Have you thought about…

. . . taking a retreat day? Regular times of pausing for rest and renewal can help us to set aside the tyranny of the urgent and make space for listening for the invitations of the Holy Spirit. Time spent in a natural setting allows us to delight in the wonders of God’s creation. Our conference camp, Amigo Center, welcomes pastoral retreatants (im.mennonite.net/resources/retreats). For those in other areas, check out Dan Schrocks’ spiritual resources pages (part E on retreat centers) to find a retreat center near you.

Conference News

Office Closings in May
The conference office will be closed on two Mondays this month: May 20 for an all-staff retreat day at Amigo and May 27 for Memorial Day.
Annual Sessions 2013
This year’s Annual Sessions is less than a month away! It will be held at Bethany Christian Schools, June 7-9, and hosted by the Swanee Lake Area Council. Information and registration can be found online at im.mennonite.net/calendar/annual-sessions. Early registration discounts end May 14.

Administrative Team Update
People continue to inquire about the recoveries of Doug Kaufman from a serious concussion in February, and of Wes Bontreger from surgery in April. Doug is back to working close to full-time (half-time for conference and half time for Benton) and catching up on work that accumulated. Wes has experienced a smooth recovery and is slowly resuming a normal schedule. Lab tests have confirmed the tumor was benign. This Friday he has a follow-up appointment with the surgeon. He still has no vision in his left eye since surgery. Wes and Doug express personal gratitude for your prayers and support during this time.

In the past month, I (Dan) participated in the quarterly Transitional Pastors support group that met at the conference office. Five others participated in the day.

A very exciting event took place at Camp Mack on April 13, as Brenda Meyer, co-pastor of Benton Mennonite, and Kay Gaier, pastor of Wabash Church of the Brethren, saw the fruition of their efforts to plan a training event for pastors and lay leaders of churches with 100 or fewer regular participants. Attendance was double the initial goal, with 150 people gathering for Strengthening Your Small Congregation. Presenters from our conference were Brenda, Mario Bustos (Valparaiso Mennonite), Esther Lanting (Hudson Lake Mennonite), Rose Stutzman (Assembly Mennonite) and David B. Miller (Prairie Street Mennonite).

Greg and I continue to work with Stewardship and Rich Gerig of Advancement Associates to plan for Rich’s first onsite visit later this month. Rich will meet with staff and then Stewardship Team to review the emerging advancement plan for the conference.

We are beginning to plan for my sabbatical time later this summer and fall, likely mid-August to mid-November.

Thanks to Dan Haarer for his faithful service as recording secretary for three conference leadership groups: Ministry Credentialing Team, Leadership Enhancement Team and Missional Leadership Team. He is looking to lighten his load, and it is probably good for conference to have several people in this role. We are looking for a person with ability and interest in serving as recording secretary for MLT. Please contact the office if you are interested, or know someone who might be. We are grateful to Helene A. Hoover for covering here for several months.

Steve Slagel (East Goshen), Denise and Robere Colona (Community Christian) attended Exponential with me April 22-25. Denise feels called to start a church in the Detroit area. Steve is working with Dan to cultivate networks and support for church planting. 5300 people gathered for this church planting convention. It was good having several people along this year, and encouraging as we talked about supporting church planting in our conference. There was a lunch meeting for all Mennonites in attendance, and we had some conversation with Ervin Stutzman, Mennonite Church USA executive director about ways we might work together. We hope to have more people participating next year. Five registrations have been purchased for 2014. Steve and I are meeting in May to plan next steps. Watch for more information in the near future.
I was on vacation last week. Doug attended the pastor theologian group of which he’s been a part for 6 years. This time they looked at the role of doctrine, studying creeds and confessions of the church through the centuries, and reading George Lindbeck’s *The Nature of Doctrine*.

All staff will participate in a planning retreat at Amigo Centre on May 20. The office will be closed that day.

Looking ahead, Annual Sessions is the next big thing. The Conference Program Planning Committee continues to meet and plan for our gathering June 7-9. Building on last year’s experience with excursions into the city, the group is planning spiritual formation experiences at different places around the Michiana area for Saturday morning.

Ervin Stutzman, Mennonite Church USA executive director, will be in the Goshen/Elkhart area in mid-June and would like to meet with pastors/leaders during that time. Indiana-Michigan and Central District conferences will host a June 19 gathering in the Goshen area. That planning should be completed shortly so watch for more information and plan to attend.

Our two conferences will also host Mennonite Church USA moderator Elizabeth Soto Albrecht on July 12, during her journey home from the Mennonite Church USA convention in Phoenix. Elizabeth has been moderator-elect the last two years and will begin her duties as moderator the last day of convention.

Two Journey interviews take place in the near future, for people possibly beginning in the fall. Who in your congregation would benefit from this leadership development program? View more information at [www.ambs.edu/churchleadershipcenter/journey-leadership-program.cfm](http://www.ambs.edu/churchleadershipcenter/journey-leadership-program.cfm).

—Dan Miller, Conference Pastor

### Regional Pastor Search Team
The Search Team meets next on May 16. Jan Rheinheimer concludes her service as interim Regional Pastor for the central region at the end of June. We continue looking for a person to serve in the central region, and have just completed a time of requesting suggestions from delegates of the eastern region.

### Missional Leadership Team Update
With gratitude for the presence of all its members, Missional Leadership Team met on April 20 at Conference offices. It was good to have Anita Yoder back after a sabbatical absence. Moderator-elect Jane Buller chaired the meeting. We rejoiced that Moderator Wes Bontreger was able to be present, so soon after a surgery removing a tumor from behind his eye. While addressing quite a variety of topics, foremost for attention were several matters needing clarity prior to Annual Sessions, June 7-9 at Bethany Christian Schools.

- We reviewed delegate feedback from the five Regional meetings held in February & March. Overall there was a good feeling about these gatherings and a high level of engagement. Regional meetings are important for the sake of maintaining connections between conference leadership and congregations’ leaders.
- A very interesting question arose out of the two primary “pillars” of the Conference’s shared work: missional transformation and connectedness. There were observations of the congregations in the Northern and Southern Regions, overall, being ones that are somewhat less connected to the Conference (due to geographical distance from the Elkhart County “center”), and yet they have often led the way in being missional. The question is, “Is there a tension between these two pillars, between being missional and being connected?”
- More preparation was done for a proposal to Annual Sessions delegates for a Variance Discernment Task Force, as discussed at Regional meetings
  - Several concerns were named about this direction, but even more affirmations were heard about the need and importance of this difficult work.
We spent time discussing the desired diversity and composition of such a Task Force and brainstorming names of potential members and a chair.

An update on this proposal will be made at Annual Sessions, and a more defined Task Force job description brought at that time. Hopefully there might even be names of a few people willing to serve on it.

- The value of including time at Annual Sessions for what has been called the last two years “Difficult Discussions” was explored more. MLT definitely affirmed the value of this methodology for facilitating conversations that probably would not have otherwise happened, although a change in what we call it might be in order.
- We explored calling this method something else, such as “Discussions that matter.” After all, the hope is to equip and inspire respectful discussions about difficult things more regularly in the course of church life, whether or not this particular method is used.
- There will be such a discussion at Annual Sessions this year, centering on some topic like “the place of the Bible in Christian formation,” since our Sessions theme connects with the denominational priority of Christian formation

Following a request from MCUSA Executive Director Ervin Stutzman to IN-MI and other area conferences, we wish to incorporate more language with God as the subject of the verb, rather than describing what happens in our Conference in terms of human subjects and human actions.

In addition to items related to Annual Sessions, MLT heard updates from John Troyer and the BCS board, from George Thompson sharing from Stewardship Team about its work with Advancement Associates, and from Dan Miller, Wes and Jane, after attending the MCUSA Constituents Leadership Council on behalf of the Conference.

We came away from the meeting grateful for Jane’s very capable leading of the meeting. We especially noted the Holy Spirit present after pausing to deliberately pray just before heading into some especially challenging tasks.

—Neil Amstutz for MLT

Financial Report

As a result of discussions at regional meetings, several congregations have asked for capital grant application materials to fund building projects. It is exciting to anticipate using these designated funds (currently over $260,000) to help growing congregations! Each grant may be up to $50,000, but not more than 50% of the cost of the building and land. When a congregation closes and designates the proceeds to conference, those funds go into capital funds to help start more churches. And we are grateful for congregations who contribute directly to this fund in addition to supporting conference operations.

When the MLT recently changed the conference staff sabbatical policy, the conference pastor became eligible for sabbatical this year. While we anticipate committees and volunteers will help cover some of his duties, there will be an unanticipated increase in 2013-14 salary expense as we hire someone to cover several key aspects of the position. The stewardship team is adding a line item to the spending plan, designating $6,000/year set aside to cover conference staff sabbaticals when they come up. After the conference pastor’s, the next possible sabbatical would be in 2015. MCUSA published their 2013-14 salary guidelines this past month, which calls for a 1.6% increase in base salary. This, too, will cause some change in our draft spending plan.

Our financial challenge continues. April income was down nearly $4,000 from last year, but expenses were up $7,000 resulting in a $10,400 deficit for the month. Our net ordinary income for the fiscal year to date is -$39,300. This is understandable, in that congregational giving to conference so far this fiscal year is $40,000 below expectations. While there is still $120,000 in our checking account, the balance is down more than $36,000 from one year ago.

We encourage each of you to support conference operations in four ways: prayer, personnel, funding and feedback.
IN-MI Mennonite Women

Executive Committee Opening
Is God calling you or someone you know to ministry beyond your local congregation? IN-MI Mennonite Women is looking for a woman to join the Executive Committee, serving as Vice-President. Primary responsibilities include planning the annual October retreat at Amigo Centre and presiding over the sessions, as well as serving on the Executive Committee. Please contact President Shirley Bustos for more information at 219-462-0526. Email: SABustos@comcast.net.

Annual Sessions Luncheon
On Saturday, June 8 during Annual Sessions, there will be a Mennonite Women luncheon. Please indicate whether you will participate when you fill out the registration form for Annual Sessions.

Updated Pastoral Salary Guidelines
Mennonite Church USA salary guidelines have been updated for 2013-14 and can be found at www.mennoniteusa.org/executive-board/leadership-development/pastor-salary-guidelines.

News from Conference Organizations

Amigo Centre (www.amigocentre.org)

Job Opening
Amigo Centre seeks to fill a temporary bookkeeping position. This part-time position includes payroll, payables, deposits, and tax forms. More information is available on Amigo Centre’s website (www.amigocentre.org) or by calling Cliff Brubaker at 269.651.2811.

Amigo Centre Golf Scramble
The Annual Amigo Centre Golf Benefit focuses on raising money for scholarships for Trailblazers/St. Joe Week. These needs-based scholarships are given to selected children from St. Joseph Co., MI, whose families do not have the resources to make a week of camp possible. The goal of our Golf Benefit is to raise enough funds to cover the 80-90 scholarships that are given out each year. This event will be held at the Island Hills Golf Course near Centreville, Michigan on June 1, 2013. Lunch will be served at Amigo Centre following the morning scramble. To register your team of four golfers or to be a sponsor, go to www.amigocentre.org/amigo-golf-scramble.html.

Amigo Summer Camp
Summer Camp is just around the corner! This summer the theme is “Shoulder 2 Shoulder” based on Zephaniah 3:9. For dates and registration information, visit www.amigocentre.org/summer-camp.html. Help create some wonderful memories for those special children in your life.
Bethany Christian Schools (http://www.bethanycs.net/)

Bethany Auction Discontinued
The Bethany Auction has served as an important fundraiser over the past 20 years and has seen many changes and modifications during that time. After each auction, a group of parents and staff have met to evaluate the event and identify changes for the future as well as consider how to keep it fresh and enjoyable.

In view of new and emerging demands on staff and volunteer time and energy, Bethany has decided not to hold an auction fundraiser in 2014. We plan to use next year to explore new avenues for getting together to build community and raise revenue.

We at Bethany Christian Schools are profoundly grateful for the generous gifts of time and energy invested by parents and volunteers over the past 20 years. These investments have enriched our school both monetarily and in the intangible ways in which working together has fostered community. We also thank the extended Bethany community including individuals, area churches, and businesses for their generous donations which have supported quality Christian education for Bethany’s students over the past 20 years.

Job Openings
Bethany invites applications for the positions of band teacher, athletic director, and bus driver. All positions are for 2013-14 and begin in early August. For details and application procedures, see bethanycs.net/jobs.

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/. To subscribe to or unsubscribe from weLink, email imoffice@im.mennonite.net.