

gospel evangel

connecting the congregations of
indiana-michigan mennonite conference

july/ august/ september 2020



Annual Sessions 2020: Built Together

Breaking down diving walls; building meaningful connections

By: Anna Board, editor

Pastors, delegates and friends of Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference gathered over Zoom on June 19-20 for Annual Sessions 2020. The theme, "Built Together", comes from Paul's words in Ephesians 2:11-22 and reminds the Church that worldly divisions and hostility have been abolished through Christ's redemptive work. Followers of Jesus are now being "built together" into one holy, living structure for the glory of God.

Members of the Goshen Mennonite Ministers Council chose the theme in the Fall of 2019 and it turned out to be incredibly poignant in light the current circumstances.

The guest teacher for the weekend, Safwat Marzouk (Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, IN), challenged listeners to think about what are the diving walls built in congregations and communities. He asked, "How do we move from activism to welcome the stranger, to embodying integration in our congregations?"

Speakers this year were Dan Miller (conference pastor of IMMC, Goshen, IN), Joanne Gallardo (Berkey Avenue Mennonite Church,

"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God." —Ephesians 2:19-22

Goshen, IN). Attendees chose between three seminars. The topics included: Jail Ministry (speaker: Cory Martin Elkhart Jail Ministry, Elkhart, IN), Intercultural Competency Training (Nekeisha Alyana Alexis, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, IN),) and Grief Ministry (Aileac Deegan, Ryan's Place, Goshen, IN).

Inside you will find a photo gallery from Annual Sessions 2020. Video recordings of the event are available on the conference website: <https://im.mennonite.net/2020-annual-sessions/>. We invite you to share these videos with friends or family!

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Annual Sessions 2020

To the Right: **Brenda Meyer** of Benton Mennonite Church blesses communion on Saturday afternoon worship.



Below L to R: **Safwat Marzouk** of AMBS, was the guest speaker for this year's Annual Sessions; **Naun Cerrato** of a new IMMC congregation, Piedra Viva offers greetings; **Worship Team (L to R)**, Rhiannon Harrison, Theo Budiardja, Jes Stoltzfus Buller, Ben Bouwman, Linda Lehman Thomas, Jason Harrison led viewers in worship on Friday and Saturday; **Bob Yoder** moderator and member of Missional Leadership Team lights three candles representing the three regions of IMMC.



But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off **have been brought near** by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has **broken down the dividing wall**, that is, the hostility between us.

—Ephesians 2:13-14



This issue is available online:
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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Annual sessions 2020



Clockwise from L to R: **Daniel and Talashia Keim Yoder** of College Mennonite Church share a story of what is growing in their congregation during the pandemic; **Izaete Nafziger** of North Goshen Mennonite Church shares about how God is at work in her congregation and community; **Mark Schloneger** of Berkey Avenue Mennonite Church served as emcee; **Cory Martin** offered a seminar on Elkhart Jail Ministry; **Joanne Gallardo** of Berkey Avenue Mennonite Church preached at Saturday's worship service; **Denise Reesor and Joel Holsopple**, of East Goshen Mennonite Church share about the impact of the Colossian Way curriculum on their group; **Nekeisha Alyana Alexis** of AMBS offered a seminar on Intercultural Competency; **Aileac Deegan** of Ryan's Place shared a seminar on Grief Ministry.

journeying with our pastors



Dan Miller, IMMC pastor, reflects on Annual Sessions 2020: Built Together and the many layers of our current realities.

There is a sense of satisfaction following Annual Sessions. Satisfaction that planning paid off, that challenges were met. Satisfaction that the gathering was encouraging. Satisfaction as gifted leaders accomplished something we hadn't done before – hold the whole event online! Much excellent content is available on the website.

And there is another layer of response – frustration, discomfort. The coronavirus – the reason we moved online – has changed our lives. Gathering in person was not safe. Coronavirus kills people who are loved and who are important to their families. It brings to light disparities in our healthcare and financial systems. It separates us.

I've recently been remembering a story my mother-in-law, Mildred Zook, told about herself. Her friends would come to her and say, "Mildred I have a

question and I want your second opinion." I don't know what that first opinion was about, but her second response was better. That's kind of the way it is. Reactions come in layers. The first and most visible layer might be anger or resistance, the second might be fear, and the third might be sadness. Or the first layer could be caution, followed by celebration.

Layers. There are devastating consequences of the pandemic. There are opportunities. We can grieve what stares us in the face. We can do things we have not done before. We can change and make change. Annual Sessions reminded us we are being built together into a dwelling place for God. God is with us.

What can you do that you haven't done before? What's your second opinion?

ministry transitions

Beginnings & Endings



Naun Cerrato above, was licensed as pastor for Piedra Viva (Living Stone) church plant on June 14.



Steve Slagel above, concluded his transitional ministry at North Goshen Mennonite Church on June 30, 2020.

financial report

By Jim Norton, IMMC treasurer
Most recent financial report

Thank you for your generosity as we were able to end the year in the black. For June giving was \$8,974 above expectations and \$7,565 above expenses. While giving for the year was \$5,712 below expectations it was \$17,172 above expenses.

