

Welcome to the delegates from the CDC Board President



Welcome back to Goshen for our 67th Annual Meeting. As we continue to lean into being accessible at our gatherings, we have chosen to build on what we learned last year about hosting a hybrid Annual Meeting here at Goshen College and College Mennonite Church, which offer us accessible buildings as well as technology assistance. Thank you to the local congregations who have helped to plan our worship, and to those helping with the technology that makes a hybrid meeting possible. As we think about future meetings, the Board of Directors welcomes feedback about how to balance our desire to be accessible with the benefits of rotating meetings throughout our conference.

This continues to be an exciting time in Central District Conference! Our two year theme has been “Tending Transformation,” and it has felt apt throughout this biennium. We have two new staff members: Matt Pritchard, our Associate Conference Minister for Emerging Communities of Faith, and Sarah Werner, our Communications Coordinator. Matt’s position is a new .33 FTE position to work alongside Doug and the Missional Church Committee in resourcing and supporting new faith communities. Sarah’s position is an expanded role of up to 20 hours / week. She is helping us to implement the recommendations of the communications audit that Marathana Prothro of Bluffton University performed for us after Mary Klaasen announced her retirement from the editor role she had filled so well. We hope that Matt and Sarah will help us nourish emerging communities of faith and share the stories of how God’s Spirit is enlivening all of our communities of faith as we know Christ’s love and answer God’s call.

We believe that our investment in this work is not only worthwhile but necessary as we tend the transformations we see God’s Spirit leading. The Tending Transformation capital campaign, which is funding grants for emerging communities of faith, part of Matt’s salary, and additional leadership and missional initiatives, has received pledges of close to \$300,000 of our \$350,000 goal. We trust that individuals and congregations will help us complete that goal in the next two years. We don’t know what fruit these efforts will bear, but we look forward to discerning together where God is leading our conference in the midst of a changing Church, and working together to join God’s efforts.

Our appreciative inquiry “Sacred Listening” process continued over this past year. We have been able to visit with about 80% of our congregations over the past year and a half, and both congregations and listeners have uniformly expressed appreciation for the chance to share and hear their stories. We have been sharing these stories in our communications, and you’ll hear more of them this weekend. We have begun the process of sifting through the stories to quantify overlapping ministries and themes, and hope to share that information with you in the coming months, as it will also inform our leadership’s ongoing reflection on how we continue to tend transformation within our conference. A huge thank you to the dozens of volunteers who have visited congregations and are now helping to sort stories into themes.

It has been 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 of the ways that we are Christ’s body in our local communities.

James Rissler