

Annual Meeting Workbook 2021

Agenda

2021 CPMC Annual Meeting

10:30-11:45 Welcome and Introductions
 Review of 2020 Annual Meeting Minutes - VOTE
 Farewell/Releasing of churches who have left
 Welcome of Freeman House Church - VOTE
 Bible Study
 Breakout Groups
 Strategic Plan Introduction
 Faith, Life, and Procedures Task Group Introduction

45 min Lunch Break

12:30-1:45 Presentation of Peace Mug
 Breakout Discussion – Strategic Plan & FLP Task Group
 Large Group Feedback and Questions – Strategic Plan & FLP Task Group
 Blueprint Introduction - VOTE
 Introduction of Slate - VOTE
 Recognition and Installation of CPMC Officers
 Closing of Delegate Session

"...so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another." –
Romans 12:5, NRSV

As we prepare to meet together for worship, connection, and yes – business, it is important to center ourselves in who we are. We work as a conference body to foster growth in holistic witness in congregations and individuals - each of our three priorities as a conference share the theme of working towards witness: leadership *for* witness, fellowship *as* witness, and discipleship *for* witness.

I'm writing to you from my home in Saint Paul, MN – the city I've called home since 2015. In any other year I'd be joyfully welcoming you here for our Annual Meeting, as we had hoped to do in 2020 and again this year. Rather, as we gather virtually again this summer, I wish to welcome all of us to this unique opportunity for *we who are many* to be both present together and at the same time grounded in the individual communities we represent.

I have been thinking a lot about the body as a metaphor over the past 16 months. The physical, social, emotional, and political "distancing" we have experienced in this time has already had profound impacts on our families, communities, and our Church, let alone our world. I admit, I am fearful of their long-term consequences we may continue to face in the years ahead. 1 Cor. 12 reminds us that we each have important individual functions and responsibilities to the whole, and as such are incomplete without one another. We serve a God who calls us as one body *to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy, and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.*

Of course, this year has not been without signs of hope and cause for celebration! In spite of an incredibly difficult year, volunteers, staff, and congregations have continued to give of their time, resources, and energy across all of conference. Together we celebrate:

Our first full year in some time with a complete staff team!

The overwhelming financial generosity of individuals and congregations, particularly in the last few months with the COVID-19 relief fund.

The continued calling of new pastors to congregations despite uncertainty and barriers to the search process.

A full slate of committee nominees, willing and ready to serve.

I hold on to hope that *we who are many, as one body in Christ*, can continue to engage together in the faithful work of witnessing across the street, with one another, and around the world. It will take work, and the burden is heavy. Still we know that together we are the body, individually members of it, and each an important part of one another.

May we continue to pursue a hope-filled witness to a world desperately in need.

Grace and Peace,

John N. Murray – Moderator, Central Plains Mennonite Conference

Ministry Staff Report to Annual Meeting, 2021

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.
— Ephesians 3:14-21

COVID-19

Looking back at last year's annual report it is clear that we were naively thinking that this pandemic would be short lived and life would be "back to normal" quite quickly. Obviously that did not happen, and we continue to experience the effects of the pandemic more than a year later. Some of the things we had hoped to do last year, like making a tour of the entire conference to connect with all of our congregations and hear the ways in which God is working in our midst, did not happen. Even the things that we continued to do had to change as we were unable to be present with people the way we had hoped to be.

Susan was forced to pivot in her work quite quickly. She began connecting with and supporting pastors through weekly Zoom meetings and phone calls. She worked with numerous search committees as they found creative ways to continue their work of finding new pastoral leadership for their congregations. She, along with the Pastoral Leadership Committee, began to do credentialing interviews on Zoom and found that this actually worked quite well. She also engaged in her annual accountability visits with pastors via Zoom. In all of this, she has been doing a great deal of work to stay connected with pastors and congregations from across the conference.

Amanda worked alongside the Christian Formation Committee to put on a series of webinars entitled, "Long cold winter" in which they worked to engage people from across the conference in different forms of Christian formation. She has also been working on an intergenerational curriculum to help pastors and parents (and congregations) think through what it means to be a Mennonite and how we are formed in the image of Christ. In her work in communications she has continued to produce the Scattered Seeds and Sower publications. The Scattered Seeds has been focusing on our ministry staff theme, *Imaginemos*, or "Let's imagine together." We see this as a call to engage our imaginations in a way that allows us to see the new opportunities that the Holy Spirit presents in our midst. Along with Nathan, Amanda has been leading the conference in Intercultural Development as a precursor to doing more anti-racism work within conference leadership and then extending that work out to credentialed leaders in the conference.

Nathan, along with the rest of the staff has spent much of his time this year thinking about what the future holds for the church. This year has presented new challenges for congregations and also exacerbated some existing challenges for some. Other congregations have found new opportunities in the midst of these times and have leaned in to new ways of being connected as a community of faith. As a staff we have spent time working on a strategic plan that will help to give some shape and form to our work over the next few years. We have tried to structure our work around areas that we believe will most benefit our pastors and churches as they continue to discern how God is calling them to bear witness to Jesus in their communities.

Imaginemos

As we have observed the church across our conference we have seen many ways in which they are under pressure in our society today. Some are struggling with the shift away from church being at the center of community life and feeling marginalized and wondering how to recover a place of prominence in the community. Others feel pulled in many different directions as they try and discern how to be relevant and reach out to people. Some of our churches are shrinking and wondering if they even have a reason to exist, while others are just tired after working so hard for so long just to keep the church doors open. We also see the church being pushed and pulled by the polarization in our society. The same culture war being fought outside the church is being fought inside the church. When we look at everything that is taking place in the church it is not surprising that many of our pastors are tired and that some pastors and congregations are struggling to discern a direction forward.

With this in mind, we have been talking about imagination and the importance of developing our biblical, Jesus-shaped shaped imaginations. There were many different pressures during Jesus' day and many different ways that Jesus was being called to conform. But, Jesus did not fit in with the varying camps and polarizations of his day. Rather, Jesus forged an entirely different path and showed humanity a different vision for what the world could look like.

As Ephesians reminds us, Jesus' self-sacrificial love revealed (and reveals) to us the incredible love that God has for God's people, a love that is far bigger and far more radical than anything the world has ever experienced. We serve a God whose very nature is love and who desires to share that love with the entire world. We serve a God who, with amazing creativity, transformed our understanding of who God is and what God is doing in the world. We are invited to allow our imaginations to be shaped by this amazingly creative God through the written Word of God and through God's Spirit actively at work in our midst.

As a conference ministry staff we want to help our congregations see the new and creative things that God is inviting us to be a part of. To some, this will sound as if we are just calling congregations and pastors to add more to their personal (and congregational) lives that are often too busy already. But instead, what if using our imaginations could help us to re-envision and re-evaluate what we are doing so we can decide what we add, what we keep, and what we leave behind?

Being “creative” or using our biblical and congregational imaginations shouldn’t just feel like it means “more work,” particularly for pastors. Rather, it should help us prioritize those things that the Holy Spirit shows us are the most important for our particular communities. One of our priorities is to learn how to coach pastors and congregations to ask the right questions and engage the best things. As a ministry staff, we want to embrace imaginative leadership and discipleship and encourage our congregations to do the same, so that together, we can find paths forward that share God’s love, healing and hope with a world that desperately needs it.

To the one who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

Nathan Luitjens, Executive Conference Minister
Susan Janzen, Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership
Amanda Bleichy, Conference Minister for Christian Formation

Pastoral Leadership Committee

2021 Annual Report

Prepared by Seth Miller

The Pastoral Leadership Committee (PLC) is charged with developing and maintaining high quality pastoral leadership for Central Plains Mennonite Conference congregations. We work closely with the Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership, assisting her and a network of volunteers in offering counsel to search committees who are calling pastoral leadership, providing encouragement and support for pastors and congregational leaders, and offering ongoing personal and professional development. PLC also supports the training of elders, deacons and other lay leaders. Among the tasks of PLC are planning the Annual Leaders Retreat for pastors, chaplains and spouses; granting scholarships for leadership development; and overseeing the credentialing process for leaders within Central Plains Conference.

The PLC is made up of six elected members – Martha Yoder, Kim Becker, Ramiro Hernandez, Karen Martens-Zimmerly, Jerry Kroeker and Seth Miller. It has been a privilege and joy to work together over the past year along with Susan Janzen.

Part of Susan's many responsibilities relating to PLC's work include leadership development training, the credentialing of new pastors, responding to pastoral misconduct charges, offering guidance on questions of polity and theological variance, relating to pastor clusters, annual accountability visits with congregational pastors and the organization of the Annual Leaders Retreat. We have been grateful for Susan's presence and the life and energy that she has brought, particularly within the areas pastoral resourcing and leadership development.

Although we have continued with normally scheduled credentialing interviews via ZOOM, due to the Coronavirus pandemic, most of the activities that PLC would be involved in planning or implementing have been either canceled or postponed.

For example, we planned to hold Boundary Training workshops during the past year. Since we have not met in person, those have been delayed. They do remain a priority. Some pastors who participated in the initial round of trainings will be eligible to engage in an advanced level training to deepen awareness of best practices; others who have yet to participate in the initial training should be in touch with Susan Janzen to coordinate a time to fulfill that requirement for credentialed pastors in CMPC. Dates for both trainings will be forthcoming.

Our recent Annual Leaders Retreat was held remotely via ZOOM on Sunday, April 25. Again, plans to meet in person for retreat were thwarted by the pandemic. But several pastors were able to gather for a time of rest and renewal and shared together in a couple of meetings via ZOOM which offered time to discuss the year, pray together and share in communion. PLC is grateful for the generous support from Everence which made possible the pastoral care packages and communion supplies sent to each pastor who signed up.

Finally, the Pastoral Leadership Committee has traditionally been the body responsible to allocating funds from the Hochstetler Scholarship fund. In October of 2020, the approved programs eligible for funds expanded to include Instituto Biblico Anabautista (IBA) and Seminario Bíblico Anabautista Hispano (SeBAH) programs of Mennonite Education Agency. Pastors who are participants in IBA and SeBAH are encouraged to apply for funds to help cover the cost of these programs.

Pastor Transitions and Credentialing

May 2020 – April 2021

Credentials Granted

Ordination

Larry Nail, Pastor at Julesburg Mennonite, Julesburg, CO on June 28, 2020

Recognition of Prior Ordination

Scott Roser, Interim Pastor at Cedar Falls Mennonite, Cedar Falls, IA on Oct. 4, 2020

License Toward Ordination

Steve Griffin, Pastor at Bellwood Mennonite, Milford, NE on Aug. 9, 2020

John David Kenney, Pastor at West Union Mennonite, Parnell, IA on Aug. 16, 2020

Jacob Guckenberger, Pastor at Christ Community, Des Moines, IA on Sept. 20, 2020

Libby Conley, Chaplain, First Mennonite, Iowa City, IA on Oct. 11, 2020

Randall Koehler, Pastor at Hutterthal Mennonite, Freeman, SD on Jan. 17, 2021

Chelsea Vaught, Pastor at Bethesda Mennonite, Henderson, NE on Mar. 7, 2021

Credentials Terminated

Ordination Withdrawn for Non-Disciplinary Reasons

Larry Nail, Pastor at Julesburg Mennonite, Julesburg, CO on April 30, 2021

Pastor Transitions — Endings

Resignations

Nick Stoddard, Pastor at Salem Mennonite, Freeman, SD effective May 15, 2020

Shawn Nolt, Pastor at Salem Mennonite, Shickley, NE effective May 31, 2020

Ry Siggelkow, Pastor at Faith Mennonite, Minneapolis, MN effective May 31, 2020

Nathan Luitjens, Pastor at Sugar Creek Mennonite, Wayland, IA effective June 29, 2020

Suzanne Ford, Pastor at Zion Mennonite, Donnellson, IA effective Nov. 30, 2020

Terri Churchill, Associate Pastor at Third Way Church, St. Paul, MN effective Dec. 8, 2020

Galen Kauffman, Pastor at Bethel Mennonite, Mountain Lake, MN effective May 31, 2021

Retirements

Scott Swartzendruber retired as Pastor at Kalona Mennonite, Kalona, IA effective July 15, 2020

Deaths

Herb Yoder, Retired Pastor, died Jan. 5, 2021

Noah Helmuth, Retired Pastor, died Jan. 10, 2021

Pastor Transitions — Beginnings

Nick Stoddard began as Pastor at Washington Mennonite, Washington, IA on June 1, 2020
Steve Griffin began as Pastor at Bellwood Mennonite, Milford, NE on Aug. 1, 2020
Jacob Guckenberger began as Pastor at Christ Community, Des Moines, IA on Aug. 1, 2020
John David Kenney began as Pastor at West Union Mennonite, Parnell, IA on Aug. 1, 2020
Ben Schlegel began as Pastor at Salem Mennonite, Shickley, NE, on Aug. 17, 2020
Bob Brown began as Pastor at Cedar Falls Mennonite, Cedar Falls, IA on Oct. 15, 2020
Randall Koehler began as Pastor at Hutterthal Mennonite, Freeman, SD on Jan. 1, 2021
Chelsea Vaught began as Pastor at Bethesda Mennonite, Henderson, NE on Mar. 1, 2021

Interim Pastor Assignments

Current Interim Pastors

Michael Loss began as Interim Pastor at Wellman Mennonite, Wellman, IA, Feb. 23, 2020 and will end on June 30, 2021
Thom Bower began as Transitional Pastor at Faith Mennonite, Minneapolis, MN, on Aug. 1, 2020
David Erdman began as Interim Pastor at Salem Mennonite, Freeman, SD, on Aug. 17, 2020
David Heusinkveld ended as Interim Pastor at West Union Mennonite, Parnell, IA, on July 19, 2020 and began as Interim Pastor at Eicher Emmanuel Mennonite, Wayland, IA, on Aug. 30, 2020
Pam Gerig Unruh began as Interim Pastor at Zion Mennonite, Donnellson IA, on Feb. 3, 2021

Assignment Completed

Jack Scandrett ended as Transitional Pastor at Hutterthal Mennonite, Freeman, SD on June 30, 2020
Val Thompson ended as Interim Church Administrator, Christ Community, Des Moines, IA, on July 31, 2020
Scott Roser ended as Interim Pastor at Cedar Falls Mennonite, Cedar Falls, IA, on Oct. 11, 2020
Gene Miller ended as Interim Pastor at Bellwood Mennonite, Milford, NE, on July 26, 2020 and served as Interim Pastor at Hutterthal Mennonite, Freeman, SD, Aug. 1 to Dec. 31, 2020
S. Roy Kaufman ended as Interim Pastor at First Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake, MN, Feb. 14, 2021
Eugene Thieszen ended as Interim Pastor at Bethesda Mennonite, Henderson, NE on Feb. 28, 2021

Congregations in Pastoral Leadership Searches

Eicher Emmanuel Mennonite, Wayland, IA – Pastor
Kalona Mennonite, Kalona, IA – Pastor
Salem Mennonite, Freeman, SD – Pastor
Shalom Mennonite, Eau Claire, WI – Part-Time Pastor
Wellman Mennonite, Wellman, IA – Pastor
White River Cheyenne Mennonite, Busby, MT – Bi-Vocational Assistant Pastor

Outreach & Service Committee (OSC)

Annual Report 2021

In 2020 the Outreach & Service Committee (OSC) determined that giving support to anti-racism work among conference congregations is a current high priority for us. This special focus follows high profile movements of the past year, especially the killing of George Floyd and intensified racial divisions in U.S. religion, electoral politics and society. In the prior reporting year OSC offered a February 2020 anti-racism webinar which remains available on the CPMC resource webpages under “anti-racism resources.” The year has elevated this kind of resourcing as a priority for Outreach & Service Committee. We are grateful for Conference staff leading the board and committee chairs through the first stage of a multi-year Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI).

Despite this clear anti-racism directive, though, the external challenges of 2020 contributed to this being a low-activity year for OSC. Thankfully, several of the related task groups have carried on with a wide range of work as you can read in their reports below. A number of OSC’s recent initiatives had taken place successfully via Zoom webinars, but with so much online activity during the pandemic we discerned a significant saturation and fatigue with this format and thus choose not to offer a webinar during this past year. In the months and year ahead OSC will look to re-invigorate our promotion of anti-racism work at the congregational level, discerning the best format(s) to do so.

Outreach & Service Committee will also look to set priorities and take action in our other focus areas of church planting, evangelism, and peacemaking. A stated purpose of OSC is: “to assist and encourage member congregations in all areas of Christian outreach, including, but not limited to evangelism, church planting, peacemaking, justice advocacy and service activities.”

The eight at-large members of the Outreach and Service Committee for 2020-21 are: Tara Stahl (Belwood MC, Milford, NE), Tamara Zechin (Sugar Creek MC, Wayland, IA), Phil Friesen (Emmanuel MC, Minneapolis, MN), Elisabeth Harder Schrock (First MC, Mt Lake, MN), Kate Friesen (Hutterthal MC, Freeman, SD), Joseph Givens (Third Way Church, St. Paul, MN), Rhonda Brubacher, (First MC, Lincoln NE) and Nick Detweiler Stoddard, chair (Washington MC, Washington IA). We are supported by Conference staff, Nathan Luitjens and Ramiro Hernandez. Additionally, there are three task groups overseen by our committee, Peace & Justice task group, Church Planting Strategy Team and the Ecuador Partnership.

- *Submitted by committee chair, Nick Detweiler-Stoddard*

Central Plains Mennonite Conference

Hispanic Report

May 5, 2021

Greetings to you all! God continues to bless us all as we move forward, keeping us safe! There is much work to be done that cannot be left undone. God called us for such a time as this and has equipped us to do His work in the midst of whatever challenges we might face in the future as the body of Christ.

2020 caused us to change in a lot of ways in how we did ministry. Because of the pandemic, limited personal contact was made possible with pastors and people in the congregations. It was not life as usual. It forced us to think and work a bit differently. As this pandemic arrived, we were surprised and left wondering how we would do ministry, but we figured it out to some degree as time ensued. I believe we did our best as could be done!

Ministry in Hispanic congregations was done through a video format application whether it was "Messenger," "DUO," "Zoom," or "YouTube," and let's not forget our cell phones as we continued ministry with people preaching, teaching, meetings or praying together. In the beginning, it was somewhat difficult for many of us and especially the elderly, because they were not acquainted with the media with a video format.

Pastors discovered that we could invite people to our services from far and locally that otherwise would not have attended our worship services via video app and or cell calls simultaneously as we held worship, bible study, or meetings. Although the ability to shake hands or put our arms around was gone, the distance was six feet apart. If we got close, it was through an elbow or bringing fits together as a sign of our "handshake."

There were those in our different congregations quarantined because of COVID19. During their quarantine, they were off from work and then resumed their lives again. It was a scary time not knowing the outcome for those that got sick. Sadly, each of our congregations had people infected with COVID19, none of the churches were spared. We, however, are grateful that we did not have casualties because of COVID19 in our congregations. Some passed away because of other complications, but not because of COVID19.

Our churches met in person throughout the summer as congregations and took all precautions instructed by the government. Some of our communities met outside their buildings, while others continued to meet in their church buildings. But as winter set in, we again met through a video format, occasionally we met in person but again followed procedures to keep us safe.

Our Cluster meetings were no different as with congregations. At times we met through a video application or otherwise met in one of our church buildings in person. We, however, continue to plan for our activities, hoping that this pandemic would soon be a memory in our distant past.

I am grateful for our staff as they have been available even in the most challenging times, whether through counseling and for their insights to myself or Hispanic pastors and their important communicating information to our churches.

God continues walk in an us among us, we are His church,

Blessings to us all!

Ramiro Hernandez, Hispanic Coordinator

Ecuador Partnership Report to CPMC 2021

In this pandemic year, our partnership ministries in Ecuador and Venezuela have adapted to thrive and have also suffered losses. Delicia and Peter Wigginton Bravo, who coordinate the partnership in Ecuador, have remained in Ecuador throughout the pandemic. At Quito Mennonite Church, Peter helps to lead the music team which produced music videos as part of their ongoing worship during the pandemic. He also co-produces and hosts a Spanish-language podcast, *Merienda Menonita*, which brings an anabaptist Christian perspective to a range of topics. For area churches, he has provided workshops in conflict transformation to leaders and lay leaders using material from Lombard Mennonite Peace Center. As part of Quito Mennonite Church's refugee ministry, Delicia continues to work closely with the cloth diaper project, which provides income to three women who sew the diapers and washable, reusable diapers to many refugee families. With the after-school program closed due to the pandemic, Delicia provides homework help virtually to children who previously participated in that program. In this time of hardship, CPMC has provided special project funds for food for the refugee ministry and Quito Mennonite Church has begun a gardening project to augment available supplies. For background reading about the Ecuador Partnership, members of CPMC are encouraged to read the recently published Volume 30 of Mission Network's publication *Missio Dei*, *The Wind Blows Where it Wishes: Celebrating 30 Years of Walking in the Anabaptist Faith in Ecuador*, by Julián Guamán and Peter Wigginton, available online at Mission Network's website <https://www.mennonitemission.net/resources/publications/Missio%20Dei/>.

The Ross Richer family, unable to safely connect with their community in Zabalo and other partner groups, returned early to the US. Naomi Ross Richer completed an illustrated book about baptism to help new believers in the community to understand its significance (you can watch her read it aloud at <https://www.mennonitemission.net/video/The-Baptism-Story>). The Ross Richers' Ministry Support team hosted a virtual re-launch of their two-way mission in December, in which Jane and Jerrell described plans to study language and indigenous theology in preparation for their anticipated return to Ecuador. In the meantime, the arrival of the internet in Zabalo, the rainforest community where the Ross Richers have previously lived for a half of each year, has made it possible for them to maintain connection with friends and church leaders there, which has been a source of encouragement. Their March ministry update noted as an item of praise a report of 30 people baptised in early 2021. The Ross Richers have been invited to share further about their two-way ministry at MC USA Convention this summer.

In Venezuela, as the pandemic added to economic and social challenges, Venezuelan Mennonites lost a strong leader and evangelist in Erwin Mirabel, president of the church conference [Red de Misiones Menonita de Venezuela](https://www.mennonitemission.net/blog/Reflections-on-a-life-of-ministry-in-Venezuela). Representatives of partners in mission Mennonite Mission Network, IMCOL (the Colombian Mennonite Church), and Central Plains Mennonite Conference testified to Erwin's faithful leadership in an article published in August. (See <https://www.mennonitemission.net/blog/Reflections-on-a-life-of-ministry-in-Venezuela>.) Even with this loss, ministry continues in Venezuela. Both the Isla Margarita and the Caracas churches continue with their lunch program, *Dale la Mano al Prójimo* – Give a Hand to Your Neighbor. On Isla Margarita, the church's water tank helps to supply neighbors with clean water, construction continues on a church building and the members have formulated plans to cultivate fellowship within the church and outreach to the broader community in 2021.

--Holly Blosser Yoder

2020 Church Planting Strategy Team Annual Report

Written by Matt Troyer-Miller

The Church Planting Strategy Team (CPST) of Central Plains Mennonite Conference works at encouraging, supporting, and resourcing developing congregations and church planters. We work to bring resources and people of existing conference congregations into partnership with developing congregations and church planters to encourage a culture of church planting within the conference.

The CPST reports to the Outreach and Service Committee of Central Plains Mennonite Conference. Members of the CPST have been Grant Nebel, Susan Janzen, Nathan Luitjens, Nick Stoddard Detweiler, Joel Beachy, and Matt Troyer-Miller. Our committee is currently in flux, as Nathan Luitjens and Susan Janzen have become Conference Ministers, Nick Stoddard Detweiler has become the chairperson of OSC, and Matt Troyer-Miller will step down as chairperson in 2021. Because of the number of changes, OSC and Conference leadership will be re-visioning/restructuring how best to offer support and resources for church planters and developing congregations. If you would like to be a part of this re-visioning process, please contact Nathan Luitjens or Nick Stoddard Detweiler.

Like many other parts of our lives, this past year was different for us. Much of the work of the CPST was postponed by COVID. We met once through ZOOM to hear updates from the various church plants and how they were affected by COVID. Mennonite Church USA's annual church planting conference SENT was online this year, and some in our conference attended these virtual workshops. Videos from this year's SENT are posted online at <https://www.mennonitemission.net/resources/church-vitality/church-planting/Sent-Conference-2021>

Currently, new and emerging churches include Torre Fuerte, Iowa City, IA; Iglesia Menonita Centro Cristiano, in Washigton, IA; and Shalom Mennonite Church, in Eau Claire, WI. Iglesia El Buen Pastor in Muscatine, IA. We continue to work and pray for Andrew Langbehn, as he considers planting a church in the western suburbs of the Twin Cities (Farmington). We also continue to work with a developing community of Mennonites in Omaha. You can find out more about our newest congregations at <http://www.centralplainsmc.org/developing-congregations.html>

While the exact format of the CPST may change, the work of CPST will continue. As we seek to develop a church planting culture in our conference, we want to encourage every existing congregation to consider becoming involved in developing new churches as an urgent and essential part of what it means to be a healthy church. When the vision develops for a new congregation, we want to surround that new work with supportive partnerships that become learning communities that explore what it means to be the church in every context. Please keep our developing congregations in your prayers as they pioneer new communities that seek to bear witness to the inbreaking of God's reign in the world.

Report for Peace and Justice Task Group – 2020-2021

Peace Stories: We continue to call for peace stories. We have received 8 stories. We continue to collect them. Consider submitting a story (Email: wilmajane17@gmail.com).

We are exploring ways to collect video stories. We are especially interested in youth interviewing people in their congregation who have done service. We are hoping to get funding to offer prizes for a video interview contest.

Dreams of a peace experience/tour: Because of the pandemic we have not pursued arranging a bus tour. After we know the location of the 2022 conference we will start looking into a local tour related to conference.

Immigration Training somewhere: After some discussion, we continued to think that there is value in doing a Saturday immigration awareness gathering in Iowa. Margie Caraballo is open to doing something. We hoping for something in the fall.

Peace Mug: We had three great nominations for the peace mug. We will announce the recipient at the virtual gathering in June. We have compiled a list of past recipients so we can attempt to spread out nominees.

Environment: We are hoping to add someone to our task group with a passion for environmental justice. If you know of someone to suggest, let us know.

Workshops at conference: We plan to offer the workshop *Sorting out truth now and in our history* via zoom. History and social studies teacher, Marcus Miller will help us learn from how Mennonites have responded to governments in history.

Acknowledgement signs: We have had two churches study the Doctrine of Discovery and considering an acknowledgement sign. We are hoping to learn from their journeys.

P & J task group is open to hearing from you. What would you find helpful for our conference in the areas of Peace and Justice?

Members: Margie Mejia Caraballo, Tom Kessler, Jane Yoder-Short (chair)

Contact P & J via email: wilmajane17@gmail.com

Christian Formation Committee 2020-2021

The Christian Formation Committee saw the bizarre nature of 2020 as a unique opportunity to match people's forced acceptance of digital communication with our desire to promote spiritual practices and formational spirituality. We saw the possibility that this winter would be relationally challenging for many as traditional social activities were limited. Therefore, a broad series of webinars was conceived and planned to bring spiritual practices and shared worship experiences to Central Plains Mennonite Conference members.

Three **webinars entitled** *Creating Together: imaginative art as a spiritual practice* were offered. A different artist each month guided participants in utilizing art as a spiritual practice. Amanda Bleichy led a five-week series, *Remembering Your Story*, where participants were prompted to remember and tell their spiritual autobiographies.

Thursdays during advent, Adam Nussbaum led us as we worshipped together using the Anabaptist Prayer Book. On December 21st, *The Longest Night of the Year*, Corey Miller led a worship service of comfort and healing. We offer this as a sample of how congregations can make their special services or programs available to a larger audience. Since we now have all learned how to make our services internet-friendly, each of our churches can reach a larger audience and provide resources to people outside their geographic area. What an excellent opportunity to think beyond our local congregation and serve others.

During Lent, Stan Harder presented a six-week series on Spiritual Practices. Each week several new spiritual practices were introduced and practiced as an introduction to contemplative spirituality.

Thank you to all those that led and participated in these webinars that helped us get through this long cold winter. These webinars were successful because of their low production cost and broad participation of people not usually present at conference activities. We hope that they will inspire future opportunities to resource the conference.

Additionally, Stan Harder lead a webinar in the fall on how to present creative and meaningful children's stories during worship. A video of that workshop is now posted on the Mennonite Church USA faith formation website. Amanda Bleichy also did the webinar, "faith formation in the fall."

Also, this year we opened the Shalom Readers program to include Adults. Now everyone can get in on the fun.

Our hope is that next year we will be able to continue providing opportunities for spiritual growth as well as getting back to our mandate to resource formation leaders in our congregations.

Stan Harder – Chair of the Christian Formation Committee

Central Plains Mennonite Conference 2021 Annual Meeting Report



helping children and adults choose the Jesus-way of PEACE!

www.centralplainsmc.org/shalom-readers.html

For years, ["Shalom Readers"](http://www.centralplainsmc.org/shalom-readers.html) has been a program unique to Central Plains Conference congregations, providing an avenue for children to learn about peaceful responses to a variety of challenging situations. New since our last annual meeting is a variation of "Shalom Readers" launched for the purpose of making similar opportunities available for adults, as well.

Here's how it works for children: Children, ranging in age from pre-school through eighth grade, are presented with opportunities to experience stories from our extensive collection of "Shalom" titles. Books may be read independently by children or they may be read aloud to an individual child or to a group of children by an adult. Children keep track of seven books they've read, respond to two of the books with a creative project of their choice, and make a request to receive a brand-new book from the "Shalom Readers" list.

And, here's what Amanda Bleichty, Central Plains Conference Minister for Christian Formation, designed for adult readers: Adults read seven books, three of which can be books read to children. After engaging more deeply with three of the books, adults can request a new book to be donated to their church library. The possibilities for engagement and reflection are truly endless and could include participation in a book club via Zoom, creating a work of art, visiting with a friend about the book, learning more about the book or the author through a podcast, or other responses.

The [annotated "Shalom Readers" book list](#) posted on the CentralPlainsMC.org website is truly a treasure. While the majority of the books feature a secular setting, the messages of these books lend themselves to meaningful follow-up discussions that underscore important elements of our Christian faith and promote responses that reflect peace, love, and justice. Looking for gift ideas for friends or family members?

The annotated “Shalom Readers” list is a wonderful resource. The titles also lend themselves well for reading comprehension lessons, mentor texts for writing lessons, and reflection in school settings, allowing us to share important concepts beyond the walls of the church.

Marlinda Beachy of Kalona, Iowa, selects the new books that are added to our children’s “Shalom” collection; Amanda Bleichty maintains the website and has been selecting the Shalom books for adults. Anyone with ideas for additional children’s titles is welcome to send book recommendations to Marlinda at mbeachy@kctc.net. Additionally, Amanda invites others to join in her reading, suggesting, and approving books for the adult list. To get involved in this way, email her at amandableichty@centralplainsmc.org.

As annual milestones for earning free books are reached, individual families or churches submit the reading lists, documentation of completed projects, and requested book titles to our conference representatives. Those living in the western part of the conference should contact Joan Friesen at jfriesen@mainstaycomm.net; those living in the eastern part of the conference should relay information to Ellen Miller at ellenkmiller@gmail.com. Joan and Ellen purchase the books and send them to churches on behalf of Central Plains Mennonite Conference.

Last year we reported that 47 new books were provided to children from seven different Central Plains congregations in 2019. This year, we’re pleased to report that once again, 47 new books were provided, with the following eight congregations represented in 2020:

- Bethesda Mennonite, Henderson, Nebraska
- Cedar Falls Mennonite, Cedar Falls, Iowa
- Des Moines Mennonite, Des Moines, Iowa
- East Union Mennonite, Kalona, Iowa
- First Mennonite, Iowa City, Iowa
- Hutterthal Mennonite, Freeman, South Dakota
- Kalona Mennonite, Kalona, Iowa
- Sugar Creek Mennonite, Wayland, Iowa

Churches may check out books that are part of our Central Plains Conference collection and are also encouraged to establish their own collections of titles from the “Shalom” list. Arrangements for checking out books from the conference office can be made by contacting Monica Clem at office@centralplainsmc.org.

Respectfully submitted by Carol J. Eisenbeis
Shalom Representative for the Central Plains Christian Formation Committee

Central Plains Mennonite Conference

Discernment Committee Report, 2021

As I start to write this report, there is hope that the wilderness of the pandemic is going to be in the past and we will step into the newness of the present. We will walk with a confidence and hope of God's Spirit working among us, through us and leading us.

We can agree this has been a year of adjustments-- adjustments of meetings and how we gathered and how the work of Central Plains conference is accomplished. Even within the adjustments, the Discernment Committee remained active, reaching out to our many gifted constituents. Our goal is to nominate a variety of persons, taking into consideration our conference's geographical vastness and cultural backgrounds. We have not met this goal to our satisfaction; however, we certainly recognize the weariness of persons we contacted and the short list of prospective candidates. And yes, there are some open positions yet to be filled.

My dream would be to see the Discernment committee do more discerning and less recruiting.

We are grateful for each person we spoke with and the prayer and thought that went into each response. We humbly offer the slate for your approval, encouraged by the experience and knowledge of the people who have agreed to serve CPMC.

As we look toward 2022 I want to reiterate some of John' Murray's words from last year:

"the slate is much longer, the needs greater, and the outcome will have an important influence on the long-term trajectory of our conference. As a Discernment Committee, we feel it's more important now than ever to be aware of the representation of our constituency on our committees. It's a big task, and in order to have our best shot at better representing our conference we need your help." As we imagine the future path of Central Plains conference we ask for your help in discerning people to fill the different positions and committees. May God's Spirit guide us as together we move forward.

Our hope is for our various committees to lead us with boldness and grace into the uncertainty ahead. We hope and pray they will equip and challenge us with grace, joy, and peace as we pursue faithful transformation for our conference, congregations, and communities.

Grace and Peace,

Pam Gerig Unruh, Asst. Moderator and Chair
on behalf of the Discernment Committee:

Peg Burkey Brad Carlson
Glenn Geissinger Marissa Hochstetler Unruh

Ballot of Election/Affirmation
Central Plains Mennonite Conference
Annual Meeting 2021

The following slate has been developed through the work of the Discernment Committee and is recommended by Conference Board. Additional nominations may be made when this ballot is presented at the Annual Meeting provided such nominees meet the requirements of the CPMC Bylaws for serving in the position for which they are nominated. Please contact potential nominees prior to the election to assure that they will serve if elected. As a matter of courtesy, the Moderator should be given prior notice of the intent to make a nomination from the floor.

Conference Board Member-at-Large *(2-year term)* vote for 1
_____ (2023) John Tyson - 1st term - Des Moines Mennonite Church, IA
_____ (2023) Gregg Waltner - 1st term - Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman, SD
_____ (2023) (write in) _____

Discernment Committee *(2-year term)* vote for 2
_____ (2023) Brad Carlson - 2nd term - Salem Mennonite Church, SD
_____ (2023) Marissa Hochstetler Unruh - 1st term - Washington Mennonite Church, IA
_____ (2023) (write in) _____

Christian Formation Committee *(3-year term)* vote for 2
_____ (2024) Dylan Keller - 2nd term - Zion Mennonite Church, IA
_____ (2024) Bethany Shetler - 1st term - Wellman Mennonite Church, IA
_____ (2024) (write in) _____

Outreach and Service Committee *(3-year term)* vote for 1
_____ (2024) Shirley Ries - 1st term - Salem Mennonite Church, SD
_____ (2024) *(candidate needed)*
_____ (2024) (write in) _____

Pastoral Leadership Committee - chair *(3-year term)* vote for 1
_____ (2024) Martha Yoder - 1st term - West Union Mennonite Church, IA
_____ (2024) (write in) _____

Pastoral Leadership Committee (3-year term) vote for 2
 _____ (2024) Kim Becker - 2nd term - Emmanuel Mennonite Church, MN
 _____ (2024) Corey Miller - 1st term - Salem-Zion Mennonite Church, SD
 _____ (2024) (write in) _____

Discernment Committee Bios

Conference Board Member-at-Large

Gregg Waltner has been a life-long member of Salem Mennonite Church. He has been involved in church offices and CMPC committees. Gregg and Audrey have two sons and seven grandchildren all living in close proximity. He and his brother and sons are involved in a dairy operation.

Christian Formation Committee - (Board appointment)

Fjaere Harder Nussbaum grew up in Mt. Lake, Minnesota, and studied at Hesston College (03-05) and Goshen College ('06-'08). She met her husband, Adam Harder Nussbaum, doing MVS in Baltimore. They spent the first 6 years of their marriage at Shalom Mennonite Church in Eau Claire, and have recently moved to St. Paul, MN, where Adam is now the pastor of Third Way Church. Fjaere is a social worker by profession, working as a DBT mental health therapist. Fjaere is energized by theatre, gardening, bread baking, and lately, cake-frosting.

Christian Formation Committee -

Bethany Shetler and husband, Dean, live in Wellman, IA. and attend Wellman Mennonite Church. Before moving to IA in 1977 they lived in Honduras and Nebraska. Bethany helped develop the youth/adult mentoring program at Wellman in the early 1980's and continues to be involved as the coordinator. Being program director for Jr. High Camp (a long time ago!) at Crooked Creek deepened her passion for helping youth as they seek to find Jesus and commit to Him as Lord of their life. She has fun volunteering at Crowded Closet twice a week, except when she and Dean spend a couple summer months in the U.P. of MI. (Grand Marais) where she grew up!

Outreach & Service Committee -

Shirley Ries is a Member of Salem Mennonite Church rural Freeman, South Dakota. She grew up in Henderson, Nebraska. Her and her husband Dennis served under AIMM in Zaire (Dem. Republic of Congo) from 1975-1985. She has worked as a lab tech,

receptionist, hosting exchange students and MYW guests and on various boards and volunteering. More recently participating in the Freeman for Justice and Peace group has made her aware of the broader immigration dilemma and the education that comes along with it. She is presently on the EtCetera Shoppe board in Freeman. Shirley and her husband have married adult children and 4 grandchildren that live in the Minneapolis area and enjoy spending time there helping with various projects and being grandparents.

Pastoral Leadership Committee - (Board appointment)

Sid Burkey is enjoying semi-retirement from the family farm near Milford, Nebraska, and continues board work for several companies with Mennonite values. He and his wife, Peg, enjoy travel experiences, reading and long walks, and attend Bellwood Mennonite Church in Milford, where he has served several terms as elder. They have 3 adult children and 8 wonderful grandkids. Sid has served CPMC in various roles, as delegate, Moderator and on the board. He has also enjoyed 2 years of supervisory staff service at MEDA and on the MEDA executive team and board. CPMC continues to be a source of Anabaptist spiritual inspiration for Sid, and he has a deep love and respect for our dedicated pastors and their important and challenging leadership roles in times of turmoil, change and celebration.

Pastoral Leadership Committee -

Corey Miller is the pastor at Salem-Zion Mennonite Church in rural Freeman, South Dakota. He has been involved in youth ministry and pastoral ministry for over 30 years and strives to bring an outward expression of God's gracious love to all. Corey and his wife Nancy have two young adult daughters and they love to garden and tend their yard. Corey looks forward to the opportunities to walk alongside pastors in this challenging and yet opportunistic time in Christ's church.

Agapé Peace Center

Promoting Self-Giving Love in Works of Peace and Justice and in Church Communities

A ministry initiative of Central Plains Mennonite Conference

Duluth, Minnesota

April 20, 2021

Dear Supporters of the **Agapé Peace Center**,

The center is now in its fifth year of operation, and certainly the pandemic has impacted all aspects of life in our world. I'm still thankful that in the midst of limited services, the Agapé Peace Center has been able to start several new efforts regarding peace education and peace ministry. Chief among those initiatives has been the [Restorative Church](#) project with its new website launched last June of 2020.

Again, **many thanks** to those who have been steady financial supporters from the earliest years of this project. I am also very thankful that this project received a \$2000 grant award last December from the Mennonite Church USA Justice Grant, which is supporting new works that address racial justice and social divisions within faith-based contexts.

The **Restorative Church** project launched a couple online events in the spring of 2021 to expand its menu of services. The Faith and Justice Learning Group, hosted every Tuesday mid-day, has brought together two groups: an older generation with experience in restorative work, and a younger college-student generation eager to learn about restorative practices in a faith-based

context. The Calvin University student-led Peacemakers Club has partnered in with this venture, providing zoom tech supports.

The former vision of having **Restorative Bible** discussion groups has now morphed into a monthly series of online workshops. Here are the three workshops offered this spring:

1. A Genesis Journey: From Rivalry to Reconciliation with Hagar, Jacob and Joseph
2. A Jesus Journey: Overcoming Evil with the Adulterous Woman and Good Friday
3. A Jew-Gentile Journey: Resolving Tensions and Divisions in the Book of Acts

One hope is to have monthly workshops next fall to expand these themes. Participants thus far have commented to me on how they appreciate learning practical communication skills for building bridges to people during hard or divisive conversations.

One eventual hope is for the R Ch platform to convene **Restorative Responses** for church leaders and clergy who can discuss actual conflicts and harms in their church community settings and receive supports for responding to these situations. A key purpose of the [Restorative Church website](#) is to provide a rich set of resources to help church leaders to stimulate gospel-shaped peacemaking practices within their own congregations.

One exciting new connection has been with Rev. Michele Day, associate pastor at Chicago's southside Trinity UCC church. Her local Nehemiah ministry will co-sponsor the 2nd **Restorative Church Gathering** on July 11, 2022, following the national restorative justice conference taking place in Chicago that year. We hope to have around 100 in attendance. As you may recall, the first gathering happened in Denver under similar circumstances.

The **Heart Balm Healing Service** has now moved from the Presbyterian Church to the Steve O'Neil Apartments in Duluth which mostly serves lower-income women in transition to stabler situations. When Amy Swenson, last summer, explained how a building with 200 women and children was experiencing constant tensions and challenges as Covid-restrictions limited all aspects of life, she welcomed the thought of a quieting space for women who needed greater supports. With the help of Kate Kolmodin, a local hospital chaplain, we are slowly winning the trust of the women to provide a sacred space for sharing and inner strengthening. One woman, a mother of three who has come consistently, aspires to be a leader for other women who struggle with transition issues.

The **Strength to Love** men's group (which previously studied MLK and Rev. Barber speeches), was able to vigil together last June 15 at the local lynching Clayton Jackson MacGie memorial site on its 100th year anniversary. We hope to do the same this coming June, following the day when Bryan Steveson will give a keynote speech either in person or online. In partnership with human rights officer Carl Crawford, I still am working toward a vision where local police can routinely meet with diverse community members in a setting of facilitated conversation.

During this last year, the **Restorative Justice Roundtable** group has also continued monthly through a zoom platform, allowing for a wider regional participation from Northeast Minnesota. Leadership has now been turned over to Duluthian Chris Godsey who convenes the meetings and provides new content for group discussion. It's a great way to bring veterans and newcomers together for supports and learning.

The book lending and giving ministry of the **G. W. Carlson Peace Library** has certainly been impacted by the pandemic year. On the other hand, it has expanded my potential to give books away to others. Over 200 books have been given out to others during the past year, and due to my own weakness for collecting books, the pandemic has *not* limited this mode of "literary trafficking."

I have continued to chair the **Conflict Management Support Team** associated with Central Plains Mennonite Conference, which meets monthly by zoom. This team provides supports to the conference minister, and is available to provide both intervention and prevention services for church groups. Through this work, I was asked this winter to provide a 2-hour workshop for Faith Mennonite Church in Minneapolis on "Healthy Communications in a Time of Polarization." In breakout sessions, participants were able to practice simple communication skills, such as using Acknowledgements and asking Narrative-based Questions.

Similarly, I have been working as a **lead facilitator** in 2021 for a congregation in St. Paul that has struggled with leadership dynamics and people leaving the church. This has been a 6-month process of healing and resolution, with multiple meetings for various purposes. All meetings are geared toward the strengthening of a church that has been injured by internal conflict and patterns of tensions. One leader of the church, in an early session that invited other leaders to echo back what they heard from another, mentioned later, "Wow. I don't think I've ever been heard like that before. This really helps me to move forward now." Co-facilitator Rick Yonker has also benefitted from having an apprentice experience under my guidance.

Finally, my work with the Agapé Peace Center has allowed me to write a **couple articles** that bear upon matters of faith and peace. Two of these are:

- Bridge-Building Conversations: Common Elements in Relational Peacemaking and Francis Schaeffer's Apologetic Ministry
- From Fear to Faith: Navigating Conspiracies and Compliance with Isaiah

(If you would like copies or links to read these articles, feel free to contact me.)

Well, this is a long listing of activities. Please join me in a **twofold prayer** that God will continue to bring the right people to be served and the right people to help as partners.

Pray also for a peaceful transition at First Presbyterian Church where the center is housed. The previous leadership is no longer present at this church.

Donations can come directly to me at the address below, but they can also be directed through Central Plains Mennonite Church (see below) for a tax deductible gift.

May God keep you safe and healthy! May God provide you with rich opportunities in your own callings to bring together Truth and Mercy and Justice and Peace (as described at the end of Psalm 85).

Ted Lewis tedlewis76@gmail.com

715-205-5945

Ted Lewis

6104 E. Superior St.

Duluth MN 55804

Central Plains Mennonite Conference

P.O. Box 101

Freeman, SD 57029

Central Plains Mennonite Conference Annual Meeting

June 20.2020

9:30-noon

via ZOOM platform

Attendees: 135 registered from 36 congregations
11 youth and 10 young adults (ages 24-30 years old)
More than 120 devices connected on the ZOOM meeting

Committee reports are available on the CPMC website – Mennonite Mission Network, Mennonite Women USA, Mennonite Men, Menno Media, Mennonite Disaster Service, Everence, Bethel College, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Corinthian Plan, Dove's Nest, Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Eastern Mennonite University, Freeman Network for Justice & Peace, and Mennonite Central Committee Central States

1. Welcome and Introductions

Shawn Nolt, Moderator opened the meeting with a message of peace in these uncertain times which requires us to meet virtually via ZOOM. He gave instructions about using ZOOM for our meeting today. Then he made introductions of the Executive Committee members and conference staff as well Chance Beachy our technical host and special guests Joe Sawatzky from Mennonite Mission Network and Kathy Neufeld Dunn from Western District Conference. This was followed by an opening prayer.

Since we are meeting virtually for the first time, we had two practice polls in preparation for voting later in the meeting.

2. 2019 Minutes Review

Marilyn Brockmueller, Executive Committee Secretary highlighted several items from the 2019 Annual Meeting minutes and 2019-20 Board Actions. A call for corrections was made with no changes noted via the Chat function or verbally. *David Heusinkveld (West Union, IA) called for the motion - "I approve the minutes." with a second by Rachelle Luitjens (Sugar Creek, IA). There were no questions. It was approved with a unanimous vote.*

3. Installation of Executive Conference Minister

Shawn Nolt lead us in a litany confirming Nathan Luitjens as the new Executive Conference Minister followed by prayer. The delegates were invited to pray for Nathan and the conference staff.

Nathan responded by introducing himself and outlining the various positions he has held in CPMC over the past 16 years. Now as ECM, he feels that we are in a great place to move forward with the Covenant of Spiritual Practices in position, and good staff to work with (Susan, Amanda, Ramiro, Monica, and Ted). Nathan says society is changing to a post-Christian era, but the Holy Spirit is at work and there are new opportunities. The church is not dead but needs to shift and adapt. In addition, there is a societal shifting with racism being highlighted not only of African Americans, but also Native Americans and Hispanics. As a conference we need to work on anti-racism and social justice so that we can have peace. Now in the time of the pandemic we have needed to become more creative.

4. Bible Study – Jeremiah 29:5-7

Nathan introduced the passage chosen for today. We planned to have the Annual Meeting in the Twin Cities. However, with the advent of COVID 19 this caused us to be more creative. In turn our scripture passage was changed to Jeremiah 29 which guides us to find God in places we do not expect to be. We are not in exile to Babylon, but like Jeremiah's people we are in a place we didn't expect to be. He had Amanda and Susan read the Bible passage from two different translations. At this point everyone was placed into table groups and given 15 minutes for discussion. (5 minutes to introduce ourselves to our table group and then re-read the passage and discuss: What do you notice/ what sticks out to you in this passage, and why?)

5. Break and Announcements

During the 15-minute break the following information was scrolling through our feed:

- Conflict Management Support Team (centralplainsmc.org/support-for-conflict)
- *Shalom Readers (centralplainsmc.org/shalom-readers)
- *Send a blessing to our newly installed Executive Conference Minister (centralplainsmc.org/blessings-for-nathan)
- *Formation Resource Library (centralplainsmc.org/formation-resource-library)
- *Donate to CPMC (centralplainsmc.org/donate)

6. Peace Mug Presentation

Emma Beachy, summer intern at Wayland Mennonite, virtually presented the 2020 Peace Mug to Marcus Miller. He was nominated by Rick Yoder Short. Marcus is a teacher at Hilcrest Academy (formerly Iowa Mennonite School). He teaches students to think critically specifically in the areas of peace, justice, and reconciliation both inside and outside the classroom. In addition, he has had much influence community-wide in the areas of justice and peacemaking.

7. Bylaw proposed change

John Murray, as Assistant Moderator and member of the Discernment Committee, brought a proposed clarification to add to the by-laws and read as follows *"A committee member who*

becomes the chair in the middle of their term resets the clock on the current term only.” There have been questions about the term lengths of the chairs of committees. To prevent very long terms when becoming the chair of a committee, this clarification is proposed to be added as 7.08 in the bylaws.

The motion” I approve the bylaw clarification as recommended by the Conference Board.” was made by Glenn Geissinger (Faith Mennonite, MN) with a second by Galen Kaufman (Bethel Mennonite, MN). There were no questions. The vote results were: Yes – 96 (99%), No – 1 (1%), Motion passed.

8.Introduction of Slate

John Murray presented the slate of nominees. This year presented extra challenges. There are still two outstanding positions. They are 1 each in Outreach & Service and Christian Formation. The Discernment committee needs names of people so this year the delegates are asked to email or text names to the committee. In addition, there is now a page on the CPMC website where names can be submitted on-line.

9.Poll on the Slate

This slate was presented by the Discernment Committee and approved by the Conference Board to be brought to the delegates today for affirmation. The poll proposed *“I affirm the following people to serve in Central Plains Mennonite Conference”*.

The following candidates each individually were approved by majority vote: Pamela Gerig Unruh (Assistant Moderator), Norm Yoder (Treasurer), John Tyson, Anita Breckbill and Shella Franz (Conference Board Members-at-large), Marissa Hochstetler Unruh, Peg Burkey, and Glenn Geissinger (Discernment Committee), Carol Eisenbeis (Christian Formation), Nicholas Detweiler Stoddard, Tara Stahl and Rhonda Brubacher (Outreach & Service), Karen Martens Zimmerly and Jerry Kroeker (Pastoral Leadership Committee).

All nominees were approved by majority vote.

10.Vote on Spending Blueprint

Kent Blossom, Treasurer, gave thanks for the strong prayer and financial support which puts CPMC in a healthy situation. This was mostly due to the ECM being employed only half time during the last fiscal year, and this will continue through August 2020. In addition, we had strong giving at the end of the calendar year. Kent and Ted Widmer were available to answer questions, but there were none. Shawn offered thanks for Kent’s work and attention to detail.

The motion “I approve the spending blueprint for 2020-21 from the Stewardship Task Group as approved by the Conference Board.” was made by Nyle Kaufman (East Union, IA) with a second by MaryAnn Harder (First Mennonite, MN). The motion was unanimously approved.

11.Roundtable discussion

Nathan introduced this time of discussion. He prefaced the discussion with the statement that we should not be looking back to the past as the golden age and then be disillusioned. Instead we should be looking at the present – where do we see signs of hope and evidence of the Holy Spirit at work, and evidence of the church being involved with justice and shalom.

Delegates went back into their groups for 20 minutes to discuss the following questions:

- 1)What new opportunities are there for your congregation to be church given the changes that are happening around us?
- 2)What does it mean for you to put down deep roots where you are planted and “seek the peace and prosperity of the city?”
- 3)How do the protests and unrest in society challenge us to think about what it means to work and pray for shalom in our communities: How does that affect our churches?

Shawn invited written responses from the groups to be sent to:

nathanluitjens@centralplainsmc.org.

12. Recognition and Installation of Officers

Shawn Nolt offered a prayer of commission and blessing for the new officers, and the continuing board and committee members.

Shawn also explained that he is resigning after only 1 year as Moderator since he has relocated outside the CPMC geographical area to Ohio. John Murray who has only served for 1 year as Assistant Moderator will step into that role for the next 2 years for a total of 3 years instead of the usual 4 years. Pam Gerig Unruh will serve as Assistant Moderator.

At this time Shawn turned over his position of Moderator to John. Shawn characterized John as energetic, joyful, and wise beyond his years. He is candid, insightful and has a quick wit. John expressed gratitude for Shawn’s leadership during 3 major staff transitions and the COVID pandemic. John invited delegates to send their best wishes to Shawn via electronic channels.

13. 2021 Invitation

Kim Becker (Emmanuel Mennonite, MN) on behalf of the Twin Cities churches invited us to the 2021 Annual Meeting June 17-20 in the Twin Cities.

14. Resolution of Thanks

Marilyn Brockmueller presented the resolution:

On behalf of the Conference Board, I’d like to express gratitude to all who contributed to this unusual annual meeting:

- To the Annual Meeting Task Group: Nathan Luitjens (chair), Galen Kauffman (Workshops coordinator), Chris Becker (Local Host Committee Chair), Shawn Nolt (Moderator), John Murray (Assistant Moderator), Susan Janzen and Amanda Bleichty (Conference Ministers), Marcia Yoder-Schrock, Interim Conference Minister for all the work they did

in preparation to meeting in the Twin Cities and then ultimately deciding to change to a digital format in this time of the pandemic,

- To Chance Beachy for being the technology “host” in addition to the conference staff for helping us conduct worship and business in this new digital format,
- To Central Plains staff (Nathan Luitjens, Amanda Bleichy and Susan Janzen), to our Moderator Shawn Nolt, and Assistant Moderator John Murray for making sure all aspects of the Annual Meeting are covered,
- Thanks to Monica Clem for her behind the scenes work in putting together all the paperwork, registration packets and all the other work she does in preparing for this Annual Meeting,
- To all of you for your participation and prayers as we prepared and then gathered to worship and work together to further God’s kingdom on earth,
- And most of all, thanks be to God’s presence and work among us in this unusual time of the pandemic and increasing awareness of racial disparities. May God’s peace go with you.

15. Final Announcements and Adjournment

John Murray reminded the participants of the Ecuador Partnership panel discussion at 1:00 today with a different ZOOM link. This ZOOM link will remain open over the lunch hour who would like to eat in the “virtual cafeteria.”

A motion to adjourn was made by Dylan Keller (Zion Mennonite, IA) with a second by Martha Hernandez (Iglesia Menonita Centro Cristiano, IA). Motion passed. Adjourned at 11.45.

Submitted by:
Marilyn Brockmueller
Executive Committee Secretary
July 24, 2020

Year-End Report of Conference Board Meetings 2020-2021

Meetings Dates:

June 22, 2020	ZOOM meeting
June 28, 2020	Email decision
August 19, 2020	ZOOM meeting
August 26, 2020	ZOOM meeting
November 11, 2020	ZOOM meeting
February 6, 2021	ZOOM meeting
February 19, 2021	Email decision
May 12, 2021	ZOOM meeting
May 15, 2021	Email decision

June 22, 2020 (Post-Annual Meeting Board meeting)

Discussion:

Four new board members introduced & oriented; minutes approved; discussion of possible dates for Council of Committee meetings and format options (hybrid or ZOOM); bylaw clarification; open positions discussed; evaluation of Annual Meeting; and farewell for outgoing members.

Action:

Norm Yoder moved that the new bylaw (7.08) passed at the Annual Meeting be titled "Committee Chair Terms." Second by Shella Franz and approved by a show of hands.

June 28, 2020 (Email Board decision)

Discussion:

Monica Clem noted two additional changes that should be made while she is updating the Bylaws to include the new bylaw 7.08. Since they are only clerical, only board action is required.

Action:

John Murray moved that the Board approve several clerical changes to the Bylaws:

5.01 (i) updating Iowa Mennonite School's name to Hillcrest Academy, and removing Wilderness Wind, and 6.09 (e) removing one "annual" (duplicated) from the sentence.

A second was made by Norm Yoder. All Board Member voted by email in favor of the motion from June 29-July 12.

August 19, 2020 (Pre-Council of Committees Board meeting)

Discussion:

Prepared for the Council of Committees meeting to be held on August 22 reviewing the agenda, participating in a Biblical Imagination exercise and finalizing details.

Actions:

No actions.

August 26, 2020 (1st Quarter Board meeting)

Discussion:

Approved minutes; evaluated the Council of Committee meeting and ZOOM format; reviewed financial reports; heard report from conference pastors; reviewed 6 open positions of which 3 are now filled since the Annual Meeting; reviewed New Ministry Grant purpose and procedures plus considered a grant proposal for IDI (intercultural development) training; started discussion on the purpose and goals of the Executive Committee within the Board, job descriptions and organizational chart; started discussion on relating to congregations that are not the majority, white constituents.

Actions:

1. S. Roy Kaufman moved to affirm Board appointments: Kent Blossom (Stewardship Task Group member), Don Kempf (Stewardship Talk Group chair) and Tamara Zechin (Outreach and Service Committee member). Second by Shella Franz. Affirmed by a show of hands.

2. S. Roy Kaufman moved to accept the IDI (Intercultural Development Inventory) Training proposal for \$3000 brought by Amanda Bleichty. Second by Norm Yoder. Approved by a show of hands.

November 11, 2020 (2nd Quarter Board meeting)

Discussion:

Minutes approved; financial report reviewed; new committee member appointment approved; conference minister's report heard; report on the Zoom Constituency Leaders Council Zoom meeting where MCUSA membership Guidelines were discussed and ways CPMC plans to address this; conference role in COVID advice/protocols for congregations.

Actions:

1. Norm Yoder moved to send out the End of Calendar Year Appeal letter as written. Second by Anita Breckbill. Approved by a show of hands.

2. John Tyson made a motion to approve Joel Beachy as the Annual Meeting Task Group Chair. Second by S. Roy Kaufman. Approved by a show of hands.

February 6, 2021 (3rd Quarter Board meeting)

Discussion:

Minutes were approved; financial reports reviewed including staff housing allowances and status of government PPP loan (how much of it will be needed, possibility of helping our members with balance of the loan); Discernment committee reported difficulty in filling positions; New ministry grants not being utilized recently; reporting from conference ministers heard; discussion of Annual Meeting format being zoom or a hybrid model and who makes that decision; CLC update on Membership Guidelines and

CPMC plans to address this; new church applying for membership in CPMC; considering delegates for MCUSA convention (we get 6 delegates + 1 alternate)

Actions:

1. Pam Gerig Unruh moved to affirm the proposed housing allowance amounts for 2021 (Nathan \$30,000, Susan \$25,000 and Amanda \$20,000). Seconded by Shella Franz and approved by a show of hands.

2. Marilyn Brockmueller made a motion to allow the Annual Meeting Task Group to make the final decision if the 2021 Annual Meeting will be in a virtual or hybrid format. Second by Pam Gerig Unruh. Affirmed by a show of hands.

February 19, 2021 (Email Board decision)

Discussion:

The Stewardship Task Group (STG) was asked by the Board to set the parameters for a proposed COVID Relief fund that would be started with our PPP dollars.

Actions:

John Murray made the motion to accept the COVID Relief Fund proposal developed by the STG on behalf of the Board. There was a second by S. Roy Kaufman. The motion approved unanimously by email votes from February 19-23.

May 12, 2021 (4th Quarter Board meeting)

Discussion:

Minutes approved; 2021-22 Blueprint reviewed and approved; reviewed year-end fund appeal results and Covid fund status; committee appointments for unfilled positions affirmed; Slate for Annual Meeting reviewed and approved; two New Ministry grants reviewed with one awaiting updated figures before approval and the other approved; highlights from Executive Conference Minister report; learned about the progress in setup and timeline for the newly formed Faith, Life and Procedures Task Group; update from the Annual Meeting Task Group; discussion about new congregation asking for membership with CPMC; report on two churches leaving CPMC; discussed filling the 6 open delegate positions for the 1-day session of the MCUSA convention.

Actions:

1. Norm Yoder made a motion to approve the Blueprint to send to the delegate body to vote on at the Annual Meeting. Second by Pam Gerig Unruh. Approved by a show of hands.

2. John Murray made a motion to affirm Fjaere Harder Nussbaum to fill the open position on the Christian Formation Committee. Shella Franz gave a second and it was approved with a show of hands.

3. S. Roy Kaufman made a motion to affirm Sid Burkey to the PLC to complete the term vacated by Jerry Kroeker. Second by Norm Yoder. Approved by a show of hands.

4. Anita Breckbill made a motion to approve the Slate as presented by the Discernment Committee. Shella Franz seconded that, and it was approved by a show of hands.

5. Norm Yoder made the motion to approve the New Ministries Grant for \$3000 to Nathan Luitjens for the Vibrant Faith Coaching – Level 1 training. There was a second by Pam Gerig Unruh. Approved by show of hands.

6. S. Roy made a motion to recommend that the Freeman House Church be presented to the delegate body for approval as a new member congregation of CPMC. There was a second by Anita Breckbill. It was approved by a show of hands.

May 15, 2021 (Email Board decision)

Discussion:

By email reviewed the updated New Ministries grant application from the Peace & Justice Task Group.

Action:

Norm Yoder made the motion to accept the New Ministries Grant application for \$3000 to Central Plains Peace & Justice Task Group for the Cross-Generation Peace Talks project. There was a second from Marilyn Brockmueller. It was approved by an email vote May 14-15.

Submitted by:

Marilyn Brockmueller

Executive Committee Secretary