

Jan. 30, 2023

To Central District Conference

This past Fall, St. Louis Mennonite Fellowship came to consensus about our desire to move our conference membership to Central District Conference.

Historically our congregation was part of both Central District Conference and Illinois Mennonite Conference. After the merger to form Mennonite Church USA, our congregation made a decision to belong to only one conference — Illinois Mennonite Conference. This decision was a financial and geographical one.

Our desire to change conferences is centered on the lack of support our congregation has received from IMC over the last six years as IMC has struggled with a number of conference minister changes. The last several years have seen a series of interim ministers and periods with no conference minister at all. As we are now the only MCUSA congregation in our area (and, as far as we know, the state of Missouri), we often feel like we are on a congregational island. We desire the connections and resources of Central District Conference so that we can deepen our relationship with MCUSA.

As we enter a time when the congregation will be beginning a pastoral search process, we recognize our need for consistent support. As IMC is in the midst of their own discernment process, we fear our congregation would not be well-supported. As a congregation that has come to consensus around calling a pastor regardless of sexual orientation, we also want to make sure whomever we call as the next pastor is able to be ordained by our conference. IMC has been examining this question for the past three years, without coming to a place of resolution.

We have been in contact with IMC leadership about this discernment process. They have been very supportive of our process. We are working to find a date for all relevant parties to meet in order to discuss and write a joint letter.

Sincerely,

St. Louis Mennonite Fellowship Governing Board
Rachel Dothager
Michelle Kaufman
Steven P. Miller