

# 2016 Spring Assembly Minutes

Frazer Mennonite Church  
April 16, 2016



Present: 118 participants, including 67 delegates, 46 general attendees and 5 staff members

1. Opening welcome by John Denlinger, Conference Moderator, and Brenda Martin Hurst, Pastor of Frazer Mennonite Church
  - a. John opened with personal reflection about returning to Frazer MC and led delegates in welcoming new attendees.
  - b. Brenda welcomed all to the Spring Assembly Celebration and reflected on the theme of growing seeds of righteousness and justice. Many have planted seeds in Frazer's Ploughshares Community Garden in hope and trust that God will turn them into fruit. Likewise, the Christian leaders of Palestine planted seeds when they wrote the Kairos document, inviting the world to see their situation. She quoted Isaiah to express hope that one day those of Israel and Palestine may have their own shade to sit under and be afraid no more. We are completely dependent on God to grow and multiply these seeds of righteousness and justice.
  - c. Kim Wagner and Irene Moon, song leaders from Frazer, led songs of worship
    - i. *Praise the one who breaks the darkness*
    - ii. *We praise thee o God*
    - iii. *We are the people of God's grace*
    - iv. *New earth, heavens new*
  - d. John Denlinger invited the ushers to collect an offering. Song leaders led the singing of *Christ we do all adore thee*.
2. Business Session
  - a. John led a review of the minutes and asked if there were any discussion. None offered.
    - i. **ACTION I: Motion to receive Fall 2015 Minutes as presented, by Clair Sauder (Neffsville), second by Hunter Hess (Neffsville).**
  - b. John invited Nancy Kauffman, Mennonite Church USA Denominational Minister, to give a blessing to ACC's new and continuing staff members. She led a prayer of blessing as delegates gathered and placed hands on staff members.
  - c. John and Merv Stoltzfus, ACC Executive Conference Minister, provided updates about how ACC leaders have been involved with a group of Lancaster Mennonite Congregations who are searching for a new affiliation in order to remain part of Mennonite Church USA. ACC leaders have been providing introductions to the conference during several info sessions held by this group. Merv and John outlined several other new conference affiliations that this group is considering in addition to ACC. Merv encouraged prayer for these congregations as they struggle internally with these choices.
  - d. Ken Martin, ACC Treasurer, presented the 2015-2016 Year-to-date report, sharing that expenses have exceeded income by \$16,434, largely because congregational contributions are lagging rather than the existence of excessive spending. Ken also introduced the proposed 2016-2017 budget. Because of continued uncertainty within the conference, the Finance Committee is again presenting an unbalanced budget in the hope that finances will stabilize in the coming year. Ken asked if there were any questions or concerns. None stated.



5. Chad closed the session with engaging the first lesson of the study guide – does scripture have anything new to say to us in light of these stories: Matt 5:43-45, Psalm 24:1, Deut. 16:20. He ended by praying hymn #720.
6. After break, Lynn Brubaker (Frazer) facilitated a time of storytelling where persons from ACC congregations shared about ways that they or their congregations are at work in the Israel-Palestine Region
  - a. Mick Sommers (Ridgeview) shared about his experience on a short-term stint in Hebron, West Bank, with Christian Peacemaker teams. He assisted CPT with observation of Israeli Defense Forces.
  - b. Lois Ann Mast (Conestoga) shared about Conestoga's support of a boy's orphanage in Hebron. The orphanage and school was started by Ida and Ada Stoltzfus, members of Conestoga working with MCC. The school teaches over 500 Muslim students. Conestoga prays, holds a fundraiser and awareness-raising event each year, and visits and encourages the school.
  - c. Dave Greiser (North Baltimore) recently returned from a "Come and See" learning tour sponsored by MCC and MCUSA. He listened to people eager to share their stories of loss of land, ancestral homes, high unemployment, harassment from Israeli Defense Forces, arrests of children for rock throwing, and restriction of access. Dave shared about evidence that global boycotts have had positive effects in the past. Boycotting and divesting, while being nonviolent, is a form of force and so should be considered with great seriousness.
  - d. Susan Gascho-Cooke (CMCL) shared about a worship experience that her congregation engaged in during the past advent season. They drew parallels to the occupation now and the one 2000 years ago during the time of Jesus. They told stories of someone working in a present day occupation that is present in the advent story, such as a shepherd and innkeeper. They also built a wall down the middle of the sanctuary for the month of December, separating one side of the congregation from the other. This barrier gave an impression of isolation and being cut off from each other and gave very different Sunday morning experiences for those on different sides.
7. After hearing these stories, table groups were encouraged to participate in the Gathering of the Graces, where each participant was encouraged to share a sweet moment from the day that they will take with them, as well as a salty moment or aspect of the day that was difficult or uncomfortable for them. Each person then dipped a grape into salt water and ate. Afterward the group prayed together, for peace in Israel-Palestine, for ACC, for Frazer, and for each other.
8. The day was closed with words of encouragement and a benediction from Rev. Alex Awad. He thanked the presenters and shared an encouragement to make even a small action to advocate on behalf of justice in Palestine.