

2026

REPORT BOOK
of the

Central District Conference
of
Mennonite Church USA



Take Courage!

June 25-27, 2026

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:

Brian Bolton (Shalom Mennonite Congregation)
Brian Kilheffer (Americus Mennonite Fellowship)
Ben Kreider (Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship)
Pat McFarren (Knoxville Mennonite Church)
David Rensberger (Atlanta Mennonite Church)
James Rissler (Atlanta Mennonite Church)
Rosene Rohrer (Raleigh Mennonite Church)

A big thanks to Levi Clymer and his staff, Eastern Mennonite University, 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 Coordinators

Kaitlyn Mendenhall (Shalom Mennonite Congregation)
Katie Corbit (Shalom Mennonite Congregation)

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 assistance, visit the registration/information table located in the Campus Center. 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.
- * Offerings: You may donate online or by check. Please make checks payable to Central District Conference and designate where you would like the money to go in the memo line.
 - **Giving Back to the Community - Thursday evening worship
 - **Central District Conference - Friday morning worship
 - **Rise Up! Take Courage! Mutual Aid Fund - Friday afternoon worship
- * 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 Harrisonburg 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

Choose the EMU guest network. You will be prompted to create an account. The account will last for a week.

Displays During the Annual Meeting

Anabaptist Disabilities Network
Anabaptist Mennonite Seminary (AMBS)
Bluffton University (BU)
Eastern Mennonite University/Seminary (EMU)
Everence
Goshen College (GC)
Journey
Mennonite Central Committee(MCC)
Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS)
Mennonite Mission Network (MMN)
MennoPin
Water Crisis in Bangladesh

Thanks to all these folks for sharing their time with us. The displays are located around the perimeter of the delegate hall.

CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE
June 25-27, 2026
Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia
Rise Up! Take Courage!

Thursday, June 25

Worship services are open to everyone! You don't need to be registered for the annual meeting to attend.

- 2:00 pm Registration
3:00 – 4:30p Pre-conference seminar: Body Wisdom – Rise Up! Take Courage! – Karla Minter and John Glick
5:00-6:45p Pastor Appreciation Dinner

7:30 pm WORSHIP I: Martin Chapel
 Speaker: Shannon Dycus
 Offering: Giving Back to the Community

9:00 pm Ice Cream Social

Friday, June 26

- 8:30 am *Delegate Session I* Campus Center
 Song
 Welcome from EMU
 Getting acquainted around tables
 State of the Conference Address
 Centering
 Congregational Story: St Louis Mennonite Fellowship
 Introduction of Resolutions and Listening Committees, and Parliamentarian
 Summary Review of 2025 Annual Meeting Minutes
 ACTION: 2025 Annual Meeting Minutes
 Treasurer's Report/Presentation of 2026-2027 Proposed Spending Plan
 Presentation of Gifts Discernment Committee and Slate
 ACTION: 2026-2027 Slate
 Commissioning Prayer: Incoming and continuing committee members

9:45 - 10:15 am Break/Snacks

- 10:15 am
 Song/Centering
 Camp Friedenswald Report
 Affirmation (vote) of Knoxville Mennonite Church for membership
 Confession of Faith Article 19 Table Discussion
 Introduction of Guests
 Announcements

11:45 am Lunch

1:30 pm WORSHIP II: Martin Chapel
Speaker: Cesar Moya
Offering: Central District Conference

2:45 pm Break

3:15 pm *Delegate Session II* Campus Center

Song/Centering

Announcement of Membership Vote/Presentation of Blessing Cup

Congregational Story: Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship

Associate Conference Minister Evaluation

3:45 pm Seminars/Activities

3:45 – 5:30 pm

Jubilee Climate Farm led by Krista Ehsta: This seminar will be off campus

3:45 pm

Seminar Session 1

*One Town's Response to ICE - Stories from Harrisonburg

*Called to solidarity with our Palestinian Siblings – Lydia Brenneman and Barry Johnson

*An Ounce of Prevention – Kristin Sancken

*Confessional Bible Study – Alaina Dobkowski

*Courage to Confront Shame – Janeen Bertsche Johnson

*Our Whole Lives – Phil Yoder and Moriah Hurst

4:35 pm Break

4:45 pm

Seminar Session 2

*One Town's Response to ICE - Stories from Harrisonburg

*Called to solidarity with our Palestinian Siblings – Lydia Brenneman and Barry Johnson

*An Ounce of Prevention – Kristin Sancken

*Confessional Bible Study – Alaina Dobkowski

*Taking Courage in Breaking Down: A Job-inspired ecotheology for death & dying
– Valerie Showalter

*Our Work to Do: Embodiment Practice in the Service of Anti-Racist Solidarity –
Amanda Gross

6:00 pm

Dinner on campus or on your own

A list of area restaurants is available (in delegate packets and at the registration table)

7:00 pm

Free Time – Opportunity for informal get-togethers

Saturday, June 27

8:30 - 9:45 am

WORSHIP III: Martin Chapel

Speaker: Daryl Byler

Offering: Rise Up! Take Courage! Mutual Aid Fund

Communion

9:45 am Break

10:15 am *Delegate Session III* Campus Center

Song/Centering

Resolution: Response to Ongoing Suffering in Palestine

ACTION

Missional Church Committee

Ministerial Committee

11:15 am

Song/Centering

2026-2027 Spending Plan

ACTION

Open Mic

Listening Committee Report

Evaluations/Committee Nominations

Close of Delegate Sessions

11:50a

Songs/Benediction

12:00 pm

Close of Annual Meeting

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.

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Central District Conference

SUGGESTIONS FOR CDC LEADERSHIP POSITIONS



SCAN ME

Name _____ Congregation _____
Phone _____ Email _____

We value your input and are asking for suggestions to the Central District Conference Gifts Discernment Committee of others' names as well as your own interests and gifts that will benefit the entire conference. You may either fill out this form today, online at <https://mcusacdc.org/cdc-leadership-positions-form/> (scan qr code) or send suggestions to office@mcusacdc.org any time. Job descriptions of all conference positions and a list of persons serving currently can be found on the website at www.mcusacdc.org/. Nominees will be discerned and persons contacted by the Gifts Discernment Committee. **Please include contact information, email, and congregation the person attends.**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Name _____
Congregation _____
Phone _____
Email _____
Gifts I/this person would bring to this position _____

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE

Name _____
Congregation _____
Phone _____
Email _____
Gifts I/this person would bring to this position _____

BLUFFTON UNIVERSITY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Name _____
Congregation _____
Phone _____
Email _____
Gifts I/this person would bring to this position _____

MISSIONAL CHURCH COMMITTEE

Name _____
Congregation _____
Phone _____
Email _____
Gifts I/this person would bring to this position _____

CAMP FRIEDENSWALD BOARD

Name _____
Congregation _____
Phone _____
Email _____
Gifts I/this person would bring to this position _____

GIFTS DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE

Name _____
Congregation _____
Phone _____
Email _____
Gifts I/this person would bring to this position _____



Welcome to the delegates from the CDC Board President

Here is something no Central District Conference Board President has ever said: Welcome to Harrisonburg, Virginia for our Annual Meeting. It's the 70th year delegates have gathered, our first time here. CDC is a growing conference, and sometimes that growth looks like visiting with each other in new locations.

I've always appreciated one of the main metaphors CDC uses for how we relate: A family of adult siblings. That works on the delegate level – we each have wisdom from the particularities of our own faith journeys to share. And it works on the congregational level – we each have our own places but have much to learn from one another in how we grow into a fuller manifestation of Christ among us. CDC is chosen family, and Annual Meeting is a reunion of sorts, even if you're a first timer discovering siblings you didn't know you had.

The board is tasked with managing the affairs and guiding the vision of the conference/family. In March we convened the midyear gathering over Zoom where we heard congregational stories and considered our relationships with our Confession of Faith's Article 19 which speaks to family, singleness, and sexuality. When the Board last met face to face, in April, we received a Power and Authority Training that challenged us in all areas of life to recognize power and use it in a way that empowers one another.

We have a gifted staff, and it's been a significant year for these leaders. Doug Luginbill had a three-month sabbatical over the winter and transitioned to 80% time. We gathered conference-wide feedback to mark Matt Pritchard's three years serving as Minister of Emerging Communities. Sarah Werner initiated lunch-and-learns which bring us together around a topic of interest concerning church life. We welcomed Kristin Sancken to strengthen our commitments to church safety. And Emma has administered us through another full year.

Back in August of last year the board, staff, and committee chairs had a retreat to discern the conference theme for the upcoming years. There was a shared sense of being in a time calling for bold faith and action. "Rise Up! Take Courage!" emerged as the guiding call, which we'll be hearing about over the course of this Annual Meeting.

We're glad you're here. We hope you make some new sibling connections and rekindle old ones. We hope you learn something you'll tell your congregation. We hope you feel emboldened by the Spirit of Christ who calls us to rise up and take courage.

Joel Miller

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 on the 2025 delegate report form or the 2024 conference directory)

<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 https://www.facebook.com/AmericusMennoniteFellowship</p>	<p>*Ann Arbor Mennonite Church (10) 734.996.9198 <i>Chima Ozor, Contact Person</i> dr.chima.ozor@gmail.com meets in homes Mail to: 1455 Kelly Green Dr, Ann Arbor, MI 48103</p>
<p>Assembly Mennonite Church (190) 574.534.4190 <i>Karl Shelly, Pastor</i> karlss@assemblymennonite.org <i>Anna Yoder Schlabach, Pastor</i> annays@assemblymennonite.org <i>Scott Coulter, Pastor</i> scottc@assemblymennonite.org <i>Moriah Hurst, Pastor</i> moriahjh@assemblymennonite.org 727 New York St, Goshen, IN 46526 office@assemblymennonite.org http://assemblymennonite.org</p>	<p>Atlanta Mennonite Church (25) 404.590.1344 <i>James Rissler, Pastor</i> jamesrissler@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 (40) 919-357-5496 chmf@chapelhillmennonite.org <i>Ben Krieder, Pastor</i> ben@chapelhillmennonite.org <i>Catherine Lee, Children and Youth Pastor,</i> catherine@chapelhillmennonite.org 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 https://chapelhillmennonite.org/ https://www.facebook.com/ChapelHillMennonite/</p>	<p>Chicago Community Mennonite Church (87) 773.343.4251 <i>Tim Peebles, Pastor</i> tjpeebles@gmail.com meets at First Church of the Brethren, 425 S Central Park Blvd, Chicago, IL 60624 http://www.ccmcil.org</p>
<p>Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship (70) 513.871.0035 <i>Brian Moll, Pastor</i> brianmoll@cincinnati-mennonite.org 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 (183) 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 (14) 708.333.1358 16200 S Kedzie Ave, Markham, IL 60428 cmc-markham@sbcglobal.net www.communitymennonite.us</p>	<p>Covenant Mennonite Fellowship (99) 941.366.3545 <i>Stan Shantz, Interim Pastor</i> sshantz55@gmail.com 5420 Ashton Rd, Sarasota, FL 34233 covenantmennonite@gmail.com www.covenantmennonite.com https://www.facebook.com/mennonites</p>

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<p>Assembly Mennonite Church (190) 574.534.4190 <i>Karl Shelly, Pastor</i> karlss@assemblymennonite.org <i>Anna Yoder Schlabach, Pastor</i> annays@assemblymennonite.org <i>Scott Coulter, Pastor</i> scottc@assemblymennonite.org <i>Moriah Hurst, Pastor</i> moriahjh@assemblymennonite.org 727 New York St, Goshen, IN 46526 office@assemblymennonite.org http://assemblymennonite.org</p>	<p>Atlanta Mennonite Church (25) 404.590.1344 <i>James Rissler, Pastor</i> jamesrissler@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 (40) 919-357-5496 chmf@chapelhillmennonite.org <i>Ben Krieder, Pastor</i> ben@chapelhillmennonite.org <i>Catherine Lee, Children and Youth Pastor,</i> catherine@chapelhillmennonite.org 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 https://chapelhillmennonite.org/ https://www.facebook.com/ChapelHillMennonite/</p>	<p>Chicago Community Mennonite Church (87) 773.343.4251 <i>Tim Peebles, Pastor</i> tjpeebles@gmail.com meets at First Church of the Brethren, 425 S Central Park Blvd, Chicago, IL 60624 http://www.ccmcil.org</p>
<p>City Peace Church (65) 513.871.0035 (formerly Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship) <i>Brian Moll, Pastor</i> brian@citypeacechurch.org 4229 Brownway Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45209 office@citypeacechurch.org Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/CMFPeace/ website: https://citypeacechurch.churchcenter.com/home</p>	<p>Columbus Mennonite Church (183) 614.784.9002 <i>Joel Miller, Pastor</i> joel@columbusmennonite.org <i>Mark Rupp, Pastor of Christian Formation</i> mark@columbusmennonite.org <i>Robin Walton, Pastor of Congregational Care</i> rwwalton55@gmail.com 35 Oakland Park Ave, Columbus, OH 43214 office@columbusmennonite.org www.columbusmennonite.org</p>
<p>**Community Mennonite Church (14) 708.333.1358 16200 S Kedzie Ave, Markham, IL 60428 <i>Bob Johnson, contact person</i> connbobjohnson@gmail.com www.communitymennonite.us</p>	<p>Covenant Mennonite Fellowship (120) 941.366.3545 <i>Stan Shantz, Pastor</i> sshantz55@gmail.com 5420 Ashton Rd, Sarasota, FL 34233 covenantmennonite@gmail.com www.covenantmennonite.com https://www.facebook.com/mennonites</p>

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<p>Faith Mennonite Church (80) 574.533.6622 <i>Mariah Martin, Pastor</i> <i>pastormariahmartin@gmail.com</i> <i>Julia Schmidt, Pastor</i> <i>julias.nicole@gmail.com</i> 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>	<p>First Mennonite Church (272) 419.358.5766 <i>Phil Yoder, Pastor</i> <i>phil@fmcbluffton.org</i> <i>Carrie Mast, Associate Pastor</i> <i>masc@bluffton.edu</i> 101 S Jackson St, Bluffton, OH 45817 fmc@fmcbluffton.org http://www.fmcbluffton.org</p>
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<p>**First Mennonite Church (149) 217.367.5353 <i>Michael Crosby, Pastor</i> <i>michael.crosby@fmc-cu.org</i> 902 W Springfield Ave, Urbana, IL 61801 office@fmc-cu.org www.fmc-cu.org</p>	<p>First Mennonite Church (63) 330.334.1863 <i>Jan Croyle, Pastor</i> <i>jancroyle2@gmail.com</i> 405 Trease Rd, Wadsworth, OH 44281 fmcwadsworth@gmail.com www.firstmennonite.com</p>
<p>****Florence Church of the Brethren-Mennonite (34) 574-238-0893 <i>David Shenk, Pastor</i> <i>pastor@miflorence.org</i> 17975 Centreville-Constantine Rd, Constantine, MI 49042</p>	<p>Grace Mennonite Church (127) 419.384.3038 <i>Matthew Yoder, Pastor</i> <i>pastor@gracepandora.org</i> 502 W Main St, PO Box 387, Pandora, OH 45877 office@gracepandora.org www.gracepandora.org https://www.facebook.com/gracemennonitepandora</p>

<p>Grand Rapids Mennonite Church (25) . . 616 729 4882 hello@grandrapidsmennonite.org <i>Alaina Dobkowski, Pastor</i> <i>alaina.dobkowski@gmail.com</i> 1343 Buffalo Ave NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505 Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/p/Grand-Rapids-Mennonite-Fellowship-61567198792425/</p>	<p>Hively Avenue Mennonite Church (100) 574.294.3423 <i>Conrad Mast, Pastor</i> <i>cmast@hivelymennonite.org</i> <i>Pratik Bagh, Pastor</i> <i>pbagh@hivelymennonite.org</i> 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> <i>pmaclin@ci.peoria.il.us</i> 2918 W Montana, Peoria, IL 61605 Website: https://www.joyfellowshippmennonitechurch.org/</p>	<p>Jubilee Mennonite Church (22) 937-592-8101 <i>Carolyn May, Pastor</i> <i>carolyn.may3@gmail.com</i> Meets at 820 W Sandusky Ave, Bellefontaine, OH 43311 Mail to: PO Box 302, Bellefontaine, OH 43311 office@jubileemennonite.com https://www.jubileemennonite.com/</p>
<p>Keller Park Church (31) 574-233-7901 <i>Tim Stair, Interim Pastor</i> <i>stair.tim@gmail.com</i> 1003 W Bryan St, South Bend, IN 46616 kellerparkchurch@gmail.com FB: facebook.com/kellerparkchurch</p>	<p>Lima Mennonite Church (40) 419.222.2120 <i>Jeff Boehr, Pastor</i> <i>jefeboehr@gmail.com</i> 1318 N Main St, Lima, OH 45801 limamc1318@gmail.com www.facebook.com/limamennonite</p>
<p>Madison Mennonite Church (150) 608.276.7680 <i>Valerie Showalter, Pastor</i> <i>pastor@madison-mennonite.org</i> 1501 Gilbert Rd, PO Box 44522, Madison, WI 53711 Mail to: PO Box 44522, Madison, WI 53744 www.madison-mennonite.org</p>	<p>Maplewood Mennonite Church (47) 260.485.8512 <i>In Pastoral Search Process</i> 4129 Maplecrest Rd, Fort Wayne, IN 46815 maplemenno@gmail.com</p>
<p>Mennonite Church of Normal (289) 309.452.6622 <i>Kevin Chupp, Pastor</i> <i>kevin@normalmennonite.org</i> <i>Lauren Satchwell, Pastor</i> <i>satchwell.lauren@gmail.com</i> 805 S Cottage Ave, Normal, IL 61761 church@normalmennonite.org www.normalmennonite.com</p>	<p>Milwaukee Mennonite Church (24) 414.232.8823 <i>Peter Eash-Scott, Contact Person</i> <i>eashscott@gmail.com</i> meets at Martin Luther Lutheran Church, 9235 Bluemound Rd, Milwaukee, WI 53226 www.milwaukeeemennonite.org</p>
<p>*Morning Star Church (20) 765.287.0021 <i>Gladys Maina, Pastor</i> <i>Simon Mungai, Pastor</i> <i>maina.mungai@gmail.com</i> Meets at 1923 S Hoyt Ave, Muncie, IN 47302 Mail to: PO Box 3505, Muncie, IN 47302</p>	<p>North Danvers Mennonite Church (151). 309.963.4554 <i>Brian Johnson, Pastor</i> <i>brian.johnson67@gmail.com</i> 5517E 1950 North Rd, Danvers, IL 61732 northdanversch@gmail.com www.northdanverschurch.com</p>
<p>***Oak Grove Mennonite Church (291) 330.669.2697 <i>Seth Miller, Pastor</i> 7843 Smucker Rd, Smithville, OH 44677 office@oakgrovemc.org www.oakgrovemc.org</p>	<p>Open Table Mennonite Fellowship (18) 574.534.1537 <i>Karla Minter, Pastor/doula</i> <i>karlaminter@outlook.com</i> meets at 413 S 7th St, Goshen, IN 46526 Mail to: 20111 Regina Rd, New Paris, IN 46553 http://www.opentablemennonite.org/</p>

<p>Paoli Mennonite Fellowship (63) 812.723.2414 <i>Paul Brubaker, Pastor paul.brubaker.lm@gmail.com</i> 2589 N County Road 100 W, Paoli, IN 47454 mennos.paoli@gmail.com</p>	<p>Raleigh Mennonite Church (70) 919. 833.1182 <i>Trey Ferguson, Pastor trey@pastortrey05.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 trevor.bechtelt@gmail.com</i> <i>Jodie Boyer Hatlem jo@shalomcc.org</i> 2685 Packard St, Ann Arbor, MI 48104 pastors@shalomcc.org www.shalomcc.org</p>	<p>Shalom Mennonite Congregation (155) 540.432.1659 <i>Brian Bolton, Pastor 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 (150) 574.533.1922 <i>Clayton Gladish, Pastor clayton@silverwoodmc.org</i> <i>Dennis Miller, Pastor dennis@silverwoodmc.org</i> <i>Janice Troyer, Pastor janice@silverwoodmc.org</i> <i>Aimee Weishaupt, Pastor aimee@silverwoodmc.org</i> <i>Jon Weishaupt, Pastor jon@silverwoodmc.org</i> 1745 W Lincoln, Goshen, IN info@silverwoodmc.org www.silverwoodmc.org</p>	<p>Southside Fellowship (60) 574.293.2825 <i>David Moser, Pastor davidssfelkhart@gmail.com</i> Chapel of the Sermon on the Mount, Lower Level, 3003 Benham Ave, Elkhart, IN 46517 ssfelkhart@gmail.com https://www.facebook.com/Southside-Fellowship-1591825197704822/</p>
<p>St Louis Mennonite Fellowship 314.632.6846 <i>Joshua Richardson, Pastor stlmenno@gmail.com</i> 3752 Giles Ave, St Louis, MO 63113 https://www.slmf.org/</p>	<p>St Paul Mennonite Fellowship (8) 651-291-0647 <i>David Edminster, Contact Person brodaahoud@gmail.com</i> meets at Cherokee Park United Church, 371 West Baker Street, St. Paul, MN 55107 http://smpmf.mennolink.org/</p>
<p><i>New Community of Faith</i> **Asian Mennonite Community Church 630.801.5060 <i>Jai Prakash (JP) Masih, Pastor pastorjpamcc@gmail.com</i> meets at Lombard Mennonite Church, 528 E Madison St, Lombard, IL 60148</p>	<p><i>In Membership Process</i> Knoxville Mennonite Church (18) 865.290.0552 <i>Pat McFarren, Pastor kmc@knoxvillemennonite.org</i> 4401 Sullivan Rd, Knoxville, TN 37921 https://www.facebook.com/knoxvillemennonitechurch</p>
<p>Peace Mennonite Fellowship (80) 567.703.7075 <i>David Elkins, Pastor peacemennonitefellowship@gmail.com</i> 22897 US-20 ALT, Archbold, OH 43502 https://www.facebook.com/peacemennonitefellowship</p>	<p><i>Provisional Members</i> Flourish Community (12) 828 318 6975 Francisco Gonzalez, Pastor francisco@flourishworship.com Meets at Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Hendersonville, 409 E Patterson St, Hendersonville, NC 28739 https://providencecongregation.org/flourish/</p>
<p>Moveable Feast (21) 312.967.6785 <i>Celeste Kennel-Shank Groff, Pastor pastor@moveablefeastcommunity.org</i> https://www.moveablefeastcommunity.org/</p>	<p>New Life Fellowship (20) 330 347 0797 Noah Raines, Pastor noah@newlifewayne.com Meets in various locations - email of call pastor for location https://newlifewayne.com/</p>

CDC LEADERSHIP 2025-2026

Board of Directors

President (2027):

Joel Miller Columbus Mennonite Church

President-elect (2027)

Karla Minter Open Table Mennonite Fellowship

Secretary (2028)

Clayton Gladish Silverwood Mennonite Church

Treasurer (2028)

Steve Jolley Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship

Member-at-large (2026)

Lydia Brenneman Lima Mennonite Church

Member-at-large (2027)

Brian Johnson North Danvers Mennonite Church

Member-at-large (2027)

Michelle Kaufman St Louis Mennonite Fellowship

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, Church Safety Coordinator, Communications Coordinator, and Administrator.

Ministerial Committee

Brian Bolton (2026)

Shalom Mennonite Congregation

Gayle Gerber Koontz (2026)

Assembly Mennonite Church

Robin Walton (2027)

Columbus Mennonite Church

Matthew Yoder (2027)

Grace Mennonite Church

Ruth Guengerich (2028)

Eighth Street Mennonite Church

Kevin Chupp (2028)

Mennonite Church of Normal

Gifts Discernment Committee

George Lehman (2026)

First Mennonite Church Bluffton

Chuck Gibson (2026)

First Mennonite Church Urbana

Janeen Bertsche Johnson (2027)

Eighth Street Mennonite Church

Rebecca Rich (2027)

Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship

David Moser (2028)

Southside Fellowship

Laura Brenneman-Fullwood (2028)

First Mennonite Church Urbana

Missional Church Committee

Julia Gingrich (2026)

Eighth Street Mennonite Church

Alaina Dobkowski (2026)

Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship

Elizabeth Kelly (2027)

First Mennonite Church Bluffton

Josh Richardson (2027)

St Louis Mennonite Fellowship

Brian Sauder (2028)

First Mennonite Church Urbana

César Moya (2028)

Emmanuel Mennonite Church

Krista Showalter Ehst(2028)

Shalom Mennonite Congregation

Matthew Pritchard (ex-officio)

The Intention Church

Historian/Archives

Historian

Perry Bush (2026) First Mennonite Church Bluffton

Archives & Special Collections Coordinator

Carrie Phillips phillipsc@bluffton.edu

Musselman Library, 1 University Dr, Bluffton, OH 45817

Resolutions Committee

Kiva Nice-Webb (2026)

Chicago Community Mennonite Church

Rich Preheim (2027)

Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

Jeff Boehr (2028)

Lima Mennonite Church

Stewardship Committee

Steve Jolley (2028)

Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship

Doug Luginigill (Staff), Ex-officio

Emma Hartman (Staff), Ex-officio

Camp Friedenswald Board

Chris Moser (2026) First Mennonite Church Bluffton

Mark Roeschley (2026)

Mennonite Church of Normal

Deanna Risser (2026) Silverwood Mennonite Church

Evan Miller (2027)

Open Table Mennonite Fellowship

Allison Troyer (2027)

Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship

Kendra Yoder (2027) Southside Fellowship

Sibonokuhle Ncube (2028)

Eighth Street Mennonite Church

Steven Hartman-Keiser (2028)

Milwaukee Mennonite Church

Brent Miller (2028) Columbus Mennonite Church

CONFERENCE RELATED MINISTRIES

Mennonite Central Committee Great Lakes Board

Peter Martin (2027)

Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship

Anabaptist 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, Core Adjunct Professor

Keller Park Church

CDC STAFF

Conference Minister

Doug Luginbill First Mennonite Church Bluffton

Associate Conference Minister of Emerging

Communities of Faith

Matt Pritchard The Intention Church

Church Safety Coordinator

Kristin Sancken

Communications Coordinator

Sarah Werner Columbus Mennonite Church

Administrator

Emma Hartman Faith Mennonite Church

Bookkeeper

Beth Yoder Mackenzie

2026

REPORT BOOK
of the

Central District Conference
of
Mennonite Church USA



Part I

Action/Discussion

CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE
Minutes
June 19-21, 2025
Bluffton University, Bluffton, Ohio
Listen! Wisdom is Calling

Thursday, June 19

*Seminar: Contemplating Radical Hospitality led by Elizabeth Kelly and Matt Pritchard

*Pastor Appreciation Dinner

*Worship I: Grace Mennonite Church

Theme: Wisdom from our Anabaptist History

Speaker: Perry Bush

Offering: Giving Back to the Community – Lima Mennonite Church for Haitian ministry

*Ice Cream Social at Grace Mennonite

Friday, June 20

Delegate Session I

Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street) led in singing *Revive Us Again*.

Welcome

Jan Lugibihl (Chicago Community) welcomed delegates to the 69th session of Central District Conference with the sounding of the gavel. Alex Sider, (First Mennonite Bluffton) interim president of Bluffton University, welcomed delegates to Bluffton University. Joel Miller (Columbus) invited delegates to get acquainted around tables by sharing about one of their grandparents.

State of the Conference Address

Jan Lugibihl (Chicago Community) reflected on the role of conference during this time. While lots of things are the same, much has changed. Some are scared, angry or sad, some are confident that things are going well, and some are wondering what comes next in our world and conference.

**What are some things conference does?* We offer each other support while we try new things. We are here to support children and young people. We support each other to find ways for peace and justice. We offer care and community to pastors and congregations. We invite congregations and welcome new groups who want to walk with us. We search for answers together. Worshiping and singing together inspires us and keeps us stronger together.

**Where do we find wisdom during these days?* For the past two years the conference theme has been, Listen! Wisdom is calling. Wisdom is often identified as one of the faces of the holy. We have spent time exploring the different aspects of the divine. We can sit together, take a breath and hear what wisdom is saying.

**Why conference?* Because we need each other.

Centering, silent reflection, and prayer: Jeff Boehr (Lima) led delegates in a centering exercise and read an adapted prayer by Marva Dawn.

Congregational Story: Karl Shelly (Assembly)

Karl shared that he recently attended a festival of homiletics where he heard Dr. Melva Sampson deliver a sermon on Hebrews 10. Sampson summed up the passage as saying to the faithful, “Don’t shrink back. Don’t shrink back from proclaiming the Gospel’s good news in word and deed because a prophetic witness is not a spiritual elective. It is the Church’s birthright.” One of the most powerful tools of engagement and resistance at our disposal is memory. Remember who you are as one of Christ’s followers, remember what God has done, and that the spirit continues to move among us.

On the first Sunday of the month, Assembly takes a second offering for payments the congregation makes in the spirit of reparations on the debt owed to black and indigenous peoples, for the immeasurable harm of white supremacy. We make these payments to help us become more of who we are created to be, a community of repentance and repair.

In their book, *Reparations: A Christian Call for Repentance and Repair*, Duke Kwon and Gregory Thompson describe white supremacy as a kind of theft: a theft of wealth, truth, and power. The biblical response called for from those who participate in or benefit from this theft is repentance and repair.

Assembly has made a commitment to work at reparations and repairs. The way we do it isn’t the same as the way Columbus Mennonite, Eighth Street, or Shalom Community works at. There is no one right way, but we are committed to the necessity to responding beyond just reading and lamenting about our history. The church is the only institution claiming to be in the business of salvation and restitution. The white church has largely shrunk back but it is never too late to do what is right. Karl encouraged congregations to consider whether reparations and repentance might be their way of being the church in these troubled times. Check with other CDC congregations: Assembly, Columbus, Eighth Street, or Shalom Community to learn more about details of how they go about it.

Introductions: Joel Miller (Columbus) introduced the following:

Resolutions Committee: Jeff Boehr (Lima), Kiva Nice-Webb (Chicago Community), Rich Preheim (Hively Ave). Joel noted that a guide for developing resolutions is on p125 of the report book.

Listening Committee: Michael Crosby (First Urbana), Anna Yoder Schlabach (Assembly), Robin Walton (Columbus)

Parliamentarian: Gerald Mast

Review of 2024 Annual Meeting Minutes: Christine Guth (Eighth Street) summarized the minutes of the 2024 annual meeting. *A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes of the 2024 annual meeting as written.* Steve Hartman Keiser (Milwaukee), David Moser (Southside Fellowship)

Treasurer's Report/Presentation of 2025-2026 Proposed Spending Plan:

Year-end Report: Tim Lind (Florence Church of the Brethren Mennonite reported that income exceeded expenses for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton) reported that the Tending Transformation campaign met its goal.

Proposed Spending Plan: The proposed spending plan for 2025-2026 will increase by about 10% over last year’s plan. Most of the increase is due to personnel costs and incorporating the expense of the Associate Conference minister into the general budget. The remaining funds in the Tending Transformation campaign for the associate conference minister will be depleted in a couple of months and then payment will come out of the spending plan. Tending Transformation funds designated for Leadership Development, Missional Church Committee and the Emerging Communities of Faith will not be replenished through the spending plan.

On behalf of the Stewardship Committee, Tim Lind moved to accept the proposed 2025-2026 spending plan. The affirmation vote by delegates will be taken on Saturday, June 21.

Presentation of Gifts Discernment Committee and Slate: Chuck Gibson (First Urbana) introduced members of the committee: Laura Brenneman-Fullwood (First Urbana), Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street), George Lehman (First Bluffton), David Moser (Southside), and Rebecca Rich (Chapel Hill). He directed delegates to p47 of the report book and named the nominees for 2025-2026:

**Board of Directors:* Clayton Gladish (Silverwood), secretary; Steve Jolley (Chapel Hill), treasurer; and Karla Minter (Open Table), president-elect

**Ministerial Committee:* Kevin Chupp (Mennonite Church of Normal) and Ruth Guengerich (Eighth Street)

**Missional Church Committee:* Krista Showalter Ehst (Shalom Mennonite Congregation) and César Moya (Emmanuel)

**Camp Friedenswald Board:* Steve Hartman Keiser (Milwaukee), Brent Miller (Columbus), and Sibonokuhle Ncube (Eighth Street)

A motion was made and seconded to affirm the 2025-2026 slate of nominees. Ardean Friesen (Silverwood), Jaimie Houghton-Thompson (Maplewood)

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

Break

Song/Centering: Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street) led in singing VT #113 *Cantai ao Senhor (O Sing to the Lord)*. Jeff Boehr (Lima) led delegates in a centering exercise and read adapted lyrics from Joseph Johnson.

Camp Friedenswald Report: Jenna Liechty Martin (Eighth Street)

Exactly 100 years ago, youth gathered at Bluffton University (BU), marking a pivotal moment for our community. Twenty-five years after that initial gathering, the vision for youth engagement culminated in the founding of Camp Friedenswald (CF). These milestones serve as important reminders of our enduring commitment to creating intentional spaces for discernment and growth.

Throughout our history, we have reflected on what elements we borrow from broader culture and how camp can be a place for spiritual discernment. Today, this tradition continues as campers are invited to disconnect from technology—leaving their phones behind—and fully immerse themselves in communal living. Staff and campers share meals, living quarters, and meaningful experiences, fostering a deep sense of belonging. As early as 1950, leaders recognized the need for dedicated spaces for youth, with one quote noting, “We realized we needed a place for youth.”

Linking this historical realization to our present, the camp’s current theme, “Wisdom of Trees,” encourages campers to find a tree and spend ten minutes in quiet reflection. This practice is a direct continuation of our commitment to discernment and personal growth. Campers have shared how these moments have impacted them; as one camper expressed, “Spending time with my tree helped me feel calm and connected to nature in a way I never had before.” Such reflections underscore the real and lasting impact that Camp Friedenswald continues to have on all who participate.

The importance of providing a space for youth remains just as vital today as it was a century ago. In addition to our summer camp programming, we continue to serve school-age children through outdoor

education opportunities. We also recognize and honor that we are not the first people to inhabit this land, as marked by a commemorative marker. Recent campaigns have enabled much-needed updates to our facilities, ensuring that camp remains a welcoming and supportive environment for generations to come.

On behalf of Camp Friedenswald, we extend sincere gratitude for your ongoing support, which allows us to honor our history and invest in the future of our community.

Presentation of Knoxville Mennonite Church and Peace Mennonite Fellowship for membership: Matt Pritchard (The Intention Church) introduced representatives from Knoxville Mennonite Church, Knoxville, Tennessee and Peace Mennonite Fellowship, Archbold, Ohio. The congregations are in the membership process to join Central District as member congregations. Conference congregations are encouraged to get to know and welcome Knoxville and Peace over the next year. A vote to affirm Knoxville and Peace as member congregations of CDC will be taken at the 2026 annual meeting.

Rachel Frantz, representative of Knoxville Mennonite Church, brought greetings from the congregation. She noted that the congregation was formerly affiliated with Virginia Mennonite Conference. During their discernment process to find a conference, they found that CDC was a good fit for their congregation. The focus of the congregation currently is to expand the children's program. There is a large group of teachers in the congregation.

Denton Yoder, representative from Peace Mennonite Fellowship, shared the congregation has been meeting for about two years. During that time, they have been trying to find a place to meet, choosing a conference, finding a place to build a church, and establishing a new structure. They are meeting with a resource person to process what they want and don't want in their structure. He asked for prayer as they continue to figure out their new structure. The congregation is still working through some trust issues. Denton asked for prayer as they continue to work on the trust issues. The congregation is trying to listen for God's guidance in determining the right thing to do.

Update on First Mennonite Chicago: Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton) shared a brief history of First Mennonite Chicago. The congregation has not met in its building since Covid. The congregation has dwindled to 6-8 people, and the building is in disrepair. Alfreda Burke has contacted a realtor and is exploring options for getting rid of the building. The best scenario would be for a non-profit to take ownership and serve the community.

Release of Agora Christian Fellowship (ACF): Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton) shared a brief history of Agora Christian Fellowship's vision for ministry in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Columbus, Ohio. Since its beginning in the 1990's, the ministry has grown into a thriving non-profit ministry to children known as Agora Ministries. Agora Mennonite Fellowship meets as a small group for worship. In March 2022, Agora Christian Fellowship became a member of Evana Network. Central District Conference sent a letter of release to the congregation. Doug led in prayer.

Abuse Prevention and Response in Mennonite Church USA: Michael Danner, Associate Executive Director for Church Vitality and Engagement, shared a PowerPoint presentation about the [Abuse Prevention and Response in Mennonite Church USA](#) document that will be presented to delegates for action at the 2025 MC USA Convention in July 2025. Delegates discussed and provided feedback on the document.

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

Delegate Session II

Song/Centering: Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street) led in singing VT #209 *We Dream of a Turning*. Jeff Boehr (Lima) led delegates in a centering exercise and shared words of Joseph Arencio of the Dakota people.

Conference Minister Evaluation: Jan Lugibihl (Chicago Community) introduced members of the task group who facilitated the evaluation process along with her: Brian Bolton, Ministerial Committee (Shalom Mennonite Congregation), Lydia Brenneman, Board of Directors (Lima), Elizabeth Kelly, Missional Church Committee (First Bluffton). She drew delegates attention to p59 of the report book. Respondents to the evaluation express overwhelming support for Doug. Jan read some highlights from the evaluation responses.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, Jan Lugibihl (Chicago Community) moved to extend a new three-year term for the conference minister, Doug Luginbill. Joel Miller (Columbus) seconded the motion. Delegates affirmed the motion.

WORSHIP II: Marbeck Center

Theme: Wisdom from our Churches Today

Storytelling: Each participant was invited to bring a symbolic object that represents something the Spirit has been doing among his/her congregation the past year.

Offering: Central District Conference

Communion

Break

Delegate Session III: Seminars

*Swiss Historical Society and Schumacher Homestead facilitated by Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton)

*Wild Church led by Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street), James Rissler (Atlanta), Brian Sauder (Chicago Community), Sarah Werner (Columbus)

*Hymnsing: Anabaptist singing through the years led by Adam Tice (Faith) and Katie Graber (Columbus)

Dinner

Free Time

Saturday, June 21

WORSHIP III: Yoder Recital Hall

Theme: Wisdom for the Future Church

Speaker: Melissa Florer-Bixler

Break/BU Alumni Get Together

Delegate Session IV

Song/Centering: Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street) led in singing VT #297 *You are Salt for the Earth*. Jeff Boehr (Lima) led delegates in a centering silence.

Congregational Story: Joel Miller (Columbus)

About six years ago, the leadership team at Columbus began discussing the idea that as an extension of the congregation's anti-racism commitments, they pass on a portion of their budget to indigenous and black organizations. The idea was confirmed by the congregation. After discussion and discernment, the congregation decided to call this reparative debt payments. They wanted to be as contextual as possible. They began by deciding how much they would owe per year in property taxes on their building were they not exempt (~\$20,000). They decided to include that much to their budget over four years adding \$5000 each year. Rather than include it in the mission portion of the budget, it was included as a facilities expense. Every year they distribute and release these funds half to a local indigenous organization and half to a black organization. Joel shared stories of two organizations that received the funds from Columbus Mennonite. The congregation was able to achieve their goal of adding \$20,000 to the budget over four years. They have learned a lot from the experience. Further research revealed that the property taxes would actually be closer to \$40,000. Instead of adding that amount to the budget, this year they will add 4% of the annual budget for the purpose of reparative debt payments. Overall, it has been a powerful and widely held important practice. In order for the practice to continue, it will be important leadership to continue to tell the story of what we are doing, why we are doing it, and what we continue to learn in the process.

Missional Church Committee: Matt Pritchard (The Intention Church)

Matt directed attention to the Missional Church Committee report on p80 in the report book. The committee is excited about the ways your congregations are partnering with God to bring more of God's shalom to the world. In our changing world, we need new and creative ways of doing this. The committee wants to resource and partner with you as you experiment. We want to hear about the work you are doing and what you are learning. Some resources from the Missional Church Committee include the Reign of God Grant intended for two or more congregations to work together. There is also an Anti-racism Grant available for congregations to work at dismantling racism in their communities. Over the last year the Missional Church Committee granted \$36,050 to various missional initiatives throughout the conference. We also partnered with conference leadership to envision more and deeper diversity and inclusion work as a conference. That work is centered around power and how that works in and through our communities. Matt drew attention to the booklet of emerging congregation stories found in the delegate folders. This year the committee renewed \$32,000 in grants for our emerging communities that will be matched with \$18,000 from them. The emerging communities are doing incredible work in the spaces they inhabit. He encouraged delegates to read stories of the work the emerging communities are doing. More stories will be shared and can be found using the link found in the booklet.

Ministerial Committee: Gayle Gerber Koontz (Assembly)

Gayle drew attention to the Ministerial Committee report found on p79 of the report book. She introduced members of the committee: Brian Bolton (Shalom Mennonite Congregation), Kevin Chupp (Mennonite Church of Normal), Ruth Guengerich (Eighth Street), Robin Walton (Columbus), Matthew Yoder (Grace), and herself as chair. The committee has decided to require the completion of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) for all future ordination candidates and will cover the cost for doing so. Area conferences are responsible for credentialing, educating and accompanying pastors in relation to the ethical standards they have agreed to follow. The committee has spent time looking at the Prevention and Accountability Resource (PAR) document and thinking about how CDC might respond. Gayle acknowledged an anonymous donation that was given to help relieve some of the educational debt of credentialed persons within the conference.

Recognition of Pastors who have died in the past year:

Elizabeth Kelly (First Bluffton) recognized the death of Gary Martin (Faith) and read the obituary. Gary served within the conference in a number of ways, most recently on the Missional Church Committee.

Recognition of newly credentialed pastors

Gayle shared there is much movement among pastors and credentialed leaders in a year's time (see pp70-71). She recognized the following:

*Ralph Ferguson III (Trey) (The Intention Church – licensed toward recognition of his current ordination

*Lauren Satchewell (Mennonite Church of Normal)– licensed toward ordination

*Karla Minter (Open Table Mennonite Fellowship) – ordained. Karla shared a bit of her journey that led to her ordination.

Journey graduate recognition

Jewel Gingerich Longenecker (AMBS) and Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton) presented gifts to April Lo (Chicago Community) and Rachel Stolpe (Milwaukee), who completed the three-year Journey program. Doug noted there will be three new students from CDC entering the program this fall. April and Rachel shared about their time in the Journey program. They were gifted with an oil lamp, certificate of completion, and free registration to the Pastors and Leaders Conference.

Break

Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street) led in singing VT #715 *Longing for Light*.

ACTION: 2025-2026 Spending Plan: Jan Luginbill (Chicago Community) opened the floor for discussion of the proposed 2025-2026 spending plan.

A question was raised as to whether adding a Conference Safety Liaison as recommended in the Prevention and Accountability Resource document would add to the budget. *Nothing will be added this year to the budget.*

The motion to affirm the 2025-2026 Spending Plan was affirmed unanimously.

Open Mic Joel Miller (Columbus)

**Dan Nester-Detweiler (Evanston):* Dan has also been part of Reba Place Fellowship for 25 years. He shared some wisdom from Ann, a member of a small group from Reba Place. "White people tend to sing about and concern ourselves with the goodness of God. We do this to assure ourselves that we are basically good people either by the grace of God or by the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Other people, i.e., the non-dominant culture tend to sing and concern themselves with the power and presence of God. They do this to remind themselves that God is with them even through the rough times. Many of these rough times have and continue to be caused by white people. Dan hopes we have heard and heed the call for repentance and repair from Assembly, Columbus, and other congregations.

**Mary Dyck (Mennonite Church of Normal):* Mary appreciated the PAR document. She is working on her congregation's church employment manual. Mary is not convinced that the person does not need to be a minister but could be other professional people such as a social worker who might provide good perspective as they are working on this issue.

**Chima Ozor (Ann Arbor):* Chima thanked Columbus for what the church is doing and hopes that more congregations will engage in reparations. Chima would like to see more diversity in the conference, including leadership.

**Anne Spelman (First Bluffton):* Anne Marie appreciated the childcare workers: Carrie Mast, Georgia Metz, Trusty Schumacher, and Sarah Phillips.

**Phil Martens (First Urbana):* Every year that Phil attends the annual meeting, he feels a sense of empowerment and ongoing energy. He is gratified and blessed to see more young people in leadership. He feels confident in the future of our congregations and conference. His observation is that attendance at the annual meeting is getting younger and that is encouraging. Younger people are the future of our congregations, conference, and denomination.

**Rachel Skilliter (First Bluffton)*: Rachel is a baby Mennonite, having only been a member at First Bluffton for one year. She stated it has been so beautiful to be here and see so many people who care about other people. We live in a world where we are surrounded by terrible news and terrible things. To see people from all over, not just Bluffton, with this same mission in their hearts feels very warm and she is thankful to be here.

**Lydia Brenneman (Lima)*: The Mennonite Church has always been a church for peace and justice. Lydia encouraged participants to pray for MennoPin and the new Mennonite Action group as they engage with what is happening in Gaza and Palestine.

**Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street)*: One of the things that did not show up in Doug's review is that he is part of the first Doctor of Ministry cohort at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. James Rissler, Charles Buller, and herself from Central District are in the first cohort. Janeen encouraged those who have been in ministry for several years to consider joining the program.

**Doug Luginhill (First Bluffton)*: Doug shared that his dissertation in the DMin program is focused on what it means to be a wise leader. He is studying Sophia, biblical wisdom from the Hebrew Bible, the Apocrypha, and Christian scriptures to see if we can have a fuller understanding of what wise leadership means and how that can enhance what God is doing in the world.

Listening Committee Report [Michael Crosby, Anna Yoder Schlabach, Robin Walton] We heard a lot, and we divided our report into three threads that we noticed over the weekend.

- **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.

Closing: Doug Luginbill (First Bluffton) closed by reading a reflection “Upside-Down Kingdom” from *Drawing Near: A Devotional Journey with Art, Poetry, and Reflection*, John D Roth, ed. He invited participants to reflect on The Upside-Down Kingdom image done by Dona Park in the Anabaptist Community Bible Art Collection found in *Drawing Near*. Doug closed the meditation by reading the poem, “When” by Joseph Gascho.

Joel Miller (Columbus) invited delegates to complete the evaluation forms and to share suggestions for committee nominations on the form found in the delegate packets.

Jan Lugibihl (Chicago Community) thanked staff of Bluffton University, Mark Bourassa for his behind the scenes work in hosting the delegates, and Merv Schrock for his help with the technical details. She thanked Phil Martens (First Urbana) for his help with running Zoom.

Jan ended the delegate sessions with the sounding of the gavel.

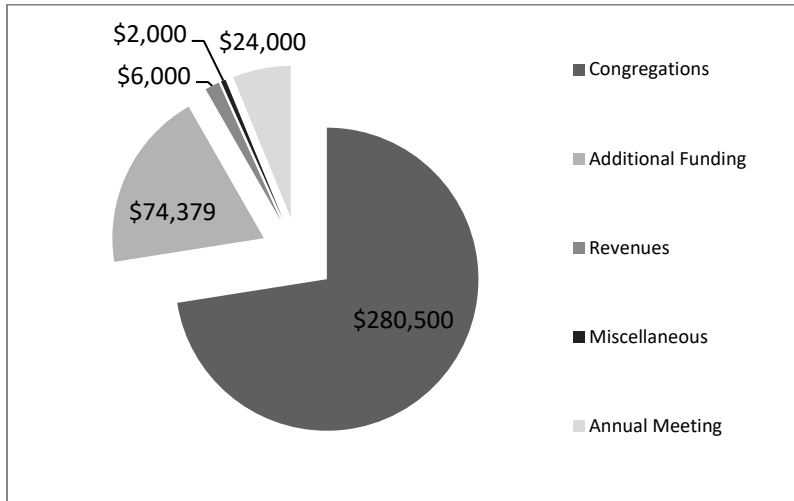
Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street) led in singing VT #202 *Peace, Be Still*.

Emma Hartman

Recorder

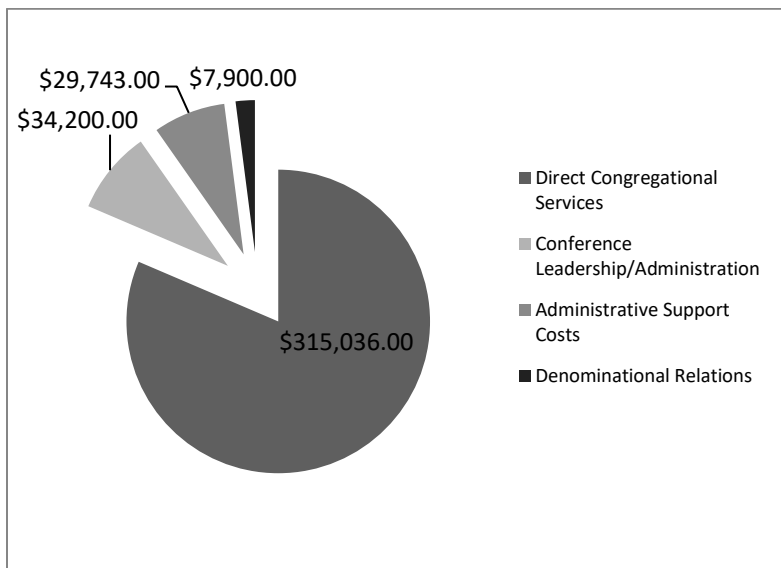
Central District Conference 2026-2027 Spending Plan		SP 2023-2024	Actual 2023-2024	SP 2024-2025	Actual 2024-2025	SP 2025-2026	YTD Actual As of 3/31/26	2026-2027 Proposed Spending Plan
INCOME								
	Congregational giving	\$227,948.00	\$242,272.18	\$244,859.00	\$264,996.49	\$265,300.00	\$195,259.89	\$280,500.00
	Annual Meeting	\$17,500.00	\$20,154.25	\$18,500.00	\$25,635.34	\$18,500.00	\$0.00	\$22,000.00
	Ann Mtng Offering/Fundrais	\$2,000.00	\$2,445.80	\$2,000.00	\$360.00	\$2,000.00		\$2,000.00
	Additional Giving	\$50,000.00	\$34,255.00	\$55,000.00	\$45,167.75	\$67,215.00	\$50,950.25	\$74,379.00
	Bequests/Designated gifts in-kind		\$890.00		\$394.68		150	
	Earned/Interest income	\$6,000.00	\$6,492.54	\$6,000.00	\$6,458.42	\$6,000.00	\$4,844.34	\$6,000.00
	Miscellaneous income	\$237.00	\$1,745.23	\$1,799.00	\$3,445.00	\$2,000.00	\$1,595.60	\$2,000.00
	Total	\$303,685.00	\$308,255.00	\$328,158.00	\$346,457.68	\$361,015.00	\$252,800.08	\$386,879.00
EXPENDITURES								
Direct Congregational Services/Networking								
	Missional Church Committee	\$2,000.00	\$1,374.56	\$2,000.00	\$1,747.67	\$2,000.00	\$1,180.93	\$2,000.00
	Ministerial Committee	\$5,400.00	\$6,386.37	\$6,000.00	\$4,134.36	\$4,500.00	\$4,962.86	\$6,600.00
	Historian/*Archives	\$4,200.00	\$0.00	\$4,200.00	\$0.00	\$4,200.00	\$4,042.50	\$4,200.00
	Publications	\$5,000.00	\$4,456.76	\$5,000.00	\$4,212.52	\$5,500.00	\$2,891.37	\$6,500.00
	Communications Coordinator	\$20,000.00	\$20,000.04	\$21,600.00	\$21,600.00	\$23,610.00	\$17,707.41	\$24,927.00
	Church Safety Coordinator						\$3,664.00	\$12,164.00
	Regional Meetings/Congregational Lists	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
		\$37,600.00	\$32,217.73	\$39,300.00	\$31,694.55	\$39,910.00	\$34,449.07	\$56,491.00
Denominational Relations								
	Mid-States Conferences	\$100.00	63.93	\$100.00		\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
	*General Assembly Delegate Escrow	\$1,800.00	\$1,800.00	\$1,800.00	\$1,800.00	\$1,800.00	\$1,350.00	\$1,800.00
	Denominational Meetings	\$3,000.00	\$2,859.89	\$3,000.00	\$3,014.98	\$3,500.00	\$2,149.48	\$3,500.00
	Constituency Leaders Council	\$5,000.00	\$1,265.92	\$3,000.00	\$1,971.78	\$3,000.00	\$263.96	\$2,500.00
		\$9,900.00	\$5,989.74	\$7,900.00	\$6,786.76	\$8,400.00	\$3,763.44	\$7,900.00
Conference Leadership/Administration								
	Board of Directors Meetings	\$2,500.00	\$2,524.34	\$2,500.00	\$2,502.71	\$2,500.00	\$4,297.98	\$5,000.00
	Gift Discernment Committee	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
	Stewardship Committee	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
	Leadership Council	\$3,900.00	\$3,660.14	\$4,000.00	\$7,385.46	\$5,500.00	\$7,074.24	\$7,000.00
	Annual Meeting Expense	\$18,000.00	\$29,264.09	\$20,000.00	\$26,186.07	\$20,000.00	\$0.00	\$22,000.00
		\$24,600.00	\$35,448.57	\$26,700.00	\$36,074.24	\$28,200.00	\$11,372.22	\$34,200.00
Administrative Support Costs								
	*Sabbatical Coverage Escrow		0					
	*Liability Insurance	\$2,500.00	\$3,317.80	\$2,500.00	\$868.46	\$1,200.00	\$1,405.78	\$1,800.00
	*Rent	\$3,108.00	\$3,108.00	\$3,500.00	\$3,108.00	\$3,108.00	\$2,590.00	\$3,108.00
	Office Expense	\$7,000.00	\$10,670.84	\$7,000.00	\$6,325.56	\$7,000.00	\$7,925.68	\$9,750.00
	Telecommunications	\$3,500.00	\$2,611.96	\$3,000.00	\$1,592.20	\$2,000.00	\$686.10	\$1,000.00
	Postage	\$2,000.00	\$1,887.61	\$2,000.00	\$2,143.37	\$2,000.00	\$1,617.27	\$2,500.00
	*Bookkeeping Services	\$3,525.00	\$3,525.00	\$3,807.00	\$3,807.00	\$3,964.00	\$2,972.97	\$4,085.00
	Staff Travel	\$7,000.00	\$7,616.75	\$7,000.00	\$8,008.53	\$7,000.00	\$3,473.92	\$7,000.00
	Misc.		\$1,208.43	\$1,000.00	\$489.29	\$500.00	\$703.56	\$500.00
		\$28,633.00	\$33,946.39	\$29,807.00	\$26,342.41	\$26,772.00	\$21,375.28	\$29,743.00
Personnel								
	*Salaries	\$152,871.00	\$150,009.84	\$166,003.00	\$166,141.33	\$192,879.00	\$147,578.46	\$193,777.00
	*Benefits	\$36,815.00	\$35,172.35	\$45,448.00	\$39,479.24	\$50,354.00	\$37,324.19	\$54,268.00
	*Payroll tax/Worker's Comp	\$7,266.00	\$6,372.84	\$7,000.00	\$6,594.19	\$8,500.00	\$7,369.56	\$10,500.00
		\$196,952.00	\$191,555.03	\$218,451.00	\$212,214.76	\$251,733.00	\$192,272.21	\$258,545.00
Cash Reserves								
		\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$4,500.00	\$0.00
	Total Expenses	\$303,685.00	\$305,157.46	\$328,158.00	\$319,112.72	\$361,015.00	\$267,732.22	\$386,879.00

2026-2027 Proposed Spending Plan Income



Congregations: Makes up 73% of total spending plan
Additional Funding: Makes up 19% of total spending plan
Miscellaneous: Makes up .5% of total spending plan
Revenues: Makes up 1.5% of total spending plan
Annual Meeting: Makes up 6% of total spending plan

2026-2027 Proposed Spending Plan Expenses/



Direct Cong Services: Makes up 81% of total spending plan expenses
Conference Leadership/Administration: Makes up 9% of total spending plan expenses
Administrative Support: Makes up 8% of total spending plan expenses
Denominational Relations: Makes up 2% of total spending plan expenses

Direct Congregational Services: Includes Missional Church and Ministerial Committee expenses, archives, publications, regional gathering expenses, salaries, housing, social security, pension, continuing education, health insurance, health savings account, payroll taxes, and workman’s comp.

Conference Leadership/Administration: Includes Board of Directors, Gifts Discernment Committee, Stewardship Committee, Leadership Council, and Annual Meeting expenses

Administrative Support Costs: Includes Cash Reserve Escrow, Liability/Directors & Officers Insurance, Office Expenses, Bookkeeping Services, Staff Travel, and Miscellaneous expenses.

Denominational Relations: Includes Mid-States Conferences, General Assembly/Convention Escrow, Conference Ministers or other denominational meetings, Constituency Leaders

2026-2027 Slate of Nominees



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



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



Position: Ministerial Committee
Member-at-large
Name: Tom Kauffman
Congregation: Assembly Mennonite Church
Occupation: Retired



Position: Camp Friedenswald Board
Name: Will Leichty
Congregation: Eighth Street Mennonite Church
Occupation: CFO at Bethany Christian Schools



Position: Ministerial Committee
Name: Georgia Metz
Congregation: Shalom Mennonite Congregation
Occupation: Pastor



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



Position: Missional Church Committee
*****Name:** Alaina Dobkowski
Congregation: Grand Rapids Mennonite Church
Occupation: Pastor

* = incumbent

** = Appointed to fill a seat left open by a resignation mid-term

***First elected term

To:

Doug Luginbill, Central District Conference Minister
Central District Conference Board

Cc: Emma Hartman

March 23, 2026

Dear Doug, Board, and CDC Sisters and Brothers,

We, the congregation of Knoxville Mennonite Church in Knoxville, TN, wish to continue in, and finalize, the process on becoming a full member congregation of the Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA.

For the last year, and more, we have thought of ourselves as such, and have tried to keep current with CDC news, activities, and ministries.

Our pastor has enjoyed and benefited from participating in the CDC pastor-peer sessions, and our congregation anticipates a future with CDC in which gifts, talents, worship and fellowship can be shared.

Respectfully,

Pat. McFarren

Pat. McFarren and the Knoxville Mennonite Congregation

Discussion of Article 19 CDC Annual Meeting - 2026

From the Introduction to the *Confession of Faith from a Mennonite Perspective*:

How do Mennonite confessions of faith serve the church?

- *First, they provide guidelines for the interpretation of Scripture. At the same time, the confession itself is subject to the authority of the Bible.*
- *Second, confessions of faith provide guidance for belief and practice. In this connection, a written statement should support but not replace the lived witness of faith.*
- *Third, confessions build a foundation for unity within and among churches.*
- *Fourth, confessions offer an outline for instructing new church members and for sharing information with inquirers.*
- *Fifth, confessions give an updated interpretation of belief and practice in the midst of changing times.*
- *Sixth, confessions help in discussing Mennonite belief and practice with other Christians and people of other faiths.*

Introduction

In Central District Conference we are engaging in a discussion about Article 19 from *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*—the confession of faith that is ours as part of Mennonite Church USA. Our discussion is in response to questions that have come to CDC leadership from congregations considering whether to join our conference and who seek clarity about our understanding and implementation of Article 19—especially the language that limits sexual intimacy to a marriage relationship between a man and a woman. While acknowledging this reflects traditional Christian teachings, our conference, as well as our denomination, has embraced a broader understanding of faithful, covenantal sexual relationships than that represented in Article 19.

Because we value the Confession of Faith, we want to interact with it and clarify it, not replace it. We are trying to embody the love of God in our words and our statements as well as our actions. Our end goal is to create a formal response to Article 19 that we can affirm as a conference and that will provide guidance about what we believe about healthy relationships.

During this year's mid-year gathering, we asked participants what they affirmed and do not affirm in Article 19, and what was most important to them as we revisit our relationship to the Confession of Faith. Here are some of the main themes that came from that discussion: We can affirm that God created humans to be in relationship, and we have a responsibility to one another. Article 19 recognizes the importance of community beyond the family, and single people are given equal respect to married people. Children, while not the sole goal of marriage, are a blessing and should be loved and respected.

We found the language about marriage being between only a man and a woman to be problematic. In Article 19 divorce is seen as a failure and sex is only condoned in the context of marriage.

The participants listed the following themes as being most important in our work of revisiting this statement:

- emphasis on committed relationships built on mutuality and love rather than emphasis only on marriage
- adoption and children outside the context of marriage
- emphasis on unity rather than progeny
- space for divorce without shame, not all marriages are “for life” and believing this often has led to the oppression of and violence against women
- creating a positive sexual ethic rather than a document of rules to be followed—an aspirational document rather than a judgmental one
- naming the reality that many people have sex outside of marriage and sex and cohabitation only in marriage is not a requirement for church membership
- affirm queer perspectives

This morning we ask you to reflect on a few of these themes in your table groups by discussing the following questions. Please keep in mind that we are a diverse gathered group, and that opinions at your table will differ. This is ok! We can have a discussion that involves disagreement. We encourage you to approach these questions with a sense of curiosity and to hold each other with love and respect during your discussion.

1. One of the most prominent themes that came out of the mid-year gathering was the desire to affirm relationships based on a covenant of mutuality that includes, but is not limited to, marriage. How might emphasizing covenant and respect in relationships benefit those in your congregation in different life circumstances (such as older adults, disabled persons, LGBTQIA+ persons and relationships, young couples, those who are single, etc.)?
2. What are some of the ways we affirm/embrace family that go beyond the way family is defined in Article 19 (mother, father, biological children)? Why is it important to include different kinds of families in a statement of faith?
3. What are some of the key features you would like to see in a positive sexual ethic (such as intimacy based on respect, an emphasis on mutual care, or other characteristics of healthy relationships)?

Confession of Faith
Article 19
Family, Singleness, and Marriage

Note: Numbers within the text below refer to the scripture texts listed below.

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, Christian family relationships can grow toward the wholeness that God intends.

We recognize that God has created human beings for relationship. God intends human life to be blessed through families, especially through the family of faith. All Christians are to take their place within the household of God, where members treat each other as brothers and sisters.¹ We hold that within the church family, the goodness of being either single or married is honored.² We honor the single state and encourage the church to respect and to include single persons in the life and activities of the church family. Families of faith are called to be a blessing to all families of the earth.³

We believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life.⁴ Christian marriage is a mutual relationship in Christ,⁵ a covenant made in the context of the church. According to Scripture, right sexual union takes place only within the marriage relationship.⁶ Marriage is meant for sexual intimacy, companionship, and the birth and nurture of children.

Children are of great importance. Jesus saw them as examples of how to receive the reign of God.⁷ Children are to be loved, disciplined, taught, and respected in the home and in the church. Children are also to honor their parents, obeying them in the Lord.⁸ Younger people are to respect their elders in the home and the church.⁹

The church is called to help couples strengthen their marriage relationship and to encourage reconciliation in times of conflict. The church is also to minister with truth and compassion to persons in difficult family relationships. As the family of God, the church is called to be a sanctuary offering hope and healing for families.

- (1) Ps. 27:10; Luke 8:19-21; Eph. 2:19.
- (2) 1 Cor. 7:38.
- (3) Gen. 12:1-3; Acts 3:25.
- (4) Mark 10:9; 1 Cor. 7:10-11.
- (5) Eph. 5:21.
- (6) Exod. 20:14; 1 Cor. 6:12-20.
- (7) Mark 10:13-16.
- (8) Exod. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-4.
- (9) 1 Tim. 5:1-2.

Commentary

1. Although family generally refers to relationships of blood, marriage, or adoption, the Scripture also describes the church as a family. Especially common in the New Testament are the references to Christians as brothers and sisters and as children of God (see Rom. 8:12-17; Gal. 4:5-7; James 2:15).
2. Many in the church remain single or become single. Jesus encouraged some to choose a life of singleness for the sake of the reign of God (Matt. 19:12; Luke 14:20). While Paul regarded marriage as a positive choice, he preferred voluntary singleness for the sake of unconditional commitment to the Lord (1 Cor. 7:25-35).
3. Scripture places sexual intimacy within God's good created order (Gen. 2:23-25). Sexual union is reserved for the marriage bond (Exod. 20:14; Mark 10:11; Rom. 7:1-3). Sexual union is for pleasure and closeness and for procreation. Through procreation, the human family continues from generation to generation. The oneness between husband and wife is a mystery which reflects the oneness of the Godhead and the oneness between Christ and his church. We affirm that Christians who marry should marry in the Lord, to a Christian spouse.
4. Some in the church experience divorce, abuse, sexual misconduct, and other problems that make marriage and family life burdensome or even impossible. Jesus affirmed the sanctity of marriage (Matt. 5:32) and pointed to hardness of the heart as the ultimate cause of divorce (Mark 10:4-9). Today's church needs to uphold the permanency of marriage and help couples in conflict move toward reconciliation. At the same time, the church, as a reconciling and forgiving community, offers healing and new beginnings. The church is to bring strength and healing to individuals and families.

Associate Conference Minister Review

This year Central District Conference completed a three-year review of Matt Pritchard, Associate Conference Minister for Emerging Communities of Faith.

The review included feedback from pastors, leaders of emerging communities, and denominational partners who work with Matt across the conference. Respondents consistently expressed appreciation for Matt's relational leadership, his encouragement of emerging ministries, and his commitment to the mission and values of Central District Conference.

Leaders of emerging communities especially noted Matt's ability to build trust and walk alongside them as new expressions of church take shape. Many respondents also highlighted Matt's creativity, enthusiasm, and openness to new possibilities for ministry rooted in Mennonite commitments to peace, justice, and community.

At the same time, the review offered helpful insights into the evolving nature of this work. As emerging communities continue to grow across the conference, respondents noted opportunities to strengthen leadership structures, clarify pathways for developing new ministries, and ensure that a wide range of voices within the conference are heard and engaged in these conversations.

Participants in the review affirmed that supporting emerging communities of faith is an important part of the conference's calling in this season. Matt's ministry has helped nurture these communities and strengthen connections between emerging leaders and the wider life of Central District Conference.

Central District Conference is grateful for Matt's leadership and for the ways he continues to encourage leaders and communities exploring new expressions of faithful witness.

Submitted by the Review Committee: Joel Miller (board and committee chair), Jan Luginbill (past board chair), Brian Bolton (Ministerial Committee), Brian Sauder (Missional Church Committee)

2026

REPORT BOOK
of the

Central District Conference
of
Mennonite Church USA



Part II

Conference Financial and Staff Reports

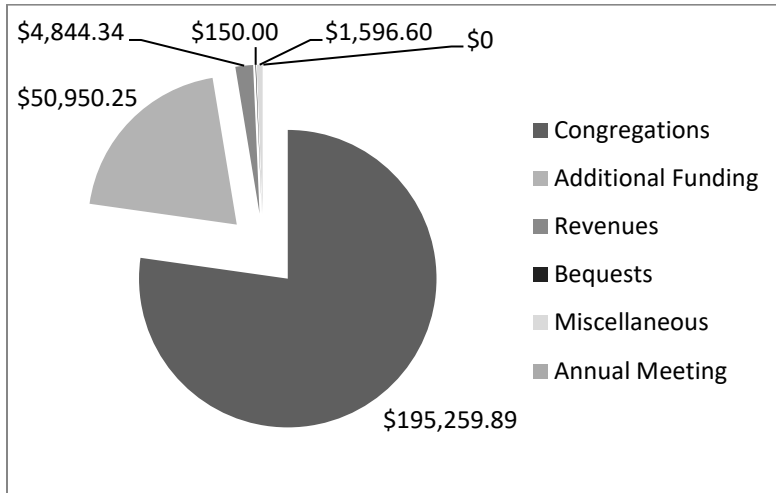
CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE
Balance Sheet
As of March 31, 2026

Checking	278,160.80
Savings	157,561.07
	435,721.87
Undeposited Funds	30.00
Prepaid expenses	1,723.63
Missional Fund	187,683.91
	189,437.54
	625,159.41
	625,159.41
Accounts Payable	-4,138.49
Other Agency Transfer	10,145.50
Other Current Liabilities	12,910.99
Funds/Escrows	
General Assembly Escrow	5,340.29
Cash Reserve Escrow	140,983.29
Conference Minister's Sabbatical Escrow	13,343.74
Missional Church Committee	1,903.75
Leadership Development	21,141.65
Emerging Communities of Faith	100,992.31
Jubilee Fund	1,277.56
Transitional Pastors Sabbatical	11,114.27
Reign of God Grant	492.00
Surplus Reserve Fund	26,748.66
Missional Committee Grants	15,093.20
Healthy Boundaries	174.27
Moveable Feast	16,928.46
The Intention Church	18,369.67
Education Debt Reduction Grant	3,996.85
Celtic Pilgrimage	30,738.49
Total Current Liabilities	427,556.46
	427,556.46
Equity	
Net income	-8,737.66
Total Equity	197,602.95
Total Liability and Equity	625,159.11

**Central District Conference
Income and Expense Statement
As of March 31, 2026**

	Actual 2025-2026 thru Mar 31 (9 months)	SP 2025-2026 thru Mary 31 (9 months)	SP 2025-2026 (12 months)	Actual 2024-2025 12 months	SP 2024-2025 (12 months)
INCOME					
Congregational Giving	\$195,259.89	\$198,975.00	\$265,300.00	\$264,996.49	\$244,859.00
Annual Meeting Registration/Offering	\$0.00	\$13,875.00	\$18,500.00	\$25,635.34	\$18,500.00
Annual Meeting Donations: Memorial/Golf	\$0.00	\$1,500.00	\$2,000.00	\$360.00	\$2,000.00
Additional Funding	\$50,950.25	\$50,411.25	\$67,315.00	\$45,167.75	\$55,000.00
Bequests/In-kind donations	\$150.00	\$0.00		\$394.68	
Earned/Interest income	\$4,844.34	\$4,500.00	\$6,000.00	\$6,458.42	\$6,000.00
Miscellaneous income	\$1,595.60	\$1,500.00	\$2,000.00	\$3,445.00	\$1,799.00
Total	\$252,800.08	\$270,761.25	\$361,115.00	\$346,457.68	\$328,158.00
EXPENDITURES					
Direct Congregational Services/Networking					
Missional Church Committee	\$1,180.93	\$1,500.00	\$2,000.00	\$1,747.67	\$2,000.00
Ministerial Committee	\$4,932.86	\$3,375.00	\$4,500.00	\$4,134.36	\$6,000.00
Historian/*Archives	\$4,042.50	\$3,150.00	\$4,200.00	\$0.00	\$4,200.00
Publications	\$2,891.37	\$4,125.00	\$5,500.00	\$4,212.52	\$5,000.00
Communications Coordinator	\$17,707.41	\$17,707.50	\$23,610.00	\$21,600.00	\$21,600.00
Church Safety Coordinator	\$3,664.00				
Mid-Year Gatherings	\$0.00	\$75.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$500.00
	<u>\$34,419.07</u>	<u>\$29,932.50</u>	<u>\$39,910.00</u>	<u>\$31,694.55</u>	<u>\$39,300.00</u>
Denominational Relations					
Mid-States	\$0.00	\$75.00	\$100.00		\$100.00
*General Assembly Delegate Escrow	\$1,350.00	\$1,350.00	\$1,800.00	\$1,800.00	\$1,800.00
Denominational Meetings	\$2,149.48	\$3,014.98	\$3,500.00	\$3,014.98	\$3,000.00
Constituency Leaders Council	\$263.96	\$850.74	\$3,000.00	\$1,971.78	\$3,000.00
	<u>\$3,763.44</u>	<u>\$5,290.72</u>	<u>\$8,400.00</u>	<u>\$6,786.76</u>	<u>\$7,900.00</u>
Conference Leadership/Administration					
Board of Directors Meetings	\$4,297.98	\$1,875.00	\$2,500.00	\$2,502.71	\$2,500.00
Gift Discernment Committee	\$0.00	\$75.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
Stewardship Committee	\$0.00	\$75.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
Leadership Council	\$7,074.24	\$4,125.00	\$5,500.00	\$7,385.46	\$4,000.00
Annual Meeting Expense	\$0.00	\$15,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$26,186.07	\$20,000.00
	<u>\$11,372.22</u>	<u>\$21,150.00</u>	<u>\$28,200.00</u>	<u>\$36,074.24</u>	<u>\$26,700.00</u>
Administrative Support Costs					
*Sabbatical Coverage Escrow					
*Liability Insurance	\$1,405.78	\$900.00	\$1,200.00	\$868.46	\$2,500.00
*Rent	\$2,590.00	\$2,311.00	\$3,108.00	\$3,108.00	\$3,500.00
Supplies	\$6,787.80	\$2,625.00	\$3,500.00	\$4,248.13	\$3,500.00
Equipment	\$1,137.88	\$2,625.00	\$3,500.00	\$2,077.43	\$3,500.00
Telecommunications	\$686.10	\$1,500.00	\$2,000.00	\$1,592.20	\$3,000.00
Postage	\$1,617.27	\$1,500.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,143.37	\$2,000.00
*Bookkeeping Services	\$2,972.97	\$2,973.00	\$3,964.00	\$3,807.00	\$3,807.00
Staff Travel	\$3,473.92	\$5,250.00	\$7,000.00	\$8,008.53	\$7,000.00
Misc.	\$703.56	\$375.00	\$500.00	\$489.29	\$1,000.00
	<u>\$21,375.28</u>	<u>\$20,059.00</u>	<u>\$26,772.00</u>	<u>\$26,342.41</u>	<u>\$29,807.00</u>
Personnel					
*Salaries	\$150,578.46	\$152,222.29	\$192,879.00	\$166,141.33	\$166,003.00
*Fringe	\$37,624.19	\$37,765.25	\$50,354.00	\$39,479.24	\$45,448.00
*Payroll tax/Workman's Comp	\$7,369.56	\$6,375.00	\$8,500.00	\$6,594.19	\$7,000.00
	<u>\$195,572.21</u>	<u>\$196,362.54</u>	<u>\$251,733.00</u>	<u>\$212,214.76</u>	<u>\$218,451.00</u>
Cash Reserves					
	\$4,500.00	\$4,500.00	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00
Total	\$271,002.22	\$277,294.76	\$361,015.00	\$319,112.72	\$328,158.00

2025-2026 Year-to-Date Actual Income (as of March 31)



Income Sources

***Congregational Contributions**

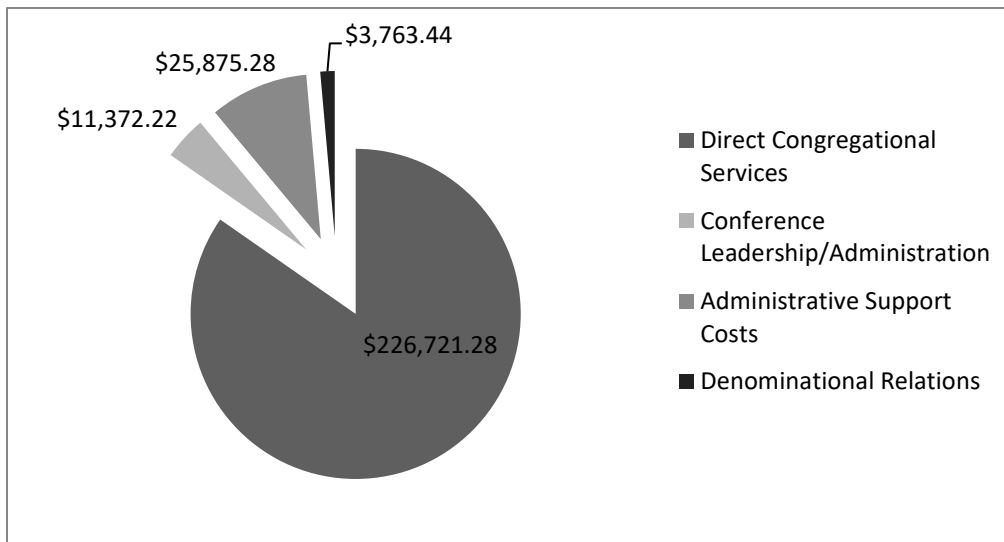
***Additional Funding:** Individual donations, Leadership Council pledges, Fundraising letters, Conference leadership donating back expenses

***Revenues:** Interest from checking/savings, Distributions from Missional Fund

***Annual Meeting Registration/Fundraising**

***Miscellaneous**

2025-2026 Year-to-Date Actual Expenses (as of March 31)



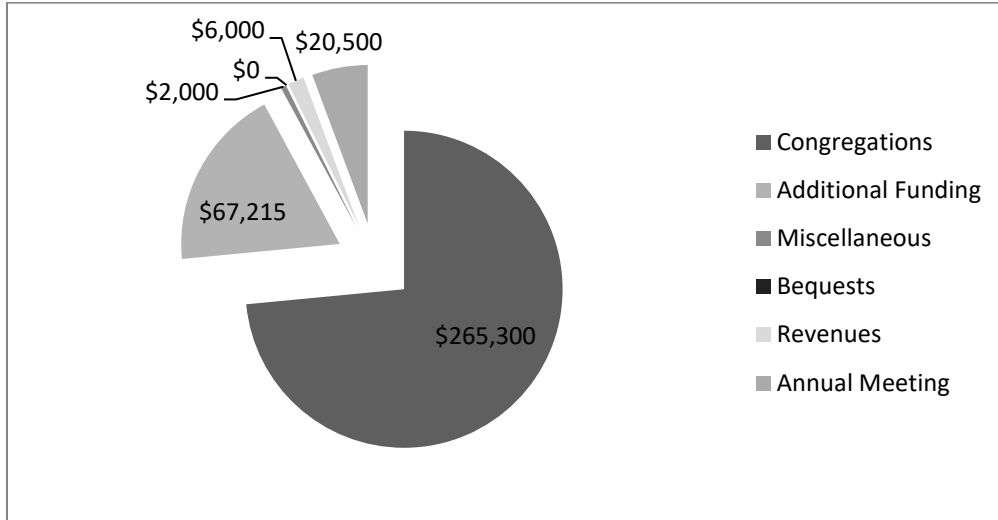
Direct Congregational Services: Includes Missional Church and Ministerial Committee expenses, archives, publications, regional gathering expenses, salaries, housing, social security, pension, continuing education, health insurance, health savings account, payroll taxes, and workman’s comp.

Conference Leadership/Administration: Includes Board of Directors, Gifts Discernment Committee, Stewardship Committee, Leadership Council, and Annual Meeting expenses

Administrative Support Costs: Includes Cash Reserve Escrow, Liability/Directors & Officers Insurance, Office Expenses, Bookkeeping Services, Staff Travel, and Miscellaneous expenses.

Denominational Relations: Includes Mid-States Conferences, General Assembly/Convention Escrow, Conference Ministers or other denominational meetings, Constituency Leaders Council

2025-2026 Spending Plan Income



Congregations: Makes up 73% of total spending plan

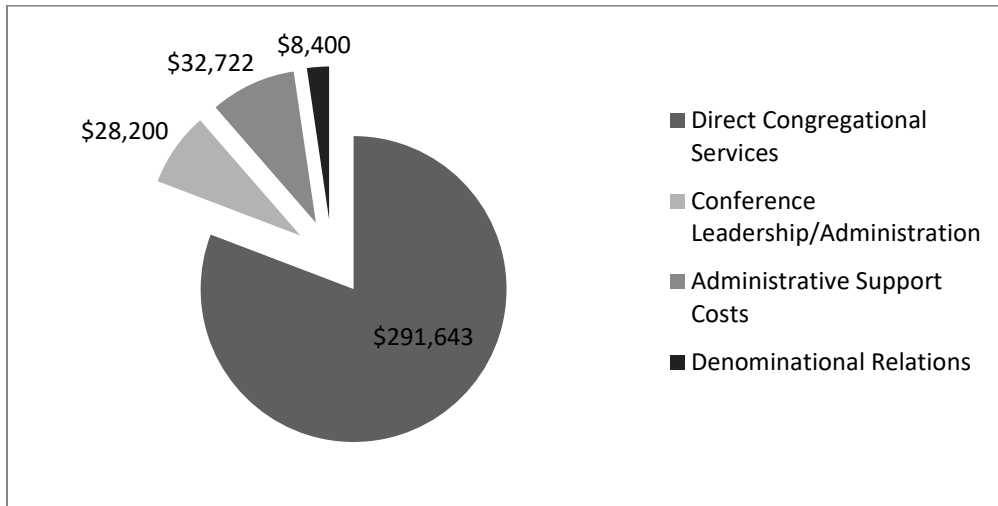
Additional Funding: Makes up 19% of total spending plan

Miscellaneous/Bequests: Makes up <0.4% of total spending plan

Revenues: Makes up 1.6% of total spending plan

Annual Meeting: Makes up 6% of total spending plan

2025-2026 Spending Plan Expenses



Direct Congregational Services: Makes up 81% of total spending plan

Conference Leadership/Administration: Makes up 8% of total spending plan

Administrative Support Costs: Makes up 9% of total spending plan

Denominational Relations: Makes up 2% of total spending plan

Central District Conference Congregational Contributions

Number of giving units (as reported in 2025) is in parentheses

*Dual Conference Congregations

Congregations	2025-2026 As of 3/31/26 9 months	2024-2025 12 months	2023-2024 12 months	2022-2023 12 months
Americus (13)	\$900.00	\$1,200.00	\$1,100.00	\$1,225.00
Ames (closed)				\$150.00
Ann Arbor*	\$500.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$500.00
Asian Mennonite Community Assembly (120)	\$16,500.00	\$21,250.00	\$19,875.00	\$11,227.50
Atlanta (13)	\$4,111.02	\$5,760.06	\$4,954.98	\$4,845.40
Chapel Hill (20)		\$3,500.00	\$3,500.00	\$2,000.00
Chicago Community (22)	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	
City Peace Church (30)	\$2,160.00	\$5,390.00	\$6,450.00	\$8,308.00
Columbus (115)	\$17,129.00	\$20,134.00	\$17,918.00	\$16,934.00
Community Mennonite*(12)	\$2,000.00		\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00
Covenant (56)	\$12,550.00	\$11,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$9,000.00
Eighth Street (99)	\$11,255.52	\$27,245.25	\$15,777.12	\$20,465.30
Emmanuel (8)	\$2,500.00	\$3,500.00	\$1,500.00	\$2,500.00
Emmaus Road (30)	\$3,640.00	\$3,640.00	\$2,730.00	\$3,640.00
Evanston* (8)	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00
Faith (29)	\$2,250.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00
First, Bluffton (139)	\$15,750.00	\$21,000.00	\$21,500.00	\$21,296.61
First, Chicago				
First, Sugarcreek (8)	\$1,500.00	\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00
First, Urbana* (59)	\$7,312.50	\$5,250.00	\$10,500.00	\$6,750.00
First, Wadsworth (25)	\$500.00	\$910.00	\$800.00	\$300.00
Florence (19)	\$1,000.00	\$2,864.51	\$1,500.00	\$1,400.00
Grace Mennonite (37)	\$7,200.00	\$9,600.00	\$9,750.00	\$8,347.50
Grand Rapids (6)	\$60.00	\$240.00	\$120.00	
Hively Avenue (29)	\$4,800.00	\$7,200.00	\$7,200.00	\$6,900.00
Joy Fellowship*				
Jubilee (5)	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$1,000.00
Keller Park (15)	\$750.00	\$1,500.00	\$2,250.00	\$4,000.00
Knoxville (10)	\$1,600.00	\$1,750.00		
Lima (15)	\$3,000.00	\$1,500.00	\$6,650.00	\$3,000.00
Madison (49)	\$13,380.00	\$8,920.00	\$10,000.00	\$7,750.00
Maplewood (29)	\$500.00	\$1,250.00	\$1,212.50	\$1,250.00

Congregations	2025-2026 As of 3/31/26 9 months	2024-2025	2023-2024 12 months	2022-2023 12 months
Mennonite Church of Normal (83)	\$14,812.74	\$23,424.42	\$16,549.08	\$15,999.99
Milwaukee (10)	\$796.40	\$1,687.55		
Morning Star*				
North Danvers (44)	\$1,000.00	\$3,162.00	\$1,240.00	\$2,025.00
Oak Grove* (97)	\$8,000.00	\$7,500.00	\$5,565.50	\$5,225.00
Open Table Mennonite Fellowship (6)	\$750.00	\$500.00	\$800.00	\$995.00
Paoli (23)	\$2,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$6,360.00	\$5,299.33
Peace (39)	\$4,281.14	\$3,812.88		
Raleigh (44)		\$6,400.00	\$2,430.00	\$5,100.00
Shalom Community (45)	\$1,650.00	\$1,650.00	\$1,650.00	\$6,750.00
Shalom Mennonite Congregation (90)	\$6,921.57	\$11,155.82	\$16,220.00	\$5,724.00
Silverwood (60)	\$8,100.00	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$13,500.00
Southside (29)	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
St Louis (17)	\$2,000.00	\$2,500.00	\$500.00	
St Paul (6)	\$600.00	\$600.00	\$670.00	\$670.00
Total	\$195,259.89	\$264,996.49	\$242,272.18	\$217,077.63



Conference Minister's Report 2026

Do we live in unprecedented times? Is this season more apocalyptic than another? Has ecological overshoot, a rise in political authoritarianism, drone warfare, sea level rise, widening economic disparity, genocide in Gaza, raging storms, wars in Ukraine, Iran and other areas, and other atrocities put us on the brink of an unprecedented era?

I recently read Brian McLaren's 2024 book, *Life After Doom: Wisdom and Courage for a World Falling Apart*. The words "Wisdom" and "Courage" especially caught my attention since our last CDC theme was "Listen! Wisdom is Calling," and our new theme is "Rise up! Take courage." And just as the old hymn, *God of Grace and God of Glory* pleads with God, "Grant us wisdom, grant us courage," so this seems like an appropriate prayer for this season. Where are we finding wisdom in the church today? How are we becoming courageous disciples of Jesus in a complex and intertwined world?

I'll share a few glimpses of wisdom and courage that I'm observing across CDC. My first observation is that we value rest. That may sound antithetical to "Rise up!" but we cannot rise up well unless we are centered, rested, and whole. I am grateful for the three-month sabbatical that I was given from November 9-February 16. And I know of several CDC pastors who recently returned from sabbatical or are embarking on sabbaticals soon. **Wisdom and courage invite us to care for our bodies and souls.**

Secondly, we are not alone. Few things make me happier in my ministry than hearing stories of pastors sharing ideas and supporting one another or when congregations partner together to learn, grow, share, and serve together. The "Rise Up! Take Courage Grant is an excellent example of congregations sharing resources across the conference to meet immediate needs. (Read the Missional Church and Matt Prichard's report for stories about this grant.) Another example of connecting is through our "Companion Congregations" project. Linking CDC congregations with congregations in Mennonite Church Manitoba is a great way to witness to the fact that God does not recognize national borders. I'd love to see six to ten more congregations build relationships with our Manitoba siblings. Ask First Mennonite, Bluffton and Mennonite Church of Normal about their experience. **Wisdom builds relationships.**

Courage leans into conflict. I'm a conflict avoidant person by nature. But I keep growing toward a recognition of conflict as an opportunity for honesty, prophetic witness, and greater self-understanding; self-understanding for both individuals and communities of faith. Whether there is conflict between a pastor and a lay leader, between two members of a congregation, or between a church and the broader community/culture, wisdom and courage are essential for the journey through conflict. When misconduct and boundary crossing happens in the church, Mennonite Church USA and CDC have people trained to assist. I am grateful that Kristin Sanken is our Church Safety Coordinator, working closely with MC USA staff when such conflicts arise. Matt and I are also available to talk with congregational leaders to assess and assist when

conflict arises. **Wisdom and courage invite reaching beyond ourselves to journey through conflict.**

I am grateful for the generosity of our congregations and individuals who support our spending plan. In my ten years as conference minister, I have not had to worry about having enough financial resources to cover our expenses. Not every conference in MC USA can say that! Through generosity, wise stewardship, and excellent staff, we are freed to engage in ministry without financial stress. One change that the board supported was my suggestion to move to 80% time beginning January 1, 2026. We will continue to monitor our staffing model to ensure we are serving the conference well. **Thank you for your wisdom and courage to support the ministry of CDC.**

Where are you noticing God's wisdom? How are you rising up in courage for the facing of this hour? Let's continue telling our stories, encouraging one another, and sharing our resources as we *Know Christ's Love...and Answer God's Call.*

--Doug Luginbill, Conference Minister



Associate Conference Minister's Report 2026

Central District Conference continues to experience a vibrant season marked by the flourishing of both established congregations and dynamic new faith communities dedicated to peace, justice, and inclusion. It is a joy to share some of the ways the Spirit is moving through the conference and how we are joining the work of Jesus in the world. I am proud of our ongoing work with emerging communities and excited as we continue to resource their work.

Empowering a Network of Thriving Emerging Communities of Peace: As Associate Conference Minister (working 1/3 time or about 15 hours a week), I support emerging faith communities and aid established congregations in their renewal efforts. A continuing focus has been searching for church communities within our geographical footprint who are theologically aligned with us and who aren't connected with a denomination.

Growing the Network: We are cultivating relationships and resourcing several emerging communities, celebrating major milestones this past year:

- **Moveable Feast (Chicago, IL):** Celeste Kennel-Shank Groff was officially commissioned in November. She has maintained a faithful presence despite a strong federal presence on her block, which even included tear gas.
- **The Intention Church (Online):** Celebrated its one-year anniversary and hosted its first in-person gathering at Follow Jesus 2025.
- **Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship (MI):** Alaina Dobkowski has been approved for licensing toward ordination. Furthermore, the fellowship has done the beautiful work of launching "Christians for Peace & Liberation," a space for monthly potlucks and justice work for neighbors committed to peace and liberation who haven't always had a spiritual home.
- **New Life Fellowship (Wayne Co, OH):** Noah Raines started the Journey Program and was officially approved for a license for specific ministry for the purpose of Church Planting. He will start the MDiv program at AMBS this autumn.
- **Expanding the Boundaries:** We welcomed existing emerging communities and leaders from Portland, ME and Flourish (Henderson, NC). We are in early explorations with a church community in Peru; potential community in Senioa, GA; and two potential Latine communities in Florida.

Collaboration & Resourcing: We continue working closely with Mennonite Mission Network's Chris Scott to clarify a new vision for denominational support of emerging communities.

We are also finding new ways to be "found" by kindred spirits. We are connecting with the Parish Collective and Trey Ferguson spoke at the Post-Evangelical Collective gathering to introduce us to a new circle of people who share our dedication to Jesus's justice and inclusion.

Additionally, I participated in the Reimagining MC USA Structure Review Task Group.

Central District Conference is making significant progress in its mission to cultivate a vibrant network of emerging "communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world!"

Report submitted by Matthew Pritchard

Church Safety Coordinator 2026



I began in the role as Coordinator of Church Safety and Conference Safety Liaison (CSL) on Oct. 15, 2025. I have a Masters of Social Work from Virginia Commonwealth University, and a Doctorate in Ministry from Western Theological Seminary. The title of my doctorate thesis was, "Maternal Inheritance: Interrogating the Divine in Stories of Intergenerational Trauma and Sexual Abuse." I currently live in Charlottesville, Virginia with my husband and two kids.

My responsibilities at Central District Conference include helping churches create or update abuse prevention policies, overseeing Healthy Boundaries training, coordinating the Annual Clergy Review process, providing training on church safety topics to credential leaders and congregations, and investigating pastoral misconduct on denomination-wide response teams.

In my position thus far, I have accomplished the following:

- provided policy guidance to Assembly Mennonite, Atlanta Mennonite, Chapel Hill Mennonite, Columbus Mennonite, Madison Mennonite, Southside Fellowship and Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship.
- created resources for churches to better understand the new "Prevention and Accountability" policy (see attached flyer for a breakdown of policies that help strengthen congregational health)
- completed Church Safety Liaison training through MC USA
- provided support to a church that had to implement their Safe Church policy because of a violation by a congregant
- been a part of a Response Team investigating two misconduct claims within CDC

A resource I have found valuable in my work with congregations is [Steps to Strengthen Congregational Health](#).

Report submitted by Kristin Sancken, Church Safety Coordinator

Ministerial Credential Report

June 1, 2025 – May 31, 2026

ORDINATIONS

- *Karla Minter, Open Table Mennonite Fellowship, June 1, 2025, by Doug Luginbill
- *Julia Schmidt, Faith Mennonite Church, August 17, 2025, by Doug Luginbill
- *Chaska Yoder, First Mennonite Church Bluffton, October 5, 2025, by Doug Luginbill
- *Brian Moll, Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship (City Peace Church), October 19, 2025, by Doug Luginbill
- *Georgia Metz, Shalom Mennonite Congregation, October 25, 2025, by Doug Luginbill
- *Paul Brubaker, Paoli Mennonite Fellowship, April 12, 2026, by Doug Luginbill
- *Ben Kreider, Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship, May 17, 2026 by Doug Luginbill
- *Joshua Richardson, St Louis Mennonite Fellowship, May 24, 2026 by Doug Luginbill

LICENSINGS

- *Alaina Dobkowski, Licensed Toward Ordination, Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship, Mar 22, 2026 by Doug Luginbill
- *Noah Raines, Licensed for Specific Ministry, New Life Fellowship, May 3, 2026 by Doug Luginbill

CREDENTIAL TRANSFERS

- *Rebecca Slough, College Mennonite Church to Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, July 23, 2025
- *Doug Zehr, Oak Grove Mennonite Church to Ohio Conference only, August 25, 2025
- *Miriam Zehr, Oak Grove Mennonite Church to Ohio Conference only, August 25, 2025
- *Neil Amstutz, Assembly Mennonite Church from Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, Sept 29, 2026
- *Doug Kaufman, Assembly Mennonite Church from Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, Sept 29, 2025
- *Stan Shantz, Covenant Mennonite Fellowship from Atlantic Coast Conference, March 2, 2026
- *Larry Augsburg, Maplewood Mennonite Church from Ohio Conference, April 1, 2026

INSTALLATIONS

- *Susan Scott, Raleigh Mennonite Church, August 17, 2025
- *Celeste Kennell-Shank Groff, Moveable Feast, commissioned on November 9, 2025
- *Stan Shantz, Covenant Mennonite Fellowship, April 19, 2026

CHANGE OF CREDENTIAL

- *Jim Egli, credential withdrawn, May 19, 2025
- *Melissa Florer-Bixler, from active to active without charge, Aug 1, 2025
- *Sandra Liechty, Recognition of Credential, September 23, 2025, Retired
- *Paul Brubaker, Paoli Mennonite Fellowship, license toward ordination extended to Dec 31, 2026 on Sept 30, 2025
- *Scott Coulter, Assembly Mennonite Church, license toward ordination extended to Dec 31, 2026 on Sept 30, 2025
- *Ben Kreider, Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship, license toward ordination extended to Dec 31, 2026 on Sept 30, 2025
- *Carolyn May, Jubilee Mennonite Church, license toward ordination extended to Dec 31, 2026 on Sept 30, 2025

- *Josh Richardson, St Louis Mennonite Fellowship, license toward ordination extended to Dec 31, 2026 on Sept 30, 2025
- *Jane Hooper Peifer, Shalom Mennonite Congregation, from active to retired, December 31, 2025
- *Stan Shantz, Covenant Mennonite Fellowship, from interim pastor to full pastor, April 19, 2026
- *Pratik Bagh, Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, license toward ordination extended to Dec 31, 2026 on April 29, 2026
- *Jodie Boyer Hatlem, Shalom Community Church, license toward ordination extended to Dec 31, 2026

RESIGNATIONS

- *Melissa Florer-Bixler, Raleigh Mennonite Church, July 31, 2025
- *Kay Bontrager-Singer, Faith Mennonite Church, Aug 31, 2025
- *Deb Sutter, First Mennonite Church Urbana, May 31, 2026

ANNIVERSARIES / SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL EVENTS

INTERIM / TRANSITIONAL PASTORS

- *Susan Scott, Raleigh Mennonite Church, August 17, 2025 -
- *Stan Shantz, Covenant Mennonite Fellowship, April 6, 2025 - April 19, 2026

RETIREMENTS

- *Jane Hooper Peifer, Shalom Mennonite Congregations, December 31, 2025
- *Pat Hostetter Martin, Shalom Mennonite Congregation, December 31, 2025
- *Deb Sutter, First Mennonite Church Urbana, May 31, 2026

DEATHS

- *Mark Weidner, September 27, 2025
- *Myron Schrag, December 6, 2025
- *Lillian Elias, January 18, 2026
- *Dean Heisey, May 25, 2026
- *Elmer Wall, May 26, 2026

CONGREGATIONAL TRANSITIONS

- *Mennonite Church of Normal from dual conference affiliation with Illinois Mennonite Conference to sole affiliation with Central District Conference, November 23, 2025

In Search Processes

- Maplewood Mennonite Church
- Mennonite Church of Normal

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
2024	Goshen College, College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana
2025	Bluffton University, Bluffton, Ohio
2026	Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia

Conference Presidents, 1957-2026

1957-	Lotus E Troyer	1997-1999	Stan Clemens
1958	Ernest J Bohn	1999-2001	Janeen Bertsche Johnson
1959-1960	Harry Yoder	2001-2003	Kevin Farnwald
1961-1962	Gordon J Neuenschwander	2003-2005	Mick Sommers
1963-1964	Jacob T Friesen	2005-2007	Alice Roth
1965-1966	Lorris A Habegger	2007-2009	Gordon Oyer
1967-1968	Claude F Boyer	2009-2011	Karl Shelly
1969-1970	Leonard Wiebe	2011-2013	Joyce Schumacher
1971-1973	Larry Voth	2013-2015	Ron Guengerich
1974	Lloyd L Ramseyer	2015-2017	Lisa Weaver
1975-1976	Howard Raid	2017-2019	Arman Habegger
1977-1978	James Dunn	2019-2021	Anna Yoder Schlabach
1979-1980	Roger Siebert	2021-2023	James Rissler
1981-1984	James Waltner	2023-2025	Jan Lugibihl
1985-1986	Vyron Schmidt	2025-2027	Joel Miller
1987-1988	Howard Baumgartner		
1989-1991	Ruth Naylor		
1991-1993	Jake Elias		
1993-1995	Barry Schmill		
1995-1997	Larry Wilson		

2026

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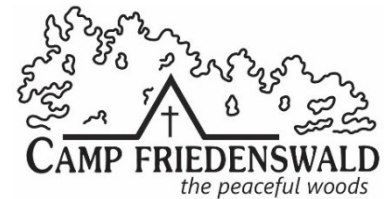


Part III

Conference Committee Reports

CDC Annual Report 2025

Submitted by Jenna Liechty Martin, executive director



The following highlights provide a glimpse into 2025 and illustrate the connections between Camp Friedenswald, Central District Conference, and its congregations.

- Throughout the year we honored and celebrated **Camp Friedenswald's 75th anniversary** through the collection of stories, a short film, and a weekend celebration at Builders Weekend. Camp was born out of a vision shared by leaders of the Middle District and Central Conference – the two conferences that merged to form Central District Conference.
- **Winter youth camps** brought together over 200 youth and sponsors from across the conference to explore "Sacred Connections." Congregations participating in these weekend retreats included: Assembly, Champaign-Urbana, Columbus, Eighth Street, Faith, FMC Bluffton, Keller Park, Milwaukee, Paoli, Silverwood, Southside Fellowship, and FMC Sugarcreek.
- Camp was the host site for the spring and fall **CDC board and leadership meetings**.
- Hospitality was extended to 11 CDC congregations for a time of retreat, worship, and/or baptism. Churches served included: Assembly, Eighth Street, Emmaus Road, Faith, Grace, Grand Rapids, Hively, Mennonite Church of Normal, Open Table, Silverwood, and Southside.
- We welcomed 729 campers (youth and family) in the summer of 2025, one of the highest numbers in recent history. **40% of youth campers came from 17 different CDC churches.**
- Of the 31-summer staff, 11 came from seven different CDC churches. Camp continues to be a place that **cultivates leadership gifts within young adults across CDC.**
- The 2025 summer theme was "**Wisdom of Trees: Instructions for Living.**" Camp pastors connected to CDC included: Moriah Hurst, Carrie Mast, Amiee & Jon Weishaupt, Janeen Bertsche Johnson, and Lisa Weaver.
- The **Campaign to Sustain Friedenswald** reached over \$2.7 million in gifts pledged or given, with the goals of increasing and improving staff housing; renovating lodges to meet guest/camper needs; improving energy efficiencies; growing endowment funds; and ultimately sustaining Camp's mission for the next 75 years!
- New signage was installed on Mail Trail, noting that the trail was once part of an extensive network of Indigenous trails in the region. Camp sits on **traditional land of the Potawatomi people.**
- Throughout the year, over \$36,000 in financial support was given by congregations in support of Camp Friedenswald. Additionally, over 800 days of volunteer time was given!

Thank you for being partners in ministry!



A new welcome sign names CDC's relationship with Camp.



Journey: A Missional Leadership Development Program

This year's Journey program includes twenty-one participants and twenty mentors in our English-language program and thirteen participants and five mentors in our Journey Southeast Asia program. Four participants are from Central District Conference: **Peter Eash-Scott** of Milwaukee Mennonite (mentor **Valerie Showalter**, Madison Mennonite), **Ardean Friesen** of Silverwood Mennonite (mentor **Jeremy Shue**, Silverwood Mennonite), **Noah Raines**, a church planter (mentor **Jeremy Shue**), and Amy Stauffer-McNutt of First Mennonite Church of Sugar Creek (mentor Kay Bontrager-Singer, Faith Mennonite Church - retired). In addition, we are pleased to have two Journey instructors from Central District Conference: **James Rissler** (Atlanta Mennonite Church) teaching Unit 2: The Biblical Story; and **Karla Minter** (Open Table Mennonite Fellowship) teaching Unit 4: Leadership: The Ministry of Reconciliation.

All Journey students and mentors gathered at Amigo Centre in Sturgis, Michigan, for the fall Weekend Learning Event. The event opened with a well attended and much appreciated optional spiritual retreat. Worship sessions laid the foundation for our time together and took place four times throughout the weekend. Learning sessions were led by Conference Minister **Doug Luginbill**, and focused on our being created in the image and imagination of God; additional activities included exploring spiritual disciplines and character formation for ministry; developing personal timelines, including significant points of spiritual and vocational growth; personality inventories; and exploring spiritual direction. Mentors participated in a mentoring workshop and mentors and mentees met together to develop and update their learning covenants, which help to guide them through the program.

In mid-September, participants joined online missional leadership development classes. As part of these studies, they carried out a 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 continue to meet bi-weekly in mentor-mentee pairs.

The winter Weekend Learning Event was held online (due to weather) from the AMBS campus January 23-25, 2026, with the theme, Anabaptism: A Way of Being Church, taught by **Jamie Pitts**, AMBS Professor of Anabaptist Studies (Hively Avenue Mennonite Church). The weekend also included worship sessions, mentor and mentee workshops, and work on learning covenants. During the Sunday morning worship time, mentees in their final year of the program, and their mentors, shared a reflection, and their conference minister or AMBS staff 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 **Lois Johns Kaufmann** (chair), **Gayle Gerber Koontz** (CDC Ministerial Committee representative), and **Doug Luginbill** for serving on the Journey Board.

Journey participants and alumni frequently tell us that Journey is a tremendous 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".

Jewel Gingerich Longenecker
Dean of Lifelong Learning

Ministerial Committee



Members: Brian Bolton (Shalom, Harrisonburg, PA), Kevin Chupp (Mennonite Church of Normal, IL), Gayle Gerber Koontz (chair; Assembly, Goshen, IN), Ruth Guengerich (Eighth Street, Goshen, IN), Robin Walton (Columbus Mennonite, OH), Matthew Yoder, (Grace, Pandora, OH), Doug Luginbill, Conference Minister (ex officio).

Implementation of revised MCUSA Safe Church Policy. Some of our work this year included reviewing the new procedures for reporting and investigating ethical and sexual abuses by church leaders in our district. We think the change that removes our conference minister from the awkward role of needing both to confront and support pastoral leaders in such situations is a significant improvement. We also welcomed Kristin Sanken as the new CDC Church Safety Coordinator. She met with our committee several times for relevant agenda items.

Credentialing of pastors and chaplains. This past year through March 2026 the Ministerial Committee completed seven interviews of candidates preparing for ordination and two interviews of candidates recommended for licensing toward ordination. Interviews typically take 90 minutes and provide an opportunity for Committee members to learn to know new CDC ministers and to encourage growth in their pastoral work.

Educational Debt and Clergy Development grants. This year we awarded the remaining \$32,000 in the Educational Debt Relief fund for pastors, the gift of two anonymous donors. Seven pastors expressed deep gratitude for this year's debt relief gifts. Twelve grants were given previously. In addition, we approved \$1200 in Clergy Development Grants. These grants supported such projects as personal spiritual retreats and an educational visit to a peace center.

Theological Education Graduates from CDC. We warmly congratulate 2025 Anabaptist Biblical Seminary graduate Melika Kauffman Hershberger (Mennonite Church of Normal, IL). Three additional graduates also attended CDC congregations while they were at seminary: Stephen Lowe (Assembly Mennonite), Daniel Nuerte (Hively Avenue) and Paul Banchasawan (Hively Avenue). Four CDC students are currently enrolled in the Journey program, but none are ready to graduate this year.

Doug Luginbill sabbatical. Since Doug is such an integral part of our committee, we put in place coverage for his Ministerial Committee work for the three months he was away, and we delayed as many credentialing interviews as we could during that time. Thanks to Matt Prichard, Emma Hartman, Kristin Sanken and Gayle Gerber Koontz for their extra assistance while Doug was away.

Submitted by Gayle Gerber Koontz, Committee Chair

Missional Church Committee



Members: *Alaina Dobkowski (Grand Rapids), Julia Gingrich (Eighth Street), Elizabeth Kelly (First Mennonite Bluffton), Josh Richardson (St Louis), César Moya (Emmanuel), Brian Sauder (First Mennonite Urbana), Krista Showalter (Shalom Mennonite Congregation), Matt Pritchard (The Intention Church) ex-officio*

Rise Up, Take Courage Mutual Aid Fund As our neighbors faced widening economic inequity and intensified immigration enforcement, the CDC Missional Church Committee launched the Rise Up, Take Courage Mutual Aid Fund—in just 24 hours.

We seeded this fund using our existing committee activities and grant budgets, promising to back up your courage with immediate, tangible resources. By processing emergency grants in less than a week, we have been able to respond at the speed of the need. The response has been incredible: in just four months, we distributed over \$20,000 to more than a dozen CDC congregations and assisted one congregation in leveraging other Mennonite resources to stretch their funds.

Across our conference, your generosity is doing so much more. We are:

- Keeping the lights and heat on at a new emergency winter homeless shelter, supported by a \$1,000 grant.
- Supplying groceries for community meals in a neighborhood recovering from the trauma of federal ICE raids.
- Providing snacks for youth after-school programs, canned goods for local food banks, and toiletries for our unhoused neighbors.
- Assisting with a \$1,050 grant for the Sola Gratia Farm Farmer's Market Initiative.

As faithful leaders, you are showing up for your vulnerable neighbors. But the requests for help haven't stopped. We urgently need your support to replenish the Rise Up, Take Courage Mutual Aid Fund so we can keep acting quickly. Please, help us embody God's justice and love. Send your donation to CDC today, marked "Rise Up, Take Courage."

Supporting Emerging Communities & Grant Updates Our work entails imagining the emerging future church. It can be messy and ambiguous, experimenting with new models of being a Peace Church.

This year, we actively supported these new models by renewing Emerging Communities Grants for The Intention Church, Moveable Feast, and Imagine Cincinnati. We also approved an \$8,000 grant for Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship's third year in the program as they take solid steps toward sustainability.

Beyond our emerging communities, we approved a \$2,500 Reign of God Grant to support a Reparations Summit hosted collaboratively by Assembly Mennonite Church, Eighth Street Mennonite Church, and Hively Avenue Mennonite Church.

Reflections We witnessed congregations stepping up in incredible ways and we clearly see God moving through themes of justice and reparations, activism and political formation, and a deepening connection to our natural environment.

Submitted by Elizabeth Kelly, Chair

Church/Minist	Awarded	How will the funds be used?
Ann Arbor Mennonite	\$1,000	Food and toiletries to homeless and low income families. Snacks for an after school program in at-risk neighborhood.
City Peace Church	\$2,000	Materials to fit out a full bathroom in a studio apartment for respite/transitional housing for homeless families with school-age children. (The Missional Church Committee assisted CPC in partnering with local MDS volunteers that provided labor for this project.)
Columbus Mennonite	\$2,000	Funds will be given directly to families we know to pay rent and utilities bills. Primarily to support immigrant households that have lost jobs or permits to work or fear leaving home.
Community Mennonite	\$375	Essential plumbing repairs for disabled senior household.
Community Mennonite	\$628	Essential heating repairs for disabled senior household.
Eighth Street Mennonite Church	\$500	Center for Healing & Hope, a church-based ministry providing a variety of services primarily to immigrants in our community, is working with churches to provide locally sourced, prepared, frozen meals for community members in need. Goal of providing 200-300 meals. Vouchers for frozen meals and/or local food pantries will be given to low-income patients and immigrant clients that come to Center for Healing & Hope for other services.
Eighth Street	\$500	Partial funding to secure the support of local lawyer to help detained parent with legal process.
First Menno of C-U	\$1,000	Fund one month of utility costs (\$1000) for a new winter homeless shelter to remain open thru April when average low temperatures increase above 40 degrees. Budget is currently \$65,000 short to reach goal of Nov '25 - Apr '26 housing.
First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana	\$1,050	Besides partnering with the Eastern Illinois Foodbank, our local food bank, and several food pantries to distribute the food they produce, Sola Gratia is establishing a new program with the Urbana Farmers' Market held every Saturday during the growing season. At the end of the day, farmers can donate extra produce that Sola Gratia will store and then deliver to the Eastern Illinois Foodbank on Monday. \$35 a week for 30 weeks will cover some of the cost of the labor and transportation to salvage hundreds of pounds of fresh vegetables during the growing season.
Grand Rapids Mennonite	\$500	We would be providing direct support to the detainee's family to help with the medical costs.
Keller Park Church	\$1,995.00	Our church has a separate building available for housing. The furnace is not working and it is in queue for repair. It would not be safe to house someone in this season without a working furnace. Requested funds would allow us to: Fix the furnace this week or next week, buy a bed (we gave the other bed to the last resident when she was able to move to permanent housing), buy a new stove (there is a hookup but no stove), buy a compact washer and dryer for self-sufficiency, help with transportation to stable employment 30 minutes from the job. Any left over will help pay for other things needed in the house or help with utilities.
Lima Mennonite	\$1,900	Rent for a person who has no documentation papers and cannot work. \$600 Others who have lost their jobs and have no income. Children needing warm cloths and blankets.
Lima Mennonite	\$1,010	The funds applied for will be used specifically to pay for the filing fee the appeal of this case in the courts. Without the appeal they are at risk for immediate deportation. This money is a reimbursement to a firm that has already paid the fee that our church has committed to.
Lima Mennonite	2500	Helping with food costs, housing rental cost, and travel costs as requests become known.

Moveable Feast Chicago	\$1,900	\$350 would cover the groceries for our next community meal, on December 5, and \$350 would cover groceries for our January meal. \$300 would be a generous contribution toward the food for the Albany Park Defense Network holiday gathering with neighbors directly affected by ICE-CBP raids, planned for later in December. \$450 could go to the Chicago Food Sovereignty Coalition. \$450 to Global Gardens Chicago.
Paoli Mennonite	\$2,000	The funds will be used to provide one-half of her monthly rental fee, with Zaituni, our Congolese neighbor, paying the other half of the rent.
Shalom Mennonite	\$2,300	COSPU will use it to put an immigration lawyer skilled in immigration appeals on retainer for the Olman family.
St. Louis Mennonite Fellowship	\$1,380	The family had previously applied for asylum and have now applied for work permits via a local social service agency. We have provided them rent assistance, and covered their work permit application costs, which total \$1380. We plan to accompany them when the work permit is processed and have to go to an ICE facility in St. Louis to give their biometric information as the next step, which is a high-risk event. We are seeking reimbursement for the expenses related to legal support.
Total	\$24,538	

2026

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Part IV

Reports from Related Institutions



Delegate Assembly



Biennial Convention, Greensboro, North Carolina



Women's Summit, Greensboro, North Carolina

MC USA seeks to equip conferences and congregations for faithful witness, so God's healing and hope can flow through us into the world. We remain rooted in Jesus, centered in community and committed to reconciliation.

Reimagining Our Future Together

In 2025, we launched the “[Reimagining MC USA](#)” initiative, a journey to face challenges within today's faith landscape, reimagine our structure, and engage congregations in shaping a hopeful, Christ-centered future together. Our four strategic priorities are governance, organizational structure, agency relationships and mission alignment. This work aims to strengthen the interconnectedness among agencies, conferences and congregations so that we can combine resources to do together what none of us can do alone.

Delegate Assembly: Equipping the Church for Tomorrow

More than 350 delegates gathered in Greensboro, North Carolina, for our biennial Delegate Assembly. In a spirit of hope, delegates approved key measures to equip the church for faithful ministry, including:

- Adopting a churchwide [Abuse Prevention and Response](#) resolution that established one uniform policy across MC USA.
- Approving [bylaw changes](#) drawing Mennonite educational institutions more fully into our shared structure and strengthening alignment between educational priorities and denominational mission.
- Reaffirming our commitment to immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers through an [updated churchwide statement](#).

Faith Formation: An Intergenerational Witness

More than [1,640 people gathered](#) for the 2025 MC USA Biennial Convention, our highest attendance in three conventions and our most ethnically diverse convention to date. Young people filled worship services and seminars to overflowing, engaging Scripture deeply and claiming their place in the church. Convention remains a sacred space where faith becomes personal and communal — forming communities of love and service.

The [Women's Summit](#), held alongside Convention, gathered 185 women for worship, storytelling and leadership development. The intergenerational setting amplified younger voices and strengthened networks of support for women in ministry.

Renewed Commitments

- Follow Jesus
- Witness to God's peace
- Experience transformation

Church Vitality

MC USA's Church Vitality team empowers and equips the church every day through:

- [Abuse prevention and response](#)
- [Hispanic Ministries](#)
- [Well-being in ministry](#)
- [Pastoral support](#)
- [Congregational support](#)

Learn more [here](#).



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Mennonite Church USA

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Mujeres en el liderazgo



Junta Ejecutiva de MC USA



Personal de MC USA

Al reflexionar sobre el año 2024, agradecemos las abundantes bendiciones que Dios nos ha concedido y las maneras en que, como Iglesia Menonita de EE. UU. (MC USA por sus siglas en inglés), continuamos llevando a la práctica nuestros [Compromisos renovados](#) de seguir a Jesús, ser testigos de la paz de Dios y experimentar el poder transformador del Espíritu Santo. Juntos y juntas, vivimos plenamente nuestra misión como denominación que equipa, empodera e inspira.

Vitalidad de la Iglesia: equipar congregaciones saludables

En 2024, el equipo de Vitalidad de la Iglesia trabajó diligentemente para nutrir congregaciones prósperas y apoyar a pastores/as y líderes. Desde herramientas prácticas como los [lineamientos para salarios pastorales](#) y el programa de cuidado de la salud [El Plan de Corinto](#), hasta iniciativas como nuestros recursos de [Bienestar en el ministerio](#), continuamos priorizando la salud de nuestras iglesias y el bienestar de quienes las sirven.

Nuestro [Ministerio de Iglesia Segura](#) empodera a las comunidades de fe para priorizar la seguridad de la infancia, juventud y adultez vulnerable. La participación en nuestros seminarios en línea y del currículo actualizado Círculo de Gracia alcanzó nuevos niveles, extendiéndose aún más allá de nuestra denominación. Además, introdujimos las revisiones de antecedentes para as y voluntarios/as de la iglesia, manifestando nuestro compromiso con espacios seguros para la adoración y el ministerio.

A través de nuestras [donaciones para la plantación de iglesias prósperas](#), brindamos apoyo económico para cinco iglesias misionales de paz nuevas, derribando así las barreras que encuentran las plantaciones de iglesias para proclamar el evangelio e involucrarse con sus comunidades.

Además, lanzamos dos *podcasts* nuevos: [“Lead/Follow”](#) (Liderar/Seguir) con el director ejecutivo Glen Guyton, en el cual líderes exploran cómo seguir a Jesús con valentía, y [“The Competent Pastor”](#) (El Pastor competente), presentado por Michael Danner y Rachel Ringenberg Miller, de Vitalidad de la Iglesia, que ofrece sabiduría práctica para pastores/as.

Paz y justicia: llevar a la práctica los valores de fe anabautista

Como Iglesia de paz histórica, MC USA continúa liderando el camino en la no violencia y la justicia. A través de nuestras [“campañas de “Aprende, ora, únete”](#) en 2024, educamos a congregaciones sobre la justicia climática y la transformación del conflicto, haciendo un llamado a conectar la fe y la acción.

Nuestros compromisos

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

Vitalidad de la Iglesia

El equipo de Vitalidad de la Iglesia de MC USA empodera y equipa a la iglesia todos los días, de distintas maneras:

- Lineamientos para los salarios pastorales.
- Recursos sobre el bienestar en el ejercicio del ministerio.
- El Plan de Corinto de cuidado de la salud para trabajadores de la iglesia.

Conozca más aquí.



MenoTicias, el nuevo magazine digital en español de MC USA y Ministerios Hispánicos de la Agencia



Be local. Be global. Be the Gospel.

When the people of God take Jesus' call to live lives of peace seriously, there is hope.

In the midst of war and strife, God is still at work, and we are committed to joining in that work. Here are some ways you can join in, too:



Partner with workers across the street and around the world through financial support. Contact KarenH@MennoniteMission.net to support workers financially.



Support Mission Network ministries and workers by becoming a prayer partner. Visit our website to join in: MennoniteMission.net/Prayer.



Explore which service options might be the best fit for adults and youth in your congregation: MennoniteMission.net/Serve.



Learn about social justice through a spiritual lens by participating in a Just Peace Pilgrimage: MennoniteMission.net/JustPeace.



"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10, NIV). It is a joy for us to partner with you in doing the good works we were created to do. Your gifts of prayer, engagement and financial contributions are essential for supporting our workers, service programs, participants, educational training and materials, and our global partnerships. It is a blessing for us to continue walking with you in this shared ministry work.

Marisa Smucker
Marisa Smucker, Executive Director



Thank you for your generous support of Mission Network's work. Blessings to each congregation and your ministries!

Eric Frey Martin
Eric Frey Martin,
Director of Learning and Engagement

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

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

Central District Conference partnership

Note: Underlined words indicate active links.

Worker support around the world



Worker support

- Delicia Bravo Aguilar and Peter Wigginton**, serving in Quito, Ecuador
 » Lima Mennonite Church
 » Paoli Mennonite Fellowship
- Joseph and Rachel Givens**, serving in Calais, France
 » Grace Mennonite Church
 » Maplewood Mennonite Church
- Toni and Matthew Krabill**, serving in Accra, Ghana
 » Oak Grove Mennonite Church
 » Eighth Street Mennonite Church
 » Silverwood Mennonite Church

- Christy Harrison and Peter Sensenig**, serving in Montbéliard, France
 » Atlanta Mennonite Church
 » First Mennonite Church, Wadsworth, Ohio
- Barbara Thuma**, served at *La Casa Grande*, Benin (self-funded)
 » Maplewood Mennonite Church
- Kate Widmer**, serving in Montbéliard, France
 » Oak Grove Mennonite Church
- Ben and Laurel Woodward-Breckbill**, serving in Paris, France
 » First Mennonite Church, Bluffton, Ohio

Service participants



Service sites

- Mennonite Voluntary Service unit**
 » [Chicago, Illinois](#)
- SOOP site**
 » [Camp Friedenswald](#)

Just Peace Pilgrimage

- Christ at the Borders, Calais France
 » **Barbara Thuma**
 » **Matthew Yoder**
- Christ at the Borders, Arizona
 » **Christ at the Border**
- Civil Rights Pilgrimage
 » **Marta Bergstresser**
 » **Emilia Martin**
 » **Alicia McLeod**
 » **Jordy Miller**
 » **Kyan Miller**
 » **Selah Potsander**
 » **Julia Schmidt**
 » **Ezra Tice**

- Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples, Bluff, Utah
 » **Julie and Philip Hart**
 » **Krisann and Scott Applegate**
 » **Conrad and Rachel Gratz**
- Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples, Yakima Valley, Washington
 » **Ruth Kauffmann**

SOOP

- Gayle and Ted Koontz**, Tucson, Arizona
Mary Yoder, Tucson, Arizona
Cindy and Tim Luginbill, Brooksville, Florida
John and Kay Reimer, Gotha, Florida
Kathy and Keith Spinger, San Antonio, Texas

Youth Venture

- » **Cade and Greta Rempel Fisher**, Zurich Switzerland
 » **Lydia Esh**, Zurich Switzerland
 » **Wyatt Fisher**, Zurich Switzerland

Prayer partners

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Congregational giving to Mission Network



From August 1, 2024, to July 31, 2025, Central District Conference congregations contributed **\$155,744** to Mission Network. **Thank you!**

Sé local. Sé global. Sé el evangelio.

Cuando el pueblo de Dios toma en serio el llamado de Jesús a vivir vidas de paz, hay esperanza.

En medio de guerras y conflictos, Dios sigue obrando y nosotros nos comprometemos a unirnos a él en su labor. Estas son algunas formas en que Ud. también puede unirse:



Participe con obreros/as del otro lado de la calle y alrededor del mundo apoyándoles económicamente. Contáctese con KarenH@MennoniteMission.net para brindar su ayuda económica.



Apoye los ministerios de la Red de Misión y sus obreros/as como compañero de oración. Visite nuestro sitio web para unirse: MennoniteMission.net/Prayer.



Conozca las opciones de servicio más adecuadas para los adultos y jóvenes de su congregación: MennoniteMission.net/Serve.



Aprenda sobre la justicia social mirando a través de una lente espiritual al participar en un Peregrinaje por la Paz Justa: MennoniteMission.net/JustPeace.



“Porque somos hechura de Dios, creados en Cristo Jesús para buenas obras, las cuales Dios dispuso de antemano a fin de que las pongamos en práctica” (Efesios 2:10, NVI). Es una alegría para nosotros llevar adelante junto a ustedes las buenas obras para las cuales fuimos creados.

Su colaboración en forma de oración, compromiso y apoyo económico es esencial para sostener a nuestros obreros, los programas de servicios, los participantes, la capacitación educativa y los materiales, y nuestras coparticipaciones globales. Es una bendición para nosotros continuar caminando junto a ustedes en este ministerio compartido.

Marisa Smucker, Directora Ejecutiva



Estamos agradecidos por su generosa colaboración con el trabajo de la Red de Misión. ¡Bendiciones para cada congregación y sus ministerios!

Eric Frey Martin,
Director de Formación y Participación

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

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

Coparticipación Conferencia Central District

Nota: Las palabras subrayadas indican enlaces activos.

Apoyo a obreros/as alrededor del mundo



Delicia Bravo Aguilar y Peter Wigginton, sirven en Quito, Ecuador
» Lima Mennonite Church
» Paoli Mennonite Fellowship

Joseph y Rachel Givens, sirven en Calais, Francia
» Grace Mennonite Church
» Maplewood Mennonite Church

Toni y Matthew Krabill, sirven en Accra, Ghana
» Oak Grove Mennonite Church
» Eighth Street Mennonite Church
» Silverwood Mennonite Church

Christy Harrison y Peter Sensenig, sirve en Montbéliard, Francia
» Atlanta Mennonite Church
» First Mennonite Church, Wadsworth, Ohio

Barbara Thuma, sirvió en La Casa Grande, Benín (autofinanciada)
» Maplewood Mennonite Church

Kate Widmer, sirve en Montbéliard, Francia
» Oak Grove Mennonite Church

Ben y Laurel Woodward-Breckbill, sirven en Paris, Francia
» First Mennonite Church, Bluffton, Ohio

Comprometidos en oración

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Participantes y lugares de servicio



Sitios de Servicio Cristiano
Unidad de Mennonite Voluntary Service (Servicio Voluntario Menonita)
» Chicago, Illinois

Sitio de SOOP
» Camp Friedenswald

Just Peace Pilgrimage (Peregrinaje por la Paz Justa)

Peregrinaje de Cristo en las fronteras — Calais, Francia
» **Barbara Thuma**
» **Matthew Yoder**

Peregrinaje de Cristo en las fronteras — Arizona
» **Christ at the Border**

Peregrinaje por los derechos civiles
» **Marta Bergstresser**
» **Emilia Martin**
» **Alicia McLeod**
» **Jordy Miller**
» **Kyan Miller**
» **Selah Potsander**
» **Julia Schmidt**
» **Ezra Tice**

Solidaridad con los pueblos originarios — Bluff, Utah
» **Julie y Philip Hart**
» **Krisann y Scott Applegate**
» **Conrad y Rachel Gratz**

Solidaridad con los pueblos originarios — Valle de Yakima, Washington
» **Ruth Kauffmann**

SOOP (Oportunidades de Servicio con Nuestros Hermanos)
Gayle y Ted Koontz, Tucson, Arizona
Mary Yoder, Tucson, Arizona
Cindy y Tim Luginbill, Brooksville, Florida
John y Kay Reimer, Gotha, Florida
Kathy y Keith Spinger, San Antonio, Texas

Youth Venture (Jóvenes Aventureros/as)
» **Cade y Greta Rempel Fisher**, Zúrich, Suiza
» **Lydia Esh**, Zúrich, Suiza
» **Wyatt Fisher**, Zúrich, Suiza

Aporte congregacional a la Red Menonita



Desde el 1 de agosto de 2024 hasta el 31 de julio de 2025, las congregaciones de la Conferencia Menonita de Indiana-Michigan contribuyeron \$155.744 a la Red de Misión. ¡Gracias!

"People plan their path, but the Lord secures their steps."

– Proverbs 16:9 (CEB)

Your stewardship ministry journey. Let's go.

Everence 2026 report

Central District Conference
Annual Meeting
June 25-27, 2026

80 years of stewardship ministry

Last year marked a milestone for Everence® – 80 years of mutual aid, stewardship, and a commitment to the belief that all that we are and all that we have belong to God.

Throughout 2025, we reflected on our origins. In 1945, our organization was created to help church members carry out the historic Anabaptist tradition of sharing financial hardships with one another through mutual support.

This year, we look to the journey ahead, ready to continue our work of supporting churches and their members as they find effective ways to be more generous and develop meaningful stewardship ministries with faith-driven resources and expertise.

Let's chart your stewardship ministry, together. Learn more at everence.com/churches.



A lasting impact through Sharing Funds

The Everence Sharing Fund is a long-standing part of our commitment to helping our clients and members through difficult times.

Each year, the Sharing Fund helps churches provide their members with financial assistance during personal hardships through matching grants. Since 2019, Everence has distributed nearly \$6 million in Sharing Fund grants, with churches making additional matches, multiplying our collective impact.

To learn more about how your church can qualify for Sharing Fund grants or to donate, visit everence.com/sharing-fund.

MyNeighbor card is generous faith in action



It's easy to make a difference with the MyNeighbor credit card from Everence Federal Credit Union.

The program offers a unique opportunity for individuals – like your church staff or members – to contribute to their church or favorite nonprofit each time they use their card. For every grocery, gas or other purchase you make with your MyNeighbor card, Everence will donate 1.5% of the transaction total to your selected Neighbor the following year.

Since 2017, Everence Federal Credit Union has donated \$3.3 million through the MyNeighbor program. Learn more at everence.com/myneighbor.

Charitable services for congregations

Wherever your church is headed, Everence Charitable Services is ready to join you on your journey. There are many generous ways your members can financially support your church's ministries, and Everence can partner with you to inspire and encourage a wide variety of unique gifts.

With help from our stewardship consultants, you can develop a meaningful stewardship plan of education events and tools to support your church's future and your members over the long term. We can also work with your church to establish, grow and manage its endowment fund. To learn more, talk to your Everence stewardship consultant or visit everence.com/churches.



*“El ser humano proyecta su camino,
pero es el Señor quien dirige sus
pasos.”*

– Proverbios 16:9 (BLPH)

El viaje hacia la mayordomía de su ministerio. ¡Adelante!

Informe de Everence 2026

Conferencia del Distrito Central
Reunion anual
25 a 27 de junio de 2026

80 años de mayordomía ministerial

El año pasado marcó un gran hito para Everence® ya que cumplimos 80 años de brindar ayuda mutua, responsabilidad y compromiso a nuestra creencia de que todo lo que somos y todo lo que tenemos le pertenece a Dios.

A lo largo de 2025, reflexionamos sobre nuestros orígenes. En 1945, nuestra organización se creó para ayudar a miembros de iglesias a llevar a cabo la histórica tradición anabaptista de compartir las dificultades económicas entre sí a través del apoyo mutuo.

Este año, vemos hacia el futuro y estamos listos para continuar nuestro trabajo de seguir brindando apoyo a las iglesias y a sus miembros al encontrar formas efectivas de ser más generosos y desarrollar ministerios con mayordomía significativa, llena de recursos y experiencia basada en la fe.

Avancemos juntos en esta jornada de mayordomía. Para más información, visite everence.com/churches.



Un impacto duradero a través de los Fondos Compartidos

El Fondo Compartido de Everence es una parte duradera de nuestro compromiso de ayudar a nuestros clientes y miembros en tiempos difíciles.

Cada año, el Fondo Compartido apoya a las iglesias con ayuda financiera a sus miembros que están pasando momentos de dificultades personales a través de subvenciones equivalentes. Desde 2019, Everence ha distribuido casi \$6 millones en subvenciones del Fondo Compartido con iglesias que han hecho aportaciones adicionales, lo cual multiplica nuestro impacto colectivo.

Para saber más sobre cómo su iglesia puede optar a subvenciones del Fondo Compartido o para hacer una donación, visite everence.com/sharing-fund.

La tarjeta MyNeighbor es fe en acción



Con nuestra tarjeta de crédito MyNeighbor de Everence Federal Credit Union, es fácil hacer un impacto positivo.

El programa ofrece una oportunidad única para que las personas — como su personal o los miembros de su iglesia — contribuyan a su iglesia u organización sin fines de lucro favorita cada vez que usen su tarjeta. Por cada gasto en comida, gasolina u otra compra que realice con su tarjeta MyNeighbor, Everence donará el 1.5% del total de la transacción a su organización preferida el año siguiente.

Desde 2017, Everence Federal Credit Union ha donado \$3.3 millones a través del programa MyNeighbor. Para más información, visite everence.com/myneighbor.

Servicios benéficos para congregaciones

Cualquier meta que tenga en mente para su iglesia, Everence está listo para brindarle apoyo a través de sus servicios caritativos. Hay muchas formas generosas en las que sus miembros pueden apoyar económicamente los ministerios de su iglesia, y Everence puede colaborar usted para inspirar a sus miembros y fomentar una gran variedad de dones únicos.

Con la ayuda de nuestros consultores de mayordomía, usted puede desarrollar un plan significativo de mayordomía con eventos educativos y herramientas para apoyar el futuro de su iglesia y de sus miembros a largo plazo. También podemos trabajar con su iglesia para establecer, hacer crecer y gestionar su fondo de dotación. Para obtener más información, hable con su consultor de mayordomía de Everence o visite everence.com/churches.



2026 Report to Central District Conference

Submitted by Karen Lehman, President/CEO

AQORD Mission

Our mission is to inspire, strengthen, and advance the effectiveness of values-aligned health and human service organizations.

AQORD is a network of 105 Anabaptist and Quaker health and human services ministries located throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. AQORD has members in the following states where CDC congregations are located:

- Indiana
- Illinois
- Michigan
- Ohio
- Florida
- Virginia

Activities

- As of January 1, 2026, the associations of MHS and FSA merged to form one organization, taking on the name AQORD. This merger brings together both Anabaptist and Quaker non-profit health and human service member organizations, creating greater value for the whole of membership.
- The 2026 annual conference will be held March 24 – 26 in Indianapolis, IN. This conference is hosted in conjunction with four sister associations. For more information and to register, please [visit the AQORD website](#).
- AQORD provides monthly webinars on a variety of topics. The 2026 themes include leadership & governance, culture & employee engagement, and industry trends. All upcoming webinars can be found [here](#) on the AQORD website.
- AQORD members continue to utilize our tools and resources to support their ministries. For a breakdown of member services, please [visit our website](#).
- [AQORD Consulting](#) continues to serve AQORD members and nonmembers in the health and human services arena, primarily providing resources in governance, executive search, executive coaching, interim placement, and strategic planning and positioning.
- AQORD leadership, along with member CEOs, is willing to provide education and information on a variety of topics such as behavior/mental health, developmental disabilities, planning for retirement, governance, and leadership.
- The AQORD Board of Directors and AQORD Staff continue to advance diversity, equity, justice, and inclusion initiatives.

For Reflection and Prayer

- Continued prayer for AQORD members facing significant funding concerns and instability due to government funding requirements and changes. Many AQORD member organizations serve vulnerable populations across the country.
- We are grateful for the financial gifts, gifts in kind, prayer, and volunteer support to AQORD member organizations.

Anabaptist Disabilities Network

Annual Report for the year ending January 31, 2026

Serving the Anabaptist Community:

- **Ministers' Continuing Education Event, Dinner Event, and Workshop** – Church of the Brethren Annual Conference 2025
- **Workshops and Worship Panel** at Mennonite Church USA Convention 2025
- **Workshops** at National Older Adult Conference, Ventures (McPherson College), Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board
- **Webinar** on Estate Planning with Everence and a disability trust lawyer
- **Camp KIND** with Amigo Centre for disabled children and their families
- **All In Project**—worship for everybody, funded through Lily Endowment

Resourcing Congregations:

- **Consulting, preaching, teaching** in 8 congregations
- **Barrier Free Grants:** 11 grants for congregations to increase their accessibility
- **God's First People Bible Study** curriculum created for adults with intellectual disabilities covering stories from the Old Testament.
- **Worship for the Whole Body** a resource created by Disability Ministries Network and Baylor University with input from ADN congregations.



Sharing Your Stories:

- **Connections Newsletter**
 - Blindness, Spring 2025
 - Summer Update 2025
 - International Partners, Fall 2025
- **Opening Doors Blog** stories of belonging, tips for inclusion

Be Involved

- **Become a Partner Congregation**
 - Designate a **congregational disability advocate** in your congregation.
 - Donate as a **partner** (\$100) or **sustaining partner** (\$500-1000) congregation
- **Donate as an individual** – any amount is helpful
 - Become a **Bethesda Partner** (\$1000/year) or **Leader** (\$2500/year)



Staff

Jeanne Davies, Executive Director
Chika Sunoto, Office Administrator
Sarah Werner, Communications Director
Keli Boyer, All In Project Director

Board

Mitch Stutzman, President
Laura Stone, Vice President
Lyle Miller, Secretary
Chris Stauffer, Treasurer

Jon-Erik Misz, **Emily Krabill**
Rebekah Flores
Karen McKeever
Jonathan Shively

Financial Summary:

Income:	\$404,431	Expenses:	\$241,171	Assets (End of Year): \$227,945
Individual Contributions	\$108,350	Staffing	\$155,842	Operating Fund:
Congregational Contributions ...	\$21,510	Barrier Free Grants	\$5,225	Lilly Grant Fund:
Foundation grants	\$3,500	Resources & Other	\$80,104	Reserve Fund:
MHS Association/Lilly	\$264,165			
Other Income	\$6,906			

Anabaptist Disabilities Network

Informe anual para el año finalizado el 31 de enero 2026

Sirviendo a la comunidad anabautista:

- **Evento de Educación Continua para Ministros, cena y taller** – Conferencia Anual Church of the Brethren 2025
- **Talleres y Panel de Adoración** en la Convención de la Iglesia Menonita USA 2025
- **Talleres** en la Conferencia Nacional de Adultos Mayores, Ventures (McPherson College), Misión y Junta Directiva para el Ministerio de Church of the Brethren
- **Seminario web** sobre planificación patrimonial con Everence y un abogado especializado en fideicomisos por discapacidad
- **Campamento KIND** con el Amigo Centre para niños con discapacidad y sus familias
- **Proyecto All In** – adoración para todos, financiado a través de Lily Endowment

Recursos congregacionales:

- **Consultoría, predicación y enseñanza** en 8 congregaciones
- **Subvenciones Barrier Free:** 11 subvenciones para congregaciones con el fin de aumentar su accesibilidad
- **El Estudio Bíblico de los Primeros Pueblos de Dios** creado para adultos con discapacidad intelectual que abarca historias del Antiguo Testamento.
- **Worship for the Whole Body**, un recurso creado por Disability Ministries Network y la Universidad de Baylor con aportaciones de congregaciones ADN.



Compartiendo tus historias:

- **Boletín de Conexiones**
 - Ceguera, primavera 2025
 - Actualización de verano 2025
 - International Partners, otoño 2025
- **Historias de pertenencia en el blog Opening Doors**, consejos para la inclusión



Participa

- **Conviértete en una congregación asociada**
 - Designa a un **promotor congregacional de discapacidad** en tu congregación.
 - Dona en nuestro nivel de **socio** (\$100) o **socio sostenedor** (\$500-\$1,000)
- **Dona en nuestro nivel de individuo** – cualquier cantidad es útil
 - Conviértete en **socio de Bethesda** (\$1,000/año) o **líder** (\$2,500/año)

Personal

Jeanne Davies, Directora Ejecutiva
Chika Sunoto, Administradora de Oficina
Sarah Werner, Directora de Comunicaciones
Keli Boyer, Directora del Proyecto All In

Junta

Mitch Stutzman, Presidente
Laura Stone, Vicepresidente
Lyle Miller, Secretario
Chris Stauffer, Tesorero

Jon-Erik Misz, **Emily Krabill**
Rebekah Flores
Karen McKeever
Jonathan Shively

Resumen financiero:

Ingresos:	\$404,431	Gastos:	\$241,171	Activos (fin de año): ..	\$227,945
Contribuciones individuales	\$108,350	Personal	\$155,842	Fondo operativo:.....	\$29,563
Contribuciones congregacionales ..	\$21,510	Subvenciones Barrier Free	\$5,225	Fondo de subvenciones Lilly:	\$158,802
Subvenciones de la fundación	\$3,500	Recursos y otros	\$80,104	Fondo de reserva:	\$39,580
Asociación MHS/Lilly	\$264,165				
Otros ingresos	\$6,906				

Report to Central District Conference

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 Global Anabaptism*
- Master of Arts: Theology and Peace Studies
- Doctor of Ministry in Leadership*
- Graduate Certificate in Ecotheology*
- Graduate Certificate in Spiritual Direction*
- Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies* (choose your own courses)
- Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies (Spanish)*
- Journey Missional Leadership Development Program* (undergraduate-level certificate)

ams.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!

ams.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

- Practical Leadership Training modules*
- Online Short Courses*: four to six weeks, discussion-based, noncredit (no grades, no papers!)
- Invite AMBS*: request a speaker (in person or online)
- Pastors & Leaders conference*: Feb. 22–25, 2027

Offerings of one to two years

- Transition to Leadership*: program for new pastors
- Ministry Reflection Circles*: reflect on current ministry challenges with the support of a group
- Spiritual Direction Seminars*

ams.edu/leadership-and-enrichment



Central District Conference connections

- (Above) In May 2025, 15 women and 18 men from eight countries graduated from AMBS.
- **Doctor of Ministry students:** Charles Buller (Silverwood), Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth St), Doug Luginbill (First – Bluffton), Josh Richardson (St Louis), James Rissler (Atlanta)
- **Master of Divinity students:** Scott Coulter and Kyle Schlabach (Assembly), Karen Hochstedler (Silverwood), Mir Knego (Chapel Hill), Rena LeBlanc (Emmaus Rd), Stacy Lehman (PEACE), Susan Setiawan (Open Table)
- **Master of Arts students:** Mari Martinez-Sywulka (Assembly), Christian Berambaye Nawai (Hively Ave), Bongwiwe Ncube (Eighth St)
- **Journey participants/mentors:** Peter Eash-Scott (Milwaukee)/Valerie Showalter (Madison), Ardean Friesen/Jeremy Shue (Silverwood), Noah Raines (church planter)/Jeremy Shue, Amy Stauffer-McNutt (Sugar creek)/Kay Bontrager-Singer
- **AMBS Board member:** John Daniels (Covenant)
- **Journey Board member:** Gayle Gerber Koontz

Want to try out seminary?

- Sign up for an Online Short Course:
 - Exploring Peace and Justice in the Bible
 - Exploring Anabaptist History and Theology
 - Understanding Anabaptist Approaches to Scripture
 - Transforming Congregational Conflict and Communication
 - Challenging Christian Nationalism
- ams.edu/online-short-courses
- Take a graduate-level course — online or on campus. Nonadmitted students get 50% off tuition for their first two courses! ams.edu/upcoming-courses
- Schedule a virtual or in-person visit and learn about what AMBS has to offer! ams.edu/visit
- Stay connected: ams.edu/subscribe • Facebook: [followAMBS](https://www.facebook.com/followAMBS) • Instagram: [ams_seminary](https://www.instagram.com/ams_seminary) • YouTube: [amsedu](https://www.youtube.com/amsedu) • TikTok: [@anabaptistseminary](https://www.tiktok.com/@anabaptistseminary)

Informe a la Conferencia Central District

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
- Doctorado en Ministerio en Liderazgo*
- Certificado de Posgrado en Dirección Espiritual*
- Certificado de Posgrado en Ecoteología*
- Certificado de Posgrado en Estudios Teológicos*
- Certificado de Posgrado en Estudios Teológicos (en español)*
- Journey: Un Programa de Desarrollo del Liderazgo Misional* (sin título)

ams.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! ams.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

- Módulos de Capacitación en Liderazgo Práctico*
- Cursos Cortos en Línea*: cuatro a seis semanas, basados en la discusión, sin crédito
- Invite a AMBS*: solicite un/a orador/a
- Conferencia de Pastores/as y Líderes*: 22–25 de febrero del 2027

Ofertas de uno a dos años

- La Transición al Liderazgo*: un programa para nuev@s pastores/as
- Círculos de Reflexión Ministerial*: reflexione sobre los desafíos actuales del ministerio con el apoyo de un grupo
- Seminarios de Dirección Espiritual*

ams.edu/leadership-and-enrichment



Conexiones a la Conferencia Central District

- *(Arriba)* En el mayo del 2025, 15 mujeres y 18 hombres de 8 países se graduaron de AMBS.
- **Alumn@s (Doctorado en Ministerio):** Charles Buller (Silverwood), Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth St), Doug Luginbill (First – Bluffton), Josh Richardson (St Louis), James Rissler (Atlanta)
- **Alumn@s (Maestro de Divinidad):** Scott Coulter y Kyle Schlabach (Assembly), Karen Hochstedler (Silverwood), Mir Knego (Chapel Hill), Rena LeBlanc (Emmaus Rd), Stacy Lehman (PEACE), Susan Setiawan (Open Table)
- **Alumn@s (Maestro de Artes):** Mari Martinez-Sywulka (Assembly), Christian Berambaye Nawai (Hively Ave), Bongwiwe Ncube (Eighth St)
- **Participantes/mentores/as en Journey:** Peter Eash-Scott (Milwaukee)/Valerie Showalter (Madison), Ardean Friesen/Jeremy Shue (Silverwood), Noah Raines (church planter)/Jeremy Shue, Amy Stauffer-McNutt (Sugarcreek)/Kay Bontrager-Singer
- **Miembro de la Junta (AMBS):** John Daniels (Covenant)
- **Miembra de la Junta (Journey):** Gayle Gerber Koontz

¿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
 - Desafiar el Nacionalismo Cristiano
- ams.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 primeros dos cursos! ams.edu/upcoming-courses
 - Programe una visita virtual o en persona. ¡Aprenda lo que AMBS tiene para ofrecer! ams.edu/visit
 - Conéctese con nosotros: **Facebook:** [followAMBS](https://www.facebook.com/followAMBS) • **Instagram:** [ams_seminary](https://www.instagram.com/ams_seminary) • **YouTube:** [amsedu](https://www.youtube.com/amsedu) • **TikTok:** [@anabaptistseminary](https://www.tiktok.com/@anabaptistseminary) • ams.edu/subscribe



2026 Report to Central District Conference

CAMPUS PASTOR ANNOUNCED

Bluffton University appointed **Eli Tracy '12** as campus pastor in November 2025. Tracy received his master's in theological studies from Conrad Grebel University College in 2016 and has been serving as an associate pastor at the Family Christian Center and as an on-call hospital chaplain at Mercy Hospital, both in Defiance. Tracy also served at Bluffton last year as an adjunct faculty member in religion.

KEENEY PEACE LECTURE

Bluffton University welcomed alumni **Dr. Jonathan Moyer '02** back to campus as the featured speaker for the university's 48th annual Keeney Peace Lecture, an event that invites the campus community to reflect on faith, justice and peacemaking in today's world.

SPIRITUAL LIFE WEEK

Rev. Phil Yoder, Pastor, First Mennonite Church, Bluffton, Ohio, was the Spiritual Life Week speaker for the spring semester. Yoder attended a student-led Bible study Sunday evening and spoke at Forum and Chapel on the subject "Abiding in Alienation," engaging with the 2026 Civic Engagement theme, "Who is my neighbor?" Yoder was also a guest in the course "Introduction to a Biblical Worldview."

PRE-OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY MAJOR ANNOUNCED

Bluffton University has announced the launch of a **Pre-Occupational Therapy (Pre-OT) major**, expanding its offerings in the health sciences to prepare students for careers dedicated to helping individuals live independently and meaningfully.

BLUFFTON AFFORDABILITY EXPANDED

Bluffton University is strengthening its commitment to access and affordability by expanding key financial aid initiatives designed to make a high-quality Bluffton education attainable for more students and families. Bluffton's **Be a Beaver Program** guarantees full tuition coverage for qualifying students and Bluffton's **County Connect Grant** automatically awards \$1,000 to students who live in or attend high school in Allen, Hancock, Hardin, Putnam and now Auglaize or Van Wert counties in Ohio.

YODER SCHOLAR APPOINTED

Bluffton University appointed **Dr. Gerald J. Mast** the Harry and Jean Yoder Scholar in Bible and Religion. The appointment provides Mast with annual funds to support scholarly research and writing in areas related to Anabaptist-Mennonite life and thought. As part of the role, he will also serve as editor of the C. Henry Smith Series in Anabaptist Culture and Thought, formerly the C. Henry Smith Series, and deliver one Yoder Scholar Lecture per year on a topic related to biblical, religious or Anabaptist studies.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. FORUM

In remembrance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Bluffton University hosted its annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day Forum presentation, featuring **Jonathon Blake Turner**, director of choral activities at Bluffton University, who offered a powerful combination of song, history and theological reflection. Turner, who started in Fall 2026, has begun work to re-establish the Bluffton University Choir.

Dr. J. Alexander Sider appointed President

Bluffton University's Board of Trustees named the 11th president in Bluffton's 125-year history. **Dr. J. Alexander Sider** accepted the call to serve as Bluffton's next president effective Aug. 1, 2025. Dr. Sider stepped into the active role of Interim President in February 2025 during a transitioning time at Bluffton. Dr. Sider, a longtime member of the Bluffton faculty, has served the university in various roles since joining in 2006, including as Professor of Religion, The Harry and Jean Yoder Scholar in Bible and Theology, Director of Peace and Conflict Studies, Director of University Assessment Programs, ADA Coordinator, and most recently Vice President of Academic Affairs and Academic Dean.

Save the date

**Bluffton University
Homecoming**
Oct. 3, 2026



Stay up to date with news and events at Bluffton University.

www.bluffton.edu/news

www.bluffton.edu/events

For more information, contact **Gerald Mast**
*Church relations coordinator
and professor of communication*
mastg@bluffton.edu

EMS Launches Doctor of Ministry in Peacemaking and Social Change

The new Doctor of Ministry (DMin) at EMS, launching in August 2025, is distinctive in many ways. It is the only Anabaptist-focused DMin that is both regionally and nationally accredited. As a matter of justice and educational integrity, EMS's DMin invests in personnel and students as courses are taught exclusively by continuing-contract, full-time EMS faculty and admitted students can receive up to 50% tuition scholarships. The asynchronous online format is designed for engaged ministry leaders who wish to learn about the theology and praxis of peace in order to ignite change toward justice in congregational or non-profit settings. Doctoral students will gain tools for trauma-informed care, biblical interpretation, liberative theologies, and analysis of religions, persons and systems while pursuing a research and writing project that matters for their ministry context. Learn more about this innovative program or apply to join our next cohort at emu.edu/seminary/degree-programs/dmin



EMS's small CPE cohorts, like this spring 2025 hybrid unit offered by Director Penny Driediger, receive personalized formation

CPE: EMS's Hidden Gem

EMS stands out among U.S. seminaries as one of only four theological schools with its own accredited Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) program. By partnering with clinical sites across the U.S., EMS's expert certified educators offer hybrid CPE units so students can hone their chaplaincy skills in their local contexts. CPE at EMS is open to current students for graduate credit and non-seminarians who wish to study chaplaincy. Learn more at emu.edu/seminary/cpe

Graduates Value EMS's Warm Community, On Campus and Online

Rev. Graciella Odelia, a 2025 Master of Arts in Christian Leadership graduate and youth minister in Mosaic Mennonite Conference, says she appreciates the warm community at EMS. "I know everyone, the professors know my name, they know my story, they know where I come from, they know my intercultural context," Graciella reflects. "I feel seen and heard." At EMS, Graciella studied theology, gained tools for deeper Bible study and valued the opportunity to study online with students from around the world. She explored youth ministry practices supporting faith and well-being through her senior capstone project, "Home Away from Home: Embracing Young Asian Immigrants in Church." Graciella is one of five graduates who earned master's degrees in Christian leadership and divinity and general theological certificates on May 4. Apply now at emu.edu/seminary/admissions



Rev. Graciella Odelia, MACL '25 at May 4 commencement

EMS Mission

Eastern Mennonite Seminary nurtures agents of justice and peace by opening spaces for theological learning and practice rooted in Jesus' radical ministry of beloved community.

- ▶ **Rev. Dr. Shannon W. Dycus**, interim president
- ▶ **Rev. Dr. Sarah Bixler**, seminary dean
- ▶ **Dr. David Evans**, associate dean
- ▶ **Adam King**, graduate recruitment specialist

emu.edu/seminary
540-432-4260

Conflict Transformation and Trauma Resilience Workshops

Equipping pastors and lay leaders on campus, on location and online. Custom-designed trainings available!

emu.edu/seminary/training



*EMU prepares students to serve
and lead in a global context*

SPRING 2026

CENTRAL DISTRICT MENNONITE CONFERENCE

EMU ANNUAL REPORT

Greetings and blessings to our Mennonite congregations and churches!

We have been working hard to position ourselves to better serve our students and fulfill our mission. Within our academic divisions, we are doing this by reconfiguring our academic structure from three schools to two divisions. The new leadership structure will help the university work more efficiently and encourage greater integration and collaboration across academic programs.

Two deans have been appointed to lead the academic divisions, with both officially beginning their roles on July 1, 2025. The **Rev. Dr. Sarah Ann Bixler**, serves as dean for the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences division. **Dr. Michael Horst**, serves as dean for the Behavioral, Health and Natural Sciences division. The two divisional deans work closely with **Dr. Tara Kishbaugh**, inaugural dean of faculty and student success, and **Jonathan Swartz**, dean of students, while reporting to the provost.

In our reimagining this past year, another development to emerge is the new pathway curriculum projected to roll out during the Fall 2026 semester. This framework repackages EMU's general education/core curriculum into four focused pathways, each aligned with university values. The pathway curriculum will help students develop in-demand soft skills that enhance their career readiness in a competitive job market. Students will likely select a pathway in the second semester of their first year, with guidance provided to help them choose the option that best fits their goals.

A few celebrations:

- EMU has been recognized and included on the 'Best Colleges in America' list from Money.com. [EMU earned a 3.5-star rating \(out of five stars\) on the list](#), outperforming several of our neighboring schools. See the [full](#) news story here.
- Total giving for fiscal year 2025 was our second best in EMU's history - surpassing \$7 million. Financial aid is among our highest priority, and \$4.1 million has been raised this year towards new scholarships.

While we work toward these successes, the political landscape continues to be at the forefront of our attention. Reduction of Department of Education staff and potential impacts to student loans, Pell and other need-based grants are the primary areas where we are gathering information and data. For our current and incoming students, EMU has provided 100% of our students with financial aid and 1:1 financial counseling from our staff. We remain committed to supporting access for students and communication about how we continue to navigate these changes.

To begin my role as EMU's next leader is both daunting and sacred. EMU is boldly preparing to continue our rich commitments and shape leaders who carry hope into a changing landscape. Thank you for your partnership in prayer and support in our mission together.

In gratitude,

Rev. Dr. Shannon W. Dycus
Interim President

How can EMU serve you?

Contact the church relations office to schedule the president or a faculty guest speaker:
540-432-4200 or
ChurchRelations@emu.edu

Central District Connections to EMU

Students

Spring semester 2026 has three undergraduates, nine graduates, and four seminary students enrolled from the Central District Mennonite Conference.

Giving

Central District Mennonite Conference churches gave over \$15,800 in matching church grants to their students during the year ending June 2025.

- ▶ **Rev. Dr. Shannon Dycus**,
interim president
- ▶ **Kirk Shisler**, *vice president for advancement*
- ▶ **Troy Martin**, *director of financial aid*
- ▶ **Braydon Hoover**, *vice president for enrollment and marketing*
- ▶ **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.

2025-26 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



Jen Shenk '94
Campus pastor

jshenk@goshen.edu

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

CAMPUS NEWS

Our Campus Ministries 2025-26 theme — Growing in Christ: Love in Action

A Goshen education is about freedom: the freedom to explore ideas, to discover hidden "rooms" within yourself, and to live with dignity in community. Each of us has more space within us than we imagine, and college is the place to make room for growth and creativity. This year, may we make room within ourselves for one another, for peace and for freedom.

Honors program encourages camaraderie, conversations

Goshen College's Honors Program, launched in 2023 with 12 first-years, is now well into its second year with 15 new students, emphasizing interdisciplinary study and leadership. Suzanne Ehst, GC's associate academic dean, said, "What they're doing in that honors space emboldens them to be academic leaders in their major, in their other courses and in their extracurriculars." The program features seminars, capstone projects and leadership requirements.

Goshen College launches new Center for Nursing and Public Health

Goshen College's nursing program marked its 75th anniversary this year with the opening of the new Center for Nursing and Public Health in the renovated Westlawn building. The 18,000-square-foot facility features state-of-the-art classrooms, labs and study spaces, providing students with hands-on, high-tech training while addressing regional nursing shortages.



CONFERENCE CONNECTIONS

\$37,200

Amount Central District Conference churches are giving 18 students for the 2025-26 school 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. **Tristan Mast** from Assembly Mennonite Church (Goshen, IN), and **Levi Moser** from Southside Fellowship (Elkhart, IN) are spending this Spring studying and serving in Ecuador. **Emma King** from the Mennonite Church of Normal (IL) is studying and serving in Indonesia this Spring.

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 2025-26 para Central District Conference

MISIÓN

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

VISIÓN

Goshen College cultivará la alegría, el crecimiento y el 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/presidentblog



Dan Koop Liechty '88
Director de Participación de Alumnos Egresados y Asesor de Estudiantes Internacionales

alumni@goshen.edu



Jen Shenk '94
Pastor del Campus

jshenk@goshen.edu

► Ver capillas anteriores y convocatorias del campus:
goshen.edu/podcasts

ENLACES DESTACADOS

Noticias del Campus
goshen.edu/news

Eventos en el Campus
goshen.edu/calendar

Eventos del Centro de Música
gcmusiccenter.org/events

Eventos Deportivos
goleafs.net/calendar

Blogs del Servicio Estudiantil
goshen.edu/sst

NOTICIAS DEL CAMPUS

Nuestro tema de Ministerios del Campus 2025-26 — Creciendo en Cristo: Amor en Acción

La educación en Goshen es sobre la libertad: La libertad de explorar ideas, de descubrir "habitaciones" ocultas dentro de uno mismo y de vivir con dignidad en comunidad. Cada uno de nosotros tiene más espacio interior del que imaginamos, y la universidad es el lugar para abrir espacio al crecimiento y la creatividad. Este año, esperamos poder hacer espacio dentro de nosotros mismos para los demás, para la paz y para la libertad.

El Programa de Honores fomenta la camaradería y el diálogo

El Programa de Honores de Goshen College, que inició en 2023 con 12 estudiantes de primer año, está ahora bien encaminado en su segundo año con 15 nuevos estudiantes, enfatizando el estudio interdisciplinario y el liderazgo. La decana académica asociada de GC, Suzanne Ehst, comentó: "Lo que están haciendo en ese espacio de honores les alienta a ser líderes académicos en su carrera, en sus otros cursos y en sus actividades extracurriculares." El programa incluye seminarios, proyectos de culminación (capstone) y requisitos para liderazgo.

Goshen College inaugura un nuevo Centro de Enfermería y Salud Pública

El programa de enfermería de Goshen College celebró este año su 75.º aniversario con la inauguración del nuevo Centro de Enfermería y Salud Pública en el edificio renovado Westlawn. La renovación de 18,000 pies cuadrados, cuenta con aulas, laboratorios y espacios de estudio de vanguardia, que ofrecen a

los estudiantes una formación práctica y tecnológica de alto nivel, al mismo tiempo que contribuyen a abordar la escasez regional de personal de enfermería.

CONEXIONES DE CONFERENCIAS

\$37.200

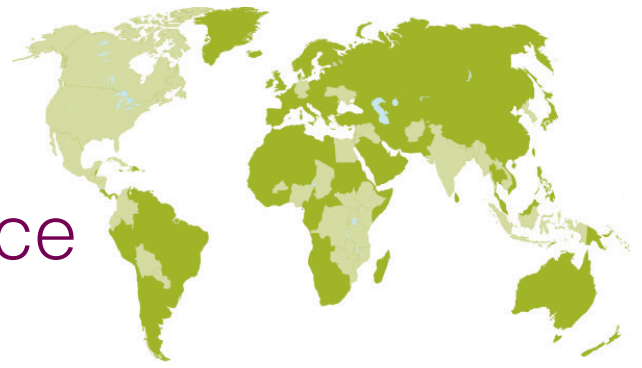
La cantidad que las iglesias de la Central District Conference están proporcionando a 18 estudiantes para el año escolar 2025-2026.

Por cada dólar recaudado por las iglesias, el estudiante recibirá un dólar adicional del programa Goshen College Church Aid Matching Grant hasta \$1000. Después de esta cantidad, las donaciones serán de un dólar por cada 4 dólares contribuidos hasta pagar la matrícula completa.

EDUCACIÓN GLOBAL

Los estudiantes de la conferencia participan dentro y fuera del campus de muchas maneras edificantes, pero queremos reconocer específicamente a los estudiantes que están participando en el programa de Educación Global de GC. **Tristan Mast** de Assembly Mennonite Church (Goshen, IN) y **Levi Moser** de Southside Fellowship (Elkhart, IN) están estudiando y sirviendo en Ecuador este semestre y **Emma King** de Mennonite Church of Normal (IL) está en Indonesia.

2026 report for Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA



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

46 countries
345 partners
459 projects



Rocio Valencia Islas and her husband Victor Lampón Leon are pastors at La Mano de Dios en Apoyo al Migrante (Hand of God in Support of Migrants), a church ministry and MCC partner providing care, relief and support to migrants moving through Ecatepec, Mexico. (MCC photo/Meghan Mast)

MCC's 2026 guiding scripture

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves...

Philippians 2:3-4 (NIV)

MCC and Central District Conference connections

- Central District Conference congregations are important partners with MCC in relief sales, thrift shops, My Coins Count fundraisers and meat canning. They also help with comforter bashes and material resources drives, like School Kit Challenge and Great Winter Warm-up.
- CDC congregations hosted various MCC speakers. Please contact our office if your congregation or group is interested in hearing from an MCC speaker.
- Groups from Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship and Bluffton University volunteered with Appalachia Build (formerly SWAP) in Kimball, WV, and Elkhorn City, KY.
- We are grateful for CDC churches and families who host International Volunteer Exchange Program (IVEP) participants.
- Peter Martin represents Central District Conference on the MCC Great Lakes Board.**

The news cycle can be exhausting. We hear of war and disaster, military buildup and greed. It's easy to think that we need more stuff or armed guards to be safe and powerful. Writing from prison, Paul reminded the Philippian Christians that Jesus modeled a different kind of power – humility, service and caring for others. This upside-down Kingdom was a source of joy for Paul: “Be glad with me!” (Phil. 2:18). Like Paul, we give thanks that MCC can be “partners in ministry” (Phil. 1:5) with the global church and with each of you.

Your humility and compassion translate to food, clean water, comforters and counseling support for people in vulnerable situations. Thank you for joining MCC to share God's love and compassion for all in the name of Christ.

Eric Kurtz, MCC Great Lakes Executive Director

“When we look beyond ourselves, we can work together to care for the needs of others.”

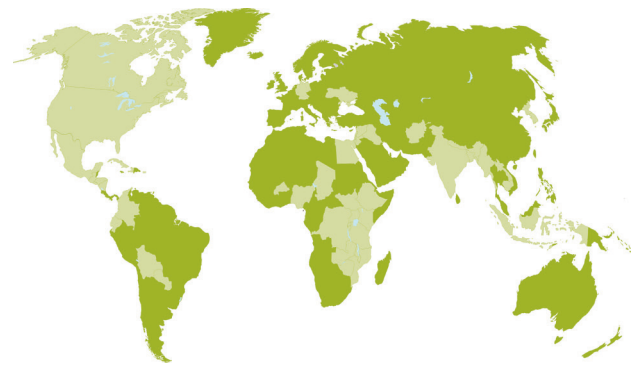
- Eric Kurtz

As of January 9, 2026, the Henrietta Dismukes Nurses' Home on MCC property in Kimball, WV, is officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Dr. Henry Dodford Dismukes, an African American Physician in the early 1900's, founded the largest privately owned Black hospital in the country for its time. Once fully rehabilitated, the Nurses' Home will be repurposed as a community learning center offering classes and preserving local history.



Informe 2026 para Conferencia del Distrito Central

MCC U.S. y MCC Great Lakes
(574) 534-4133 • GreatLakes@mcc.org • mcc.org



46 países
345 asociados
459 proyectos



Rocío Valencia Islas y su esposo, Víctor Lampón León, son pastores de La Mano de Dios en Apoyo al Migrante, un ministerio de la iglesia y socio de CCM que brinda cuidado, ayuda y apoyo a personas migrantes que transitan por Ecatepec, México. (Foto MCC/Meghan Mast)

Escritura guía del CCM para 2026

No hagan nada por egoísmo o vanidad; más bien, con humildad consideren a los demás como superiores a ustedes mismos...

Filipenses 2:3-4 (NVI)

Escuchar los noticieros puede ser agotador. Oímos acerca de guerras y desastres, de rearme militar y codicia. Es fácil pensar que necesitamos más cosas o guardias armados para estar seguros y ser poderosos. Escribiendo desde la cárcel, Pablo recordó a los cristianos de Filipos que Jesús modeló un tipo diferente de poder: la humildad, el servicio y el cuidado de los demás. Este reino al revés era una fuente de alegría para Pablo: «¡Alégrese conmigo!». (Fil. 2:18). Al igual que Pablo, damos gracias porque CCM puede ser «compañero en el ministerio» (Fil. 1:5) con la iglesia global y con cada uno de ustedes.

Su humildad y compasión se traducen en alimentos, agua potable, edredones y apoyo psicológico para personas en situaciones vulnerables. Gracias por unirse a CCM para compartir el amor y la compasión de Dios por todos en el nombre de Cristo.

Eric Kurtz, *Director Ejecutivo del MCC Great Lakes*

Las conexiones entre CCM y la Conferencia del Distrito Central

- Las congregaciones de la Conferencia del Distrito Central son socios importantes de CCM en las ventas para dar ayuda humanitaria, las tiendas de segunda mano, las recaudaciones de fondos llamado, mis monedas también cuentan y el enlatado de carne. También ayudan con las campañas de edredones y recursos materiales, como el reto para hacer paquetes escolares y el Gran evento de calentamiento en invierno.
- Las congregaciones de la CDC acogieron a varios exponentes de CCM. Póngase en contacto con nuestra oficina si su congregación o grupo está interesado en escuchar a un exponente de CCM.
- Los grupos de Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship y Bluffton University se ofrecieron como voluntarios con Appalachia Build (antes SWAP) en Kimball, Virginia Occidental, y Elkhorn City, Kentucky.
- Agradecemos a las iglesias y familias de la CDC que recibieron a participantes del Programa Internacional de Intercambio de Voluntarios (IVEP).
- Peter Martin representa a la Conferencia del Distrito Central en la Junta de MCC Great Lakes.**

“ Cuando podemos ver más allá de nosotros mismos, podemos trabajar juntos para atender las necesidades de los demás.”

-Eric Kurtz

Desde el 9 de enero de 2026, la residencia de enfermeras Henrietta Dismukes, situada en la propiedad del CCM en Kimball, Virginia Occidental, figura oficialmente en el Registro Nacional de Lugares Históricos. El Dr. Henry Dodford Dismukes, un médico afroamericano de

principios del siglo XX, fundó el hospital privado afroamericano más grande en el país en aquella época. Una vez rehabilitada por completo, la Residencia de Enfermeras se reconvertirá en un centro de aprendizaje comunitario que ofrecerá clases y preservará la historia local.





Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) – Ministry Engagement with churches of Central District Conference

During the past 18 months, Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) strengthened its partnership with congregations of Central District Conference (CDC) through worship leadership and coordinated volunteer engagement. These interactions increased congregational awareness of MDS's mission, expanded volunteer participation, and reinforced relationships between MDS and CDC congregations. MDS desires to have an active Church Contact Person (CCP) in every anabaptist congregation. A CCP shares information about MDS with their church and has direct access to area MDS leadership, usually a MDS Unit within their state, when a local response is needed.

MDS leadership engagement in worship settings resulted in direct connections with five CDC congregations. Kevin King, Executive Director of MDS, preached at Peace Mennonite Church (Archbold, Ohio) and Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship (Berne, Indiana). Lawrence Matthews, Volunteer Development Coordinator for MDS Region 2, preached at Grace Mennonite Church (Pandora, Ohio), Maplewood Mennonite Church (Fort Wayne, Indiana), and First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana (Illinois). These engagements supported volunteer recruitment, strengthened communication channels, and encouraged ongoing congregational participation in MDS and MDS's support of church ministry.

As a result of these relationships, dozens of volunteers from CDC congregations served with MDS in multiple capacities. Volunteers filled key roles as Church Contact People, supported local community disaster responses, served as weekly volunteers, and provided leadership on both local and national MDS projects. This volunteer engagement increased MDS's operational capacity and contributed directly to disaster response and recovery efforts locally and beyond.

A significant outcome of CDC–MDS collaboration is the partnership with City Peace Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. Through a CDC 'Rise Up! Take Courage! Mutual Aid Fund' award and collaboration with the Western Ohio Unit of Mennonite Disaster Service, City Peace Church increased its capacity for local ministry and community engagement. Grant funding from CDC enabled coordinated planning, volunteer mobilization, and leveraged resource sharing, resulting in a strengthened City Peace Church's response to neighborhood needs and outreach.

The City Peace Church story is one of many examples that demonstrates the impact of equipping local congregations with MDS resources and support to extend their ministry and service.

Report submitted by:

Lawrence Matthews, First Mennonite Church
Bluffton, Ohio
Mennonite Disaster Service
Region 2 Volunteer Development Coordinator
Lmatthews@mds.org / 419.303.8056

**Initial
Consultation
Only \$60**

**Thanks to all of our supporting
congregations and
our accredited representative,
Rubi Astello, (right)
we are open for business.**



For all of 2025 and continuing today, La Posada is offering classes, giving immigration law counsel and helping clients to make applications for immigration status.



The La Posada Immigrant Aid Board of Directors invites you to support us with your annual, quarterly, or monthly gifts.

Patty Gorostieta, president; Rose Rivera, vice-president; Peter Graber, treasurer, Rebeca Benavides; Jorge Montenegro; Izaete Nafziger; and Michelle Ramer

Thank you in advance for making 2026 even better!



Celebration night at the end of citizenship class!

Patty Gorostieta, board president (left of Carrie), and Rubi Astello, accredited representative (right of Carrie) with instructor Carrie Hartzler Bhandari and three members of the fall class.

**Special thanks to
Sunnyside
Mennonite Church!**

They provide office space, a large classroom, volunteer door monitors for security, and a generous annual gift.



**Consulta
Inicial por
Solo \$60**

Gracias a todas nuestras congregaciones colaboradoras y a nuestra representante acreditada, Rubi Astello (a la derecha), ya estamos abiertos al público.



Durante todo el año 2025 y hasta el día de hoy, La Posada ofrece clases, brinda asesoramiento en derecho migratorio y ayuda a los clientes a presentar solicitudes de estatus migratorio.



La Junta Directiva de La Posada Ayuda al Inmigrante te invita a apoyarnos con donaciones anuales, trimestrales o mensuales.

Patty Gorostieta, presidenta; Rose Rivera, vicepresidenta; Peter Graber, tesorero; Rebeca Benavides; Jorge Montenegro; Izaete Nafziger y Michelle Ramer

¡Gracias de antemano por hacer que el 2026 sea aún mejor!



Noche de celebración al final del curso de ciudadanía!

Patty Gorostieta, presidenta de la junta (a la izquierda de Carrie), y Rubi Astello, representante acreditada (a la derecha de Carrie), junto con la instructora Carrie Hartzler Bhandari y tres miembros de la clase del otoño.

¡Un Agradecimiento especial a la Iglesia Menonita de Sunnyside!

Ellos proporcionan espacio para la oficina, un aula amplia, voluntarios para el control de acceso por motivos de seguridad y una generosa donación anual.



2026

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

Congregations attain Full Membership upon Conference delegate approval of the Board of Directors’ recommendation. Congregations may attain Provisional Membership upon approval of the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors shall establish policies and procedures for congregations to attain membership in the conference.

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
Updated June 2024

Policies and Procedures:

Communities of Faith Joining CDC

For Congregations Already Part of an MC USA Conference

Congregations which are members of another MC USA conference are expected to follow the process for changing conferences as outlined by MC USA leadership.

Congregations requesting membership with Central District Conference shall submit a written request to the CDC Board of Directors to begin the membership process. A congregation which has requested to join the Conference, has met membership criteria, and has been visited by a Conference representative(s) may be introduced by the Board of Directors to the Conference at an Annual Meeting. Congregations whose requests are received 120 days prior to the forthcoming Annual Meeting may be introduced at that Annual Meeting. Upon mutual agreement by the requesting congregation and the Board of Directors, the congregation will be presented to the delegates for affirmation of membership at the Annual Meeting following the year in which they were introduced. During the period between introduction and a delegate decision to affirm membership, the congregation is able and encouraged to participate fully in all conference activities except voting privileges.

Congregations Which Are Not Part of an MC USA Conference

A congregation or emerging community which is not part of an MC USA conference may apply at any time to join the Conference as a Provisional Member. Congregations or emerging communities attain provisional membership upon approval of the Board of Directors. Provisional Members must be working towards fulfilling the membership criteria. Provisional membership expires as of July 1 of each year and may be renewed for the following year by the Board of Directors prior to expiration. Provisional Members are encouraged to participate in conference activities but do not have voting privileges. Provisional Members derive membership in Mennonite Church USA and may apply for full membership in CDC following the process described in A.2 above.

A group which desires to relate to the Conference, but does not yet meet the membership requirements, or does not desire congregational status, is encouraged to participate in conference activities, but does not have voting privileges.

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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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

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.

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



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 the *Prevention and Accountability Resource* which was adopted by MC USA delegates in July 2025. This resource is available on the CDC website; <https://www.mennoniteusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Prevention-Accountability-Resource.pdf>
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) and *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: _____

Child Safety Policy

Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA (CDC)

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To see a copy of the complete policy, go to <https://mcusacdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/CDC-Child-Safety-Policy-Final-Google-Docs.pdf> or click on the QR Code



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:

Mennonite Church USA

Jason Boone, Coordinating Minister of Peace and Justice Support Network
Peace@MennoniteUSA.org;
Toll-free 866-866-2872; www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace

Lombard Mennonite Peace Center—101 W. 22nd Street, Suite 206,
Lombard, IL 60148; 630-627-0507; Admin@LMPeaceCenter.org
www.LMPeaceCenter.org

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 Scottdale 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](#), Scottdale, 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



STEPS TO STRENGTHEN CONGREGATIONS

There are three parts of ensuring a congregation is healthy, safe, and able to protect their most vulnerable members. Consider these the “exercise” and “healthy eating” that help prevent disease in the body of Christ.

1 CONGREGATIONAL HEALTH

2 PASTORAL SUPERVISION

3 POLICIES

CONGREGATIONAL HEALTH

(p. 20-23 of “Prevention and Accountability”)

- Use a congregational behavioral covenant
- Adopt a conflict resolution process
- Adopt a misconduct or grievance process
- Establish good financial practices in line with accepted accounting principals
- Talk openly about abuse prevention

PASTORAL SUPERVISION

(p. 23-26 of “Prevention and Accountability”)

- Clear and reasonable job descriptions for all employees
- Signed employment agreements or ‘covenant of understanding’
- Follow MC USA salary guidelines
- Form a Pastor-Congregation Relations Committee (PCRC)
- Conduct effective and healthy pastoral evaluations
- Ensure pastor has access to external support

POLICIES

(p. 28-30 of “Prevention and Accountability”)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Non-discrimination policy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intellectual property policy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Harassment and abuse policy | <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict of Interest policy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Safe Church policy | <input type="checkbox"/> Whistle blower policy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Acceptable computer & internet use policy | <input type="checkbox"/> Misconduct file sharing policy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media policy | <input type="checkbox"/> Confidentiality policy |

Prevention and Accountability Resource

Mennonite Church USA

May 2, 2025

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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



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*

2026

REPORT BOOK
of the

Central District Conference
of
Mennonite Church USA



Part VI

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

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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

46

47 In our denominational discussions about inclusion, many Mennonites have falsely claimed that
48 LGBTQIA exclusion is necessary for MC USA to remain in fellowship with people of color.
49 This tactic of pitting *marginalized groups* against each other falsely assumes uniformity of
50 thought among and within diverse groups of people, even as it denies the existence of LGBTQIA
51 people of color within the church.

52

53 Our calling as disciples of Jesus compels us to “[c]onfront the misuses of power in our...
54 institutions” by “seek[ing] to tell the truth and repent.”⁷

55

56 **Therefore, be it resolved that, as members of Mennonite Church USA**
57 **committed to *truth-telling*, repentance, and transformation in the Way of**
58 **Jesus:**

59 **We confess that:**

- 60 • Our denomination’s policies, structures, practices, and theologies have excluded
61 LGBTQIA persons from fully sanctioned participation in the denomination and have
62 caused great *harm* to LGBTQIA Mennonites and their families.
- 63 • We have failed to offer the Good News of God’s “grace, joy and peace”⁸ to LGBTQIA
64 Mennonites and their families.
- 65 • Our denomination and congregations are diminished in vitality and faithfulness by the
66 loss of our siblings who have chosen to leave because of exclusionary practices and
67 policies.
- 68 • We have not affirmed the full status and worth of LGBTQIA people as fully beloved by
69 God.
- 70 • We have scapegoated people of color as the reason for discrimination against
71 LGBTQIA people, and blamed LGBTQIA people for the loss of some people of color
72 in the church.⁹
- 73 • LGBTQIA Mennonite people of color are virtually erased.
- 74 • We have not taken seriously “every human grouping [being] reconciled and united in
75 the church.”¹⁰
- 76 • As a result of the polity implications of the Membership Guidelines Section III, we
77 have driven wedges of mistrust between MC USA pastors and their congregations, and
78 between congregations and conferences.

79

80

81

82 ⁷ Renewed Commitments for MC USA, 2018

83 ⁸ Mennonite Church USA *Vision: Healing and Hope*

84 ⁹ Quoted from Advisory Group report p. 11. This scapegoating is one way that we name how Mennonite institutions
85 have done and do violence to people in the church. While not the focus of this resolution, we hope that dealing
86 honestly with one form of oppression in the church is also a call to engage more seriously with others, like White
87 Supremacy.

88 ¹⁰ Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, Article 9

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**

115

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-communities-study-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 Hjalmarsen, 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.



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
- 22 • Experience and bear witness to the belovedness of all creation, acknowledging that all
23 people are made in the image of God and are children of God.
 - 24 • Follow Jesus: In his life and teaching, Jesus emphasized that God’s reign includes all
25 people, especially those who have been marginalized or excluded. As an Anabaptist
26 community of the living word, we will listen carefully to the voices of people with
27 disabilities, to better understand the fullness of God’s love for us and the vision of God’s
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.
- 30
- 31
- 32
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- 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.
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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
<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.

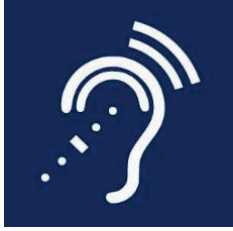


Hearing. Assistive Listening Devices (ALD) and other aids are provided for persons who are hard of hearing.



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.**



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