



Healing

"I think this is what you're looking for!" Liann's friend proclaimed as she forwarded an email from Moveable Feast, an emerging faith community in Central District Conference pastored by Celeste Kennel-Shank.

Liann's journey to Moveable Feast was driven by a deep longing for a church that embodied peacemaking, justice, and true inclusivity. This desire stood in stark contrast to the "barriers for gender and sexuality" she and her husband had encountered in

Continued on Page 8



A Message from Doug Luginbill Conference Minister

Dear CDC Delegates and Annual Meeting Participants,

Thank you for your participation in worship, fellowship, and discernment. One decision that we always make at Annual Meeting is the approval of a spending plan. Next year's spending plan represents a 10% increase from our 2025-2026 spending plan. Much of this increase is due to including the Associate Conference Minister's expenses in the spending plan. For the last three years, this has been covered by the *Tending Transformation Campaign*.

In December of 2021 the CDC Board initiated a three-year, \$350,000 *Tending Transformation Campaign* that focused on the following four goals:

- ✧ Support a part-time Associate Conference Minister to resource emerging communities of faith
- ✧ Develop a Grant Program to support emerging communities of faith
- ✧ Provide clergy development grants and seminary scholarships for current and future pastors
- ✧ Provide support for a Missional Activities Fund.

As of May 22, we have received \$345,000 with an additional \$6,500 in outstanding pledges. We are grateful for the generosity of over 100 donors that made this possible!

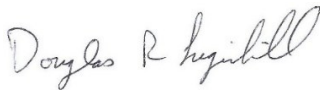
In January of 2023, Matt Prichard began as our Associate Conference Minister. Matt and our Missional Church Committee have provided excellent leadership to two emerging communities of faith; Moveable Feast, Chicago, IL and The Intention Church, a completely online congregation. Matt has also been an excellent support to some of our newer congregations and congregations who are seeking renewal or revitalization.

Matt's ministry and the work of the Missional Church Committee are helping us meet our overall mission as a conference including "Supporting missional partnerships that make God's reign visible and fostering ministries of evangelism, peace, healing, and hope."

The CDC Board is committed to continuing the Associate Conference Minister position into the future. **Through a slight increase in requests from congregations and increasing our individual contributions from \$50,000 to \$66,000 (a 32% increase), we believe we can fund this position through our annual Spending Plan.**

Enclosed is an outline of a strategy that will help us meet our Spending Plan. Please consider being one of our supporters that will help us reach our Spending Plan goal. Gifts can be made online at www.mcusacdc.org or send checks payable to Central District Conference to Central District Conference, PO Box 1199, Goshen, IN 46527-1199.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Douglas R. Luginbill".

Doug Luginbill for the CDC Board of Directors

P.S. See the enclosed stories from members of emerging congregations to learn how they are experiencing faith in these new communities.



Authentic Self

Jessica is what you might call chronically online. Years ago, Jessica stumbled upon Trey Ferguson on twitter. His continual refrain “love is committed to wholeness” resonated with her. Her journey to finding a spiritual home had been marked by experiences of exclusion and the need to hide parts of herself. She was excited to learn that Trey was launching The Intention Church and that she could be a part of it.

Trey serves as pastor of The Intention Church, an online peace church community that’s part of Central District Conference. Jessica joined this congregation at its very beginning last fall. What she found was a deeply accepting space, the kind of community she had desperately needed, where she could be her authentic self without fear of judgment. The Intention Church distinguishes itself by embracing diversity in all its forms, celebrating LGBTQ+ individuals, and prioritizing open and honest dialogue. This commitment creates a profound sense of safety and belonging, welcoming people from a variety of church backgrounds who share a passion for peacemaking and justice in the world. Within this

community, made up of people gathered from across the globe, vulnerability is met with compassion, questions are encouraged, and both joys and sorrows are shared openly. At The Intention Church "I haven't had to fracture any parts of my identity," Jessica reflected. She has finally discovered a place where she feels genuinely seen, heard, and valued, a community built on authenticity, connection, and shared purpose.

This transformative experience is made possible by the generosity of people throughout Central District Conference. Your support directly enables The Intention Church to create and sustain this vital online space – a space where individuals like Jessica, and many others, discover a community that not only accepts them but also actively works towards a more just and peaceful world.

An Ode to the Peeps at Intention

by Jessica Chung

I.

I have felt my being
crack and fracture,
tucking away the parts of myself
the people who swore to love me
would sneer at,
would condemn,
would simply not understand.

I Hokey Pokey-ed my way
through these groups,
one foot in and back out again.
My head was on a swivel 'til
I turned around and never came back.

II.

I found people who
moved and breathed with intention,
who knew how to repair and joke
in equal measure.
I arrived with my whole self,
every part of my identity intact,
not splintered.

My feet have stilled.
There is rest here in this company
of grievors and dreamers.
I look at this bunch
and don't turn away.



In the Thick of Things

Ted was raised in the Mennonite tradition and took a meandering path through different Christian traditions before finding a home at Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship. Over time, he grew uneasy with certain elements in the evangelical and charismatic circles he'd experienced, such as the celebration of nationalism and justification of war. He also wrestled with how specific scriptures applied to the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals.

When he began connecting to Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship, they provided a counter-narrative to Ted's previous experiences, modeling a serious commitment to justice, peace, and following Jesus. The fellowship's environment encouraged Ted to fully embrace inclusion and to actively engage in addressing social issues. The authenticity and vulnerability of the community fostered a deep sense of connection and mutual respect. Ted is deeply appreciative of the leadership of Alaina Dobkowski and Susan Kragt.

Now Ted feels deeply connected to the fellowship and expresses that "Christ is more present in my life in our gatherings than

Continued on Page 9



Missing Connection

Ben grew up in the Mennonite tradition, with his mother's side of the family deeply rooted in the Mennonite church in places like Kansas and Idaho. However, he became disconnected from the church when he moved to Michigan. Despite his grandmother's efforts to reconnect him by sharing an article about Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship, Ben didn't initially engage.

Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship became an agent of change in Ben's life when attending his grandmother's funeral inspired him to seek out a faith-based community. Witnessing the strong community come together for the funeral made him miss that connection in his own life. This longing prompted him to visit Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship, where he soon began to connect with others.

Since February 2024, Ben has been regularly attending the fellowship. He values plugging back into a community with connections to MC USA and Anabaptism. Ben is also actively involved in developing the children's ministry, which is important to him. He finds it meaningful to express faith through deeds,

Continued on Page 9

Healing *Continued from Page 1*

many churches and in college. They yearned for a space where their children could witness an authentic representation of Jesus's boundless love and acceptance.

Before finding Moveable Feast, their search for a church in Chicago was characterized by uncertainty and a struggle to identify a community that aligned with their evolving understanding of faith. They visited 12 churches in their search without success. The accumulated hurt from past church experiences, including the sting of power abuse, cast a long shadow, making the prospect of finding a truly safe and welcoming space feel daunting.

Since joining Moveable Feast less than a year ago, Liann and her family have experienced firsthand the transformative power of a truly inclusive community. The focus on shared purpose – to love their neighbors and make a tangible difference for the marginalized – has provided a sense of belonging and purpose that was previously missing. Moveable Feast's emphasis on a co-created community, where everyone has a voice, has resonated deeply with their desire to move beyond hierarchical structures and experience an authentic, lived-out faith. The community's embrace of interfaith connections has further fostered a sense of expansive welcome. In Liann's words, the experience has been "really transformative" and "really healing," bringing her to tears of gratitude.

Your partnership with the Central District Conference directly fuels Moveable Feast's ability to cultivate this vibrant faith and vital authenticity. You make it possible for communities like Moveable Feast to embody the radical love of Jesus, offering healing and a true sense of belonging.

In the Thick of Things *Continued from Page 6*

any other time in my life." He is grateful for the GRMF's emphasis on Scripture, their willingness to grapple with hard questions, and the support he has found for his desire to follow Christ. Ted feels at home among the people of GRMF who are "out in the thick of things," working towards justice and caring for the marginalized.

Thank you for your commitment to emerging communities of faith in Central District Conference. Your support enables Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship to be a thriving space of intergenerational connection and vibrant community, which was crucial in Ted's journey of faith and transformation.



Missing Connection *Continued from Page 7*

showing love, and engaging in pacifism, especially in the current climate.

Your support of CDC has enabled Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship to become a place where people like Ben can easily connect, get involved, and reclaim their connection to Anabaptism. Thank you!

More about some of CDC's Emerging Communities Faith...

Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship grandrapidsmennonite.org is an intergenerational Jesus-centered community committed to peacemaking and doing life together; we seek to be a place where all people experience God's justice, peace and joy.



PEACE Mennonite Fellowship peacemennonitefellowship.com

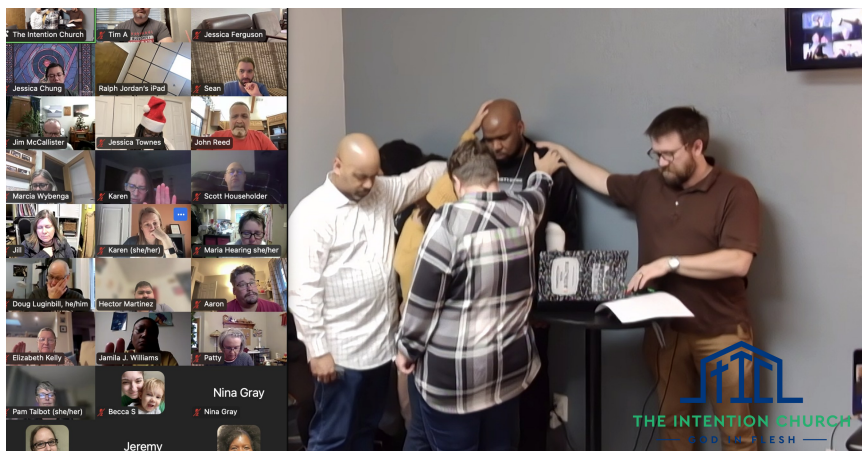
is an Anabaptist Christian community where its diverse body of believers share the commitment to follow Jesus, allow the Holy Spirit to change our heart and actions, and proclaim God's peace; we strive to offer a safe space for all people to come as they are, where relationships are valued, and where love guides our life together.



Imagine Cincinnati imaginecincinnati.org
hosts spaces for parents, caregivers & kids
to experience wonder, ask the big questions,
connect with nature, and find belonging.



The Intention Church theintentionchurch.com is a (mostly digital) gathering of believers committed to following the narrow way of Jesus through humility, justice seeking, peacemaking, and embodying love.



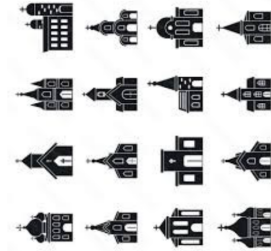
Moveable Feast, Chicago, gathers people for reflection, renewal, and community building to sustain us in the work on justice and peacemaking. moveablefeastcommunity.org





More Stories
from CDC's
Emerging
Communities.

Many Gifts will fulfill the mission of the *Central District Conference*.

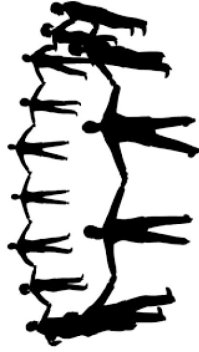


24-25 Church Contributions needed- \$245,000
25-26 Church Contributions needed- \$285,000

\$7,500

\$5,000

\$5,000



\$2,500

\$2,500

\$2,500

\$2,500

24-25 Individual Contributions needed- \$50,000
25-26 Individual Contributions needed- \$66,000

\$1,500 \$1,500 \$1,500 \$1,500 \$1,500 \$1,500

\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------

\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500
\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500

\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100
\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100



Donate
Today.

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