



**Central
District
Conference**

A conference of
Mennonite Church USA

focus

October 2016

KNOWING CHRIST'S LOVE—ANSWERING GOD'S CALL

Conference archives preserve and foster research

by Carrie Phillips, Central District Conference archivist

I'm grateful to share about the benefits of your conference archives—for housing and caring for the historical record of the conference, and for supporting congregational historians, church administrators and others who have interest in preserving the past for your worship communities.

The word, "archive," denotes three different ideas. **Archiving** is a multi-layered action; to collect, store, organize, preserve and provide access. An **archive** is a defined collection of physical traces—documents and artifacts — representative of a person, place, thing or idea. An **archives** is a place where such collections are stored, preserved, organized, and available for study. An **archivist** is someone trained and practiced in approaches to all of this for preserving the historical record and supporting those who want to learn from those records.

While congregations can maintain their own archives (and should, to some degree), having a centralized archives allows for the professional management of archival collections and locating those with conference materials, providing for one-stop research options.

The CDC archives is ready to help the person in each congregation who is responsible for historical records. Visit the CDC archives page at <http://libguides.bluffton.edu/asc/centraldist> for a chart that shows which records should be kept locally and which records can be transferred to the archives. When you're ready to make a transfer, contact me to make arrangements.

If you're interested in your congregation's or the conference's history, the CDC archives is ready to assist you. Discuss your interests with me and make an appointment to visit the archives. We'll work together to select the

materials which may lead to answers to your research questions. Then it's time to skim, read, skim, read, and read some more! Take notes or you may be able to take digital photographs or make photocopies of the materials.

While I've cared for the CDC's records for more than 10 years, I've had only a few interactions with CDC researchers along the way. I was energized by the conversations I encountered at the CDC annual meeting, and I look forward to finding ways to make the archives more accessible to interested researchers. The stories in these documents can be so interesting when the right person comes along to unlock them!

Contact information

<http://libguides.bluffton.edu/asc/centraldist>

Email: archives@bluffton.edu

Phone: 419-358-3275

Visit: Musselman Library, Bluffton University.



Mary E. Klassen

Carrie Phillips led a workshop on archiving congregational documents at the CDC annual meeting in Columbus, Ohio, in June. Carrie is archivist for Bluffton University and earned a Master of Library and Information Science from the University of Washington.

Remember the past to guide the future

by Perry Bush, Central District Conference historian

I was appointed as Central District Conference historian in 2005. Initially this was to be for a three-year term, though it gradually evolved into an ongoing, permanent commitment. Eleven years later, I am still at it and will continue to serve as long as the conference desires.

Because this was a new position, part of my first duties was to figure out what a conference historian does, and set about doing it. Yet I was given a major project right away: to assist the CDC in the planning and creation of a historical booklet released in time for its half-centenary in June 2006. I sent out a call for CDC congregations to tell their own stories and edited the narratives that came in. The resulting collection, *Knowing Christ's Love ... Answering God's Call: Stories of the Central District Conference, 1990-2006*, was released in 2006. It remains today a vivid, rich collection of the congregational lives of 26 CDC churches (and also Bluffton University), and was made possible by the ready willingness of these churches to share their stories.

Since that time, I've fleshed out the job of the CDC historian in other ways. I continue to work closely with the CDC archivist, my colleague Carrie Phillips of the Bluffton University Archives and Special Collections, the official repository of CDC congregational records. I work on an on-call basis for the conference minister and administrator. This has sometimes involved such activities as my drafting of CDC historical vignettes for presentation as regional meetings.

While I would not list this as an official part of my duties, I would certainly include my work as a Mennonite historian under the wider, unofficial scope of my job. For example, I'd like to hope that my biography of the important Mennonite historian, church leader and public intellectual C. Henry Smith (titled *Peace, Progress and the Professor: The Mennonite History of C. Henry*



Smith, published last fall by Herald Press) stands as a contribution to CDC history. In such efforts, I am hoping that my work falls into the long and rich tradition of previous generations of Mennonite historians, who saw it as their role to lay out usable pasts for the church. In particular, I trust my work as CDC historian helps member congregations to remember their pasts, preserve and share their stories, and in so doing creates a usable past capable of guiding us into the future.

In addition to being CDC historian, Perry Bush is professor of history at Bluffton (Ohio) University. He has a PhD from Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Your gifts at work

The continued ministry of Central District Conference is made possible by the generosity of churches and individuals. Your financial support of Central District Conference:

- Enhances pastoral effectiveness through pastor-to-pastor support and sharing of ideas.
- Supports congregation-to-congregation mission partnerships through Reign of God grants.
- Assists congregations and pastors during times of transition.
- Provides resources for worship that speak to our time and place.
- Renews, challenges and inspires people at Annual Meetings.
- Transforms lives of children and adults through Camp Friedenswald retreats.

Gifts of all sizes, from \$5 to \$1000, are needed to fulfill the CDC mission; *Knowing Christ's love ... Answering God's call*. Your gift before the end of the calendar year is greatly appreciated. Gifts can be made online by going to www.mcusacdc.org/donate or by mail to 1015 Division St., Goshen, IN 46528-2000

In Christian service,
Roger Nafziger, Treasurer
Doug Luginbill, Conference Minister

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