



Conference Minister's Report 2025

"God's purpose is now to show the rulers and powers in the heavens the many different varieties of God's wisdom through the church." (Ephesians 3:10 CEB)

Listen! Wisdom is calling. This theme we have used over the past two years seems especially timely. "The heavens" are centers of power, authority, influence, and control. The "wisdom" of these powers is often in direct opposition to the wisdom of God through Christ. Some of the ways Central District Conference congregations are showing God's various forms of wisdom include:

- Giving time, gifts, resources, and energy to creative worship of God. We know our God. It is God alone who receives our acts of worship.
- Following the peaceful way of Christ Jesus. We are following Jesus into homeless shelters, to the seats of power in our cities and country, to the bedsides of loved ones ill or dying, to the spaces where immigrants huddle, to communities of refuge and hope.
- Walking with and supporting emerging communities of faith. We continue to build relationships with new faith communities who are searching for a Gospel of peace rooted in hospitality, and committed to loving God, neighbor, and self.
- Calling Anabaptist pastoral leaders who are "wise, dynamic, and compassionate." (See our CDC mission statement.) And providing leaders with resources for continuing growth toward wisdom.
- Sharing stories of healing and hope. These stories are shared during monthly pastor peer gatherings, through our *CDC Connector* newsletter, during Mid-Year Gatherings and at Annual Meeting.
- Practicing spiritual disciplines that tune our hearts, souls, minds, and bodies to God.
- What is an additional way you are witnessing God's wisdom in your life and community?

This is a year of celebration for 500 years of Anabaptist witness. In a presentation on the AMBS campus in February, John Roth invited us to consider the difference between understanding Anabaptism as primarily a "restoration movement" or a "renewal movement." I wonder if Wisdom can help guide us toward an understanding of what it means to bear witness to God's love as Anabaptists and Mennonites today.

Matt Prichard initiated a conversation with various leaders across the denomination to reflect on how we talk about, train for, experiment with, and engage in renewal among our churches. How is Wisdom calling us individually and as congregations to open ourselves to the creative and transformative Spirit of God? In a world that is, as Psalm 46 suggests, "changing, shaking, and roaring," how do we embrace hope and let go of fear? Who are the voices that call us to renewal? What are the actions that lead us to renewal? How is the Spirit cultivating in us an openness to renewal?

I am so grateful for the sharing of resources that happens across the conference. Not only are we likely to exceed our CDC proposed income, we have successfully completed the \$350,000 *Tending Transformation Campaign*. This has supported Matt Prichard's position over the past 30 months, provided emerging churches with grants, supported ongoing pastoral education, and provided missional ministry resources for congregations and individuals.

The CDC Board is committed to continuing the position of Associate Pastor for Emerging Communities of Faith (Matt's position). This requires additional contributions from individuals of roughly \$40,000 and from congregations of \$10,000-\$15,000. Together, I am confident that we can stretch ourselves towards the mission and ministry to which our conference and churches are called.