

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.

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