



Indiana-Michigan
Mennonite Conference

weLink

connecting the congregations of IN-MI Mennonite Conference

December 9, 2015



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Office Closing for the Holidays

The conference office will be closed beginning Thursday, December 24 and reopen on Monday, January 4. In case of emergency over the holidays, call Dan Miller at 574-238-1883.

A Strange Time for Advent

What a strange time this is for Advent. We have recently been unnerved by attacks in Paris and follow-up raids across Europe. There was a shooting in San Bernardino California on December 2. Politicians seek to score points with threats of retribution and guarantees of safety. Fear is a natural response to feeling threatened. How might we as followers of Jesus think and act in response? I do not have “the answers” to what should be done. I am reminded of the verse in 1 John 4:18, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear;...” The writer calls us to abide in love. That invitation sounds difficult when we are afraid – and I’ve wondered if that’s when the rubber hits the road.

Needless to say, this is a difficult time. Let us consider how we are called to posture ourselves and what we might do in love.

If you are looking for ideas, consider [these suggestions from Mennonite Church USA](#).

Missional Leadership Team Report

The Missional Leadership Team is focused in reflecting on our current context and exploring future oriented questions:

What leadership gifts are needed for the future?

Appreciating the value of a team, the ability to live with differences, and valuing reconciliation were named along with our more practical gifts.

How are staff doing after reductions?

Staff morale is good. MLT celebrates the dedication of our staff.

Rejoicing in the fact that finances are in better condition than last year. The \$100,000 drop from the 2014-15 anticipated income/expenses has been incorporated. There may be additional losses from congregations that withdraw from IN-MI Conference. As of the end of November, contributions are \$5000 ahead of last year. Income is slightly ahead of expenses.

At the November 13th retreat we began to discern in sharing and prayer:

In light of our commitment to Connect, Credential and Celebrate...

What is most important to do to serve the needs of congregations and leaders in Indiana Michigan Conference?

- We plan to receive the Unity and Variance Task Group recommendation with gratitude.
- Fold the recommendation into our leadership plan for vision and direction for the conference which we will test at the March delegate regional meetings.

Experience together our June Annual Session in worshipful discernment centered on the Joy and Grace we experience through Jesus Christ.

Understanding the Israel/Palestine Context

What are the social, economic and political realities in which people of faith strive for peace? Five Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference representatives spent some time looking at this up close. They can bring you and your congregation a perspective on these questions, and deepen the questions many of us are asking in a world needing peace.

Randy Detweiler (Holdeman)

Gwen Gustafson-Zook (College)

Leighton Miller (Wildwood)

David Sutter (Kern Road)

Janice Sutter (Kern Road).

Deron Bergstresser (Faith) and Dawn Yoder Harms (Assembly) pastors in dual-affiliation congregations are participating as representatives for Central District.

Invite them to speak on Sunday morning, share in a Christian Education hour, or come for a special gathering.

Celebrating

In December we celebrate the abundant grace of God given to the world in the birth of a baby. God comes to us in vulnerable and life-changing ways. In this season of fear and political positioning, this is a time for courageous loving. By the grace of God we are called beyond fear, to care for the stranger and the alien, the widow and the fatherless. Thank you, God, for reaching out to us and not leaving us to our own devices!

We celebrate Doug's improvement following a bout with shingles. It's good to have him back in the swing.

Connecting

Delegate meetings have been set for March 5 and 12, with a snow date of March 19. Check the website to see whether you will head north to Grand Rapids or south to Kokomo.

November was an unusual month for staff. The calendar was full of events that take place just occasionally: present for part the Missional Leadership Team retreat day, Pastoral Leadership Team (PLT) Weekend at Amigo, a staff planning day right after PLT, and conference ministers meetings.

Cheryl Beachy, Dan Miller and Gene Hartman met with several Elkhart pastors for the early stages of planning for Annual Sessions. Be sure to mark your calendars for June 16-18 and come to Elkhart, Indiana to see what God is doing among the eight IN-MI Conference congregations present in that city. Plan on a significant time of worship, celebration and visioning.

Everence has received a \$1,000,000 grant from the Lilly Foundation to address financial stressors of pastors and their families. The grant will be used for educational events about some of the financial challenges pastors face, and there will be matching grants available for those facing difficult financial challenges. Let staff know if you have ideas for educational topics that will be helpful to you as a pastor or for pastors in your congregation.

Credentialing and Leadership Development

There are no upcoming credentialing services scheduled.

Leadership Enhancement Team is introducing “a framework for pastoral growth” to several area councils. It is also evaluating the usefulness of the Pastoral Leadership Team weekend. They have invited regional pastors John Powell and Mary Mininger to help them think about that.

Congregational Updates

We continue to experience developments in our relationships with congregations:

*Carroll Community Worship Center informed us they will withdraw from conference effective December 31 2015.

*First Mennonite Church, Fort Wayne had its final worship service on November 22. Mary Mininger, regional pastor, gave the closing sermon. Many who had connections with First Mennonite over the years were present for this occasion.

*A second Chin congregation in Indianapolis has approached us about becoming part of Mennonite Church USA. Brian Bither and Frank Kandel have had contact with the leaders.

Final Service at First Mennonite, Ft. Wayne, Ind.

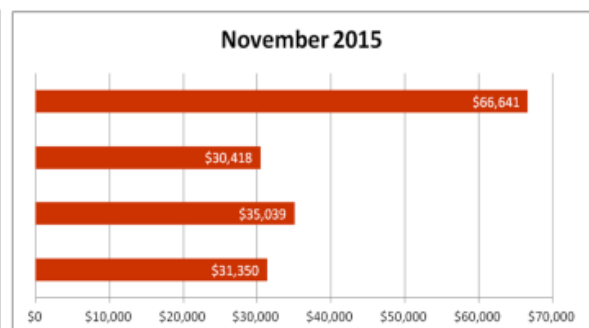
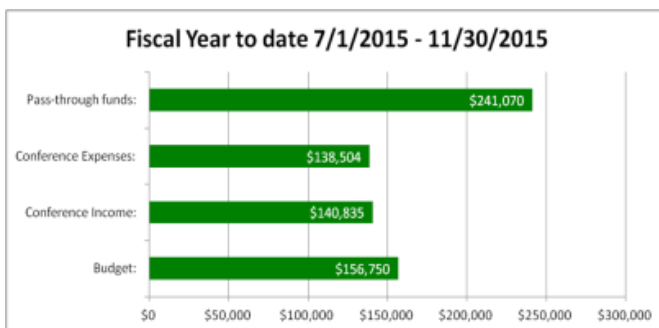
“On Sunday, November 22, 2015 around 130 people gathered to celebrate the 112 years of ministry of First Mennonite Church of Ft. Wayne, Indiana, who is closing their doors. The church building will continue to be used by Mentoring Moms, an organization involved in walking with women in the community.”



Financial Report

Thanks to your generous contributions during the month of November our income was ahead of budget for the month by \$4,621.00 which brought our income ahead of expenses for the year by \$2,331.00. In comparison to this time last year our income is almost five thousand dollars ahead of last year's giving. Thank you for standing with us as we do the work God has called us to perform.

Jim



Amigo Centre

AMIGO E3 Survival Skills for Life program is in need of mentors. See the link on Amigo's homepage for more information. Financial gifts and prayer support for the

program are also valued. www.amigocentre.org

Amigo Centre Winter Youth Retreats

Amigo Centre Winter Youth Retreats are open for registration. You may register online or via mail or call in. If you have any questions please contact us at info@amigocentre.org or 269-651-2811. Additional speaker information available online.

- **Junior High Retreats:**

- January 8-10 – Speaker: Adam Fellers, Locust Grove Mennonite Church
- February 12-14 – T Mounsithiraj, Maple City Chapel

- **Senior High Retreats:**

- January 15-17 – Bob Yoder, Goshen College Campus Pastors
- February 19-21 – Jo-Ann Brant, Goshen College Bible and Religion Professor

We hope to see you here!

Looking for a place to hold a **gathering for the holidays**? December 18-20 Amigo has available rooms in West Shore Lodge and the lower level of the Retreat Center. Call for details. 269-651-2811.

Looking for a special **gift for Christmas**? Why not consider giving a gift towards a week of summer camp or an Amigo Retreat (program or personal) or Amigo Park. Call today for details. 269-651-2811.

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/.

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