

gospel evangel

connecting the congregations of
indiana-michigan mennonite conference

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Photograph by Joel Short

From left to right: Jim Birky, Ken Good, Chris Birky, Harvey Nix, John Sandberg, Rod King, and Keith King help out with the Hopewell renovations.

Capital Grant Helps Congregation Engage Community

By **Chris Rahe**, interim communication coordinator

Hopewell Mennonite in Kouts, Ind., has been a very service oriented congregation, and in 2013 decided to focus on what it means to be missional. This mission mindset resulted in many events and programs that utilize their fellowship hall, which had not been renovated in over 40 years.

During the fall of 2013, planning began on major renovations involving three areas with an estimated total cost of \$80,000:

1) updating and improving the plumbing system by enlarging water lines.

2) Enlarging, updating and making the restrooms handicapped accessible.

3) remodeling and updating the foyer, kitchen and fellowship hall.

In March 2014, Hopewell applied for a Capital Grant from Indiana-Michigan Conference to help pay for this major renovation. The matching grant is available to congregations that are members of the conference.

The grant was approved for \$39,500 and the project was ready to move forward. According to Joel Short, pastor of Hopewell, "We began construction in late June 2014. Just about everything was finished by late August."

"We wanted to have everything completed
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leadership development

Credential Reviews

By **Doug Kaufman**, Conference Pastor for Leadership Transitions

The majority of my work with ordination credentials in the conference is the joyful and challenging ministry of working with people exploring a call into pastoral ministry. I work with the Ministry Credentialing Team on discerning whether we believe someone has the gifts, skills, and calling to be a pastor. As part of that process we help people to understand the ethical and relational understandings and practices that guide pastoral ministry.

Unfortunately, sometimes people do not follow these ethical understandings and so in that case we review their credentials. This part of our work is often confidential and so consequently happens beyond the awareness of most of the conference. But this summer our review of someone who performed a same-sex marriage ceremony made headlines in Elkhart County newspapers and was even picked up by national news outlets.

In my five years with the conference we have had 8 reviews, and so one has happened—at least once a year. What kinds of actions have led to reviews? Soliciting Solicitation of a prostitute, unaccountable financial management, unwanted sexualized attention, and breach of confidentiality are examples of other cases we have reviewed.

What kinds of actions do we take in response? A public case where the pastor admitted fault led to immediate resignation and suspension of the credential. When in cases where the offense was limited we have simply worked with the pastors in understanding what they did wrong and how to avoid having it happen again.

The most extreme response we can take is to terminate someone's credential. We have done that a couple of times, but only after several years of working with the people involved to encourage a new way of doing things

and finding no change in behavior. We can also put someone's ordination credential on probation, (a period of close supervision of their ministry), or even suspension, (where the pastor is no longer empowered to perform ministerial functions). Both of these are time-limited actions we take while we work with the person. The work with the person This may include requiring counseling or asking another pastor or person to work with the pastor on becoming more accountable for their his or her behavior.



Doug Kaufman,
conference pastor for
leadership transitions

All of these cases are difficult and soul-wrenching. At times we find it difficult to decide whether the person has done something wrong. We always find it difficult to discern what action we will take in response. How serious is the offense and what course of action will lead to healing for the offender and for the victim, if there is one? Because of these difficulties, the process usually takes anywhere from several months to several years.

So We invite your prayers for our work within credentials and especially in credential reviews. We need God's wisdom and insight as we listen and deliberate. The Ministry Credentialing Team is Bill Beck, pastor of Locust Grove, Marilyn Rudy-Froese, co-pastor of Berkey Avenue, June Alliman Yoder, retired professor of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary and member of College, Kevin Yoder, chair, co-pastor of Olive, and Angy Moore, law student at Indiana University and member of Bloomington.

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Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference—a conference of **Mennonite Church USA**—is a community of 71 congregations in Indiana, Michigan and Kentucky, gathered together for mutual encouragement in kingdom mission and inspiration to joyfully follow Jesus.

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christian community

Capital Grant (continued from cover)

by the beginning of our preschool which began in September," Short added.

Following completion of the renovation, Short noted, "It seems like we've had an increase in interest in using our facility. We want to be a resource to the community whenever we can and that was part of our goal, to have a space that can be used."

Indiana-Michigan Conference currently has \$500,000 designated for Capital Grants

Congregations desiring a Capital Grant (ranging from \$10,000 to \$50,000 but not more than 50 percent of the cost of the building and land) should contact the conference office or a conference regional minister to request an application form.

All photographs by Joel Short



Jack Rust, Tim Stoner, Harvey Nix, Henry Farias



Ann Miller, Jody Leek, Pat Bechtel



Harvey Nix, Chris Birky, Mike Jones, Ken Good



The completed fellowship hall

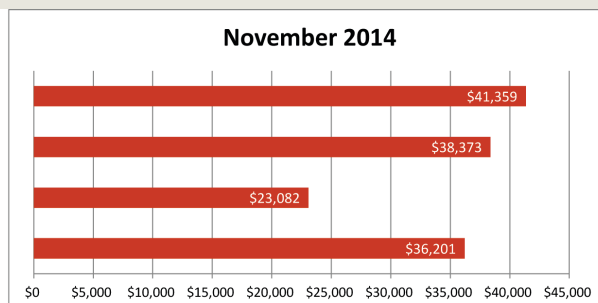
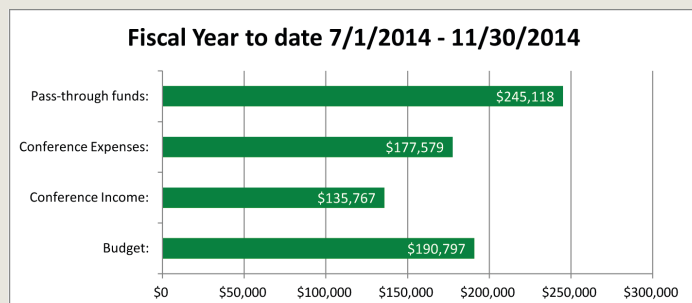


Rod King (on tractor), Austin Deavers

financial report

Financial support in November was 60% of what was needed to fund conference operations. Conference had a \$15,291 deficit for the month, resulting in a \$41,812 deficit for the fiscal year so far. We are 41.6% through the fiscal year, which runs July 1 through June 30. Based on income and expense trends from the last five years, conference will end the fiscal year with a \$32,000 deficit.

Conference values your support, expressed in one or more of these four ways: prayers, personnel (volunteer time), funding, and feedback. Thank you.



Area Councils Support Your Local Pastor

By **Chris Rahe**, interim communication coordinator

Indiana-Michigan Conference congregations are organized into five regions and 14 area councils, which are designed to be a supporting network to the pastors individually and corporately.

Mary Mininger pastored with her husband Phil at Paoli Mennonite for nearly 13 years before becoming the southern regional pastor for Indiana-Michigan Conference. Throughout that time she participated in the Camfell area council, which she says was "a source of support and connection that was meaningful, and it seems to continue to fill an important role for the central area churches."

Area councils are a way for pastors of congregations outside some of the heavy Mennonite areas to still feel a sense of connection to each other and to the conference. Mininger says that in addition to personal support for pastors, the councils can also be an excellent networking opportunity. She mentioned an example from Camfell when one church was having Ted & Company come in for a performance. She says, "When churches have special events going on, they will let the others know in case they may wish to take



Mary Mininger
relates to two area
councils as southern
regional pastor

advantage of the opportunity."

Each area council has its own schedule for meeting, but the two Mininger relates to as regional pastor, Camfell and the Fort Wayne area council, meet very regularly. Fort Wayne meets every month and Camfell meets on a slightly irregular schedule that's, "not every month, but a little bit more than every other month."

Area councils are one of many ways for congregations to connect with other Mennonites in their area.

ministry transitions

Beginnings



Carolyn Hunt was installed and licensed as pastor for formation and community engagement at Prairie Street, Elkhart, Ind., on October 26 by Doug Kaufman.

Ending

Keith Reynolds concluded as pastor of Fairhaven Mennonite in Fort Wayne, Ind., on November 16.