

Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference  
Conference Communications Council Zoom Meeting Minutes  
February 6, 2021, 8:30 a.m. to noon

**Gathering and Instructions:** Katherine Jameson Pitts, Executive Conference Minister, opened the meeting with a welcome and instructions for the day.

**Welcome and Prayer**

Dianna Eshleman, Moderator, welcomed all to the Conference Communications Council. She reminded us that the problems of sickness & death, political & social unrest, and disorder in the lives of persons in our communities and church family can feel overwhelming but, we can take comfort in **Jeremiah 29:11** knowing that it is not a promise to immediately rescue us from hardship or suffering, but rather a promise that God has a plan for our lives and regardless of our current situation, He can work through it to prosper us and give us a hope. She led the group in prayer.

**Scripture** – Psalm 16 - Kiara Yoder, PNMC Board member, read the scripture

**Hymn** – “Be Thou My Vision” A video clip of Portland Mennonite Church singing this hymn was shown.

**Executive Conference Minister Report – Katherine Jameson Pitts**

**Finances:** Our financials ended the year in the black. Congregational giving saw a small decline but was offset by lower travel expenses. We were able to use the interest income for operating expenses while continuing to grow our investment funds. PNMC continues to support and grow our witness by distributing several Healthy Congregational Grants to congregations. Most recently grants were given to enable a congregation to prepare a hospitality suite in their church building and to support a laundry service for the unhoused. We have additional funds available for these grants, so let Katherine know if you are interested.

**Antiracism Training:** The PNMC Board is beginning the process of working at antiracism in our organizational structure through the use of the Intercultural Development Inventory and *Widerstand* resources on Racial Justice.

**Pastoral Transitions:** We had several pastoral transitions this year. Menno Mennonite Church welcomed Emily Toews officially as a co-pastor for that congregation along with her husband Bryce Miller. We accepted the transfer of Emily’s ordination credential from Mennonite Church Manitoba as well as Duncan Smith’s and Charlene Epp’s credentials from Mountain States Mennonite Conference. The Leadership Team has granted a License toward Ordination to Ron Hershey, pastor at Filer Mennonite Church, and a License for Specific Ministry for Church Planting to Jesus Fuentes.

**Congregational Resources:** Mennonite Church USA and its agencies and related institutions have prepared resources for congregations in so many areas this past year:

- Peacemaking office to address undoing racism, climate care, immigration justice, and now resisting militarism
- Faith Formation office to help us serve children and families and reinvent youth ministry
- MennoMedia to deepen our worship and introduce us to new hymns.
- Everence to help us manage our finances in ways that align with our faith. If your congregation is struggling due to a pandemic related drop in income, remember that Everence has Congregational Financial Assistance grants available and The Corinthian Plan has a program to assist with insurance premiums.

It has been a goal in Mennonite Church USA that no congregation should face this time alone and without resources. You to explore all that is there for your congregations on their website <https://www.mennoniteusa.org/resource-portal/>.

**MC USA Delegate Assembly:** The Mennonite Church USA Delegate Assembly will be virtual on 7/10/21.

**PNMC Annual Conference:** The Annual PNMC Conference will be held on 8/21/21. A decision will be made later whether it will be in person or online.

**Prayer Requests:**

- International Bethel City Church as the Muange's relocated to the Detroit area in Michigan and the congregation here closes.
- Congregations who are concerned about their families with children and finding creative ways to care for and support them virtually.
- Pastors have worked hard at learning new skills in the past year and many of them are tired. The challenge of reopening lies ahead and while the thought brings joy, there will also be new work to be done. We will need to be responsive and agile in new ways yet again.
- Congregations in pastoral transitions, which is different and can be difficult in these times. Zion is preparing for a candidate weekend later this month, Hyde Park has just formed a search committee. Western, Vida Nueva, and Lebanon are in a time of interim discernment.

**Presentation**

Safwat Marzouk, Associate Professor of Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary gave a presentation on "Reading the story of Joseph in an Age of Migration."

After Safwat's presentation, we were divided into breakout rooms to discuss the following: Bearing these insights from the Joseph Story, reflect on the following questions:

1. How does mutual giving and receiving challenge the paradigm that you have been operating by as you envisioned relationships between host and migrant communities?
2. In what ways can power relations be an obstacle towards integration and how can it function as a catalyst towards inclusion and justice?
3. How can these insights be lived out in your congregation and PNMC?

After the 30-minute breakouts, we gathered again and addressed comments/questions and thanked Safwat for his presentation. The slides he used in the presentation will be made available.

### **Sharing from congregations – one recent blessing and a prayer request**

Kevin Chupp, Moderator-Elect, read congregation names and asked each to respond briefly with a recent blessing and a prayer request.

**B = Blessing**

**PR = Prayer Request**

**Albany Mennonite Church**, Albany, OR – Peter Epp

B: The congregation is having conversations around inclusion and whether we are showing welcome to LGBTQ persons. This is through a process of asking questions and listening.

PR: Continued blessing from this work.

**Bend Mennonite Church**, Bend, OR – Sam Adams

B: Several babies were born which is a blessing of life.

PR: Zoom services can bring out differences. Prayer to keep Jesus central within those differences.

**Centro Cristiano Pentecostes de McMinnville**, McMinnville, OR – No report.

**Comunidad Cristiana Vida Nueva**, Aurora, OR – Misael Araujo

B: Being able to have outside services.

PR: Pray for people who have lost jobs and loved ones from COVID 19.

**Corvallis Mennonite Fellowship**, Corvallis, OR - Dave Hockman-Wert

B: Zoom services have allowed connections with people outside their geographic area.

PR: For educational and front-line workers and anti-racism training for the congregation.

**Emmaus Christian Fellowship**, Meridian, ID - Karla Morton

B: Been able to find ways to include children in online worship

PR: Supporting for a Haitian who is going to school here in the U.S. Prayers for his permanent residency, to support him and also receive blessing from him.

**Eugene Mennonite Church**, Eugene, OR - Steve Kimes

B: Given a \$50K loan to be able to share with those struggling with the pandemic.

PR: For laundry and loan program stabilization and permanency.

**Evergreen Heights Mennonite Church**, Caldwell, ID - Kathy Bilderback

B: Meaningful worship services, work with elementary school, WiFi hotspot/community garden

PR: Doug Gross, Sam who will be released from prison soon and how to support him through this transition.

**Evergreen Mennonite Church**, Kirkland, WA – Jessica Wright

B: Opportunity to meet on Zoom and make connections outside geographic area.

PR: Sense of loneliness and life beyond COVID; dismantling white supremacy.

**Filer Mennonite Church**, Filer, ID – Ron Hershey

B: Congregational member, George, beat COVID and pneumonia.

PR: Open to the Holy Spirit to become “less” so we can become “more.”

**First Mennonite Church of Church of Aberdeen**, Aberdeen, ID – Kevin Chupp

B: Camp closed down for the summer but received an estate gift to keep kids at camp through scholarships.

PR: To be able to steward this financial gift well.

**First Mennonite Church of McMinnville**, McMinnville, OR – No report.

**Hyde Park Mennonite Fellowship**, Boise, ID – Gary Jewel and Jack Swaim

B: Are able to reach more people through Zoom services.

PR: Pastoral search process guidance and wisdom.

**Iglesia Menonita Roca de Salvación**, Aurora, OR – No report

**Jerusalén Iglesia Menonita**, Aurora, OR – Angel Campoz

B: More people are able to join prayer services via Zoom.

PR: Continue to share God’s light to families and the community.

**Lebanon Mennonite Church**, Lebanon, OR – Grant Bachman

B: Virtual services allow new people to use their gifts with music, technology and preaching.

PR: Looking to fill interim during COVID, for church leadership and when/how to meeting in person for worship.

**Menno Mennonite Church**, Ritzville, WA – Emily

B: The new co-pastor, congregation has remained healthy through COVID even with online and small in-person groups.

PR: Leadership is exhausted. Continuing to work with immigration and parenting is difficult during this time.

**Ministerios Restauración**, Portland, OR – Samuel Moran

B: Thursday and Sunday Facebook Live. Have had weddings and baptisms.

PR: For healthy congregations and to recover from COVID. Pray for Samuel’s family and health.

**Mountain View Mennonite Church, Kalispell, MT – Libbie Lapp**

B: New leadership team and being able to participate in person.

PR: Pastor is on sabbatical. Pray for him and the Leadership Team as they fill in during the sabbatical. Brent Kauffman will do Lent/Easter (7 weeks)

**Pacific Covenant Mennonite Church, Canby, OR – Wilbur Kauffman**

B: Zoom meetings have allowed for new closeness and focus.

PR: To look for new movement from the Holy Spirit.

**Portland Mennonite Church, Portland, OR – Linda Wenning**

B: Devotion of the congregation and expanding reach due to Zoom services.

PR: How to meet in person and still keep people safe especially with a pre-school to consider.

**Prince of Peace Mennonite Church, Anchorage, AK – Alana King Weaver**

B: Zoom services have provided an increase in attendance from outside the area.

PR: No interim pastor and using lay leadership currently. Prayers for future and how to have hybrid services with Zoom and in-person.

**Salem Mennonite Church, Salem, OR – Jerrell Williams**

B: Creativity to engage the homeless and anti-racism work.

PR: Vision process--who has God called us to be in this context and space as we go through the process and grow as a congregation?

**Seattle Mennonite Church, Seattle, WA – Megan Ramer**

B: Community working together to address homelessness. North King County Shelter will open soon. A huge coalition continues to grow with ecumenical support through Melanie's leadership.

PR: Discernment via Zoom is challenging and stressing some bonds. Pray for discernment on some very big issues and to come together to hear God's Spirit via Zoom effectively.

**Shalom Church, Spokane, WA – Jan Yoder**

B: Thankful for Zoom services that have created hope and encouragement.

PR: Healing for our nation and specific health concerns within the congregation.

**Western Mennonite Church, Salem, OR – Terry Rediger**

B: Physical well-being of congregation through COVID and for the financial health of the congregation.

PR: Congregational discernment process in the Review Phase and healing from the past so can go forward through 2021.

**Zion Mennonite Church, Hubbard, OR – Bill Blank**

B: Staying connected through socially distanced once-a-month drive through events.

PR: Transitioning through COVID and processing candidates online.

**Church Plants****Iglesia Anabautista Ebenezer**, Jesús Fuentes

B: They have 20-22 people for each session of Facebook Live with 80 people viewing. COVID vaccine given, but they are continuing to stay safe.

PR: For Moran's family and continuing with church planting.

**Community of Hope**, Bellingham, WA – Rachael Weasley (via Katherine)

B: They had their first Zoom worship service in December. Continue to make connections with young people who would not have prior church connections.

PR: Pray for Rachael's husband's health issues.

Kevin Chupp closed with prayer and Katherine adjourned the meeting at 11:50 a.m.

Submitted by Twila Lehman  
PNMC Secretary