ through word and deed, calling people to salvation in Christ, and to form Christian communities of love and service to others.
 - b. "Establish, teach and promote the core values and beliefs of the church based on scripture as expressed in the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, as updated from time to time.
 - c. "Tell the story of God's faithfulness in our journey as an Anabaptist people.
 - d. "Encourage and enable congregations to actively engage in God's mission in the world.
 - e. "Confront forces of the world which work against God's intent for all creation.
 - f. "Be a channel for dialogue and witness to other church bodies and to governing authorities.

DELEGATE ASSEMBLY 2022



- g. "Provide a sense of larger community, creating a common identity for ourselves and recognized by those with whom we come in contact."

ACTIONS PROPOSED IN THE RESOLUTION

Summary of Actions	Division of MC USA Responsible	Financial Impact
There is a general call to "confront the injustice within the current U.S. criminal legal system."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Board staff. Program agencies. Area conferences. Congregations. 	This action is aspirational. There is no direct financial impact.
The resolution lists ten "starting places" to work at the aspirational call.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Board staff. Program agencies. Area conferences. Congregations. 	Many of the items listed are educational. There will be some cost associated with acquiring educational resources, staff coordination time and possibly shifting investments, if groups are interested in divestments. The additional costs associated with this resolution seem minimal. MC USA Executive Board staff has established the Justice Fund , which may be helpful for conferences and congregations working at the concerns in this resolution. Read more about the Justice Fund.

ADDITIONAL NOTES CONCERNING IMPACT

MC USA EXECUTIVE BOARD STAFF

This resolution is consistent with work currently carried out by MC USA Executive Board staff. As part of the Journey Forward process and our [Bring the Peace Initiative](#), we are well-positioned to facilitate the recommendations in this resolution. The staff has provided an [Anabaptist grounded resource for clergy and congregations to engage in learning about the call for police abolition](#). The Executive Board staff is strengthening our capacity for peace and justice with new strategic staffing coordination with the various program agencies and other partners.

The resolution will not significantly change our work; it will reinforce the importance of this work in MC USA.

MC USA PROGRAM AGENCIES

Agencies will be invited to report at the next Delegate Assembly on how they engaged in the options listed in the proposed church statement resolution.

Please check out [Delegate Resources: Special Session May 2022](#) for more information.

Page 3 of 4

SPECIAL SESSION OF THE

DELEGATE ASSEMBLY 2022



MC USA AREA CONFERENCES

Conference delegates will be invited to report at the next Delegate Assembly (following the May 2022 Special Session) on how they have engaged in the options listed in the proposed church statement resolution.

MC USA CONGREGATIONS

Congregational delegates will be expected to report at the next Delegate Assembly (following the May 2022 Special Session) on how they have engaged in the options listed in the proposed church statement resolution.



Mennonite Church USA

Accessibility Resolution

(Updated May 21, 2021)

Introduction:

The purpose of this resolution is to help all members of Mennonite Church USA (MC USA), including congregations, area conferences, agencies and constituency groups recognize and seek to remove the barriers to belonging in architecture, communications and attitudes that prevent individuals with disabilities from participating in church life; and to bring wholeness to the Body of Christ as those barriers are removed, and all people are fully integrated into the community of faith.

“Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. All kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit and to all kinds of people! The variety is wonderful.” 1 Corinthians 12:7, The Message.

Resolution:

As members of MC USA, we commit to growing as communities of grace, joy and peace without barriers so that God’s healing and hope flow through all of us to the world regardless of ability.

This resolution affirms that people with disabilities are included within priorities expressed in MC USA Journey Forward:

- Experience and bear witness to the belovedness of all creation, acknowledging that all people are made in the image of God and are children of God.
- Follow Jesus: In his life and teaching, Jesus emphasized that God’s reign includes all people, especially those who have been marginalized or excluded. As an Anabaptist community of the living word, we will listen carefully to the voices of people with disabilities, to better understand the fullness of God’s love for us and the vision of God’s reign through Jesus Christ.

- Witness to God's peace: We are called to extend God's holistic peace to all. We bear witness to Christ's gift of peace to the world by rejecting violence and resisting injustice in all its forms and in all places.
- Experience transformation: The Holy Spirit dwells in and among us, transforming us to reflect God's love in unique ways. When our worship includes all people, the Spirit gathers the whole body of Christ, where our diversity reveals God's beauty and enables us to more fully embody the grace, joy and peace of the gospel.

We, the members, congregations and organizations of MC USA, resolve to deepen our understanding of barriers for people with disabilities, to take action to make our community life and facilities accessible and welcoming to all, and to discern and affirm the gifts of each person for our common good.

Anabaptist Disabilities Network in collaboration with Mennonite Health Services (MHS) will support MC USA congregations, conferences and organizations to remove barriers to belonging for people with disabilities by:

- Providing assessment tools, such as the accessibility surveys offered by Congregational Accessibility Network. (Appendix 2)
- Offering events and resources for all ages to raise awareness and change attitudes about disability.
- Sharing and developing resources, including curriculum, for people with disabilities.
- Providing resources to congregations through congregational disability advocates.
- Consulting with congregations about addressing specific barriers.

Congregations can take action by:

- Assessing their own accessibility through an audit or inventory, and by periodically surveying their congregants to learn of any barriers to full community participation.
- Developing a plan to increase accessibility in some way(s). For example, motorized door openers or wheelchair ramps, assisted listening devices or hearing loops, large print worship materials, Sunday school classes that raise awareness and understanding.
- Calling a disability advocate or advocacy team charged with helping to assess accessibility, identify and remove barriers, share resources on disability, and call forth the gifts of people with disabilities in the congregation.

At all levels of the church, we commit to calling out and employing the leadership gifts of people with disabilities.

Accessibility Resolution: Appendix 1

Supplemental Information

Context

Faith communities in the U.S. are exempt from secular mandates in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As a result, many Mennonite congregations lag behind secular society in making facilities and activities accessible and in integrating those with disabilities into their communities.

While celebrating the many steps Mennonites have taken to become more accessible to people with disabilities, architectural barriers persist, hindering the participation of persons with mobility challenges. Communication barriers persist, hindering the participation of those with differing visual, intellectual or hearing abilities. Attitudinal barriers persist, reflecting a lack of sensitivity and denying those with differing abilities dignity and access to spiritual nurture, friendship, freedom, membership, baptism, self-expression, service, and leadership equal to and balanced by the rights of others.

History

In 1983, the General Conference Mennonite Church General Assembly adopted a *Resolution Regarding Caring Community*, which pledged to continue to pay special attention to the needs of those with physical, emotional, and sensory disabilities, and to break down the barriers that have hindered their participation.

We interpret the 1995 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* to include all people, including those with disabilities:

- At Pentecost, God began to pour out the Spirit on all flesh and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, all Christians are called to carry out their particular ministries (Article 3).
- God has created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, creating human beings in the divine image (Articles 5 and 6).
- All believers have been baptized in one Spirit into the one body of Christ, and the varieties of gifts and ministries in the church are all given for the common good (Article 9).
- The church's mission is to reconcile differing groups, creating one new humanity. The church is called to witness to people of every culture, ethnicity, or nationality (Article 10).

96 Definition

97 People with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, emotional, intellectual, or
98 sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective
99 participation in society on an equal basis with others. (United Nations Convention on the
100 Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, December
101 2006).

102 Implementation Resources/Accountability

103 Following the approval of this resolution, Anabaptist Disabilities Network (ADN) will provide
104 leadership to carry out the concepts and commitments in this resolution. We do this in
105 collaboration with Mennonite Church USA agencies, and related organizations that serve those
106 with differing abilities.

107 Resolution Process

108 Work on this resolution began in 2014. ADN recognizes the contribution of the following to this
109 resolution: Tim Burkholder, Christine Guth, Clare Krabill, Richard Aguirre, Sheila Stopher-Yoder
110 Jeanne Davies, Eldon Stoltzfus, Katherine Dickson, and Katie Smith.

111 At the invitation of Anabaptist Disabilities Network ("ADN"), four congregations, namely, Akron
112 Mennonite Church, Hesston Mennonite Church, Waterford Mennonite Church, and Berkey
113 Avenue Mennonite Fellowship endorsed this resolution and worked in collaboration with MHS to
114 bring it to Mennonite Church USA in 2021.

115

Accessibility Resolution: Appendix 2

Note: The Congregational Accessibility Network (CAN) was begun by Anabaptist Disabilities Network in 2007. In 2011, CAN became an independent organization with a mission to encourage congregations of all faiths to include persons with disabilities.



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Congregational Assessment Survey Form

Welcome to the **Congregational Accessibility Network (CAN)**! This survey form is intended to help your congregation assess its level of accessibility to persons with various disabilities, including mental illness, and to provide suggestions to increase your accessibility.



The **Congregational Assessment Survey** is at <http://www.canaccess.org>. You are encouraged to use this hard copy version to collect the information needed and then fill out the survey online. The online survey automatically registers and keeps track of your results, and you can return to update it at any time. In addition, the Assessment Survey automatically generates the CAN Accessibility Seal for use on your congregational website.

The **CAN Accessibility Seal** acknowledges and awards an emblem for congregations that meet certain criteria in any of the following accessibility categories:



Mobility. This indicates accessibility to the building and grounds including parking, entrances, restrooms, and worship space for wheelchair users and others.

Hearing and Language



Hearing – Assistive Listening Devices (ALD) and other aids are provided for persons who are hard of hearing.

Sign Language – Sign language interpretation is provided to enable communication between hearing persons and those who are deaf.



Vision – Visual aids are provided for persons who have low vision or are blind.



Support – The congregation supports inclusion of persons with disabilities through awareness-raising, education, support groups, and provision for individual differences in gifts, behavior, and learning style.



Mobility

Mobility accessibility means that anyone can use the congregational building and grounds. This means the congregation provides accessible parking leading to an accessible entrance, which, in turn, leads to an accessible worship area and preferably to at least one accessible classroom. Accessibility for wheelchair users has become the criteria of measurement for many areas of mobility accessibility. Also included in this section are questions related to hand mobility, particularly in the use of door handles and water faucets.

Congregations that earn the Mobility emblem meet the criteria outlined for **Parking, Entrance, Interior, Restrooms, and Worship Area**. Congregations are highly encouraged to meet the criteria for **Classrooms** and **Social/Gathering Area** as well.

Parking: Accessible parking spaces are provided. All accessible parking spaces have common features. Note the slight differences between **Van Accessible** spaces and **Car Accessible** spaces.

All Accessible parking spaces meet all of these criteria:

- ___ Each parking space has a level, stable surface.
- ___ Parking spaces are marked with an upright sign with the universal accessibility symbol clearly visible even when a vehicle is parked in the space.
- ___ Accessible parking spaces are at least 8 feet wide.
- ___ A path at least 36 inches wide leads from the parking space aisle to an accessible entrance. Path is level or at a grade of no more than 1:12 (for 1 in. of rise, 12 in. of length).

Van Accessible parking spaces meet these additional criteria:

- ___ A smooth level aisle 8 feet wide is marked beside each parking space for wheelchair accessibility. (Two spaces may share an aisle.)
- ___ A sign reading "Van Accessible" is alongside the universal accessibility sign.

Car Accessible parking spaces meet this additional criterion:

- ___ A smooth level aisle 5 feet wide is marked beside each parking space for wheelchair accessibility. (Two spaces may share an aisle.)

The number of accessible parking spaces needed is based on the total number of spaces.

Check	Total Spaces	Van Spaces	Car Spaces
___	25 or less	1	0
___	26-50	1	1
___	51-75	1	2
___	76-100	1	3
___	101-150	1	4
___	151-200	1	5
___	201-300	1	6
___	301-400	1	7
___	401-500	2	7
___	Over 500	2% accessible with 1/8 of those van spaces rounded up to the next whole number and the rest car spaces	

Entrance

___ A covered drop off area with 114" vertical clearance for vehicles to discharge passengers. (Recommended)

Entrance to the building is accessible to people who use wheelchairs, scooters, and walkers, as well as others who have difficulty using stairs. **Note:** This question only pertains to the method of building entry. A later question will address accessibility within the building.

All methods of accessible entrance meet the following criteria:

- ___ Accessible from accessible parking spaces via a smooth path at least 36 inches wide at a grade of no more than 1:12 (for 1 in. of rise, 12 in. of length).
- ___ There is clear signage indicating the accessible entrance. (If a main public entrance is not accessible, there should be a clear sign pointing to the accessible entrance.)
- ___ There is at least a five-foot level platform at the entry door.
- ___ The doorway entrance into the building is at least 36 inches wide.
- ___ Doorway has a level threshold of no more than ½ inch.

Accessibility can be via **Ground level**, a **Ramp**, or an **Elevator or lift**.

Ground level accessible entrances meet all of the above criteria

Ramps also meet the following criteria:

- ___ Ramp maximum incline of 1:12 (for 1 in. of rise, 12 in. of length), preferably 1:20.
- ___ Ramp minimum width is 36 inches.
- ___ Handrails are provided – on at least one side for shorter ramps (except curb ramps) and on both sides for rises of more than 6 inches.
- ___ After each 30 feet of ramp (measured horizontally) at a slope of 1:12 to 1:16 (or 40 feet for a slope of 1:16 to 1:20), there is a level landing.

Elevator or lift. Accessible entrances that include an elevator or lift also meet all of the following criteria:

- ___ Elevator or lift is certified by the company for intended use.
- ___ Elevator or lift is able to be easily used by standing or wheelchair user.
- ___ Elevator or lift is large enough to accommodate a wheelchair (preferably, along with a standing attendant).
- ___ Elevator or lift is able to bear the weight of a power wheelchair with person in it.

Doors are of two types:

- **Automatic doors** are recommended wherever possible since they provide the greatest amount of independence to the most people.
- **Manual doors** can also be made more accessible.

Manual doors should meet the following criteria:

- ___ Able to be opened by a wheelchair user without forcing the wheelchair off of the surrounding level surface.
- ___ Have a handle easy to grasp with one hand without the need for tight grasping, pinching, or twisting wrist.
- ___ Doors are light and easy to open (less than 5 lbs. pressure) by a wheelchair user.
- ___ (Highly recommended) Have an usher or greeter stationed at the door to help persons with mobility challenges.

Automatic doors should meet the following criteria:

- ___ Marked with the universal wheelchair access symbol and in good operating condition.
- ___ Plainly visible push buttons at comfortable height for person in a wheelchair.
- ___ Buttons at sufficient distance from any door that opens toward the user.
- ___ Doors open at moderate speed and give sufficient time for user to pass through.

Interior. Hallways and other interior sections of the building are accessible to people who use wheelchairs, scooters, and walkers, as well as others who have difficulty walking. **Note:** All of the criteria are required unless otherwise indicated.

- ___ **Hallways.** Hallways are level or have an incline of no more than 1:12, have a barrier-free width of at least 48 inches (60 inches preferable) to allow one wheelchair and one person walking to pass each other.
- ___ **Coat Racks.** At least one section of coat racks is low enough to be accessible by persons in wheelchairs and small children.
- ___ **Stairs.** All stairs have at least one handrail mounted 34-38 inches above the step. (This should include the podium platform; please see the Worship Area section.)
- ___ **Carpets and rugs.** Carpets and rugs are securely attached with a firm backing and have a pile level no more than 1/2-inch thick.
- ___ **Door handles.** (Required for doors on restrooms, worship area, and classrooms labeled accessible and highly recommended for others.) Room doors are able to be opened and closed with minimum effort and have handles that do not require tight grasping, pinching, or twisting wrist (generally lever handles).

Restrooms At least one restroom accessible to users of wheelchairs and others with mobility issues is available for both men and women. Restrooms may be of two types:

- **Family/companion restroom.** At least one is highly recommended. This makes it possible for a spouse or attendant of a different gender to assist the person with the disability.
- **Restroom stall within the standard facilities for each gender.**

Accessible family/companion restrooms meet the following criteria.

- ___ Have signs clearly marking them as accessible.
- ___ Have entrance doors with lever door handles that do not require tight grasping, pinching, or twisting wrist to operate.
- ___ Have entrance doors at least 32-inches wide.
- ___ Have entrance doors that either swing into the hallway, or, if swinging into the room, allow sufficient room beyond the radius of the door to turn a wheelchair. (See next point.)
- ___ Restrooms are at least 60 inches wide (beyond the radius of the door; see previous point) and 59 inches deep.
- ___ Wall-mounted grab bars are 33-36 inches high next to and at the back of the commode.
- ___ The toilet seat is 17-19 inches high.
- ___ The sink counter is no more than 34 inches high, has a knee clearance of at least 27 inches high, 30 inches wide and 19 inches deep, and hot and cold handles that do not require tight grasping, pinching, or twisting wrist to operate.

Restroom accessibility provided by a **stall within the standard facilities** for each gender meets the following criteria. **Note:** Accessible stalls in standard restrooms are recommended even if an accessible family/companion restroom is also provided. In situations where accessible stalls are the only accessible options, entrance doors to the restrooms must be wheelchair accessible (highly recommended in any case).

- ___ Entrance doors into the restrooms are at least 32 inches wide.
- ___ Entrance doors are operable by a person in a wheelchair and any door handles provided do not require tight grasping, pinching, or twisting wrist to operate.
- ___ Entrance doors either swing into the hallway, or, if swinging into the room, allow sufficient room beyond the radius of the door to turn a wheelchair. (See next point.)
- ___ The restrooms have at least a five-foot wide turning radius (beyond the radius of the door; see previous point).
- ___ At least one sink is provided with a counter no more than 34 inches high, a knee clearance of at least 27 inches high, 30 inches wide and 19 inches deep, and hot and cold handles that do not require tight grasping, pinching, or twisting wrist to operate.
- ___ Accessible restroom stalls are clearly marked with the universal accessible sign.
- ___ Entrance doors into the accessible stalls swing into the room, not into the stall.
- ___ Accessible restroom stalls are at least 60 inches wide and 59 inches deep.
- ___ Accessible stalls have secure, wall-mounted grab bars 33-36 inches high on the side and at the back of the commode.
- ___ Accessible stalls have a toilet seat 17-19 inches high.

Worship Area

All methods of accessible entrance meet the following criteria:

- ☐ Have an accessible building entrance and hallway leading to them.
- ☐ At the entrance, the presence of greeters, a clear view, and/or clear signage indicates the way to the accessible entrance to the worship area.
- ☐ There is at least a five-foot level platform at the entry door.
- ☐ The doorway entrance into the worship area is at least 36 inches wide.
- ☐ Doorway has a level threshold of no more than ½ inch.
- ☐ Ushers are available at the doorway to help persons find seating.

Accessibility can be via **Floor level**, a **Ramp**, or an **Elevator or lift**.

Floor level accessible entrances meet all of the above criteria:

Ramps also meet the following criteria:

- ☐ Ramp maximum incline of 1:12 (for 1 in. of rise, 12 in. of length), preferably 1:20.
- ☐ Ramp minimum width is 36 inches.
- ☐ Handrails are provided – on at least one side for shorter ramps and on both sides for rises of more than 6 inches.
- ☐ After each 30 feet of ramp (measured horizontally) at a slope of 1:12 to 1:16 (or 40 feet for a slope of 1:16 to 1:20), there is a level landing.
- ☐ There is five-foot level platform at top and bottom of ramp and at any switchbacks.

Elevator or lift. Accessible interior paths to worship area entrances that include an elevator or lift also meet all of the following criteria:

- ☐ Elevator or lift is certified by the company for intended use.
- ☐ Elevator or lift is able to be easily used by standing or wheelchair user.
- ☐ Elevator or lift is large enough to accommodate a wheelchair (preferably, along with a standing attendant).
- ☐ Elevator or lift is able to bear the weight of a power wheelchair with person in it.

Worship Area Seating. Seating is provided so that a wheelchair user can sit beside family members. Please indicate the number of spaces provided. **Note:** A space is defined as an area able to accommodate one wheelchair with at least one additional seat by its side.

- ☐ Front (No. _____)
- ☐ Rear (No. _____)
- ☐ Middle (scattered site cutouts with considerations for drafts, temperature, sound, light, view) (No. _____)

Leadership area. The leadership area (chancel, platform, bimah, minbar) is accessible so that persons with mobility issues can function in leadership roles.

- ___ Stairs to the leadership area have at least one handrail mounted 34-38 inches above the step.
- ___ A ramp or lift is provided for wheelchair accessibility (highly recommended), or provision is made for an alternative accessible speaking location for a person in the wheelchair to be seen and heard.
- ___ A 27-inch table is provided as needed as an alternative to a short podium.

Classrooms. At least one classroom is accessible to wheelchair users. **Note:** All of the criteria are required.

- ___ An accessible path at least 36 inches wide leads from an accessible entrance to the classroom door.
- ___ There is a five-foot level platform at the classroom door.
- ___ The doorway entrance into the classroom is 36 inches wide with a level threshold of no more than ½ inch.

Social/Gathering Area. The area where the congregation gathers for social activities is accessible to wheelchair users. All of the criteria are required.

- ___ An accessible path at least 36 inches wide leads from an accessible entrance to the door of the social/gathering area.
- ___ There is a five-foot level platform at the door of the social/gathering area.
- ___ The doorway entrance into the social/gathering area is 36 inches wide with a level threshold of no more than ½ inch.

Additional Recommendations to enhance accessibility are recommended.

- ___ **Accessible telephone.** A telephone is provided with the top of the controls no more than 48 inches from the floor and with a knee clearance of 27 inches.
- ___ **Fire alarms,** both visual and auditory are installed 48 inches from the floor.
- ___ **Evacuation plan.** An evacuation is in place for persons who are in wheelchairs, are blind, have an intellectual disability or mental illness, or who otherwise need help.
- ___ **Special seating** is provided with seat 19 inches from floor, arm rests, foot stool, and extra wide leg room.
- ___ **Fragrance free section.** Seating is provided in a separate environment which is kept fragrance free for persons with chemical sensitivities.
- ___ **Bookstands or lapboards** are available for persons unable to hold hymnals or scriptures.

Hearing and Language

Please read this section carefully. It contains important background material for the next two sections.

In this category, it is important to distinguish between three descriptive terms.

- **Hard of hearing** – persons who have a hearing loss but can still hear with a hearing aid or Assistive Listening Device. Some may also use sign language.
- **deaf** (with a small “d”) – persons who have very little or no hearing and rely on the English language, an alternate sign language, speech reading (sometimes called “lip reading”), print, and/or other visual materials as their primary means of communication.
- **Deaf** (with a capital “D”) – persons who use a distinct language, American Sign Language (ASL), and identify themselves with a cultural group (North American Deaf Culture). These individuals may have some hearing.

Two separate emblems are possible in this category.



Hearing. Assistive Listening Devices (ALD) and other aids are provided for persons who are hard of hearing.



Sign Language interpretation can help remove barriers in communication and participation between hearing persons and those who are deaf or hard of hearing. Qualified interpretation into the particular sign system that the person uses should be provided. Interpretation into **American Sign Language** should be provided to enable communication between Deaf and hearing persons.

In addition, under the **Vision** section is an important recommendation on “Lighting for speakers” Persons who rely on speech reading (sometimes called “lip reading”) also require proper lighting on the face of speakers.



Hearing

Assistive Listening Devices (ALD) and other aids are provided for persons who are hard of hearing.

Congregations that display this emblem will have a good sound system along with individual ALD. A roving microphone or acceptable alternative is important, especially for congregations who have announcements, a time of sharing, prayer requests, etc. Several additional items follow that are highly recommended.

The main worship area of the congregation has a good sound system along with individual ALD.

Note: All criteria required.

- ___ **Sound System.** A clear audible sound system, equipped with at least one microphone, is regularly used in the main worship area during the worship service.
- ___ **ALD.** The sound system in the main worship area includes individual ALD for people who are hard of hearing.
- ___ Ushers are educated on the location of ALD and how to assist persons wishing to use them.

A roving microphone or acceptable alternative is necessary for Hearing Accessibility.

Note: One out of three is acceptable.

- ___ **Roving microphone.** A roving microphone is available for sharing time, prayer requests, etc.
- ___ **Alternative 1.** When a roving microphone is not available, an accessible microphone is available at the front of the room.
- ___ **Alternative 2.** When a roving microphone is not available, the worship leader summarizes each comment over his/her microphone so that all can understand.

The following are recommended. Please check any that are available.

- ___ **Phone with volume control.** At least one hearing aid compatible phone with volume control is available.
- ___ **Taped services.** Sermons or complete worship services are made available on audio and/or videotape.
- ___ **Sermon texts.** Paper copies of sermon texts are available.
- ___ **Closed captioning** or another visual language option is available.
- ___ **Background noise eliminated.** Background noise has been eliminated as much as possible.

In addition, most persons who are hard of hearing or deaf can read, so the visual aids under **Vision Accessibility** are also recommended.



Sign Language

Sign language interpretation is provided.

Congregations meet the criteria for displaying this symbol by providing a qualified interpreter to assist with communication between persons who are deaf and those who do not know sign language. This typically means interpretation between American Sign Language (ASL) used by the Deaf community and spoken English but may also be met by providing interpretation into another sign system typically used by persons in that local community.

___ **Sign language interpretation** is provided. Please indicate the sign language system used.

___ **ASL.** Interpretation in ASL is provided.

___ **Other sign system.** Interpretation is provided in the following signed English systems. _____

Sign language interpretation is provided in the following **contexts**:

___ **Worship.** Sign language interpretation is provided in at least one main weekly worship service.

___ **Classrooms.** Sign language interpretation is provided in educational settings for persons who need it.

___ **Social Functions.** Sign language interpretation is provided for informal social activities.

___ **Other** _____



Vision

Aids are provided for persons who have difficulty seeing. Most of these aids are in the form of some kind of large print.

Basic standards for visual accessibility are met when there is **adequate lighting** in the worship area and there are at least two accommodations to make **large print** available either through **printed materials or visual projection** of words. Additional recommendations are also made to both accommodate those with low vision or to use visual means to make possible other accessibility features.

___ **Adequate Lighting** is provided throughout the worship area (sanctuary). This includes the elimination of glare from windows and lights. **Note:** See the Visual Aids question below for an additional consideration.

___ **Large Print** worship materials are provided, and ushers are educated on their location and use. **Note:** Large Print should be at least 14-point type, but may need to be larger, depending on the font used as well as the individual person.

___ Large Print **Bulletins**.

___ Large Print **Hymnals**.

___ Large Print **Song Sheets**. For non-hymnal music used by congregation.

___ Worship materials are **projected** on an **overhead screen**. **Note:** This can be a suitable alternative for many people to large print materials.

___ **Worship Order** projected.

___ **Worship Readings** projected.

___ **Announcements** projected.

___ **Hymns** projected. An alternative to Large Print Hymnals.

___ **Worship Songs** projected. An alternative to Large Print Song Sheets.

The following **auditory accommodations** are recommended as helpful for persons with low vision:

___ **Announcements**. Verbal announcements are given using a microphone.

___ **New Hymn Introduction**. New hymns/songs are introduced prior to the worship or in such a way that people with low vision can participate more fully during the worship.

The following are also essential visual aids to accompany other accessibility features. (Highly recommended.)

___ **Exterior signs visible**. Signs are easily visible near the building entrance indicating location of accessible parking spaces and entrances.

___ **Interior signs visible**. Interior signs are easily visible noting the location of any available accommodations, i.e., accessible restrooms, elevators, Assistive Listening Devices, etc.

- ___ **Lighting for speakers.** Lighting for the area which speakers use is directed to the front of speakers, toward the face, not from behind the person. This is important for persons who are hard of hearing or who rely on speech reading.

The following are also essential to aid persons who are **blind**: (Highly recommended.)

- ___ **Greeters and Ushers.** Greeters and ushers are available at building and worship area entrances and are trained to orient new persons who are blind to the environment and guide them as necessary.
- ___ **Doorway lettering.** Raised letters and Braille signs are provided at doorways to rooms, including classrooms and restrooms.
- ___ **Braille material.** Bulletins, signs, and other written material are available in Braille.



Support

The congregation supports inclusion of persons with disabilities and mental illness through awareness-raising events, educational materials and activities, support groups, and provision for individual differences in gifts, behavior, and learning style.

This emblem will be awarded by meeting the criteria in any of the following areas. All are recommended.

___ **Mission Statement.** The congregation has language in its mission statement, covenant, or other foundational document addressing its intention to provide access to, and inclusion of, people with disabilities and mental illness.

Awareness and Education Activities. At least one of these awareness-raising activities has been carried out within the past year.

___ **Disabilities awareness.** Disabilities awareness is promoted by the observance of annual awareness events in the worship or education program of the congregation. Example: Disabilities Awareness Week (Disabilities Awareness Week (second week in March in the U.S.).

___ **Mental health awareness.** Mental health awareness is promoted by the observance of annual awareness events in the worship or education program of the congregation. Examples: Mental Health Month (May), Mental Illness Awareness Week (first week in October in the U.S.)

___ **Sermons.** At least one sermon relating to disabilities and/or mental health issues has been preached.

___ **Educational events.** At least one workshop, seminar, or educational series has been held in the congregation.

___ **Individual and Family Needs Questionnaire.** Members and attendees have been surveyed within the last three years about disabilities and mental illness present in their families and how the congregation may become more inclusive, supportive, and accessible to them. (This questionnaire is available on the CAN website and is adaptable to any congregation.)

___ **Library Resources.** Educational materials on disabilities and mental illness are available in the congregation's library, office, or other space open to attendees.

Training. The following training opportunities are provided and promoted.

- ___ **Leadership knowledge and training.** Congregational leaders have been educated in general terms on the differences between diagnoses of mental illness, learning disabilities, developmental disabilities, etc. Those who work directly with persons with disabilities have received specific instruction or training on those disabilities.
- ___ **Companion training.** Training has been held in the past two years for persons who serve as aides or companions to persons with disabilities and/or mental illness.
- ___ **Hospitality training.** Specific training is provided to greeters and ushers so they can better help individuals with mental illness and other disabilities feel welcomed, accepted, and included in the congregation.

Special Education Services. The following special education services are offered:

- ___ **Classroom Integration.** Children and adults with developmental, intellectual, and learning disabilities and differences are welcomed in the regular education program of the congregation through the use of special materials, teaching methods, behavioral supports, and classroom aides as necessary.
- ___ **Special education classes.** Classes are provided for adults with developmental disabilities which support their abilities to learn without treating them like children.
- ___ **Individual Spiritual Formation Plan (ISFP).** An ISFP is on file for children and adults who need special considerations in order to be included in worship, spiritual education, and/or other aspects of congregational life.

___ **Referrals.** Congregational leaders have a working knowledge of counseling professionals and appropriate agencies in the community to whom they can refer people with questions or needs in the area of mental health or disabilities.

Gift discernment. The congregation's gift discernment process includes consideration of persons with disabilities, including mental illness.

- ___ **Mission and Service.** The congregation has ministry and service opportunities (e.g., choir, teaching, ushering, elder, etc.) open to persons with disabilities, including mental illness.
- ___ **Discernment Process.** The congregation has a gift discernment process whereby persons with disabilities, including mental illness, are asked to share their abilities in the congregation and community outreach.

Individual and Family Supports. The following services are offered and promoted.

- ___ **Benevolence fund.** A benevolence fund (or other financial support structure) is available through the congregation to provide financial assistance for expenses incurred above and beyond insurance coverage for members, including those who have a mental illness or other disability.
- ___ **Respite.** The congregation has designated individuals who can provide respite care to family members who have dependents with disabilities and/or mental illness.
- ___ **Facility availability.** The congregation's facility is available free of charge to community support groups on issues involving disabilities, mental illness, addictions, etc.
- ___ **Support groups.** The congregation organizes support groups or caring circles for people who have disabilities (including chronic mental illness) and their families.
- ___ **Special Diets.** Special diets (e.g., diabetic, gluten-free) are considered when food is served.

___ **Other congregational supports.**

DELEGATE ASSEMBLY 2022



STAFF SUMMARY AND IMPACT STATEMENT

This summary is the opinion of the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board staff about the impact of the proposed resolution if passed by the delegate board. This summary does not necessarily reflect the views of resolution writers or the Executive Board. Delegates are encouraged to consult other resources, engage the writers of the resolution and discern within their context. This summary is based on the staff's understanding of the current bylaws and policies of Mennonite Church USA (MC USA).

TITLE: MENNONITE CHURCH USA ACCESSIBILITY RESOLUTION

[Link to the resolution.](#)

TYPE OF RESOLUTION: CHURCH STATEMENT

WHAT IS A CHURCH STATEMENT RESOLUTION?

A church statement gives direction to the church on matters of Christian faithfulness, often concerning current issues or issues where current church documents or previous statements fail to adequately address current questions/challenges. Church statements are approved by the delegate body and are implemented by the national body, area conferences, local congregations and individual followers of Jesus, according to the rights and responsibilities provided to each body. ***Church statements should be developed to further God's mission, as defined by our statement of vision and purpose, as well as our Renewed Commitments.***

Please read: [Developing Resolutions for Mennonite Church USA](#) for a more detailed overview of resolutions in MC USA.

WHAT DOES THE RESOLUTION ADDRESS IN MC USA?

FROM THE WRITERS

"The purpose of this resolution is to help all members of Mennonite Church USA (MC USA), including congregations, area conferences, agencies and constituency groups, recognize and seek to remove the barriers to belonging in architecture, communications and attitudes that prevent individuals with disabilities from participating in church life, and to bring wholeness to the body of Christ, as those barriers are removed and all people are fully integrated into the community of faith."

STAFF SYNOPSIS

This resolution affirms the need to care for and integrate people with disabilities in the life and work of MC USA. As the church works at being an inclusive body, we must ensure that we eliminate barriers that prevent people from fully engaging in the mission of MC USA.

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CURRENT POLICIES OR PROGRAMS RELATED TO THIS CHURCH STATEMENT RESOLUTION

1. This resolution aligns with the intent of **Renewed Commitments for MC USA**: “God invites us to experience and bear witness to the belovedness of all creation. We yearn to know and share in the mystery of God’s unending love. We confess that sin fragments our wholeness and strains our relationships with God, each other and the world. Confronted with the misuses of power in our lives, communities and institutions, we seek to tell the truth and repent. The Holy Spirit beckons us toward the restoration of all things in Christ. God continually calls us beloved.”
2. Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, **Article 6. Creation and Calling of Human Beings**: “We believe that human beings were created good, in the image of God. As creatures according to the divine likeness, we have been made stewards to subdue and to care for creation out of reverence and honor for the Creator. As creatures made in the divine image, we have been blessed with the abilities to respond faithfully to God, to live in harmony with other human beings, and to engage in meaningful work and rest.”
3. Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, **Article 17. Discipleship and The Christian Life**: “In all areas of life, we are called to be Jesus’ disciples.”
4. **Bylaws of Mennonite Church USA, Article II.1.a-g**:
 - a. “Share the good news of Jesus Christ through word and deed, calling people to salvation in Christ, and to form Christian communities of love and service to others.
 - b. “Establish, teach and promote the core values and beliefs of the church based on scripture as expressed in the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, as updated from time to time.
 - c. “Tell the story of God’s faithfulness in our journey as an Anabaptist people.
 - d. “Encourage and enable congregations to actively engage in God’s mission in the world.
 - e. “Confront forces of the world which work against God’s intent for all creation.
 - f. “Be a channel for dialogue and witness to other church bodies and to governing authorities.
 - g. Provide a sense of larger community, creating a common identity for ourselves and recognized by those with whom we come in contact.”

ACTIONS PROPOSED IN THE RESOLUTION

Summary of Actions	Division of MC USA Responsible	Financial Impact
Affirm people with disabilities as part of the work of MC USA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All members of Mennonite Church USA. 	This action is aspirational and restates the current values of MC USA. There are no additional costs.
Remove barriers to belonging for people with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Board staff. Program agencies. Area conference. Congregations. 	This action will require investment in tools and educational materials. Consultations will add additional cost. Most initiatives like this can be accomplished for less than \$5,000.

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Congregational planning for accessibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Congregations.	The need for this action will vary by congregation. Everence has church loans available that may help congregations with actions they want to take in conjunction with this resolution. <u>Fund your vision.</u>
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ADDITIONAL NOTES CONCERNING IMPACT

MC USA EXECUTIVE BOARD STAFF

The Executive Board will need to provide information about available programs and resources that are available to help conferences and congregations live into the actions outlined in the church statement. MC USA does attempt to eliminate barriers and make accommodations for people with disabilities at gatherings it sponsors. The staff would conduct and publish an audit to show how well it complies with the actions outlined in the church statement.

MC USA PROGRAM AGENCIES

Anabaptist Disabilities Network, with the support of our program agency, Mennonite Health Services (MHS), will provide counsel and resources for MC USA congregations, conferences and organizations to remove barriers to belonging for people with disabilities, as outlined in the church statement.

MC USA AREA CONFERENCES

The church statement focuses mainly on congregations. Conference leaders would need to determine how to best partner with their members in this effort.

MC USA CONGREGATIONS

The resolution lists several options for congregations. Anabaptist Disabilities Network also offers support for congregations.



Mennonite World Conference
A Community of Anabaptist-related Churches

Shared Convictions

By the grace of God, we seek to live and proclaim the good news of reconciliation in Jesus Christ. As part of the one body of Christ at all times and places, we hold the following to be central to our belief and practice:

1. God is known to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Creator who seeks to restore fallen humanity by calling a people to be faithful in fellowship, worship, service and witness.
2. Jesus is the Son of God. Through his life and teachings, his cross and resurrection, he showed us how to be faithful disciples, redeemed the world, and offers eternal life.
3. As a church, we are a community of those whom God's Spirit calls to turn from sin, acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, receive baptism upon confession of faith, and follow Christ in life.
4. As a faith community, we accept the Bible as our authority for faith and life, interpreting it together under Holy Spirit guidance, in the light of Jesus Christ to discern God's will for our obedience.
5. The Spirit of Jesus empowers us to trust God in all areas of life so we become peacemakers who renounce violence, love our enemies, seek justice, and share our possessions with those in need.
6. We gather regularly to worship, to celebrate the Lord's Supper, and to hear the Word of God in a spirit of mutual accountability.
7. As a world-wide community of faith and life we transcend boundaries of nationality, race, class, gender and language. We seek to live in the world without conforming to the powers of evil, witnessing to God's grace by serving others, caring for creation, and inviting all people to know Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

In these convictions we draw inspiration from Anabaptist forebears of the 16th century, who modeled radical discipleship to Jesus Christ. We seek to walk in his name by the power of the Holy Spirit, as we confidently await Christ's return and the final fulfillment of God's kingdom.

***Adopted by Mennonite World Conference
General Council
Pasadena, California (USA)
March 15, 2006***

2022

REPORT BOOK
of the

Central District Conference
of
Mennonite Church USA



Part VI

CDC Resolutions

CDC Resolutions

1998-2008

1998 42nd Annual Session at Bluffton College

ACTION: “On this weekend, the broader Mennonite Church is recognizing the *25th anniversary of the ordination of Emma Richards to pastoral ministry*. It is with gratitude that we recognize the gift of leadership that women have brought to our churches and conferences. Therefore, be it resolved that the Central District Conference will continue to call out, affirm and encourage the gifts of women in ministry.”

ACTION: “We, as the Central District Conference of General Conference Mennonite Church gathered at Bluffton College, June 18-20, 1998, *deplore and grieve the presence of handguns* in our society and the violence and death caused by the use of the handguns in our homes, schools and communities. Therefore, be it resolved that we call our society to join us in taking a bolder stand against this violence by supporting such actions as handgun legislation, teaching conflict mediation, praying and confronting the economical and racial injustices which lie at the root of this violence and in which we may knowingly or unknowingly participate.”

1999 43rd Annual Session at Iowa Wesleyan College

ACTION: “*Mennonite College of Nursing*: In these very days that the Central District Conference is meeting in its annual session, the Mennonite College of Nursing is celebrating the completion of 80 years of nursing education as an independent Mennonite Church related institution, after which it will become an integral part of Illinois State University in Normal. Its principle historic landmark, the Troyer Memorial Nurses’ Home, has been sold and will continue to be used by another facility. It is appropriate that we use this occasion to express deep appreciation for these eighty years of dedicated service – For the Love of God and Humanity, as stated in the College memo. We call to remembrance the pioneer leaders, such as Peter Schantz and Emanuel Troyer, who convinced the Central District Conference to establish a hospital and training school for nurses, and then solicited the assistance of the Defenseless Conference, thus leading to the establishment in 1919 of the Mennonite Sanitarium and the Mennonite Sanitarium Training School. We recall and express our appreciation for the many dedicated Mennonite administrators (e.g. Benjamin and Lydia Rupp, first Superintendent and Matron; Lena Maxwell, long-time Superintendent of the Nursing School; William Dunn, CEO of the Mennonite Hospital Association; Presidents Jacquelyn Kinder and Kathleen Hogan), as well as staff members, teachers, and constituents who made possible the growth of the hospital program and the nurses training school from its early beginnings to its more formal education program as the Mennonite Training School. Mennonite Hospital School of Nursing and its eventual establishment as the Mennonite College of Nursing with accredited Bachelor of Science and Masters of Science in Nursing Degree programs. We express appreciation for the 2,258 dedicated nurses who completed requirements for Diplomas, Bachelors, or Masters degrees at the Mennonite Hospital School of Nursing and the Mennonite College of Nursing and have faithfully served not only the needs of central Illinois but also the needs of many other parts of the world in a wide variety of service and mission programs. Today we especially express our deep appreciation to President Kathleen Hogan for 30 years of meritorious service, including 15 years as CEO and President, during which she led the Mennonite College of Nursing to be the first fully accredited independent College of Nursing in the United States.

2000 44th Annual Session at Goshen College (joint session with IMMC, IMC, and OMC)

No resolutions

2001 45th Annual Session at Bluffton College

ACTION: “We, the delegate body of the Central District Conference of the General Conference Mennonite Church, declare the *intent of the Central District Conference to join Mennonite Church USA*. Central District Conference with its member churches will become part of Mennonite Church USA upon the approval of the Plan of Merger (see Membership Guidelines for the Formation of the Mennonite Church USA, section II, 7, b) by the General Conference delegate body in July of 2001.”

2002 46th Annual Session at Meadows Mennonite Church

ACTION: “*Resolution for Peace*: Be it resolved that we continue to pray for leaders of nations, especially George W. Bush, Colin Powell, Ariel Sharon and Yassar Arafat, that the seeds of hatred which have been and are being planted might not germinate and the seeds being planted for peace could grow, so that current and future generations might be enabled to live in hope and peace.”

2003 47th Annual Session at Bluffton College

ACTION: “We, the delegate body of the Central District Conference, *affirm the Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship in their service to the people of Atlanta*. We support and encourage them in their mission of hospitality to the vulnerable in their midst and in their fellowship together as the body of Christ. During the coming year, we pledge as congregations to engage with Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship in sharing the cup of blessing, in deepening our connection with one another, and in acknowledging our kinship in God’s family. We look forward to completing Atlanta Mennonite fellowship’s application process in our net annual meeting.

2004 48th Annual Session at Oak Grove Mennonite

ACTION: “We, the delegates of CDC, ask our *conference leaders to work with leaders from Illinois Mennonite, Indiana-Michigan Mennonite, and Ohio Mennonite conferences, and with MC USA leadership, to explore new possibilities for the way these conferences work together*. This exploration will reflect the reality that these conferences and congregations are part of one denomination, Mennonite Church USA, and that there is a strong call within these conferences and MC USA to become more effective as a missional church. Any new plan will require both the counsel and the confirmation of conference delegates.”

Action: “*Resolution on USA & Iraq*: “We, the delegate body of the Central District Conference, gathered at the Oak Grove Mennonite Church in Smithville, Ohio on June 24-26, 2004, affirm the “*Confession of Faith from a Mennonite Perspective*” — in particular articles 22 & 23 which relate to matters of peace and justice. We commit ourselves to teach more faithfully our understanding of Christ’s call and His way of peace. We believe that the same Spirit that empowered Christ empowers us too: to love enemies, to forgive rather than seek revenge, to practice right relationships, to rely on the community of faith to settle disputes, and to resist evil without violence. In response to all forms of violence, personal and corporate,

private and public, individual and national, we confess our guilt and disclose our shame. We admit our knowledge of God's will for us — God's will that we would live at peace with one another. We know this to be God's will for all humanity. As gathered followers of Christ, and in response to our Savior's call and example, we recommit ourselves to living and speaking for peace. To this end we pray and work for an immediate cessation of all hostilities in Iraq. We lament our nation's chosen form of engagement. We stand in resolute opposition to the invasion and occupation of Iraq. We commit ourselves to praying for our nation's leaders, to offering visions for peaceful alternatives, and to supporting all who are working for an end to the present war. May God bind the hands of all who would do violence and free the hands of those who yearn for peace. We pray for all involved: For those who make decisions, for those who are ordered to carry them out, and for those who are required to endure their consequences. We pray for ourselves too, when we, willingly or unwillingly — knowingly or unknowingly — pay for the very violence we deplore. May God have mercy on us all. In this volatile and uncertain time, [we] pray that the new Iraqi provisional government will rule justly and be like a morning after a long and dark night for the Iraqi people." —*J. Daryl Byler, MCC Washington office director*. May the Spirit of Christ guide us in our every thought and deed."

ACTION: *Letter to Vietnam:* Ruth Naylor, Resolution Committee, presented a letter defining the relationship of Mennonites in Vietnam and asking for the release of Mennonite Church leader, Nguyen Hong Quang sent from MC USA. This letter will be sent to the United States Embassy in Vietnam on behalf of Central District Conference. Delegates received copies of the letter and were encouraged to ask their congregations to send copies of the letter as well.

2005 49th Annual session at Maplewood Mennonite Church

ACTION: "Be it resolved that we, the delegates of Central District Conference, note the *death of Ann Hilty*, First Mennonite Church, Bluffton, Ohio on June 9, 2005. We express our deepest appreciation for her years of service to CDC as conference historian and member of the former Historical Committee."

ACTION: "*Resolution on Military Recruitment:* We as Anabaptist-Mennonites are known as an historic peace church. That history begins with those first disciples who followed the nonviolent Jesus in his way of salvation through the cross and Resurrection. The 16th-century Anabaptist-Mennonite movement renewed a witness to the way of radical love for Christian disciples. With the apostle Paul we testify that "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5.1). We have taught that faithful obedience to the example (I Peter 2.21-24) and teaching (Matthew 5-7) of Jesus requires us to refuse military service. At many points in our history as a community of faith we have sought options of alternative service when governments instituted compulsory military conscription. Today in the United States we face a different situation. Although officially there is no military draft, we have become aware that the vigorous recruiting efforts by the armed services in fact represent a "virtual draft." We are concerned about the impact of these tactics on both our own young people and the society as a whole.

Current military recruitment efforts

Whereas

- * Young men and women in high school are being approached by military recruiters with an effort unparalleled in U.S. history;
- * Promises of money, education, and a profession are being used to entice youth who feel vulnerable and without viable options for their future;
- * The U.S. military has given its Armed Service Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test in about 14,000 high schools nationwide to look for potential recruits, often without parents'

- knowledge;
- * Federal law now provides for student contact information to be released to military recruiters, unless a student takes action to “opt out;”
- * Many public school administrators across the country are cooperating with military recruiters to meet recruiting quotas.

Therefore, we, the delegates of Central District Conference, call on congregations to take the following actions.

Commit to Christ's way of peace and to affirm that peace and nonviolence are core Anabaptist Christian commitments.

Learn what your local school administration's current policy is and request they release to military recruiters only contact information of students whose parents request this. This is called an “opt in” policy.

Encourage youth to begin a file about their beliefs regarding conscientious objection to war. Christian Peacemaker Registration forms are available from the MCC web site.

Participate in the organizing of a broad community coalition to work at counter-recruitment strategies.

Spend time with the youth of your congregation developing strong relationships and educating them about conscientious objection to war and nonviolence. (see resource list)

÷If ASVAB test is given in the local high school challenge its appropriateness for students not interested in military service.

÷Be available to counsel youth and offer alternatives to those being actively recruited by military personnel.

Resources:

From MCC: Thermostat: a new DVD and study guide for youth on peace, conscientious objection to war and nonviolence. A website: www.mcc.org/ask-a-vet, provides e-mail links to military veterans who are now conscientious objectors to war, so youth can have direct conversation with them. Also includes Christian Peacemaker Registration information. Second Mile: curriculum for a congregational journey of peacemaking. Change of Command: video featuring the stories of military veterans now committed to peace and nonviolence.”

2006 50th Annual session at Bluffton University

ACTION: *Resolution of Appreciation for Lee Snyder.* On this occasion of Dr. Lee Snyder's retirement from the presidency of Bluffton University, we express gratitude for her ten years of faithful service to Bluffton University and to the Mennonite church, for her strengthening of ties between the church and the university, for her commitment to the peace church mission of Bluffton and its impact on students from many backgrounds, for her leadership in building an institution of higher learning that will serve the faith and scholarship of future generations of Central District Conference members, for her wise and steady leadership as moderator of Mennonite Church USA during the historic 2002 merger between the Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonite Church, for serving as a role model for leaders of church institutions, especially for women, and for her lifelong commitment to the mission of the church of Jesus Christ. We wish for her and her husband Del God's richest blessings in the years to come.

ACTION: *Resolution of Remembrance of Barney Habegger.* We, the delegates of Central District Conference, note the death this past year of Barney Habegger, First Mennonite Church, Berne, Indiana. We remember with deep appreciation his creative and passionate service to the church, his masterful recruitment of people for the projects of the church, and his ability to turn dreams into practical and

accessible realities. We recall with gratitude his service on the Commission on Home Missions and on the board of Camp Friedenswald. We especially note the impact he had on many young and recently planted churches through his work with the men's organization, Join Hands, and we acknowledge the contributions he made to these churches through his hard work, often down on his knees, on behalf of the renewal and reconstruction of church facilities. Many who responded to his call to service were deeply transformed by his life and witness. Thanks be to God.

ACTION: *Resolution of 50th anniversary celebration:* During this 2006 annual meeting, as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Central District Conference, we thank God for:

- those congregations that covenanted in 1957 to create the Central District Conference;
- the congregations that have joined the conference since its beginning;
- the individuals who provided leadership and facilitated the work and ministry of the conference;
- the institutions and programs of the conference where God's love has been made known;
- those issues which have brought us closer together through discussions in which God's will has been discovered and followed.

We thank God for faithfulness to us in the past and in bringing us together this year. We thank God for the stories of how God is working in our congregations.

We pray for God's wisdom and guidance as we seek to:

- strengthen the mutual awareness of the ministries that are emerging among us;
- free the Spirit to move in our midst through faithful stewardship and greater generosity;
- discern the practical shape of God's grace in our discernment of faithful lifestyles;
- articulate more clearly the strengths of our conference's heritage of voluntary congregational and conference relationships;
- extend our hospitality beyond conventional Mennonite habits of connection and relationship;
- expand on our present diversity to more faithfully reflect the global and cultural variety of God's in-breaking reign.

We pray God's vision and strength to continue the journey as God shows us the way. We anticipate the as-yet-unwritten stories of God working in our congregations.

Praise be to God for the past, present, and future faithfulness of that part of the church of Jesus Christ known as the Central District Conference!

2008 52nd Annual Session at Wheaton, Illinois

ACTION: *Iran Resolution*

Be it resolved: It is Time to Talk with Iran

The situation:

Tensions are mounting between the governments of the United States and Iran. In fact, it appears the U.S. is positioning itself for more aggressive action toward Iran, including the strong possibility of military strikes within the coming months.

Our Faith:

In the spirit of our assembly theme: "For such a time as this:"

**We know that all are created in the image of God, U.S. and Iranian citizens alike.*

**We know that we are called to be bearers of peace in the world.*

**We call for the following response,*

Our Response:

The delegates of Central District Conference pledge to:

**Respectfully call on all our elected leaders to talk (pursue diplomacy) with Iran and refrain from military action.*

**Pray weekly with our families and congregations for peace with Iran*

**Educate ourselves regarding U.S.-Iranian relationships and support Mennonite peacemaking efforts with Iran.*

For more information and resources: www.centraldistrict.mennonite.net; www.mennoniteusa.org/peace; www.mcc.org

An invitation to the congregations of Central District Conference
A Congregational Peace Pledge:
A call to intentionally encounter the realities of war

Goal: To invite congregations and conferences to commit to the actions delineated in the proposal

Whereas:

We believe that peace is the will of God, that God created the world in peace, that God's will is most fully revealed in Jesus Christ, who is our peace and the peace of the whole world, and that as Christians we are called to follow the path of Jesus and his call to live as peacemakers; we thus believe that we are called to engage the violence of war and injustice in the world that largely leaves us untouched.

1. When we have opportunity for personal contact with those who suffer, compassion is planted, and out of this compassion comes our responses. Examples of showing compassion are encounters: with the hungry in soup kitchens, the homeless in a tornado's wake, or with prisoners. Warfare, on the other hand, causes hurt in ways that Mennonites are not as likely to confront on a regular basis.
2. Historically war was an inescapable reality forcing hard choices on U.S. Mennonites. During the Civil War men had to choose whether they would fight, hire substitutes, pay commutation fees, or face punishments. In World War I some Mennonites drafted into the military refused to wear the uniform or carry guns, while others became stretcher-bearers for the army. There was no possibility of alternative service. Some were court-martialed, imprisoned, and suffered mistreatment. In World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War young Mennonites could claim conscientious objector status and engage in alternative service if they could defend their convictions convincingly. In recent years the government has adopted a volunteer army and ended the use of the draft. This has radically changed the relationship of civilians to war and in particular has changed the dynamics for pacifists wishing to witness faithfully to the issues of war.
3. Men and women around us volunteer to fight multiple wars simultaneously; Mennonites may avoid scenes of violent conflict, demands to bear arms, or having to justify their pacifism. Can we continue to be a peace church if we remain insulated from the reality of war and the need to witness to this reality?

Therefore, be it resolved:

That Central District Conference invites congregations, who wish to be intentional about the reality of war, its victims, and the hard questions it asks of nonviolent followers of Jesus, to commit themselves each year to actions such as the following:

- For each 100 members in the congregation, send one member on a delegation to a conflict zone with Christian Peacemaker Teams, Witness for Peace, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), Mennonite Mission Network, or other organizations dedicated to providing a nonviolent presence internationally or locally. The congregation is encouraged to pay partial funding for the trip and support the member's efforts to raise the remaining funds. Congregations with less than 100 members may pool resources into a common fund to support one of their members. After the trip the congregation will assist the member with sharing about his/her experiences with the congregation and other local audience.
- Sponsor at least one event each year that asks youth to question participation in war. Examples can include education of the congregation's youth group, counter-recruitment efforts in local schools, and/or provide a counter-presence when military recruiters visit local schools.
- Bring at least one speaker to the congregation each year who has worked at peace building with victims of war, is a former combatant who knows the experience of having inflicted harm on others, or did alternative service during a previous war. The Oasis of Hope Community in Newport News (757-775-8101), the TWOW (Transforming the Wounds of War) program at EMU's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding (<http://www.emu.edu/cjp/pti/twow>), or the MCC Peace Office are possible sources of speakers.

A Resolution on Unity in a Time of Disagreement

Call to unity. As Mennonite disciples, we believe we have been called by Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit to live in unity. We believe that our unity is in Christ, brought about through his life, death and resurrection. We believe that God has promised that all things will be gathered into Christ Jesus, and that God is at work in the church to bring that promise to fruition.

We believe that Christian unity is not ours to create, but is a gift from God already given. We are aware that we often lack faith in that promised and already-given unity. We are aware of our human tendency instead to seek uniformity of belief and practice through the setting of boundaries and the creation of rules. We are aware that this tendency is most evident in times of disagreement and stress. We are aware that we are currently living in such times.

It is our hope that we will continue to grow in faith, and so learn how to inhabit the unity that is ours in Christ Jesus. It is our prayer that the Holy Spirit will be poured out on our congregations, conferences and denomination, making that growth possible. We pray that we will love one another as Christ loved us, and that we will be known to the world by that love.

Our ongoing anxiety. The current disagreement regarding the credentialing of a pastor in a same-sex committed relationship has once again raised the anxiety about inclusion in our denomination. Questions of theology, polity, faithfulness, and discernment of the Holy Spirit's leading are being asked across our denomination.

Respecting each other's discernment. We believe that the answers we seek are best found in dialogue and mutual discernment, rather than denunciation and separation. We ask our sisters and brothers in the broader church to remember our common "*commitment to ongoing dialogue and discernment and 'agreeing and disagreeing in love,'*" as affirmed by MC USA delegates in Columbus (2009).

We believe that a strength of our denomination has been its understanding of accountability as being relational rather than punitive. Current calls by some to reverse the credentialing of Theda Good seem to us to work against that understanding. We are concerned that such action would set a troubling precedent, moving us toward a polity that is based on a centralized and hierarchical understanding of Christian unity. And we believe that calls to the Executive Board to discipline Mountain States Conference, or risk losing other area conferences, run counter to our denominational commitment to agree to disagree in love.

Therefore, as the MC USA Executive Board engages in conversation with Mountain States Mennonite Conference leaders, we call on them to help us be a denomination that continues the practice of relational rather than punitive accountability, no matter the strength of our disagreement. We commit ourselves to remaining in relationship with our sisters and brothers in Mountain States Conference, as we will with other area conferences, regardless of the outcome of their conversation with MC USA Executive Board. We commit ourselves to prayer for all concerned. And we will continue to do our part to help us, as a denominational body of believers, to live into the unity already ours in Christ.

An invitation to the congregations of Central District Conference

A call to greater inter-racial and cross-cultural engagement

Goal: to invite all CDC congregations and members to take deliberate steps to develop inter-racial and cross-cultural relationships that will increase mutual understanding and equip us to work and witness together for greater justice and peace.

Confession:

We acknowledge and grieve the long history of racism in our nation and in the church. We have too often failed to be proactive in seeking justice, and in building bridges of understanding and friendship with sisters and brothers of different races and cultures. We have not always modeled nor reflected in our community life God's welcome and love for all the racial and cultural diversity of God's people and we too often reflect the fact of Sunday morning being the most segregated time in our society.

Whereas: We believe that God created and equally loves the broad diversity of our human family, that God desires that the church reflect the racial and cultural diversity that is the human community, that God calls the church to bear witness to God's mission to form a community made up of people "from every nation" and defined by just relationships, that Jesus prayed for the unity of his followers and that we are all enriched through inter-racial and cross-cultural relationships; we thus believe that this should be reflected in each of our local communities of faith and that we are called to take the initiative for that to happen.

Therefore be it resolved:

That Central District Conference invites all member congregations to take intentional steps to connect with and develop relationships with a church of a predominantly different cultural and/or racial composition through one or more of the following steps:

1. Plan a joint worship service
2. Cooperate in a joint activity such as a church picnic
3. Host a joint Summer Bible School/camp activity
4. Engage in a joint public peace and justice witness
5. Plan a pulpit exchange
6. Do a joint service project
7. Plan a one-day workshop on anti-racism
8. Etc.

Respectfully submitted by Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, March 17, 2014

An invitation to the congregations of Central District Conference

A call to greater faithfulness in our witness for peace

Goal: to encourage all CDC churches and members to take a small step in faithfulness to our call to be peacemakers and witnesses for peace by deliberately and clearly communicating our convictions with our government and government agencies such as the Internal Revenue Service.

Confession: We grieve the violence of war and conflict throughout the world. We acknowledge and confess the role our country has played and plays overtly and covertly in so much of that violence. As a nation, we readily respond in violence to perceived and real threats. We have settled into a state of perpetual war with which we are too readily at peace. Defense of perceived national interests, defense of national honor, and political pressure often lead our nation to shortsighted and reckless use of military power. In the process, people have been tortured, innocent civilians have been killed by drones, oppression of peoples by their repressive governments have been supported, and movements for greater justice and peace have been squelched. This all happens at a sanitary and safe distance from us, but in our name. We confess that we know this is not God's will. We also confess that we are too often silent in proclaiming God's will both by what we do and by what we don't do.

Whereas: We believe that God's will for the world is redemption and wholeness and peace, in essence, shalom, that justice is God's will for all relationships both personal and international, that resources are given for building and not destroying, and that we are called to give witness to these convictions through word and action,

Therefore, be it resolved:

That Central District Conference encourages all of its congregations and members to take deliberate steps in our context and time to witness to God's reign and God's will for peace this next year through taking one or more of the following or similar actions during "tax season":

1. Sending a congregational letter to the local newspaper
2. Creating a banner expressing our beliefs for public display
3. Hosting a community candle light vigil
4. Witnessing outside the post office while sharing a snack and an information sheet
5. Including with our IRS tax filing, a written testimony of our commitment to peace and withholding a symbolic portion of our taxes paid for war
6. Etc.

Respectfully submitted by Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, February 19, 2015

Affirmed by delegates June 12, 2015 at the Annual Meeting, Southside Fellowship on the AMBS campus