

Atlantic Coast Conference Spring Assembly Minutes
April 18, 2015, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Forest Hills Mennonite Church

In attendance: 97 including 61 delegates and 5 children in childcare

Staff: Warren Tyson, Merv Stoltzfus, Sonni Carrion, Lois Ann Mast, Brook Musselman

- I. Opening welcome by Warren Tyson, ACC executive conference minister, John Denlinger, conference moderator, and Jon Carlson, lead pastor of Forest Hills Mennonite Church
 - a. Warren gave a few brief announcements and welcomed all to Spring Assembly 2015.
 - b. John thanked all for attending on such a nice day, and expressed his hope that today would be a day of transformation as we joined together in being conference.
 - c. Jon read from Acts and highlighted what it means for us to be witnesses. There are still those in this world who need to learn who Jesus is, the truth about his saving act and his command for us to make disciples. He explained the historical parallel between the act of being a witness and of being a martyr; there is still a cost to telling the truth about Jesus.

- II. Worship led by Becky Degan, associate pastor at Forest Hills Mennonite Church
 - a. #46 in Grace Notes: “Reign down”
 - b. #19 in Grace Notes: “In this place”
 - c. #13 in Grace Notes: “How can we be silent”

- III. Introduction of keynote speakers by Warren Tyson
 - a. Brian Miller and Emily Ralph, pastors of Sunnyside Mennonite Church, Lancaster
 - i. Brian shared the context and the need of the community where the church resides – a need was initially seen and a group set to meet that need.
 - ii. They shared about what it looks like to serve in the margins – community meals, activities, refugee hospitality
 - iii. “We cannot flourish as a congregation if the community around us doesn’t flourish” we must help community break cycles of addiction, poverty, hopelessness.
 - b. Sam Wanjau, pastor of African Community Church of Lancaster
 - i. ACCL members have had numerous interesting experiences with door-to-door ministry in the neighborhood around the church: meeting hostility and welcoming homes; meeting recent immigrants like themselves and those who are intrigued by the church’s evangelism practices. Regular service trips are another important aspect to being a witness for Christ.
 - ii. “Missions is not only what we do or what we think we do, but is you and me serving in whatever capacity the Lord may show”, whether in our community or thousands of miles away.
 - c. Jason Storbakken, founder of Radical Living along with his wife Vonetta, Director of Chapel and Compassionate Care at Bowery Mission, New York City
 - i. Jason shared about the vision of an ‘upside-down kingdom’ that the Radical Living intentional community lives out. They are a very diverse community

ethnically and ecumenically, but strive to do life together and to live more fully into the Kingdom of God. He also shared about his work at the Bowery Mission as pastor of the homeless community. Here, the homeless can come together to have their physical needs met and to be known and loved as a child of God.

IV. Group Missions Discussion

- a. Sam Wanjau and the choir from African Community Church of Lancaster opened with a song in Swahili and an accompanying dance.
- b. Warren gave an overview of past conference missions involvement since ACC's inception in 1978, when there was a robust vision for missional outreach and multiplication of churches, including dozens of new church plants and thriving outreach programs. International mission outreach continues to be important to several ACC churches. Today's session comes out of a request from the current Missions Committee, asking delegates to assist with vision-casting as the conference seeks a rejuvenated vision for what the ministry of ACC looks like going forward.
- c. Julie Dunst led attendees in a group discussion exercise where each table discussed a given question and was asked to provide concrete ideas for the Missions Committee to consider implementing. Some of the ideas presented include:
 - i. Encouraging congregations to take ownership of church planting, with conference in a supporting role instead of vice versa. Church planting requires a large amount of buy-in that can only be formed when individuals feel a personal connection to the visionary or project. Buy-in is difficult to achieve when the conference is the initiator.
 - ii. The conference should nominate an annual project that ACC churches can support together. This could be an afternoon, day-long, or week-long project that ACC churches are encouraged to support together. The youth suggested that this project be bigger than any one church could accomplish on its own.
 - iii. Affirmation was given for the Nickels for Neighbors program, provided that the advertising and communication is improved.
 - iv. Conference can be a means for churches to request help with a project, and invite another member church to provide assistance. This pairing can be done through conference staff or a new Missions Committee program.

V. Conference Reporting

- a. John Denlinger offered a review of the 2015 Fall Assembly Minutes.
 - i. **ACTION I: Motion to approve Fall Assembly 2014 minutes as presented, by Jim Ralph (Ark) second by Ken Herr (Zion), and unanimously received.**
- b. Warren Tyson highlighted a few items from the Summary Highlights of Executive Committee Action Items, July 2014 to February 2015.
- c. John discussed the storyline of Great Joy Christian Fellowship's request to leave ACC. He invited a motion to grant Great Joy's request.
 - i. **ACTION II: Motion to release Great Joy Christian Fellowship from ACC membership by Bob Petersheim (Conestoga), second by Mick Sommers (Ridgeview), and unanimously approved, with regret.**

- ii. Ken Herr asked about the remaining financial obligation that Great Joy owes. John responded that he believes the payments will continue through the summer, after which the obligation will have been paid in full.
 - iii. Clair Sauder asked about whether the request letter was from Pastor Weir alone. Warren and Merv noted that in the cultural context of Great Joy, the Pastor is the sole decision maker and the congregation will follow his lead.
- d. Ken Martin, Treasurer, outlined the Statement of Income and Expense. He noted a net loss of \$15,295.69 YTD as a result of lowered income rather than increased spending. He also highlighted the Statement of Financial Position, March 31, 2015, which shows that the General Fund Balance as of March 31 was \$18,338.88. A third document that Ken presented was the Proposed Budget 2015-2016.
 - i. Ken Herr noted that the expected contribution from Great Joy should be removed.
 - ii. Mick Sommers asked if there would be a line item for adding to the Reserve Fund. Ken responded that the fund will be built up only if income exceeds expenses.
 - iii. **ACTION III: Motion to approve proposed 2015-2016 ACC Budget by Wes Boyer (Conestoga), second by Clair Sauder (Neffsville), unanimously approved.**
- e. Regarding Warren Tyson's retirement announcement, John and Chad reported on the process of finding a new executive conference minister on behalf of the Executive Committee. They noted that a partnership with Eastern District Conference would not be pursued. Merv's work with the conference was affirmed. The Executive Committee will continue to be in contact with Nancy Kauffmann, MC USA Denominational Minister, who will give support to the process. Chad gave an invitation for delegates to give their input in the coming weeks as the job description is reviewed.
 - i. Much appreciation was given to Warren for his great work in the role of executive conference minister.
- f. Warren and John presented a report on the March 2015 Constituency Leaders Council meeting.
 - i. John noted that a highlight was hearing again from Ruth Haley Barton who shared at the Fall 2014 ACC Assembly weekend. John was impressed by the diversity and giftedness of the Mennonite Church that was represented on the CLC. Despite the diversity in ethnicity and conviction, he sensed a willingness to live with our differences, with the acknowledgment that there is work to do together both before and after the Kansas City meeting. There was a feeling at the CLC meeting that the denomination is largely ready to move on from the same-sex conversation and look for where God is leading next.
 - ii. Jane Peifer's thoughts, given by Warren, centered on how we do work together through discernment. The CLC approved four of the six resolutions it reviewed. Both John and Jane mention that nothing was mentioned about the Evana Network during the CLC meetings, either officially or unofficially, and so it's unveiling a week later was a surprise. Jane will be serving on the planning

committee of CLC for the next two years, and will also be working with Ervin Stutzman during the convention on teaching about discernment.

- iii. Warren mentioned the question that is often asked at CLC meetings, “how do we communicate the sense that we are in a sacred space” during the CLC meetings. The time is always one of great fellowship and of listening for God’s voice and direction. Warren also introduced Marissa Smucker who has taken over for Dean Heisey as the Mennonite Mission Network church relations representative relating to ACC and other eastern U.S. area conferences.
- g. John Weber introduced the leadership solicitation page, inviting nominations for numerous open roles on ACC Executive Committee and other conference committees.
- h. Merv Stoltzfus gave a report from the 2015 ACC Bible Quizzing which included 53 teams. He gave a response on behalf of the Blossom Hill quiz team lead by Lyndell Theissen. They didn’t realize how many teams there would be, how hard the competition would be, how much time it would take to learn the material, and how picky the judges are. The best part about quizzing was how much fun it was to compete and have fun together as a team.
- i. Karen Davis, a member of Community Mennonite Church of Lancaster, gave an overview of the new PA safe child laws and CMCL’s response to the need for safe child policies. The congregation has worked with Samaritan Counseling Center and has implemented Circles of Grace training curriculum for kids.
- j. Joanne Ranck Dirks give a report on the Mennonite World Conference being held in Harrisburg this summer. She encouraged all to register individually or as a congregation to share in the experience. Registrations can be shared within households and between households.
- k. Becky Degan invited ACC churches to join in providing materials to make MCC school kits. Kits will be assembled as part of a service project at the MWC Assembly Gathered in July.
- l. Julie Dunst gave an introduction and invitation to the Church Governance Training at Conestoga Mennonite Church in September. This program will seek to equip church lay leaders, chairs, and pastors to build good working relationships.
- m. Chad Martin announced that the Fall Assembly will be held jointly by Hiwet Legeta and Neffsville churches in Neffsville’s building on October 24. He then invited us to reflect on one piece of the day that impacted us personally. He reminded us that Jesus calls us to be the body of Christ, his hands and feet.

VI. Meeting adjourned at 4:10

recorder: Brook Musselman, conference coordinator