

# gospel evangel

connecting the congregations of  
indiana-michigan mennonite conference

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Worms at work: (Left to right) Worms digesting biodegradable waste to make castings. A bucket of composting material to be turned into worm castings.

## Casting Hope

### Entrepreneurial ministry is opening doors for discipleship

By: Anna Board, editor

*"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Colossians 3:17, NRSV)*

At a time when church culture seems to be changing, leaders are looking for new ways to engage with their congregants and communities outside of the normal church service. One of these new methods is entrepreneurial ministry – creating self-funding ministries from within a congregation that employ and service members of the community.

As employees work alongside church members, relationships are formed, and Christ is shared. For Daniel Yoder, the Pastor of Christian Formation for youth at College Mennonite Church (CMC, Goshen, IN), the idea of using entrepreneurial ministry with the CMC youth was the perfect opportunity for discipleship.

In February 2017, Daniel Yoder and Jessica Whicker, the food services director at CMC, attended an entrepreneurial ministry workshop known as a Hatch-a-thon. Both Whicker and Yoder were looking for alternative ways to engage youth in ministry through the creation of self-funding ministries.

It was Whicker who first mentioned the idea of worm composting or vermicomposting as both a ministry and an employment opportunity for youth. Vermicomposting involves collecting food scraps, paper, and other biodegradable waste that are then fed to worms. The worms digest this recycled material and the waste becomes fertilizer or "castings". And so, Casting Hope was born.

Who would've thought that worms and garbage could open the door for ministry? For Yoder, part of the ministry it is about seeing the potential in the commonly disregarded. Youth can often be overlooked because of inexperience or lack of usefulness.

Yoder puts it this way, "[it's about] finding a different way for the church to be a different kind of witness in the community by what we do with our trash...[it's] a little bit how it feels like sometimes youth are viewed... Sometimes they're not payed attention to, in the same way that we don't pay attention to the things we throw away. I felt [Casting Hope] could be a somewhat prophetic project for our church in a lot of ways."

Casting Hope blurs the line between ministry and business. Daniel Yoder

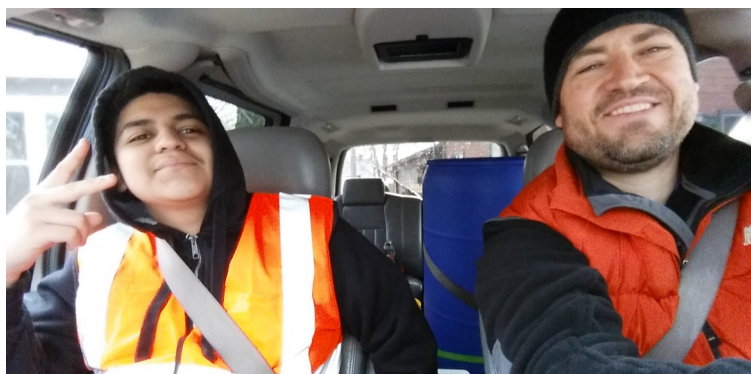
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# Casting hope

saw a need in his community for flexible employment that would allow students to have consistent work even with their busy schedules. In addition, Casting Hope provides an element of mentorship which connects youth to a congregation, "It's not just worms and compost that we're working with. There's accounting, there's marketing and all these other pieces to it." Students are paired up with adult volunteers who have experience in those fields.

Youth gain practical life skills while also tending to their souls. Each Saturday morning before curbside pickup begins, Yoder and the student worker begin the day by reciting Colossians 3:17 (see top of article). Yoder explains, "we're not just playing with worms



(left to right) Joven and Daniel Yoder, are headed out in the "Worm-mobile" to pick up composting material from participating clients.

for the fun of it. There actually is a bigger purpose for this. Believing that God is in it from the beginning and kind of just naming that with that passage every time we work." Colossians 3:17 calls the reader to a deeper understanding of what life with Jesus can look like. Regardless of activity or day of the week, all is to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus. Through this, secular things are made sacred, even worm castings.

The impact of this entrepreneurial ministry is apparent in both the student employees and their families. Yoder explains, "the thing I have seen, especially for one employee, his family is not able to attend every Sunday or Wednesday, but this has been a consistent connector to the church." Learning practical skills and having job experience has given this student increased confidence.

Not only has he learned about vermicomposting, but in the interview, Yoder told of how this student was involved in the designing process of the worm boxes, where the worms are housed, and he has learned some automotive skills like changing brake lights and car batteries.

Learning and executing a new skill is an empowering experience, but there is added weight when it is paired with Kingdom work. Yoder says, "It's a complete human development kind of thing for an adolescent. In terms of skill development, youth have the chance to develop a skill within the context of your faith. Youth can

develop that skill anywhere, but I think it's different when you develop it within a church context... For example, when you learn to swing a hammer on a service trip, that skill will forever be tied to a learning experience that benefited someone else."

Casting Hope currently employs three youths and they are looking to expand now that the school year started. Yoder is encouraged when youth immediately see the ways that Casting Hope offers them mentorship, a chance to care for creation, and an opportunity for employment.

When asked how he might encourage other congregations to engage in entrepreneurial ministry, Yoder says, "I want to say, 'go do it.'" Getting something like this off the ground can be a lot of work. "But I think there is enough creativity in every congregation to find something." Yoder encourages "find what fits for your church, but in ways that your faith gets played out in the community." Starting something new takes energy. It may mean looking for local resources or opportunities outside of your congregation-like the Hatch-a-thon. Yoder goes on, "[Don't] be afraid of who you are and let that lead you into your unique place in the community."

As God's people move outside of the church walls, ministry opportunities will abound. After all, church doesn't just happen on Sunday mornings, it's available everywhere as one seeks the Lord, "in whatever you do." Each congregation is uniquely gifted to care for its community; Entrepreneurial ministry is one way of discovering those gifts and putting them into action.

More information on Casting Hope can be found on their website: [www.castinhopegoshen.com](http://www.castinhopegoshen.com).

And if you want to know more about a Hatch-a-Thon go to: <https://ministryincubators.com/offerings/hatchathons/>

**Pastor Gathering**  
November 11-13, 2019  
*Amigo Centre, Sturgis, MI*

**Registration is now OPEN!**  
Information online:  
<https://im.mennonite.net/news-events/2019-pastor-gathering/>



## Congregational Coaches Connecting Congregations

By: Anna Board, editor

Walking with Jesus is meant to be lived out in community. The Bible encourages Christians to engage with fellow believers as a way of sharpening and encouraging one another. In Galatians 6:2a, Christ followers are told to “Bear one another’s burdens” (NRSV); the writer of Hebrews says, “let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24 NSRV). Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference (IMMC) facilitates Christ-centered community through the involvement of Congregational coaches.

Congregational coaches, formerly known as Overseers, serve as a resource and consultant alongside pastors/congregational leaders. They connect a congregation with another part of Conference and are an expression of mutual care. Every congregation needs someone who knows and cares whether they succeed. Congregational coaches are one incarnation of that.



Leonard Wiebe, above is congregational coach at Bonneyville Mennonite, East Goshen Mennonite, and Kern Road Mennonite Church Elkhart, IN

Leonard Wiebe has acted as congregational coach for Bonneyville Mennonite Church, East Goshen Mennonite Church, and Kern Road Mennonite Church since 2008. Before accepting this position, Wiebe pastored various Mennonite Churches for 40 years. It was his experience as a pastor that inspired him to become a coach. He states, “I felt that I might be able to help these pastors in their positions of much work and heavy schedules. I remember that in my early years of pastoring, it was always very helpful to

be able to talk with someone who had years of experience pastoring.”

In addition to providing counsel to pastors and church leaders congregational coaches also commit to be a resource to congregations in difficult times like pastoral changes and mission discernment. Being deeply involved in the life of a congregation results in powerful connections.

Janice Yordy Sutter, one of the pastors at Kern Road Mennonite, has experienced the benefit of having a coach, and has been a congregational coach for Walnut Hill since 2013. She has walked with the congregation in seeking vision, doing pastor/ congregation reviews, and is grateful for the ways she has seen the Lord work “Congregations have personalities and histories that shape how they hear and respond to God’s call. It’s amazing to observe a group reflect on their history and ponder about how the Spirit is moving now and to let this formulate into current plans and actions.”



Janice Yordy Sutter, above serves as congregational coach at Walnut Hill Mennonite Church.

Eight individuals currently serve as congregational coaches throughout IMMC. Leadership Enhancement Team (LET) and the conference pastor help coaches and congregations get connected. Coaches and congregations commit to a three-year term. There is an agreement to pray for one another, meet regularly and a statement about covering honoraria and expenses. Parties can renew in three-year cycles as long as the relationship is mutually beneficial.

Wondering how a congregational coach might benefit your congregation? Contact Dan Miller or an LET member to explore the possibilities.

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.

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We invite you to submit articles and article ideas.

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# journeying with our pastors



Dan Miller, IMMC pastor, looks ahead to Annual Sessions 2019.

For over a decade I've been hearing that training for pastors should include teaching entrepreneurial attitudes and skills. Entrepreneurial is a big word that means seeing the opportunity in any challenge. Remember the saying, "If life hands you lemons, make lemonade?" Seeing an opportunity creates options instead of being stuck with only one perspective. The "e-word" also implies willingness to risk what exists for what might be.

In this issue we tell a story of an entrepreneurial effort by Daniel Yoder and Jessica Whicker at College Mennonite Church. What they are trying to do connects to the community, seeks to join God, and has the potential to change the church. ("Engaging the world God loves" seems to consistently lead to the church being converted!) Interestingly, instead of beginning with their own answers, Daniel and Jessica took advantage of educational resources available in their community. This lives out a key dynamic in Luke 10, where the disciples became part of the community and received hospitality.

When I think about training pastors in entrepreneurial attitudes and skills, I imagine pastors seeing

possibilities and taking risks so the congregation can more effectively participate in God's plan to redeem the world. Maintaining the status quo, while often feeling very good, keeps churches where we have been. I wonder how a congregation might include that expectation in a job description!

I hope this story stirs readers to look at your own communities and consider what resources might open new opportunities.

The second story highlights the conference resource in congregational coaches. Not all conferences offer this way of being conference together, but it has been a longstanding part of IMMC. Coaches offer a listening ear and share words of counsel out of their own experience. Coaching relationships are often mutually encouraging and beneficial. Leadership Enhancement Team can help If your congregation wants to look for a coach. Contact me or a member of Leadership Enhancement Team.

We hope this issue prods you to think to think about opportunities in the challenges around.

## ministry transitions

### Beginnings



Jane Miller, above, began as interim pastor at Walnut Hill Mennonite Church on July 1, 2019.



Gary Martin above, began as transitional pastor at First Mennonite, Indianapolis on July 7, 2019.

### & Endings

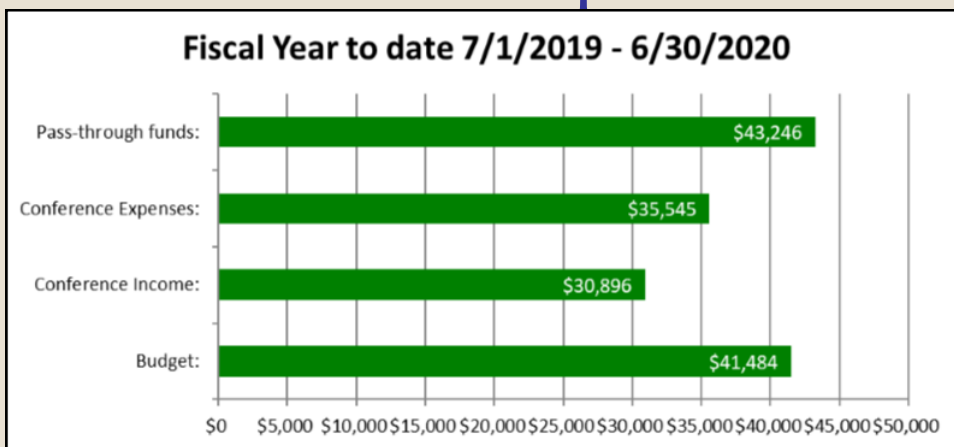


Shannon Dycus above, concluded as pastor at First Mennonite Church on June 30, 2019.



Randy Miller above, concluded as transitional pastor at North Main Mennonite on August 18, 2019.

## financial report



### NORTH MAIN STREET MENNONITE CHURCH

We celebrate the life and ministry of North Main Street Mennonite Church, Nappanee, IN. Members held a service of remembrance and celebration on July 28th and celebrated their final service on August 18, 2019.