

# gospel evangel

connecting the congregations of  
Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference



## Worship, Fellowship at Summer Fest

Delegates gather for Summer Fest 2024 to see the new things God is sprouting before us.

By: Clayton Gladish, Administrative Coordinator

The community of congregations that make up Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference (IMMC) came together once again for our annual gathering, but this time it took on a new name: Summer Fest. This name change recognizes the shift in focus that has already been taking place at IMMC gatherings. Conference leaders and staff listened to what attendees found to be the most meaningful aspects of our gatherings, worshipping together and fellowship with one another being at the top of that list. We decided to make a shift that celebrates and focuses our attention on what really matters to us.

There is no way to replicate the experience of being at Summer Fest with text and photos, but there are some things that cannot go without sharing. First and foremost, we are grateful for our hosts, the Mara Christian Church of America, Indiana, for not only giving us a place to gather but for their warm hospitality throughout our time there. They taught us more about their culture (pictured above: Eric Lian, a congregational leader), they allowed us to take over almost every inch of their building, and they provided a meal of food from their culture. We were blessed by this opportunity to join with these wonderful siblings-in-Christ while we gathered for Summer Fest.

In our worship services, we heard stories of what God is doing in the congregations in and around Indianapolis. The Ministry Credentialing Team (MCT) led the worship service on Saturday morning, making space for lament, confession, and gratitude around credentialing practices from the past that have caused harm to individuals and communities in IMMC. This was a sacred space where we felt the Holy Spirit move in us to bring healing, hope, and grace.

The afternoon on Saturday included opportunities to experience two ways of worshipping and encountering God through Wild Church or through Visio Divina. Following these, attendees enjoyed Fun Fest activities, including a hymn sing, artistic expressions, yard games, and (of course) fun snacks.

The final worship service included communion, bringing together familiar words with the celebration of the new ways God is moving in and around the conference. While our time

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# Worship, Fellowship at Summer Fest

together was short, it was a meaningful opportunity to connect with folks from all around the conference.

The photos here give just a taste of what it was like to be at Summer Fest 2024. If you could not make it, do not fret! We will gather again next summer at Waterford Mennonite Church on June 13-14, 2025. We hope you will join us for worship and fellowship there!



On Friday evening, Craig Oury (Shalom, not pictured) led a game with 20-sided dice that corresponded with 20 questions.



Communion at Summer Fest. Pictured: **Steve Slagel** (Moderator), **Becky Helmuth** (Moderator-elect), **Chhaki Khiami** (Mara).



During the Fun Fest, members from First Mennonite led an art project on the theme of God doing a new thing.



For those willing to venture into the heat, yard games provided more time for fellowship. Pictured: **Dominic Ramer** (Waterford), **Katie Misz** (Waterford).



Musicians from Shalom Mennonite Church (Indianapolis) led the songs of worship during Summer Fest.



**Kent Miller** (Leadership Enhancement Team Chair) recognized new pastors.



## Why We give to IMMC

Join Joy & Randy in giving by visiting [im.mennonite.net/give](https://im.mennonite.net/give)



We give to support IMMC because we find value in being part of a community of congregations that support pastors, leaders, and congregations. Within this community we can do things together that we couldn't do on our own, and we benefit by being in relationship with other individuals and other congregational systems. We learn and grow together.

Joy & Randy Detweiler, Prairie Street Mennonite Church

# Youth & Young Adult Delegates

## Welcoming Intergenerational Discernment

By: Clayton Gladish, Administrative Coordinator

In the peaceful surroundings of Pathways Retreat Center of Goshen, IN, the Missional Leadership Team (MLT) gathered for a two-day retreat. Briefly setting aside the regular business of conference leadership, the MLT entered into a time of reflecting on the past and listening for the Spirit's leading forward. In the midst of these generative conversations, excitement began to grow around the idea of widening our conference discernment circles to intentionally include youth and young adults.

What was initially one of several ideas that had come forward, the idea of involving younger folks quickly rose to the top as an important move for Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference. Inspired by the recent Mennonite Church USA delegate gathering where the voices of young people were influential and integral in deciding the intervals between MennoCon gatherings, the MLT were reminded that younger persons have a stake in what the church does. Their voice matters and there was great affirmation for finding ways to make that possible at the conference level.

Over the following months, MLT continued to discern and dialogue around this, eventually forming a proposal that would allow for congregations to send two youth or young adults, ages 16-25, as delegates to conference events. The initial plan was to have delegates vote on the inclusion of youth and young adult delegates at the Spring Summits. A slight detour had to be made to comply with conference structures when it was noted that this proposal would require an amendment to our by-laws. This added a slight complication, but plans were formed to leverage technology and the feedback provided at the Spring Summits to make this happen by e-vote.

In addition to amending the bylaws, MLT created a plan for equipping new and familiar delegates with what they need to represent their congregation and discern with the Holy Spirit together. Again, leveraging technology and feedback from the Spring Summits, MLT has created a FAQ page on the website, created introductory videos, and is working on a plan for mentorship opportunities for youth and young adult delegates. This will not only increase the number of eligible delegates per congregation but will increase our capacity for inter-

congregational work. A plan is also in the works for making the purpose of conference gatherings more clear and the roles of these gatherings more intentionally connected to the big picture of what we do together.

Summer Fest, formerly known as Annual Sessions, was the first opportunity to put our newly amended bylaws into practice. Having youth and young adults present does require us to think a little more creatively and challenge our assumptions about what is known and not known. But MLT did not view this as a problem to be overcome but an opportunity to lean fully into the new thing that God has been doing among us.

When the theme verse of Isaiah 43:19 was chosen for the 2023-24 year, we did not know what it would mean for us. Honestly, it felt a little strange to have just one verse but there is just so much in this one verse for us to dig into and inspire us. These prophetic words seem to ring especially true these days: "Look! I'm doing a new thing; now it spouts up; don't you recognize it? I'm making a way in the desert, paths in the wilderness."

One challenge that long-lasting organizations like Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference faces is the ability to adapt and evolve over time. It can be easy to merely maintain the structures and systems that have served us well in the past. But the reality is that even though they may have served us well in the past, that doesn't mean they always will. A common refrain in the Conference Office is, "We are not meant to serve our systems, our systems should serve us." In other words, we want to ensure that our work serves the conference of today and of the future, not the conference of the past. We are grateful for the many things in our past that have brought us to where we are today and the best way to honor that past is to continue to discern what will help us continue as a community of congregations.

We are grateful for the ways in which we have seen God at work in and through us. The addition of youth and young adults to conference discernment and gatherings is just part of this way forward and we are excited for how we will hear from the Spirit through these new voices.



Intergenerational story-telling around tables at Summer Fest on Friday Night. Pictured: Barbara Funnell (Hudson Lake), Beka Youngberg (Benton), Rachel Yoder (Fairhaven).

### Fiscal Year-to-Date Report

7/1/2023 - 5/31/2024

Pass-through:	\$224,074
Conference Expenses:	\$239,296
Conference Income:	\$204,841
Budget:	\$247,037

# journeying with our pastors



**Sharon Yoder**, IMMC Conference Co-Minister, reflects on her call to ministry and the potential for cultivating a culture of call in our faith communities.



This issue is available online:  
[im.mennonite.net/gospel-evangel](http://im.mennonite.net/gospel-evangel)

Stephen Lowe's sermon at Spring Summit included a powerful testimony of God's call in his youth. He shared a moving, Spirit filled message from Isaiah 43, captivating our hearts and preparing us well for the conversation about to ensue: inviting youth and young adult delegates to join our conference assemblies. His message also reminded me of my own call to ministry.

When I was twelve, I heard a voice declaring that I was called to a life of ministry. In the following decades, my call was affirmed repeatedly through shoulder tapping. During high school and college, I was asked to serve in numerous leadership roles, both in educational settings and in the congregations I joined. I was also invited to serve as a co-leader for missionary teams in East Africa, in board leadership roles, as a congregational co-pastor and hospital chaplain, and now as a conference minister. Nearly every leadership position I've held developed because of shoulder tapping. God moved someone to nudge me, nudges that became powerful invitations in my life. Many opportunities would have been missed had it not been for the affirming voices urging my response.

I wonder how shoulder tapping youth and young adults to join conference assemblies will change our conference meetings. I'm grateful for the opportunity to hear their voices at our tables. I'm even more thrilled to consider how this opportunity has potential to change them. How might nudges to join IMMC assemblies create spaces for them to consider other leadership opportunities?

Each of us has the power to influence. Each of us can see and hear others in a way that conveys affirmation. How are we nudging youth and young adults to embrace their gifts and respond to new opportunities? How might our nudging change their future? How might it impact a congregational culture of call? I dream for youth and young adults to be seen and heard, to be affirmed, to be in spaces where they can practice leadership, and ultimately, to feel greater ownership in the church and conference. I dream of a church that includes youth and young adults in the very tapestry of leadership and discernment. I dream of a time when more youth and young adults are nurtured to hear God's call to spiritual leadership roles in our faith communities. May it be so.

## ministry transitions

### Beginnings



**Osée Tshwape** began as associate pastor at Sunnyside on January 1, 2024.



**Ndunge Sefu** began as interim pastor at Kalamazoo Mennonite Fellowship June 2, 2024.



**Monica Miller** ended as pastor at First Mennonite, Indianapolis on January 25, 2024.



**Naun Cerrato** ended as pastor at Piedra Viva on January 31, 2024.



**Grant Miller** ended as pastor of Kalamazoo Mennonite Fellowship on May 12, 2024.



**Merle Hostetler** ended as pastoral team member at East Goshen on June 23, 2024.

**Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference**—a conference of **Mennonite Church USA**—is a community of congregations in Indiana and Michigan.

We are a community of congregations, centered on Jesus, guided by the Holy Spirit, acting through grace, love and peace, engaging the world God loves.

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