

Clinton Brick Mennonite Church Withdrawal

Clinton Brick Mennonite Church near Goshen, Ind. built its first meetinghouse, made of logs, in 1854. Not until the year 1880 did the congregation make a brick building, giving the congregation its name. (In contrast to the nearby Amish Mennonite congregation made of wooden frame, Clinton Frame.) That brick structure burned to the ground in 1945 and was rebuilt within two years. They are one of the oldest Mennonite congregations in Elkhart County and were active members of the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference until recently. The congregation was without a pastor for several years until David Hathaway, a graduate of the conference Journey program, was licensed in 2012 and then ordained on June 22, 2014.

In a letter dated September 21, 2014, the conference received a letter from Clinton Brick's pastor and elders. In part it says:

After a 7 month process of dialog and discernment which culminated in a Congregational meeting on July 13th 2014 where a vote was taken and it was decided by a large majority that Clinton Brick would separate from Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference and Mennonite Church USA. It is with sadness that we take this action but with recognition that there are a number of issues where our differences in understanding of scripture are too great. The largest rift may be the latest one having to do with how to view the various sexual orientations that have become acceptable to many in the nation but also now with a number of leaders and congregants in the Mennonite Church. We believe that God created and ordained marriage to be between one man and one women and sexual relations to be only between male and female in that married state. We also believe that stating this position is not enough.

At its October 23, 2014 meeting, the Ministry Credentialing Team acknowledged with sadness their withdrawal effective October 1, 2014, as their letter stated. We also want to bless Clinton Brick as they continue to seek God's will and way in their setting.

Submitted by Doug Kaufman, conference pastor for leadership transitions