

2021 Fall Assembly

Blossom Hill Mennonite Church || April 17, 2021

Minutes

Present: 116 participants (both in-person and by video), including 79 delegates representing 27 member congregations

The Fall Delegate Session was conducted both in-person and via livestream. which was available following the session.

9:00 am Session:

1. **Welcome:** Cindy Petersheim (moderator, Conestoga) provided a welcome to ACC's delegate meeting. She shared some reminders and suggestions about the mechanics of the meeting. Cindy thanked Landis Communities and Eastern Mennonite Missions for sponsoring and Blossom Hill and Rossmere Mennonite Churches for co-hosting this assembly. Michelle Dula (pastor, Blossom Hill) gave a welcome on behalf of the congregation.
2. **Worship:** Steve Ness (Blossom Hill) and the Blossom Hill worship team lead a time of worship:
 - a. Here in this Place, *Voices Together* #10
 - b. Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore, *Voices Together* #283
 - c. I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say, *Voices Together*, #536
 - d. I Saw a Tree by the Riverside, *Voices Together*, #514
 - e. My Soul Cries Out, *Voices Together*, #412
 - f. If You Believe and I Believe, *Sing the Journey*, #32
3. **Nickels for Neighbors presentation:** Joanne Dietzel (conference minister, Ridgeview) presented the 2021 Nickels for Neighbors grant to the New York Mennonite Immigration Program for their efforts to expand their services to a larger number of families. Joanne presented the check to Ken Bontrager, board chair of the NYMIP.
4. **New Minister Introductions:** Richard Thomas (Ridgeview) introduced recently credentialed ministers in ACC. He led a time of prayer for these and all ACC ministers.
 - a. Anita Castle, pastor of Grace and Peace Mennonite Church
 - b. Lindsey Frye, chaplain with Lancaster Hospice
 - c. Jennie Brown, co-pastor of Bethel Mennonite Church
 - d. Dale Brown, co-pastor of Bethel Mennonite Church
 - e. Jeremiah Martin, pastor of Conestoga Mennonite Church

5. **Receive Spring 2021 Minutes:** Cindy Petersheim presented the minutes from the 2021 Virtual Spring Assembly, including action items. **These were approved as presented (Keith Miller (Conestoga), Faith Sauder (Community)).**

6. **Congregational Leadership Fund (CLF) Update:** Merv Stoltzfus (executive conference minister, Ridgeview) reviewed the purpose of the CLF and shared that the balance is currently above \$321,000. 2% will be released until the target of \$500,000 is reached. The fund is available for projects and scholarships to assist congregational leadership.

7. **Year-to-date Budget Update:** Rod Yoder (Finance Committee chair, East Chestnut Street) shared the financial update by video.
 - a. In the final budget for the 2020-2021, the congregational giving exceeded budget by nearly \$10,000. Total income was \$338,000 which was over \$7,000 above the budgeted income. Expenses were well below budget led to a surplus of \$18,544.18.
 - b. The Final Budget for 2021-2022 was revised to reflect a deficit of \$22,112. The deficit reflects the proposed hiring of a new conference youth minister.
 - c. The year-to-date report showed a deficit of \$14,659, nearly in line with the amount projected by the approved budget. Cash reserves sit at \$154,000, an amount that has been growing over the last few years. Rod shared the expectation that this reserve is the reason the Finance Committee felt comfortable presenting a deficit budget.
 - d. John Bomberger, conference treasurer, joined Merv Stoltzfus to answer any questions:
 - e. **The September year-to-date budget was received as presented.**

8. **Peace Mug Presentation:** Brook Musselman (conference coordinator) presented the Peace Mug to Brooklyn Peace Center for the ongoing peace work and community care in Brooklyn, NY. The mug was presented to Merv Stoltzfus and John Bomberger, board members of the Center. A video from Jason Storbakken, director of the Center was played that gave a vision of the space and thanks for ACC's support of the Brooklyn Peace Center.

9. **Bylaw Update Presentation:** Jon Carlson (assistant moderator, pastor, Forest Hills) introduced the 14 amendments being presented for a vote, and highlighted two: 1) the removal of associate member status for congregations, 2) adjusting terms for committee members by reducing term limits from three to two.
 - a. Other clarifications:
 - i. A typo in Amendment 12 (repetition) was noted.
 - ii. Clarification was given that the "current confession of faith" to refer to any ongoing work that the Church would do.
 - iii. The original language will remain that allows delegates to act electronically.
 - b. The bylaw amendments were approved as presented, with the typo correction as mentioned (Jon Carlson (Forest Hills), Steve Crane (Zion)).

10. **2021 Leadership Slate Presentation:** Lyndell Theissen (Gifts Discernment Committee Chair, Blossom Hill) introduced those being recommended by the Gifts Discernment Committee for conference leadership roles.
 - a. The full slate was approved by majority vote:
 - i. Cindy Petersheim, moderator (1 year only)
 - ii. Steve Crane, Executive Committee member-at-large

- iii. Lynn Brubaker, Executive Committee secretary
 - iv. Todd Gusler, Executive Committee assistant moderator
 - v. Addie Banks, Executive Committee member-at-large
 - vi. Keith and Ruth Douglas Miller, Peace & Justice Committee co-chairs
 - vii. Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, Gifts Discernment Committee member
 - viii. LaVern Yutzy, Gifts Discernment Committee member
 - ix. Dawn Ranck-Hower, Ministerial Leadership Committee chair
 - x. Karyn Nancarvis, Youth Committee chair
 - xi. Lyndell Thiessen, Gifts Discernment Committee chair.
- b. Lyndell also noted the committee membership plan through the change of conference year from Jan-Dec to July-June. These go into effect with the just-passed bylaw amendments.
- i. Currently seated members are grandfathered into three-term committee membership eligibility
 - ii. We will continue with the plan proposed in 2019 to discontinue the Fall Assembly following the 2021 meeting.
 - iii. Newly elected members in the Fall of 2021, along with all existing committee members renewing, would serve a two-year term, beginning immediately and running through June 30, 2023
 - iv. Committee members with terms expiring in October 2022 would be asked to shorten their term to June 30, 2022. This will help stagger terms that come up for renewal or recruitment. These positions will be presented on a ballot at the Spring Assembly in 2022 with a start date of July 1, 2022.
 - v. In the spring of 2022, committee members will be elected to begin terms on July 1 with the new conference year.
- c. A vote was taken by paper for those in-person and via digital form for delegates joining virtually. The full leadership slate was approved by majority vote.

11. **Prayer of blessing for Jon Carlson:** Cindy Petersheim read a blessing followed by a prayer from Merv Stoltzfus over Jon who is the incoming assistant moderator of Mennonite Church USA.

12. **Membership Guidelines Presentation:** Bob Petersheim (Conestoga) and Gina Burkhart (Landisville), members of the resolutions task force, presented a video explaining the history and significance of the Mennonite Church USA membership guidelines. MC USA Executive Board has recommended that the membership guidelines be retired by the gathering of delegates in May 2022. They noted the importance for individuals and congregations to wrestle with discerning how to respond to this step.

13. **Closing:** Cindy Petersheim dismissed the session for an intermission before the 11:00 am session.

11:00 a.m. Session:

14. **Keynote speaker:** AMBS Professor Drew Strait provided an opening discussion on The Bible and Christian Nationalism: Faithful Leadership in a World of Political Idolatry. Drew's 11:00 am and 1:00 pm sessions helped define Christian nationalism and offered a biblical response in an Anabaptist perspective. Reviewing texts from the Old and New Testament, Drew discussed the

significance of the political metaphor of idolatry in ancient Jewish and Christian communities. Special attention was given to how political power can co-opt the mind of the worshiper. The seminar also offered suggestions for how pastors and lay leaders might faithfully negotiate and shepherd Christian nationalists and resist the systems of domination that Christian nationalism amplifies.

15. **Closing:** after several announcements from Brook Musselman, Joanne and Angela Dietzel closed by reading a responsive adaptation of the Lords Prayer.

Recorder, Brook Musselman