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A word from MLT...

What does it mean to be rooted or grounded? Every healthy community is grounded by their story, inherited and experienced. Being rooted, on the other hand, means something different. Roots are safe, secure, and provide nourishment to a plant. However, roots can also bind us to one place, and left unattended, can stop growth.

I joined the Missional Leadership Team just a few months ago. While I have been connected to IMMC my entire life, I am learning much about leadership and the congregations who make up the conference. The IMMC narrative, while grounded in a rich history, has continued to change and grow. Our calling as a conference and congregations is to tend and amend the soil of our community together.

Here are three ways the MLT has been tending and amending the soil:

- ***We celebrate the ministry of Conference Pastor, Dan Miller, and prepare for a future Co-Conference pastor ministry.*** We are grounded by a long legacy of men and women who have supported, challenged, and served with us in conference ministry roles. Now we stand at the threshold of a new and exciting model of co-conference pastoral leadership. We have been defining and clarifying these positions and we have been praying for God's Spirit to bring future energy and growth.
- ***We have continued to explore and engage a vision for Intercultural Competency throughout the Conference.*** We are grounded by our faith and convictions in the love of God for all humanity, a desire for wholeness in our relationships, and justice in our world. We continue to learn and step into practices that we trust God will use to transform us into a community of vibrant diversity.
- ***We gathered our congregation's delegates, and others, by Zoom for two "Regional" Meetings in the month of March.*** We are grounded by the robust relationships of people of our congregations. The meetings engaged us in worship and conversations. We heard an update from Piedra Viva Mennonite Church, our new congregation from Elkhart, IN. We heard reports of the Conference Pastor search process and received an encouraging report of our finances. We discussed together

the possible next steps for our intercultural work. The movement of the Spirit among us is strong and inviting!

We are grounded and we are seeking, by the grace of God, to bear new fruit.

By Steve Slagel, MLT member

Celebrating

* the Spirit of God that raised Jesus to life on that first Easter morning; and the Spirit of God living in us gives life to our mortal bodies. (Romans 8:11)

* Phil Schmidt will join Mandy Yoder on the pastoral team at Belmont Mennonite Church, beginning April 15; his installation service will be at the church on April 25. Phil recently concluded his ministry at Tabor Mennonite near Newton, Kansas.

* the work of Personnel Committee. Personnel Committee is appointed by Missional Leadership Team to assist MLT and staff (mostly the conference pastor) with personnel concerns. Personnel Committee's work is known most to MLT and staff and is more visible when they coordinate and compile the three-year evaluations for staff. They also advise on personnel policy questions, such as implications of updated Fair Labor Standards Act guidelines several years.

* staff opportunities for time away from the office.

Connecting

* As part of their April 24 meeting, Missional Leadership Team will meet with Annual Sessions planners, to hear more about plans for Annual Sessions.

* Spring is a usual time for the Michigan Pastors and Leaders Summit. Dan Miller and Anna Board often attend. Can this meeting be in person, or will it need to be on Zoom one more time?

* Brenda Meyer, Steve Slagel and Dan Miller attended Constituency Leaders Council, March 12-13 on Zoom. See Steve's and Brenda's reflections below in this issue of weLink.

* Chris Kauffman and Dan Miller attended the March 18 Journey board meeting via Zoom. The board noted this was Dan's last meeting.

* Sharon Yoder and Dan Miller meet regularly via zoom with other conference ministers in Mennonite Church USA. These meetings offer input about issues relevant to conference ministry work and a chance to hear updates from one another.

Credentialing and Leadership Development

* Conversations with pastoral applicants is on the rise in this season of the year. Sharon had contact with 21 pastoral applicants in the month of March.

* Members of the Ministry Credentialing Team recently hosted two credentialing interviews. We are blessed to hear about the ministry call and journey of our pastors and upcoming pastors; these conversations are holy spaces.

* Jen Helmuth Sherk has been serving on the pastoral team at Kern Road Mennonite Church since January 2018. Sharon will officiate at her ordination at an outdoor service on May 2.

Reflections from Constituency Leadership Council

"The recent Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) meeting revolved again around how to proceed with the Membership Guidelines. I experienced it as an emotionally intense meeting, over zoom with limited time.

The Executive Board (EB) is proposing retiring the Guidelines. They point out that most of the Guidelines have been incorporated into MCUSA bylaws, with the exception of the mandate that a pastor's credentials be reviewed if they perform a same-sex wedding. That mandate has been confusing and hard to implement since it is actually conferences that hold pastor's credentials.

There is wide agreement with the bottom line of the EB proposal. There are intense differences in understanding what that means. MCUSA executive director Glen Guyton observed about our interactions “this is how fear works”. Indeed there are fears all around: fear that the denomination is caving into cultural relativity, fear that harms done to GLBTQ members will continue unacknowledged, fear that some voices are not being heard, fear that the denomination will experience further losses over this decision.

The EB resolution commits to “the difficult work of being church together”, following the suggestion of the guidelines themselves that this work happen “via area conference to conference engagement”. I’m grateful for the CLC as a place where this engagement happens, and hope that acknowledging our fears will be part of the difficult work we continue to do.”- from Brenda Meyer, moderator-elect

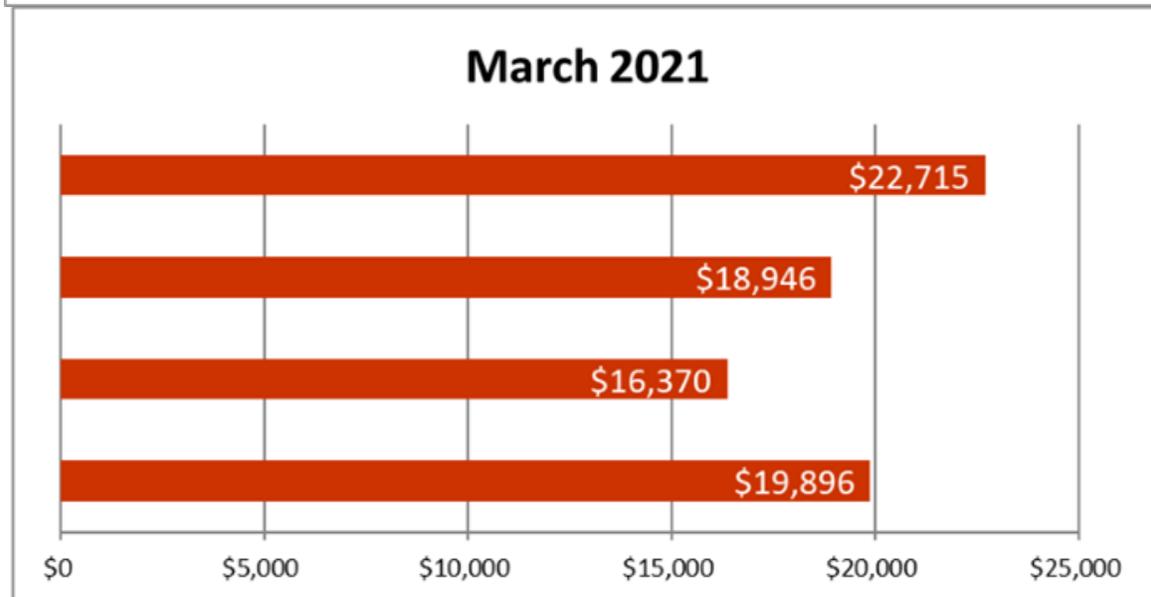
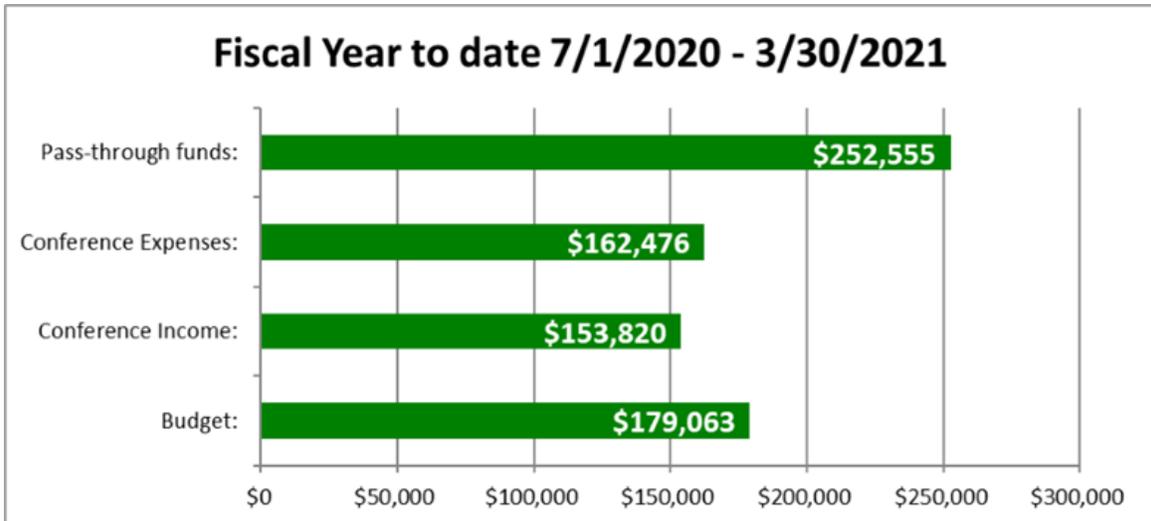
“I participated in a CLC gathering in 2018. The primary discussion at that time, as well as during the recent CLC, was around the membership guidelines. I am struck by the careful and considerate attention to hearing the voices of congregations and conferences. Making changes to the descriptions of our identity as MCUSA requires careful listening and it also takes time.

This CLC gathering seemed more relaxed to me, maybe because we were meeting by Zoom. The less anxious atmosphere may also indicate a shift from the pain and division we experienced with the departure of so many congregations a few years ago. This time I heard many more expressions of encouragement and joy from other CLC participants. This, I believe, is a glimpse of a more hopeful future for our conference and our churches. Thank you, IMMC, for the opportunity to participate.”- from Steve Slagel, member of MLT

IMMC looking for two Step-Up delegates for convention!

IMMC is looking for two youth or young adults, 16-21 years old, to serve as Step-Up delegates to the Mennonite Church USA delegate assembly this July. What young people in your congregation are interested in learning about how Mennonite Church USA functions? Send names with a short explanation to imoffice@im.mennonite.net. The delegate assembly will be virtual this year, so no travel is necessary to participate. More information available on the [MennoCon21 website](#).

Financial Update



Income for March was \$3,526 below expectations and \$2,576 below expenses. Year to date we are \$25,243 below expectations and \$8,656 below expenses. We trust that income will be improving in the next month or two. Thank you for your contributions. –*Jim Norton*

Bethany Christian Schools Updates

Bethany Christian Schools is seeing a full-time Marketing and Communications Manager, responsible for the overall success of the school's marketing strategy. This position manages internal and external communication, social media accounts and the website, press releases and other PR, creation of advancement and enrollment materials and more. Successful candidates will be strategic thinkers with excellent communication skills. Necessary experience includes writing, graphic design, project management and team collaboration. Adobe Creative Suite proficiency a plus and familiarity with G Suite an advantage.

Accepting applications until April 21 or until position is filled. Contact Head of School Tim Lehman at tclehman@bethanycs.net or call (574) 534-2567 for more information or to apply.

Updates from Amigo

- Amigo Centre is looking for their next Executive Director. This full-time position is responsible for the oversight of all programming, administration and maintenance of Amigo, offering strategic vision toward the future. This position also includes publicly representing Amigo Centre and finding various ways to strengthen support for Amigo within its diverse constituency. Qualified applicants will demonstrate strong leadership skills of leading and managing an organization. They will have a passion for transformative faith experiences and a gift for working with people, including excellent communication skills. Letters of interest and resumes can be sent to amigosearch@amigocentre.org. Join us in praying for Amigo and the search process as we discern a new Executive Director.
- Our next **Full Moon Campfire** event is scheduled for April 25 and 26. Call to make your reservations! Why not make it a weekend family getaway! On April 24 we are offering two classes: Wild Edible Hike from 10 am – noon and Bow Drill Fire Building from 1-3 pm. Special family room rates of \$75 a night are still available through April. Call to reserve your place.
- **RETREAT TO AMIGO:** If you are looking for a way to get out of the house and have a safe place to stay, consider coming to Amigo! By using the Retreat Center and West Shore Lodge we have created **six small designated suites** to limit contact with people outside of your group. Meals and staff led activities available, and limited access to the Activity Center. When's the last time you just sat and listened to the birds, Sandhill cranes and geese communicating around a lake... or watched the chipmunks and squirrels play... it's very entertaining! Bring your family and we will provide the space for you to relax and play. Call 269-651-2811 or email us at info@amigocentre.org

- **Amigo Park** is taking reservations for summer 2021 (mid-May to mid-October). We look forward to a more normal summer at the Park, including the availability of the bathhouse. Call or email to inquire about availability soon. Phone: 269-651-2734 or email: amigopark@amigocentre.org
- **NEW DATE: Schoolgirl Sampler Quilt Workshop...** scheduled for a small group of quilters (two groups of five maximum) is scheduled for **May 13-16, 2021**, at Amigo. Led by Janis Nelson and Marie Troyer. Register through Mandy Yoder at Mandy@amigocentre.org. Check our web site under Adult Programs, Scrapbooking retreats for more details: <https://www.amigocentre.org/scrap-craft-quilt-retreat.html> There is a specific brochure for this event. Call or email with questions.
- **Attention Bird Lovers** – Mark your calendars for **May 7-9**. Amigo Centre will be hosting Birds of a Feather... Gather Together. This weekend retreat is for the birds. Spend the weekend watching, photographing, learning, talking and being surrounded by God's Creation. We'll spend time on the pontoons, in the canoes and on traipsing on foot all around Amigo Centre to see which of our feathered friends are here.
- **SAVE THE DATE!** 24th **Annual Amigo Centre Golf Scramble** will be June 5, 2021 at 8 am. Registration to come soon. If you are interested in joining and want registration information feel free to contact Amigo Centre at 269-651-2811 to have your name added to the list.
- **Summer 2021 Day Camp registration is open as well as Family Camp (new this year)!** Check our web page for additional information. Let us know if you or someone you know is interested in working as a counselor or providing leadership to our programming. Contact colton@amigocentre.org for more information.
- **Scrapbooking, Crafting and Sewing retreat update:** we are currently only able to accommodate small groups. Instead of our normal large gatherings, the scheduled dates are limited due to providing all participants with a single room. We set groups of friends up in smaller areas to work (masks are still required inside). **Dates outside our already scheduled retreats are possible!** Call for availability – 269-651-2811.
- **Amigo Bike Michiana** scheduled for **October 8-10, 2021**. Our speaker will be Dr. Sibonokuhle Ncube, *founding Executive Director/National Coordinator of the Brethren in Christ Compassionate and Development Services in Zimbabwe, currently studying at AMBS. In fall of 2018, Dr. Ncube was part of a Global South Voice Speaking Tour of the Great Lakes region, co-sponsored by MCC and the Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions.* Here's a story about our project: <https://mcc.org/stories/addressing-conflict-caused-limited-resource> Visit our web site for registration and additional information.

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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