

# gospel evangel

connecting the congregations of  
indiana-michigan mennonite conference

march/april 2015 | vol 96, no 2

Photograph by Greg Leatherman Sommers



From left, John Troyer, Mary Lehman Yoder, Mark Schloneger and John Roth pray together Feb. 8.

## Future visions

### Humility's crucible can turn conflict into focus on Christ

By **Laurie Oswald Robinson**, interim editor

**W**hen substances are combined in a crucible and exposed to high heat, they transform into something new. Mark Schloneger, chair of the Unity & Variance Task Group for Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, used this image to set the tone for a Feb. 8 gathering at East Goshen (Ind.) Mennonite Church.

About 300 people attended the event, "Faithfulness Under the Cross: Unity, Division & the Church," where Schloneger gave opening remarks at the event. It is one conversation that is part of a two-year process to discern what breadth of variance the conference can live with.

"When elements are exposed to high heat, they bond together to produce a new compound," said Schloneger, pastor of North Goshen (Ind.) Mennonite Church. "This compound is not a sum of those elements, but an entirely new thing, with different properties. But in order for this to

happen, those substances have to be in the same crucible, subjected to the same flame. In a time marked by conflict and uncertainty, we should not try to find a way out to avoid the heat but to remain there, knowing that our formation and transformation depend on it."

Speakers who shared their visions for how to best effect transformation were John Troyer, a pastor at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen; Mary Lehman Yoder, of Assembly Mennonite Church, Goshen; and John Roth, a history professor at Goshen (Ind.) College.

Troyer talked about encountering grace in unexpected ways, and of the church being a fellowship of the (continued on page 4)

## inside

- 2 Annual sessions**  
"Joyfully following Jesus"
- 3 Annual sessions**  
continued
- 4 Feb. 8 gathering**  
continued
- 5 Feb. 8** continued
- 6 at bethany**
- 7 at amigo**
- 8 MLT update**

# 2015 annual assembly

## Joyfully following Jesus

“With great joy, you people will get water from the well of victory.” Isaiah 12:3



**June 18-20, 2015**  
**Indianapolis, Indiana**  
**Broadway United Methodist Church**

By **Cheryl Beachey**, chair of CPPC

Our logo for annual sessions this year is meant to remind us of our choice to focus on the message and example of Jesus as we journey through life. In that spirit, the Conference Program Planning Committee (CPPC) chose as its theme conference mission statement: “Joyfully Following Jesus,” with a focus on Isaiah 12.

An online resource, Spirituality & Practice, includes a description of joy: “It is a spiritual practice growing out of faith, grace, gratitude, hope and love. It is the pure and

simple delight in being alive. Joy is our elated response to feelings of happiness, experiences of pleasure, and awareness of abundance. It is also the deep satisfaction we know when we are able to serve others and be glad for their good fortune.”

It is this kind of joy the committee hopes and prays will be part of our annual session as we gather to work and worship. The committee invites all participants of the annual assembly to reclaim their delight, become aware of the abundance which is ours, share how our experiences on this journey have changed us and be glad for one another.

It is also the committee’s hope that this year’s theme will build upon last year’s theme, “Broken ... Beloved.” As we continue to build upon our identity as broken and beloved daughters and sons of Creator God, we also want to “Serve the Lord with gladness!” (Psalm 100:2a)

**“We have God’s  
 joy in our blood.”**  
 — Frederick Buechner

This issue is available online:

[im.mennonite.net/gospel-evangel](http://im.mennonite.net/gospel-evangel)



**Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference**—a conference of **Mennonite Church USA**—is a community of congregations in Indiana, Michigan and Kentucky, gathered together for mutual encouragement in kingdom mission and inspiration to joyfully follow Jesus.

**Office:** 109 E. Clinton St., Suite 100, Goshen, IN 46528  
 (574) 534-4006 or (800) 288-8486; [www.im.mennonite.net](http://www.im.mennonite.net)

**Missional Leadership Team Members:** Jane Stoltzfus Buller, moderator, Goshen, IN; Gene Hartman, moderator-elect, Topeka, IN; Rebecca Kauffman, Orleans, IN; Aimee Mayeda, Indianapolis, IN; Steve Miller, Naubinway, MI; George Thompson, treasurer, Auburn Hills, MI; Bob Yoder, Goshen, IN.

**Gospel Evangel** is published six times annually by Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference (Jan/Feb, Mar/Apr, May/Jun, Jul/Aug, Sep/Oct, Nov/Dec). It is printed and mailed by Duley Press, 2906 N. Home Street, Mishawaka, IN 46545. Periodical postage is paid at Nappanee, IN 46550 (USPS 575-940). Postmaster: Send address changes to IN-MI Mennonite Conference, 109 E. Clinton St., Suite 100, Goshen, IN 46528.

**Interim Editor: Laurie Oswald Robinson**  
**Email:** [LaurieOR123@gmail.com](mailto:LaurieOR123@gmail.com)

We invite you to submit articles and article ideas.

Printed on 30% PCW recycled paper.

# 2015 annual assembly



Worship speakers from left are: Daniel Miller, conference minister (Friday morning); Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, moderator, Mennonite Church USA (Friday evening); and John Powell, regional pastor, Indiana-Michigan Conference (Saturday afternoon). They will preach on various aspects of Isaiah 12. Photos provided.

## Schedule/Speakers/Seminars

You are invited to enter into the joy of Jesus during Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference's annual sessions from Saturday through Thursday, June 18-20, in Indianapolis, Indiana. Sessions will be held at Broadway United Methodist Church, 609 E. 29th St.

### Please note the current registration fees:

\$45 on or before May 1

\$75 beginning May 2

\$90 on-site registration after noon EDT June 1

**To register online:** Go online to see when the online registration form is available: [im.mennonite.net/calendar/annual-sessions](http://im.mennonite.net/calendar/annual-sessions). Those unable to register online please contact the conference office for a printable form at [imoffice@im.mennonite.net](mailto:imoffice@im.mennonite.net) or 574-534-4006. **Lodging:** Hotel and other accommodations are listed on the conference website. [Click here to go to that document.](#)

### Thursday

**12:00 - registration opens**

**12:30 - 5:30** - Workshops

\* "Healthy Boundaries for Pastors" workshop (**credentialed pastors only**)

\* "Pastor/Congregational Evaluations" workshop (**for non-pastors**)

\* Service Project

**Dinner on your own (non-pastors)**

**6:30-8:30** - Pastor appreciation meal

### Friday

**Breakfast on your own**

**8:00** - Registration opens, coffee available

**8:30 - 9:30** - Opening worship

**9:45 - 11:45** - Worshipful work

**12:00 - 1:15** - Lunch

\* General lunch

\* Congregational Coaches' lunch

**1:30 - 5:00** - Worshipful work (30-minute break)

**5:30 - 6:30** - Dinner

**7:00 - 8:30** - Evening worship

**9:00** - Affinity conversations

### Saturday

**Breakfast on your own**

**8:15-11:00** - Gathering and outings

**11:30 - 1:00** - Lunches

\* General Lunch

\* Mennonite Women Luncheon

\* Mennonite Men

\* Retired Pastors

**1:15 - 3:00** - Worshipful work

**3:30 - 4:30** - Ending worship



Dr. Melissa Hofstetter

### boundaries seminar for pastors

Pastors are invited to "Healthy Boundaries for Pastors," on Thursday, June 18, from 12:30 to 5:30 p.m. Presenter will be Dr. Melissa Hofstetter, Ph.D., M.Div., of Pasadena, California. **Topics include:** embodiment of sexual ethics, clergy self-care, mental health and the church, ethics of pastoral care and counseling, boundary maintenance, power dynamics and differentials, child safety and clergy mandatory reporting.

She has served as a district elder in the Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference and is a licensed psychologist in Los Angeles. **Special note:** This workshop is designed for credentialed church leaders and may become required for pastors credentialed by the conference. Attendance is limited to pastors. **Workshop cost** is being underwritten by a grant from the Leadership Training Fund.

## Future visions (continued from cover)



Attendees at the event Feb. 8 at East Goshen (Ind.) Mennonite Church respond to presentations. From left, Dan Miller, conference minister, Lane Miller and Anna Ruth Hershberger. Photos by Greg Leatherman Sommers.

broken who desperately need God's grace. He said he is being transformed as his congregation engages with Revive Indiana. It's an evangelistic push in his wider community that includes Mennonites and others.

"Do I believe that God is active in doing things to hearts and drawing people together?" he asked. "It's not about coming up with a theology or a system, but about the power of God in our midst."

"I want to be a part of a church that is not considered a pure church because it is better than others, but because it gathers believers together who believe in God's provident actions beyond our expectations, and who loves us so deeply in our 'stuckness' that we no longer remain stuck."

**"It's not about coming up with a theology or a system, but about the power of God in our midst." — John Troyer**

Lehman reflected on how the faith, hope, love and humility, can help forge transformation.

"No one conference, congregation or denomination has the whole picture," she said. "I believe that humility is one of the virtues, graces, gifts and fruits sadly missing from the left and the right in our present discussion."

"... What if conference relationships were about learn-

ing from one another rather than judging one another? Nothing undercuts humility more than the sense that I've got it right."

**"I believe that humility is one of the virtues, graces, gifts and fruits sadly missing from the left and the right in our present discussion." — Mary Lehman Yoder**

An understanding of history also can help forge unity amidst diversity, Roth said. "As we struggle to make sense of the pain and anxiety and frustration of the current moment, it is helpful for us to remember that all the kinds of questions we are facing today are not new," he said.

"They are deeply woven into our understanding of our church that goes back 500 years. When competing understandings of scriptures made differences seem unresolvable, Mennonites tended to respond by moving toward the pole of separation in pursuit of holiness; or spiritualism in pursuit of unity."

He believes besetting sins in both poles is arrogance and idolatry. "Separatists in quest of holiness doctrines and rules of their own worship the creation rather than the creator," he said. "Spiritualists worship themselves and the idol of individual freedom, while the church disappears."

# unity & variance

Roth said an antidote to such polarities is entering into an eschatological vision of worship that includes all tribes and tongues and nations. It is the "cult of a colorful multitude of people joined together in single purpose -- to give praise to the one seated on throne," he said.

He suggested ways congregations could experience this: 1. Develop a relationship with one other congregation in the global Anabaptist church 2. Develop a relationship with one other congregation from a different faith tradition and 3. Celebrate the Lord's Supper every week for a year.

**"... It is helpful to remember that all the kinds of questions we are facing today are not new." — John Roth**

"In the end, the unity I seek, the company of people I want to fellowship with [are those] willing to share [their] version of the song of praise to the lamb that was slain, to one already victorious over sin and brokenness and violence and all that separates us, one in whom we live and move and have our being, the one who has broken down the dividing walls of hostility, who is our peace," he said.



John Roth, one of three speakers Feb. 8 at East Goshen (Ind.) Mennonite Church, focuses on the historical aspect of unity and variance among Mennonites. Photo by Greg Leatherman Sommers.

Merle Hostetler, pastor at East Goshen, inspired the event. His congregation needed a venue in which to have difficult conversations and asked the conference for help. "This event showed me that we are able and willing to come together in diversity and variance and name what we have in common," he said. "So lifegiving to me was the fact that we could sit down together and hear varying perspectives and still be alright."

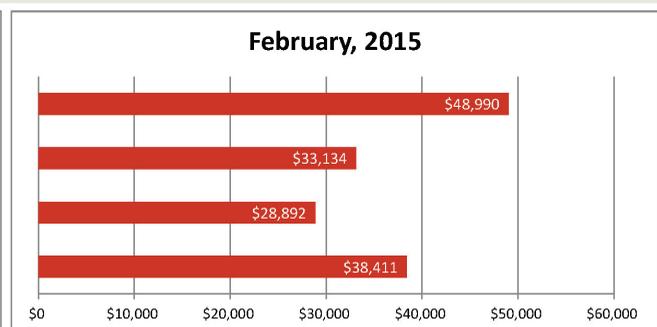
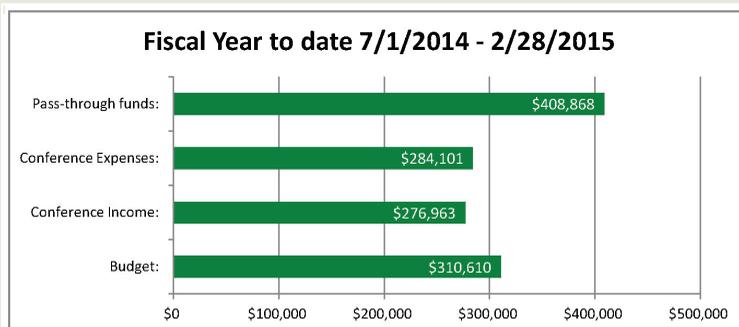
## financial report

By **Greg Leatherman Sommers**, conference administrator

### February 2015 financial report

Great news! Individual and congregational contributions to the work of conference were significantly above budgeted expectations for the month of February. As it tends to be one of our slower financial months, conference had expected a loss of around \$15,000 for February. At the end of the month, however, it was a delightful surprise to find that increased giving and lowered expenses resulted in a loss of only \$4,242.

Using five-year trends with the monthly and fiscal year to date numbers, we currently project an end of fiscal year loss of less than \$7,000. This loss is an improvement over the end of the last couple of fiscal years when conference ended with losses of approximately \$10,500 and \$15,000.



at **bethany**

## “Life Lemons”

### Performing arts explore justice themes

By **J. Kevin Miller**, Bethany communication coordinator

**W**hen life gives you lemons, make lemonade. That phrase is used by Bethany’s performing arts troupe, Emmaus, in its program, “Life Lemons.” And the group takes it further: “You can make it better—or bitter.”

Talashia Keim Yoder, the troupe’s facilitator-teacher, describes it this way: “Life doesn’t always give us what we expect or want. We can choose to wallow, or we can change our perspective, get creative and make something good out of the situation. The lemon moments of life are often the ones that provide valuable lessons for us.”

Life Lemons emerged from the troupe’s brainstorming of themes: They thought it would be fun to develop and would be relevant to both children and adults. The entire process is student-led, drawing upon and cultivating the gifts of the students as they write, direct, and choreograph their shows that they perform in the community.



**Emmaus: (front) Nathanael Eby, Olivia Copsey, Ethan Lapp; (middle) Sarah Leininger, Mallory Bontreger, Darienne Maust, Erin Bontrager; (back) David Kauffman, Kyle Snyder. Photo by J. Kevin Miller.**

“Performing arts at Bethany exists for the students, to help them learn and grow, Keim Yoder says. “We believe that if we care for the minds and souls of students in the process, the product will be good.”

And it has been. During the last 11 years that Keim Yoder has directed theater at Bethany, people have come to expect a high quality show with creative choreography and thoughtful content that does more than entertain. This winter’s play, Radium Girls, addressed a highly relevant

justice issue through a story that impacted the labor movement of the 1920s that we still feel today, and in Keim Yoder’s words, “demonstrates the power of humanity: that each person has a face, a life, a story.”



**Mallory Bontreger (right) applies make up to Gabriella Klopfenstein prior to the performance of Radium Girls. Director/producer Talashia Keim Yoder assists. Photo by J. Kevin Miller.**

The play also provided opportunity for students to look at themselves, others and the world in a more layered way. Senior Mallory Bontreger, who compares her character (Grace Fryer) to another real-life activist, Erin Brockovich, says, “Both went against the odds of their situations and refused to back down until justice prevailed.”

Keim Yoder, a pastor at College Mennonite, focuses primarily on Christian formation. “I find it impossible not to make faith connections ... and I love that we have students eager to explore that,” she says.

Keim Yoder also organizes musical theater-skills workshops. She leads many of these and brings in guest teachers, including former students who are becoming teachers. They have included Sadie Gustafson-Zook (’13) who led a workshop; and Radium Girls assistant directors Jesse Bontreger (’13) and Kelly Frey Martin (’08).

Life Lemons uses music, drama and dance and includes familiar stories to entertain and instruct. Emmaus performs for local elementary school students and will perform at a church outing and a public performance at 6 p.m. Sunday, May 17, at Bethany.

# New LIFE emerges

## Fresh vision brings change

By **Mandy Yoder**, Amigo program director

**P**eople of all ages who attend Camp Amigo in 2015 may expect to find new life as they experience this year's theme, LIFE: **L** – Living for God; **I** – Identity in Christ; **F** – Overcoming Fears; and **E** – Engaging Culture.

To help inspire renewal of vision and programs, T and Jean Mounsithiraj, summer camp program directors, hosted a reunion and recruitment retreat for the 2014 summer staff and friends last December. Out of that retreat, with encouragement and direction from the directors, the summer staff developed a theme that is bolstering leadership skills.

As the couple served as camp pastors for the past three years, they grew in their desire to give more direction, planning and oversight to Amigo's summer camp program. With a heart for ministry for both campers and the counseling staff, they are excited about taking Camp Amigo to a new level.

"Developing leadership skills in the staff is one component of the vision that we bring to Amigo this year," says Jean Mounsithiraj. "The skills will help all summer staff to lead one worship session for campers. Support and direction will be provided, and as a result of this directive, the summer staff members are excited by the challenge."

As 75 percent of former staff members return they, along with new staff, will implement changes. **They include:**

1. Offering camp for ages 8-13 for three different weeks (send all your children in one week!)
2. Two camps will run each week (8-10, grades 2-4 in Discovery Camp and 10-13, grades 5-7 in Encounter Camp)
3. Day camp offered each of these weeks for ages 4-13
4. Ages 4-7 will be in their own group
5. Ages 8-13 will be incorporated into a residential cabin group
6. Longer hours (7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.) to allow for drop off and pick up for working parents
7. Adventure Camp for ages 13-16, with a new format including survivor skills, sports or arts

Part of implementing LIFE is the return of favorite camps from the past. **They include:**

1. Two weeks of Horse Camp
2. First Camp – for young children accompanied by an adult for an overnight tent adventure
3. Experience Camp for ages 6-8 for two nights



**Campers enjoy outdoor games. Photo by Mandy Yoder.**

"We are anticipating new games and activities and a return of favorite programs from the past," says Mandy Yoder, the camp's overall program director. "A large percentage of our 2014 summer staff is returning and the staffers are eager to spend time with your children. We invite you to consider sending your children, grandchildren, or church children to Camp Amigo this year."

If you, your family or your church want to offer assistance -- financial, volunteering, or staffing -- contact us at [info@amigocentre.org](mailto:info@amigocentre.org), or 269.651.2811. In addition, Amigo will continue to offer a week of camp for those in St Joseph County, Michigan, who otherwise cannot afford camp.

To subsidize costs, we sponsor a Golf Scramble each year in support of St Joe Week. This year, the Scramble will be held June 6 at the Klinger Lake Golf Club. Would you consider joining us, or sponsoring a hole? Please consider sending your donations to Amigo Centre designated to "Summer Camp Scholarships."

# leadership development

## Guiding goals

### Charting a path through perplexity

By **Jane Stoltzfus Buller**, moderator, Missional Leadership Team

**T**he Missional Leadership Team (MLT) met at the conference offices March 7 to focus on three of the five goals identified at our Fall Retreat last August. The team also heard reports from the Missional Credentialing Team (MCT), the Unity and Variance Discernment Group (UVDG), Bethany Christian Schools Board and conference staff.

#### Goal #1

**Goal One** is enhancing our communication and responding patterns within conference. Our conversation gave direction and helped us as we continue to make it a priority to keep the member congregations aware of what happens within our conference of congregations and articulate well our perspectives and realities.

We continue to wrestle with the reality of a conference that is diverse in belief, thought and action, and yet together in seeking to be the Body of Christ in the world.

#### Goal #2

**Goal Two** is to work at budget priorities, including how the reduced staffing FTE impacts what is done and not done.

We focused on naming what we are letting go in June so that the smaller staff will be able to function efficiently and well. Some of what we named is the number of meetings expected from staff, IT work, some communication pieces, amount of supervisory time and Annual Sessions planning.

It's possible we may ask volunteers to provide some of this work for our conference of congregations, in light of the realization that we cannot do all that we used to do.

#### Goal #3

As part of **Goal Three**, we gave good time to the UVDG, a priority for our work this year. The MLT is grateful for the work of those who give attention to who we currently are and how we'll evolve as we live out our faith in Jesus Christ among diverse member congregations. We pray for the UVDG and how we, as communities together, find a way forward in this time of transition:

1. Some congregations may decide to leave, as they strongly hold to the Mennonite Church USA Confession of Faith as it has been articulated in the past.
2. Others may be open to experimenting in new ways with how we hold to the Mennonite Church USA Confession of Faith.
3. And many others will observe, pray and lament from the 'center,' continuing to call for a more balanced approach.

We affirmed the Feb. 8 meeting at East Goshen (Ind.) Mennonite Church, "Faithfulness Under the Cross: Unity, Division and the Church." This group gave us a report of its survey to be shared at delegate meetings in March.

In a report from the MCT, we became aware again how the diversity in our conference about same-sex relationships makes decision-making more complicated. We continue to pray for the MLT and its difficult decisions.

It is an honor to serve the church when times are changing and even feel chaotic to some. And yet, we are part of the Body of Christ in the world. May we grow in our understanding of how the crucified and risen body of Jesus is re-membered as the church, a light in the world.

## Discontinuing

As a cost-cutting measure, conference will be terminating our toll-free and fax lines. This change will become effective July 1, 2015.