



January 14, 2015



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### Administrative Team Update

Winter has finally come to the people of Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference!

Dan Miller took a trip to Detroit in the second week of December to join a group meeting with Bonnie Childs, Peace Community Mennonite Church, and to visit with Denise Colona and Bishop Sam Wilson from Community Christian Fellowship Ministries. Those were good meetings. He was also going to visit Shakil Khondoker while there, but Dan got very sick and needed to cancel. He spent most of the next week at home.

The rest of staff kept things moving.

Greg Sommers met with Stewardship Team on December 17. That group continues to monitor the financial situation and work at advancement plans. Greg and John Powell have been working on a short presentation for Missional Leadership Team (MLT), staff and Stewardship Team members to share Sunday mornings while visiting congregations.

Many staff took vacation over the holidays, so the conference office was closed for two weeks, opening again on January 5.

Dan met with the MLT for their meeting on Jan 9. Doug Kaufman joined for lunch and gave a Ministry Credentialing Team (MCT) report. Staff received an update on January 13 about the staffing discussion.

January promises to be a busy month. A member of the team attends the Northern Michigan Pastor/Spouse retreat in Conway, Mich. each January. Dan will be attending this year. He will also attend the Anabaptist Renewal Circles gathering in Ohio at the end of this week. Both Doug and Dan will attend AMBS Pastors Week. We tried to find at least one person to attend Eastern Mennonite Seminary's School for Leadership Training because of this year's focus on "nones." If you are attending that event, we would be glad to receive your reflections on how that emphasis connects with thinking about future possibilities for IN-MI Conference.

We are beginning to anticipate winter delegate meetings. This year there will be two meetings, one north (Bethel Mennonite, Ashley, MI) and one south (First Mennonite, Indianapolis). We did this several years back and received encouragement to do this again. The reports we received from the last meetings were that people were glad that they made time to be present. An announcement of the dates was sent to delegates last week: March 14 (north) and 21 (south). More information can be found on [the conference website](#).

**The office will be closed Monday, January 19, in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.**

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## Regional Pastor Staffing Update

Beginning January 1, 2015 Russell Jensen, pastor at Belmont Neighborhood Fellowship in Elkhart, became interim regional pastor for the western region of Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference. He can be contacted at [russellj@belmontmc.org](mailto:russellj@belmontmc.org). We are glad to have him on staff!

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## Prayer request for Gordon Dyck

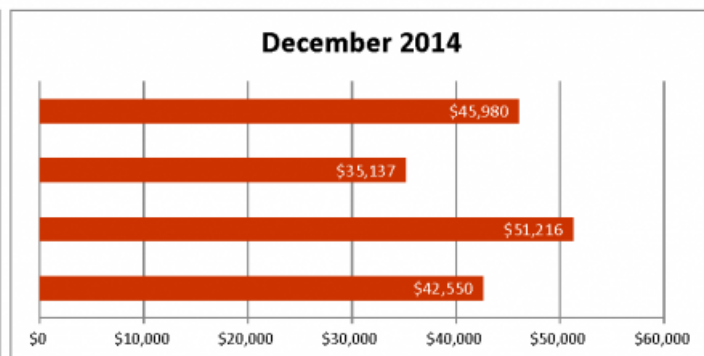
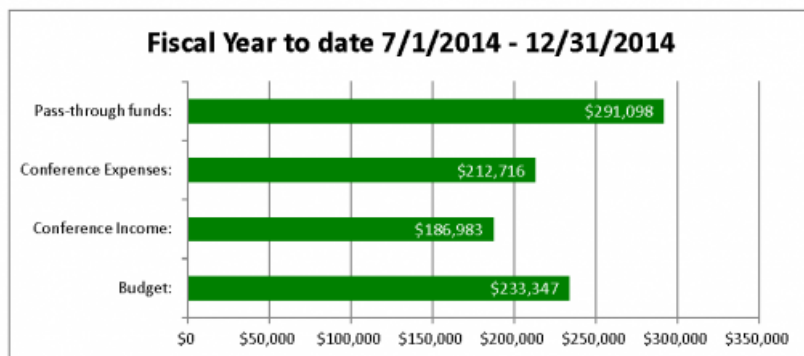
Those who have been around conference for awhile will know Gordon Dyck from his many years on Church Life Commission. He has also been overseer for numerous congregations, most recently Hudson Lake Mennonite and Fellowship of Hope. Gordon and his wife Judy have a condo in Estes Park, Colorado, where they have been spending a few months each year in recent years and are now planning to move there in 2015. This fall we received word from him that he has been diagnosed with ALS. Fortunately, the muscle deterioration connected with this has not yet, and hopefully will not, impact his talking, swallowing or breathing. But he does anticipate eventually being in a wheelchair. We invite your prayers for Gordon and his family as they make decisions and adjustments to living with ALS, for which they need patience and inner strength. Gordon can be contacted at [gordondyck@comcast.net](mailto:gordondyck@comcast.net) or 574-536-5677

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## December financial report

Thanks to your generosity, financial support for conference exceeded expenses by \$16,000 for the month of December. That's great news! Individuals donated more than \$11,800 to conference operations so far this fiscal year, which runs July 1 through June 30.

We are 50% through the conference fiscal year. Overall financial support for the conference was \$29,000 less than budgeted for the period, and \$9,000 less than the same time last year. Congregational support was \$32,000 less than expected for the first six months of the fiscal year. Expenses for the period were \$20,600 less than planned, and close to \$14,000 less than last year.



## Unity and Variance Task Group

How can we be faithful to Christ as we address our differences? How might we grow in the fruit of the Spirit while we passionately disagree? As we enter into 2015, the Unity & Variance Task Group continues to be guided by these two questions.

In the midst of conflict, the questions compel us to hold together our love of God and our love for each other. Our call as Christ's witnesses does not stop with our deep convictions about any particular issue. Rather, it also impacts *how* we hold those convictions and *how* we disagree.

Over the next few months, you will have an opportunity to join us as we seek answers to our two guiding questions. First, we ask for you to complete a survey that will be distributed by email to conference pastors and delegates on Wednesday, January 21, 2014. The survey

is open to all members of conference congregations, and we ask for your help in distributing it widely. While a survey cannot replace face to face conversations, we believe that it will be a helpful tool for further discernment. We ask all responses to be submitted by Sunday, February 21 so that we can compile and report them during the regional delegate meetings in March.

Second, you are invited to attend “*Faithfulness Under the Cross: Unity, Division & the Church*,” an event that will be hosted by East Goshen Mennonite Church on February 8, 2015 (3:00 p.m.). We’ve asked Mary Lehman Yoder (Assembly MC), John Troyer (Clinton Frame MC), and John D. Roth (Berkey Avenue MC) to speak about their forward-looking visions for the church and how that vision guides their understandings of unity and mutual accountability. This event is open to all who wish to attend, though we plan to make a video recording available for those who cannot.

Finally, we look forward to sharing more with you at the regional delegates sessions on March 14 and March 21 about what we have learned thus far and the ways that we will continue our discernment.

We recognize the anxiety and uncertainty that is present in our congregations, conference and denomination. As we address our differences, may we live lives that are worthy of the calling that we have received. May we be completely humble, gentle, and patient, bearing with one another in love. May we make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. For in Christ, all things hold together. (Ephesians 4:1-3, Colossians 1:17)

–Mark Schloneger, Unity & Variance Task Group

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## Bethany Christian Schools



The Bethany Christian Schools Board is pleased to announce the appointment of Timothy “Tim” Lehman to the position of Head of School beginning July 1, 2015. Tim is no stranger to Bethany Christian, having served in a range of positions from 2002 to 2014 as teacher, coach and assistant principal. He follows the retirement of Allan Dueck who served as Bethany’s Head of School for nearly 20 years. As a previous member of Allan Dueck’s leadership team, Tim brings proven administrative skills and leadership capabilities.

“Tim is an excellent educator with a distinct passion for Mennonite education”, said Sharon Yoder, Chair of the Bethany Christian Schools Board. “He strongly supports Bethany’s mission and commitment to the Mennonite church, the Anabaptist faith perspective, and Christ-centered values.”

Tim’s breadth of educational experience, proven excellence in teaching, knowledge of Bethany Christian Schools and rapport with his peers will allow him to step in to the Head of School role informed and prepared to offer effective leadership going forward.

In addition to the support of the board, Tim received affirmation from Jim Buller, a long time peer, friend and the current Interim Head of School. “Tim did a great job as assistant principal and has the full respect of faculty and administration. He is a “masterful” teacher, an avid reader and strategic thinker.”

Tim is a trained psychologist with a Teaching Certification in Secondary Education in Social Studies. He received his Principal Licensure Certification in 2013. He has received many teaching awards including the Indiana Outstanding Geography Teacher of the Year in 2005 and Distinguished Teaching Achievement Award from the National Council for Geographic Education in 2012. He has also published and presented on multiple themes within the Geographic Educators Association.

When asked about this opportunity at Bethany Christian Schools, Lehman was quick to reference his love for students and the opportunity to lead Bethany’s vision to integrate faith and learning which encourages critical thinking, creativity and innovation. Lehman noted,

“Bethany Christian School has a unique, vibrant learning environment. I am grateful for the confidence of the board and the opportunity to serve the Bethany parents and students. It will be a privilege to lead this talented faculty and staff.”

Bethany Christian School’s current fiscal health, outstanding teachers, and supportive churches means Lehman joins an institution positioned well for the future. The current \$5.6M Campaign for Sustainability provides a vision for the future that establishes excellence in multiple areas.

Bethany Christian Schools is committed to providing educational opportunities to students of all backgrounds within a context that is unashamedly Anabaptist Mennonite.

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## Amigo Centre

### Amigo Centre Winter Youth Retreats

There are still opportunities to join us for some great winter fun:

#### Junior High Retreat:

February 13-15 – Speaker: Derrick Ramer

#### Senior High Retreats:

January 16-18 – Speaker: Kenzie Intemann

February 20-22 – Speaker: Kevin Wilder

### Transitional Ministry Training

March 9-13, 2015, Amigo Centre will host a Transitional Ministry Training retreat. Transitional ministry has a unique place in the mission of the church. While “interim pastors” have provided preaching and pastoral care between pastor assignments for many years, “transitional ministry” involves training to lead congregations through a process of preparation for entering a new chapter of leadership. If you or someone you know is interested in pursuing this type of ministry, visit [tmt.amigocentre.org](http://tmt.amigocentre.org) for additional information, or contact Amigo Centre at 269.651.2811.

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*weLink* connects IN-MI Conference congregations to each other, to the conference organizations Amigo Centre, Bethany Christian Schools and to the wider church. It is published on the second Wednesday of each month. *weLink* issues are archived on the conference website at [im.mennonite.net/welink-archive/](http://im.mennonite.net/welink-archive/).

#### Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference

109 E. Clinton St., Suite 100 | Goshen, IN 46528

Phone: 574-534-4006 or 800-288-8486

Email: [communications@im.mennonite.net](mailto:communications@im.mennonite.net) | Website: [im.mennonite.net](http://im.mennonite.net)



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