

CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE  
Minutes for the 60th Annual Session  
June 23-25, 2016  
Columbus Mennonite Church, Columbus, Ohio  
*Abounding in Love. . . Abiding in Grace*

**Thursday, June 23**

*Family Day events*

- \*Golf Scramble at Minerva Lake Golf Course
- \*Run/Walk/Bike-a-thon at Olentangy Bike Path
- \*Comforter Knotting at Columbus Mennonite Church
- \*Pastor Appreciation Dinner at Columbus Mennonite Church
- \*Backyard Picnic at North Broadway United Methodist Church

WORSHIP I: Abounding (Columbus Mennonite Church)

Text: Luke 8:1-14 Speaker: Mark Rupp (Columbus Mennonite)

- \*Ice Cream Social and CMC Music Sampler at Columbus Mennonite Church

**Friday, June 24**

*Delegate Session I* in Anniversary Hall, North Broadway United Methodist Church

Roger Nafziger (Eighth Street) led delegates in singing HWB 651, *I Owe the Lord a Morning Song*

Lisa Weaver (Madison) welcomed delegates to the 60<sup>th</sup> delegate sessions with the sounding of the gavel. She thanked the hosting congregations for their work. Lisa introduced a piece of artwork entitled *Abounding in Love. . . Abiding in Peace*, done by Hannah Sandvold (Madison). The piece depicts visually how worship and delegate sessions connect and are bridged. It was created as an expression of gratitude and appreciation to Lois Johns Kaufmann.

Lisa thanked the worship planners and coordinators of the 2016 annual meeting. She introduced the following:

*Resolutions Committee:* David Stolpe (Milwaukee), Dawn Yoder Harms (Assembly), George Lehman (First Bluffton)

*Listening Committee:* Nina Lanctot (Florence), Jon Hilty (Grace), Kiva Nice-Webb (Chicago Community)

*Parliamentarian:* Gerald Mast

*Medical Persons On Call:* Ruth Massey, Phoebe Graber

*Youth Delegates/Mentors:* Anna Biesecker-Mast/Louise Matthews; Simia Yoder/Dawn Yoder Harms

**Summary Review of 2015 Annual Meeting Minutes:** Carrie Mast (First Bluffton) briefly reviewed the 2015 annual meeting minutes. The minutes were affirmed as written with the correction of Paul Gering's congregation (Hively Avenue) on p35.

**Highlight Actions in 2016 Agenda:** Carrie reviewed the agenda and highlighted the actions/agenda for the delegate sessions.

**State of the Conference Address:** Lisa Weaver (Madison) shared the following address with the delegates.

*It is an honor to stand before you today as president of the Central District Conference Board, to offer this State of the Conference address. My two-year term is half over, and my heart is full as I*

*think back over the past twelve months, and contemplate the twelve months yet to come.*

*In the forefront of my heart and mind is the fact that this will be our last CDC Annual Meeting with Lois Johns Kaufmann as Conference Minister. Lois has been at the helm for eight years, offering guidance and stability to our network of churches. She has interacted with individuals, congregations, CDC committees, and denominational-level entities, all with grace, courage and goodwill.*

*As many of you saw, I sent out a request for prayers, blessings, favorite scriptures, and words of thanks for Lois, to compile in a gratitude journal. Not surprisingly, I received responses from all of those categories just mentioned: individuals, congregations, CDC committee members, and denominational-level leadership.*

*Organizing the messages became a very helpful way for me to come to terms with saying goodbye to Lois as our Conference Minister. Here is a small sample of the overwhelming love and appreciation expressed for Lois:*

*“Your graceful and gracious presence helped the rest of us to be non-anxious.”*

*“Thank you for your wise pastoral hand and your commitment to keeping us in accountable relationships beyond ourselves.”*

*“Although you will be greatly missed in the role of Conference Minister, please know that you have had an enduring impact on CDC.”*

*“You so clearly lived out God’s love to us.”*

*“You showed me how to be clear in my convictions and generous towards those who do not share them.”*

*“Lois, I simply don’t know what we would have done without you.”*

*One respondent remarked that some of the most moving moments in the Bible are when God’s messengers show up and say, ‘Do not be afraid, I have good news...’” Lois, on behalf of your CDC community, I want to thank you for being one of those messengers, one of God’s faithful children who shares the good news. We have indeed been blessed by your work and ministry.*

*I would now like to describe to you one segment of the most recent MC USA Constituency Leadership Council that I attended. It was March of this year. At these CLC meetings there is always one evening in which moderators (or, in the case of CDC - presidents of the board) gather to share updates and news. At this particular meeting, we were invited to open the sharing by giving a “weather report” from our respective conferences. Responses ranged from “sunny” to “foggy,” to “storms on the horizon,” “operating under a tornado watch,” and even “recovering from a typhoon.”*

*When it was my turn, I reported mostly clear skies in CDC, but then added that what we all really wanted to know was who our next Chief Meteorologist would be. It was one of my best lines ever at a CLC meeting, and I only had to explain to a few people later that what I had meant was that our Conference Minister was retiring and that we were in the midst of a search process. Well, I am pleased to share with you today that we do have a new “Chief Meteorologist” lined up -- on*

*August 15 we will be welcoming Doug Luginbill as our new Conference Minister.*

*As stated in the letter of introduction that went out just this past week from the CDC office, Doug brings to this position fourteen years of pastoral ministry experience, seven years of experience as Director of Camp Friedenswald, and most recently, over six years of administrative experience as Director of Resource Development and Church Relations at Mennonite Home Communities of Ohio. Doug holds a degree in Sociology and Religion from Bluffton University and a Master of Divinity degree from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart. While Doug grew up in the CDC and pastored at First Mennonite Church in Bluffton, he also spent seven years in pastoral ministry in Western District Conference at Hope Mennonite Church (in Wichita, KS), and spent a year as an interim pastor at Salem Mennonite Church, which is in the Ohio Conference.*

*Doug is currently a member of First Mennonite Church, Bluffton, where he lives with his wife Paula. Doug and Paula have two adult children, their son Jonathan and his wife Kara Marang, and their daughter Carissa. Doug plans to maintain a home office in Bluffton where he will continue to live, but will of course be in regular and frequent contact with Emma in the Goshen CDC office.*

*I would like to extend deep appreciation to the members of the Search Committee who worked many hours to bring a recommendation to the Board. Members were Carrie Mast (First Bluffton), who served as chair, Jeff Boehr (Southside), Ron Guengerich (Silverwood), Tony Hartman (Covenant), Cyneatha Millsaps (Community), and Margaret Sawatsky (Hively Avenue).*

*In addition, Nancy Kauffmann, our MC USA Denominational Minister was extraordinarily helpful to both the Search Committee and the Board as we talked through the process of transition. She is a great resource for us, and yet since much of her work is done behind the scenes, it is not always recognized. We are indeed blessed to be connected to Nancy via our membership in MC USA.*

*As indicated by the first part of this address, much of my time and energy with Central District over this last number of months has been around the search process, and planning for the leadership transition. However, there are other things going on in Central District as well! In fact, there are three specific events - coming late summer and fall - that I would like to highlight.*

*First, in October, the CDC office staff and members of the Ministerial Committee are organizing a weekend event for CDC pastors and spouses. It is a weekend of fellowship, rest, rejuvenation, and learning related to finances. The funding for this event is coming from the Lilly Foundation; CDC is tapping into the substantial grant that was awarded to Everence by the Lilly Foundation, specifically for educational opportunities for pastors related to finances. One specific benefit of the weekend is that it will be a timely opportunity for pastors to gather with Doug as their new Conference Minister. Pastors should mark their calendars now for October 21-23, and congregational leaders should plan to release their pastors for that weekend.*

*Second, this fall we will see in print Human Sexuality in Biblical Perspective: A Study Guide, being published by Cascadia Publishing House. The Study Guide is based on a document created by a CDC task force last year. This document was briefly introduced at the Annual Meeting in 2015, and has been available on our CDC website since that point. Gerald and Carrie Mast reshaped this original document into six short chapters and included discussion questions and suggestions for use.*

*Layout and design of the Study Guide was done by Alison King of First Mennonite Church in*

*Bluffton, and original artwork was created by Jill Steinmetz of Grace Mennonite in Pandora. Cristina Lucas is translating the entire guide into Spanish. And it is our own Lois Kaufmann who wrote the Foreword; I am thankful that Lois's voice will remain with this project in written form even while her term as Conference Minister is concluding. Feedback on the manuscript was gathered at numerous points along the way, including in discussion groups at Regional Gatherings this past year, in various CDC congregations who used drafts of the chapters and questions in Sunday School classes, as well as many individuals who shared feedback through written comments or in-person meetings. I am humbled and awed by the collective experience, wisdom and energy that has gone into this project.*

*And finally, I want to describe a third upcoming venture for CDC. CDC has been selected to participate in a peer review, as identified in the Membership Guidelines Resolution that was passed at KC 2015. There are many elements of this pilot peer review yet to be worked out. However, the following is what CDC leadership has been told at this point, and so I would like to share it with you:*

*Central District Conference was chosen for a peer review because of a decision by the CDC Ministerial Committee to license for pastoral ministry a person in a committed, same-gender relationship. The CDC Board affirmed the recommendation made by the Ministerial Committee, making it a joint decision.*

*The peer review will take place sometime between now and the October CLC meetings. At the October CLC meetings, CDC leadership will be expected to give a verbal report, which will accompany a written report submitted by the peer review team.*

*The peer review team consists of:*

- \*Marco Guete, Conference Minister for Southeast Mennonite Conference*
- \*Mary Etta King, Transition Conference Minister for Mountain States Mennonite Conference*
- \*Terry Zehr, Associate Conference Minister for New York Mennonite Conference*
- \*Elizabeth Troyer-Miller, a Conflict Mediation Specialist who is a member of Central Plains Mennonite Conference.*

*The peer review will involve an on-site visit, likely at the CDC office in Goshen. The date for this on-site visit has not yet been set, but in early July we expect communication about possible dates.*

*I have personally run through a wide spectrum of emotions when thinking about this peer review, and I have witnessed numerous reactions by other individuals. Reactions I have experienced or encountered have included: surprise, anger, humor, fear, interest, apathy, acceptance and irritation.*

*CDC Board member Carol Lehman shared one perspective that I have found helpful to consider. Carol articulated this perspective when the Ministerial Committee and Board gathered together this past April at Camp Friedenswald. She suggested that one approach would be to see the peer review as an opportunity for Central District to share the Good News found in the Gospel -- to tell the story of a pastoral call, a vibrant congregation, careful discernment work, and the commitment by a faith community to follow the teachings of Jesus. I find that when I use this lens offered by Carol, I am able to draw upon positive reserves.*

*So, as I said at the beginning of this address, my heart is full.*

*\*Full of appreciation for Lois.*

*\*Full of excitement about incoming leadership.*

*\*Full of anticipation for planned gatherings, new resources, and opportunities to share the Gospel.*

*\*Full of questions.*

*\*Full of hope.*

*Our theme for this biennium is Abounding in Love, Abiding in Grace. And this is what I think CDC is about: An abundance of love -- Love from God, love for each other and the world around us. And an infinite supply of grace -- Grace from God, grace for ourselves, grace for the neighbor far away and the stranger near at hand.*

*May we all experience the fullness of love and grace during our time here in Columbus, and as we return to our respective congregations and communities.*

*Thank you.*

Phil Hart (Columbus) led delegates in singing *God Calls Us*, written by Patty Shelly, music by Phil Hart.

**Treasurers Report/Presentation of 2016-2017 Proposed Spending Plan:** Roger Nafziger (Eighth Street) reviewed the balance sheet (p53) and the income and expense sheet (p54). As of April 30, 2016, congregational giving is ~\$11,000 ahead of the spending plan. Additional funding is running behind the spending plan, the net income is ~\$1000 ahead of the spending plan. Expenses are running behind the spending plan. Roger projected that the conference would meet the 2015-2016 spending plan.

Roger directed delegates to the 2016-2017 proposed spending plan (p40). He reviewed the plan. Expenses remain similar to last year. Personnel expenses will increase due to the change in conference ministers. The biggest increase was due to going from paying a medicare supplement for Lois to paying for health insurance for the conference minister.

**Presentation of Gifts Discernment Committee and Slate:** Steve Hartman Keiser (Milwaukee) brought greetings from Milwaukee Mennonite, who just celebrated their 10-year anniversary. He introduced members of the Gift Discernment Committee: Ruth Guengerich (Silverwood), Lois Hochstetler (Mennonite Church of Normal), Lawrence Matthews (First Bluffton), Jim Mohr (First Wadsworth), and Joyce Schumacher (Grace). Steve gave delegates time to think of and write down names of persons who might have gifts to serve the conference.

Steve directed delegates to the slate of nominees (p42). Steve moved to accept the slate. The slate was affirmed as presented.

**Commissioning Prayer:** Lois Johns Kaufmann (Assembly) thanked all those who worked for the conference while she served as conference minister. She recognized incoming and continuing committee members for their work and invited those at table with them to lay hands on them. Lois led in a commissioning prayer.

**Getting acquainted around tables:** Lisa Weaver (Madison) invited delegates to share their name, congregation, and an interesting, unusual or memorable place they have gathered to worship.

## **Break/Snacks**

Phil Hart (Columbus) led delegates in singing *God Calls Us*, written by Patty Shelly, music by Phil Hart.

**Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) Report:** Lois Kaufmann (Assembly) shared that the Constituency Leaders Council is one of the gems of MC USA. It is the best hope for the future of our denomination. Each of the 18 conferences within MC USA is invited to bring at least three people. These join representatives from the agencies and constituent groups. This diverse group meets for table conversation, worship, and fellowship. Lois noted that when we talk just to the people who agree with us, we do not make progress. There is an African proverb that says, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” CLC is a place to hear counsel from the group. Agenda covered by the CLC at the March meeting included:

- \*A change in the way resolutions are brought to the MC USA convention

- \*Bid farewell to Franklin Conference

- \*Conversation about how a peer review should take place

- \*\*Lois shared that this conversation gave CDC the opportunity to share why we did what we did and tell our story, to give and receive counsel, and to bear witness to God’s presence among us.

- \*\*Lois gave a brief overview of the long process conference leadership have engaged in to make the decisions that led to the peer review. There is recognition that the decision did not come to the delegates for affirmation. There has been space for conversation at regional gatherings. A task group was appointed to create a document sharing a biblical perspective of our process. This document was tested at regional gatherings and feedback was received from a number of congregations and individuals. It is now in the process of being published as a study guide that can be accessed by many.

- \*Resolution on Membership Guidelines passed at Kansas City invited CLC to begin to shift its role from giving counsel to the Executive Board to becoming a decision-making group. The reason is to provide a way to get through the polarization in which MC USA finds itself. At the same time, the current configuration allows for free discourse at the tables that may be lost.

**Historical Vignette:** Lois Kaufmann (Assembly) shared that Perry Bush (First Bluffton), CDC Historian, wrote *Peace, Progress and the Professor*, a story about C Henry Smith. C Henry Smith tells the story of the development of Mennonite Church in a particular era. He was able to name the distinctives and gifts the Mennonite Church has to offer. Portraying the character of C Henry Smith, Tim Schrag (Mennonite Church of Normal) shared the following monologue written by Perry Bush.

*Good afternoon! I am delighted to be here with my friends here at the Central District Conference. In my own day the CDC, had not, of course been formed, but one could say that I was around at the very genesis of it. In fact, I rather feel myself an all-round Mennonite. I was born an Amishman. My childhood church was the old Amish Mennonite congregations of Metamora/Roanoke in Illinois. Later I joined what is commonly known as the Old Mennonites while teaching in an Old Mennonite College. Through much of my life I kept my official church membership in two congregations not far away in the old Central Conference: East White Oak of Normal and then Carlock Mennonite Church. By force of circumstances, for twenty years my wife Laura and I attended a congregation of the General Conference, First Mennonite of Bluffton, Ohio, which we finally joined in 1940.*

*You might say I was also with you CDC folks in a congregational and historical sense. You might know that I have served the church in a great many ways, but primarily through my scholarship. I have written a number of books on Anabaptist and Mennonite history. A few of you people with gray hair might even have read them in your youth. These are old books now but I have not changed my mind much about what I wrote in them. I still hold that the system of church discipline among the Mennonites was congregational. Conferences were often held at which they united more or less on certain fundamental matters of their faith. Matters of government, and many times, of practice, were left to the individual congregations. Consequently, the history of the church is almost entirely a history of separate congregations. I believe*

*that this is something of what you have been about in your Central District Conference.*

*Yet it's not primarily church polity that I want to speak with you about today. Instead, I'd like to focus a bit on matters of toleration and unity.*

*Let me tell you a little story from my childhood. When I was a boy on the farm it was the custom in our family for my father to give each of us boys a watch upon his sixteenth birthday. I was the third in the family, and by the time my turn came I had acquired a fondness for study in several fields of knowledge, including astronomy. I told my father that if it were agreeable to him I preferred a telescope to the watch. Being a wise father, he agreed. And so on my sixteenth birthday I came into possession of a fairly good Montgomery Ward telescope.*

*That telescope was worth more to me than a score of watches could have been. I can still remember the thrill I experienced when for the first time I turned the instrument upon the moon and saw in clear outline upon the surface what my books said were mountains, valleys and shadows. I saw the Sun and watched the spots by the hour as they shifted their position across the big disk. Countless new stars, invisible to the naked eye, came within the vision of my glass. All space seemingly is filled with these heat and light centers called stars, millions of them, the nearest one so far away that it takes the light rays which it send out three years to reach us, going at a rate of speed so fast that it would encircle the Earth eight times in one second. Each of these millions of stars it is said is the center of an entire solar system consisting of entire worlds -- many of which, no doubt like our own, are inhabited by rational beings capable of worshipping their creator. How it stretches the imagination to grasp only faintly the idea of the immensity of this wonderful universe and its marvelous Creator and Ruler. How it humiliates us. Against such a background as this, how insignificant seem the little difference of opinion which exist among us mortals, here on this little world of ours. And so the greatest lesson I learned from my little telescope was not a lesson in astronomy, but rather a lesson in toleration.*

*This lesson of toleration it seems to me is especially applicable to us as Mennonites. A casual survey of the official religious statistics of our government might give one the impression, judging entirely by the space devoted to the denomination in the list of figures, that the Mennonites were the largest of all the churches. To us are given seventeen lines in the printed report, while the Catholics occupy only one. Mennonites have a membership of a hundred thousand, while the Catholics count up over fifteen million. But the latter are but one body, while we are separated into seventeen distinct groups. And herein lies our greatest weakness. It seems to me that these various groups need to learn to co-operate at least in carrying out such constructive efforts as each group working by itself is unable to accomplish.*

*It would be a matter of surprise to most of us no doubt, if we made a serious attempt to discover the truth, to find out how insignificant the differences are which not keep us apart as Mennonites. The beliefs which we have in common are of far more significance than those which separate us. All the distinctive principles of the early Anabaptists, who were our Mennonite forbears, such as Baptism upon confession faith, non-resistance, opposition to the oath, separation of church and state, religious toleration, and insistence upon a pure life- on all these fundamental teachings all Mennonites of America are still at one. No one group can honestly charge any other with having forsaken the faith of the fathers. All these Mennonite groups still maintain all the fundamental principles of the early founders. Such small differences as there are have been injected into the body within the last hundred years, and in view of their common inheritance now seem quite insignificant and easily reconcilable.*

*Of course let us not be misunderstood. Some little things are of great importance. Toleration is a relative term. It never means anarchy. We cannot let down the bars to beliefs and practices which would ultimately undermine the Christian faith itself. Toleration does not mean that a man has a right to teach and practice*

*what he pleases even though it may be destructive of the principles of the church and yet remain within the fellowship of the organization. Any organization has a right by majority rule to pass upon the qualifications of its membership. That is democracy, and the only basis upon which a democracy can exist. At the same time, however, toleration is not a one sided virtue. It involves obligations as well as privileges. It demands that we respect the honest convictions of others of others even though we do not agree with them.*

*There seems to be a concerted effort on the part of some Mennonite writers to becloud the issue by charging certain Mennonite leaders with holding the view that toleration means anarchy, that there should be no discipline at all, that everyone should do that which seemeth good in his own eyes. I know of no Mennonite which holds such views. We are pleading for toleration of one another in the little differences of opinion and practice on which there is an honest disagreement held by large groups all equally sincere, but for a firm and united stand against every inroad upon the great principles of the founders of the faith, and the common inheritance of us all.*

*The great need of today among Mennonites is not so much an absolute unanimity of belief and practice in all details, as a spirit of co-operation in carrying out a great constructive program of church activities which no group by itself is able to achieve. There is so much good we can accomplish together. What the Mennonite church needs today above all else is that its broken body should be healed and made whole.*

**Note on sources:**

*Nearly all of the above words are Smith's own. I have added a few initial lines -- specifically, the first paragraph and half of the second -- only to help Smith address a contemporary audience. Most of the remainder of that second paragraph (beginning with "the system of church discipline among the Mennonites was congregational...") was taken from C. Henry Smith, "The Mennonites of Europe," in *Mennonite Church History*, edited by J.S. Hartzler and Daniel Kauffman (Scottsdale: Mennonite Book and Tract Society, 1905), 96.*

*Nearly all the rest of this speech was excerpted from a speech that Smith himself delivered orally. Entitled "The Next Step," it was the opening address to the Fifth All-Mennonite Convention, meeting at West Market Street Mennonite Church in Nappanee, Indiana, September 3, 1925. I have reordered and condensed this address but believe I have still preserved its central thrust here. The full text of this speech (and all other addresses at this convention) are available at Bluffton University Archives and Special Collections in Bluffton, Ohio and at the Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana. Finally, I have added the last three words ("and made whole") from a similar speech, with at times nearly identical phrasing, that Smith gave to the spring meeting of the ministers of the Western District Conference of the General Conference Mennonite Church, who gathered in spring, 1923 in Goessel, Kansas. This address was published as "Lessons from Mennonite History," in *The Mennonite* (Oct. 4, 1923):1-2.*

*-- Perry Bush*

*Central District Conference Historian  
Professor of History, Bluffton University*

**Introduction of Open Table Mennonite Fellowship:** Lisa Weaver (Madison) introduced delegates to Open Table Mennonite Fellowship. The congregation began in 2012 as a house church with an informal, contemplative/interactive style of worship. The age of attendees ranges from infant to age 80+ and includes a significant number of college students. Sally Weaver Glick serves as the congregational doula and pastor. Lisa reviewed CDC's membership process in which a congregation desiring membership in the conference is introduced to delegates and then voted into membership the following year allowing time for

the conference congregations to get acquainted with the new congregation. She invited delegates to meet with folks from Open Table for informal fellowship following lunch.

Sally Weaver Glick shared the history and story of the congregation while showing pictures of congregational life.

**Camp Friedenswald Highlights:** Jenna Liechty Martin, Executive Director of Camp Friedenswald, invited congregations to enjoy Camp Friedenswald for retreats. History shows that over 80 years ago, conference leaders felt a need and desire for a camp. Sixty-six years ago, they gathered to purchase the original 40 acres that became Camp Friedenswald. The desire was that it would be a place for retreat away from everyday life, for young adults and campers, for connecting people from across the conference, and for faith formation for all who came. That desire continues to be at the heart of what Camp Friedenswald does yet today.

Much has changed over the years. The camp has grown from 40 acres to 365. The staff has grown from one person to 16. They serve a broad range of people, expanding from the original focus of youth and young adults to a broad range of ages. The ministry has also expanded from primarily to conference youth to minister to youth and local people and groups throughout the area through the outdoor ed programs.

Much has stayed the same, i.e., the boys cabins, and there is now a real need to update those aging facilities. Much work has gone into identifying the needs. Plans are in place to replace the boys cabins and the renovate the guest house and the A-frame chapel. Good progress has been made in raising funds for the project. Jenna extended an invitation to congregations to join in raising funds for the projects. The goal is to break ground in late fall and hope that by next year, Camp Friedenswald will have new facilities. She thanked delegates for their continued support.

**Missional Church Committee Report:** Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street), chair, introduced the members of the committee: Gerald Mast (First Bluffton), John Powell (Shalom Community), Gladene Hershberger (Oak Grove), Kiva Nice-Webb (Chicago Community), Phil Hart (Columbus), Matt Morin (Milwaukee), and Lois Kaufmann-Hunsberger (Maplewood), MC USA Resource Advocate. She directed delegates to the written report on p69 in the report book. Janeen explained the role of the Missional Church Committee. Some of the areas the committee worked on this year include new faith communities, creation care issues, peace and justice issues, supported several events, talked about an article by John Powell about how we as congregations respond to the racism that evident in our culture today, looked at military recruitment and counter recruitment alternatives, and gave out two Reign of God grants.

Delegates viewed a video about the RAWtools event held in Chicago. Kiva-Nice Webb shared her experience of the event.

Gerald Mast invited delegates to reflect on and brainstorm about the stories they just heard. How might God be calling us in our communities and contexts to transform swords into plowshares? Gerald read the following questions and invited table groups to discussion:

\*Name some of the tools of division and violence that plague our neighborhoods, churches, and conference relationships.

\*What stories of creation and reconciliation can CDC congregations tell to counter the narratives of violence and division in our communities?

\*What actions do we need to take as a network of congregations in order to transform instruments of violence and division into tools of creation and reconciliation?

**Word from MC USA:** Nancy Kauffmann, MC USA Denominational Minister, recognized representatives

from the MC USA agencies that were present. Steve Bustos (Everence) shared that Everence was awarded a 1 million dollar grant to assist pastors of MC USA and the Conservative Conference. The grant needs to be distributed over the next three years. The money will be used to benefit five different areas:

- \*\*Pastoral financial assistance fund geared toward helping to eliminate debt for pastors (student loan, credit card, medical, etc). This is a matching grant of up to \$2500.
- \*\*Financial education events over the next three years that will be put together between conference leadership and Everence church relations
- \*\*Comprehensive financial planning (\$1200 that Lilly will subsidize with \$1000)
- \*\*Contribution of \$250 to a pastor's Mennonite Retirement Trust (MRT) fund if a pastor attends an educational event or takes part in the comprehensive financial planning
- \*\*Educational event assistance that will help cover childcare for pastors to attend the financial educational events

State of the Union of MC USA: Nancy has seen the good, the bad, and the ugly. She believes there is hope within MC USA. She shared a couple of stories that give her hope.

What is good about CDC? Nancy challenged delegates to hold to the broad goodness within CDC. She identified some of the good things she sees:

- \*CDC has been a haven for those who have felt choked in other places of the church.
- \*CDC has had a representative through Lois who has the wide respect of the church. She has been a bridge, steady, gracious, and honest. She continues to tell the story of CDC and holds up what CDC's DNA is.
- \*CDC's sense of humor.

*Peer review:* Nancy was glad to hear that there is a space of understanding that the peer review is an opportunity to tell CDC's story. Nancy sees a peer review as brothers and sisters sitting around a table and sharing how God has been at work in their conferences and lives. It is coming to the table assuming that God is at work in all of us even if we are going in different directions. Nancy believes there is opportunity to build relationships when we tell stories. She will be praying for CDC and the peer review and the Constituency Leaders Council. Nancy invited CDC to come to the peer review humbly to share our story. To come courageously, trusting that God will lead and that the truth eventually does win out. She encouraged CDC to tell our story of God's leading and shaping us to these decisions, and to extend grace because grace does disarm. She encouraged all to pray, coming together with open hands, praying that all experience a glimpse of heaven. The church should be showing those glimpses. God continues to work through us.

**Introduction of Guests:** Lois Kaufmann (Assembly) introduced guests from Mennonite Church USA Executive leadership and its agencies, Mennonite schools, and from other organizations related to the conference.

### **Lunch, Visiting Displays, Book Signings, Getting Acquainted Time with Open Table Mennonite Fellowship**

#### ***Delegate Session II***

Roger Nafziger (Eighth Street) led in singing SJ 73, *The Lord Lift You Up*.

**Congregational Story: Covenant Mennonite Fellowship:** JB Miller (Covenant) shared the following story:

*Each Sunday at Covenant we share a peace story. Some are personal experiences. Several months ago I*

*shared this story.*

*When my partner John and I moved to Sarasota, we learned that one of our neighbors is a retired Marine colonel. Colonel Smith is the quintessential Marine colonel: gruff, direct and in charge. He flies the US flag on his mailbox 24/7 and wears a flag lapel pin every day. We weren't sure how he'd feel about two gay men as neighbors, but the Colonel and his wife were very welcoming and we became good friends. We grew to enjoy their company.*

*Around Memorial Day last year Colonel Smith said "I see you don't have a flag, and I have an extra one." I quickly said "I don't have a flag pole," he said "Oh, I have a flag pole too." Now I was stuck. Before I knew it, I had agreed to fly a flag from our mailbox which is not what I wanted to do. I went inside and told John what I had agreed to do. John, who grew up in a military family but is a life-long pacifist, said "You did what! Do we really want to fly a flag?" I said "Of course not." After further conversation I knew I had to talk to the Colonel and explain to him why we were uncomfortable flying a flag.*

*With a great deal of apprehension I walked across the street and knocked on the door. They invited me in. I settled into a comfortable chair, feeling like our friendship was in jeopardy. How could I explain not flying the American flag that is so important to him? Finally words came to me. "You know we're Mennonites and historically Mennonites don't display a national flag, regardless what country we're living in." I went on to say that it doesn't mean we don't love our country and aren't grateful for the sacrifices that have been made for religious freedom. Over the next 30 minutes we had a spirited but friendly conversation about pacifism and our long history of immigrating for religious freedom. They were gracious and understanding. Towards the end, Colonel Smith said "Well, I fought so people can practice their faith as they see fit, I get it."*

*There are many more layers to the story, but today our friendship is stronger than before. He seemed surprised, but pleased, when we told him we'd be joining them for Memorial Day celebrations at the Sarasota National Cemetery this year.*

**Dwelling in the Word:** Lois Kaufmann (Assembly) led delegates in the process of Dwelling in the Word using Jeremiah 6:10-16. Following discussion, she led in prayer.

Roger Nafziger (Eighth Street) led in singing HWB 353, *Lord, listen to your children praying.*

### **Plenary/Table Group Discussion**

James Rissler (Atlanta) shared that in 2009, Palestinian Christians issued a call to Come and See what the Palestinian situation was like. Recently, James and several CDC pastors participated in a Come and See Tour facilitated by MCC. A resolution on Israel-Palestine was brought to delegates at the Mennonite Church USA assembly in Kansas City in 2015. The delegate body voted to table that resolution, asking that it be revised. Delegates also called for a period of learning and discernment as we seek to support Palestinian and Israeli peacemakers. MC USA recommended Dr Awad as someone who could do that.

The Rev. Alex Awad is a missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church. For many years he served in Israel/Palestine with his wife, Brenda. He was the pastor of a small international church in East Jerusalem and was affiliated with the Bethlehem Bible College as professor, dean of students, and board member.

Dr. Awad shared the story of his work in Palestine/Israel using a PowerPoint presentation. He shared the story of how Bethlehem Bible College began. It is the now the biggest Bible College in Israel. Their mission is to work toward peace through ministries such as listening to Syrian refugees. He also shared

stories about the Christian church in Palestine and Israel. Peace among Jews, Muslims and Christians in Israel/Palestine will advance peace world-wide. If there is peace in the Holy land, Jews and Palestinians all over the world will be affected.

Dr. Awad invited table discussion about what more Mennonites can do to insure the continued presence of Christianity in Palestine, Israel, the Middle East and in North Africa.

Dr. Awad shared that Palestinian Christians leave their country for political and economic reasons, uncertainty about the future, high socio-economic status, opportunity to seek jobs, and the threat of radical Islamist movements.

#### *The Political Challenge*

He shared the history of the political challenge within Palestine. The Zionist movement began with the Balfour Declaration that the Jews took as license to come to Palestine to create a Jewish State. Jews started pouring into the Holy Land and creating Jewish communities. Using a map of the area, Dr. Awad shared the history of the way Israel has taken the land from the Palestinians. He also shared the story of the way the wall has been built between the two countries. The wall is being built on Palestinian land. In order for Palestinians to visit their families, land, and churches on the other side of the wall, they must receive a permit from Israel.

Dr. Awad invited table discussion about how Mennonites can influence members of the US Congress to advance peace in Israel/Palestine.

#### *The Biblical Challenge*

Dr. Awad addressed the Biblical challenge by creating a “Two Covenants Chart” that compared the promises made to the Jewish people in the past and how they are interpreted to the church today. He reviewed the chart for the delegates.

#### *Signs of Hope*

Dr. Awad is hopeful because he believes in Jesus Christ.

Many young people in the United States are getting news from electronic media and are more eager for peace than a blind support for the State of Israel.

Many Jews and Israelis are fed up with the current policies of the Israeli government and some are becoming the strongest advocates of Palestinian rights.

Many countries who are close friends with Israel are ready to recognize a Palestinian State.

Most Palestinians, including the President, have committed to non-violent methods to resist the illegal occupation of their land.

Churches in the United States, including some evangelical churches, are increasingly focusing on issues of justice rather than their historic interpretations of Biblical prophecies when dealing with the Palestinian/Israeli conflict.

The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement is gaining momentum in many parts of the world. The movement encourages churches not to invest retirement funds in U.S. companies that are doing shady business with Israel to advance the Palestinian occupation.

The desperation of the Zionist lobby alleging more and more people are anti-Semitic as they lose support, especially among evangelical Christians. The more they are losing support, the more they are labeling everybody who goes against Israel as being anti-Semitic.

### **Break**

### **Seminars at Columbus Mennonite Church**

- \*Come and See Tour led by James Rissler, Joel Miller, Dawn Yoder Harms, Deron Brill Bergstresser, Janeen Bertsche Johnson, Renee Kanagy
- \*Immigration/Border Issues led by Jorge Vielman and Mark Claassen
- \*Archiving Congregational Documents led by Carrie Phillips
- \*Human Sexuality Biblical Perspective Study Guide led by Gerald and Carrie Mast
- \*Slowing Down in Prayer led by Lois Johns Kaufmann and Sally Weaver Glick

## **Transition**

## **Dinner**

- Mennonite Women Dinner at Columbus Mennonite Church
- Mennonite Men Dinner at North Broadway United Methodist Church Anniversary Hall

## **Free Time**

### **WORSHIP II** at Columbus Mennonite Church:

- Theme - *Abiding*
- Speaker: Brenda Sawatzky Paetkau (Eighth Street)
- Text: Luke 8:16-25
- Offering
- Communion

- Worship Leader: Joel Miller (Columbus)
- Song Leader: April Shupe (First Sugarcreek)
- Scripture: Coordinated by Renee Kanagy (Cincinnati)
- Children's Time: Phil Hart (Columbus)
- Worship Table: Joel Miller and Robin Walton (Columbus)

### **Reception** for Lois Johns Kaufmann at Columbus Mennonite Church

## **Saturday, June 25**

### **WORSHIP III** at Columbus Mennonite Church:

- Theme - *Abiding*
- Speaker: Charles Bontrager (First Mennonite Wadsworth)
- Text: Luke 8:26-39

- Worship Leader: Brian Bolton (Shalom Mennonite Congregation)
- Song Leader: April Shupe (First Sugarcreek)
- Scripture: Coordinated by Renee Kanagy (Cincinnati)
- Children's Time: Phil Hart (Columbus)
- Worship Table: Robin Walton (Columbus)

## **Break**

### ***Delegate Session III***

Phil Hart (Columbus) led in singing *God Calls Us*.

**Congregational Story:** Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship. James Rissler (Atlanta) shared the following story:  
*Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship has a covenant that our community is invited to sign during each Easter season. Under the heading of "Relationship to the World," our covenant says this:*

*We commit ourselves to participating in the Reign of God in our communities and in the larger world. We recognize the violence of social, economic and political oppression in our city and in our world. In response we live and share the message of Jesus the Messiah. As witnesses of this prophetic message we seek solidarity with those who suffer, we work to resist oppression and violence in their many forms, and we strive to bring about peace with justice.*

*El Refugio is a ministry of hospitality, visitation and education serving those impacted by immigration detention at Stewart Detention Center. The central part of this ministry is weekend operation of a hospitality house in rural Lumpkin, Georgia, a mile from the detention center. Families and friends of those detained are welcomed for free food, lodging, and support before, after and between visits. The house also serves as a base from which individuals and groups visit men in detention, carrying their new understandings of an unjust system back into their communities. AMF members serve at the house, serve on the board and provide financial and other supports to the organization.*

*AMF is a generous supporter of Peacebuilders Camp at Koinonia Farm, in Americus, Georgia. Co-founded by an AMF member and a Quaker friend, Peacebuilders brings together youth from widely diverse backgrounds for a week-long, overnight summer camp that focuses on human rights. Each day, a different right is explored through discussions, field trips, service projects, and conversations with inspiring peacemakers who are working to extend that right to marginalized communities. Much learning also happens organically, as youth from many different races, religions, and socioeconomic situations build relationships across lines of diversity and come to appreciate each other's stories and perspectives.*

*Someone who recently decided to become a member of AMF shared that there were many things she appreciated about us, but that our commitment to working for God's just peace in our world clinched her decision. At AMF, we don't have programs. What we do have is a couple dozen people living their faith and working for shalom in diverse ways, who find in AMF a community that supports each other in deepening our faith and our openness to allowing God's Spirit of Love to permeate our lives.*

*We are glad to be part of a conference that doesn't have a lot of programs, but has a few dozen congregations living their faith and working for God's peace in a variety of ways, joined together with a commitment to commend each other's work on behalf of God's reign, and to invite each other to an ever increasing openness to God's Spirit of Love.*

**ACTION: 2016-2017 Spending Plan:** On behalf of the Board of Directors and Stewardship Committee, Roger Nafziger (Eighth Street) moved to adopt the proposed 2016-2017 spending plan. It was affirmed by the delegates.

**ACTION: Constitutional Changes re Annual Meeting Program Planning Committee**

On behalf of the Board of Directors, Lisa Weaver (Madison) moved to adopt the following constitutional change:

*At their February 14, 2014 meeting, the Board of Directors took action to suspend the bylaws regarding the Annual Meeting Program Planning Committee for the 2011-2012 program year to test alternative options for planning worship for the annual meetings. The process will be reviewed at the end of that time. Delegates were informed at the 2012 annual meeting that a different model for planning worship for the annual meeting was being tested. After a three year testing period of the process outlined below, the Board of Directors is recommending that **Bylaw 1. Section F: Annual Meeting Program Planning Committee** be deleted from the Bylaws. This bylaw reads,*

*This committee shall consist of three members to be elected by the Conference, one to be elected each year for a term of three years. The committee, in consultation with the Board of Directors,*

shall formulate the program for the annual meeting of the Conference.

The following paragraph outlining the process that is currently used will be added to the Policy and Procedures of the Conference:

***Planning for Annual Meetings***

*Staff members will meet to orient local coordinators and worship planners from hosting congregations in the region in which the annual meeting is held. The planning day includes a review of logistical details and an on-site facilities tour. Staff members also orient the local worship planners and help to begin the planning process. Planning is then turned over to the local coordinators and worship planners. Staff members collaborate with them throughout the planning process.*

The Constitutional change as presented above was affirmed by the delegates.

**ACTION: Constitutional Change re Missional Church Committee**

On behalf of the Board of Directors, Lisa moved to adopt the following constitutional change:

At their October 4, 2013 meeting, the Board of Directors took action *to test reducing the number of members on the Missional Church Committee from nine members to seven for a two year period, to be reviewed at the end of that time.*

After consulting with the Missional Church Committee, the Board is recommending that the Bylaw 3. Section E.2 be changed to reflect the reduced number on the committee. The bylaw will read (change in bold,

*The committee shall consist of **seven members, two or three** elected each year for three year terms. The Conference Ministry staff are ex-officio members. Individual committee members may have experience and expertise in various facets of congregational life, such as worship, nurture, evangelism, education, peace and justice. It will intentionally link with MC USA resources.*

Question from Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street): The Missional Church Committee currently has eight members. Does this mean that one of them are getting kicked off the committee? *No. Lois Kaufmann-Hunsberger sits on the committee because of her role as the advocate for MennoMedia.*

The Constitutional change as presented above was affirmed by the delegates.

**MCC Great Lakes Report:** Matt Tschetter, Regional Donor Associate for Ohio, brought greetings from Zenebe Abebe, retiring Executive Director, and Eric Kurtz, incoming Executive Director.

Matt shared news of the cease fire in Colombia. While this is good news, there are other rebel groups still in conflict with the government. He asked delegates to pray with the Colombian Mennonite Church and Justa Paz. He also encouraged delegates to continue to pray for Syria and to pray for peace in the region.

Mennonite Central Committee is a worldwide ministry of Anabaptist churches, shares God's love and compassion for all in the name of Christ by responding to basic human needs and working for peace and justice. Matt invited delegates to reflect on what it means to serve. What is Christ calling us to do in our lives? How do we interact with people?

Matt directed attention to the report on p98. The report highlights various things MCC and CDC folks have been involved in during the past year.

Matt highlighted the CDC Reign of God grant that helps congregations pair up with another congregation to do things such as the Borderlands Learning Tour. Recently, Hively Avenue Mennonite Church and Southside Fellowship joined together to do the tour.

Matt invited congregations to consider borrowing the Migration exhibit if they do a focus on immigration. He thanked delegates for their continued support.

**Ministerial Committee Report:** Ron Adams (Madison) introduced the committee members: Ardean Friesen (Silverwood), Joel Miller (Columbus), Ray Person (First Bluffton), Jane Roeschley (Mennonite Church of Normal), Margaret Sawatsky (Hively Avenue). He shared about the work of the committee. The committee works with the conference minister to provide care and support for the ministers of CDC, including pastors, chaplains, and staff members of organizations within Central District or Mennonite Church USA. Their work includes participating in the credentialing process, reviewing Ministerial Licensing Information (MLI) forms, conducting interviews with perspective candidates for licensing and ordination, providing resources to pastors to benefit their ministry, conducting credentialing reviews as mandated by the MC USA Membership Guidelines, and responding to any reports of pastoral ethical misconduct. They are also a source of support to the conference minister.

Ron shared that one of the gifts of Mennonite Church USA calling system is the Ministerial Licensing Information form. The MLI is a kind of extended resume detailing the candidates work history, professional references and educational accomplishments. In addition the MLI asks the candidates to respond to questions about his/her faith journey, theological and biblical faith understandings, the Confession of Faith in Mennonite Perspective, and our denomination's Vision, Healing and Hope Statement. Completing an MLI is an essential step in our denomination's credentialing process for ministry. It is used by congregational search committees, conference ministers, and conference ministerial committees in their work of discernment. The MLI offers insight into a candidate's call and fitness for ministry, and provides information about the potential fit between the candidate and a particular ministry location. Currently, the MC USA MLI form is not made available to LGBTQ pastoral candidates. This year, the committee created a parallel tool for use within Central District Conference. This parallel tool insures that the same questions, procedures, and processes are used for evaluating all ministerial candidates. The availability of this parallel tool makes it possible for Central District to respond to calls for credentialing from LGBTQ individuals and from ministry locations that are calling them to serve. The use of this parallel tool is consistent with CDC's current credentialing processes and reflects CDC's faithful and loving variance with Mennonite Church USA.

Joel Miller (Columbus) highlighted several aspects of the Lilly Grant mentioned earlier. The grant will be used to address the financial needs of pastors. Joel encouraged delegates to advocate for their pastors to their congregational leadership to make them aware of the grant if their pastor needs assistance. He encouraged pastors to mark October 21-23, 2016 on their calendars to attend a pastor/spouse retreat.

Ardean Friesen (Silverwood) recognized newly installed, licensed and ordained ministers: Brian Bolton, ordained (Shalom Mennonite Congregation); Terri Geiser, ordained as chaplain (Hively Avenue); Julia Gingrich, licensed (Eighth Street); Emily Hedrick, installed, (Lima); Brian Johnson, licensed (North Danvers); Rebecca Kauffman, ordained (Paoli); Tim Peebles, installed as interim pastor at Chicago Community; Eric Rucker, licensed as chaplain (Atlanta); Brian Sauder, ordained for ministry at Faith in Place (First Urbana and Chicago Community); Wanda Stopher, installed (First Bluffton); Rachel Nolt, ordained (Silverwood); Michael Gehman will be licensed and installed at First Sugarcreek. Margaret Sawatsky led in prayer.

Margaret Sawatsky (Hively Avenue) remembered and gave thanks for pastors who died in 2016. She read the following:

The light of life is a finite flame.  
Like the candles we kindle, life is kindled.  
It burns and glows.  
It is brilliant with warmth and beauty.  
The flame stands and our lives are full.  
But as night follows day, the candle of our life burns down and flutters.  
There's an end to the flames, yet we do not despair.  
For we are more than a memory slowly fading into the darkness.  
With our lives we give life, something in us can never die.

Margaret lit a candle in honor of Robert Ramseyer, a CDC credentialed mission worker and AMBS professor, who died Apr 30, 2016.

She lit a candle in honor Steven Yoder, pastor at First Mennonite Bluffton, who died on June 1, 2016.

We are who we are today and where we are today because of those who have touched our lives, and who have let their lives touch ours. Margaret thanked God for the lives of Bob and Steve. As long as we live, they too will live, for they are a part of us as we remember them.

Roger Nafziger (Eighth Street) led in singing HWB 75, *Holy, holy, holy*.

**Presentation of Gift:** Lisa Weaver (Madison) invited Hannah Sandvold (Madison) to explain how she created the piece of art created to help celebrate Lois Kaufmann's work and life. She shared the process that she used to create the abstract visual drawing. Hidden within the piece are the words love, grace, and peace.

Lois Kaufmann (Assembly) thanked delegates for the wonderful, heartwarming farewell. She said farewell to Emma and thanked her for the behind the scenes work and for her support as a sounding board and encourager. Delegates responded with a round of applause.

### **Open Mic:**

**\*\*Karla Minter, MMN:** Karla highlighted MMN's report on p82 and thanked delegates for their support. She shared that Jonathan Brenneman (Lima) has begun working through Mennonite Voluntary Service at the Elkhart office. Stefan Baumgartner (Silverwood) is also doing an MVS term in San Francisco. The Madison MVS unit has a local partner who is looking for a young adult to come.

Karla introduced Jonathan Brenneman, who shared briefly of his work. He is working to create education resources to inform people about the work being done in Israel/Palestine. His position comes in response to the Israel/Palestine resolution at Kansas City 2015 that was tabled with a mandate for more educational resources to be created.

**\*\*Frank Trnka (St Paul):** Frank spoke to the elephant in the room. While he was not present at Kansas City 2015, he is aware that many signed the resolution to make the BMC community part of the Constituency Leaders Council. The resolution was dealt with in a dismissive way by the executive board. Although there is a strong allied community among Central District Conference, the peer review process will be happening without LGBTQ voices at the table. This means that we really have to trust the allies to do that work. Mark Rupp's sermon on Thursday made it clear that you sometimes hear different messages when you hear directly from LGBTQ people. It may be time for CDC and Mountain States to think about nominating Queer people to leadership positions so there are LGBTQ voices at CLC. He and Keith Schrag were present at Saskatoon in 1986 when the church agreed to remain in loving dialogue about the LGBTQ issue. That was 30 years ago and the amount of loving dialogue during that time has been minuscule.

**\*\*David Rensberger (Atlanta):** David shared that seeing newly ordained and licensed people taking up ministry as pastors and chaplains does his heart good and gives hope for the future.

**\*\*Phil Hart (Columbus):** Phil echoed what Frank said. He shared that he and Mark Rupp found a document passed in the late '60s by Central District Conference, bemoaning and recognizing the fact that they had come late to the question of civil rights, and wishing they had done it better. If this were the race question instead of a peer review, we would all understand that it would be impossible to have a conversation without African Americans at the table. At some level we ought to be able to make a stand and say that we need to have the people involved present.

**\*\*Tim Schrag, (Mennonite Church of Normal):** Tim clarified that the presentation he gave about C Henry Smith was a conflation from two speeches written by C Henry Smith that Perry Bush put together. C Henry Smith was speaking for himself.

Tim stated that one of the ongoing challenges for CDC will continue to be the wave that has carried us along – the themes of openness and inclusion. At the same time, one of the most vivid parts of this conference was the story from Covenant Mennonite Fellowship. JB told of his experience of finding in his neighborhood who was flying the American flag, a retired Colonel, and what it meant for JB to move to a stance of neighborliness with this person. In figurative terms, if you are a person who takes a progressive stance toward LGBTQ persons the proper question that has been asked is, 'Has this been an open and including conference where people welcome?' Tim hopes the answer is yes. On the other hand, if we would use the language of progressive and traditional, a challenge for CDC is to embody full neighborliness, inclusion, and openness to people who are taking a more conservative or traditional position. If Central District Conference is going to have integrity in using the language of inclusion toward those in a society who want to polarize and marginalize, we need to make sure that we are not a group that marginalizes those who are not with the majority. It is a challenge for our current group to continue to advocate for all of the directions that we have been, but to make it a safe place where all voices are heard. Rather than avoiding or tolerating people who are 'flying the flag', or hoping that they stay quiet, we make this a place where full neighborliness can be achieved. Tim thinks CDC is up to it and is not critical of anything that has happened during the annual meeting. However he wonders what it would be like if he had come here as a person of integrity and openmindedness, but was more of a traditionalist. Would he feel welcome in the delegate hall? That is a challenge in any group at all times. It is hard work to love, even your enemy.

**\*\*Keith Schrag, (Ames):** Keith thanked Frank and Tim for their remarks. Some people may have read an article he wrote that was published online in the Mennonite World Review last November. The article was about inclusion. Inclusion includes everyone. Keith knows what it is like not to be included. Last year was his first year back at Central District after decades of silence. It was a fabulous time to be welcomed home and he appreciated it. Keith wants everyone to experience that. Keith shared that last year, conservative a woman at his table thanked him for saying, as a Queer Menno, that everyone, including those with conservative voices, should be included. It is important as people who reflect Christ's love, that everyone is included. While we work at the job of dancing with Mark as a Queer pastor, we also need to work at listening to the conservative voices among us who have as much of Christ's concern at heart. It is something that is a real challenge for us in these days. Keith does not want the political and social pressures that have broken us apart as a people over the past decades to continue to break us apart now because we Queers have won on marriage and inclusion in ministry. There are no losers in serving Christ. Keith deeply cherishes the Central District sense of who we are.

**\*\*Sherry Schmidt, (Paoli):** Sherry has been caught up in the beauty of the inclusiveness that has been present this weekend. She wanted to put a word in for racism and white privilege. While we are being swept along by various things, it is hard to keep it all in balance. Sherry lives in a white community, but finds herself needing 'Louisville' time because she wants to be with a wider variety of people. As she looks around Central District, she is noting that the group is still very white. Sherry enjoyed the black women's planning of the Women's Retreat several years ago and made sure she was there.

**\*\*Nancy Kauffmann, Mennonite Church USA:** Nancy thanked Tim for his comments. If you look at the number of congregations and their membership numbers that have left because of the LGBTQ issue, the numbers may seem overwhelming. But, there is another dynamic going on. There are some congregations that have truly processed it in a good way and decided that they needed to separate. There are a number of congregations that are leaving so quickly, they hardly know what they are going to. Nancy shared the story of one congregation to give an example of why we need to reach out now to congregations not participating in the conference now so we can establish a relationship. There are a lot of conservative persons who are hurting and do not want to leave the church. What conditions are the congregations that have left in? Are there persons who wish that the conference or their sister congregations would reach back out to them?

**\*\*Dan Nester-Detweiler, (Evanston):** Dan shared that he is an introvert and it is difficult to share. The Spirit has prompted him to speak. He was aware of the Spirit's movement in Mark Rupp's sermon and in the honest sharing around the tables. Dan grieves in seeing the obsessive and painfully violent conversations about, but not with, our LGBTQ brothers and sisters in Christ. He trusts that all heard the challenge of the Holy Spirit through the RAWtools presentation that said we should re-forge our violent selves into instruments of peace. Tim Schrag's moving presentation of C Henry Smith moved Dan to read more online. Two lines to C Henry's response to the split and foundation of the General Conference Mennonite Church specifically speak for and to him. "It will be observed that the questions in dispute did not concern themselves with fundamental Mennonite doctrine. Mennonite quarrels never do." There needs to be a way through this great Spirit-led conference, trying to be a voice for God for inclusion, that allows for many voices to be heard. There are a lot of attempts to try for unity. Moral unity does not really exist. To unfairly paraphrase Lois Johns Kaufmann, "If moral unity were a real thing, my wife would agree with everything I say for of course, I am always right." Yet, seriously, moral relativism is just as wrong as moral unity for the exact same reason. Both unity and relativism render a peace church irrelevant. The peace of Christ and God's peace would also be rendered an irrelevant piece of fiction. So what's left? Dan has been reading this past week about moral inclusion. Moral inclusion can be summarized in the word Dr Alex Awad said over and over again: justice, justice, justice.

**\*\*Matt Morin, (Milwaukee):** Matt stated that the Missional Church Committee neglected to mention that St Paul Mennonite Fellowship is helping the Missional Church Committee by working with two different congregations. One is a CDC member and one is exploring the possibility of affiliation with CDC. It should not be taken lightly or overlooked that St Paul was silenced and censored and kept from offering gifts to the body. Immediately upon being welcomed into CDC, the congregation jumped in with two feet to bless the conference and denomination. That's grace and unmerited love. Matt encouraged the conference to allow LGBTQ voices to speak for themselves in the upcoming peer review.

### **Listening Committee Report**

Jon Hilty (Grace) thanked the hosting congregations, Columbus Mennonite Church and North Broadway United Methodist Church for opening their doors and cleaning up after us, the coordinators, worship committee, leadership and work of the various committees, leaders of the seminars, and to Dr Awad. He thanked the delegates for participating willingly and joyfully in the annual meeting. Jon thanked the speakers for their courage and words of inspiration. He thanked Emma Hartman for her work and Lois Johns Kaufmann for her leadership and devotion to Central District Conference.

*Kiva Nice-Webb (Chicago Community): The Listening Committee is charged with identifying and listening to the Spirit and the tenure of the time we spend together. There are a lot of people that comprise the spirit and tenure within CDC. Kiva framed her report by quoting the African proverb Lois Johns Kaufmann shared, "If you would like to go fast, go alone. If you would like to go far, go together." Kiva noted different energies that are brought to CDC: heavy and light energy, loud and quiet, introverted energy, profound sadness and profound humor in the ability to laugh. We bring hope, joy, and a commitment to peace and faith. We bring energy that is sprinting forward for our very life's sake, fighting*

*to have our humanity and our status as children of God recognized by God's other people. We bring a need to sit down for we are dizzy from all the turmoil we are experiencing in Mennonite circles. We bring movement. We are longing to dance as freely as David danced before the altar. And, we bring stillness. An experience of God in the stillness never having danced and yet still finding God in the keeping of one's space. We are seeking God with a fierce commitment to the ancient paths. We are seeking God by finding ever new ways of seeing, both of them kingdom revealing. We are celebrating, listening and loving. Some of us are here locally and some of us drove or flew here to Columbus. Some of us in CDC are not here. For some of us it is too far, too expensive, too white, too stressful, too sad, too silencing. Some of us speak differently, some of us speak radical, queer theology with our deconstruction tools and down with this racist patriarchy. Some speak simply and slowly and about tractors and crop yields in everyday language. Some of us would ask some questions, but without the right words, silence ourselves and stuff our questions inside for fear of being seen as an affront to others, but unable to voice where we are. We bring energy of questions: How do we celebrate fully without silencing? How do we worship truly without traumatizing? How do we allow each other's journeys without sacrificing anyone's fullness? We are very different and we bring different kinds of energy. We are one in Christ, but only in Christ. We are one in our desire to seek the kingdom of God. We are one in our hunger for service, justice, and peace. Not all agreeing, but all CDC, abounding in love and abiding in grace.*

*Nina Lanctot (Florence): Nina has been listening for seeds. Whatever are those crazy seeds that enable Mennonites to dance. Who knew we would dance? Don't we know that Mennonites find it very difficult to dance? That is why Nina is glad she was not born Mennonite, because for her Thursday was the prophetic expression she had been longing for for ten days. But it was not for everyone. So what are these seeds, these wild, prolific seeds that have shaped our time? What is the Spirit saying? A few little ones—from Mark Rupp (Columbus), "Ode to the seeds who make a way out of no way." From Brenda Sawatzky Paetkau (Eighth Street), "Ode to agitation itself that is a sign of God's kingdom breaking in so that all are free to abound and abide." From Charles Bontrager (First Wadsworth) "Ode to Christ who has emptied the tomb once and for all, because even while Empire gets what it wants, it is doomed."*

*There has been love and grace in abundance. Two other dancing sisters have been gratitude and hope. I sense deep gratitude and hope for Lois. But Lois is emblematic of a season in this conference. For Nina, a watershed was in 2012 when we welcomed St Paul Mennonite Fellowship. When the vote was taken, many of us burst into tears. Soon after that Megan Ramer took the mic and said, "I'm sorry I haven't spoken with all of you. I have been working on the mandate from my congregation to be missional and to marry [LGBTQ] people. I need your counsel and I want you to know." Nina sensed the tide had turned. Now we are living into a turning tide, which brought us to this place gratefully.*

*So, grateful for the seeds of the past:*

*\*For a man who long ago wanted the big picture and got a telescope. He made us remember all the good we can do together and that it is possible for this body, this broken body to be healed and made whole.*

*\*Gratitude in the middle of struggles at tables and awkward conversations so that some of those many voices we heard named, those energies were stirring. That is the gratitude of struggle.*

*\*Gratitude for leadership and for the L train: Lloyd, Lois, and Luginbill. Because Lloyd is still making a way where there is no way on this parallel MLI project. We are fortunate and we will be fortunate once again.*

*What are the deepest expressions of hope?*

*\*From Lois: "My hope is in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ calls us to be one."*

*"CLC is the best hope for our denomination."*

*\*From Nancy: "I believe there is hope within us in Mennonite Church USA, even when members of*

*North Central and Mountain States continue loving conversations.”*

*\*From James Rissler (Atlanta) in his introduction of Dr Awad: “He embodies the deep hope born of deep faith for the Palestinian people despite long struggle.”*

*\*From Dr Awad: “Such short time, but we have to have time for the hope.*

*\*Remember the eight points of hope from Palestine? How can we despair?*

*So who knew we would dance? The Holy Comforter had prepared the place. A rainbow place of beauty, variety, the whole globe, the comfort that is given when people have nothing. Will you dance when you go home? Will you wrap a comforter around yourself and tell about the dancing? These can both work.*

Jon Hilty (Grace): Jon shared the words he had heard during the annual meeting.

*Words I heard at conference*

*Hold me close*

*Squeeze me tight*

*Sure love Central District Conference*

*Pick me up*

*Hold me tight*

*Sing me home*

*Approximations, expectations, imaginations, permission*

*Introduction, revolution, explanation, creation, definition, recreation, expression, condition, population, convention, creation, affirmation, celebration, communion, congregation*

*Pick me up*

*Hold me tight*

*Sing me home*

*Toleration, obligation, cooperation, expectation, recommendation, formation, expansion, renovation, exploration*

*Pick me up*

*Hold me tight*

*Sing me home*

*Division, authorization, polarization, segregation, reconciliation, action, integration, distribution, education, communication, conversation, consolidation, opinion, confession, observation, trepidation, intercession, occupation, calibration, celebration, education, population, persecution, visitation, resolution, refrigeration*

*Pick me up*

*Hold me tight*

*Sing me home*

*Inaction, situation, inspiration, vocation, restoration, declaration, compensation, domination, deportation, assassination, sanction, frustration, solution*

*Pick me up*

*Hold me tight*

*Sing me home*

*Creation, intention, abomination, interpretation, discussion, inclusion, examination, explanation, discussion, affection, submission, exploitation, consideration, protection, education, revision*

*Pick me up  
Hold me tight  
Sing me home*

*Revelation, agitation, recognition, dimension, transformation, inclusion, expansion, dissension, vision, compassion*

*Pick me up  
Hold me tight  
Sing me home*

*Recognition, emotion, transformation, confession, communion, liberation, anticipation, contemplation*

*Pick me up  
Hold me tight  
Sing me home*

*Confession, agitation, transition, revelation, paralyzation, devotion, legion, salvation, declaration, proclamation*

*Pick me up  
Hold me tight  
Sing me home*

*Legion, invasion, occupation, action, emotion, transformation, cultivation*

*Pick me up  
Hold me tight  
Sing me home*

*Installation, celebration, transition, expansion, formation, proclamation*

*Pick me up  
Hold me tight  
Sing me home*

*Visitation, detention, operation, organization, conversation, situations*

*Pick me up  
Hold me tight  
Sing me home*

*Discussion, adoption, constitution, question, comparison, passion, mission, collaboration, migration*

*Pick me up*

*Hold me tight  
Sing me home*

*Ordination, confession, denomination, foundation, transition, installation, action, vision, expression*

*Pick me up  
Hold me tight  
Sing me home*

*Companion*

*Hold me close  
Squeeze me tight  
Sure love central district conference  
We have been picked up  
We have been held tight  
We have sung in our home: Central District Conference*

Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street) led in singing SJ 73 *The Lord lift you up*.

Lisa Weaver (Madison) invited delegates to fill out an electronic evaluation. The evaluations will help in planning for next year's annual meeting at Bluffton University, June 22-24, 2017. She presented Lois with a journal and the art piece done by Hannah Sandvold. Lisa closed the delegate sessions with the sounding of the gavel.

Emma Hartman  
Recorder