

# gospel evangel

connecting the congregations of  
indiana-michigan mennonite conference

january/ february/ march 2019 | vol 100, no 5



## A Community of Congregations Finding Mennonite connections across miles

By: Anna Buck, editor

Building connections as we center our lives on Jesus to engage the world God loves us what IMMC is about. Shalom Mennonite Church in Indianapolis have built strong friendships with the Mara Christian Church of America in Indianapolis. Pastors Frank Kandel (Shalom) and Brian Bither (Shalom) performed Chhakki Khaimi's (Mara) ordination service earlier this month. Belmont Mennonite and Sunnyside Mennonite in Elkhart, IN connect each year to put on Kids Community Theater (see Oct/Nov/Dec. edition of *Gospel Evangel*). In Michigan, where the nearest IMMC churches are often a few hours away, pastors are finding beautiful ways to connect and support one another as well.

Bess and Will Fitzgerald, pastors at Kalamazoo Mennonite Church, have been tasked with finding pastors for Maple River Mennonite (Brutus, MI) and Cedar Grove (Cedar Grove, MI). They have been trained by Doug Kaufman to be Search Guides, individuals within IMMC who walk with search committees as they look for a new pastor. In a phone interview with Bess, she expressed the blessing she feels about the new relationships formed through this search process. Bess states, "We've been there to visit and before we

visited them we only had contact with those people at conference events. Our impression of those churches were that they were struggling, that they were feeling their smallness, feeling their age. But when we visited them, we've found them to be very lively little churches. That has been the most encouraging."

Bess finds that relationships are strengthened when you meet people where they are. She says, "Our church isn't very big, we're about 20. About three years ago, the Lord impressed on my heart that I should meet everybody in their homes and I went around and visited and it was really impactful. The same is true for churches. When you cross the threshold, the depth of understanding of people is deeply improved."

This type of face to face ministry is a source of encouragement for pastors on the receiving end as well. Heidi Burkhart (Maple River) states, "Will and Bess Fitzgerald from Kalamazoo are working with us in the pastor search and

### inside

- 2 A community
- 3 Self-examination
- 4 Journeying with our pastors

(continued on page 2)

# A community



A collage of Michigan congregations (top row, left to right): Maple River, Grand Marais, Grace, Bethel, Kalamazoo, (bottom row, left to right): Wildwood, Cedar Grove, New Hope, Ninth Street, Liberty, Peace

supporting us through prayer.” She went on to say, “It’s nice to have the support and be able to support or encourage other small congregations facing similar issues as we are.”

Congregations are coming together to bear one another’s burdens. Anna Troyer’s husband, James Troyer, was the pastor of Cedar Grove Mennonite (Cedar Grove, MI) until he passed away in 2016. She remembers, “In the case here at Cedar Grove, when my husband was unable to fill the pulpit anymore, we received help here. Rexton, Naubinway, Wildwood and Grand Marais have all been very helpful in helping us fill the pulpit on Sunday mornings.” Cedar Grove is still searching for someone to fill the pastor position, but this is made easier with the help of sister congregations. In a phone interview, she mentioned that Grand Marais is still a source of support as Steve Post, a retired pastor and member of Grand Marais, has been willing to come preach one, sometimes two or three times a month to help fill the pulpit.

Forming connections with an IMMC congregation in another location while also ministering to one’s own community can feel daunting. A normal tension for those in ministerial leadership is how to stay connected with Mennonite brothers and sisters while also have relationships with the local faith community. Both are important. Ecumenical support offers encouragement and there is something significant about Mennonites coming together to celebrate their heritage and their unique perspective on the world.

Bess expresses her hunger for that kind of fellowship, “It would be great if we could know and encourage each other; declaring our Mennonite distinctiveness to each other. Each one of us lives in a circle where we are a little different than the other churches in our

area. It’s always refreshing to talk with others from a Mennonite background.” Heidi agrees, “It gives us a better sense/ understanding of belonging, of being a part of the greater Mennonite community. This sense definitely becomes stronger or more ‘real’ when we are actively participating in a conference event. It helps us to feel more connected and not alone.”

Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference is a “community of congregations,” over fifty individual churches connected by a shared vision to be “centered on Jesus, guided by the Holy Spirit, acting through grace, love, and peace; engaging the world God loves.” These pastors and church leaders are being conference to one another by sharing resources, lending support, and encouraging one another. Cultural differences, lack of manpower and the day-to-day tasks that accompany ministry can strain these connections; however, it is precisely those moments when support is needed. As bridges between congregations are built, we see the larger network that makes up the IMMC community.

Bill Scott, pastor at Ninth Street Mennonite Community Church (Saginaw, MI) states, “It makes me feel like I am part of a family. That the people that are in my congregation are more, at the least the people in the community, is much more than my congregation. And that we should be there to help each other as the Bible has told us to help one another in order to be all that God wants us to be.”

*In preparing for this article, I spoke with a number of Michigan pastors about their experiences. Due to space, I was unable to include all of them. Special thanks to all those who contributed including Denny Heath (Midland) and Janice Wagner (Wildwood).*

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.

**Mailing Address:** PO Box 702, Goshen, IN 46527  
(574) 534-4006 or [im.mennonite.net](http://im.mennonite.net)

**Missional Leadership Team Members:** Paula Killough, moderator, Elkhart, IN; Bob Yoder, moderator-elect, Elkhart, IN; Randy Detweiler, Wakarusa, IN; Wilma Cender, Valparaiso, IN; Rebecca Kauffman, Orleans, IN; George Thompson, treasurer, Auburn Hills, MI.

**Gospel Evangel** is published four times annually by Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference (Jan/Feb/Mar/ Apr/May/Jun, Jul/ Aug/ Sept, 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 Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, PO Box 702, Goshen, IN 46527.

**Editor:** Anna Buck, administrative coordinator  
**Email:** [imoffice@im.mennonite.net](mailto:imoffice@im.mennonite.net)

We invite you to submit articles and article ideas.

Printed on 30% PCW recycled paper.

## Self-Examination and Spiritual Growth

### Framework for Pastoral Growth, a resource for our Pastors

By: Anna Buck, editor

This year, for the first time in 28 years of ministry, I successfully kept the Sabbath," says Dan Schrock pastor at Berkey Ave. Mennonite Church. "Until June 2017, regularly observing Sabbath remained a challenge because I was still working too many hours as a tri-vocational pastor...I was frequently stressed and often sick. It was hard to take a regular Sabbath."

Wilma Cender, an IMMC pastor and member of the Missional Leadership Team states, "We can so easily get into a rut, no matter what our profession is. Pastors in particular, we need to keep ourselves nurtured in order to nurture others."

The Leadership Enhancement Team (LET) desires to help pastors provide resources for pastors to nurture spiritual growth. Each year, LET sends out the *Framework for Pastoral Growth* brochure and accompanying self-evaluation sheet to all IMMC pastors.

Rhonda Yoder, chair of LET states, "While we assume pastors would agree continued growth is always something to strive for, we also recognize full schedules sometimes keep good intentions on the back burner...it is a tool to encourage them to take time and review what was helpful to them and to identify where they have grown."

For Dan Schrock, the *Framework for Pastoral Growth* did just that, "It provides a rationale for reading and reflecting that I might not do otherwise." Wilma reflects, "it's another tool for us as pastors to experience what the Holy Spirit might be trying to show us...It certainly showed me some things to tend to in my own life."

LET selects two of the six core competencies on which to focus. Based on those competencies, pastors are asked to find an accountability partner, to create goals and objectives for growth, to list resources to aid their growth and at the end of the year, they are asked to reflect on their growth.



Wilma Cender sits at her kitchen table where she practices morning stillness in creation with God.

The 2017-2018 *Framework*, focused on competencies three (Christian Spirituality/Discipleship) and four (Self-awareness and Emotional Health). Over the course of the year, pastors consider personal goals and interact with different self-selected texts that correspond with their spiritual goals. With focused minds and hearts, pastors like Dan and Wilma were able to see real change in their spiritual walks and in their daily routines.

Dan's first goal was to continue to ponder the nature of pastoral leadership. Realizing his need for intentional rest, Dan dropped from 85% FTE at Berkey, to 50% FTE. Taking on less isn't always easy, but the results can be invaluable. Dan continues, "I'm earning significantly less money, but the blessing is that I'm more healthy, am no longer stressed, and can take Sabbath every week without any serious problems."

For Wilma, who had the goal to increase capacity to worship outside one's personal preferences, this time of intentional spiritual work stirred up questions that have impacted her walk with Jesus and her ministry. She says, "The book that I read was *Barefoot Disciple* by Stephen Cherry. I was really enamored by what he calls 'childhood maturity'...as adults we need to play more and make more of a mess...how does that bring our life into more of imagining Jesus with us in every aspect of our life, whether it's skipping or finger-painting or doing something creative or reading a book? It's about not making our lives so full that we don't have time to see the holy in the everyday things."

LET provides resources for its pastors to help them experience a deeper walk with Jesus and with their congregations. Pastors are encouraged to utilize the *Framework* and to connect with an accountability partner who will aid them in their growth. As our leaders seek the Lord and commune with one another, incredibly things begin to happen.

### SAVE THE DATE 2019 Regional Meetings

**Southern Region:** February 23, 2019

(Parkview Mennonite Church, Kokomo, IN)

**Central Region:** March 9, 2019

(East Goshen Mennonite Church, Goshen, IN)

**Northern Region:** March 16, 2019

(Maple River Mennonite Church, Brutus, MI)

To learn more, visit the resources page on [im.mennonite.net](http://im.mennonite.net)



# journeying with our pastors



Dan Miller, IMMC pastor, reflects on what it means to be conference to one another.

We are a community of congregations. The Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference (IMMC) mission statement begins with this affirmation. The graphic on the front of this issue represents congregations in relationship. It's a comfortable idea, and even sounds biblical. Yet living into it can be confusing. Do we see eye to eye? Does anyone really care about what's happening in your congregation?

As we put this issue together Walnut Hill (where I am a member) experienced a tragic death. Philip Thomas died unexpectedly of a heart attack after he arrived in Kenya on an international peace assignment.

It happened our Congregational Coach was scheduled to preach two Sundays after that happened. Janice Yordy Sutter recognized the grief we were experiencing and said Kern Road had prayed for us. That brought tears to my eyes, that another congregation had taken our pain seriously enough to pray when they met. Prayers we didn't even know. I experienced an emotional benefit to having connections, and was grateful for our congregational coach.

There are other dimensions to a community of congregations. In this changing world, we can learn and do more together than we can alone. The cover story is about Michigan congregations connecting for mission and support. The northern Michigan churches pioneered what became area councils in IMMC.

Pastors benefit from connections, too. IMMC has excellent pastors who are committed to remaining vital and growing throughout life. IMMC supports that commitment with the Framework for Pastoral Growth. The inside story gives some testimonials and describes this aspect of being a community of congregations.

As brothers and sisters, we are grateful for one another's connections. If there is something your congregation needs, contact your area council, congregational coach, or the conference office.

As we enter 2019, I am so grateful for your presence with us.

## ministry transitions

### Beginnings



Mariah Martin, above, was licensed and installed as at Bonneyville Mennonite Church on November 4, 2018.



Barbara Devereaux, above, was ordained at Kern Road on November 25, 2018.



Randall Miller, above, began as transitional pastor at North Main on October 15, 2018.

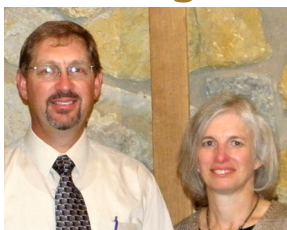


Chhaki Khaimi, above, was ordained for ministry at Mara Christian Church of America in Charlotte, NC on December 2, 2018.



Tom Kauffman, above, began as transitional pastor at Paoli on November 4, 2018.

### & Endings



Sharon and Kevin Yoder above, conclude their time as pastors at Olive Mennonite Church on December 30th.



Marty Lehman above, concluded her time as pastor of Administration and Christian Formation at College Mennonite Church on November 29th.

## financial report

### Fiscal Year to date 7/1/2018-11/30-2018

