

2023

REPORT BOOK
of the

Central District Conference
of
Mennonite Church USA



June 22-24, 2023

Welcome from the Planning and Worship Committees

There are several groups who have been thinking about, praying for and preparing for this event for a very long time. We're excited that everyone is at last gathered to worship, discern, learn and enjoy each other's company—and we extend a special welcome to this event from us! We have felt God's leading in our planning and we look forward to the moving of God's spirit in our gathering.

Worship Planners:

Scott Coulter (Assembly)
Mariah Martin (Faith)
Julia Schmidt (Faith)
Karla Minter (Open Table)

A big thanks to Cynthea Good Kauffman (Assembly), Goshen College Events Coordinator, and Tia Johnson for their help in logistical details. Thanks to all the many others who have helped in all kinds of ways—from caring for children to taking care of our tech needs to setting up chairs and everything in between— to make this event happen. Thanks to all of you.

Children's Coordinator

Aimee Weishaupt (Silverwood)

Art Silent Auction

Rachel Stolpe (Milwaukee)
Phil Martens (First Mennonite Church Urbana)

Some Helpful Tips for a Good Experience

- * Keep this book with you. It has schedules, delegate action items, committee reports and other things to guide you through your time at the Delegate Assembly.
- * If you're lost and confused or need any kind of, visit the registration/information table located in lobby across from the fellowship/delegate hall. We've tried to make our space as accessible as possible. If you don't see what you need, please ask and we'll try our best to accommodate you.
- * Spend some time in the Prayer Room. The Prayer Room is located behind the sanctuary and is a prayerful space to spend some quiet time with God.
- * An offering for Central District will be taken on Saturday morning during the worship service.
- * The hosting congregations have selected Anabaptist Disabilities Network to receive the Giving Back to the Community Donation from the conference. You may donate online or by check. Please make checks payable to Central District Conference and designate "ADN" in the memo line. Checks may be placed in the offering on Thursday night.
- * Care for our environment. Use the reusable coffee mug and water bottle you have brought with you. Use the recycling bins provided around the meeting site. Turn off the lights when you leave a room. Enjoy walking around the town and surrounding Goshen area.
- * Scent free policy: In recognition of individuals with asthma, allergies and severe environmental and chemical sensitivities, we ask you to refrain from wearing fragrances and scented personal care products at the Annual Meeting activities. This includes perfumes, colognes, aftershave and scented hair products. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated by those affected.
- * If you need first aid or medical assistance, please go to the information table located just outside the delegate session meeting area.

Wi-Fi Access

To access Wi-Fi, click on GC guest. No user name or password are required but you will need to reset the access every day.

Displays During the Annual Meeting

Anabaptist Disabilities Network (ADN)
Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary
(AMBS)
Bluffton University (BU)
Camp Friedenswald (CF)
Everence
Journey

La Posada
Mennonite Central Committee Great Lakes
(MCC GL)
Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS)
Mennonite Health Network (MHN)
Mennonite Mission Network (MMN)
Mennonite Men

Thanks to all these folks for sharing their time with us. The displays are located around in the hallway.

CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE

Detailed Schedule

June 22-24, 2023

College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana

Tending Transformation

Thursday, June 22

- 2:00 pm Registration begins at College Mennonite Church in the hall outside the fellowship hall
3:00 pm Transformation as sacred journey led by Naomi Wenger, Newcomer Center #17
5:00 pm Pastor Appreciation Dinner at College Mennonite Church, Koinonia Room
7:30 pm WORSHIP I: College Mennonite Church
Theme: When the Church is the Church, the Community Rejoices
Texts: Proverbs 11:10, John 4:4-42, Jeremiah 6:13-14; 8:10b-11; 29:5-9
Speaker: Matt Pritchard
Offering: Anabaptist Disabilities Network
9:00 pm Ice Cream Social in College Mennonite Church fellowship hall

Friday, June 23

- 8:30 am *Delegate Session I* in CMC fellowship hall
Welcome
Getting acquainted around tables
State of the Conference Address
Centering, silent reflection, and prayer
Congregational Story: Olentangy Wild Church Emerging Community of Faith
Introduction of Resolutions and Listening Committees, and Parliamentarian

Summary Review of 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes
ACTION: 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes

Treasurer's Report/Presentation of 2023-2024 Proposed Spending Plan

Presentation of Gifts Discernment Committee and Slate
ACTION: 2023-2024 Slate
Commissioning Prayer: Incoming and continuing committee members

9:45 - 10:15 am Break/Snacks

10:15 am Panel discussion committee reports: Ministerial, Missional Church, Camp Friedenswald

Congregational Story: Moveable Feast Emerging Community of Faith

10:45 am Introduction of St Louis Mennonite Fellowship
Sharing around tables/open mic - Dwelling in the Word/Visioning
Introduction of Guests

Announcements

11:45 am Lunch in the dining hall or on your own
A list of area restaurants is available (in delegate packets)

1:30 pm *Delegate Session II*
Tending Transformation: Accessibility Resolution

3:00 pm Break

- 3:30 pm *Delegate Session III*
Tending Transformation: Resolution of Repentance and Transformation
- 5:00 pm Dinner in dining hall or on your own
A list of area restaurants is available (in delegate packets)
- 7:00 pm Free Time or Seminars
*MC USA panel reports led by Doug Luginbill (sanctuary)
*Discovering God's work in your community: an interactive seminar led by Matt Pritchard (Koinonia Room)
*The Bible and the Book of Creation (that is, the whole earth) for an Intergenerational Audience led by Lora Nafziger (Newcomer 17)
*Marking adulthood transitions through ritual and reflection led by Joel Miller (Newcomer 19)

Saturday, June

24 8:30 - 9:30 am

WORSHIP III: CMC sanctuary
Theme: Transforming Practice
Speaker: Wanda Stopher
Text: 1 Corinthians 11:17-26
Offering for Central District Conference
Communion

9:30 am Break:

10:00 am *Delegate Session IV* in CMC fellowship hall
Art Auction announcement
Tending Transformation: For Justice in the U.S. Criminal Legal System

11:30 am ACTION: 2022-2023 Spending Plan
Open Mic
Listening Committee Report

11:45 am Evaluations/Committee Nominations

Close of Delegate Sessions

11:55 am 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 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

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 in the 2022 conference directory)

<p>***Agora Ministries 614.280.1212 <i>Richard/Rebecca Bartholomew, Pastors</i> 400 W Broad St, Columbus, OH 43215 rich@agoraminstries.org</p>	<p>Americus Mennonite Fellowship (30) 229.815.1034 <i>Brian Kilheffer, Contact Person</i> bk.ck1@hotmail.com 409 E Hill St, Americus, GA 31709 http://www.facebook.com/AmericusMennoniteFellowship</p>
<p>*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</p>	<p>Assembly Mennonite Church (228) 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> scottc@assemblymennonite.org 727 New York St, Goshen, IN 46526 office@assemblymennonite.org http://assemblymennonite.org</p>
<p>Atlanta Mennonite Church (32) 404.590.1344 <i>Anton Flores-Maisonet, Interim Pastor</i> alternacommunity@gmail.com 1088 Bouldercrest Dr SE, Atlanta, GA 30316 Website: http://www.atlmenno.org/ Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/ATLMenno/</p>	<p>Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship (35) 919-357-5496 chmennonite@gmail.com <i>Ben Krieder, pastor (as of Aug 15, 2023)</i> benjamin.kreider@ptsem.edu 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/</p>
<p>Chicago Community Mennonite Church (84) 773.343.4251 <i>Tim Peebles, Transitional Pastor</i> tjpeebles@gmail.com meets at First Church of the Brethren, 425 S Central Park Blvd, Chicago, IL 60624 http://www.cemcil.org</p>	<p>Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship (44) 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</p>
<p>Columbus Mennonite Church (186) 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</p>	<p>**Community Mennonite Church (18) 708.333.1358 <i>In Pastoral Search Process</i> 16200 S Kedzie Ave, Markham, IL 60428 cmc-markham@sbcglobal.net www.communitymennonite.us</p>

<p>Covenant Mennonite Fellowship (100) 941.366.3545 <i>Jason Kuniholm, Pastor</i> jkuniholm@gmail.com 5420 Ashton Rd, Sarasota, FL 34233 covenantmennonite@gmail.com www.covenantmennonite.com https://www.facebook.com/mennonites</p>	<p>Eighth Street Mennonite Church (198) 574.533.6720 <i>Brenda Sawatzky Paetkau, Pastor</i> bpaetkau@8thstmennonite.org <i>Julia Gingrich, Pastor</i> jgingrich@8thstmennonite.org 602 S 8th St, Goshen, IN 46526 office@8thstmennonite.org www.8thStMennonite.org</p>
<p>Emmanuel Mennonite Church (26) 352-377-6577 <i>James Rissler, Interim Pastor</i> mmoser321@gmail.com meets at 1236 NW 18th Ave, Gainesville, FL 32609 www.gainesvillemennonites.org</p>	<p>Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship (65) 260.301.6498 <i>Peter Martin, Pastor</i> 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> mitchellbrown211@gmail.com 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>Kay Bontrager-Singer, Pastor</i> kay.bsinger@gmail.com <i>Mariah Martin, Pastor</i> pastormariahmartin@gmail.com <i>Julia Schmidt, Pastor</i> julias.nicole@gmail.com 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>
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<p>First Mennonite Church (75) 330.852.2822 <i>Mike Gehman, Pastor</i> mgehman3@gmail.com 113 W Main, PO Box 250, Sugarcreek, OH 44681 office@firstmennonitesugarcreek.com</p>	<p>**First Mennonite Church (179) 217.367.5353 <i>Michael Crosby, Pastor</i> michael.crosby@fmc-cu.org <i>Debra Sutter, Associate Pastor</i> debra.sutter@fmc-cu.org 902 W Springfield Ave, Urbana, IL 61801 office@fmc-cu.org www.fmc-cu.org</p>
<p>First Mennonite Church (40) 330.334.1863 <i>Jan Croyle, Pastor</i> jancroyle2@gmail.com 405 Trease Rd, Wadsworth, OH 44281 fmcwadsworth@gmail.com www.firstmennonite.com</p>	<p>****Florence Church of the Brethren-Mennonite (45) <i>In pastoral search process</i> 17975 Centreville-Constantine Rd, Constantine, MI 49042 florence.brethren.mennonite@gmail.com florencechurch.blogspot.com</p>
<p>Grace Mennonite Church (95) 419.384.3038 <i>Matthew Yoder, Pastor</i> pastor@gracepandora.org 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> alaina.dobkowski@gmail.com 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> stair.tim@gmail.com <i>Pratik Bagh, Interim pastor</i> pbagh@hivelymennonite.org 800 E Hively Ave, Elkhart, IN 46517 office@hivelymennonite.org www.hivelymennonite.org</p>	<p>**Joy Fellowship Mennonite Church (15) 309.637.8424 <i>Phil Maclin, Pastor</i> pmaclin@ci.peoria.il.us 2918 W Montana, Peoria, IL 61605</p>
<p>Jubilee Mennonite Church (25) 937-592-8101 <i>Carolyn May, Pastor</i> carolyn.may3@gmail.com <i>Gwyn Stetler, Pastor</i> stetler.gwyn@gmail.com Meets at Olive Tree event center, 121 W Chillicothe St, Bellefontaine, OH 43311 Mail to: Russ Miller, 1471 County Road 11, Bellefontaine, OH 43311 https://www.jubileemennonite.com/ jubileemenno@gmail.com</p>	<p>Keller Park Church (75). 574-233-7901 <i>David Cramer, Teaching Pastor</i> david.c.cramer@gmail.com <i>Susannah Griffith, Interim Assistant Pastor</i> susannahgriffith@ams.edu 1003 W Bryan St, South Bend, IN 46616 kellerparkchurch@gmail.com FB: facebook.com/kellerparkchurch/</p>
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<p>Open Table Mennonite Fellowship (25) 574.534.1537 <i>Karla Minter, Pastor/doula</i> karlaminter@outlook.com meets at 413 S 7th St, Goshen, IN 46526 http://www.opentablemennonite.org/</p>	<p>Paoli Mennonite Fellowship (40) 812.723.2414 <i>Paul Brubaker, Pastor</i> paul.brubaker.lm@gmail.com 2589 N County Road 100 W, Paoli, IN 47454 mennos.paoli@gmail.com</p>

<p>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>	<p>****Shalom Community Church (72) 734.761.7366 <i>Trevor Bechtel, Co-pastor</i> <i>trevor.becht@gmail.com</i> <i>Jodie Boyer Hatlem</i> <i>jo@shalomcc.org</i> meets at 1001 Green Road, Ann Arbor Mail to: PO Box 8080, Ann Arbor, MI 48105 pastors@shalomcc.org www.shalomcc.org</p>
<p>Shalom Mennonite Congregation (153) 540.432.1659 <i>Brian Bolton, Pastor</i> <i>brian@shalommc.org</i> <i>Krista Showalter Ehst.. krista@shalommc.org</i> <i>Georgia Metz. 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 office@shalommc.org www.shalommc.org</p>	<p>Silverwood Mennonite Church (127) 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 info@silverwoodmc.org www.silverwoodmc.org</p>
<p>Southside Fellowship (65) 574.293.2825 <i>David Moser, Pastor</i> <i>davidssfelkhart@gmail.com</i> <i>Debbie Bledsoe, Pastor</i> <i>debbiessfelkhart@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 ssfelkhart@gmail.com https://www.facebook.com/Southside-Fellowship-1591825197704822/</p>	<p>St Paul Mennonite Fellowship (8) 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>	

2022-2023 CDC LEADERSHIP

Board of Directors

President (2023):

James Rissler Atlanta Mennonite Church

President-elect (2023)

Jan Lugibihl Chicago Community Mennonite Church

Secretary (2025)

Christine Guth Eighth Street Mennonite Church

Treasurer (2025)

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, Bluffton University rep, Camp Friedenswald, executive director, Conference Minister, Associate Conference Minister of Emerging Communities of Faith, Communications Coordinator, 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

Kiva Nice-Webb (2023)

Chicago Community Mennonite Church

Rich Preheim (2024)

Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

Jeff Boehr (2025)

Lima Mennonite Church

Gifts Discernment Committee

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

David Moser (2025) Southside Fellowship

Laura Brenneman-Fullwood (2025)

First Mennonite Church Urbana

Stewardship Committee

Tim Lind (2025)

Florence Church of the Brethren-Mennonite

Doug Luginill (Staff), Ex-officio

Emma Hartman (Staff), Ex-officio

Ministerial Committee

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

Ruth Guengerich (2025)

Eighth Street Mennonite Church

Kevin Chupp (2025) Mennonite Church of Normal

Missional Church Committee

Karla Minter(2023)

Open Table Mennonite Fellowship

Tim Stair (2023) Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

Elizabeth Kelly (2024)

First Mennonite Church Bluffton

Anthony Flores-Maisonet (2024)

Atlanta Mennonite Church

Brian Sauder (2025)

Chicago Community Mennonite Church

Xaris Martinex (2025)

Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship

Matthew Pritchard (ex-officio)

Atlanta Mennonite Church

Camp Friedenswald Board

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

Alita Yoder Funk (2025)

Silverwood Mennonite Church

Steven Hartman-Keiser (2025)

Milwaukee Mennonite Church

Sarah Werner (2025) Columbus Mennonite Church

AUXILIARY GROUPS

CDC STAFF

Mennonite Men

Steve Thomas, Coordinator
steveforpeace@gmail.com 574.202.0048

Conference Minister

Doug Luginbill First Mennonite Church Bluffton

CONFERENCE RELATED MINISTRIES

Associate Conference Minister of Emerging

Communities of Faith

Matt Pritchard Atlanta Mennonite Church

Bluffton University Board of Trustees

Tim Stried (2023) Columbus Mennonite Church

Annette Heslep (2024)
First Mennonite Church Bluffton

Heather Bachman Reichenbach (2025)
Eighth Street Mennonite Church

Jane Roeschley (2026) Mennonite Church of Normal

Communications Coordinator

Sarah Werner Columbus Mennonite Church

Administrator

Emma Hartman Faith 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

Bookkeeper

Beth Yoder

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 Griffith,
Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies
Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

2023

REPORT BOOK
of the

Central District Conference
of
Mennonite Church USA



Part I

Action/Discussion

CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE

Minutes of 65th Annual Session

June 23-25, 2022

College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana

Tending Transformation

Thursday, June 23

*Golf Outing organized by Ruth and Ron Guengerich

*Bike/run/walk

*Storytelling as a Tool for Spiritual Transformation led by Brenda Sawatzky Paetkau and Kay Bontrager-Singer

*Pastor Appreciation Dinner at Assembly Mennonite

WORSHIP I: College Mennonite Church

Theme: Tending Transformation

Text: Romans 12:1-10, Galatians 6:14-18

Speaker: David Cramer

Offering: Natural Helpers

Ice Cream and Popcorn Social

Friday, June 24

Delegae Session I

Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street) led in singing *Come, all you people*, from *Voices Together* (VT 2).

Welcome

James Rissler (Atlanta), president of the CDC board, welcomed delegates to the 65th annual meeting with the sounding of the gavel. He invited participants to introduce themselves around tables.

State of the Conference Address: James Rissler (Atlanta) gave the State of the Conference address sharing the following highlights

*The new conference theme chosen for the next biennium is Tending Transformation. The theme reflects our sense that God continues to do new things among us. We can't always control the new things happening but we can tend the transformation by paying attention to what God is doing.

*We have begun an appreciative inquiry Sacred Listening process in which we hope to visit all 46 of our congregations this year to hear their stories, to hear how God's Spirit is moving among and transforming them. In the months to come, we will be sharing what we hear from one another. Next year, we will begin to ask how what we have heard shared might inform the way we are conference to one another.

*The Church is changing in its relationship to our culture. There are more and more people who disavow religious affiliation and the church is less central to the social fabric of our lives. Yet many who say they have no religious affiliation also identify as "spiritual" in some sense. There is space for imagining new ways to engage those who do not think of church as an obvious part of their lives. As the Church changes, we have been excited to receive inquiries over the past couple years from individuals and small groups exploring whether and how they might form a community of faith in their area. We don't know whether any of these seeds will sprout and flourish, or what they will look like as they do. But we expect new models of being church to emerge. We are in the process of hiring a new Associate Conference Minister for Emerging Communities of Faith. This position will be up to .5 FTE and will be primarily responsible for engaging and resourcing these possibilities.

*In order to hire a new Associate Conference Minister for Emerging Communities of Faith, and to

provide some funding to these emerging communities of faith, and to increase our support for missional activities and pastoral leadership development, we are engaging in a “Tending Transformation Campaign” to raise \$350,000 over the next three years.

*Three and a half weeks ago in Kansas City, almost five of every six delegates affirmed the recommendation of MC USA’s Executive Board to retire the third section of the membership guidelines. This is the section that prohibited pastors from performing same-sex marriages.

*We also passed, with a vote by 55.7% of delegates, the Repentance and Transformation resolution brought by Inclusive Mennonite Pastors, and co-signed by many of us individually, by several of our congregations, and by the board and ministerial committee of CDC. That resolution not only rescinds the membership guidelines, but it also repents of the harm that they and other policies of MC USA have done to LGBTQIA+ persons, commits to their having a voice in the development of any policies that specifically affect them, and commits to MC USA embodying a theology that honors LGBTQIA+ people in all future church statements as well as advocating for such a theology in conversations with broader Christian groups.

*This is a moment that I, and many of us, celebrate. And many of us also wonder what will happen in the coming months. I had so many good, sincere, vulnerable, caring conversations with people in Kansas City who did not vote for Repentance and Transformation. I hope, deeply hope, that the care with which so many of us engaged one another in Kansas City will be carried back to our congregations and conferences, and that we will trust God’s Spirit to guide us, together, into the future.

*It took me years to adopt a theology that fully honors LGBTQIA people within the church, and I am absolutely still learning. It took me years of study and relationships with so many faithful and gracious queer and allied people to help me see that God’s love encompasses all of us equally, regardless of gender or sexuality. If you’re not yet at that point, please hear me say that I understand, and I love you, and that the church needs you, MC USA needs you, CDC needs you. I so deeply believe that we are better together - better at being the Church God desires of us, better at being the body of Christ that reflects Christ’s love.

*The state of Central District Conference, I believe, is expecting. We are being attentive and intentional as we tend the transformations God’s Spirit is inviting. We are doing the sacred work of listening to one another deeply, and we are committing resources to support new ways of being communities of faith. The Church is changing, and our conference will continue to change over the coming years. Our discernment remains grounded in faith, hope, and love, and with these three among us, I can’t wait to see where God leads us.

Jan Lugibihl, (Chicago Community) invited participants to reflect on the theme with their whole beings, minds, bodies and spirits. She led a body prayer, followed by a blessing.

Congregational Story - Hively Avenue Mennonite Church: Mary Klassen shared that one of the pastors described the congregation as a revolving door of love. She shared several examples of why.

*A young man from Tanzania visited the congregation. He was going to a university 200 miles away and did not know anyone in that area. Members at Hively knew a lady who lived in that city and she was able to help him get housing and settle into the area.

*A family came to Elkhart from South Africa so the husband could study at AMBS and came to worship at Hively. They asked the congregation to pray for them as they navigated all the things that need to be done as new immigrants. Within a couple weeks, they found a strong connection at Prairie Street Mennonite Church and are now part of that congregation.

*That same Sunday, a family from Cuba arrived at Hively. They found Hively through another Cuban immigrant the congregation had helped several years ago. The congregation helped the family find temporary housing on the AMBS campus. They knew very little English and the congregation was not as bilingual as they want to be. The congregation introduced them to Prairie Street where they can worship every Sunday in the Spanish language.

There are people from many countries in the congregation. The congregation is shaped by them and continue to be transformed by their presence in congregational life. The congregation is sometimes

stretched to meet the needs of others and to bless them as they find new homes, including new faith homes in sibling congregations.

Introductions: Jan Lugibihl (Chicago Community) introduced the following:

Resolutions Committee: George Lehman (First Bluffton), Kiva Nice-Webb (Chicago Community), Rich Preheim (Hively Ave)

Listening Committee: Xaris Martinez (Chapel Hill), Carrie Mast (First Bluffton), Karl Shelly (Assembly)

Parliamentarian: Gerald Mast

Youth Delegates/Mentors: Lily Miller, Youth Delegate, Joel Miller, Mentor

Summary Review of 2021 Annual Meeting Minutes: Jan Lugibihl (Chicago Community) summarized the minutes of the 2021 annual meeting. *A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes of the 2021 annual meeting as written. Tim Stair (Hively Avenue), David Moser (Southside) The motion was affirmed.*

Highlight Actions in 2022 Agenda: Jan Lugibihl (Chicago Community) reviewed the agenda and highlighted actions and agenda for the delegate sessions.

Treasurers Report and Presentation of 2022-2023 Proposed Spending Plan: Tim Lind (Florence Church of the Brethren - Mennonite) thanked congregations for their support of the conference and thanked staff for their careful attention to expenses. CDC will meet its spending plan this year.

Tim directed delegates to the proposed 2022-2023 spending plan on p 24 of the report book. The spending plan includes budgeting for the Tending Transformation campaign. Action on the proposed spending plan will take place on Saturday, June 25.

Presentation of Gifts Discernment Committee and Slate: Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street) introduced the members of the Gifts Discernment Committee: Sally Weaver Glick (Open Table), Peter Eash-Scott (Milwaukee), Jon Hilty (Grace), Joel Miller (Columbus), Brenda North Martin (Raleigh), and herself. She gave a brief description of how the committee works. Janeen expressed gratitude to those who say yes and for the spirit of discernment and intentionality of those who are invited. She acknowledged that there are individuals who are missed and encouraged delegates to share names of those with gifts for conference work with the committee. The more names the committee receives, the greater the possibility of diversity. Janeen introduced the nominees presented on the slate:

*Board of Directors: Tim Lind, treasurer (Florence Church of the Brethren-Mennonite) and Christine Guth, secretary (Eighth Street)

*Ministerial Committee: Ruth Guengerich (Eighth Street) and Drew Strait (Keller Park)

*Missional Church Committee: Brian Moll (Cincinnati), Xaris Martinez (Chapel Hill), and David Voth (Grace)

*Camp Friedenswald Board: Alita Yoder Funk (Silverwood), Steve Hartman Keiser (Milwaukee), Mark Roeschley (Mennonite Church of Normal), and Sarah Werner (Columbus)

*Bluffton University Board of Trustees: Jane Roeschley (Mennonite Church of Normal)

On behalf of the Gifts Discernment Committee, Janeen moved to affirm the 2022-2023 slate of nominees. Steve Hartman Keiser (Milwaukee) seconded. The motion was affirmed.

Commissioning Prayer: Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton) invited all new and ongoing committee and board members to stand. He thanked them for their willingness to share their gifts, experience, time and energy to the work and worship of Central District Conference. Doug led prayer.

Break/Snacks

Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street) led in singing *Come, all you people*, from *Voices Together* (VT 2).

Missional Church Committee Report: Karla Minter (Open Table), chair of the committee, named

committee members: Xaris Martinez (Chapel Hill), Brian Moll (Cincinnati), Matthew Pritchard (Atlanta), Valerie Showalter (Madison), and Tim Stair (Hively Avenue). The committee used the theme of Tending Transformation to organize their work for the year. The work was divided into two main areas: Tending Transformation in Religious, Ethnic, and Racial Reconciliation (RER) and Tending Transformation in Growing Communities of Faith. The committee did a lot of work in this area the last few years, last year created an anti-racism grant, and continued that work this year. Growing Communities of Faith has had a lot of active work this year by providing support for the work the board has done in establishing an Emerging Communities of Faith grant and written some protocols for the grant. The committee also provided input into the Associate Conference Minister of Emerging Communities of Faith job description and provided a person to serve on the search committee.

Karla invited participants to reflect on their own congregational life and congregations that have influenced them over the course of their lifetime. It is congregations that influence us and propel us to do the work of reconciliation in our communities. Karla encouraged participants to read about the history of Central District found in *Walking Together in Faith: the Central District Conference 1957-1990* by Elaine Sommers Rich. Also, Perry Bush edited a collection of stories from congregations, including a sermon preached by Janeen Bertsche Johnson in 1999 when the General Conference Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Church were talking about merging. In that sermon, Janeen emphasized that stories from the past can help us move with grace and purpose into the future.

Karla shared a story of how she was influenced by Mennonite churches in the communities in which she lived throughout her life. Those congregations included Paoli, Lafayette Mennonite Fellowship, Chapel Hill, Raleigh Mennonite Church, Columbia City Church of the Brethren, Waterford Mennonite, Assembly, Faith Mennonite, and Open Table.

Word from MC USA: Rachel Ringenberg Miller, Denominational Minister of Ministerial Leadership, named things that might cause someone to contact her:

- *a pastor looking to enter ministry and needing to fill out the Ministerial Leadership Inventory (MLI),

- *a leader in a congregation wanting information about salary guidelines,

- *a conference minister wondering about resources and needing extra support.

Rachel is working with Michael Danner.

Rachel shared that all the resolutions presented at the special delegate assembly in Kansas City in May passed. She directed delegates to pp 137-183 in the report book and invited them to review the resolutions and the staff impact statements for information and ways congregations can work toward living out the resolutions.

Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street) led in singing *Faith Begins by Letting Go*, from *Voices Together* (VT 585).

Jan Lugibihl, (Chicago Community) led a body prayer, followed by a blessing.

Dwelling in the Word/Visioning: Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton) shared that tending transformation calls us to pay attention and invites us to be stretched, to be open and waiting, expectant people. He invited Gayle Gerber Koontz (Assembly) and Ray Person (First Bluffton) to read Ezekial 17:22-24 and Matthew 13:31-42, using the lectio divina method. He invited table groups to reflect on what they heard, what caught their attention, and to consider who might be seeking shelter and shade in our congregation's trees. How might this speak to emerging communities of faith? Following the discussion, table groups were invited to share what they heard with the larger group.

Blessing Trenton Mennonite Church: Trenton Mennonite Church was a member of the Middle District since 1893 and a member of Central District Conference since its beginning in 1957. Because of differing theological understandings, the congregation decided to discern its affiliation with another conference. In March 2022, Trenton affiliated with Ohio Conference. James blessed the congregation with prayer.

Blessing of Keller Park: James Rissler (Atlanta) reported that Keller Park had been gifted with a blessing

cup and blessings from conference congregations during worship on Thursday evening.

Introduction of Guests: Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton) welcomed and introduced guests and representatives from Mennonite Church USA executive leadership and its agencies, Mennonite schools and from other organizations related to the conference.

Lunch, Visiting Displays

Delegate Session II

Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street) led in singing *Come, all you people*, from *Voices Together* (VT 2).

Jan Lugibihl, (Chicago Community) led a body prayer, followed by a blessing.

Term Review of Conference Minister: James Rissler (Atlanta) introduced Phil Martens (First Urbana), Karla Minter (Open Table), and Ray Person (First Bluffton), who were part of the group who coordinated the term review of the conference minister. James explained the process and gave a summary of the results of the conference minister's evaluation. On behalf of the board of directors, James invited delegates to affirm the review with a round of applause. James led in prayer.

Camp Friedenswald Highlights:

Jenna Liechty Martin (Eighth Street) shared that Camp Friedenswald began in 1950 as a ministry of Middle District and Central Conference. She wondered if the shared ministry around Camp Friedenswald had a place in bringing the two groups together to form Central District Conference. Like many others, Camp Friedenswald has felt the impact of trying to operate during the pandemic. They have also experienced the opportunity for something new and the sense of the Spirit at work. Jenna shared highlights of what has been happening at Camp over the past year:

- *Construction of a new playground
- *The theme for this summer, Shaped By Earth, invited campers to
 - **make clay tiles from clay found at camp
 - **learn the story of the land at Camp Friedenswald
- *Camp has also been working at transformation by
 - **learning more about the Potowatomi, who tended the land on which Camp is located
 - **created a land acknowledgment statement
 - **joined a repair network of the Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery coalition
 - **partnering with Mennonite Men to plant 7600 trees on Camp land next spring
 - **planted 50 trees around main camp
- *New programs
 - **Grand Camp held this past spring
 - **Just Camp in late July
 - **Restoration Retreat in October - partnering with the Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions
- *Annual Women's Retreat

Jenna noted that many congregations see Camp as a partner and extension of their congregational ministry. Camp continues to extend an invitation to support congregations in their ministry for people of all ages. She shared words from participants at high school camp when they were asked about what they appreciated most about Camp. Jenna thanked congregations for their continued financial support, thoughts and prayers, and their time spent volunteering.

Congregational Story: Southside Fellowship (SSF): (PowerPoint presentation)

David Moser shared that the pandemic compelled SSF to reconsider and reinvent itself. The process began before the pandemic when the congregation hired two consultants to help them plan for their future. The theme of tending transformation resonates deeply with the congregation as they think about how to be a congregation that welcomes all. Each year, the congregation gathers together and reaffirms their desire to walk together in following Christ as a faith community. The commitment art piece for 2022 was the image of a labyrinth and participants were invited to sign their names in path of the labyrinth. The labyrinth is a symbolic pilgrimage and a metaphor for the journey of transformation. SSF has put a lot of

work into the discerning of their vision for the future. The congregation listened deeply to who they are as a community, to who they are called to be, and how they are to play their part in transformation of God's work in the world. They crafted a new mission statement to help them remember who they are and where they are going. The mission statement begins with two questions:

- *Who is God?
- *How shall we live?

SSF is exploring new ways of being church together:

- *In addition to long-term small groups, the congregation meets once a month in 'Sunday small groups' in place of worship. The groups are rotated every six months and provide a way to deepen relationships.
- *The congregation has increased their time at Camp Friedenswald, including the baptism of four youth at the Camp
- *Continued to have fun together, i.e., dressing up like saints at an All Saints Day party
- *Cried together, i.e., remembering, grieving, and celebrating the life of Carol Epp, a long time member of SSF and who worked for many years for MC USA coordinating the MC USA conventions. Recently, they dedicated a new oak tree on the AMBS campus in Carol's memory.

Part of the transformation the congregation is going through is a discernment process that involves returning to the original vision of wanting to focus their energies and resources more on ministry and mission than on a building. They are in the process of selling their office building purchased 20 years ago. The funds from the sale will be used to augment their ministry. They hope to hire another part-time pastor to work alongside David, increasing their footprint in the community. An undocumented person in the congregation was interested in buying the property but could not access bank loans. Another member loaned the money for the purchase. The church offices are being moved into the basement of the AMBS chapel, which expresses the congregation's ongoing desire to support the work of the seminary. SSF has been renting from AMBS for almost 55 years. The congregation recognizes the need to trust the Spirit in the transformation of them as a congregation.

Storytelling stations: Delegates were invited to participate in the following four storytelling stations. Each station told their story four different times, each 20 minutes in length. After 20 minutes, the participants rotated to another storytelling station.

- *Pilgrimage as Spiritual Practice with Jane Roeschley
- *The Great Adventure with Lamar Nisly of Bluffton University
- *Journey/Amahoro Ministries - Charles Baraka/Lavon Welty
- *65 Years with CDC - Janeen Bertsche and Perry Bush

Break/Snacks

WORSHIP II: "Swords to Plowshares: Story and Song" A children's musical based on *Swords to Plowshares: The Creation of John P Klassen's Mennonite Central Committee Medallion* written by Lisa Weaver and led by Eliza Jacoby Stoltzfus.

Offering: Ukraine

Dinner

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

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

Break

Delegate Session III

Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street) led in singing *Come, all you people*, from *Voices Together* (VT 2).

Jan Lugibihl, (Chicago Community) led a body prayer, followed by a blessing.

Congregational Story: Shalom Mennonite Congregation: (PowerPoint presentation)

Brian Bolton shared that as the congregation was tending the transformation brought on by the pandemic, there was much uncertainty. Where did they go? Will they come back? The pandemic offers them the opportunity to try new things -- throw things at the wall and see what sticks. One of those things happened on Palm Sunday of 2022 after it had been two years since they had celebrated Palm Sunday together. They prepared for a Palma Paloosa event with various activities laid out on tables. As people gathered together some of them had a look of joy at being together for the first time, the joy of simply being together is palpable. Along with Palma Paloosa, others things that have been sticky are other rituals such as

- *graduations

- *blessings of babies

- *mourning losses

- *drumming up of the sun on Easter followed by worship and breakfast

- *Pentecost birthday party with pinata and parachutes

- *Potlucks have morphed into monthly snacklucks and potlucks in the park

There were plans already in place before the pandemic to respond to growth in the congregation by changing structural plans and expanding the pastoral team to three with the addition of Georgia Metz and Krista Showalter Ehst. This change allows them to spend more time caring for each other and honoring and welcoming the diversities that exist within and around their community. Growth is stretching preconceived notions of congregational culture and identity.

Shalom has continued its signature hospitality and quest for justice and shalom for those inside and outside of their community. That includes the joys of refugee sponsorship, Habitat house building, speaking Christ's peace in the face of war, singing for their lives as they call for an end to frivolous fossil fuel projects in the state. Christ's love is calling them back to their center and a call to love, justice and peace.

Ministerial Committee Report: Ray Person, chair (First Bluffton)

Ray invited delegates to read the committee's report on page 45 of the report book. He introduced members of the committee: Brian Bolton (Shalom Mennonite Congregation), Kay Bontrager-Singer (Faith), Gayle Gerber Koontz (Assembly), Robin Walton (Columbus). Doug Luginbill serves as an ex-officio member of the committee. Ray noted that much of the work of the committee occurs in credentialing interviews, both licensing and ordination, of clergy. The committee will also continue to find ways to help congregations address patriarchy and racism in the church by providing workshops and other resources to congregations as they welcome more diverse clergy. The past two years have been particularly stressful for pastors and the committee will continue to discern how to support them and find ways to move forward.

- **Leaders in Training:*

- **Journey: David Miller (AMBS) explained a bit of how the Journey program works and

recognized J P Schumacher (First Bluffton) and Charles Baraka (Madison) for graduating from the Journey program. Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton) recognized Gloria Bucher (First Bluffton), Lavon Welty (Eighth Street) as mentors for JP and Charles respectively. David presented a certificate of completion and Doug presented a lamp to each of them. They will also receive a one year subscription to the Vision journal, and a free registration to Pastors and Leaders conference. David thanked Gloria and Lavon for serving as mentors and gifted them with a one year subscription to Vision and a free registration to the Pastors and Leaders conference. Doug led in prayer.

Jan Croyle (First Wadsworth), who graduated last year from Journey, shared about her experience in Journey. Jan described the Journey program as “something more.” As an accountant, she felt the need for something more in her life. Journey enabled transformation in her life, something she did not know she could be. She encouraged participants to consider the Journey program to open the world of the Bible and build relationships. In the middle of her Journey program, the pastor, Charles Bontrager, resigned. Jan felt the call to become the interim pastor of the congregation. Jan felt the call from within and the congregation affirmed the call from without. Eventually, she was called to be the pastor of the congregation. She was supported and affirmed in her discernment from Doug, Journey, and the conference.

**Recognition of new pastors/credentialed leaders*

Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton) recognized new pastors and credentialed leaders:

- *Brian Moll (Cincinnati) licensed toward ordination,
- *Sarah Werner (Columbus) licensed toward ordination,
- *Susannah Larry (Hively Avenue) licensed toward ordination,
- *David Cramer (Keller Park) licensed toward ordination,
- *Carrie Badertscher (Keller Park) licensed toward ordination,
- *Georgia Metz (Shalom Mennonite Congregation) licensed toward ordination,
- *Krista Showalter Ehst (Shalom Mennonite Congregation),
- *Peter Janzen (Maplewood) transferred credential from Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference,
- *Clayton Gladish (Silverwood) licensed toward ordination,
- *Jason Kuniholm (Covenant)

Doug expressed gratitude for their leadership and willingness to serve.

**Remembering pastors who have died*

Gayle Gerber Koontz (Assembly) remembered the life of Robert Coon, who died July 2021.

ACTION: 2022-2023 Spending Plan: James invited questions re the spending plan. On behalf of the Board of Directors James moved to affirm the 2022-2023 proposed spending plan as presented. The motion was affirmed unanimously.

Everence: Steve Bustos (Silverwood) shared a presentation about resources provided by Everence. Some of those resources include:

- *Everence Foundation: \$158M contributed, \$72M distributed with 20% given to local congregations.
- *My Neighbor credit card: \$440,000 distributed
- *Sharing Fund giving program: \$819,000 distributed; 21 CDC congregations participated
- *Local volunteers. Stewardship advocates
- *Individual participation in various plans Everence offers
- *Healthy pastors, healthy churches, Wellness, and Financial Planning Subsidies Lilly grants
- *Financial choice: talk to trained counselors about finance, including debt management
- *Safe Church grant of \$350 to create safe sanctuaries
- *Youth Savings Week - July 11-15

Art Auction: James Rissler (Atlanta) announced that the art auction raised ~\$1600 for the Tending Transformation campaign.

Open Mic: [James]

**Karla Minter (Open Table)*: Karla shared three grants available from the Missional Church Committee:

*Anti-racism grant,

*Reign of God grant,

*Emerging Communities of Faith grant (matching grant)

More information about the grants can be found at mcusacdc.org under Resources/Missional

**Joyce Schumacher (Grace)*: Joyce shared a story from when Doug Luginbill was installed in his first pastorate at First Mennonite Bluffton in 1996. Her mother walked to the front and said to the congregation, "Please, as Doug serves you, be kind to him."

**Willard Roth (Eighth Street)*: Willard thanked CDC for having a conference minister and investing in that conference minister over the years. He shared the following story from Southside Fellowship (SSF) in light of the actions of MC USA in the last few weeks.

In 1993 SSF entered into an intensive study, which they identified as a time of discussion, deliberation, and discernment to provide each member opportunity to voice convictions and concerns to explore more fully issues related to the 'acceptance of persons in gay and lesbian relationships as members of the church.'

After that intense, thorough, prayerful, guided study, Mark Weidner, who was the conference minister at that time, wrote a memo to other congregations in the conference, in which he said, "During calendar year of 1993, SSF spent a good deal of time on a study of spirituality and sexuality and how to respond to the requests for membership from a person living in a same sex covenant relationship." On September 25, 1994, the congregational chair wrote, "November 21, 1993, 75 members met to bring closure to the year long study on spirituality and sexuality and to respond to the request for membership from the person living in a same sex covenant relationship." A lengthy discussion did not resolve in consensus. The meeting ended by adopting with some dissent, the statement, "While we continue to have differing opinions among us, we affirm that SSF will continue to receive into membership as we always have, anyone who actively affirms the SSF commitment statement and signs the annual commitment pledge form." Mark wrote, "Since that decision, I believe about a half dozen persons have left the church. It is hard to say their leaving was directly precipitated by this issue or if it was the last straw. This has left the congregation with a somewhat smaller base. SSF is open to dialogue with other congregations on this matter of gays in the church and has sought to do this all along while they were considering what to do with this particular member being received. SSF appreciated the one CDC congregation that requested opportunity for dialogue on the issue. Representatives from First Mennonite Church Berne initiated and hosted a dinner meeting in Fort Wayne for conversation with SSF elders. The atmosphere was cordial and mutually enriching – a model for agreeing and disagreeing in love." Willard stated that as the pastor at the time, that conversation was one of the most moving of his experience. All of us know the difference between congregations and the importance that Berne has been in this conference, and yet that was an extremely cordial conversation.

Because of the guidance that Mark Weidner provided and that the conference has provided historically through the years, it behooves us to keep investing in conference ministers for the good of all of us.

**David and Sharon Rensberger (Atlanta) via Zoom*: David and Sharon expressed appreciation for the availability of Zoom, which made it possible for them to serve as delegates from Atlanta Mennonite Church when Covid concerns and travel costs made it seem unwise for them to travel to Goshen.

**Paul Neufeld Weaver, (First Bluffton)*: Paul was recently appointed director of the Lion and Lamb Peace Arts Center. The Center is searching for half time graduate assistant, who will receive full tuition for two years plus a stipend and other benefits. The expectation is that this person would be the hands and feet of the Center for the next two years. They would like to have someone in place by August.

Paul noted that *Swords to Plowshares*, the book that yesterday's musical was based on, was produced by the Center. The Center wants to be a resource for congregations as well as for the conference.

**Karen Miller Mareco, (Columbus)*: Karen attended the Celtic Pilgrimage storytelling session. She stated that it made her think that her annual pilgrimage is to the annual women's retreat at Camp Friedenswald. She encouraged all of the women to consider attending this year's event, September 16-18.

Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street) led in singing *Faith Begins by Letting Go*, from *Voices Together* (VT 585).

Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) Report: PowerPoint presentation

Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton) shared the makeup and purpose for the CLC within MC USA. CDC representatives are president of the board, James Rissler (Atlanta), president-elect of the board, Jan Luginbill (Chicago Community), and the conference minister, Doug Luginbill. Doug shared that he has found CLC to be a place where conference and constituent groups can share openly and honestly around tables and recognize the various voices and perspectives that are brought to the denomination. CLC provided counsel that conferences and congregations would benefit from some resources at the

denominational level as we talk about the resolutions brought to Kansas City. MC USA staff heard the counsel and provided numerous written resources and webinars for congregations that are still available and relevant as we live into the resolutions approved by the delegates at Kansas City.

One change that the Repentance and Transformation resolution brings to CLC is that there will be a newly formed LGBTQIA representative group at CLC. The voices of Queer folks will be at the table, MC USA is drawing the circle wider. This widening of the circle will cause some congregations and conferences to feel they no longer belong in the circle. This paradox of religious life, where the inclusion of some causes others to feel they no longer belong, is painful. How is God's Spirit calling us to respond to this perpetual reality? MC USA is offering a special webinar, What now?, on July 18 at 7p.

The polity of CDC provides wise counsel as we seek to love and show concern for one another and as we seek to help each other even as we do not feel the need to control one another. The last section of polity in the final section, states,

“. . . 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 [siblings] in our congregations and in the wider conference. . . .

We understand this individual responsibility, this call to mutual accountability— difficult as it may be— to be at the heart of Anabaptism. . . The church is a voluntary community which each person enters on the basis of [their] 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.”

May we continue to pay attention and tend this ongoing transformation.

MCC Great Lakes Report:

Kelly Shenk Koontz (Assembly), program director for MCC Great Lakes, described the work of the program director and thanked congregations for their support of MCC. That support makes global and domestic work possible.

Listening Committee Report:

Carrie Mast (First Mennonite Bluffton) shared themes she heard during the 66th annual meeting:

- *Trees
- *Transformation requires faith
- *Storytelling
- *Transformation cannot be controlled
- *Transformation through art
- *Some of our best moments of tending transformation have included an element of intentionality
- *Children leading worship
- *Transformation takes time and often comes with challenges, hard work, and exhaustion before we get to something new
- *Transformation requires periods of transition
- *Our transformation includes a hybrid format
- *Transformation might feel like we are being stretched by God
- *Transformation means letting go and sometimes saying no
- *Transformation calls for change

What I heard during CDC delegate sessions and in the hallways Karl Shelly (Assembly Mennonite)

If CDC were a tree, it would have 66 rings – some wide from years that were flush, others narrow from times of scarcity. There are currently 48 birds nesting in its branches. They've migrated to this annual

gathering from nine states. In this CDC tree you'd find some warblers, grackles, chickadees, barn owls, and definitely a few cuckoos. All are precious in God's sight.

In James Rissler's *State of the Conference* report, we heard an emotion-filled message suggesting we are a body that is "expecting." But to what exactly are we giving birth? And who exactly is responsible for this pregnancy? [Aren't metaphors fun?]

The answers to those questions are wrapped in some mystery, but there are the telltale signs of the Holy Spirit moving among us, planting new saplings, bringing high trees low and low trees high, and beckoning us to be transformed.

In other reports and stories during the delegate sessions we heard that the church is *changing* – changing as leaves do in new seasons.

The pandemic has changed us in a variety of ways,

- including in how we gather. This hybrid gathering is one example of that.

We also heard that CDC is changing:

- We were once a rural-based conference; now we are more city-based.
- We're changing in that we're adding staff.
- We're changing in that we're dreaming new dreams (Tending Transformation campaign)
- We're in touch with new emerging congregations. We're also saying goodbye to a long-time CDC congregation that has left us for another conference. Despite our conference retaining a geographically-descriptive name, we have become much more a conference of *affinity* rather than of *geography*.

We heard how congregations are changing

- Hively Ave has become a revolving door of love.
- Shalom Mennonite is growing and re-experiencing the joy of simply being together.
- Southside Fellowship is restructuring, and has named two questions key to their ongoing discernment: *Who is God? How shall we live?*

Camp Friedenswald is changing

- It is learning more about how its land was once inhabited by the Potawatomi nation, and as a result Camp is now part of the Repair Network working at Indigenous solidarity and restitution.

MC USA is changing

- A month ago, it retired the controversial membership guidelines. And more revealing of who the denomination has become, it adopted the Repentance and Transformation Resolution – a resolution endorsed by a number of CDC congregations, and a clear call to address the harm, the violence done to LGBTQIA people. We wait to see how this will shape who we become as a denomination.

Unlike at Kansas City, we at this gathering did not hear or discuss any prophetic or social justice resolutions at this gathering. Does that mean we don't think there is much good that comes from taking a stand or charting a course of action together? And that we would rather simply offer each other the examples of our congregational action?

We also heard a question concerning a great mystery: What is the meaning of "GC"? (who knows?)

In the midst of all this change, it was observed that strong trees provide refuge -- a place where birds of every kind and color can land. Recent science has confirmed what many Native People have said for centuries – that strong, tall trees communicate with and support new trees.

So what new saplings or what different color of bird need the support that a conference such as ours can give?

That, friends, is a question that invites transformation.

****What I heard during worship and in more informal conversations during this annual conference***
Xaris Martinez (Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship)

Surrounded by colorful art and by fellow CDCers over Zoom, we were called into worship by the newest communities among us (Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship and Keller Park Church), who reminded us

of how we continue to welcome and be blessed by one another.

We sang in unison, in harmony, in multiple languages, and while clapping and dancing, giving us hope that we can, together, sing a new world into being—a new world “where each gender, class, and race brings its rainbow gifts and colors to God’s limitless embrace” (VT 809).

This new world requires that we be transformed—individually and collectively. While many of us grew up believing that this transformation required self-negation, David Cramer called out this kind of thinking as toxic theology, perhaps even deadly. What transformation truly requires is celebration—a celebration of the unique and diverse gifts that each of us brings to our congregations, conference, and denomination. It is when we show up as fully ourselves that we can discern together “what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2).

We celebrate the ways in which this conference provides a safe and accessible place for many of us to show up as fully ourselves—and we remember that there are still many among us and in other conferences whose gifts we have failed to celebrate. We celebrate the ways in which the recent votes in Kansas City are calling our denomination to be transformed and be a place where our queer siblings are honored and celebrated as the people of God that they are—and we remember that this transformation requires confessing and repenting of past harms, engaging with love and care across our differences, and ensuring that those who continue to be marginalized among us are not pitted against each other but are instead listened to, learned from, valued. We are better, together.

We asked God to take our lives, our moments, our days, our hands, our feet, our intellect, our lips, our silver, our gold, our will, our love, our very selves, and use it all to tend the transformation already underway among us (VT 759). Do we mean it? Hands at our waist, hands reaching out, hands cupped at our hearts, hands outstretched—are we ready to come to God’s table, to name what is broken in our lives, to be nurtured by the bread and the cup, to offer the peace of Christ to each other?

As we tend the transforming work of God in our midst, Susannah Larry reminded us that many of the trees we have relied on, admired, and built our faith around will fall. Some of those trees will be burned down to ash as we reject the ways of empire and learn new ways of being church together. Some of those trees will come down as the climate changes around us, some because we failed to care for them well. After all, some of us in this conference are known for killing plastic plants ...

But in the midst of what may look like rubble, God reminds us to look again—to pay attention, to slow down, to listen. Do you see the new seeds falling on the ground? Some of them will sprout and flourish, others will wither and dry up. Do you hear the birds as they pick up branches to form nests? Some of them will fly away. Do you feel the wind blowing around you? That’s the Spirit, rooting us, transplanting us, taking us on a migrant journey. Do you hold a leaf that our children drew in your hand? Their creativity and imagination will continue to inspire us. Some of the fallen trees among us will get made into playground benches, some into pews for our meeting houses, some into shelter for those who are unhoused in our community, some into paintbrushes and knitting needles and pencils, and some will be used to light bonfires where we will gather to laugh, mourn, and share our sacred stories of transformation.

The youngest among us reminded us to “wonder and watch, wonder and wait, wonder and watch and wait” (*Swords to Plowshares*). We are an advent people—waiting for birth, expecting transformation, singing together of a new world that is coming where all of us are free (VT 416). May our minds be stretched and our hearts enlarged as we experiment and explore and discern and affirm (VT 585). “Come, Lord Jesus, come. Holy Spirit, come” (VT 49).

****What I heard during Storytelling Stations & Seminars and in more informal conversations*** Carrie Mast (First Mennonite Church Bluffton)

It is interesting to note that storytelling in all kinds of ways is a crucial ingredient of how we are Tending Transformation; much of our time together gathered together as conference is simply storytelling. Even this listening report is the story of CDC’s 65th Annual Session.

It seems that we are so eager to be together doing our storytelling that we didn't even wait for the start of the annual meeting; approximately 30 of us gathered together for a PRE-conference seminar with Brenda Sawatzky Paetkau and Kay Bontrager-Singer to learn how to use Storytelling as a Tool. This seminar provided the creative space and time for putting learning into action as participants were transformed from participants to storytellers with one another.

Great stories often come from our adventures in travels, and yesterday afternoon, we were invited to an odyssey around College Mennonite to hear about Pilgrimage, the Great Adventure, some fruit from the Journey program, and our trek together as CDC over the last 65 years. Through these four storytelling stations, we learned:

- *from Jane Roeschley that Pilgrimages are Spiritual Practices as she shared her own Celtic Pilgrimage experiences;
- *From Lamar Nisly, Paul Neufeld Weaver, and Clara Matthews how first year Bluffton University students are taking The Great Adventure together in the Smoky Mountains to deepen understandings of self and others through connections within classroom communities in a natural setting;
- *From Charles Baraka and Lavon Welty how completing the Journey program led to Amahoro Ministries which works through workshops to heal hearts and bring reconciliation to Burundi and the Great Lakes Region of Africa;
- *From CDC Historian Perry Bush and Janeen Bertsche Johnson how Central District Conference formed from the Middle District Conference and the Central Conference in 1957 - with an excellent compilation of the comings and goings of each congregation who has played a role in any of these conferences - as well as visits down memory lane and a few rabbit trails with David Bertsche and Ron Ropp as they shared their recollections of what they were doing around the time of that 1957 merger.

Last evening was really more storytelling in the shape of seminars. We listened to stories of transformation happening through organizations that are addressing the ecological crisis and another that is connecting immigrants with community volunteers who speak their language and can refer them to services in the community for food, transportation, housing, jobs, language classes, and legal help. We learned how a book can be a tool of transformation by way of nurturing the development of Anabaptist faith practices in families. We heard how a podcast can transform our thinking about complex issues in the world, and some of us considered how war and conflict is transforming Ukraine, and how our own peace church responses might help alter the course of transformation from war to peace.

Thanks to:

- College Mennonite Church, Goshen College, and local families for hosting us
- Staff and volunteers who set up meeting rooms, informative booths, snacks, and coffee
- Worship and song leaders for reminding us of the incredible resources of our musical heritage
- Artists who shared their multimedia presentations and art work with us
- Members of Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, Southside Fellowship, and Shalom Mennonite Congregation for sharing their stories of transformation with us
- Rachel Ringenberg Miller for bringing us greetings from MC USA. We're grateful that we are one of the eight conferences she will be working with in the months and years to come.
- Les Gustafson-Zook for updating us on the work of MCC in Ukraine
- The representative of MCC Great Lakes for updating us on the domestic, national, and international work of MCC
- Phil Martens for ensuring CDCers could join the meeting over Zoom
- Doug Luginbill for the ways in which he pastors all of us and for graciously accepting our affirmation of his gifts and ministry through applause
- James Rissler for his state of the conference address, where he vulnerably shared how he has grown and who he has learned from and let his voice break as emotions washed over all of us.
- Jan Luginbill for leading us in embodied prayer and for helping us figure out what the colored dots on our name tags meant

And last, but absolutely not least, Emma Hartman for, well, for absolutely everything! I truly don't know how this conference would function without your administrative and logistic skills and your wisdom and perspective. Gracias!

Once upon a time there was the Central District Conference, a group of people committed to listening to the Spirit, to going wherever their efforts in tending transformation may take them, knowing the support of their traveling companions and the love of God and the peace of Jesus Christ as constants in their journey of faith. Amen.

Evaluations/Committee Nominations: Jan Lugibihl (Chicago Community Mennonite Church) invited delegates to fill out the evaluation forms and share suggestions for committee nominations.

Close of Delegate Sessions: James Rissler (Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship) recognized the retirement of Mary Klassen (Hively Avenue Mennonite Church) and thanked her for work as editor of the conference publications and her care in helping us listen to each other. He thanked Tyler Klassen for his offerings of photography. James presented a wire Tending Transformation Tree to Mary as a parting gift.

James closed the 2022 delegate sessions with the sounding of the gavel.

Closing: Doug Luginbill (First Mennonite Church Bluffton) closed the 2022 annual meeting with prayer.

Children's Program: Thanks to Lora Nafziger (Assembly) for coordinating childcare and to Christa Janzen (Assembly) and her helpers for leading the K-Gr5 programming.

Emma Hartman
Recorder

Tending Transformation Campaign		Over 3 years	Per Year							
Total		\$ 350,000.00	\$ 116,667.00							
Emerging Communities (50%)		\$ 175,000.00	\$ 58,333.00							
Staff (30%)		\$ 105,000.00	\$ 35,000.00							
Leadership Development (10%)		\$ 35,000.00	\$ 11,667.00							
Missional Activities (10%)		\$ 35,000.00	\$ 11,667.00							
		\$ 350,000.00	\$ 116,667.00							
Other Income		21-22	22-23	22-23	Actual/	22-23 SP	Total TT	23-24 SP	24-25 SP	
			YTD	YTD SP	SP Comp	Year 1	(inc 21-22	Year 2	Year 3	
							donations)			
5200 - Campaign Donations		52,565.00	150,485.06							
Total Campaign Donations		<u>52,565.00</u>	<u>150,485.06</u>				203,050.06			
TENDING TRANSFORMATION ALLOCATIONS										
Emerging Communities of Faith		26,282.50	75,242.53	43,749.75	31,492.78	58,333.00	101,525.03	58,333.00	58,333.00	
Missional Activities		5,256.50	15,048.51	8,750.25	6,298.26	11,667.00	20,305.01	11,667.00	11,667.00	
Leadership Development		5,256.50	15,048.51	8,750.25	6,298.26	11,667.00	20,305.01	11,667.00	11,667.00	
Associate Conference Minister		15,769.50	45,145.52	26,250.00	18,895.52	35,000.00	60,915.02	35,000.00	35,000.00	
Total TENDING TRANSFORMATION ALLOCAT		<u>52,565.00</u>	<u>150,485.06</u>	<u>87,500.25</u>	<u>62,984.81</u>	<u>116,667.00</u>	<u>203,050.06</u>	<u>116,667.00</u>	<u>116,667.00</u>	
Other Expense										
7400 - Campaign Expenses			55.04							
Total Campaign Expenses			<u>55.04</u>				<u>512.47</u>			
Net Campaign Income			150,430.02				202,537.59			
Campaign Allocation Detail										
		Beg Bal 2022	2022-2023	2022-2023	2022-2023					
			YTD	YTD IN	YTD OUT					
2109 · Leadership Development		9,877.73	15,421.14	9,556.50	4,692.09					
2147 · Missional Ch Committee		-	2,449.06	4,556.50	2,807.44					
2174 · Emerging Communities of Faith		9,000.00	35,532.50	23,032.50	-					
2175 · TT New Hire (Assoc Conf Min)		-	6,480.24	15,769.50	7,189.26					

2023-2024 Slate of Nominees



Position: **Board of Directors,**
President-elect
Name: Joel Miller
Congregation: Columbus Mennonite Church
Occupation: Pastor



Position: **Missional Church Committee**
Name: Gary Martin
Congregation: Faith Mennonite Church
Occupation: Transitional Pastor



Position: **Board of Directors,**
Member-at-large
Name: Lydia Brenneman
Congregation: Lima Mennonite Church
Occupation: Chaplain



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



Position: **Ministerial Committee**
Name: *Brian Bolton
Congregation: Shalom Mennonite Congregation
Occupation: Pastor



Position: **Camp Friedenswald Board**
Name: Chris Moser
Congregation: First Mennonite Church Bluffton
Occupation: Resource Development at Mennonite Home Communities of Ohio



Position: **Ministerial Committee**
Name: *Gayle Gerber Koontz
Congregation: Assembly Mennonite Church
Occupation: Retired



Position: **Camp Friedenswald Board**
Name: *Deanna Risser
Congregation: Assembly Mennonite Church
Occupation: VP for Administration & CFO at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS)

* = incumbent

**=appointed to fill a vacant seat, first elected term



Position: **Missional Church Committee**
Name: Julia Gingrich
Congregation: Eighth Street Mennonite Church
Occupation: Pastor

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



**Central
District
Conference**
A conference of
Mennonite Church USA

Doug Luginbill
Conference Minister
1015 Division Street
Goshen, IN 46528-2000
confmin@mcusadc.org
574-534-1485

*Knowing
Christ's love...
Answering
God's Call*

February 9, 2023

St. Louis Mennonite Fellowship
3752 Giles Ave,
Saint Louis, MO 63116
Via email to Pastor Jennifer Harris Dault, doveintheattic@gmail.com

Dear friends of St. Louis Mennonite Fellowship,

Greetings to you in the name of Jesus Christ, our risen Lord. Through email correspondence and Zoom calls with Pastor Jennifer over the past months, we have been aware of your interest to transfer your affiliation from Illinois Mennonite Conference to Central District Conference. We understand this was a deliberative discernment process which ended in affirmation by the congregation. We are also aware that Illinois Mennonite Conference has been informed of your decision through conference moderator Darrel Miller. We affirm your careful discernment.

We received your formal request to join Central District Conference in a letter dated January 30, 2023. At a CDC board of directors meeting on February 6, the board unanimously and enthusiastically affirmed moving forward with your membership request. This is a two-step process in that you would be introduced to CDC delegates at our June 2023 Annual Meeting and then affirmed by delegates at our June 2024 Annual Meeting.

As one of the 16 conferences of Mennonite Church USA, and as a conference of 45 congregations, we recognize the importance of being connected with other conferences and congregations for support and accountability. We understand the purpose of being a conference is to provide encouragement, share resources, and build mutually beneficial relationships between congregations. We recognize that some within your congregation will already be familiar with Central District Conference since you were part of CDC some years ago. Welcome back!

Below are steps that we believe will help foster good process and relationships as we discern together the Spirit's leading.

1. All congregations seeking membership with CDC are expected to be familiar with and support the "[Membership Criteria](#)" of the conference. We would request a letter stating your support of these criteria, preferably by April 1, 2023.

2. We invite you to participate in our Mid-Year gathering at First Mennonite Church, Champaign-Urbana on March 4, 2023. You can find information about that [HERE](#). You are also invited to our Annual Meeting at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, IN on June 22-24. (The details of this meeting are forthcoming.) At the meeting you will be introduced to the delegates. Either James Rissler, CDC President, or I will contact Pastor Jennifer in the coming weeks to talk more about this.
3. Throughout the year, you are invited to participate fully in CDC activities and events, receive our publications, and interact with our members and leadership as we continue to discern together God's leading toward possible membership.
4. I have already met with your Pastor Search Committee and enjoyed getting to know some of your members.
5. Sometime prior to our June Annual Meeting, I and another board member would like to worship with you, get to know you, and respond to any questions you might have.
6. Assuming continued interest by both St. Louis Mennonite Fellowship and Central District Conference, the delegates at our June 2024 Annual Meeting would vote on membership.

Please don't hesitate to contact us or other CDC leadership when questions arise. May God's grace, wisdom and peace be with you during this season of discernment.

In Christ's love,



Doug Luginbill, Conference Minister

James Rissler, President of the CDC Board of Directors



1 Mennonite Church USA

2 Accessibility Resolution

3 (Updated May 21, 2021)

4

5 Introduction:

6

7 The purpose of this resolution is to help all members of Mennonite Church USA (MC USA),
8 including congregations, area conferences, agencies and constituency groups recognize and
9 seek to remove the barriers to belonging in architecture, communications and attitudes that
10 prevent individuals with disabilities from participating in church life; and to bring wholeness to
11 the Body of Christ as those barriers are removed, and all people are fully integrated into the
12 community of faith.

13 *"Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone*
14 *benefits. All kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit and to all kinds of people! The variety is*
15 *wonderful." 1 Corinthians 12:7, The Message.*

16 Resolution:

17 As members of MC USA, we commit to growing as communities of grace, joy and peace without
18 barriers so that God's healing and hope flow through all of us to the world regardless of ability.

19 This resolution affirms that people with disabilities are included
20 within priorities expressed in MC USA Journey Forward:

- 21 • Experience and bear witness to the belovedness of all creation, acknowledging that all
22 people are made in the image of God and are children of God.
- 23 • Follow Jesus: In his life and teaching, Jesus emphasized that God's reign includes all
24 people, especially those who have been marginalized or excluded. As an Anabaptist
25 community of the living word, we will listen carefully to the voices of people with
26 disabilities, to better understand the fullness of God's love for us and the vision of God's
27 reign through Jesus Christ.

- 28
- 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.
- 34

35 We, the members, congregations and organizations of MC USA, resolve to deepen our
36 understanding of barriers for people with disabilities, to take action to make our community life
37 and facilities accessible and welcoming to all, and to discern and affirm the gifts of each person
38 for our common good.

39

40 **Anabaptist Disabilities Network in collaboration with Mennonite**
41 **Health Services (MHS) will support MC USA congregations,**
42 **conferences and organizations to remove barriers to belonging for**
43 **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.
- 50

51 **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.
- 59

60 At all levels of the church, we commit to calling out and employing the leadership gifts of people
61 with disabilities.

62

63 Accessibility Resolution: Appendix 1

64 Supplemental Information

65

66 Context

67 Faith communities in the U.S. are exempt from secular mandates in the Americans with
68 Disabilities Act (ADA). As a result, many Mennonite congregations lag behind secular society in
69 making facilities and activities accessible and in integrating those with disabilities into their
70 communities.

71

72 While celebrating the many steps Mennonites have taken to become more accessible to people
73 with disabilities, architectural barriers persist, hindering the participation of persons with mobility
74 challenges. Communication barriers persist, hindering the participation of those with differing
75 visual, intellectual or hearing abilities. Attitudinal barriers persist, reflecting a lack of sensitivity
76 and denying those with differing abilities dignity and access to spiritual nurture, friendship,
77 freedom, membership, baptism, self-expression, service, and leadership equal to and balanced
78 by the rights of others.

79 History

80 In 1983, the General Conference Mennonite Church General Assembly adopted a *Resolution*
81 *Regarding Caring Community*, which pledged to continue to pay special attention to the needs
82 of those with physical, emotional, and sensory disabilities, and to break down the barriers that
83 have hindered their participation.

84 We interpret the 1995 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* to include all people,
85 including those with disabilities:

- 86 • At Pentecost, God began to pour out the Spirit on all flesh and by the gifts of the Holy
87 Spirit, all Christians are called to carry out their particular ministries (Article 3).
- 88 • God has created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, creating human
89 beings in the divine image (Articles 5 and 6).
- 90 • All believers have been baptized in one Spirit into the one body of Christ, and the
91 varieties of gifts and ministries in the church are all given for the common good (Article
92 9).
- 93 • The church's mission is to reconcile differing groups, creating one new humanity. The
94 church is called to witness to people of every culture, ethnicity, or nationality (Article 10).

95

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.



**1840 Homewood Ave.
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Phone: 570-360-5035
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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
<input type="checkbox"/>	25 or less	1	0
<input type="checkbox"/>	26-50	1	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	51-75	1	2
<input type="checkbox"/>	76-100	1	3
<input type="checkbox"/>	101-150	1	4
<input type="checkbox"/>	151-200	1	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	201-300	1	6
<input type="checkbox"/>	301-400	1	7
<input type="checkbox"/>	401-500	2	7
<input type="checkbox"/>	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.**

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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

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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

88

89 **We commit to:**

- 90 • *Rescind* the Membership Guidelines, Section III.¹¹
- 91 • Include LGBTQIA people and/or representative allies in the creation of any resource,
92 document, or policy produced or distributed by the denomination that specifically affects
93 LGBTQIA people.
- 94 • Require that the Executive Board consult with LGBTQIA leaders¹² to create an
95 LGBTQIA constituency group with representation on the Constituency Leaders Council
96 and/or other denomination-wide leadership groups.
- 97 • Provide denominational resources for individuals, congregations, and conferences to
98 engage with repentance and reconciliation in their own contexts. Such resources should
99 explore historic harms, encourage *truth-telling*, and address areas of *intersectionality*.
- 100 • Follow the leadership of LGBTQIA Mennonites to provide support and resources for
101 LGBTQIA leaders in the church. This should involve investment of denominational time
102 and money.
- 103 • Formalize and publicize policies for MC USA’s Executive Board, staff, and church-wide
104 program agencies that prohibit the use of sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital
105 status as criteria to restrict a person’s full participation in the ministries, activities, roles,
106 and committees at the denominational level.
- 107 • Embody a theology that honors LGBTQIA people and relationships with all future MC
108 USA theological statements, including but not limited to future revisions of *The*
109 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* and *A Shared Understanding of*
110 *Ministerial Leadership*. When MC USA partners with other denominations or faith
111 groups, its input into the process will advocate for this theology.

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113

114 **GLOSSARY**

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116 *Allies* - Within the context of the LGBTQIA community, allies are individuals who are not
117 LGBTQIA (i.e., they are heterosexual and cisgender), but who support the LGBTQIA
118 community. Being an ally means: sharing power, taking risks, taking responsibility, being open
119 to the unknown, becoming part of addressing injustice, leveling the playing field, accepting
120 differences, making allowances, and leading by action. It is important for an ally to join
121 LGBTQIA persons in solidarity, and not play a patronizing role in the journey towards equality.
122 [Definition adapted from *Safe Zone* (2016) by the Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT
123 Interests.]

124

125 *Harm* - Here used broadly to mean the diminishment of physical, mental, and/or spiritual health
126 as a result of beliefs, policies, and practices that reject the faithful witness of LGBTQIA people
127 and their faith communities. Harm is related to *violence* (see definition below).

128

129 ¹¹ This will effectively eliminate section III of the Guidelines. Sections I and II are part of the MC USA bylaws.

130 ¹² Many LGBTQIA Mennonite leaders are affiliated with advocacy groups including Brethren Mennonite Council
131 for LGBT Interests, Pink Menno, and Inclusive Mennonite Pastors.

132

133 *Intersectionality* - A lens that helps us understand the overlapping dimensions of identity,
134 privilege, and oppression. A community whose theology and structures tend to intersectionality
135 will recognize the interlocking nature of each person's identity markers (such as gender, sexual
136 orientation, race, economic status, age, etc.) and how they are granted the space to belong and
137 the power to thrive.

138

139 *LGBTQIA* - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual. The acronym is
140 one generally accepted way of representing a diversity of sexual orientations and gender
141 identities. Sometimes "queer" is used as an umbrella term for LGBTQIA.

142

143 *Marginalized groups* - Those who are denied access to institutional power because of one or
144 more aspect/s of who they are. Because the dominant cultural norms in MC USA, as in wider
145 U.S. culture, have been established by those who are predominantly white, heterosexual,
146 cisgender, and male, marginalized groups in our context include Black, Indigenous, and other
147 People of Color, LGBTQIA people, and women.

148

149 *Rescind* - "take back, cancel" (*Merriam-Webster*). At the time of writing "A Resolution for
150 Repentance and Transformation," MC USA leadership is proposing to "retire" the Membership
151 Guidelines with little or no mention of the pain the Guidelines have caused. "Rescind" represents
152 a stronger rejection of the painful legacy of the Membership Guidelines in the formation and life
153 of our denomination.

154

155 *Truth-telling* - Following the practitioners of restorative and transformative justice, publicly
156 telling the truth about harm is an essential step toward healing. Truth-telling centers the stories of
157 those who have been harmed, reveals the impact of past actions, and opens the door to
158 accountability and change.

159

160 *Violence* - Occurs when the actions of individuals, institutions, or structures of power
161 intentionally or unintentionally hurt, damage, or destroy the value of an individual or a group.
162 Exclusion is a threatening act that enforces the experience of othering -- treating some people in
163 the church as essentially different and generally inferior -- and continues the cycle of
164 marginalization. Othering and marginalization are forms of violence; they cause emotional,
165 physical, and spiritual harm.

166

167 Submitted by Michael Crosby, Joanna Harader and Randy Spaulding, on behalf of the Inclusive
168 Mennonite Pastors Leadership Team.



1 For Justice in the U.S. Criminal Legal System

2 Updated May 28, 2021

3

4 Summary

5 As a historic peace church, Mennonite Church USA is called to resist “injustice in all forms, and
6 in all places.”¹ Many aspects of the current United States’ criminal legal system cause pain and
7 suffering for many, especially poor people and people of color.

8 The U.S. criminal legal system, at its core, promotes violence and punishment, not reconciliation
9 and peace. We hear this from the voices of those currently and formerly incarcerated, calling for
10 justice; from their families, who yearn to be made whole; and from people of color, who are
11 discriminated against and hurt by this system.² The violence of the U.S. criminal legal system
12 will not, and cannot, bear the fruits of justice and peace.

13 A just world will only come through following the life and teachings of Jesus. For too long, we
14 have ignored the teachings of Jesus as they apply to the criminal legal system. Jesus calls us to
15 help the poor, the sick and the oppressed. “I was in prison and you visited me,” Jesus tells the
16 righteous in Matthew 25:36. We confess that too often, we have ignored that call.

17 At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus reads from the prophet Isaiah, saying, “The Spirit of the
18 Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to
19 proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to
20 proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Then, Jesus declares, “Today this scripture has been
21 fulfilled in your hearing.” Luke 4:18-21

22 As Christians, we are called to look to Jesus and the prophetic tradition of the Bible for our
23 vision of justice. We, like every generation of the church before us, are called to do our part,
24 empowered by the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, to advance God's all-encompassing
25 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 levels⁴
- 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

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55 USA Executive Board staff and the Resolutions Committee):

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69

70 **Additional Endorsers of this Resolution**

71 Pastor Karl S. Shelly, J.D.

72

73 **Appendix A**

74 **Policing**

75 Policing originated to control various “threatening” peoples. In the Southern United States, many
76 police forces were borne out of slave patrols, formed to maintain the institution of slavery. In the
77 Northern states, Indian Constables controlled Native Americans, and in cities, such as St. Louis,
78 Mo., police forces were formed to protect residents specifically from Native Americans.³

79 The racial elements of early police can still be seen today. When stopped by police, a person of
80 color is more likely to have their vehicle searched.⁴ Body camera footage also shows police
81 officers clearly interacting with Black community members differently than their white
82 counterparts.⁵ The rate at which Black people are arrested is higher than white people for both
83 juveniles and adults. Additionally, Black people are five times more likely than white people to
84 be stopped by police without just cause.⁶ The statistics for death by police are alarming as well,
85 as Black and Hispanic people are disproportionately impacted. While white people make up
86 more than 60% of the population, they only make up about 41% of fatal police shootings. Black
87 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>.

88 Police brutality is a well-documented phenomenon. Over the past five years, police officers have
89 killed more than 5,000 people.⁹ These statistics do not include other forms of police brutality in
90 which the victim lives, as these are harder to document. Additionally, police officers have
91 become increasingly militarized, and the number of SWAT and other militarized units has
92 increased. These units use weapons, body armor and vehicles designed for war. As these units
93 grow in numbers, there has been no corresponding increase in officer safety or decrease in
94 crime.¹⁰

95 Ultimately, many issues in policing are rooted in the fact that police in the United States have
96 become overtasked and overburdened. Municipalities look to the police to handle issues of
97 homelessness, mental health crises, food insecurity and addiction.¹¹ These issues are better
98 addressed by increased funding for education,¹² social services, medicine, transportation
99 infrastructure and other public works.¹³

100 **Cash Bail**

101 The cash bail system is one of the most fundamentally unjust tenets of the American legal
102 system. The state charges a cash bail, which is either a standard amount for a particular offense,
103 or an amount adjusted by a judge, trying to guarantee that the defendant will return for their trial
104 or hearing. If they do show up, the bail money is returned; if they don't, it is forfeited to the
105 government. This system creates a divide based on economic status and incarcerates people
106 based on their economic status.¹⁴ Close to 90% of people being held in jails pre-trial are there
107 because they cannot afford to pay the bail.¹⁵ Additionally, being held before sentencing raises the
108 likelihood of being convicted.¹⁶ The idea of cash bail was to avoid people fleeing, but it has
109 become about how much money you have instead of whether or not you will show up to court.¹⁷
110 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>.

111 proven to have committed a crime.¹⁸ Cash bail also disproportionately affects Black, Latinos and
112 Native American people, as they are twice as likely to be held in jail for failing to post bond.¹⁹
113 These same groups also face higher bail rates than white people when charged with similar
114 crimes.²⁰

115 **Legal Counsel and Sentencing**

116 The court system itself is also unjust. Ninety-four percent of prisoners do not stand trial, but
117 instead are pressured into plea deals, forfeiting their chance to be proven innocent or guilty by a
118 jury.²¹ The plea deal has become a way for the legal system to save time and money, at the
119 expense of those being charged. People who have been charged are encouraged to take plea
120 deals, with prosecutors threatening extraordinarily inflated charges if the case is taken to trial.

121 Additionally, mandatory sentencing laws have increased both the number of people incarcerated
122 and the length of their incarceration.²² These include “three strikes” laws, which increase the
123 length of sentence for the third offense, no matter the charge, and mandatory minimum
124 sentencing laws, which force judges to impose certain sentences on specific crimes. Their stated
125 goal was to reduce drug use, but they have generally failed to do so. Instead, these mandatory
126 minimums increase the number of people in jail and are one of the major reasons why the U.S.
127 has the highest incarceration rate in the world.²³

128 The death penalty is another area of problematic and unjust sentencing. Studies show that the
129 death penalty is used in a racially biased way, as a defendant is more likely to be sentenced to
130 death for killing a white person than for killing a non-white person.²⁴ MC USA has already
131 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/>.

132 Finally, a lack of access to legal counsel makes it difficult for those charged with crimes to prove
133 their innocence or fight for a more just sentence.²⁶ Public defenders are overworked, and as a
134 result, many of their clients are unable to receive the attention that they deserve.²⁷

135 **Incarceration**

136 The U.S. system of incarceration has many flaws. One of the most notable is the increasing use
137 of private prisons, which are designed to profit from those serving time. These prisons do not
138 save the government money.²⁸ Instead, they make money for their shareholders and help foster a
139 culture of predatory legal action. Both private prisons and government-run prisons practice
140 numerous inhumane policies.²⁹ Prisoners can be hired out to private companies that contract with
141 the government, and the prisoners are often paid less than a dollar a day.³⁰

142 Additionally, the experience of living in a prison can be incredibly traumatic, and PTSD as a
143 result of incarceration is not uncommon.³¹ Women are especially vulnerable, as they are more
144 likely than men to experience both inmate-on-inmate and staff-on-inmate sexual violence.³²
145 After being released, formerly incarcerated individuals are often excluded from public housing
146 and considered ineligible for many jobs. In some states, they are barred from voting.

147 Incarceration hurts more than the person incarcerated. Eighty percent of women in jail are
148 mothers, and the majority of them are their child's primary caretaker.³³ Visitation policies often
149 discourage visits from families because of the cost of phone or video calls, limited visitation
150 hours and diminished quality of contact.³⁴ In addition, parents often have difficulty regaining
151 custody of children after they are released.³⁵ The effects of incarceration make it difficult for
152 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.

2023

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, 2023

Checking	382,201.64
Savings	141,240.53
	523,442.17
Undeposited Funds	76.70
Prepaid expenses	2,072.36
Missional Fund	180,906.78
	183,055.84
	706,498.01
	706,498.01
Accounts Payable	-1,470.34
Other Agency Transfer	6,816.94
Other Current Liabilities	5,626.35
Funds/Escrows	
General Assembly Escrow	8,830.65
Cash Reserve Escrow	119,743.39
Conference Minister's Sabbatical Escrow	13,343.74
Ministry Inquiry Program	319.75
Missional Church Committee	2,449.06
Leadership Development	11,862.14
Emerging Communities of Faith	35,532.50
Tending Transformation New Hire	5,848.52
Jubilee Fund	1,522.56
Transitional Pastors Sabbatical	11,114.27
Reign of God Grant	1,250.00
Surplus Reserve Fund	26,239.37
Missional Activities Fund	15,093.20
Healthy Boundaries	709.76
Celtic Pilgrimage	50,072.97
Total Current Liabilities	314,904.83
	314,904.83
Equity	
Net income	186,770.73
Total Equity	391,593.18
Total Liability and Equity	706,498.01

**Central District Conference
Income and Expense Statement
As of April 30, 2023**

	Actual 2022-2023 thru April 30 (10 months)	SP 2022-2023 thru April 30 (10 months)	SP 2022-2023 (12 months)	Actual 2021-2022 12 months	SP 2021-2022 (12 months)
INCOME					
Congregational Giving	\$186,727.03	\$175,925.84	\$211,111.00	\$201,797.90	\$191,000.00
Annual Meeting Registration/Offering	\$500.00	\$10,000.00	\$12,000.00	\$12,777.00	\$12,000.00
Annual Meeting Donations: Memorial/C	\$0.00	\$2,500.00	\$3,000.00	\$190.00	\$3,000.00
Additional Funding	\$39,157.00	\$37,500.00	\$45,000.00	\$44,997.50	\$32,500.00
Bequests/In-kind donations	\$662.83	\$0.00		\$0.00	
Earned/Interest income	\$6,502.13	\$5,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$6,623.93	\$6,000.00
Miscellaneous income	\$2,303.18	\$1,055.00	\$1,266.00	\$550.00	\$1,680.00
Total	\$235,852.17	\$231,980.84	\$278,377.00	\$266,936.33	\$246,180.00
 Tending Transformation *	 \$203,050.06	 \$97,222.50	 \$116,667.00		
Total	\$438,902.23	\$329,203.34	\$395,044.00		
EXPENDITURES					
Direct Congregational Services/Networking					
Missional Church Committee	\$764.44	\$1,666.67	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	\$2,000.00
Ministerial Committee	\$3,698.41	\$6,250.00	\$7,500.00	\$7,447.07	\$7,500.00
Historian/*Archives	\$3,548.56	\$3,500.00	\$4,200.00	\$0.00	\$4,200.00
Publications	\$2,375.70	\$4,166.67	\$5,000.00	\$3,981.95	\$5,000.00
*Editor Stipend	\$4,829.12	\$4,985.83	\$5,983.00	\$5,912.00	\$5,912.00
Regional Gatherings	\$1,142.01	\$833.33	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00
	<u>\$16,358.24</u>	<u>\$21,402.50</u>	<u>\$25,683.00</u>	<u>\$17,341.02</u>	<u>\$25,612.00</u>
Denominational Relations					
Mid-States	\$66.06	\$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	\$1,358.86	\$2,083.33	\$2,500.00	\$0.00	\$1,500.00
Constituency Leaders Council	\$2,543.88	\$4,166.67	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$3,000.00
	<u>\$5,468.80</u>	<u>\$7,750.00</u>	<u>\$9,300.00</u>	<u>\$1,800.00</u>	<u>\$6,300.00</u>
Conference Leadership/Administration					
Board of Directors Meetings	\$2,263.13	\$1,666.68	\$2,000.00	\$755.24	\$2,000.00
Gift Discernment Committee	\$0.00	\$83.33	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
Stewardship Committee	\$0.00	\$83.33	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
Leadership Council	\$4,861.75	\$2,083.33	\$2,500.00	\$1,715.00	\$2,500.00
Annual Meeting Expense	\$0.00	\$10,000.00	\$12,000.00	\$18,585.27	\$12,000.00
	<u>\$7,124.88</u>	<u>\$13,916.67</u>	<u>\$16,700.00</u>	<u>\$21,055.51</u>	<u>\$16,700.00</u>
Administrative Support Costs					
*Sabbatical Coverage Escrow					
*Liability Insurance	\$2,300.63	\$2,083.33	\$2,500.00	\$2,535.01	\$2,500.00
*Rent	\$2,590.00	\$2,590.00	\$3,108.00	\$3,108.00	\$3,108.00
Supplies	\$2,680.38	\$2,916.67	\$3,500.00	\$2,432.19	\$2,500.00
Equipment	\$2,146.10	\$2,916.67	\$3,500.00	\$2,230.13	\$2,500.00
Telecommunications	\$2,900.77	\$2,500.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,422.41	\$3,000.00
Postage	\$1,495.94	\$1,250.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,122.88	\$1,200.00
*Bookkeeping Services	\$2,813.34	\$2,813.33	\$3,376.00	\$3,336.00	\$3,336.00
Staff Travel	\$3,304.62	\$7,500.00	\$9,000.00	\$3,536.40	\$6,000.00
Misc.	\$226.25	\$0.00		\$324.94	
	<u>\$20,458.03</u>	<u>\$24,570.00</u>	<u>\$29,484.00</u>	<u>\$22,047.96</u>	<u>\$24,144.00</u>
Personnel					
*Salaries	\$124,437.64	\$146,344.00	\$175,614.00	\$135,759.34	\$135,760.00
*Fringe	\$30,575.43	\$41,868.00	\$51,094.00	\$32,129.64	\$32,162.00
*Payroll tax/Workman's Comp	\$5,002.93	\$5,296.00	\$5,502.00	\$5,639.44	\$5,502.00
	<u>\$160,016.00</u>	<u>\$193,508.00</u>	<u>\$197,210.00</u>	<u>\$173,528.42</u>	<u>\$173,424.00</u>
**					
Cash Reserves	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total	\$209,425.95	\$261,147.17	\$278,377.00	\$235,772.91	\$246,180.00
Tending Transformation Campaign					
Emerging Communities of Faith			\$58,333.00		
Staff			\$35,000.00		
Leadership Development			\$11,667.00		
Missional Activities			\$11,667.00		
			<u>\$116,667.00</u>		
Total Expenses			<u>\$395,044.00</u>		

*Includes \$52,565 received in 21-22

** Total number is less the Tending Transformation proposed staff amount of \$35,000

Central District Conference Congregational Contributions

Number of giving units (as reported in 2022) is in parentheses

*Dual Conference Congregations

Congregations	2022-2023 As of 4/30/23 10 months	2021-2022 12 months	2020-2021 12 months	2019-2020 12 months
Agora*		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Americus (13)	\$1,000.00	\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00	\$1,100.00
Ames (6)	\$150.00	\$250.00	\$150.00	\$100.00
Ann Arbor*	\$500.00	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$500.00
Asian Mennonite Community		\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Assembly (115)	\$11,227.50	\$6,352.50	\$8,470.00	\$10,850.00
Atlanta (20)	\$3,968.74	\$3,136.08	\$2,106.18	\$2,090.52
Berea (12)		\$1,000.00	\$500.00	\$1,000.00
Chapel Hill (18)		\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00
Chicago Community (27)		\$5,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$5,000.00
Cincinnati (34)	\$6,158.00	\$9,290.00	\$5,336.00	\$6,480.00
Columbus (109)	\$16,934.00	\$16,295.00	\$16,271.00	\$15,749.00
Community Mennonite*(10)	\$1,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00
Covenant (54)	\$9,000.00	\$8,500.00	\$6,000.00	\$0.00
Eighth Street (99)	\$15,308.36	\$24,666.50	\$19,169.23	\$14,093.59
Emmanuel (14)	\$2,500.00	\$2,400.00	\$2,000.00	\$3,000.00
Emmaus Road (24)	\$2,730.00	\$3,185.00	\$1,820.00	\$2,275.00
Evanston* (8)	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00
Faith (27)	\$2,500.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00
First, Bluffton (131)	\$17,796.61	\$17,148.00	\$17,144.00	\$20,996.00
First, Chicago		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
First, Sugarcreek (10)	\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00	\$3,500.00
First, Urbana* (61)	\$5,000.00	\$6,500.00	\$6,500.00	\$6,500.00
First, Wadsworth (20)	\$300.00	\$800.00	\$650.00	\$300.00
Florence (19)		\$1,400.00	\$1,400.00	\$1,400.00
Grace Mennonite (39)	\$8,347.50	\$8,130.00	\$6,097.50	\$9,945.00
Grand Rapids				
Hively Avenue (32)	\$5,700.00	\$7,150.00	\$6,600.00	\$6,050.00
Joy Fellowship*		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Jubilee (5)	\$1,000.00	\$500.00	\$1,350.00	\$1,785.00
Keller Park (22)	\$3,000.00			
Lima* (18)	\$3,000.00	\$1,500.00	\$3,750.00	\$2,250.00
Madison (40)	\$5,750.00	\$7,500.00	\$7,500.00	\$7,350.00
Maplewood (30)	\$1,250.00	\$1,000.00	\$500.00	\$1,250.00
Mennonite Church of Normal* (80)	\$15,999.99	\$14,783.52	\$15,341.01	\$11,743.26
Milwaukee (10)		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Morning Star*		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
North Danvers (52)	\$993.00	\$470.00	\$445.00	\$1,439.00
Oak Grove* (88)	\$3,325.00	\$9,175.00	\$12,312.50	\$6,312.50
Open Table Mennonite Fellowship (10)	\$995.00	\$0.00	\$1,607.00	\$2,545.73
Paoli* (32)	\$5,299.33	\$4,116.00	\$4,032.96	\$4,791.78
Raleigh (40)	\$5,100.00	\$5,000.00	\$6,440.00	\$6,800.00
Shalom Community (33)	\$6,750.00	\$3,850.00	\$1,650.00	\$1,650.00
Shalom Mennonite Congregation (74)	\$5,724.00	\$6,950.00	\$5,791.00	\$6,906.00
Silverwood (65)	\$9,750.00	\$9,750.00	\$10,500.00	\$10,000.00
Southside (32)	\$5,000.00	\$2,500.00	\$8,000.00	\$2,750.00
St Paul (6)	\$670.00	\$600.00	\$600.00	\$600.00
Trenton (33)- withdrew		\$500.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
Total	\$186,727.03	\$201,797.60	\$200,933.38	\$187,302.38

Conference Minister's Report 2023

Tending Transformation, our conference theme, has felt like “Tending Transition” for me and a number of CDC congregations. In the last two years there have been twenty active search committees. Six were the results of retirements. Four pastors moved from part-time ministries to fulltime ministries in other conferences or faith-based organizations. Four pastors moved for personal health or family related reasons. Three took positions not directly related to traditional ministry. One search was to call a new position, one to pursue a PhD, and one to allow two congregations to come together and form a new vision together. The church, like any living organism, experiences constant change and transition. These transitions, while they can feel daunting and anxiety producing, are also opportunities for God’s creative and transforming love to grow and expand in new ways.



I am grateful and very excited that these transitions have also resulted in 14 new pastors serving across CDC. These pastors bring insights and energy from recent education or other ministry experiences. Some have followed a call in later life to become ministers. Some are exploring their identity as pastors and leaders. Others are serving in hospitals, as hospice chaplains, as educators of future pastors, or serving faith-based ministries serving a wide constituency.

These transitions have also tapped the gifts and energies of lay persons in congregations. Our “yes” to serving God, following Christ, and ministering with the power of the Holy Spirit, comes in many shapes and opportunities. I am exceedingly grateful to those who have said “yes” and to those who have tapped, encouraged, and named gifts in others so that saying “yes” is affirmed by both God and God’s people!

Transitions continue. As of April 1, there remain eight active pastoral searches. May all our prayers, invitations to leaders, and God’s abundant grace continue to serve our churches well.

As James Rissler mentioned in his welcome letter, transformation is happening throughout our conference in many wonderful ways. Our CDC staff of Emma Hartman, Matt Prichard, Sarah Werner, Beth Yoder and I value the CDC mission of “*Knowing Christ’s Love...Answering God’s Call.*” While Beth, as our bookkeeper, who works about 2-4 hours per week, doesn’t attend our staff meetings, the other four of us have begun meeting twice a month. Our hour-long Zoom meetings focus on Centering our faith, Developing our relationships, and Carrying out our mission. I am so grateful to have such wonderful colleagues in ministry. Our commitment is to focus our unique gifts, strengths, and energies to best serve you and the congregations you represent. We want to hear your stories, the ways you are experiencing Christ’s love, how you are answering God’s call, and what futures the Spirit is inviting you to live into.

Together, as a community of 45 congregations across 10 states, we are continually learning from, supporting, and encouraging one another as we share God’s healing and hope with our world.

-Doug Luginbill, Conference Minister

Ministerial Credential Report

June 1, 2022 – May 31, 2023

ORDINATIONS

Kiva Nice-Webb was ordained at Chicago Community Mennonite Church, June 5, 2022 by Doug Luginbill

LICENSINGS

Jodie Boyer Hatlem, licensed toward ordination at Shalom Community Church, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Sept 11, 2022, by Doug Luginbill

Carrie Mast, Licensed for Specific Ministry at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton, Ohio, Sept 25, 2022 by Doug Luginbill

Philip Yoder, Licensed Toward Ordination at First Mennonite Church Bluffton, Ohio, October 2, 2022 by Doug Luginbill

Karla Minter, Licensed Toward Ordination at Open Table Mennonite Fellowship, Goshen, Indiana, Oct 16, 2022 by Doug Luginbill

Debbie Bledsoe, Licensed for Specific Ministry at Southside Fellowship, Elkhart, Indiana, November 6, 2022, by Doug Luginbill

Pratik Bagh, Licensed for Specific Ministry, Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Indiana, December 11, 2022 by Doug Luginbill

Julia Schmidt, Licensed Toward Ordination at Faith Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana, Jan 22, 2023 by Doug Luginbill

Anton Flores-Maisonet, Licensed for Specific Ministry, Atlanta Mennonite Church, Atlanta, Georgia, April 9, 2023 by Doug Luginbill

Peter Eash-Scott, Licensed for Specific Ministry, Madison Mennonite Church, Madison, Wisconsin, April 16, 2023 by Doug Luginbill

Carolyn May, Licensed Toward Ordination, Jubilee Mennonite Church, Bellefontaine, Ohio, May 21, 2023, by Doug Luginbill

Gwyn Stetler, Licensed Toward Ordination, Jubilee Mennonite Church, Bellefontaine, Ohio, May 21, 2023, by Doug Luginbill

CREDENTIAL TRANSFERS

Deron Brill Bergstresser (Faith Mennonite Church) to Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, Jan 9, 2023

Kevin Chupp, Mennonite Church of Normal from Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference, Oct 26, 2022

Rachel Ringenberg Miller, Eighth Street Mennonite Church, from Western District, April 16, 2023

Orlando Redekop, Community Mennonite Church, to Central Plains, April 20, 2023

Renee Kanagy, Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship to Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, May 24, 2023

Marty Troyer, Columbus Mennonite Church from Western District Conference, May 28, 2023

INSTALLATIONS

Tim Peebles, Chicago Community Mennonite Church, Chicago, Illinois, July 10, 2022

Susannah Griffith (formerly Susannah Larry), Keller Park Church, South Bend, Indiana, Aug 7, 2022

Jodie Boyer Hatlem, Shalom Community Church, Ann Arbor, Michigan, September 11, 2022, began Sept 1

Carrie Mast, First Mennonite Church, Bluffton, Ohio, September 25, 2022, began Sept 1
Philip Yoder, First Mennonite Church, Bluffton, Ohio, October 2, 2022, began September 26, 2022
Karla Minter, Open Table Mennonite Fellowship, October 16, 2022, began on July 1, 2022
Kevin Chupp, Mennonite Church of Normal, October 23, 2022, began on October 24, 2022
Debbie Bledsoe, Southside Fellowship, November 6, 2022, began on September 20, 2022
Pratik Bagh, Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, Nov 27, 2022
Mariah Martin, Faith Mennonite Church, Jan 22, 2023, began on Jan 1, 2023
Julia Schmidt, Faith Mennonite Church, Jan 22, 2023, began on Jan 1, 2023
Anton Flores-Maisonet, Atlanta Mennonite Church, April 9, 2023
Peter Eash-Scott, Madison Mennonite Church, April 15, 2023
Carolyn May, Jubilee Mennonite Church, May 21, 2023, began on May 1, 2023
Gwyn Stetler, Jubilee Mennonite Church, May 21, 2023, began on May 1, 2023

CHANGE OF CREDENTIAL

Sally Weaver Glick, Open Table Mennonite Fellowship, license for specific ministry expired, June 30, 2022
Alison Casella Brookins, Chicago Community Mennonite Church, from 'active' to 'active without charge'
Isaac Villegas, Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship, from 'active' to 'active without charge'

RESIGNATIONS

Deron Brill Bergstresser, Faith Mennonite Church, July 31, 2022
Jake Hess, Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, June 30, 2022
Sally Weaver Glick, Open Table Mennonite Fellowship, June 30, 2022
Isaac Villegas, Chapel Hill Mennonite Church, June 20, 2022

ANNIVERSARIES / SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL EVENTS

INTERIM / TRANSITIONAL PASTORS

Susannah Griffith, interim pastor, Keller Park Church, South Bend, Indiana
Tim Peebles, interim pastor, Chicago Community Mennonite Church, Chicago, Illinois
James Rissler, interim pastor, Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Gainesville, Florida
Pratik Bagh, interim pastor, Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Indiana
Anton Flores-Maisonet, interim pastor, Atlanta Mennonite Church, Atlanta, Georgia
Peter Eash-Scott, interim pastor, Madison Mennonite Church, Madison, Wisconsin
Conrad Mast, Florence Church of the Brethren-Mennonite, ended his assignment as Transitional Pastor, April 30, 2023

RETIREMENTS

Eve MacMaster, Emmanuel Mennonite Church, August 31, 2022
Deborah Byler, Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, October 6, 2022
Randy Roth, Assembly Mennonite Church, Aug 3, 2022

DEATHS

Donald Nofziger, June 25, 2022 (Eighth Street Mennonite Church)
Phil Mininger, April 26, 2023 (Paoli Mennonite Church)

CONGREGATIONAL TRANSITIONS

In Search Processes

Community Mennonite Church
Hively Avenue Mennonite Church
St Louis Mennonite Fellowship
Florence Church of the Brethren-Mennonite
Atlanta Mennonite Church
Emmaus Road Mennonite 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
 2023 Goshen College, College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana

Conference Presidents, 1957-2023

1957-	Lotus E Troyer	2003-2005	Mick Sommers
1958	Ernest J Bohn	2005-2007	Alice Roth
1959-1960	Harry Yoder	2007-2009	Gordon Oyer
1961-1962	Gordon J Neuenschwander	2009-2011	Karl Shelly
1963-1964	Jacob T Friesen	2011-2013	Joyce Schumacher
1965-1966	Lorris A Habegger	2013-2015	Ron Guengerich
1967-1968	Claude F Boyer	2015-2017	Lisa Weaver
1969-1970	Leonard Wiebe	2017-2019	Arman Habegger
1971-1973	Larry Voth	2019-2021	Anna Yoder Schlabach
1974	Lloyd L Ramseyer	2021-2023	James Rissler
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		

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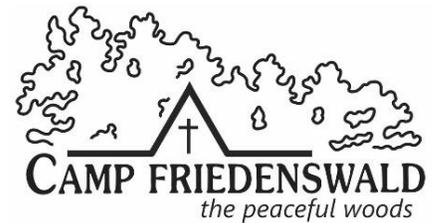


Part III

Conference Committee Reports

CDC Annual Report 2022

Submitted by Jenna Liechty Martin, executive director



The following highlights provide a glimpse into the year and illustrate the interactions between Camp Friedenswald, Central District Conference, and its congregations.

- **Winter Family Camp** brought together an intergenerational group of people– with 90% of the 55 campers coming from CDC churches.
- **Mentors and mentees** from Assembly Mennonite (pictured right) helped plant over 50 trees in the spring.
- **Hospitality was extended to six CDC congregations** for a time of retreat. We welcomed Assembly, Faith, Hively Avenue, Keller Park, Open Table, and Silverwood.
- We **welcomed 440 campers to our 2022 summer programs**. The summer theme centered on the ways that God’s good creation is continually being shaped and molded. Campers had the chance to play in the clay from the ground at camp and to create a tile – pictured right. **Camp pastors representing CDC congregations** helped to shape our times of worship. Pastors included Matthew Yoder (pastor, Grace Mennonite), Ben Kreider (intern at Columbus Mennonite), Kristen Swartley (member, Assembly), Valerie Showalter (pastor, Madison Mennonite), Malinda Berry (Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary and Faith Mennonite).
- **Nine of the sixteen summer staff (pictured right) came from six CDC congregations** including Assembly, Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship, Columbus Mennonite, Eighth Street, Hively Avenue, and FMC Bluffton.
- **Women’s Retreat**, an annual retreat hosted at Camp Friedenswald and planned by women from across CDC, was planned by a group from Mennonite Church of Normal and FMC Champaign-Urbana. 54 women from across the conference and beyond gathered for a weekend focused on “Embodying courage: healing connections” with guest speaker Samantha Lioi.
- After a long hiatus due to COVID, **Camp once again provided hospitality to the CDC Leadership Council** in the fall of 2022.
- Throughout the year over \$55,400 of **financial support** was given through CDC and directly from congregations towards Camp’s programs. Thank you for continuing to partner with Camp in our shared ministry and for giving generously!





Journey: A Missional Leadership Development Program

This year's Journey program includes twenty-three participants and twenty-one mentors. Two participants and two mentors are from Central District Conference: **April Lo** (Chicago Community Mennonite) mentored by Anne Munley (North Suburban Mennonite, Illinois Mennonite Conference), and **Rachel Stolpe** (Milwaukee Mennonite) mentored by **Mariah Martin** (Faith Mennonite, Goshen). **Charles Baraka** (Madison Mennonite) is serving as a mentor for three students from Malawi: Ephraim Nzitonda, Lyson Makawa, and Shadrek Kwendanyama.

Journey students and mentors from the U.S. and Canada gathered at Amigo Centre in Sturgis, Michigan, for the fall Weekend Learning Event September 8-10. Worship sessions, led by Allan Rudy-Froese, AMBS Professor of Christian Proclamation, and Joanne Gallardo, Conference Minister for Indiana-Michigan Conference, laid the foundation for our time together and took place four times throughout the weekend. Learning sessions, led by Marilyn Rudy-Froese, Church Leadership Minister for Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, focused on spiritual disciplines and character formation for ministry. In other learning sessions students developed personal timelines, including significant points of spiritual and vocational growth; explored personality inventories; and learned about 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 (also led by **Doug**).

Following the fall gathering, in mid-September, participants joined online missional leadership development classes. As part of these studies, they 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 ministry experiences. In February, participants joined new online classes and continued to meet bi-weekly in mentor-mentee pairs.

The winter Weekend Learning Event was held on the AMBS campus March 10-12. The theme, Anabaptism: A Way of Being Church, included a visit to Menno-Hof guided by **Jamie Pitts**, AMBS Associate Professor of Anabaptist Studies, and three additional teaching sessions by Jamie. The weekend also included worship sessions led by Joanne Gallardo; mentor and mentee meetings; and work on learning covenants. During the Sunday morning worship time, mentees in their final term of the program shared a reflection, and their conference minister or mentor provided a blessing and prayer.

Twice a year, mentees submit short reflection papers describing their learnings from the previous online class, and mentors submit reflections describing their observations of their mentees' learning and growth. These reflection papers are shared with mentees' conference ministers to help conference ministers stay informed of mentees' growth and development in the program.

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 Journey Board.

Journey participants and alumni frequently tell us that Journey is a wonderful learning opportunity for pastors, lay leaders, church planters, and other emerging leaders. If you or someone you know wants to develop or deepen their 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jewel Gingerich Longenecker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jewel Gingerich Longenecker
Dean of Lifelong Learning

Ministerial Committee

Members: Brian Bolton (Shalom, Harrisonburg), Kevin Chupp (Mennonite Church of Normal), Michael Crosby (First, Champaign-Urbana), Gayle Gerber Koontz (chair; Assembly, Goshen), Ruth Guengerich (Eighth Street, Goshen), Robin Walton (Columbus), Doug Luginbill, Conference Minister (ex officio).



This year we welcomed **two new committee members**—Ruth Guengerich and Kevin Chupp, and we are delighted that Matt Prichard was appointed as an associate conference minister to assist Doug particularly with support for emerging congregations and their leadership in our district.

We focused some of our energy on how we might contribute to implementing the **Resolution for Repentance and Transformation** passed by MCUSA in 2022. We prepared to lead worship and conversation on congregational responses to this resolution at the 2023 CDC Annual Meeting. We also felt called to listen to stories of those who have experienced harm from the church or whose gifts have not been welcomed in the church because of their sexual identity or the sexual identity of a family member. We initiated and publicized *An Invitation To Be Heard* for this purpose and met with one respondent. Doug had informal conversations with another person. We also joined with the CDC Board and the Missional Church Committee in helping facilitate and financially support a retreat designed by and for leaders in the Mennonite-related LGBTQ+ community, held at Camp Friedenswald in February.

A substantial and rewarding task of this committee is **interviewing candidates for pastoral licensing and ordination**. Interviews include conversation and external recommendations about theological, spiritual, personal and leadership commitments and competencies. As of April we completed 11 interviews and were excited by the quality of new and developing pastoral leaders serving our conference.

We approved policy for a **new Seminary Scholarship Grant** to be funded partly from our regular budget and expanded through the Tending Transformation campaign. Funds are available for theological education at various levels including Journey participants as well as master's level students. Some limited scholarship aid for AMBS DMin students may be available. Two grants were approved by April 2023.

We continued to provide regular counsel and support for the substantial work of our conference minister in developing and sustaining congregational leadership. We further provided resources for CDC pastors and congregational leaders such as the webinar on creating and maintaining healthy pastor-congregational relationships led by David Brubaker in November 2022 and Lisa Weaver's conversation with faith formation leaders in January 2023.

We reviewed the US and Canadian conference ministers' proposed changes to the shared policy regarding pastoral misconduct and oversaw the regular education of CDC pastors for Healthy Boundaries Training. Ruth Guengerich is now the **person on the Ministerial Committee to contact regarding pastoral misconduct** is Ruth Guengerich. See the CDC website tab entitled *Misconduct* for contact information.

Submitted by Gayle Gerber Koontz

Missional Church Committee

Members: Anton Flores-Maisonet (Atlanta Mennonite Church), Elizabeth Kelly (First Mennonite Church, Bluffton), Xaris Martinez (Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship), Karla Minter, Chair (Open Table Mennonite Fellowship), Brian Sauder (Chicago Community Mennonite Church, Tim Stair (Hively Avenue Mennonite Church), David Voth, (Grace Mennonite Church); Emma Hartman, CDC Administrator, (Faith Mennonite Church), and Matthew Pritchard, Associate Conference Minister for Emerging Communities of Faith, (Atlanta Mennonite Church), ex officio members



The committee convened for five meetings, two Leadership Council meetings, and participated in mid-year gatherings and the Annual Meeting.

Anti-racism Grants were awarded to three recipient congregations, providing resources to extend the congregation's anti-racism, immigration, land justice and reparations partnerships.

- Amoharo Ministries, in collaboration with Madison Mennonite Church, received funds to host a gathering for youth from diverse cultural backgrounds, including recent immigrants, to explore tribal conflicts of home countries, racism in the US and their generational affects. Skills for community organizing, trauma healing and transformation of communities were explored in the context of creating hope for the future of their families, church, community and country.
- Columbus Mennonite Church utilized grant funds to host a Ted & Co performance, "We Own This Now," challenging the doctrine of discovery, exploring native rights and land ownership. This grant provided resources to further the congregation's exploration of land reparations and collaboration with local Native American initiatives.
- Shalom Mennonite Church's partnership with local African American organizations was strengthened with grant dollars to host consecutive events including a luncheon, walking tour of unfairly zoned and marginalized historically black neighborhood, presentation on black history with facilitated discussion for personal and congregational response to work against racism inherent in our institutions and our lives.

The Associate Conference Minister for Emerging Communities of Faith, Matt Pritchard, began serving as ex officio member of this committee in January. The vision for collaboration and communication between this committee, Matt as Associate Conference Minister, grants for emerging communities of faith, and resources to and from congregations is in progress.

The committee actively engaged with models of conference and congregational implementation of the MC USA Repentance and Transformation and Accessibility resolutions and the For Justice study resolution.

- Financial support was provided for use toward a visioning meeting for the emerging institutionally-recognized Queer Constituency Council, bringing together Inclusive Mennonite Pastors and Brethren Mennonite Council representatives at Friedenswald.
- Attendance at CDC mid-year gatherings raised accessibility awareness.
- Members of the committee will give leadership to an Annual Meeting session engaging the "For Justice in the US Criminal Legal System" through worship, congregational storytelling, input and discussion among delegates.

Submitted by Karla Minter, Chair, Missional Church Committee

2022

REPORT BOOK
of the

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Part IV

Reports by Related Institutions



Presentamos cómo la Junta Ejecutiva y el personal de MC USA sirvieron a conferencias, congregaciones y comunidades en 2022:



MC USA (por sus siglas en inglés) lanzó "[Diversidad: el diseño de Dios](#)", un nuevo estudio multimedia que llama a los adultos jóvenes a celebrar sus dones únicos y la diversidad intencional de la creación de Dios.

El [Fondo de Justicia](#) proporcionó recursos a las congregaciones de MC USA que trabajan para combatir la pobreza, dismantelar el racismo, abordar la reforma migratoria o re imaginar a la policía. MC USA otorgó 16 subvenciones del Fondo de Justicia a 14 congregaciones en 2022.

MC USA respondió a las acciones y el trabajo emanados de la Sesión Especial de la Asamblea de Delegados involucrando a los constituyentes en dos iniciativas educativas de "Aprender, Orar, Unirse". "[Dándole la bienvenida a todos](#)" celebró los dones de las personas con discapacidades, y "[Encarcelamiento masivo](#)" examinó las injusticias en nuestro sistema jurídico penal.

La Junta Ejecutiva y el personal de MC USA forjaron conexiones globales participando en el Congreso Mundial Menonita en su asamblea más reciente en Indonesia. La moderadora de MC USA, Linda Dibble, [fue confirmada](#) como representante de América del Norte para el Comité Ejecutivo del CWM y Sue Park-Har, la Ministra Denominacional de Involucramiento Racial/Étnico, fue nombrada miembro de la Comisión de Diáconos.



El Comité de Resoluciones de MC USA [respondió a los comentarios de los delegados](#) y redactó nuevas "Pautas para desarrollar resoluciones organizacionales y declaraciones de la iglesia en la Iglesia Menonita de EE. UU.". Las pautas están diseñadas para poner menos énfasis en el resultado de una resolución específica y más énfasis en cómo estamos viviendo nuestros valores juntos.

MC USA se asoció con el Comité Central Menonita para lanzar la [Red de Alternativas al Alistamiento Militar \(AMEN por sus siglas en inglés\)](#), una iniciativa para conectar a los jóvenes con asesores voluntarios que puedan ayudarlos a encontrar oportunidades no militares para su carrera, servicio y capacitación.

Una nueva [encuesta denominacional](#), encargada por la Junta Ejecutiva, reveló que los miembros de MC USA tienen un profundo compromiso con su fe, una pasión por la construcción de la paz, un corazón para el servicio y estrechos lazos congregacionales.

"He aquí que yo voy a hacer una cosa nueva; pronto saldrá a luz; ¿no la conoceréis? Aun abriré un camino en el desierto, y ríos en la soledad."
Isaías 43:19

Nuestra misión

La misión de la Junta Ejecutiva de MC USA es equipar y capacitar a los líderes para compartir con otros el regalo de la paz y el amor transformador de Dios.

Nuestra visión

Dios nos llama a ser seguidores de Jesucristo y, por el poder del Espíritu Santo, crecer como comunidades de gracia, alegría y paz, para que la sanación y la esperanza de Dios fluyan a través de nosotros hacia el mundo.

Nuestros compromisos renovados

- Seguir a Jesús
- Testificar de la paz de Dios
- Experimentar la transformación



[Suscríbete a PeaceMail](#), la revista semanal de noticias digitales de MC USA, para leer todas las noticias, blogs, eventos y recursos de la denominación.



Únase a nosotros en MennCon23, Kansas City, 3-6 de julio de 2023. (Asamblea de Delegados 7-8 de julio) convention.mennoniteusa.org



Here are some of the ways MC USA Executive Board and staff served conferences, congregations and communities in 2022:



MC USA launched [“Diversity: God’s Design,”](#) a new, multimedia study that calls young adults to celebrate their unique gifts and the intentional diversity of God’s creation.

The [Justice Fund](#) provided resources to MC USA congregations working to combat poverty, dismantle racism, address immigration reform or reimagine policing. MC USA awarded 16 Justice Fund grants to 14 congregations in 2022.

MC USA responded to the actions and work of the Special Session of the Delegate Assembly by engaging constituents in two “Learn, Pray, Join” educational initiatives. [“Welcoming EveryBODY”](#) celebrated the gifts of people with disabilities, and [“Mass Incarceration”](#) examined the injustices in our criminal legal system.

MC USA Executive Board and staff nurtured global connections by participating in Mennonite World Conference and attending the most recent assembly in Indonesia. MC USA Moderator Linda Dibble [was affirmed](#) as a North American representative on MWC’s Executive Committee and Denominational Minister of Racial/Ethnic Engagement Sue Park-Har was appointed to the Deacon’s Commission.



The MC USA Resolutions Committee [responded to delegate feedback](#) and drafted new “Guidelines for Developing Organizational Resolutions and Church Statements in Mennonite Church USA.” The guidelines are designed to put less emphasis on the outcome of a specific resolution and more emphasis on how we are living out our values together.

MC USA partnered with Mennonite Central Committee to launch the [Alternatives to Military Enlistment Network \(AMEN\)](#), an initiative to connect young people with volunteer advisors who can help them find non-military career, service and training opportunities.



A new [denominational survey](#), commissioned by the Executive Board, revealed that MC USA members have deep commitments to their faith, a passion for peacebuilding, a heart for service and close congregational ties.

“I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” Isaiah 43:19

Our Mission

The mission of the MC 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



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



Join us for MennCon23, Kansas City, July 3-6, 2023. (Delegate Assembly July 7-8) convention.mennoniteusa.org

*"... by speaking the truth
with love, let's grow in every
way into Christ."*

– Ephesians 4:15b (CEB)

Churches call upon Everence as helpful stewardship partner

Churches can count on Everence Financial® as a reliable stewardship partner.

Working closely with congregations and their members has been at the core of what we do since our founding as a mutual aid organization in 1945.

We help our members find effective ways to be more generous, as part of our focus on stewardship as a spiritual discipline – stemming from the historical biblical belief of Anabaptist Christians that all we are and all we have is from God (Psalm 24).

Pastors and church leaders also rely on Everence for helpful stewardship education resources. Learn more at everence.com/churches.

Sharing Fund helps churches reach more people in need



The Everence Sharing Fund helps thousands of families and individuals every year with basic, everyday needs.

Everence has awarded about \$4.7 million in Sharing Fund grants in the last five years, and our partner congregations distributed about \$7 million more.

Seek Growth

Everence 2023 report

Central District Conference
Annual Meeting
June 22-24, 2023

The Sharing Fund is, in most cases, a matching grant program. Churches with an Everence stewardship advocate can request matching Sharing Fund dollars to help meet the needs of people in their church and community.

From financial struggles to emergency crises, Sharing Fund grants help people keep a roof over their heads, buy food for their families and pay medical expenses.

To see how your church can access Sharing Fund grants – or to donate to the program, visit everence.com/sharing-fund.

MyNeighbor card is working to boost charitable causes



The MyNeighbor credit card from Everence Federal Credit Union is doing what credit union leaders intended – supporting the communities in which their members live and work.

Since its launch in 2017, the MyNeighbor card has generated more than \$1.7 million for charitable organizations, including individual churches.

Members use the card the same way they'd use an ordinary credit card, but instead of generating

points or airline miles, 1.5% of each transaction total is donated by Everence to the cardholder's chosen charity.

The "neighbor" you choose just needs to be a 501(c)(3) public charitable organization. You can change which organization receives your donations via an online dashboard.

Want to know more? Visit everence.com/myneighbor.

A variety of resources to help churches thrive

Churches have unique financial and stewardship needs – something Everence understands better than many financial services providers, thanks to our 78-year history of working with churches, their staff and their members.

From telling your church's story, fulfilling your ministry, and looking to your church's future, our knowledgeable stewardship consultants can share ideas with pastors, church leaders, Sunday school classes, and small groups about cultivating generosity and sustaining giving over the long term.

And Everence partners with denominations and networks to offer benefits such as retirement plans for pastors and staff.

Check out everence.com/churches to learn more about how we can work together.



“... Más bien, al vivir la verdad con amor, creceremos hasta ser en todo como aquel que es la cabeza, es decir, Cristo.”.

– Efesios 4:15b (NVI)

Las iglesias invocan a Everence como socio útil de mayordomía

Las iglesias pueden contar con Everence Financial® como un socio de administración confiable.

Trabajar estrechamente con las congregaciones y sus miembros ha sido el núcleo de lo que hacemos desde nuestra fundación como una organización de ayuda mutua en 1945.

Ayudamos a nuestros miembros a encontrar maneras efectivas de ser más generosos, como parte de nuestro enfoque en la mayordomía como disciplina espiritual, derivada de la creencia bíblica histórica de los cristianos anabautistas de que todo lo que somos y todo lo que tenemos es de Dios (Salmo 24).

Los pastores y líderes de la iglesia también confían en Everence para obtener recursos útiles de educación de mayordomía. Obtenga más información en everence.com/churches.

El Fondo Compartido (Sharing Fund) ayuda a las iglesias a alcanzar a más personas necesitadas



El Fondo Compartido de Everence ayuda a miles de familias e individuos cada año con las necesidades básicas y cotidianas. Everence ha otorgado alrededor de \$4.7 millones en subvenciones del Fondo Compartido en los últimos cinco años, y nuestras congregaciones asociadas

Busca el crecimiento

Reporte Informativo de Everence 2023

Conferencia del Distrito Central
Reunion anual
22 a 24 de junio de 2023

distribuyeron alrededor de \$ 7 millones más.

En la mayoría de los casos, El Fondo Compartido es un programa de subvenciones de contrapartida. Las iglesias que tienen un defensor de mayordomía de Everence pueden solicitar dólares equivalentes del Fondo Compartido para ayudar a satisfacer las necesidades de las personas en su iglesia y comunidad.

Desde dificultades financieras hasta crisis de emergencia, las subvenciones del Fondo Compartido ayudan a las personas a mantener un techo sobre sus cabezas, comprar alimentos para sus familias y pagar gastos médicos.

Para ver cómo su iglesia puede acceder a las subvenciones del Fondo Compartido – o para donar al programa, visite everence.com/sharing-fund.

La tarjeta MyNeighbor está impulsando causas benéficas



La tarjeta de crédito MyNeighbor de Everence Federal Credit Union está haciendo lo que los líderes de las cooperativas de ahorro y crédito pretendían: apoyar a las comunidades en las que viven y trabajan sus miembros.

Desde su lanzamiento en 2017, la tarjeta MyNeighbor ha generado más de \$1.7 millones para organizaciones caritativas, incluyendo iglesias.

Los miembros usan la tarjeta de

la misma manera que usarían una tarjeta de crédito ordinaria, pero en lugar de generar puntos o millas aéreas, el 1.5% del total de cada transacción es donado por Everence a la organización benéfica elegida por el titular de la tarjeta.

El “vecino” que usted elija solo necesita ser una organización caritativa pública 501(c)(3). Puede cambiar qué organización recibe sus donaciones a través de un panel de control en línea.

¿Quieres saber más? Visita everence.com/myneighbor.

Una variedad de recursos para ayudar a las iglesias a prosperar

Las iglesias tienen necesidades financieras y de mayordomía únicas, algo que Everence entiende mejor que muchos proveedores de servicios financieros gracias a nuestra experiencia de 78 años de trabajo con las iglesias, su personal y sus miembros.

Desde contar la historia de su iglesia, cumplir con su ministerio y mirar hacia el futuro de su iglesia, nuestros consultores, expertos en mayordomía, pueden compartir ideas con pastores, líderes de iglesias, clases de escuela dominical y grupos pequeños sobre cómo cultivar la generosidad y las donaciones sostenibles a largo plazo.

Y Everence se asocia con denominaciones y redes para ofrecer beneficios como planes de jubilación para pastores y personal. Consulte everence.com/churches para obtener más información sobre cómo podemos trabajar juntos.

Mennonite Education Agency's purpose is to strengthen the church through education.

Historic Graduation Ceremony



In September, MEA graduated eleven students from the Hispanic Ministries' two educational programs: [IBA](#) (*Instituto Bíblico Anabautista*— Anabaptist Biblical Institute) and [SeBAH](#) (*Seminario Bíblico Anabautista Hispano*— Hispanic Anabaptist Biblical Seminary). The service held at Hesston (Kansas) College marked the first formal graduation ceremony for SeBAH since the program's inception in 2010. It also marked the first time two sitting college presidents attended a Hispanic Ministries graduation: President Joe Manickam from Hesston College gave the keynote address and President David Boshart from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana, offered the invocation. Hesston College Professor Michele Hershberger (at left with graduate Yanira López) anointed each graduate. Marco Güete, director of

MEA's Hispanic Ministries programs, described the experience as meaningful and moving:

"These graduates will bring their knowledge and skills to strengthen their congregations and build new disciples of Jesus, who may also become leaders in their churches. It is a beautiful cycle that ripples out beyond this moment."

First Spanish language Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies

MEA's Hispanic Ministries' program SeBAH (*Seminario Bíblico Anabautista Hispano*), has entered into a historic partnership with Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) to develop the first Spanish language graduate certificate in theological studies. The course of study for the **SeBAH-AMBS Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies** will be taught in Spanish and is designed to provide professionals, congregational leaders, and bivocational pastors with a foundation in theological and biblical study. The certificate requires 21 credit hours and can be completed in two years. Graduates will then be eligible to enroll in AMBS master's programs. MEA's Director of Hispanic Ministries Marco Güete deserves high praise for a lifetime of work and perseverance leading to the development of this program.

"The cooperation between SeBAH and AMBS opens a range of quality theological study opportunities for Hispanic leaders in the United States and Spanish-speaking countries. We are pioneering graduate-level theological education in Spanish." – Marco Güete

Hispanic Ministries Outreach Goes Digital



MEA's Hispanic Ministries has offered programs of study and continuing education courses for many years. Now they've moved into digital faith formation. The ezine, "*MenoTicias*," (Mennonite News) and the podcast, "*Un Momento de Anabautismo*" (An Anabaptist Moment) aim to inspire and teach about Mennonites and Anabaptists, the vision of the 21st century Anabaptist-Mennonite Church, and what it means to walk with Jesus. You can subscribe to these resources at www.HispanicMennoEdu.org/menoticias/.

Hispanic Ministries director to resume walk on *el Camino de Santiago* to support IBA



Marco Güete is on the road again. This May, the director of Hispanic Ministries at MEA will continue his journey along *el Camino de Santiago* (the Way of Saint James) in Spain to raise awareness and funds for MEA's Anabaptist Biblical Institute, known as IBA (*Instituto Bíblico Anabautista*). This will be his third trek along *el Camino*. In September 2019, Güete walked 164 miles from Saint Jean Pied de Port, France, to Burgos, Spain, and raised around \$16,000. Last year, Marco was joined by his wife Sandra. Together they walked 157 miles from Burgos to Foncebadón in Spain, raising close to \$18,500. This May, they will rejoin the trail in Astorga and walk 162 miles to Santiago de Compostela. They expect this final walk will take 16 days. People have been surprised and inspired by Marco's journey. At 72 years young, this is no small goal. What drives him to return to *el Camino* again and again? "The students," he says. "I am inspired by the IBA students and their deep desire to know Jesus and understand the Bible. They feel called to leadership in the church, and I want them to have the resources and education they need to navigate the Christian journey. The Hispanic Mennonite church is

growing," he added. "We want these congregations to have well-trained disciples of Jesus to lead them. Keeping the program accessible and affordable is a priority, and fundraising is critical. Marco hopes his walks will raise awareness and inspire generosity within the church. Online gifts can be made at www.MennoniteEducation.org/donate or Paypal.me/MennoniteEd. Checks can be sent to Mennonite Education Agency, 3145 Suite 2, Elkhart, IN 46517, memo: el Camino/IBA.

Mennonite Learning Network



MEA operates the Mennonite Learning Network, a Moodle platform for online learning. Current partners include SeBAH, [Semilla](#), [Mennonite Mission Network – Sent training](#), the [Collaborative MBA program](#), and the [Doctorate in Nursing Practice consortium](#). MEA is shaping plans to make this platform available more broadly to MC USA area conferences as an online learning platform they can access at reduced costs compared to getting the services on their own.

MEA Investment Fund

Since 1995, [The MEA Investment Fund](#) has served MC USA-affiliated schools, congregations, area conferences, and other programs with Mennonite education-related assets that are integrated into an investment pool. Pooling funds offer many benefits to the participants. Today, over twenty entities participate in the pool. As of January 31, 2023, it was valued at \$197.2 million.

New scholarship for BIPOC students

MEA is developing a new scholarship that would encourage BIPOC students (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), who are members of MC USA congregations, to attend higher education institutions affiliated with MC USA. Currently, MEA is completing the details of this new scholarship with the goal of launching it for the 2023 – 24 academic year. You can contribute at www.MennoniteEducation.org/donate and indicate "BIPOC scholarship."

"At Home" Resources



Inherited from our friends at Mennonite Church Canada, the At Home worship guide series leads individuals and families through the days and weeks of Lent and Advent with the goal of deepening their experience of the season. Daily and weekly Scriptures are woven with worship rituals, prayers, activities, and background information. **Whether at home or in the classroom**, MEA is committed to helping teachers and parents as they impact children and young people. Available in Spanish and English, Lent at Home 2023 can be downloaded free at MEA's website: www.MennoniteEducation.org/Resources/Pages/Lent-at-Home.

On behalf of the staff and board of directors, thank you for supporting Anabaptist-Mennonite education.

Submitted by Michael Danner
Executive Director

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 2023 Mennonite Health Assembly will be held Tuesday, March 7 – Thursday, March 9, in Denver, CO. Registration will begin on December 13, 2022. For more information and to Register please visit <https://mhsonline.org/mhs-events/mennonite-health-assembly/>
- MHS provides monthly webinars on a variety of topics. The 2023 themes include leadership, governance, workforce development, and faith and work. 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. 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.

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



Plantación de iglesias

Mauricio Chenlo trabaja con Matt Pritchard y oficia de coach para la puesta en marcha de un grupo en Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Apoyo a obreros y obreras

- 1 **Deborah Byler**, sirvió en San Pedro Carchá, Guatemala
» Hively Avenue Mennonite Church
- 2 **Brian y Noelia Fox**, sirvieron en Burgos, España
» Maplewood Mennonite Church
- 3 **Joseph y Rachel Givens**, sirven en Calais, Francia
» Grace Mennonite Church

- 4 **Jane y Jerrell Ross Richer**, sirven en la Región Amazónica del Ecuador region in Ecuador
» Eighth Street Mennonite Church
- 5 **Christy Harrison y Peter Sensenig**, sirven en N'Djamena, Chad
» First Mennonite Church, Wadsworth, Ohio
- 6 **Delicia Bravo Aguilar y Peter Wigginton**, sirven en Quito, Ecuador
» Lima Mennonite Church
» Paoli Mennonite Fellowship
- 7 **Rebekah York**, sirve en Bogotá, Colombia
» Silverwood Mennonite Church

Comprometidos en oración

38

Participantes y lugares de servicio



Sitios de Servicio Cristiano

Unidad de Mennonite Voluntary Service (Servicio Voluntario Menonita)

» Chicago

Sitio de SOOP

» Camp Friedenswald

Mennonite Voluntary Service (Servicio Voluntario Menonita)

8 **Cade Fisher**, sirve en Tucson, Arizona

9 **Gayatri Salzer**, sirve en Chicago, Illinois

Service Adventure

(Voluntarios Aventureros)

10 **Rylee Weishaupt**, sirve en Albuquerque, New Mexico

SOOP (Oportunidades de Servicio con Nuestros Hermanos)

Joy y Titus King, Tucson, Arizona
Shirley y Vernon King, Tucson, Arizona

Gayle y Ted Koontz, Tucson, Arizona
Cindy y Tim Luginbill, Gotha, Florida

Aporte congregacional a la Red Menonita



Durante el último año fiscal de la Red de Misión, desde el 1 de agosto de 2021 al 31 de julio de 2022, las congregaciones de la Conferencia Central District ofrendaron **\$143.527. ¡Gracias!**



Desde la Red Menonita de Misión queremos agradecer a la conferencia Central District por su continuo apoyo. Su coparticipación, a través de la oración, colaboración y participación, hace posible nuestra coparticipación con iglesias, organizaciones y personas alrededor del mundo para compartir la totalidad de Cristo con toda la creación. Nuestra esperanza para el año entrante viene de la palabra de Dios, así como dice Hebreos 10:23: "Mantengamos firme la esperanza que profesamos, porque fiel es el que hizo la promesa." Que nuestra fe en Dios sea inquebrantable y podamos avanzar juntos, confiando en las promesas de Dios. ¡Que Dios los bendiga!

Marisa Smucker

Marisa Smucker, Directora Ejecutiva Interina



La conferencia Central District ha respondido a la misión de Dios y se ha unido a ella. Su compasión y amabilidad lo ha hecho posible. Muchas gracias por ayudar a hacer una diferencia en el mundo.

Naun Cerrato

Naun Cerrato
Representante de Relaciones con los Constituyentes

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

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

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 working with Matt Pritchard and coaching a start up with folks from Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Worker support

- 1 Deborah Byler**, served San Pedro Carchá, Guatemala
» Hively Avenue Mennonite Church
- 2 Brian and Noelia Fox**, served Burgos, Spain
» Maplewood Mennonite Church
- 3 Joseph and Rachel Givens**, serving in Calais, France
» Grace Mennonite Church

- 4 Jane and Jerrell Ross Richer**, serving in the Eastern Rain Forest region in Ecuador
» Eighth Street Mennonite Church
- 5 Christy Harrison and Peter Sensenig**, serving in N'Djamena, Chad
» First Mennonite Church, Wadsworth, Ohio
- 6 Delicia Bravo Aguilar and Peter Wigginton**, serving in Quito, Ecuador
» Lima Mennonite Church
» Paoli Mennonite Fellowship
- 7 Rebekah York**, serving in Bogotá, Colombia
» Silverwood Mennonite Church

Prayer partners 38

Service participants

Service sites

Mennonite Voluntary Service unit
» [Chicago](#)

SOOP

» [Camp Friedenswald](#)

Mennonite Voluntary Service

- 8 Cade Fisher**, serving in Tucson, Arizona
- 9 Gayatri Salzer**, serving in Chicago, Illinois

Service Adventure

10 Rylee Weishaupt, serving in Albuquerque, New Mexico

SOOP

- Joy and Titus King**, Tucson, Arizona
- Shirley and Vernon King**, Tucson, Arizona
- Gayle and Ted Koontz**, Tucson, Arizona
- Cindy and Tim Luginbill**, Gotha, Florida

Congregational giving to Mission Network

During Mission Network's past fiscal year, Aug. 1, 2021, through July 31, 2022, Central District Conference congregations gave **\$143,527**. Thank you!



We at Mennonite Mission Network want to thank Central District Conference for your ongoing support. Your partnership, through prayer, gifts and participation, makes it possible for us to partner with churches, organizations and individuals around the world to share all of Christ with all of creation. We draw hope for the coming year from the word of God, as it says in Hebrews 10:23, "Let us hold strong to the confession of our hope, never wavering, since the One who promised it to us is faithful" (VOICE). Thus, let our faith in God be unshakeable, and may we move forward together, trusting in God's promises. Blessings to you!

Marisa Smucker

Marisa Smucker, Interim Executive Director



Central District Conference has responded to and has joined in the mission of God. Your compassion and kindness has made this possible. Thank you so much for helping make a difference in the world.

Naun Cerrato

Naun Cerrato
Constituent Engagement Representative

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

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

Report to Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA

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 — in person or at a distance, full time or part time — and deepen your understanding of Scripture, faith and Anabaptist theology!

Degrees and programs (* = distance-friendly program)

- Master of Divinity*
- Master of Arts in Christian Formation
- Master of Arts: Theology and Peace Studies
- Master of Arts: Theology and Global Anabaptism*
- Graduate Certificate in Spiritual Direction*
- Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies* (fully customizable)
- Doctor of Ministry in Leadership*
- Journey Missional Leadership Development Program* (undergraduate-level, nondegree)

amsb.edu/degrees-and-programs

We offer generous need-based financial aid, scholarships and matching grants for both full- and part-time graduate students. You *can* afford seminary!

amsb.edu/affordability

Leadership and enrichment

Grow your ministry skills and gain Anabaptist approaches to today's leadership challenges through our nondegree offerings. (* = distance-friendly program)

Short-term options

- Online Short Courses*: four to six weeks, discussion-based, noncredit
- Invite AMBS*: request a speaker (in person or virtual) on a topic of your choice
- Pastors & Leaders conference*: Feb. 19–22, 2024
- !Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth (summer)

Yearlong offerings

- Spiritual Direction Seminars*
- Transition to Leadership: program for new pastors
- Integrity Circles*: reflect theologically on leadership within a group

amsb.edu/leadership-and-enrichment

Central District Conference connections

- **Doctor of Ministry students:** Charles Buller (Silverwood), Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth St), Doug Luginbill (First – Bluffton), James Rissler (Atlanta, Emmanuel)
- **Master of Divinity students:** Debbie Bledsoe (Raleigh, Southside), Alaina Dobkowski (Grand Rapids), Melika Kauffman Hershberger (Normal), Andrew Hudson (Covenant), Sibonokuhle Ncube (Eighth St), Daniel Teye Nuertey (Hively Ave)
- **Master of Arts students:** Steve Benner (Normal), Scott Coulter (Assembly), Andrea Cramer (Keller Park), Jon Zirkle (Assembly)
- **Graduate Certificate students:** Carrie Mast (First – Bluffton), Deanna Risser (Assembly)
- **Journey participants/mentors:** Denise Berbach (Atlanta)/Lois Kaufmann (Assembly), April Lo (Chicago Community)/Anne Munley (Illinois Conf), Rachel Stolpe (Milwaukee)/Mariah Martin (Faith), Shadrek Kwendanyama, Lyson Makawa, Ephraim Nzitonda, all of Malawi/Charles Baraka (Madison)
- **Board member:** John Daniels (Covenant)

AMBS statistics

- In 2022–23, 141 graduate students were enrolled at AMBS: 61 from the U.S., six from Canada and 74 international students.
- The undergraduate-level nondegree Journey program had 21 participants from the U.S., Canada, Malawi and Uganda, as of March 2023.
- In 2021–22, 1,577 people participated in lifelong learning offerings of AMBS's Church Leadership Center.

Want to try out seminary?

- Sign up for an Online Short Course (no grades, no papers!):
 - 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

amsb.edu/online-short-courses

- Take a graduate-level course — online or on campus. Nonadmitted students get 50% off tuition for their first three credit hours! amsb.edu/upcoming-courses
- Schedule a virtual or in-person visit. Talk with students, faculty and staff and learn what AMBS has to offer! amsb.edu/visit
- Stay connected: facebook.com/followAMBS • twitter.com/amsb_seminary • amsb.edu/subscribe

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

AMBS sirve a la iglesia como una comunidad de aprendizaje con una visión anabautista, educando a l@s seguidores/as de Jesucristo para ser líderes en la misión de Dios de la reconciliación en el mundo.

Nuestros programas integran lo académico, la formación espiritual y la práctica. Estudie con nosotros —en persona o a distancia, tiempo completo o medio— y profundice su comprensión de las Escrituras, la teología anabautista y la fe.

Programas académicos (*disponible a distancia)

- Maestro de Divinidad*
- Maestro de Artes en Formación Cristiana
- Maestro de Artes: Teología y Anabautismo Global*
- Maestro de Artes: Teología y Estudios de Paz
- Certificado de Posgrado en Dirección Espiritual*
- Certificado de Posgrado en Estudios de Teología*
- Doctorado en Ministerio en Liderazgo*
- Journey: Un Programa de Desarrollo del Liderazgo Misional* (sin título)

ambs.edu/degrees-and-programs

Ofrecemos ayudas financieras generosas basadas en la necesidad, subvenciones y becas para ayudar a que su educación de posgrado sea económica. ¡Sí, se puede asistir al seminario! ambs.edu/affordability

Liderazgo y enriquecimiento (*disponible a distancia)

Desarrolle sus habilidades ministeriales y obtenga enfoques anabautistas para los desafíos de liderazgo de hoy a través de nuestras ofertas sin título.

Opciones a corto plazo

- Cursos Cortos Anabautistas*: en línea, cuatro a seis semanas, basados en la discusión, sin crédito
- Invite a AMBS*: solicite un/a orador/a (en persona o virtual) sobre un tema de su elección
- Conferencia de Pastores/as y Líderes*: 19–22 de febrero del 2024
- !Explore: Un Programa Teológico para Jóvenes de Secundaria (en el verano)

Ofertas de un año

- Seminarios de Dirección Espiritual*
- La Transición al Liderazgo: un programa para nuev@s pastores/as
- Círculos de Integridad*: reflexione teológicamente sobre el liderazgo dentro de un grupo

ambs.edu/leadership-and-enrichment

Conexiones a la Conferencia Central District

- **Alumn@s: Doctorado en Ministerio en Liderazgo:** Charles Buller (Silverwood), Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth St), Doug Luginbill (First – Bluffton), James Rissler (Atlanta, Emmanuel)
- **Alumn@s: Maestro de Divinidad:** Debbie Bledsoe (Raleigh, Southside), Alaina Dobkowski (Grand Rapids), Melika Kauffman Hershberger (Normal), Andrew Hudson (Covenant), Sibonokuhle Ncube (Eighth St), Daniel Teye Nuertey (Hively Ave)
- **Alumn@s: Maestro de Artes:** Steve Benner (Normal), Scott Coulter (Assembly), Andrea Cramer (Keller Park), Jon Zirkle (Assembly)
- **Alumnas: Certificado de Posgrado:** Carrie Mast (First – Bluffton), Deanna Risser (Assembly)
- **Participantes/mentores(as) en Journey:** Denise Berbach (Atlanta)/Lois Kaufmann (Assembly), April Lo (Chicago Community)/Anne Munley (Conferencia Illinois), Rachel Stolpe (Milwaukee)/Mariah Martin (Faith), Shadrek Kwendanyama, Lyson Makawa, Ephraim Nzitonda, todos de Malaui/Charles Baraka (Madison)
- **Miembro de la Junta:** John Daniels (Covenant)

Las estadísticas de AMBS

- En 2022–23, 141 alumn@s de posgrado estudiaron en AMBS: 61 de los EE. UU., 6 de Canadá y 74 de otros países.
- En el marzo del 2023, el programa Journey (sin título) tuvo 21 participantes en los EE. UU., Canadá, Malaui y Uganda.
- En 2021–22, 1,577 personas participaron en ofertas del Centro de Liderazgo Eclesial de AMBS.

¿Quiere explorar el estudio del seminario?

- Realice un Curso Corto en Línea (sin crédito):
 - Explorar la Paz y la Justicia en la Biblia
 - Explorar la Historia y la Teología Anabautista
 - Comprender los Enfoques Anabautistas de las Escrituras
 - Transformar el Conflicto y la Comunicación Congregacional

ambs.edu/online-short-courses

- Realice un curso de posgrado en línea o en el campus. ¡L@s alumn@s no admitid@s obtienen un 50% de descuento en sus primeras tres horas de crédito!
ambs.edu/upcoming-courses

- Programe una visita virtual o en persona. ¡Hable con estudiantes, profesores/as y personal y aprenda lo que AMBS tiene para ofrecer! ambs.edu/visit

- Conéctese con nosotros:
 - facebook.com/followAMBS
 - twitter.com/ambs_seminary
 - ambs.edu/subscribe

In October 2022 Bethel College adopted a new Strategic Plan. This plan will guide how we approach situations, solve problems, recruit students, and interact with the wider community for the next 5 years. Under the overall theme of *Knowledge is not Enough*, the plan is divided into seven strategic priorities.

The first priority is “Employment Experiences.” Bethel has been working to become a federally designated work college. Several students have already started in the program, and in 2027 we will graduate our first class that fully participates in the program, at which point we will be eligible for federal designation. Every student that graduates will have on-campus and/or off-campus work experience, increasing their likelihood of success after college and reducing their debt while in college.

“Ethos of Service” is the second priority. A committee has been formed to define exactly what “service” means to our campus community and develop an action plan to increase service to our community. We hope to add opportunities for service to our already established annual Service Day, in which all students participate.

Establishing a Thresher Media Network is the third priority. This priority focuses on increasing the visibility of campus life and building community through media channels. Students will have the opportunity to engage in several avenues of media relations.

The fourth priority focuses on real estate and infrastructure. While perhaps not the most exciting to talk about, we all know that these items are important and integral to campus life.

Strategic priority five seeks to redesign support services to meet the needs and expectations of a diverse student population. We continue to seek to define diversity in a fast-changing world. Plans to increase campus diversity and inclusion, support mental health needs, and work towards a safer campus are being put into place.

Students choose to attend college for a variety of reasons, and these institutions provide much more than simply knowledge, but the main focus of all colleges and universities is to teach. Redesigning curricula around our college mission and student diversity is strategic priority six. Employment opportunities continue to change and evolve, and our slate of coursework must respond.

The final priority is to establish a “Life Cycle System.” From recruit, through their time as a student, to becoming a part of our alumni network, our goal is to provide the proper support every step of the way.

More information on the *Knowledge is not Enough* strategic plan can be found at <https://www.bethelks.edu/about/who-we-are/strategic-plan>.

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.



2023 Report to Central District Conference

\$1.5 MILLION ENDOWED CHAIR IN BOTANY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

Thanks to generous funding from anonymous donors, Bluffton University has established the M'Della Moon Endowed Chair in Botany and Environmental Science. The \$1.5 million dollar gift will fund a faculty chair who will divide their time equally between managing the Bluffton University Nature Preserve and teaching university classes. The endowment is named after M'Della Moon, a member of Bluffton's science faculty from 1921-61.

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK OFFERED

Bluffton will offer a Master of Social Work (MSW) graduate degree with a mental health specialization starting in the 2023-24 academic year. The program, conducted in partnership with Goshen College, is designed to equip students with the advanced knowledge and skills required to meet the mental health needs of their communities and offers students a holistic approach to the field of social work. Coursework will prepare students to sit for licensure in any state. Applications opened in January.

LION AND LAMB UPDATES

Starting this academic year at The Lion and Lamb Peace Arts Center, an emphasis is being placed on training and empowering university students to lead sessions with school children on cultural understanding and conflict resolution. To facilitate that connection and more directly align the work with Bluffton's education program, **Dr. Paul Neufeld Weaver**, professor of education and director of global education, is serving as director of The Lion and Lamb. **Tareq Abuhallima**, from Gaza, Palestine, is serving as a graduate assistant to staff the center. He is connected with MennoPIN (Mennonite Palestinian Israel Network). Bluffton senior **Grace Liechty Zickafoose**, Lima Mennonite Church, served as the undergraduate student assistant during fall 2022.

ANABAPTIST COMMUNITY BIBLE

As part of MennoMedia's Anabaptism at 500 project, **Dr. Gerald Mast's** Religious Communication class worked through assigned passages and developed notes from their discussions of those passages for the upcoming Anabaptist Community Bible. Dr. Mast is also gathering notes from historic Anabaptist sources.

CDC CONNECTIONS ON CAMPUS

Rev. Georgia Metz '13, pastor of Shalom Mennonite Congregation in Harrisonburg, Va., spoke during Forum, gave the Chapel message and visited with students the week of March 19, 2023, for Bluffton's semi-annual Spiritual Life Week. Metz's messages supported the theme "Let's Listen."

Marathana Prothro, assistant professor of communication, provided the Civic Engagement Day Forum "Echo Chambers and Funhouse Mirrors: Navigating an Age of Alternate Facts, Distorted Reality and Fractured Relationships." Prothro attends Grace Mennonite Church in Pandora, Ohio.

Thank you!

Bluffton University currently enrolls nine students from Central District Conference churches: **Theodore Andreas, Benjamin Hartzler** and **Therisanyo Phetlhu**, First Mennonite Church of Bluffton; **Rilynn Kauffman** and **Deborah Yoder**, Assembly Mennonite Church; **Grace Liechty Zickafoose**, Lima Mennonite Church; **Blake Clum, Caitlyn Renner** and **Madelyn Renner**, Grace Mennonite Church.

Church Matching Scholarship support is \$7,277 for 2022-23.

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

Bluffton University at Convention!

Bluffton presenters at Mennonite Church USA Convention 2023 include:

Melissa Friesen, "Acting Out the Parable"

Marathana Prothro, "One T-Shirt at a Time: My Journey Away from Fast Fashion"

For more information, contact **Gerald Mast**

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

EMS Welcomes New Seminary Dean, Dan Ott

EMS honored 2022 retirees Dr. Sue Cockley (dean) and Dr. Nancy Heisey (professor of biblical studies and church history). Rev. Dr. Daniel Ott is the new seminary dean, formerly associate dean for academic initiatives and professor of religious studies at Monmouth College, IL. An ordained Presbyterian minister and peace theologian, Ott says his new role at EMS “brings together my deepest passions and my life’s work.”

New Graduate Certificate in Faith-Based Peacebuilding

In fall 2022, EMS launched a certificate to help faith leaders respond effectively to conflict. Students in the 18-credit program take half of their coursework in the seminary and half in the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding. Flexibility is built into the degree so students can choose relevant courses – in person or online – in theology, biblical studies, racial justice, conflict analysis and peacebuilding.

EMS Receives \$1 Million for Conflict Transformation Training

Lilly Endowment Inc. awarded EMS \$998,606 to develop interdisciplinary leadership workshops and trainings that integrate personal spiritual formation, biblical and theological frameworks, and conflict transformation skills. Director Dr. Jacob Cook works with leaders at EMS and EMU’s Center for Justice and Peacebuilding to equip pastors and lay leaders in conflict transformation and trauma resilience through digital content, online courses, regional on-site trainings and on-campus workshops.



L to R: Daniel Ott, EMS Dean; Sarah Bixler, EMS Associate Dean; Jacob Cook, Pathways Program Director; Jacqueline Font-Guzmán, Center for Justice and Peacebuilding Strategic Visioning Director

Spring 2022 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. Students presented senior capstone projects on teaching the Bible, faith and human bodies, healing racial trauma, disability, and recovery ministries. 2022-23 seminary enrollment is strong, with a 14% increase over 2021-22.

NEW: Study at EMS from Wherever You Live!

EMS is more accessible than ever! All courses are now available to take from a distance. Students can join the EMS learning community from their own location through Zoom technology and our online learning management system. Plus, thanks to forward-thinking donors, Mennonite students receive generous aid toward degree programs at EMS. Half- to full-tuition scholarships are available. Apply now or recommend our programs to someone you know! Visit <https://emu.edu/seminary/courses/> for information about upcoming classes.

Harrisonburg, Virginia

www.emu.edu/seminary

churchrelations@emu.edu

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
- ▶ **Daniel Ott**, seminary dean
- ▶ **Sarah Ann Bixler**, associate dean

**emu.edu/seminary
540-432-4260**

Conflict Transformation and Trauma Resilience Workshops

Equipping pastors and lay leaders on campus and online beginning
May 2023

[emu.edu/seminary/
workshops](http://emu.edu/seminary/workshops)



*Prepared to serve and
lead in a global context*

SUMMER 2023

CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE

EMU ANNUAL REPORT

Greetings from President Huxman

In this beautiful season in the Shenandoah Valley, I bring greetings from Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) to the families, churches and conferences that make up MCUSA. A special greeting to the Central District Conference. Join me as I feature a few highlights from the previous year.

CELEBRATING STUDENT SUCCESS. I enjoyed accompanying the super talented **EMU Chamber Singers** under the direction of Dr. Benjamin Bergey on its Ohio and Indiana Spring break tour. We are raising money for the choir to embark on a European tour this summer. The group visited 11 churches and schools. It was a lovely time to engage with so many alumni, friends and prospective students of EMU.

In addition to 50 undergraduate programs, EMU is home to 11 graduate programs and a seminary. One such graduate program is in the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding (CJP). A new student in CJP is **Anna Dovbyck from Ukraine**. She joins students from USA, South Korea, Japan, North Sudan, South Sudan, Rwanda, Kongo, Liberia, Mozambique, Iran, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and India. Her family has been upended by the war and a best friend is on the front lines in Donbas. She says: "Amidst the turmoil, I began to ask myself: what can I do? Getting a professional education in conflict transformation and work with trauma became my way of responding to the challenges of the war. And so now I find myself studying in the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University. It is probably the first time in recent adult years that I feel so much in my place, and so motivated."

UPGRADING FACILITIES. We've just completed a major renovation in University Commons, creating a new student union and new admissions space. Now we are turning our attention to a new Track and Field Complex, looking for "pace setting" gifts to completely build a new complex. We've already raised over half of the total. We are also replacing our aging Turf Field for soccer, lacrosse and field hockey. The third imminent capital project this year is the architectural design and specs for a new facility to house a fabrication lab for our growing Engineering program. We were so pleased to receive ABET accreditation for our engineering program this summer. Precious few private liberal arts colleges in the country receive this coveted validation.

Thank you for your partnership in prayer, encouraging prospective students, and offering generous financial support. Mennonite students still comprise well over one-quarter of our traditional undergraduate student body.

In gratitude,
Susan Schultz Huxman, Ph.D., President, EMU

Harrisonburg, Virginia

www.emu.edu

churchrelations@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

Eleven undergraduate students, two graduate students and one seminary student from Central District Mennonite Conference are enrolled in the spring 2023 semester.

Giving

Central District Mennonite Conference churches gave \$48,839 in matching church grants during the fiscal year ending June 2022.

- ▶ **Susan Schultz Huxman**,
president
- ▶ **Kirk Shisler**, *vice president for advancement*
- ▶ **Braydon Hoover**, *Associate Vice President of Advancement*
- ▶ **Luke Litwiller**, *director of undergrad 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.

2023 Report to Central District Conference

MISSION

Goshen College transforms local and global communities through courageous, creative and compassionate leaders. Shaped by Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, we integrate academic excellence and real-world experience with active love for God and neighbor.

VISION

Goshen College will cultivate joy, growth and purpose, preparing students to thrive in life, leadership and service. Rooted in the way of Jesus, we will seek inclusive community and transformative justice in all that we do.



Rebecca J. Stoltzfus '83
President

president@goshen.edu

► Read the president's blog at:
goshen.edu/president-blog



Dan Koop Liechty '88
Director of alumni engagement & international student adviser

alumni@goshen.edu



Cathy Stoner
Campus pastor

► Watch past campus chapels and convocations:
goshen.edu/podcasts

CAMPUS NEWS

Mennonite Writers Conference

The ninth Mennonite/s Writing Conference was hosted on Goshen College's campus in the Fall of 2022. The theme, "Celebrating 30 Years: Looking Back, Looking Forward," celebrated both reflection and passing the torch to the next generation. Originally scheduled for 2020 to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the first Mennonite/s Writing in 1990, and twice postponed by COVID concerns, the conference drew Mennonite- and Anabaptist-related writers, readers and scholars from all over North America.

New MSW

Beginning in 2023, Goshen College will offer a highly interactive and online Master of Social Work (MSW) degree program, conducted in partnership with Bluffton University. With plenty of opportunity for application to real-world settings, students will gain advanced clinical skills and complete their master's degree in as few as 12 months.

Learn more about this program at:
goshen.edu/msw

Top 10 Nationally Ranked

Goshen College appeared in the number eight spot – the top in Indiana – on Academic Influence's ranking of the best colleges and universities in the country by "Academic Stewardship," a challenge to traditional college rankings that ranks schools based on how effectively they use their financial and human resources toward academic impact. Taking their cue from Malcolm Gladwell's podcast series "The Myths of Meritocracy," Academic Influence created the Academic Stewardship metric to reward schools for making the most of what they have.

CONFERENCE CONNECTIONS

39

Students enrolled from 14 Central District Conference congregations this academic year

\$68,434

Amount churches pledged 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.

GLOBAL EDUCATION

Students from the conference are involved on- and off-campus in many edifying ways, but we specifically recognize students who have studied and served through GC's Global Education program. **Luisa Dutchersmith** from Faith Mennonite (Goshen) is spending the semester studying and serving in Ecuador. **Annalise Nisly** from Grace Mennonite Church (Pandora, OH) is studying and serving in Tanzania.

FEATURED LINKS

Campus News
goshen.edu/news

Campus Events
goshen.edu/calendar

Music Center Events
gcmusiccenter.org/events

Athletics Events
goleafs.net/calendar

Study-Service Term blogs
goshen.edu/sst

Informe 2023 para la Conferencia del Distrito Central

MISIÓN

Goshen College transforma las comunidades locales y globales a través de líderes valientes, creativos y compasivos. Moldeados por la tradición anabaptista-menonita, integramos la excelencia académica y experiencia en el mundo real con el amor hacia Dios y al prójimo.

VISIÓN

Goshen College cultivará alegría, crecimiento y propósito, preparando a los estudiantes para prosperar en la vida, el liderazgo y el servicio. Arraigados en el camino de Jesús, buscaremos una comunidad inclusiva y una justicia transformadora en todo lo que hagamos.



Rebecca J. Stoltzfus '83
Presidenta

president@goshen.edu

► Lea el blog de la presidenta en: goshen.edu/president-blog



Dan Koop Liechty '88

Director de la participación de alumnos egresados y asesor de estudiantes internacionales

alumni@goshen.edu



Cathy Stoner

Pastora del campus

► Mire las capillas y convocatorias pasadas del campus: goshen.edu/podcasts

ENLACES DESTACADOS

Noticias del campus
goshen.edu/news

Eventos del campus
goshen.edu/calendar

Eventos del departamento de música
gcmusiccenter.org/events

Eventos deportivos
goleafs.net/calendar

Blogs de estudios en el extranjero
goshen.edu/sst

NOTICIAS DEL CAMPUS

Conferencia de Escritores Menonitas

La novena Conferencia de Escritores Menonitas se celebró en el campus de Goshen College en el otoño de 2022. El tema, "Celebrando 30 años: mirando hacia atrás, mirando hacia adelante", celebró tanto la reflexión como el paso de la antorcha a la próxima generación. Originalmente fue programada para el año 2020 para celebrar el 30 aniversario de la primera escritura menonita en 1990. Y por preocupaciones de COVID, fue pospuesta dos veces. Sin embargo, la conferencia atrajo a menonitas y escritores, lectores y eruditos anabaptistas de toda América del Norte.

Nuevo programa de maestría

A partir de 2023, Goshen College ofrecerá un programa de maestría en trabajo social altamente interactivo y en línea, realizado en asociación con la Universidad de Bluffton. Con muchas oportunidades para la aplicación a entornos del mundo real, los estudiantes obtendrán habilidades clínicas avanzadas y completarán su maestría en tan solo 12 meses. Obtenga más información sobre este programa en: goshen.edu/msw

Las mejores 10 universidad clasificadas a nivel nacional

Goshen College apareció en el puesto número ocho, el primero en Indiana, en el ranking de Academic Influence de los mejores colegios y universidades del país por "Academic Stewardship", un desafío a las clasificaciones universitarias tradicionales que clasifica a las escuelas en función de la eficacia con la que utilizan sus recursos financieros y humanos para lograr el impacto académico. Siguiendo su ejemplo de la serie de podcasts de Malcolm Gladwell "Los mitos de la meritocracia", Academic Influence creó la métrica de administración académica para recompensar a las escuelas por aprovechar al máximo lo que tienen.

CONEXIONES DE CONFERENCIAS

39

Estudiantes inscritos de 14 congregaciones de la Conferencia del Distrito Central este año académico

\$68,434

La cantidad prometida por parte de congregaciones hacia el apoyo estudiantil para el año académico.

El programa Subvención de contrapartida de ayuda de la iglesia de Goshen College proporciona una igualación dólar por dólar de los primeros \$1,000 por estudiante y una igualación 1:4. Después de eso, hasta la matrícula completa.

EDUCACIÓN GLOBAL

Los estudiantes de la conferencia participan dentro y fuera del campus de muchas maneras edificantes, pero reconocemos específicamente a los estudiantes que han estudiado y servido a través del programa de Educación Global de GC. **Luisa Dutchersmith** de Faith Mennonite (Goshen) está estudiando y sirviendo en Ecuador este semestre. **Annalise Nisly** de la Iglesia Menonita Grace (Pandora, OH) está estudiando y sirviendo en Tanzania.

Anabaptist Disabilities Network

Informe Anual 2022

ADN en la Comunidad:

Resolución de MC USA sobre la Accesibilidad aprobada en Mayo 2022

“Nosotros, los miembros, congregaciones y organizaciones de MC USA, resolvemos profundizar nuestra comprensión de las barreras que bloquean a las personas con discapacidades, tomar medidas para hacer que nuestra vida comunitaria e instalaciones sean accesibles y acogedoras para todos, y discernir y afirmar los dones de cada uno. persona para nuestro bien común”.

Servicios de accesibilidad para conferencias denominacionales

Ayudas para la movilidad, dispositivos de asistencia auditiva, transcripciones de diapositivas para lectores de pantalla, salas sensoriales y más.

Talleres y capacitaciones: el personal y asociados de campo están disponibles para consultar, predicar y enseñar.

- **Cuidado mutuo para personas con discapacidades** en la Conferencia Anual de la Iglesia de los Hermanos
- **Un lugar para todos** para jóvenes y adultos en la Conferencia Nacional de Jóvenes de la Iglesia de los Hermanos

Nuevos recursos para las congregaciones:

- ***Believing and Belonging***, un plan de estudios de membresía anabautista para adultos escrito en un nivel de lectura de tercer grado
- Guía de estudio de resolución de MC USA sobre la accesibilidad
- **Encuesta de evaluación congregacional en línea** Las congregaciones pueden auditar su accesibilidad y recibirán apoyo de ADN para abordar las inquietudes que surjan.
- **Aprenda, ore, únase: Acogiendo a cada CUERPO**, aborde temas de accesibilidad en la iglesia y cuídense mutuamente. (Creado con MC USA)
- **Guía de Salud Mental** para iglesias
- **Boletín de conexiones**
 - Discapacidad y empleo, invierno de 2022
 - Demencia y congregaciones, verano de 2022
 - Autismo y fe, otoño de 2022
- **Blog Abriendo Puertas** sobre la inclusión de la discapacidad
- **Seminarios en la web**
 - Discapacidades y planificación patrimonial (con Everence)
 - Demencia y Atención Congregacional (con Discipleship Ministries, Church of the Brethren)
 - Comunicación impresa y digital accesible (con comunicadores anabautistas)
- **Subvenciones para crear áreas sin barreras:** hasta \$500 para cualquier proyecto que aumente la accesibilidad de su congregación.



“Anabaptists Now,” por Dona Park, de **Believing and Belonging**



Audífonos para reducir bulla, y otros ítems sensoriales en la conferencia CoB National Youth

Involúcrese:

Conviértase en una congregación asociada. Designe un **defensor de la discapacidad de la congregación** que trabajará con los líderes de la iglesia para hacer de su iglesia un lugar donde todos pertenezcan y todos sirvan. Apoye a ADN con una **donación congregacional**, dando \$500 o \$1.000 al año.

Conviértase en un socio de Building the Future: como individuo, done \$1.000 por año durante 3 años. O done lo que pueda; las pequeñas donaciones hacen una diferencia importante.

Anabaptist Disabilities Network

Annual Report 2022

ADN in the Community:

MC USA Accessibility Resolution approved – May 2022

"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."

Accessibility Services at Denominational Conferences

Mobility aids, hearing assistance devices, slide transcriptions for screen readers, sensory rooms, and more.

Workshops and Trainings: Staff and Field Associates are available to consult, preach, and teach.

- **Mutual Care for People with Disabilities** at Church of the Brethren Annual Conference
- **A Place for Everybody** to youth and adults at Church of the Brethren National Youth Conference

New Resources for Congregations:

- **Believing and Belonging**, an Anabaptist membership curriculum for adults written at a third-grade reading level
- MC USA Accessibility Resolution Study Guide
- **Online Congregational Assessment Survey** congregations audit their accessibility and receive support from ADN in addressing concerns that arise.
- **Learn, Pray, Join: Welcoming Every BODY** address issues of accessibility in the church and care for one another. (Created in partnership with MC USA)
- **Mental Health Guide** for Congregations
- **Connections Newsletter**
 - Disability and Employment, Winter 2022
 - Dementia and Congregations, Summer 2022
 - Autism and Faith, Fall 2022
- **Opening Doors blog** on disability inclusion
- **Webinars**
 - Disabilities and Estate Planning (with Everence)
 - Dementia and Congregational Care (with Discipleship Ministries, Church of the Brethren)
 - Accessible Print and Digital Communication (with Anabaptist Communicators)
- **Barrier Free Grants:** up to \$500 for any project that increases the accessibility of your congregation.



"Anabaptists Now," by Dona Park, from **Believing and Belonging**



Noise-reducing headphones, fidgets, and other sensory items at CoB National Youth Conference

Be Involved:

Become a Partner Congregation. Designate a **congregational disability advocate** who will work with church leaders to make your church a place where everyone belongs, and everyone serves. Support ADN with a **congregational donation**, giving \$500 or \$1000 annually.

Become a Building the Future Partner: As an individual, donate \$1000 per year for 3 years. Or give what you can; small donations make a significant difference.

2023 report for Central District Conference

MCC U.S. and MCC Great Lakes
(574) 534.4133 • GreatLakes@mcc.org • mcc.org



Adolfo Conde's water harvesting system in Norte de Potosí, Bolivia, allows him to irrigate his crops to produce and market a greater variety of vegetables. An MCC partner works with Indigenous rural farmers to reduce the adverse effects of climate change through adaptation and mitigation measures aimed at guaranteeing food security. (PRODIG photo/Catalina Ospina)

MCC and Central District Conference connections

- Central District Conference 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.
 - Thank you to the families from
- Central District Conference churches who are hosting International Volunteer Exchange Program (IVEP) participants.
 - Bluffton University students volunteered with the SWAP home repair program in Appalachia.

“ It's beautiful to see the ways that people put aside their differences and unite together to support MCC's mission. **”**
-Eric Kurtz

In McDowell County, West Virginia, MCC is working with local community members to highlight the often-forgotten history of the Black experience in Appalachia. Monthly gatherings offer a space for telling stories and learning from shared experiences. In Kimball, MCC's SWAP location was found to once hold the

Henrietta Dismukes Hospital and Nurses' Home, founded by Dr. Henry Dodford Dismukes in the 1930s. SWAP staff and local residents are working together to honor the history and legacy of Dr. Dismukes as well as Dr. Roscoe Conklin Harrison, who both experienced racism and injustices as African American doctors.



MCC's 2023 guiding scripture

Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters...

Isaiah 55:1 (NIV)

MCC is able to work in 45 countries because of strong partnerships, not only with organizations on the ground but also with supporters like you.

You're helping farmers in Bolivia grow more diverse crops, even in difficult land. In Ukraine, you're helping families access food, shelter and trauma support. And in Chicago, you're helping young people who are currently incarcerated find hope and create a brighter future.

We are grateful for each of you and the role that you play. Whether you donate financially, pray for MCC, volunteer at an MCC thrift shop, pack kits, knit comforters, help can meat or bid on items at a relief sale, we appreciate you. You are helping to share God's love and compassion for all in the name of Christ.

With thanksgiving,

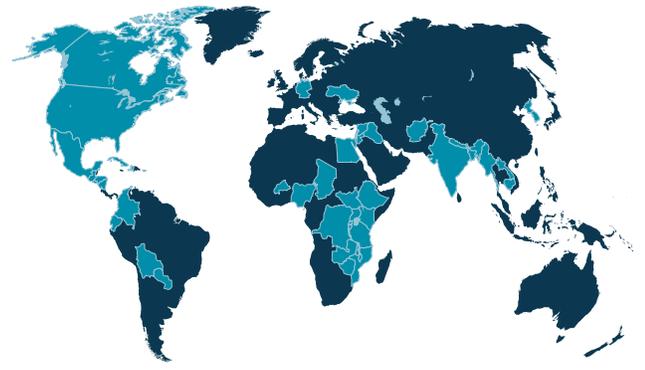
Eric Kurtz, MCC Great Lakes executive director

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



Informe 2023 para la Conferencia del Distrito Central

CCM EE.UU. y MCC Great Lakes
(574) 534.4133 • GreatLakes@mcc.org • mcc.org



45

países

381

asociados

496

proyectos



Adolfo Conde cuenta con un sistema de recolecta de agua en la Región del Norte de Potosí, Bolivia, que le permite regar sus cultivos y así producir y comercializar una mayor variedad de verduras. Una organización asociada al CCM trabaja junto con agricultores rurales indígenas para reducir los efectos adversos del cambio climático mediante medidas de adaptación y mitigación destinadas a garantizar la seguridad alimentaria. (Fotografía de PRODII/Catalina Ospina)

Conexiones entre el CCM y la Conferencia del Distrito Central

- Las congregaciones de la Conferencia del Distrito Central desempeñan un papel importante en las ventas para ayuda humanitaria, tiendas de segunda mano, la campaña “My Coins Count” (Mis monedas cuentan), colectas de recursos materiales y el programa de carne enlatada del CCM.
- Varias congregaciones organizaron charlas, tanto virtuales como en persona, con oradores del CCM.
- Gracias a las familias de las iglesias de la Conferencia del Distrito Central que hospedan a participantes del Programa de Intercambio Internacional de Voluntarios (IVEP).
- Estudiantes de la Universidad de Bluffton participaron como voluntarios en trabajos de reparación de viviendas del programa Compartir con el Pueblo Apalache (SWAP) Appalachia.

Escritura guía del CCM para 2023

¡Vengan a las aguas todos los que tengan sed!

Isaías 55:1 NVI

El CCM puede trabajar en 45 países gracias a sus sólidas alianzas, no solo con organizaciones locales sino también con colaboradores como ustedes.

Ustedes están ayudando a los agricultores de Bolivia a producir cultivos más diversos, incluso en tierras difíciles. En Ucrania, están ayudando a las familias a tener acceso a alimentos, refugio y apoyo para traumas. Y en Chicago, están ayudando a jóvenes que están actualmente encarcelados a encontrar esperanza y construir un futuro mejor.

Estamos muy agradecidos con cada uno de ustedes y el papel que desempeñan. Valoramos su ayuda; al realizar donaciones económicas, orar por el CCM, trabajar como voluntarios en una tienda de segunda mano del CCM, armar paquetes de auxilio, tejer mantas, ayudar a enlatar carne o realizar ofertas en ventas para ayuda humanitaria, están ayudando a compartir el amor y la compasión de Dios por todos en el nombre de Cristo.

Con agradecimiento,

Eric Kurtz, *director ejecutivo del MCC Great Lakes*

Peter Martin, *representante de la Junta Directiva del MCC Great Lakes*

“Es hermoso ver la manera en que las personas hacen a un lado sus diferencias y se unen para apoyar la misión de CCM.”

-Eric Kurtz

En el condado de McDowell, Virginia Occidental, el CCM trabaja junto con miembros de la comunidad local para poner de relieve la historia, a menudo olvidada, de la experiencia negra en Appalachia. Las reuniones mensuales ofrecen un espacio para contar historias y aprender de las experiencias compartidas. En Kimball, se descubrió que el centro del programa SWAP del

CCM fue en su día la sede del Hospital y Hogar de Enfermeras Henrietta Dismukes, fundado por el Dr. Henry Dodford Dismukes en la década de 1930. El personal del programa de SWAP y los residentes locales colaboran para honrar la historia y el legado del Dr. Dismukes y el Dr. Roscoe Conklin Harrison, víctimas del racismo e injusticias como médicos afroamericanos.





A year of restoring hope with love

"Do everything in love." 1 Corinthians 16:14



ANNUAL REPORT 2022 HIGHLIGHTS

MDS volunteers served
38,652 days helping
718 households
 recover from disasters.



MDS brought hope...

- Building new homes.*
- Constructing driveway bridges.*
- Mucking out.*
- Restoring forests.*
- Cleaning up debris.*
- Repairing homes.*

On local or national levels, with a few volunteers or hundreds of them, MDS brought a priceless element of hope into the lives of disaster survivors across Canada and the United States.

Thanks to donors and volunteers, MDS, from August 1, 2021 through July 31, 2022...

MDS also built trust with disaster survivors and partner organization. As Terri Rubiolo said when she received a new MDS-built home in Concow, California: "We put it in God's hands." Now she and her husband, John, operate a community food assistance program that provides 1,000 meals a week. The hope is spreading!

As Mark Cox, Hope Crisis Response Network logistics coordinator said when he combined efforts with MDS volunteers: "This collaboration is getting people home—that's what it's all about."

We pause to look at a year's worth of statistics—and we give thanks. But we are also still moving, growing and striving for even more creativity, collaboration and community in our responses. Years from now, may disaster survivors be able to count on the values of hope, love, and compassion that define MDS.

6,495 volunteers

from across Canada and the U.S. gave their time, skills and compassion

to build

57 new homes,

complete

302 repairs,

finish

281 cleanups,

and build

3 new bridges

for households who experienced a disaster.

This volunteer labor is a value* of

**\$9.39 million USD/
 \$12.96 million CDN**

**Statistics from Aug. 1, 2021
 through July 31, 2022**
(our 2021 fiscal year)

** Based on a volunteer rate of
 \$29.95 USD/hour
 — www.independentsector.org*

Respond. Rebuild. Restore.



**Mennonite
 Disaster
 Service**

www.mds.org

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 583 Airport Lititz
 PA 17543 USA
 tel: 717-735-3536
 fax: 717-735-0809
 toll-free: 800-241-8111
 mdsus@mds.org

MDS Canada Office
 200-600 Shaftesbury Blvd.
 Winnipeg, MB R3P 2J1 Canada
 tel: 204-261-1274
 fax: 204-261-1279
 toll-free: 866-261-1274
 mdscanada@mds.org

2022 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, Mennonite Men U.S. Coordinator
stevet@mennonitemen.org | (574) 202-0048



Mennonite Men

Engaging men to grow, give and serve.

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) support vulnerable communities.

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

We recently reached the milestone of our first 100,000 trees planted! We are grateful for the

strong support of this creation care and climate action campaign. Of the 100,287 trees planted, 75,385 were in Central America, 20,902 in North America, and 4,000 in Africa. Our largest project this year was in Baja Verapaz, Guatemala where local communities and families planted 35,385 trees in agroforestry projects.

Our board recently approved seven JoinTrees grant proposals for planting 52,819 more trees. Projects include 20,367 trees in Guatemala, 20,000 in Mexico, 1,400 at Camp Friedenswald in Michigan, 2,852 at East Goshen Mennonite Church, and 8,200 on Mennonite properties in Goshen, Indiana.

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 2.3 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 next JoinHands grant will assist Ripple Church, a Mennonite congregation of Mosaic Mennonite Conference, to purchase an existing building for their meeting place and community center in Allentown, Pennsylvania. This congregation is active in offering neighborhood ministries for children, youth, meal service, and providing a place of belonging. Church leaders state, “Purchasing this building will allow the church to continue into the future and provide a safe location downtown for many people who are not welcomed in other areas of the city.”

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.

Fewer retreats in the last year has given us the opportunity to complete a new book with Herald Press titled *Living that Matters: Honest Conversations for Men of Faith*. This practical handbook is a guide to help individuals and groups engage in honest conversations on what matters most for men—with a focus on following Jesus, forming community, and building peace. These short reflections help individuals and groups deepen relationships with one another and with God as we seek to live into God's shalom. Look for the book's release by Herald Press in early 2023.

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 disclose.
 - (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, 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:

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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



CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE

A conference of Mennonite Church USA

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



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.

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: _____

Central District Conference Procedures for Pastoral Transitions, Credentialing Leaders and Maintaining Credentials

Affirmed by CDC Ministerial Committee in June 2020, updated Oct. 21, 2021

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.

The CDC Mission Statement also includes the following charge, "Calling and nurturing wise, dynamic and compassionate Anabaptist leadership." The stewardship of this mission is accomplished through relationships of trust, mutual accountability, excellent communication and vital resourcing at all stages of ministerial leadership. *A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership* serves as the primary polity document in all areas of pastoral leadership and credentialing. The following shall serve as guidance to the conference minister and ministerial committee as they seek to fulfill the CDC mission.

Transitions in Pastoral Leadership

- I. Resourcing Congregational Leadership
 - A. When a resignation or retirement of a pastor is announced, the Conference Minister (CM) and congregational leadership discuss options and opportunities. CM is available for counsel throughout the transitional period. Clarify who the point of contact is in the congregation.
 - B. Emphasis shall be placed on *ending well* for both the congregation and pastor. An Alban Institute book, *Saying Goodbye* by Edwin White is a good resource. CM encourages congregations to conduct an exit interview with the exiting pastor. (Guidance for exit interviews is available on the MC USA website. <http://mennoniteusa.org/resource/pastor-congregation-relations/>) CM encourages congregations to have a ritual of "releasing the pastor" on last Sunday.
 - C. CM talks about developing a "separation agreement" between congregation and exiting pastor, especially when the pastor remains in the community. CM provides samples of "separation agreement's used in other congregations.
 - D. The CM encourages congregations to consider transitional pastoral leadership in some situations. (See *Intentional Interim Pastoral Ministry* on MC USA website.)
 - E. CM directs congregational leadership to the MC USA website for resources regarding pastoral transitions.
 - F. CM is a resource to congregational leadership as a search committee is formed.
- II. Resourcing the Pastor
 - A. When a pastor announces their resignation, the CM maintains relationship with the exiting pastor throughout the remainder of their ministry in the congregation.
 - B. Emphasis shall be on ending well. Say "good-bye" in healthy ways. Celebrate achievements. Be honest about disappointments. Tend difficult relationships. Continue to fulfill responsibilities. An Alban Institute book, *Saying Goodbye* by Edwin White is a good resource.
 - C. The CM is available to assist with negotiations of the separation agreement and/or financial negotiations if needed.

- III. Resourcing Congregational Search Committees
 - A. The CM typically meets with the search committee twice:
 - 1. To orient the search committee using orientation materials provided by both the denomination and the conference. (Orientation documents are followed.)
 - 2. To present MLIs.
 - B. The CM remains available for counsel throughout the search process.

Engaging with Potential Pastoral Candidates

- I. Initial Interview conducted by the Conference Minister
 - A. When a candidate contacts the CM seeking a ministry position within CDC or when the CM learns of a potential candidate, the CM will conduct an interview, preferably in person, to explore the following:
 - 1. what openings are available and/or what openings the candidate is interested in
 - 2. explore the candidate's self-understanding of their call to ministry
 - 3. explore the candidate's education and experiences
 - 4. explore the candidate's sense of giftedness and areas of ministry the candidate finds most fulfilling or energizing
 - 5. explore areas of desired growth or perceived lack of giftedness
 - 6. explore why the candidate desires to be considered in the CDC
 - 7. explore familiarity with MC USA credentialing process and CDC polity
 - 8. if the candidate is already employed, explore the reasons for a desired change
 - 9. ask if the candidate has any questions about CDC or the candidating process
 - B. All candidates will be informed that they cannot be considered for a position until their MLI and references are received by the CM from the MC USA Leadership Development Office. The CM will explain the MLI process if the candidate is not familiar with the process.
 - C. Candidates are informed that once they say "yes" to being a candidate of choice, they are to inform any other congregation that they are in conversation with that they must end that exploration.
 - D. The CM will explain the credentialing process
- II. MLI Process
 - A. If a potential candidate is not familiar with the MLI process, the CM will explain it to the individual. Explain that only candidates who have a current MLI will be considered for a ministry placement.
 - B. Potential candidates will be asked to update any MLIs older than 2 years.
 - C. Explain that it typically takes 6 weeks to complete the MLI process.
 - D. If the CM is asked to serve as a reference for the candidate, the CM will conduct an interview as described above, exploring any additional areas as needed to complete the MLI reference.
 - E. If the candidate has already served in another conference of MC USA, the CM will contact the conference minister where the candidate has most recently served.

- III. Sharing MLIs with search committees
 - A. Typically a potential candidate is contacted by the CM before their MLI is shared with a search committee in order to determine a candidate's openness to being considered for a position.
 - B. There are also times when it may make sense to share an MLI first with a search committee to determine the level of their interest in a candidate.
 - C. Candidates are told that their names will be held with confidence within the search committee.
 - D. Congregational search committees have the option to run additional background checks as they desire.
 - E. The CM will inform candidates, who have had MLIs submitted to a search committee, when their names are no longer being considered by a congregation.
 - F. The search committee chair will contact candidates whom they have interviewed but who are no longer being considered to inform them of their decision. The CM is available to the candidates for a follow-up conversation.

The Credentialing Process (See Section III of *A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership* for more detailed guidance.)

- I. Licensing toward Ordination
 - A. The licensing process is initiated when a congregation sends a written notice to CDC requesting licensing. When a congregation calls a new pastor, that call can serve as the official request to begin the licensing process.
 - B. If a current MLI (within the last 2 years) is not on file, the candidate completes an MLI.
 - C. Prior to a licensing interview, the CM will provide an orientation to new pastors. (See "New Clergy Orientation" below.)
 - D. If the candidate is employed outside of the congregation (chaplain, professor, etc.), the employer shall also send a letter of support for the candidate. The letter shall include a brief summary of the candidate's ministry responsibilities.
 - E. The MLI and any additional supporting documents are sent to all members of the Ministerial Committee before a scheduled interview.
 - F. All members of the ministerial committee are invited to participate in the interview. A minimum of three members of the Ministerial Committee plus the conference minister interview the candidate. Questions for the candidate are based around MC USA's Core Competencies. Committee members not present for the interview may offer questions to the CM in advance of the interview.
 - G. 1 ½ hours is assumed for the ordination interview. The ministerial committee members present will determine the outcome of the interview. If agreement is not reached, a simple majority vote will suffice. Should there be a tie, the conference minister will break the tie. It is also an option not to decide at the time of the interview if further information is needed.
 - H. Minutes of the interview are shared with the rest of the ministerial committee and a hard copy is placed in the clergy's personnel file at the CDC office.
 - I. The CM writes a letter informing the pastor and the congregation of the ministerial committee's decision regarding licensing. A copy is placed in the clergy's personnel file at the CDC office.

- J. A signed and witnessed *Code of Ethics* form from the candidate is required. Copies are provided to the candidate and the moderator of the congregation. The original is placed in the clergy's personnel file at the CDC office.
- K. A pastoral mentor is assigned to each minister for two years. Their assessment of the candidate's readiness for ordination is requested when that time comes. The pastor and mentor are expected to meet every 4-6 weeks for conversation about ministry.
- L. The conference minister will participate in the licensing/installation service in the congregation. In the event of difficult scheduling conflicts, a member of the Ministerial Committee may participate in the service.
- M. A Certificate of License, embossed with the CDC seal, will be presented to the pastor. A copy of the certificate will be placed in their personnel file.
- N. The pastor's status is updated on MennoData.

II. Ordination

- A. The ordination process begins when a congregational leader communicates their desire to ordain a licensed person in their congregation. The CM will communicate with the congregational leader and provide them with the MC USA *Congregational Discernment for Ordination* to help congregations discern readiness for ordination.
- B. The CM will meet with the ordination candidate and explain the process which includes providing a current MLI. The candidate will also be given the "ordination prep questionnaire."
- C. The congregation sends a written request to CDC requesting ordination.
- D. If the candidate is employed outside of the congregation (chaplain, professor, etc.), the employer shall also send a letter of support for the candidate. The letter shall include a brief summary of the candidate's ministry responsibilities.
- E. The candidate's mentor provides a written letter of support for the candidate.
- F. The ordination candidate sends in written responses to the ordination prep questionnaire (CDC and MC USA).
- G. Prior to the interview, the CM provides the ministerial committee with the congregation's letter of request, the mentor's letter of support, the candidate's responses to the questions, the MLI and any other supporting documents. All members of the ministerial committee are invited to participate in the interview. A minimum of three members of the Ministerial Committee plus the conference minister interview the candidate. Committee members not present for the interview may offer questions to the CM in advance of the interview.
- H. As much as possible, a representative from the congregation attends the ordination interview, primarily to speak to the congregation's process for determining readiness for ordination.
- I. 1 ½ hours is assumed for the ordination interview. The ministerial committee members present will typically determine the outcome of the interview. If agreement is not reached, a simple majority vote will suffice. Should there be a tie, the conference minister will break the tie. It is also an option not to decide at the time of the interview if further information is needed.

- J. The CM writes a letter informing the pastor and the congregation of the ministerial committee's decision regarding ordination.
 - K. A signed and witnessed *Code of Ethics* form from the candidate is required. Copies are then sent to the candidate and the moderator of the congregation. The original is placed in the clergy's personnel file at the CDC office.
 - L. Minutes of the interview are shared with the rest of the ministerial committee and a hard copy is placed in the clergy's personnel file at the CDC office.
 - M. The conference minister will participate in the ordination service in the congregation.
 - N. A Certificate of Ordination, embossed with the CDC seal, will be presented to the pastor. A copy of the certificate will be placed in their personnel file.
 - O. The pastor's status is updated on MennoData.
- III. Dual Conference Congregations: We are committed to working with IMC, IMMC, and Ohio Conference in credentialing processes for dual-conference congregations, adapting as needed, so that candidates do not need to submit two sets of written responses or be interviewed twice. Refer to *Outline of Common Assumptions Regarding Mid-States "Preferred Resource Provider" Relationships for Pastoral Searches* and *Mid-States MC-USA Area Conference Statement on Congregational Dual Conference Affiliation*.
- IV. Installation/Commissioning
- A. When a pastor begins a new ministry in a congregation, an installation service is conducted by the CM. If the pastor is also being licensed, the installation and licensing services are typically conducted as part of the same ceremony. Rarely, there may be occasions when a pastor is first installed and then, at a later date, licensed.
 - B. Commissioning is the term used when an interim or transitional pastor begins a new assignment in a congregation.
 - C. A signed and witnessed *Code of Ethics* form from the pastor is required. Copies are then sent to the pastor and the moderator of the congregation. The original is placed in the clergy's personnel file at the CDC office.
- V. Transferring *Active* or *Active Without Charge* Credentials:
- A. When a credentialed person with an ordination credential from another conference is being considered by a CDC congregation or other ministry, the CM will contact the sending conference leadership. The CM will inquire about the standing of the candidate's credential and inquire about anything else that would be helpful to know as the candidate is being considered.
 - B. A current (within two years) MLI is required for anyone transferring their credential to CDC if they are remaining in active ministry. The MLI is shared with the Ministerial Committee and feedback provided to the CM. A formal interview can be requested by the CM or Ministerial Committee.
 - C. Credentialed leaders are expected to talk with the pastor of the congregation they will be attending and discuss the transfer of their credential. This is to determine

the local congregation's understanding and expectations regarding credentialed leaders within the congregation.

- D. If the candidate is employed outside of the congregation (chaplain, professor, etc.), the employer shall also send a letter of support for the candidate. The letter shall include a brief summary of the candidate's ministry responsibilities.
 - E. As soon as possible after a credentialed individual new to CDC is called by a CDC congregation or other ministry, several members of the Ministerial Committee and the conference minister will have a get-acquainted conversation with the new person. They will encourage participation in conference events and especially Pastor Peer meetings and resourcing opportunities. The CM will conduct an abbreviated "orientation" as outlined below in "New Clergy Orientation" and receive a "New Clergy Orientation Packet."
 - F. A signed and witnessed *Code of Ethics* form from the candidate is required. Copies are then provided to the candidate and the moderator of the congregation. The original is placed in the clergy's personnel file at the CDC office.
 - G. For pastors of congregations, the conference minister will participate in an installation service as close to the beginning of their new ministry as possible.
 - H. The CM will request the transfer of the pastor's credential.
- VI. Transferring Credentials that are *Inactive or Retired*
- A. The CM will contact the sending conference leadership. The CM will inquire about the standing of the candidate's credential and inquire about anything else that would be helpful to know as the candidate is being considered.
 - B. The CM will have a conversation with the credentialed leader, preferably in person, to become acquainted and to provide a brief orientation about CDC and answer questions about CDC.
 - C. The credentialed leader is expected to talk with the pastor of the congregation and discuss the transfer of their credential. This is to determine the local congregation's understanding and expectations regarding credentialed leaders within the congregation.
 - D. A signed and witnessed Code of Ethics form from the clergy is required. Copies are then provided to the clergy and the pastor or moderator of the congregation. The original is placed in the clergy's personnel file at the CDC office.
 - E. Once the credentialed leader is a member of the CDC congregation, the credentialed leader, with the support of the pastor, requests that CDC initiate a transfer of their credential.
 - F. The CM requests the transfer.
 - G. If the credentialed leader wishes to become "active," an updated MLI is required.

New Clergy Orientation

The orientation shall last approximately two hours and include:

- A. Presentation of the "New Clergy Orientation Packet" which consists of:
 - 1. Most recent CDC Annual Meeting Report Book and CDC Directory
 - 2. *CDC At-a-Glance*
 - 3. List of Spiritual Directors- Website; <https://mennosdn.org/>
 - 4. *CDC Code of Ethics*

5. CDC *Annual Clergy Review* form
6. CDC *Healthy Boundaries Policy*
7. CDC *Personnel File Policy and Procedures*
8. CDC *Maintaining Credentials in Good Standing*
9. *Six Core Competencies* of MC USA ministerial leadership
10. Information about Camp Friedenswald
11. Information about Bluffton University
12. Information about AMBS including *Journey*

- B. Communicating the expectation that the candidate be familiar with:
 1. *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*
 2. *A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership*
 3. *CDC At-a-Glance*
 4. The Central District Conference Polity (In Report Book)
 5. CDC *Identity Document* (In Report Book)
 6. CDC *Code of Ethics* (must be signed by time of installation/licensing)
 7. CDC *Annual Clergy Review* form
 8. MC USA *Pastoral Sexual Abuse Policies and Procedures*
 9. CDC *Healthy Boundaries Policy*
 10. CDC *Personnel File Policy and Procedures*
 11. CDC *Maintaining Credentials in Good Standing*
 12. *Six Core Competencies* of MC USA ministerial leadership
- C. Discussion of the MC USA Mentoring expectations and potential mentors
- D. Discussion of Pastor Peer opportunities and expectations
- E. Discussion of Annual Meetings and Regional Gatherings
- F. Description of the CDC organizational structure
- G. Information on the Transition into Ministry program (TiM)
- H. Encouragement to connect with a spiritual director
- I. Opportunity to ask any questions

Maintaining Credentials in Good Standing

- I. Congregational Pastors
 - A. Pastors will maintain compliance with the CDC *Code of Ethics*.
 - B. Pastors will follow the Healthy Boundaries Policy.
 - C. Pastors will complete the *Annual Clergy Review* form.
 - D. Pastors are expected to build peer relationships with other CDC pastors and participate in either a local or online pastor peer group as frequently as is possible. Recognizing that this is difficult for part-time pastors, they are encouraged to relate to other Mennonite clergy in ways that enhance their ministry.
 - E. Pastors are strongly encouraged to participate in CDC Annual Meetings and one Regional Gathering.

- F. Pastors are encouraged to develop a relationship with a spiritual director and maintain spiritual practices and disciplines that enhance one's life with God.
- G. Pastors are expected to be life-long learners, participate in continuing education opportunities regularly, and read books, periodicals and other media that provide ongoing ministry growth.
- H. Annually, CDC staff will review the MC USA clergy roster (MennoData report) and any questions regarding the status of the credential will be clarified.
- I. Pastors are free to contact the CM or a member of the ministerial committee for support, discernment, a listening ear and encouragement.

II. Non-pastor clergy

- A. Clergy will maintain active membership in a CDC congregation. If regular participation in the CDC congregation of membership is not possible due to geographical distance, regular participation in another congregation is expected.
- B. Clergy will maintain compliance with the CDC *Code of Ethics*.
- C. Clergy will follow the Healthy Boundaries Policy.
- D. Clergy will complete the *Annual Clergy Review* form.
- E. Clergy are invited to participate in local and online pastor peer groups as time allows.
- F. Clergy are encouraged to participate in peer relationships with other clergy in similar ministry settings.
- J. Clergy are encouraged to develop a relationship with a spiritual director and maintain spiritual practices and disciplines that enhance one's life with God.
- G. Clergy are encouraged to participate in CDC Annual Meetings and one Regional Gathering.
- H. Clergy are expected to be life-long learners, participate in continuing education opportunities regularly, and read books, periodicals and other media that provide ongoing ministry growth.
- I. Annually, CDC staff will review the MC USA clergy roster (MennoData report) and any questions regarding the status of the credential will be clarified.
- J. Clergy are free to contact the CM or a member of the ministerial committee for support, discernment, a listening ear and encouragement.

Resourcing of Credentialed Leaders

- I. The CDC ministerial committee will continually assess what kinds of resourcing events are beneficial to the credentialed clergy and seek to facilitate participation in such events.
- II. The CM will pass along information to clergy about resourcing events.
- III. The ministerial committee will seek to provide financial support to clergy for whom continuing education or professional support resources are limited.
- IV. The ministerial committee will develop and maintain a directory of professional resources for pastors facing difficult circumstances in their family or place of ministry.

Reviews of Pastors: Congregations are encouraged to use the materials and guidance available on the MC USA website regarding regular pastor reviews.

Investigations of Pastoral Misconduct or Abuse: The MC USA *Pastoral Sexual Abuse Policies and Procedures* will be used whenever an accusation of pastoral sexual abuse is brought against a credentialed leader. The CDC ministerial committee will:

- I. Identify and train contact persons
- II. Identify and train investigators
- III. Provide periodic training and refreshers for CDC Board, staff and ministerial committee members regarding these policies and procedures.

Credential Reviews:

- I. In matters of reported ethical or polity violations that do not meet the definition of sexual abuse, the ministerial committee may conduct a credential review to determine if the violation occurred and, if so, what appropriate response to give.
- II. At the February 22, 2018 meeting of the ministerial committee, it was determined that an automatic credential review would not be necessary when a pastor performs a same-sex wedding unless a complaint were raised by a CDC member or if it was known that the pastor did this without the blessing and support of the congregation.

A Record Retention Policy for Credential Files was approved by the CDC Ministerial Committee on October 15, 2020.

Guidance on Communication of Ministerial Misconduct Situations was adopted by the CDC Ministerial Committee on August 19, 2021

**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

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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 Osawatimie, 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



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 Scottsdale 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](#), Scottsdale, 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).

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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

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

- 164
- 165 4) *Sabbatical*: In addition to the salary and benefit extension that covers regeneration time
166 between assignments, congregations served by a transitional pastor will provide an amount
167 equal to one month of regular salary for each 12 months of ministry, or fraction thereof,
168 and prorated accordingly. Unused years toward a sabbatical in a long term congregation do
169 not accrue when such a pastor becomes an II/T pastor, but years do accrue when an II/T
170 pastor moves to the next assignment. This money will be placed in a sabbatical fund to be
171 held in trust by the area conference office for that particular transitional pastor. The funds
172 will be available for a sabbatical after several transitional assignments, based on actual
173 accumulated service of 4 years. The home credentialing area conference will issue a 1099
174 for tax reporting purposes at the end of the tax year when sabbatical fund monies are
175 disbursed to a transitional pastor. Sabbatical planning is to be done by the transitional
176 pastor in consultation with the conference minister where his/her credential is held. In
177 situations where these monies are not fully vested or claimed, the monies shall be
178 forwarded to the Transitional Pastor Fund, referred to in item 3, B, 5 below.

179

180 5) *Expense Coverage*:

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

195

196 **3. Conference Responsibilities**

197 **A. Employment Negotiations**

198 Conference leaders will serve in an advocacy role for the transitional pastor in salary and
199 benefit negotiations. In situations where congregation/conference relationships are strained,
200 conference leaders will advocate for the transitional pastor. When advocacy is absent, the
201 transitional pastor needs to utilize her/his own resources to educate the congregation on the
202 transition process. Conferences will encourage congregations to realize that interim periods are
203 not the time to attempt to save financial resources by understaffing, since that results in
204 transitional pastors devoting an inordinate amount of time to routine pastoral tasks.
205

206 **B. Inter Conference Cooperation**

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

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

217 **Possible criteria:**

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

228

229 **4. Development and Promotion**

230 1) Constituency Education

231 Transitional pastors, their support groups, conferences and the denomination are encouraged
232 to make constituency education a priority through seminars and other conference and
233 denominational venues. This includes helping congregations acknowledge the wisdom in
234 seeking objective, outside counsel as a matter of basic congregational health at all times.
235 Congregations are usually not the best judge in discerning their need regarding a transitional
236 pastor or interim pastor assignment.
237

238 2) Recruitment

239 Transitional pastors, their support groups, conference and denominational leaders are
240 encouraged to develop a specific plan for recruitment to increase the ranks of qualified
241 transitional pastors. This will include a strategy for utilizing bi-vocational transitional pastors.
242

243 3) Training

244 The Transitional Pastor Group will be encouraged to provide regional training
245 opportunities. Conferences and the denomination will work cooperatively in funding,
246 promoting and recruiting, potential candidates for transitional pastor training events.
247

- 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**

258

- 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

- 298 of insurance to a) the congregation where serving, or b) when the transitional pastor is
299 between assignments, directly to the transitional pastor.]
300
- 301 **8.** In addition to the salary and benefit extension that covers regeneration time between
302 assignments, congregations served by a transitional pastor will provide an amount equal to one
303 month of regular salary for each 12 months of ministry, or fraction thereof, and prorated
304 accordingly. This money will be placed in a sabbatical fund to be held in trust by the
305 transitional pastor's home conference office for that particular transitional pastor.
306
- 307 **9.** Congregations are encouraged to recognize that above budget expenses will often be incurred
308 during a transitional period for such items as curricular supplies, consultants' fees, specialized
309 training, etc.
310
- 311 **10.** Provide space and priority for the transitional pastor to consult with your Conference Minister
312 and to attend conference events, appropriate churchwide meetings, and pastor-peer meetings.
313 The congregation will cover the expenses of attendance.
314
- 315 **11.** When a long distance commuting situation emerges, the congregation being served by the
316 transitional pastor will assume responsibility for seeing that everything possible is done to
317 limit commuting stressors. A transitional pastor should not incur financial liabilities for
318 lodging or commuting costs, and should have a realistic work schedule that allows adequate
319 time at home with family.
320
- 321 **12.** Congregations need to realize that transitional periods are not the time to attempt to save
322 financial resources by understaffing, since that results in the transitional pastor devoting an
323 inordinate amount of time to routine pastoral tasks.
324
- 325 **13.** Be willing to postpone or delay the pastoral search process until adequate attention is given to
326 the issues at hand. The transitional pastor will be able to assist this discernment, and suggest a
327 process for the congregation during its search. The Conference Minister should be brought in
328 for this process.
329
- 330 **14.** The transitional pastor will not transfer membership to your congregation. They may become
331 associate members for the period they serve your congregation. The TP's ordination will
332 remain with their home conference.
333

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

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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

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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

88

89 **We commit to:**

- 90 • *Rescind* the Membership Guidelines, Section III.¹¹
- 91 • Include LGBTQIA people and/or representative allies in the creation of any resource,
92 document, or policy produced or distributed by the denomination that specifically affects
93 LGBTQIA people.
- 94 • Require that the Executive Board consult with LGBTQIA leaders¹² to create an
95 LGBTQIA constituency group with representation on the Constituency Leaders Council
96 and/or other denomination-wide leadership groups.
- 97 • Provide denominational resources for individuals, congregations, and conferences to
98 engage with repentance and reconciliation in their own contexts. Such resources should
99 explore historic harms, encourage *truth-telling*, and address areas of *intersectionality*.
- 100 • Follow the leadership of LGBTQIA Mennonites to provide support and resources for
101 LGBTQIA leaders in the church. This should involve investment of denominational time
102 and money.
- 103 • Formalize and publicize policies for MC USA’s Executive Board, staff, and church-wide
104 program agencies that prohibit the use of sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital
105 status as criteria to restrict a person’s full participation in the ministries, activities, roles,
106 and committees at the denominational level.
- 107 • Embody a theology that honors LGBTQIA people and relationships with all future MC
108 USA theological statements, including but not limited to future revisions of *The*
109 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* and *A Shared Understanding of*
110 *Ministerial Leadership*. When MC USA partners with other denominations or faith
111 groups, its input into the process will advocate for this theology.

112
113

114 **GLOSSARY**

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116 *Allies* - Within the context of the LGBTQIA community, allies are individuals who are not
117 LGBTQIA (i.e., they are heterosexual and cisgender), but who support the LGBTQIA
118 community. Being an ally means: sharing power, taking risks, taking responsibility, being open
119 to the unknown, becoming part of addressing injustice, leveling the playing field, accepting
120 differences, making allowances, and leading by action. It is important for an ally to join
121 LGBTQIA persons in solidarity, and not play a patronizing role in the journey towards equality.
122 [Definition adapted from *Safe Zone* (2016) by the Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT
123 Interests.]

124

125 *Harm* - Here used broadly to mean the diminishment of physical, mental, and/or spiritual health
126 as a result of beliefs, policies, and practices that reject the faithful witness of LGBTQIA people
127 and their faith communities. Harm is related to *violence* (see definition below).

128

129 ¹¹ This will effectively eliminate section III of the Guidelines. Sections I and II are part of the MC USA bylaws.

130 ¹² Many LGBTQIA Mennonite leaders are affiliated with advocacy groups including Brethren Mennonite Council
131 for LGBT Interests, Pink Menno, and Inclusive Mennonite Pastors.

132

133 *Intersectionality* - A lens that helps us understand the overlapping dimensions of identity,
134 privilege, and oppression. A community whose theology and structures tend to intersectionality
135 will recognize the interlocking nature of each person's identity markers (such as gender, sexual
136 orientation, race, economic status, age, etc.) and how they are granted the space to belong and
137 the power to thrive.

138

139 *LGBTQIA* - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual. The acronym is
140 one generally accepted way of representing a diversity of sexual orientations and gender
141 identities. Sometimes "queer" is used as an umbrella term for LGBTQIA.

142

143 *Marginalized groups* - Those who are denied access to institutional power because of one or
144 more aspect/s of who they are. Because the dominant cultural norms in MC USA, as in wider
145 U.S. culture, have been established by those who are predominantly white, heterosexual,
146 cisgender, and male, marginalized groups in our context include Black, Indigenous, and other
147 People of Color, LGBTQIA people, and women.

148

149 *Rescind* - "take back, cancel" (*Merriam-Webster*). At the time of writing "A Resolution for
150 Repentance and Transformation," MC USA leadership is proposing to "retire" the Membership
151 Guidelines with little or no mention of the pain the Guidelines have caused. "Rescind" represents
152 a stronger rejection of the painful legacy of the Membership Guidelines in the formation and life
153 of our denomination.

154

155 *Truth-telling* - Following the practitioners of restorative and transformative justice, publicly
156 telling the truth about harm is an essential step toward healing. Truth-telling centers the stories of
157 those who have been harmed, reveals the impact of past actions, and opens the door to
158 accountability and change.

159

160 *Violence* - Occurs when the actions of individuals, institutions, or structures of power
161 intentionally or unintentionally hurt, damage, or destroy the value of an individual or a group.
162 Exclusion is a threatening act that enforces the experience of othering -- treating some people in
163 the church as essentially different and generally inferior -- and continues the cycle of
164 marginalization. Othering and marginalization are forms of violence; they cause emotional,
165 physical, and spiritual harm.

166

167 Submitted by Michael Crosby, Joanna Harader and Randy Spaulding, on behalf of the Inclusive
168 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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DELEGATE ASSEMBLY 2022



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.

DELEGATE ASSEMBLY 2022



- 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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<p>5. Follow the leadership of LGBTQIA Mennonites to provide support and resources for LGBTQIA leaders in the church.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Board staff. 	<p>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.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Board staff. • Program agencies. 	<p>This is already current practice, so there is no additional cost.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Board staff. 	<p>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.</p>
<p>8. When MC USA partners with other denominations or faith groups, its input into the process will advocate for this theology.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Board staff. 	<p>This action is not defined well enough to attribute a cost.</p>

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.

SPECIAL SESSION OF THE

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.

1 For Justice in the U.S. Criminal Legal System

2 Updated May 28, 2021

3

4 Summary

5 As a historic peace church, Mennonite Church USA is called to resist “injustice in all forms, and
6 in all places.”¹ Many aspects of the current United States’ criminal legal system cause pain and
7 suffering for many, especially poor people and people of color.

8 The U.S. criminal legal system, at its core, promotes violence and punishment, not reconciliation
9 and peace. We hear this from the voices of those currently and formerly incarcerated, calling for
10 justice; from their families, who yearn to be made whole; and from people of color, who are
11 discriminated against and hurt by this system.² The violence of the U.S. criminal legal system
12 will not, and cannot, bear the fruits of justice and peace.

13 A just world will only come through following the life and teachings of Jesus. For too long, we
14 have ignored the teachings of Jesus as they apply to the criminal legal system. Jesus calls us to
15 help the poor, the sick and the oppressed. “I was in prison and you visited me,” Jesus tells the
16 righteous in Matthew 25:36. We confess that too often, we have ignored that call.

17 At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus reads from the prophet Isaiah, saying, “The Spirit of the
18 Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to
19 proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to
20 proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Then, Jesus declares, “Today this scripture has been
21 fulfilled in your hearing.” Luke 4:18-21

22 As Christians, we are called to look to Jesus and the prophetic tradition of the Bible for our
23 vision of justice. We, like every generation of the church before us, are called to do our part,
24 empowered by the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, to advance God’s all-encompassing
25 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 levels⁴
- 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

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55 USA Executive Board staff and the Resolutions Committee):

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69

70 **Additional Endorsers of this Resolution**

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72

73 **Appendix A**

74 **Policing**

75 Policing originated to control various “threatening” peoples. In the Southern United States, many
76 police forces were borne out of slave patrols, formed to maintain the institution of slavery. In the
77 Northern states, Indian Constables controlled Native Americans, and in cities, such as St. Louis,
78 Mo., police forces were formed to protect residents specifically from Native Americans.³

79 The racial elements of early police can still be seen today. When stopped by police, a person of
80 color is more likely to have their vehicle searched.⁴ Body camera footage also shows police
81 officers clearly interacting with Black community members differently than their white
82 counterparts.⁵ The rate at which Black people are arrested is higher than white people for both
83 juveniles and adults. Additionally, Black people are five times more likely than white people to
84 be stopped by police without just cause.⁶ The statistics for death by police are alarming as well,
85 as Black and Hispanic people are disproportionately impacted. While white people make up
86 more than 60% of the population, they only make up about 41% of fatal police shootings. Black
87 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>.

88 Police brutality is a well-documented phenomenon. Over the past five years, police officers have
89 killed more than 5,000 people.⁹ These statistics do not include other forms of police brutality in
90 which the victim lives, as these are harder to document. Additionally, police officers have
91 become increasingly militarized, and the number of SWAT and other militarized units has
92 increased. These units use weapons, body armor and vehicles designed for war. As these units
93 grow in numbers, there has been no corresponding increase in officer safety or decrease in
94 crime.¹⁰

95 Ultimately, many issues in policing are rooted in the fact that police in the United States have
96 become overtasked and overburdened. Municipalities look to the police to handle issues of
97 homelessness, mental health crises, food insecurity and addiction.¹¹ These issues are better
98 addressed by increased funding for education,¹² social services, medicine, transportation
99 infrastructure and other public works.¹³

100 **Cash Bail**

101 The cash bail system is one of the most fundamentally unjust tenets of the American legal
102 system. The state charges a cash bail, which is either a standard amount for a particular offense,
103 or an amount adjusted by a judge, trying to guarantee that the defendant will return for their trial
104 or hearing. If they do show up, the bail money is returned; if they don't, it is forfeited to the
105 government. This system creates a divide based on economic status and incarcerates people
106 based on their economic status.¹⁴ Close to 90% of people being held in jails pre-trial are there
107 because they cannot afford to pay the bail.¹⁵ Additionally, being held before sentencing raises the
108 likelihood of being convicted.¹⁶ The idea of cash bail was to avoid people fleeing, but it has
109 become about how much money you have instead of whether or not you will show up to court.¹⁷
110 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>.

111 proven to have committed a crime.¹⁸ Cash bail also disproportionately affects Black, Latinos and
112 Native American people, as they are twice as likely to be held in jail for failing to post bond.¹⁹
113 These same groups also face higher bail rates than white people when charged with similar
114 crimes.²⁰

115 **Legal Counsel and Sentencing**

116 The court system itself is also unjust. Ninety-four percent of prisoners do not stand trial, but
117 instead are pressured into plea deals, forfeiting their chance to be proven innocent or guilty by a
118 jury.²¹ The plea deal has become a way for the legal system to save time and money, at the
119 expense of those being charged. People who have been charged are encouraged to take plea
120 deals, with prosecutors threatening extraordinarily inflated charges if the case is taken to trial.

121 Additionally, mandatory sentencing laws have increased both the number of people incarcerated
122 and the length of their incarceration.²² These include “three strikes” laws, which increase the
123 length of sentence for the third offense, no matter the charge, and mandatory minimum
124 sentencing laws, which force judges to impose certain sentences on specific crimes. Their stated
125 goal was to reduce drug use, but they have generally failed to do so. Instead, these mandatory
126 minimums increase the number of people in jail and are one of the major reasons why the U.S.
127 has the highest incarceration rate in the world.²³

128 The death penalty is another area of problematic and unjust sentencing. Studies show that the
129 death penalty is used in a racially biased way, as a defendant is more likely to be sentenced to
130 death for killing a white person than for killing a non-white person.²⁴ MC USA has already
131 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/>.

132 Finally, a lack of access to legal counsel makes it difficult for those charged with crimes to prove
133 their innocence or fight for a more just sentence.²⁶ Public defenders are overworked, and as a
134 result, many of their clients are unable to receive the attention that they deserve.²⁷

135 **Incarceration**

136 The U.S. system of incarceration has many flaws. One of the most notable is the increasing use
137 of private prisons, which are designed to profit from those serving time. These prisons do not
138 save the government money.²⁸ Instead, they make money for their shareholders and help foster a
139 culture of predatory legal action. Both private prisons and government-run prisons practice
140 numerous inhumane policies.²⁹ Prisoners can be hired out to private companies that contract with
141 the government, and the prisoners are often paid less than a dollar a day.³⁰

142 Additionally, the experience of living in a prison can be incredibly traumatic, and PTSD as a
143 result of incarceration is not uncommon.³¹ Women are especially vulnerable, as they are more
144 likely than men to experience both inmate-on-inmate and staff-on-inmate sexual violence.³²
145 After being released, formerly incarcerated individuals are often excluded from public housing
146 and considered ineligible for many jobs. In some states, they are barred from voting.

147 Incarceration hurts more than the person incarcerated. Eighty percent of women in jail are
148 mothers, and the majority of them are their child's primary caretaker.³³ Visitation policies often
149 discourage visits from families because of the cost of phone or video calls, limited visitation
150 hours and diminished quality of contact.³⁴ In addition, parents often have difficulty regaining
151 custody of children after they are released.³⁵ The effects of incarceration make it difficult for
152 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.

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.



1 Mennonite Church USA

2 Accessibility Resolution

3 (Updated May 21, 2021)

4

5 Introduction:

6

7 The purpose of this resolution is to help all members of Mennonite Church USA (MC USA),
8 including congregations, area conferences, agencies and constituency groups recognize and
9 seek to remove the barriers to belonging in architecture, communications and attitudes that
10 prevent individuals with disabilities from participating in church life; and to bring wholeness to
11 the Body of Christ as those barriers are removed, and all people are fully integrated into the
12 community of faith.

13 *“Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone*
14 *benefits. All kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit and to all kinds of people! The variety is*
15 *wonderful.” 1 Corinthians 12:7, The Message.*

16 Resolution:

17 As members of MC USA, we commit to growing as communities of grace, joy and peace without
18 barriers so that God’s healing and hope flow through all of us to the world regardless of ability.

19 This resolution affirms that people with disabilities are included
20 within priorities expressed in MC USA Journey Forward:

- 21 • Experience and bear witness to the belovedness of all creation, acknowledging that all
22 people are made in the image of God and are children of God.
- 23 • Follow Jesus: In his life and teaching, Jesus emphasized that God’s reign includes all
24 people, especially those who have been marginalized or excluded. As an Anabaptist
25 community of the living word, we will listen carefully to the voices of people with
26 disabilities, to better understand the fullness of God’s love for us and the vision of God’s
27 reign through Jesus Christ.

- 28
- 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.
- 29
- 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.
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35 We, the members, congregations and organizations of MC USA, resolve to deepen our
36 understanding of barriers for people with disabilities, to take action to make our community life
37 and facilities accessible and welcoming to all, and to discern and affirm the gifts of each person
38 for our common good.

39

40 **Anabaptist Disabilities Network in collaboration with Mennonite**
41 **Health Services (MHS) will support MC USA congregations,**
42 **conferences and organizations to remove barriers to belonging for**
43 **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.
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51 **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.
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60 At all levels of the church, we commit to calling out and employing the leadership gifts of people
61 with disabilities.

62

63 Accessibility Resolution: Appendix 1

64 Supplemental Information

65

66 Context

67 Faith communities in the U.S. are exempt from secular mandates in the Americans with
68 Disabilities Act (ADA). As a result, many Mennonite congregations lag behind secular society in
69 making facilities and activities accessible and in integrating those with disabilities into their
70 communities.

71

72 While celebrating the many steps Mennonites have taken to become more accessible to people
73 with disabilities, architectural barriers persist, hindering the participation of persons with mobility
74 challenges. Communication barriers persist, hindering the participation of those with differing
75 visual, intellectual or hearing abilities. Attitudinal barriers persist, reflecting a lack of sensitivity
76 and denying those with differing abilities dignity and access to spiritual nurture, friendship,
77 freedom, membership, baptism, self-expression, service, and leadership equal to and balanced
78 by the rights of others.

79 History

80 In 1983, the General Conference Mennonite Church General Assembly adopted a *Resolution*
81 *Regarding Caring Community*, which pledged to continue to pay special attention to the needs
82 of those with physical, emotional, and sensory disabilities, and to break down the barriers that
83 have hindered their participation.

84 We interpret the 1995 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* to include all people,
85 including those with disabilities:

- 86 • At Pentecost, God began to pour out the Spirit on all flesh and by the gifts of the Holy
87 Spirit, all Christians are called to carry out their particular ministries (Article 3).
- 88 • God has created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, creating human
89 beings in the divine image (Articles 5 and 6).
- 90 • All believers have been baptized in one Spirit into the one body of Christ, and the
91 varieties of gifts and ministries in the church are all given for the common good (Article
92 9).
- 93 • The church's mission is to reconcile differing groups, creating one new humanity. The
94 church is called to witness to people of every culture, ethnicity, or nationality (Article 10).

95

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.

DELEGATE ASSEMBLY 2022



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.

DELEGATE ASSEMBLY 2022



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.



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



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