

IN-MI Mennonite Conference Regional Meeting Testimonials

Four delegates and pastor Lyle Miller traveled to the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference regional delegate sessions in Ashley, Mich., on March 14. Here are reflections from two of the delegates.

It is noble for the conference to adopt the theme “Joyfully following Jesus” for the year culminating with the annual sessions June 18-20, 2015 in Indianapolis. Noble because the times are calling for us to work our way through a number of otherwise difficult things – repercussions from sexual abuse by church leaders in the past, tension over matters of sexuality and needing to cut out \$100,000 from the conference operating budget. The timely appointment of a committed Unity and Variance Task Force seems providential while we as followers of Jesus Christ learn what kinds of differences we can live with while serving and living together as brothers and sisters of one faith community. A helpful reflective statement by Dan Miller seemed to me to be an appropriate reminder. In essence, it said that we are not called to be the ones determining God’s mission but we have the opportunity of joining in the mission of God that is ongoing. As the early Anabaptists finding their way in the reformation, we are similarly engaged in finding our way following Jesus in our culture today. While this task is definitely immense, we continue to sing praises to the Lord in recognition of the Lord’s presence with us in the past and knowing it remains with us as we journey together.

—Timothy Burkholder

It was a sober meeting, filled with greeting friends and the blessings of worship. The Indiana-Michigan Conference leader, Dan Miller, filled the roles of pastor, facilitator and prophet. I found the greatest challenge was to understand and accept the threatened and actual divisions in Mennonite Church USA. Several quotes from Dan Miller are: “What we thought supported our fellowship together is falling apart.” “What level of variance are we able to live with?” “Even with a wonderful past, the only way to go is forward.” He made it very clear changes are coming, and that we must do our best discernment, following the Holy Spirit.

—Barbara Hodel

Cindy Voth Returns to Work

First, allow me to begin by expressing Luke's and my deep appreciation for your love, support, prayers, cards, meals, and diapers as we welcomed Jeremiah and Lydia into our family. I have cherished the time I have been able to spend with my four children during the past 12 weeks and we thank the congregation for the gift of my maternity leave. A special heartfelt thank you to the pastoral team, especially Velma, who helped carry out my responsibilities during my time away.

As I complete my first week back in the office, I wanted to update everyone on my work schedule as there have been some changes due to childcare arrangements. Until the end of May, I will be in the office all day Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays as well as Tuesday afternoons. I will be taking my Sabbath day on Thursday. I am looking forward to reconnecting with you all - hearing the stories of your life journeys during our time apart, and joining together as we strive to faithfully follow Jesus!

—Cindy Voth, Pastor of Community Life

Year of the Bible Scavenger Hunt

Looking for something fun to do on Sunday, April 19? If your interests include travel, photography, the Bible, friends or just winning at something, you may want to keep this date open. Come join us as we take the next Year of the Bible event to the streets, literally. Greg Hire has prepared a scavenger hunt that will truly test your creative skills as well as your road savvy. The fun starts at 5:00 p.m. at WMC. More details to come so mark your calendars.

Stephen Ministry Training Continues



This coming week the Stephen Ministry training class will be considering how to help suicidal people get the help they need. During this session they will be working with a questionnaire that deals with significant information about suicide and shows how to minister to suicidal people.

Endowment Fund Applications due April 1

The deadline to prepare applications for this cycle of grants from Waterford's endowment is April 1. A total of \$4,400 will be available during this distribution cycle. In addition, \$2,100 from last cycle's proceeds was not distributed, so the committee may award up to \$6,500 in this round.

Waterford's Endowment Fund was established about eight years ago to serve as a way to support the ongoing work of Jesus at Waterford. Ministry teams, recognized groups within the congregations, and individuals representing outside agencies are all invited to apply for grants. Past distributions have supported continuing education for ministry teams, special events, housing projects, mission organizations and more. We welcome being inundated with requests, as these applications represent creative approaches to ministry. Applications are available in the literature racks located near the mailboxes.

As you consider an application, here are a few suggestions from the Endowment Fund Committee that can strengthen a proposal:

- Linkages to the congregation's mission and directional statements are beneficial.
- Opportunities to serve as one-time "seed money" for a new project or to expand an ongoing project are particularly well received, though consideration should also be given to the sustainability of an ongoing project.
- We have typically denied projects that would more appropriately be funded from our regular congregational spending plans.
- Given that we typically receive requests for more money than is available, the opportunity to partially fund a proposal through your itemizing of components is helpful.
- To encourage new creativity, we typically will not fund a project in two consecutive distribution cycles.

If you have questions about the process of preparing an application, please contact a member of the committee listed below, particularly chair Elvina Schmidt.

Contributions to the fund are welcomed at any time. If you have questions about contributing, please contact a committee member, particularly Lyle Miller. The Mennonite Foundation also provides excellent assistance in considering creative ways of being generous with the financial resources we have been entrusted with.

—Endowment Fund Committee: Elvina Schmidt, chair; Timothy Burkholder, congregational chair; Jim Fisher, lay ministry partner for Facilities & Finance Ministry Team; Jerry Detweiler; Jon. Wieand; Lyle Miller, pastor of family life and financial stewardship

Welcome, Embrace, and Send

Ever wonder what it is like to be in a Sunday School class where you are with a group of people you know will be new every four years? The college-age class holds this distinction. It is a class of welcoming, embracing, supporting, and sending. It seems like once you get to know each other pretty well, you need to say goodbye.

Last spring we said goodbye to Annette Conrad and Adama Millogo. They got married and went to Burkina Faso, where they now are starting a school to teach English. Annette and Adama are people who care about others and wish to make a difference in the world. They shared many stories in Sunday school class about their journey of faith and desire to share their faith with others.

The name of their new school is "Excellent English". Their hope is to provide a new approach to learning English which contrasts from the rote memorization and repetition approach that is taught in surrounding schools. Their approach is an immersion approach using audiovisuals, books, periodicals, and conversation.

Our class said goodbye to Annette and Adama last spring, but we did not let them go alone. God went with them. We invite you to join us as we pray and support the mission work that Annette and Adama are doing in Burkina Faso. They have an optimistic vision for their work, and I am guessing that God's dreams for them are even bigger.

Visit their website to read more about their work in Burkina Faso at excellentenglishburkina.weebly.com

—JD Smucker



Waterford Mennonite Church

65975 State Road 15
Goshen, IN 46526
p: 574 533-5642
f: 574 533-0879

office@waterfordchurch.org
www.waterfordchurch.org

Staff Team

Administrative Ministry

- Angela Ingle
Coordinator of Administrative Ministries
- Michelle Lehman
Secretary
- Tony Miller
Interim Administrative Assistant for Communications
- Elvina Schmidt
Bookkeeper
- JD Smucker
Worship Coordinator

Facilities Ministry

- Judy Kniesly
- Jan Oostland
Facilities Manager
- Courtney Shetler

Pastoral Ministry

- Neil Amstutz
Pastoral Team Leader
- Lyle Miller
Pastor of Family Life and Financial Stewardship
- Velma Swartz
Pastor of Senior Ministries
- Cindy Voth
Pastor of Community Life

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Katie Hurst,
editor; 574 312-0125
buzz@waterfordchurch.org