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Administrative Team update

January's big news was the public announcement about staffing reconfiguration. After prayerful and extended consideration, the Missional Leadership Team has decided to decrease conference staff from 5.0 FTE to 3.0 FTE, effective July 1, 2015. The conference administrator position will end, along with communication coordinator and three regional pastor positions. This impacts Greg Sommers, David Araujo, Russell Jensen, and Brent Eash. The following people have been invited to continue and have indicated willingness to do so: Doug Kaufman, conference pastor for leadership transitions, Vanessa Kelleybrew, administrative assistant, Janelle Martin, bookkeeper, Dan Miller, conference pastor, Mary Mininger and John Powell, north and south regional pastors. Job descriptions for remaining positions are being revised and we are discerning what can conceivably continue, what should be done differently or discontinued. Thank you to those who have expressed support and are praying for staff in this time of transition. Delegates will be asked to affirm a spending plan at Annual Sessions that reflects this change.

Dan attended the northern Michigan Pastor/Spouse Retreat just outside Petoskey. James Krabill spoke on music and mission. The weather was cold and snowy, but the fellowship was warm.

Dan and Doug attended Pastors Week at AMBS. It was an encouraging and challenging week about the work of God's Spirit beyond our boundaries and the challenge to get on board.

In early January, Rachel Waltner Goossen's article came out as part of a Mennonite Quarterly Review issue dedicated to themes of discipline, healing and forgiveness related to sexual abuse. Titled Defanging the Beast, Goossen's article tells the story of John Howard Yoder's abuse of women and the church's ineffective attempts to address it. Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference's discipline process of the early 1990's is included in the story. We grieve for all who have and continue to pay the price for Yoder's misconduct. A resolution on preventing sexual abuse is on track to come to delegates in Kansas City.

On February 8, East Goshen Mennonite Church and the Unity and Variance Task Group of IN-MI Conference sponsored a gathering called "Faithfulness under the cross: Unity, Division and the Church." Attendance was in excess of 280 people. The conference Facebook page has many pictures, and a recording can be accessed by [clicking here](#).

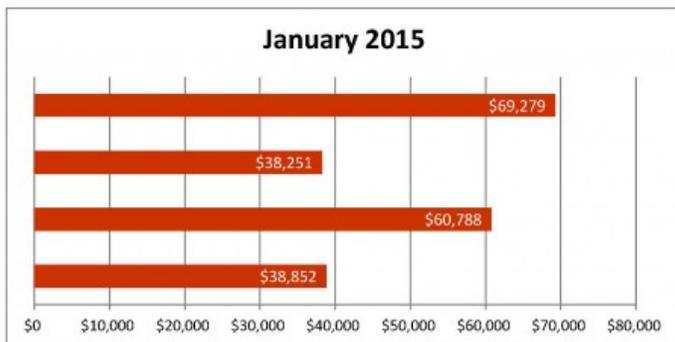
Delegate meetings are quickly approaching. Invitations have been sent with a request for RSVPs. These meetings are excellent opportunities to connect with sisters and brothers from other congregations, share stories and encouragement, and offer counsel. Delegates receive invitations, but others are welcome to attend. Plan to arrive by 8:45.

Conference Program Planning Committee continues planning for June 18-20 Annual Sessions in Indianapolis. We look forward to the theme, "Joyfully following Jesus" and text from Isaiah 12.

January financial report

Financial support for conference during the month of January was very close to the budgeted amount, for which we are grateful. Expenses were slightly less than planned. This fiscal year to date (July 1 through January 31), conference net income is -\$2,895. Compared to last fiscal year at this time, when our net income was -\$36,588, this is really good news. Congregations donated nearly \$360,000 to various local, regional, national, and international missions by designated giving through conference so far this fiscal year. That's wonderful!

Thank you for your support for conference. Please consider adding support in one or more of these four ways: prayers, personnel (volunteer time), funding, and feedback.



Summary of January 9 MLT Meeting

JOYFULLY FOLLOWING JESUS WE WILL CULTIVATE A MISSIONAL IMAGINATION IN EVERY CONGREGATION.

The Missional Leadership Team (MLT) has been hard at work since the beginning of the New Year. It seems like we have much to do to meet the goal of trimming \$100,000 from the proposed spending plan that will come to Delegate Meetings in March. Our first meeting of 2015 was on January 9, a snowy Friday. Three of the four members-from-a-distance actually made it to the meeting, which we were pleased about and we were able to connect with the other by phone. So all were present as we considered several important things.

The timely evaluation of Dan Miller, Conference Pastor, was reviewed and shared with him in Executive session. We were grateful for the feedback we received from those who took the time to respond to the questions and it is helpful in our ongoing work of restructure and staffing considerations.

We committed the most time and energy to working at conference staffing configuration for the next few years. At our August Retreat, we made a commitment to reduce staffing expenses by \$100,000. We also developed three priorities to guide staff: 1) Connections and Communication; 2) Credentialing and Pastoral Transitions; and 3) Celebrations/Gatherings. These reflect input from the August Teams Retreat, from our existing staff, and from our history of the ways congregations 'use' conference.

In the November meeting we decided on a staffing structure of 2 FTE on ministry level and 1 FTE Administrative level and created a sub-group to hear our staff even more deeply and then develop several configurations for the Missional Leadership Team to consider as possible ways to staff for our priorities and vision. We considered their helpful ideas, and felt the Holy Spirit's presence as we decided on the way our staff could look for the next few years.

The hard part, of course, was deciding about the persons to fill these positions. We recognized the strength of all those who serve our congregations as conference staff and appreciate their work. Thus, it took much longer than we anticipated. The MLT completed the task by phone on Monday evening, January 19 satisfied to move forward. Jane Stoltzfus Buller, Moderator, and Gene Hartman, Moderator-elect met with the staff on the following morning and reported to them the configuration and the people being invited to stay. Those who have responded affirmatively to the invitation are Dan Miller, Doug Kaufman, Mary Mininger, John Powell for the Ministry positions and Vanessa Kelleybrew, Janelle Martin for the Administrative position. Those whose positions will not continue after June 30, 2015 are Greg Sommers, Brent Eash, David Araujo and Russell Jensen. At this point, we are working at how to develop job descriptions for the positions, which will be changing and evolving as we move forward. We hope to have a detailed communication for the delegates at our Delegate Meetings in March.

We also heard from the Ministry Credentialing Team on the credential review they are doing, and received a report from the Unity and Variance Discernment Group.

The MLT continues to invite your prayers as we govern conference in these turbulent times. We are especially aware of those who will no longer be part of our conference staff after June and ask that you keep all in your prayers as we live into the realities of 2015.

Summary by Jane Stoltzfus Buller

Save the date: Pastoral Leadership Team weekend 2015

Plan now to attend "Leading from a Healthy Soul" November 13-15, 2105 with Gilberto Flores at Amigo Centre. Gilberto brings a lifetime of experience to reflections about the challenges of leadership in the church. Watch for more details and registration information in coming months.

Amigo Centre

Thanks for the many expressions of care and concern that have come to the Amigo Centre staff and to the family of Tyrel Baldrige. Tyrel's life ended suddenly and unexpectedly on January 29. Tyrel had been serving in Voluntary Service in Amigo's maintenance department since late May and was scheduled to bring his term of service to a close on January 30. Tyrel was 20 years old. Ty's grandparents and family members have been very connected to Amigo, going back to its founding days when Ty's grandfather, Dale Stutzman, was part of the original committee that cast a vision for Christian camping for the IN-MI Conference and helped birth Camp Amigo. Ty's sensitivity, hard work, warm smile and thoughtfulness about his faith and others around him are and will be missed. Ty was from Goshen, IN, before joining staff at Amigo Centre. Your continued prayers for both family and staff will be much appreciated.

Bethany Christian Schools

Visit Bethany on Feb. 16: Students in grades 6-10 interested in exploring Bethany Christian Schools can shadow a Bethany student on Monday, Feb. 16, (President's Day) 8:50 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Parents are invited to a 8:45-9:15 a.m. coffee and conversation. Parent tours are available at 9:15 a.m. This is a great way for prospective students and families to discover Bethany! For more information, to register, or to schedule a visit on another date see bethanycs.net.

Tickets for Radium Girls: Bethany Christian High School will be performing Radium Girls, Feb. 26, 28 and March 1. Performances are on Thursday and Saturday evenings at 7:30 and Sunday at 3 p.m. Tickets are \$8 for adults and \$6 for students. Ticket sales begin Monday, Feb. 9, and may be purchased online at bethanycs.net/radium_girls15 (or call the school at 534-2567 on school days, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.). This empowering play is based on the true story of the women who worked at the US Radium Corporation in New Jersey. Touted by everyone from Marie Currie to business men, radium was thought to be a miracle cure until the girls who painted dials with it began getting deathly ill. This deeply personal play takes us on the journey of all sides in the legal and ethical battle that followed.

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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