



November 2022

Central District Conference Connector

Stories and News from across the conference

Board Affirms Matt Pritchard as Associate Conference Minister

The CDC Board of Directors is excited to announce that Matt Prichard will begin January 9, 2023 as the new Associate Conference Minister for Emerging Communities of Faith. This will be a 1/3 time position with primary focus being given to mentoring, resourcing, and supporting emerging communities of faith across CDC. Matt is also available to congregations seeking to revitalize their mission and vision.

Matt is married to Elizabeth Moraff and they have two young children, Shifra and Miriam. They live in Atlanta, GA. Matt is an ordained minister in Mennonite Church USA and a member of Atlanta Mennonite Church. Matt will continue as a chaplain of Georgia Tech's Grace House, serving over 400 university students each week through peace faith development, addressing food and housing insecurity, suicide prevention, voting rights, interfaith cooperation, LGBTQIA+ flourishing & mental health programs. Matt has extensive inter-cultural and cross-cultural educational experience including serving as the National Co-Coordinator of the Global Urban Trek through InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. Matt brings a strong background in church planting, intentional Christian community development and coaching emerging



Communications Coordinator Needed:

Central District Conference seeks a part-time member of the conference leadership team to share stories of how CDC congregations and leaders are fulfilling our mission: Knowing Christ's Love. . . Answering God's Call. The successful candidate will be able to gather stories from across the conference and share these stories clearly and compellingly across various media platforms. Skills in content management will allow this person to work with existing staff and conference leadership to develop a strategic approach to sharing our stories. Travel to conference events expected. The position is up to half-time. Salary commensurate with experience and training.

To inquire, contact Emma Hartman, office@mcusacdc.org

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communities of faith. He brings practical skills in organizational formation, community decision-making and legal/technical/financial systems.

Jan Lugibihl, as president elect of the CDC Board of Directors, chaired the search committee. She stated, "The Associate Conference Minister Search Committee was very impressed with Matt's enthusiasm about emerging communities of faith and his passion for walking with them as they seek to discern and live out God's calling." Other members of the search committee includ-

ed Jorge Vielman (Hively Avenue Mennonite), Kay Bontrager-Singer (Faith Mennonite), Valerie Showalter (Madison Mennonite), Brian Moll (Cincinnati Mennonite, and Conference Minister Doug Luginbill (ad hoc).

"Mennonite peace church theology and practice is radically good news in today's world," proclaims Matt. "I am excited to accompany emerging faith communities and the churches of CDC as we welcome people into Jesus' work of reconciliation, justice and liberation."

Doug's Mug: Licenses

By Doug Luginbill, Conference Minister

I've been thinking a lot about licenses recently. In the past two months I've participated in the licensing services for five pastors. I've signed the marriage license for my daughter and her husband. And I was asked to suggest edits to [A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership](#) which describes the credentialing (licensing and ordination) process of Mennonite Church USA.



What licenses do you have? What did you have to do to get them? What do they mean to you? What do they allow you to do?

In MC USA, pastors, chaplains, and others are "licensed as ministers of the Gospel." Following a call to serve in a ministry position and after an interview with the ministerial committee, a person can be licensed as a minister of the Gospel. This brief summary does not give credit to the long season of discernment, training, experience, resistance, and God-moments that someone experiences along the journey.

Here's a proposed statement for the *Shared Understanding* document. "Ministers have power, authority, and influence. Ministers must recognize this and practice these gifts in ways that serve to build up and serve the community of faith, not themselves. Ministers who fail to acknowledge their power, authority, and influence are likely to abuse and misuse it." A ministry license acknowledges and affirms this.

I wish there were something similar for congregation members. Maybe "Congregation members have

Doug's Mug, cont'd

power, authority and influence. Some of these by nature of a role or position they hold in the congregation as a committee member, moderator, custodian, etc. Others hold power and influence by nature of their longevity in the congregation, their strong gifts in certain areas, or their position in the broader community. Congregation members who fail to acknowledge their power, authority, and influence are likely to abuse and misuse it.

Typically when I participate in a licensing service on behalf of the CDC ministerial committee, I say something like this to the congregation. "You know, Pastor X is not perfect. When there is disagreement or disappointment, have mercy." And I say something like this to the pastor. "You know, this congregation is not perfect. When there is disagreement or disappointment, have mercy." There's always laughter that speaks with the recognition of truth. Pastors and congregations are not perfect. We know that. But sometimes we wish they were.

When perfection fails us, which it does all the time, we must find ways to live into the messiness. Our Central District Conference Ministerial Committee is hosting an interactive webinar on Saturday morning, November 12 from 9:30-11:00 eastern time. The title is [Tending Healthy Pastor-Congregation Relations](#). (Click on this [LINK](#) to learn more and register.) This is for pastors and congregational leaders and anyone else who has interest in the topic. David Brubaker will serve as the resource person for this webinar. David is a professor, Dean of the School of Social Sciences and Professions at Eastern Mennonite University, and has worked in conflict transformation throughout his career.

While licenses recognize certain training, competency, or qualifications to practice or do something, healthy relationships with God and others are critical to exercising positive power, authority and influence in the Beloved Community and Kingdom of God.

What are you going to do with the Sacred Listening stories?

Many have asked what will become of the stories gathered during the *Sacred Listening* visits? Above is one example. We want to share snippets with our CDC congregations so we can learn from and get to know one another better. We also intend to share lengthier stories as well. We will also look for common themes to discover ways we might resource or support one another. And we will highlight unique ministries, programs, or worship experiences that inspire us and expand our understandings of what it means to be the church today.

Read a sampling of Sacred Listening Stories on page 4

Pastor Installations and Licensing

◆ **Jodie Boyer Hatlem** was installed and licensed toward ordination as pastor of Shalom Community Church, Ann Arbor on Sept. 11. She began Sept. 1.

◆ **Carrie Mast** was licensed for specific ministry as interim pastor for Christian education and administration at FMC Bluffton on Sept. 25. She began in that role on Sept. 1.

◆ **Phil Yoder** was installed and licensed toward ordination as lead pastor at FMC Bluffton on Oct. 2. He began Sept. 26.

◆ **Karla Minter** began as doula of Open Table Mennonite Fellowship on July 1. She was licensed toward ordination on Oct. 16.

◆ **Kevin Chupp** was installed as pastor at Mennonite Church of Normal on October 23. He began on Oct. 24.

◆ **Debbie Bledsoe** was installed and licensed for specific ministry as associate pastor at Southside Fellowship on November 6. She began on Sept. 26.

◆ **James Rissler** began as part-time interim pastor at Emmanuel Mennonite Church on October 1.

Sacred Listening Stories

Nearly 30 of our 46 congregations have participated in the [Sacred Listening process](#). Many positive affirmations have been received from both congregations and the wonderful volunteers who have been the listeners. Congregations expressed deep appreciation for simply being listened to as they shared their stories of how God has been faithful among their congregation and community.



Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen, IN

Silverwood Mennonite Church (formerly Silver Street Mennonite Church), is one of our oldest congregations, having been organized in 1892. In the 1980s the congregation made the move from its historically rural location to its current location in the city of Goshen. The congregation's spirit of adaptation was reflected in the following story by one of its members.

I am grateful for the journey we as a church took in 2018 to figure out how welcoming we wanted to be. We went into that process with a lot of apprehension, but it was done prayerfully, carefully, and gently. The experience tied us together as a family and helped us to communicate with each other. There was a willingness to slow the process down when necessary. When the statement was finished, it felt like a physical weight was lifted and we were freed.

Keller Park Church, South Bend, IN

Keller Park Church, South Bend, IN, is one of the newest congregations in CDC. Previously part of the Missionary Church, they joined us in 2021. Here are two reflections.

In the wake of George Floyd, Ashley Swanson went to his first protest and countless other people from Keller Park Church were there. It was especially meaningful to be part of a community that cared about what was going on in the world and wanted to do more than just send "thoughts and prayers on social media."

Angie Linskey shared that there are so many amazing kids in their midst that are bold and not afraid to be who they are. Junea, the youngest member in attendance (probably two?), whispered to Angie, "God loves them," referring to everybody gathered around the front of the sanctuary.

Assembly Mennonite Church Goshen, IN

Assembly Mennonite Church,
Goshen, IN, was formed in the
1970s. They end their worship
services with the reminder,
*"The light that is in one place at
one time is now in all places
and at all times."*

Financial Report

Sept. 30, 2022

YTD Contributed Giving:	\$43,782
YTD Plan:	\$56,946
Difference between giving and plan:	-\$13,164
YTD Expenses:	\$58,246
YTD Plan:	\$78,344
Difference between expenses and plan:	-\$20,098

*"We wanted to live in an integrated community, but we didn't know how much it
would change our lives."*

Community Mennonite Church, Markham, IL

Community Mennonite Church, Markham, IL, was just beginning as a congregation when CDC was formed in 1957. Here is a reflection from Norma and Mike Devine who joined the church in 1968.

When they first came, they were so impressed that it was a racially integrated congregation. They had wanted to live in a diverse neighborhood and found it at Community Mennonite. They did not have a pastor, but a team of lay leaders. The team was also diverse. There were conflicts of style, but they always worked them out. It was also important to them to be in a Peace Church. This was at the height of the Vietnam War. The church had 20 people doing their Conscientious Objector Volunteer Service. The church was their community, their friends and their children's friends were all there. The Sunday school program was very important and fulfilling, there were church pageants, people would see a need and take care of it. They shared, "We wanted to live in an integrated community, but we didn't know how much it would change our lives."

The Central District Conference Connector is an interim publication following the retirement of Mary Klassen as the editor of *Reporter* and *focus*. This publication will be distributed approximately every four to six weeks by CDC staff; Emma Hartman (office@mcusacdc.org) and Doug Luginbill (confmin@mcusacdc.org).

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