

## CDC Listening Committee Notes

👂 👂 👂 👂 Success for our group was described as keeping it brief. So, while our listening has been deep and robust, our report will hopefully be tidy and brief. Although I will say, in deference of past listening committees, this task is daunting. We heard a lot, and we divided our report into three threads that we noticed over the weekend. Each of us will speak about one of those threads' wisdom, gratitude and community.

- **Thread: Discerning wisdom from within and without**

The first thread is the work of discerning wisdom – wisdom from within, and wisdom from without.

At our opening worship on Thursday night, Perry Bush reminded us that being an Anabaptist is, and always has been, the work of spiritual discernment. He asked us what walls enforce our identity, and what walls come down – by choice or by force of culture?

He pointed at our “ugly failures” of cultural accommodation: to the false wisdom of racism, patriarchy, and homophobia. And highlighted how profoundly we’ve been shaped by an identity grounded in God’s peace and justice, and in serving each other and the world.

Stories from Assembly and Columbus Mennonite reminded us of the twin tasks of right remembering and coming restoration: telling the truth about a society that is organized around White Supremacy and taking prophetic action to return stolen wages and stolen land.

We reflected on the need for wisdom in organizational leadership. MC USA’s Prevention and Accountability Resource sets a new tone for how we exercise our collective power, and how we hold each other accountable to it. *This is important work that helps “to create an ecosystem where it is less likely that abuse will happen” Few of us may read those 86 pages, but we all benefit from a denomination that is trying to do better in instances of pastoral misconduct and abuse.*

We were reminded that our best wisdom comes both from within and without. It comes from within us and within an Anabaptist tradition that is both half a millennium old yet still “new every morning.”

And it comes from without – from beautiful mashups of faith and cultural expression like the Mennonite Women’s musical last night.

And from Camp Friedenswald and a Wild Church gathering at the Bluffton Nature Preserve inviting us to set aside our phones and listen to the sacred wisdom of the trees.

And as we heard on Thursday night, sometimes a Leonard Cohen song about sex can be the best teacher of our spiritual calling as followers of Jesus.

- **Thread: gratitude**

- For Story. Our session began with a story of our 16th century radicals who set the tone for our movement.
- For financial generosity, the success of the Tending Transformation and Friedenswald Capital Campaigns.
- For hearing the stories of congregations that have dreamed of finding a home in CDC: Knoxville, Peace Mennonite and engaging with other emerging congregations.
- For new pathways to ministry, like the Journey Program and the stories of call we have celebrated.
- For Doug, who is a steady, patient, accessible, thoughtful, faithful, and skilled leader.
- For a word cloud sermon that emerges from the priesthood of all believers and many shared values.
- For the hospitality of Bluffton University, and the leadership of several congregations: Grace, First Mennonite, Lima, Jubilee, Cincinnati, and Peace who led worship. Carrie Mast and Georgia Metz who tended to the fun and care of the 13 kids who were present, who scavenged things from the displays, went treasure hunting, created murals and learned prayer practices.
- For Emma, who does all the work to build this event and make sure that it runs smoothly and in general keeps CDC in order. And for Sarah, our master communicator who has captured our moments in photographs and will represent this gathering well for the rest of CDC in the Connector.

- **Thread: Grounded in a Christ centered community**

- We were appreciative of the regular Centering practices led by Jeff Boehr “which grounded our work and worship in the presence of the fullness of God with us and in us.” In a weekend that is full of words, these practices gave us spaces to be aware of the spirit moving in us and all around us. As well as the musicians and music leaders who helped us to sing our theology and enter into times of worship.
- Not the spiciest conference but we are comfortable with each other and happy to be around each other. Around 145 of us gathered. And all 145 had edits to the bios in the Slate that we joyfully and unanimously approved. Thank you to those of you who said yes to those positions.
- At an informal gathering at Phil’s house, pastors watched the sun set and the fireflies come out. This conference has pastors who genuinely enjoy being together even when they don’t have to.
- From Melissa we heard that the church’s prophetic task is to tell the truth about the world: to stand against war, greed, resolution copper, genocide. May we be empowered in this work and encourage each other. And we place our trust in the one who does not abandon us and pour out life-giving spirit on us all.

- When we come together, we are strengthened to go back to our congregations, dreaming new dreams of tacos, peace, those delicious Bluffton monster cookies, and this broader community of faith that carries on the work of our Anabaptist ancestors, discerning together the future we create together.