

JULY 2015

Resolution for “greater faithfulness in our witness to peace” passes unanimously

After several minutes of public comment, most wanting to recognize the amount of violence and hate in our own communities and at the U.S. borders, Central District Conference delegates unanimously approved a resolution calling for “greater faithfulness in our witness for peace.”

The resolution specifically relates to congregations’ peace witness as it relates to U.S. government. It recognizes citizens’ role in war and violence across the globe on behalf of the U.S., despite individuals’ views on war and violence.

The goal, the resolution reads, is to “encourage all CDC churches and members to take a small step in faithfulness to our call to be peacemakers and witnesses for peace by deliberately and clearly communicating our convictions with our government and government agencies such as the Internal Revenue Service.”

Noting that Central District Conference sees this violence as against God’s plan for the world, the resolution sets out several “deliberate steps” to “witness to God’s reign and God’s will for peace” during tax season.



1. **Sending a congregational letter to the local newspaper**
2. **Creating a banner expressing our beliefs for public display**
3. **Hosting a community candle light vigil**
4. **Witnessing outside the post office while sharing a snack and an information sheet**
5. **Including with our IRS tax filing, a written testimony of our commitment to peace and withholding a symbolic portion of our taxes paid for war**
6. **Etc.**

This resolution was submitted by Hively Avenue Mennonite in Elkhart, Ind.

The delegates also unanimously approved the slate of candidates for open committee seats, the 2015-2016 spending plan, and the 2014 annual meeting minutes.

The delegate sessions included time to review and discuss resolutions and statements to be considered at Mennonite Church USA Convention, held in Kansas City, Mo., June 30 through July 5.



CDC releases statement on sexuality for congregations' discussion, study

Recognizing that many of the discussions and disagreements within Mennonite Church USA and the broader church currently surround topics related to human sexuality, and in particular same-sex relationships, the Central District Conference board of directors formed a task group of six individuals from within CDC to research and write a document to lead CDC into further conversations about human sexuality.

Ron Guengerich, outgoing CDC board chair and member of the task force, introduced the document to delegates during the annual meeting Friday.

“Human Sexuality: A Biblical Perspective, A Draft” is very much a conversation starter, he said.

The document includes an introduction, going over the denominational history of statements on sexuality and societal understanding of same-sex relationships; a section on the theology of scripture, laying out CDC’s understanding of the Bible; a section on exegetical consider-

ations, exploring eight Biblical texts related to our understanding of God’s vision for sexuality; and a closing part laying out moral questions for consideration.

The task force that created this document included Loren Johns of Eighth Street Mennonite in Goshen., Ind., Regina Shands Stoltzfus of Assembly Mennonite in Goshen, Ind., Alex Sider of Bluffton University in Bluffton, Ohio, Kiva Nice-Webb of Chicago Community Mennonite in Chicago, Ill., Michael Miller of Assembly Mennonite in Goshen., Ind., and Ron Guengerich of Silverwood Mennonite in Goshen., Ind.

Guengerich said that this document is meant to help individuals, small groups, Sunday school classes, and congregations to look into the Bible and “allow this Text to transform and reshape us.”

“Human Sexuality: A Biblical Perspective, A Draft” is available on the CDC website at http://www.centraldistrict.mennonite.net/Annual_Mtng_2015



Alison Brookins rounds a corner at Camp Friedenswald during the run/walk/bike-a-thon the Thursday afternoon of the CDC annual meeting weekend.

The day included the run/walk/bike-a-thon, a golf outing, and a cookout at Camp Friedenswald.

Workshops explore hymns, studying the Bible

Engaging the Spirituality of Jesus

John Bell, Reverend and renowned hymn writer, began his session, “The Engaged Spirituality of Jesus,” with congregational singing and the comment, “It’s so great to be in the company of Mennonites.”

Bell sprinkled singing —always quickly teaching the group the hymns and songs in order to join him— amidst his storytelling and insight.

Early on he asked the group ‘Why have we inherited the image of a passive baby and a fairly passive Savior?’ He then noted that he gets most excited by songs other than those about “calm, passive Jesus.”



Rethinking our Relationship with each Other and the Bible

Jewel Gingerich Longenecker, associate dean for leadership education and director of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary’s Church Leadership Center, led a discussion Saturday morning during the session, “Rethinking our Relationship with Each Other and the Bible.”

“Since our founding, we Mennonites have claimed the Bible as the central source of authority for our faith and life. The Bible, we have said, is how we learn about God, and most importantly, about Jesus Christ, the One whom we together seek to follow,” Longenecker wrote in her introduction to the session. “Yet these days it seems many of us are not spending a whole lot of time with the Bible.”



Pastors new to CDC



The ministerial committee (pictured in back row) recognized all of the credentialing changes across Central District Conference in the last year.

New pastors to CDC, either through licensing or installation at a CDC church were asked to come forward.

Those present (pictured above in the front row, left to right) were Debra Sutter at First Mennonite of Urbana, Ill.; Renee Kanagy at Cincinnati Mennonite; Deborah Byler at Hively Avenue Mennonite in Elkhart, Ind.; Tara Hartman at Covenant Mennonite in Sarasota, Fla.; Charles Bontrager at First Mennonite of Wadsworth, Ohio; and Mark Rupp at Columbus Mennonite.

Other new pastors to CDC (not pictured) are Dianne Schmidt at Grace Mennonite of Pandora, Ohio; SunJu Moon in South Korea; and Tracy Buller at Silverwood Mennonite in Goshen, Ind.

Taking a break during the delegate sessions



During Saturday's delegate session, Jim Mohr, led delegates through a series of stretches and movements, as he told the story of the early church through the formation of Mennonite Church USA. The break included rubbing each others' backs as members of the early church and hiding under tables during the Reformation.

CDC Mennonite Women hear about photo project of non-straight Mennonites

While both Central District Conference's Mennonite Men and Mennonite Women enjoyed meals the Friday evening of the annual meeting, Mennonite Women also enjoyed learning about Jaclyn Wells' Strangers No More project.

Wells, who attends First Mennonite of Bluffton, explained how she traveled to several Mennonite churches in the Midwest, inviting those who identify as non-straight or non-cisgender to be photographed for her project.

"Through this project, humanity is displayed through the simplicity of a photograph and every photograph honors a person with a story. These are the stories of our Mennonite community members; let them be strangers no more," reads an official description of the project.

Wells created the project to be displayed at the Mennonite Church USA Convention in Phoenix, Ariz., in 2013. She continues to travel and display and speak about her work at different churches and gatherings.



Mark your calendars now for the
2016
Central District Conference
Annual Meeting

June 23-25, 2016

Columbus Mennonite Church,
Columbus, Ohio

Final annual meeting worship session centers around liturgical meal

Central District Conference's annual meeting included three worship sessions, culminating in a liturgical meal midday Saturday, all focused on Christ's illuminating power.



The first two services, held in Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary's Chapel of the Sermon on the Mount, included ethereal visuals, including dozens of white candles, each representing a CDC congregation. During the final worship sessions, churches were asked to take a candle with another congregation's name back to their churches to think about and pray for during the coming year.

In the first service, worship focused on how "Christ Illuminates through Texts of Suffering," with Mary Schertz of Assembly giving the message titled "Risen Christ: Wounded Healer."

The second service Friday evening focused on how "Christ Illuminates at the Table of Blessing," with Jeremy Shue of Silverwood delivering his message titled "Eyes Wide Shut."

The final service Saturday had attendees wash their hands before entering the room in silence, then sharing a simple meal while discussing the annual meeting's events and how to take the meeting's happenings back to their congregations. Mary Klassen also delivered a reflection during the service, which focused on how "Christ Illuminates in the Courage of Returning."

Thank you
to the CDC Annual Meeting Planning Committee
and all others who helped during the meeting.

Coordinators:

Helen Glick (Assembly)
Lynette Bachman (Eighth Street)
Kay Bontrager-Singer (Faith)
Suzanne Lind (Florence)
Winifred Saner (Hively Avenue)
Titus/Joy King (Silverwood)
David Moser, Betsy Bontrager (Southside)
Jenna Liechty Martin, Jeff Boehr (Camp Friedenswald)
Ron Ringenberg (AMBS)
Lora Nafziger (Assembly)

Local Worship Coordinators:

Anna Yoder Schlabach (Assembly)
Brenda Sawatzy Paetkau (Eighth Street)
Deron Brill Bergstresser (Faith)
Nina Lanctot (Florence)
Mary Klassen (Hively Avenue)
Aimee Weishaupt (Silverwood)
Joan Yoder Miller (Southside)

CENTRAL DISTRICT REPORTER

Volume 59, Number 3, March 2014

Editors: Marlys Weaver-Stoesz

E-mail: marlys.weaver@gmail.com

The Reporter is published six times a year. It is the official organ of communication among the churches of Central District Conference of the Mennonite Church USA. It is distributed free to CDC congregations through the CDC spending plan.

Central District Office:

Lois Johns Kaufmann, conference minister

Emma Hartman, administrator

1015 Division St., Goshen, IN 46528

Toll-free: 800-662-2264

Phone: 574-534-1485

Fax: 574-534-8654

E-mail: office@mcusacdc.org

Web address: www.centraldistrict.mennonite.net