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.
i. **Motion to receive the 2016-2017 Budget by Ken Martin (Forest Hills), second by Nancy Sauder (Neffsville). Unanimously approved.**

ej. John presented the 2016 Leadership Solicitation form on behalf of the Gifts Discernment Committee. The roles requiring nominations are Assistant Moderator of Executive Committee, two Members-at-Large of Executive Committee, two members of Gifts Discernment Committee, and Finance Committee Chair.

f. Brook provided several announcements

3. **Rev. Awad**

a. Reverend Alex Awad gave a presentation on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Mennonite involvement in the peace process, and shared a biblical narrative that supports shared land and peaceful relations in the region.

4. After Lunch, Chad opened a time of table group reflection and discernment. Discussion questions referenced two resources: the *Kairos: Palestine* document, written by Palestinian Christians requesting assistance from Christians worldwide, and the study guide produced by the Mennonite Palestine-Israel Network (MennoPIN). In table groups, sections of the study guide were assigned to different tables which were encouraged to discuss the question, “What surprised you or caught your group’s attention in the section you discussed?” Table leaders then reported reflections of the group:

a. Katy Heinzel (CMCL) shared her group’s surprise at the prevailing hope present among Palestinians without any apparent reason and appreciated the mutual upraising for both Palestinians and Israelis.

b. Francesca Crane shared her group’s surprise that it was the Israeli people who have an explicit call to righteousness from God but are often the initiators of injustice.

c. Sam Walters (Grace Ubuntu) shared how his group felt troubled by how many questions were raised within the group. They indicated eagerness to continue educating themselves about the conflict.

d. Brenda Martin Hurst (Frazer) shared that the church has a great role to play in the inevitable outcome: “once justice has been achieved.” Justice is the first step toward peace.

e. Dale Detweiler (Birch Grove) shared his group’s self-reflection by placing themselves in the Palestinians shoes – “would we act differently?”

f. Steve Musselman (Zion) noted the strong language used in both documents to name evil, but their call to respond in radical love and resistance rather than revenge or force.

g. Susan (CMCL) shared that her group was given pause at the statement about the right to defend selves. It is interesting that content on love dealt largely with resistance.

h. Gary Blosser (Hope Community) shared that his group reflected on the original attempt at justice created injustice. They felt a desire for us to create actual, lasting justice.

i. Hugo Monroy, (Primera Iglesia) shared his group’s belief that the mission of a Christian is to bring justice to the world, ex: prophets.

j. Julio Damaso (Eben-Ezer) shared that land is a resource for the purpose of living together in faith and peace, without provocation of one another. This blessing is given to all people, regardless of race or belief.

k. Jon Carlson (Forest Hills) reported on discussion noting that erroneous fundamentalist biblical theology causes destruction. They wondered where common ground is for those who don’t share the Christian faith given the complexity of two peoples and three faiths existing within a contested land.
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.