

2018 CDC Listening Committee Report

Worship

Through chant and song, through text and sermon, through confession and prayers, through children's story and rituals— with our senses, our voices, our minds, our bodies – we encountered, again and again, this powerful articulation of the essence of faith: We don't know where we are going, yet God is with us and God will never leave us.

Our worship services continue to be full and rich. For many CDC'ers, these worship times not only hold us together as sister congregations, but “hold us” in MCUSA right now, while we face our unknowing, reminded that sometimes a keener sense of God's being with us is found in the God we see and experience in worship here, with each other -- especially in the warm hugs, the shared laughter and the weeping eyes that testify to the righteous power of welcome, affirmation and full inclusion.

We are a conference on a journey, we are congregations on journeys and as individuals, too – all with stories to hallow and share. Thank you to the worship planners, preachers, musicians, and leaders – you guided us, taught us, led us, challenged and inspired us; to choose trust when knocked off our high horses, to choose trust that Jesus is on the other side of any dead end, to notice God in one another by the affirmation of, “I see you”, to learn new chants, to keep walking on the journey that “is long,” to pray for the only real currency that is love, and to be a humble, hospitable people that embody the power of God's Table, and the Voice that calls us “Beloved” at the waters of baptism, so as to cultivate a culture of encounter, as healers and repairers of “the breach” in God's shalom, near to us and far.

Storytelling and Workshops

Part of our not knowing where we are going is the disorientation and chaos of our culture. But we find our way as we tell our stories and find other companions on the journey. That seemed to be the message of the seminars and workshops, whether it was learning what we need to do to “Get Home Safe” or discover the power of presence on a train ride in a country at war; whether it was a congregation discovering a mission of transitional housing or providing hospitality with people from around the world in our nation's capitol. In the late afternoon seminars we found ourselves finding reorientation by focusing on the Reign of God in mission, education, service and song.

Delegate Sessions

With distinctive humor and note of history, Arman Habegger gave his inaugural rapping of the CDC gavel and then invited us all into his curiosity and delight about the piece of wood from which the gavel is made. In this and in giving his State of the Conference address, Arman proved that he is capable of invoking what he called the “laughter that lightens our moments together.”

That laughter was and is a vital part of CDC, especially during delegate sessions. Laughter is part of what helps CDC maintain its “party” kind of reputation, at least as much as is possible in a conference delegate meeting. And this year we were happy to continue to welcome individuals, visiting friends, new congregations, and even Allegheny Conference, to the party -- however “late” any of us arrived.

Welcoming others to the party is one of a number of ways in which our delegate sessions were a study in shifting boundaries. We heard testimony of how boundaries have been shifting for many individuals as our faith and our church families have expanded, contracted, and transformed. We caught a glimpse

of CDC's current dance with Allegheny, and it evoked a sense of hope among some that our institution is capable of new, creative ways of cooperating. It evoked questioning of priorities, as some wondered aloud: if we can "buy time" from a kindred institution, might we also be able to spend our currency with organizations whose boundaries require us to stretch even further in our work of overcoming racism?

Speaking of such boundaries -- we also found ourselves chuckling at repeated jokes about congregational makeups of "gentiles" or the one which is "pastorless but also Yoderless." Such laughter brings a cathartic and, to some, painful reminder that a come-here/from-here mentality is still very strong at the intersection of Anabaptist commitment and other identity markers such as race, gender, and ethnicity. On twitter yesterday, delegate Hillary Watson invited Mennonites to "reexamine the way they talk about "ethnic Mennonites." And last year's CDC plenary speaker, Drew Hart, replied, offering a succinct explanation: "It is racist. It's a racialized hierarchical framework which obscures the way Euro Mennonites assimilated into, perform, and are advantaged by, whiteness."

So, as with our confessional tones in worship, we at CDC continue deepen our awareness of the ways in which we are "in the red" -- perhaps even if not as much as we thought in reconciling our budget, still we have much reconciling to do with one another and our neighbors. Meanwhile we at CDC have been able to conduct the business of this institution like a family -- with respect, truthfulness, love, laughter, and, as was said about last year, with "nary an intervention by the parliamentarian."

We close by offering our thanks:

- To the local churches and individuals who planned and supported this assembly, and to all the visitors from sister congregations and churchwide guests
- To the Gifts Discernment Comm and their work to help us call people for their new (or continuing) roles
- To the worship planners and participants
- For Carrie Mast's 2017 Minutes summary
- For those ending terms with CDC, and those beginning new ones
- To the Missional church Committee for fulfilling our deepest desire to have our reports framed and enriched with superfluous dramatic license
- For Jim Harder's presidency at Bluffton U
- To College Mennonite Church
- The Catering staff who brought in excellent meals
- Building staff who transitioned room at early and late hours
- To Doug, for steady leadership and generous smiles, and finally, to Emma, who is likely to be the first person to help us when "we don't know where we are going."

Listening Committee: Michael Crosby, Jane Roeschley, Tim Stair