



Central  
District  
Conference

A conference of  
Mennonite Church USA

# focus

KNOWING CHRIST'S LOVE  
ANSWERING GOD'S CALL

APRIL/MAY 2015

## Remembering CDC's 'fascinating' history *The work of the CDC historian and archivist*

### PERRY BUSH, CDC HISTORIAN

Being the CDC historian is a way for Perry to serve the church and perfectly matches his gifts and passions.

"My job I think is to help CDC congregations remember our shared history and individual congregations remember their individual histories," he said. "Central District Conference has a rich and fascinating history."

Perry is a history professor at Bluffton University and especially enjoys writing history. He has published a number of books and articles, largely focused on Mennonites, pacifism and

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—Perry Bush

nonresistance, and war and peace. His newest publication, a biography of C. Henry Smith, recognized as the first known Mennonite historian, will be out this fall through Herald Press. Because Smith was part of the General Conference and living and working in Indiana and Ohio, he would have been part of CDC today, Perry noted.

Perry moved to Bluffton in 1994 and began attending First Mennonite Church of Bluffton. He has been the CDC historian for 10 years.

When Perry first became the conference's historian, he said, he was not so aware of CDC's history, but early on was assigned to help organize a book of congregations' stories called

*Knowing Christ's Love... Answering God's Call: Stories of the Central District Conference, 1990-2006.* Most congregations did respond and contributed to the book, quickly catching Perry up to speed.



Perry enjoys being able to attend CDC gatherings and meeting other people across the conference, encouraging congregations to remember their histories and engage with CDC's collective history, and working with CDC archivist Carrie Phillips.

"It's just sort of fun to be the official record-keeper of the conference," Perry said.

Perry also embraces CDC's role.

"I believe in Central District Conference — that we should come together to be more than individual bodies," he said. Currently, CDC is "doing a lot to help the larger church think through some of these larger issues," which he noted is characteristic of this conference's polity and deep roots in inclusion.

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## CARRIE PHILLIPS, CDC ARCHIVIST

As the archives and special collections librarian at Bluffton University's Musselman Library, part of Carrie Phillips' work includes maintaining the Central District Conference archives.

"I have a background in preservation, and the work of physically caring for rare and valuable collections is very intriguing to me," she said. "While I am not Mennonite myself, I do have Mennonite roots, and I have enjoyed becoming a member of the local Bluffton community with its strong Mennonite roots."

CDC archives has been managed by Bluffton University since the first memorandum of understanding was signed between the two institutions in 1980, according to Phillips. The CDC had a historical committee, which helped to give direction to the archives, but that group was dissolved before Carrie took on her role with the library.

"My happiest days," Carrie said, "are those when I'm able to successfully track down the answer to someone's research question, or



when I can organize a collection that hasn't been well organized, or when I can spend time at my workbench performing a conservation or preservation treatment, or when I can work with students, either undergraduate researchers or my two student assistants, who are interested in history and can learn more about it through the use of the materials for which I give care."

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CDC members can access <http://libguides.bluffton.edu/asc> to see more about the CDC archives. "There's a tab for the Central District Conference archives, with a bit more information and some recommendations

for what materials should be sent to the archives, Carrie said.

There is also information on CDC's website at [www.centraldistrict.mennonite.net](http://www.centraldistrict.mennonite.net)

"Most importantly, I'd want people to feel welcome to call or write or email with any questions or other thoughts of interest related to the archives."

**Make your plans for the  
Central District Conference  
Annual Meeting**

**June 11-13**

hosted by  
**Southside Mennonite Fellowship,**

on the campus of  
**Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary,  
Elkhart, Ind.**

*Watch for details in the May CDC Reporter.*