



Central
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Conference

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focus

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KNOWING CHRIST'S LOVE—ANSWERING GOD'S CALL

Exploring ministry in Madison Mennonite Church

by Emily Stoltzfus

The Ministry Inquiry Program offers opportunity for students at Mennonite Church USA colleges, universities and seminaries to explore a call to ministry. These students explore aspects of ministry during the summer, working full time for eleven weeks in a congregation or other setting, such as a camp or service agency. In summer 2017, Emily Stoltzfus of Goshen, Ind., participated in this program, serving in Madison Mennonite Church.

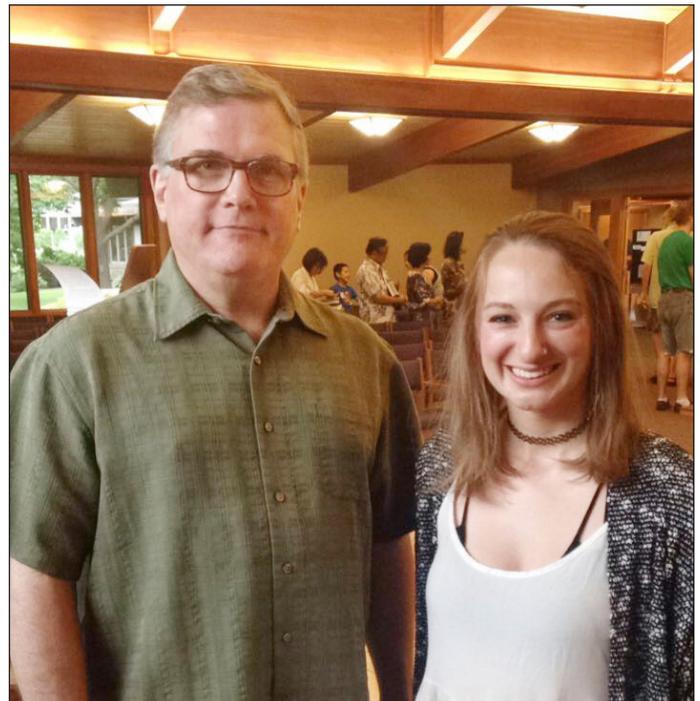
The opportunity to be apart of the Ministry Inquiry Program in a community as special as Madison, Wisconsin, was inexplicably formative. The people in the church are something unique. They welcome you with open arms. While there, I had the opportunity to develop relationships with all generations, gain confidence in leadership skills, listen to others to respect and understand different perspectives, learn to know myself better on a spiritual level, and become more educated on issues within the church and beyond.

One of the greatest strengths of the Ministry Inquiry program in Madison was the freedom to work with the specific gifts and desires that the individual brings. The pastor, Ron Adams, did not pressure me to do things I was not comfortable with, yet he both invited and made me feel welcome to be involved in just about all that he did, in all of the different hats that he wore for his role. He checked in with me at many different points throughout the summer to be sure that he was meeting my needs. He always went above and beyond. I really appreciated the communication, attention, and freedom in all that we did together.

As someone who is studying to be a social worker, a specific goal and desire I had was to become increasingly culturally competent. This is important in a church setting, or no matter what line of work you are in. Ron acknowledged that, and shared this passion.

There were consistently opportunities for education in Madison. The sessions and conferences this summer gave me a plethora of valuable information to be more competent in different situations and to develop a sense of the language around cultural competency. Some of those sessions included a two-day conference

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Ron Adams, pastor of Madison Mennonite Church, and Emily Stoltzfus, who participated in the Ministry Inquiry Program in the congregation last summer.

for restorative justice for school social workers and principals; the Central District Conference annual meeting, where I had the opportunity to hear from author, professor and speaker Drew Hart; the care team meetings with our local church committee; a session on the U.S. history of slavery; an anti-racism training led by Justified Anger; a panel on the injustice of juveniles in the criminal justice system; a tenant/landlord council meeting; and a training for Interfaith Hospitality Network. These are only a handful of the opportunities to become more involved, listen and educate oneself.

My last Sunday in Madison was yet another confirmation of the love and respect that I have for Madison Mennonite Church. A lot of difficult things were being shared, both personal and an acknowledgement of the news, such as the domestic terrorist attack in Charlottesville. Though people sang hymns through tears about the serious matters that were mentioned, the moments together felt important. They felt safe. Toward the end of the service the whole church gathered around the front of the sanctuary so that we could be closer to one another for the sending hymn and benediction.

Through it all, I was reminded of the strength of the congregation. The way they came together to support people, the way they immediately confronted situations with the whole church, no matter how difficult. I couldn't have imagined not learning to know the congregation. As we sent one another off, I had a melancholy yet peaceful feeling inside, realizing that once you enter the front door this church, you are a part of the family. This was a place where everyone belonged.

The summer I spent with Ministry Inquiry in Madison, Wisconsin, was a life-changing and irreplaceable experience. I thank Goshen College, Madison Mennonite Church, College Mennonite Church, and all who made it possible to bring this beautiful opportunity to full completion.



Silverwood chosen for project related to young adults

Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., has been selected by the Center for Congregations in Indianapolis to be part of their Engaging Young Adults initiative. Over the next two years, representatives from the 30 chosen congregations will gather in regional clusters and twice as a large group to learn and brainstorm ways to engage young adults.

The congregation as a whole will be involved in the ministries with young adults. In addition, they will work together to match the Center's grant of \$30,000, so they will have a total of \$60,000 to fund the ideas they pursue.

Silverwood received a different, earlier grant to help fund their building renovation. In January the congregation, listening to the Spirit, discerned that working with young adults and young families was one of three areas where they should focus their efforts. Then Jeremy Shue, one of the pastors, learned about this program, they applied, and in August learned that they had been chosen.

The Center's website includes this statement: "Many Indiana congregations are grappling with how to include and engage this generation. The current generation of young adults is large and far from homogeneous, and congregational settings vary widely across Indiana—urban, rural, small town. So there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. The Engaging Young Adults initiative will help you engage young adults in your own community and context."

Silverwood celebration

On Sunday, October 29, Silverwood will celebrate its 125th anniversary and dedicate their building after its renovations. The project included renovation and enlargement of the foyer and beginning a columbarium and scattering garden. All are invited to the Sunday morning worship service at 10:30 and the potluck meal that follows.

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Central District Conference
www.mcusacdc.org office@mcusacdc.org
800.662.2264