



Indiana-Michigan
Mennonite Conference

weLink

connecting the congregations of IN-MI Mennonite Conference

April 15, 2015



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Administrative Team Report

With the arrival of Easter we celebrate resurrection life that continues to work its way out in the world God loves.

Wow! March was a full month, with staff constantly coming and going! Greg had his second leg surgery on March 12 therefore was unable to attend either delegate meeting. He returned March 23, has begun physical therapy, and is recovering well. Two weeks post-surgery he reported this knee is progressing better than the other did.

Delegate meetings at Bethel in Ashley, Mich. and at First, Indy brought out about 150 people from 45 congregations. Worship began, ended and wove through the day – thanks to the regional pastors who gave leadership. Stewardship Team gave an update of the financial situation and the draft spending plan for 2015-16. Missional Leadership Team talked about the structure review and coming staffing changes. The PLANT Network brought an update on their work with potential

church planters in IN-MI Conference. The Unity and Variance Discernment Group reported on the conference survey and led discussion around tables.

Doug went on north following the Bethel meeting to meet with search committees from several congregations, and to enjoy the glory of the remaining snow and cold. Unfortunately, Dan was sick in the week between meetings, and missed the mid-states conference ministers retreat day.

Greg headed up a project to upgrade our server and email because support for our server software ends this spring. Most of the work has been completed, so Greg and MicroSource tech support are now working out remaining complications.

Mennonite Mission Network board met in Elkhart on March 23, so the board invited Dan Miller, along with Lois Kaufmann, to speak about our conferences. The board was very interested in the various developments in both IN-MI and CDC. Afterward there was a moving celebration of the completion of a bible in the Toba Qom language. Moving pictures were shown of people receiving copies of the Bible in Qom. Former MMN workers in the region read scripture selections for the board and staff.

Laurie Oswald is quickly coming up to speed as editor of the Gospel Evangel, in the ending of the communications coordinator position. Dan and Vanessa will be working with her the most in the next year. Laurie brings broad experience as writer and editor to her work.

Then there was travel to Constituency Leaders Council. Gene Hartman (Emma) and Shannon Dycus (First, Indy) joined Dan to represent IN-MI Conference. (See CLC report in this weLink.)

Conference Program Planning Committee (CPPC) continues planning for June 18-20 Annual Sessions in Indianapolis. Bill Miller began as Annual Sessions Planner, a seasonal part-time staff position. He is working with CPPC, office staff, and local planners in Indianapolis. Bill is a great addition to staff.

Several staff took vacation over spring break, so the office was closed or had very irregular hours the first week of April.

In the month ahead:

- April 13-15 Dan and Doug will be in Lombard, Ill., for Advanced Clergy Clinic with Lombard Mennonite Peace Center. (Now is the time to register for next year!)
- April 20-27 Dan will be on vacation.

- May 11, all conference staff will meet in Goshen for a semi-annual face-to-face retreat. Other than Annual Sessions, this will be our last gathering in the current configuration.
- May 16 Dan will meet with Missional Leadership Team
- Doug will be ordaining Marcella Hershberger at Bonneyville in May 17.

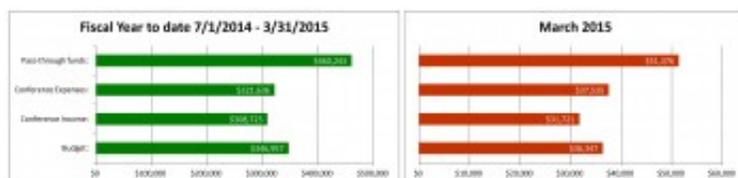
May the resurrection of Jesus sustain and challenge you this month.

March Financial Report

The 2014-2015 spending plan was pretty accurate — within \$400 — in projecting congregational contributions to conference for the month of March. Individual contributions were less than hoped. Expenses were higher than expected, due to a Leadership Training grant and Gospel Evangel publishing costs coming due in March instead of February. Some Gospel Evangel-related expenses have been shifted from “Supporting Leadership Empowerment” (the eliminated communication coordinator position salary) to “Community Building Resources” (a contracted writer-editor).

Year-to-date figures, while not positive, are less negative than anticipated. Net income was negative \$12,913, compared to an anticipated shortfall of \$13,843 at this point in our fiscal year. This is significantly better than this time last year, when conference fiscal year income was negative \$25,021! Using income and expense patterns from the five most recent years, we predict a loss of only \$140 at the end of fiscal year 2014-2015 (based on the end of March figures).

Contributions through conference to other local, regional, national and international ministries continue to be a blessing. Thank you for your support to and through conference. Conference appreciates your prayers, volunteer time, financial support, and feedback as we continue to minister together as a congregation of congregations.



April prayer newsletter

[Here is the prayer newsletter for April 2015.](#) We encourage you to include prayer requests in your church bulletin or incorporate into Sunday worship as you see fit.

Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) Report

Shannon Dycus, Gene Hartman and Dan Miller represented Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference when the Constituency Leaders Council of MCUSA met March 26-28 in Wichita Kansas. The theme verse for the meeting was Romans 12:2: *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.* The overarching theme for the meeting was discernment. Worship was woven throughout our time together. After getting acquainted or reacquainted around tables the following discussions and reporting took place.

- Thursday forenoon and afternoon sessions were led by Ruth Haley Barton author of the book *"Pursuing God's Will Together"* as well as other books about group discernment. Her presentations included steps of preparation for discernment (clarify the question), putting ourselves in a position to be led (prayer), discerning God's will together (listening to God and each other), and doing the will of God (communicating and planning). The CLC found the presentation to be helpful and informative but it felt rushed due to time constraints.
- Thursday evening was time for three different groups within the CLC to meet. The Conference Ministers met together, Conference Moderators (including moderator-elects) met together and the rest of the CLC met together as well. The conversations centered on the question: *How does your conference understand its willingness to take counsel and be accountable to the whole?*
- The first session Friday forenoon included Ervin Stutzman highlighting and further commenting on his *Executive Director's Report* to the CLC. Ervin's report is always interesting and insightful as it relates to MC USA as a body. This time also included updates from the Executive Board (EB) and time for discussion as it related to both Ervin's report and the EB updates.

- The second session Friday forenoon included work on further discernment about LGBTQ inclusion and MC USA polity questions. As usual the discussion around this topic was warmly engaging while at the same time respectful of the varying stances.
- The first session Friday afternoon included several reports...
 1. Andre Gingerich Stoner reported on some of the work that Christian Churches Together (CCT) has been doing. MC USA is a member of CCT. This report included updates on how the immigrant churches are changing the face of America, and a statement in response to Martin Luther King Jr's Letter from a Birmingham Jail.
 2. Iris de Leon Hartshorn announced scholarships available for Intercultural Development Inventory training.
 3. There was also a time for reflections on the racial tensions arising from the recent police actions in predominately African American communities.
- The second session Friday afternoon was spent discussing and providing recommendations to the EB concerning several resolutions being considered for the Kansas City Convention. Four resolutions were recommended to the EB by the CLC. While more work needs to be done by the Resolutions Committee (RC) concerning these resolutions, the topics addressed were as follows...
 1. The denominations response to LGBTQ credentialing and performance of same sex covenants.
 2. A response to the seemingly unending war we are involved in as a nation.
 3. A response to the ongoing Israel/Palestine situation.
 4. A church-wide statement on sexual abuse.
- The first session Saturday forenoon included continuing discussion on the proposed resolutions and hearing reports from the following...
 1. The #WeAreMenno campaign and the new website.
 2. The Listening Committee.
 3. The Gifts Discernment Committee.
- The final session of our CLC gathering started with an open mic time. Our meeting closed with a time of worship, communion, and blessing.

The CLC gatherings include people with differing positions and views but I find that the conversations are conducted in a way that shows love and respect for each other. It was evident during our meeting that all members of the CLC love the church and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gene Hartman – CLC Rep.

Mennonite Mission Network's Day of Prayer

Pray with us, pray for us, pray for our world! Help us celebrate Mennonite Mission Network's Day of Prayer on May 1 and join us in prayer for the mission and ministry of each person, congregation, conference and Mennonite Mission Network. Visit www.MennoniteMission.net/DayOfPrayer for individual and congregational resources like:

- Prayer Vine, a monthly prayer calendar
 - A 24-hour prayer vigil sign-up sheet
 - And more!
-

Amigo Centre

GOLFERS!

Put together a **team of four**, enjoy a morning on the beautiful **Klinger Lake Country Club golf course** and a **meal at Amigo Centre**, all while helping a deserving child have a life-changing week of camp. **The Amigo Centre Camp Scholarship Golf Scramble, June 6, 2015** will enable children from families with limited resources receive scholarships for a week of summer camp at Camp Amigo. Register by phone (269.651.2811) or online at www.amigocentre.org

Business owners can also register to be a sponsor. Thank you for investing in children!

CAMP AMIGO

We are once again preparing for one of the most exciting times of the year at Amigo Centre – Summer Camp! Our theme for 2015 is L.I.F.E. Living for God; Intity in Christ, Overcoming Fears, Engage Culture. Our early registration discount is available through May 1 – so don't delay to register your children or

grandchildren! More information is available at: www.amigocentre.org.

MAY 8-9, 2015 – MOTHER-DAUGHTER SCRAPBOOKING, CRAFTERS AND QUILTING RETREAT

This Mother's Day weekend, spend some quality time with family and friends at Amigo. Whether you scrap, craft or sew – bring your projects along with your daughter, mother, aunt, grandmother... This weekend is **designed to include the younger generation** in a priceless tradition. One night and 3 meals, including supper on Friday, breakfast "Tea" and lunch on Saturday. You may arrive after 2:00 pm on Friday – and stay till 6:00 on Saturday. Room check out is 2:00 pm on Saturday.

We provide the space – a table with access to power, the lodging in hotel-style rooms in the Retreat Center along with great food! Hosted by Angela Miller; we'll provide just the right amount of focused input to allow you all the time you want to work on your projects and enjoy the lovely surroundings that Amigo has to offer. Register by phone (269.651.2811) or online (www.amigocentre.org).

AMIGO CENTRE FACILITIES AVAILABLE

FAMILIES! Can Amigo Centre serve you and your family this summer? Some dates are still available for groups, family gatherings, and retreats. Amigo would love to welcome you to this place and facilities that belong to the IN-MI Conference churches. Call 269.651.2811 for details.

Bethany Christian Schools

MCC Essay Contest

Bethany senior Isaac Brenneman (Waterford Mennonite) and junior Kyle Snyder (Berkey Avenue Mennonite) were two of four students nationwide recognized in the 2015 MCC Washington Office High School Essay Contest.

Jared Knepper, a senior at Shalom Christian Academy in Chambersburg, Pa., won the grand prize with Brenneman and Snyder receiving honorable mention, along with Brooklyn Ries of Freeman (S.D.) Academy. The grand prize winner receives \$300 and honorable mention winners receive \$100 each.

Brenneman's essay focused on the Central American migration crisis. Following is an excerpt:

"Gang-related violence is one of the root causes of the increase in migration to the United States.... A lack of jobs is another cause for the increase.... With our Christian and Anabaptist values in mind, our response needs to be hospitable and welcoming towards these immigrants because as children of God, we are called to help those in need. One way we can respond is by supporting more organizations that help provide assistance and services to these immigrants."

Snyder's essay was titled "Shortcomings of Mass Incarceration in the U.S." Following is an excerpt:

"Federal and state prisons, however, use retributive justice as the main focus for rehabilitating prisoners. This is perhaps one of the worst methods for effectively reducing recidivism within prisoners.... One alternative is restorative justice, which deals with the criminal accepting their prosecution and helping to find a feasible solution which both helps the prisoner realize the problem, and finds a mutually acceptable solution that is fair.... Retributive and restorative justice mainly differ because of the interaction the victim and the prisoner have in deciding the punishment."

The essay contest highlights the perspectives of youth on significant public policy issues and promotes the involvement of young people in faithful witness to government authorities.

MCC contest rules state that "The contest is open to Anabaptist youth of high school age and to all youth who attend Mennonite high schools. Entries are judged on the participants' understanding of the issues, clarity of argument and degree of creativity in crafting thoughtful policy positions."

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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