



## Reports from MC USA Council fill agenda for CDC meetings

When the Leadership Council of CDC gathered at Camp Friedenswald on April 9 for their semi-annual meetings, agenda focused on reports from the recent meeting of the MC USA Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) and the human sexuality study guide.

### Peer review coming

Lois Kaufmann, conference minister, and Lisa Weaver, conference president, reported that in the near future, CDC will be the subject of a review, initiated by the MC USA Constituency Leaders Council.

CDC has credentialed a pastor in a covenanted, same-sex relationship, and this step—seen as being at variance with denominational guidelines—prompts a peer review that is called for by a resolution passed at the MC USA convention last summer. While procedures for peer reviews such as this have not yet been established, CLC has decided to do a pilot review of CDC.

Lois and Lisa both emphasized they have just learned of the decision to proceed with a pilot



*Carl Yoder (front left), Marlene Steiner Suter and Lois Johns Kaufmann discuss issues in their table group at the Leadership Council meeting. In the background are Ray Person, Kiva Nice-Webb, Jane Roeschley and Emma Hartman.*

review and few details are available yet. What is known is that the review will involve an on-site visit by an assessment team to a conference location and a report to the CLC by CDC representatives and the review team. This will conclude with a report to the MC USA Executive Board, with possible recommendations from the team. Lois and Janeen Bertsche Johnson, member of the Missional Church Committee, reassured the group that the conference does not expect punitive actions from the MC USA Executive Board as a result of this review.

Lois has indicated she will participate in the review, even if it occurs after her retirement. Others representing CDC will be members of the Board and the Ministerial Committee.

In the discussion that followed this report, several Council board members commented that the review gives CDC opportunities to talk about how God is at work in the conference. Lisa

### Groups named in this report

**CDC:** Central District Conference

**CDC Leadership Council:** The Conference's Board of Directors and members of the Ministerial, Missional Church and Stewardship Committees

**MC USA:** Mennonite Church USA

**CLC:** Constituency Leaders Council consisting of representatives of all the conferences in MC USA and of other constituency groups and agencies. (Lois Kaufmann, conference minister; Lisa Weaver, conference president; and Arman Habegger, conference president-elect, are the CDC representatives.)

concluded the session by quoting board member Carol Lehman, who in an earlier meeting said, "We have an opportunity to share a wonderful story about following Jesus."

### **Financial assistance for pastors**

Lois reported that Mennonite Church USA has received a grant of \$800,000 from Lilly Endowment to work with financial needs of pastors. The grant program recognizes that pastor compensation is low in relation to the level of education expected of pastors and that pastors may carry significant debt because of their education or other factors.

One half of the grant will be used for education activities related to financial management, and the other half will provide direct assistance to pastors with financial needs. Credentialed pastors in congregational ministry are eligible, and assistance from the grant will need to be matched by funds coming from or through the congregation.

Lois will communicate with congregations to encourage them to be aware of this assistance and consider how they might help secure assistance for pastors in need. Congregational treasurers and stewardship committees especially need to be aware of this and consider how to gather matching funds.

Application forms are available from the conference minister.

Lois acknowledged that the congregations where the need is greatest may be where the capacity to match the grant funds is the lowest. "We are looking for ways that congregations or the conference may be able to channel funds to where they are needed," she said.

### **Human Sexuality study guide**

Leadership Council members heard an update on a study guide on biblical perspectives of human sexuality. This study guide is based on the fairly academic paper written by CDC's Sexuality and Faithful Relationships Task Group last year that offers a biblical perspective that is open to inclusion of LGBTQ Christians.

Carrie and Gerald Mast, who are developing the guide, are in conversation with a potential publisher and brought for discussion some of the recommendations the publisher has raised. The Leadership Council affirmed continuing to focus on adapting the earlier study for this

new document, while acknowledging other perspectives when that strengthens the guide. The bibliography and appendix will note materials from other perspectives that are already available. Once published, congregations will be invited to consider ways and settings to study it.

**T**he Leadership Council meeting concluded with conversation about "forbearance," referring to a resolution from the MC USA convention in Kansas City that calls all in Mennonite Church USA "to offer grace, love and forbearance" toward others in the church with different beliefs related to same-sex covenanted unions.

Many noted that the very nature of CDC demonstrates this, and we assume and accept differences in viewpoints. Gerald Mast, member of the Missional Church Committee, summed up his perspective, saying, "Forbearance is part of the warp and woof of Central District."



*Lisa Weaver, Madison, Wisc.,  
CDC president*



*Joel Miller, Columbus, Ohio.,  
member of the Ministerial  
Committee*



*Roger Nafziger, Goshen, Ind.,  
CDC treasurer*

Photos from the Leadership Council meeting by Mary E. Klassen

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