

# Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference Annual Gathering/ZOOM--Delegate Assembly 2021 Minutes – August 21, 2021

Welcome/Instructions/Call to Worship –Katherine

- Virtual Choir - *May you be rooted and grounded in love*
- Scripture Drawing -- Exodus 15:1-2, 11-13 – Amy Epp
- Message – Peter Epp – Peter talked about uncertainty in the future and where we are being led. Love moves us forward and love brings us home
- Virtual Choir - *God be the love*
- Praying together/Lord's Prayer – Katherine

Delegate meeting

- Call to Order – Dianna - Minutes are approved by delegates
- Roll Call of Congregations

At (name of congregation) we know God is leading us because. . .

- Albany Mennonite Church, Albany, OR
  - God is always leading us, it depends whether we are following or not. We know we are following by the love and caring we have felt for each other
- Bend Mennonite Church, Bend, OR
  - In our time together, in our prayers for the world, for one another and our neighbors, we are sustained by God and we keep going.
- Centro Cristiano Pentecostés, McMinnville, OR
- First Mennonite Church McMinnville, OR
  - The congregations have had a name change to River of Life Fellowship and Iglesia Rio de Vida and are joining and working together.
- Comunidad Cristiana Vida Nueva, Salem, OR
- Corvallis Mennonite Fellowship, Corvallis, OR
  - We feel God leading, guiding and directing us. We give empathy to those in our midst and have great joy when we gather together
- Emmaus Christian Fellowship, Meridian, ID
  - We are a small group of 6 family units. We are still having fellowship and hoping we will be able to meet more in the fall.
- Eugene Mennonite Church, Eugene, OR
  - We are able to love one another. We had a pot luck last month, and are giving sacrificially to those in need in our community. We are standing with those persecuted in our community, specifically the homeless.
- Evergreen Heights Mennonite Church, Caldwell, ID
  - When we gather we hear and tell stories of God's presence as well as the challenging ways God is leading us in our personal lives.
- Evergreen Mennonite Church, Bellevue, WA
  - We remain connected and engaged in difficult conversations. We are still meeting remotely. We are entering new challenges and feel God's presence there.

- Filer Mennonite Church, Filer, ID
  - God continues to lay new good works in front of us and the congregation picks them up
- First Mennonite Church of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, ID
  - We are people of faith and follow God's leading. We are involved in outreach in our community.
- Hyde Park Mennonite Fellowship, Boise, ID
  - We see new faces and hear new voices. We are meeting new people, singing new songs, praying new prayers, receiving new health and healing. With God's help we are being renewed
- Iglesia Menonita Roca de Salvación, Aurora, OR
- Jerusalén Iglesia Menonita, Salem, OR
- Lebanon Mennonite Church, Lebanon, OR
  - We are navigating this pandemic and moving forward to achieve goals. We are preparing to hire a new pastor.
- Menno Mennonite Church, Ritzville, WA
  - We have seen new life, both metaphoric and literal in our midst. We have known new life with congregational growth alongside the pandemic, and the new birth within the congregation. Even as we see the need for life giving rains, again metaphorically and literally, we have known God's provision and surprises along the way.
- Ministerios Restauración, Portland, OR
  - For almost 2 years in isolation, we are still studying scriptures. We know God is guiding us as we are able to be with and support families who have had COVID and healed
- Mountain View Mennonite Church, Kalispell, MT
  - We continue to gather in the name of Jesus and invite the spirit to be our guide. We have felt God's presence in our decision making and in our fellowship
- Pacific Covenant Mennonite Church, Canby, OR
  - Our participation level has increased during the year, whether or not we meet in person.
- Portland Mennonite Church, Portland, OR
  - We are part of a Consortium of churches that is starting a family shelter on the East side of Portland. We are sustained by faith, hope and love
- Prince of Peace Mennonite Church, Anchorage, AK
  - We are supporting each other with love and compassion
- Salem Mennonite Church, Salem, OR
  - We are able to dream of our future together as we discern in a visioning process what God is calling us to be in the Salem/Keizer area
- Seattle Mennonite Church, Seattle, WA
  - The mandatory apartness hasn't kept God from providing comfort and care for us. We are caring for the vulnerable. The Holy Spirit has helped us make a critical decision to give a property to a black/indigenous and/or non-white group who has been historically discriminated against.
    - We ask for prayer for those who will be carrying out that decision.
    - We ask for prayer as Pastors Melanie and Jonathan Neufeld are leaving us.
- Shalom Church, Spokane, WA
  - We have supported each other during the isolation and have become more aware of other communities near and far. We are doing more to support those far away communities
- Western Mennonite Church, Salem, OR
  - Just before the pandemic we started a discernment process. We are moving slowly yet making progress and coming toward the finish line. We have not had the joy of pot luck but have had some staff picnics together.

- Zion Mennonite Church, Hubbard, OR
  - In simple things God is guiding us. Our gardens are growing, babies are being born, we had a little bit of rain this morning and technology has helped us stay connected. We have a new pastor and are encouraged by the new opportunities in our neighborhood

Church plants –

- Iglesia Anabautista Ebenezer, Salem, OR
- Community of Hope Mennonite Church, Bellingham, WA
  - We thought it was impossible to start a church during a pandemic, but God is surprising us in many ways and opening doors to us. Our existence is proof that God is leading us. We are making connections and people are offering financial support and lay leadership

Prayer of blessing for each congregation – Katherine

Executive Conference Minister report – Katherine

The theme for our annual meeting is “Love will lead us home”. It draws on the song of God’s people escaping captivity in Egypt, being led through the waters, and finding themselves safe on the other shore. Earlier this spring it seemed to resonate with our feelings; we were vaccinated, we hoped to gather in person, and the end of the pandemic seemed in sight. The Delta variant changed all those plans. We are at a place where we don’t know what lies ahead of us, but we know God is with us. We know God gives good gifts to God’s people. We know God’s love is always leading us to our home in Christ.

If unprecedented and resilient were the words of 2020, the word for 2021 seems to be weary. Yet we keep putting one foot in front of the other. We keep reaching out one hand to another to lift someone up or to offer a gift that is needed. We keep turning to God for strength and salvation and most of all for the love we need to carry us on. God does more than we can ask or even imagine. Thanks be to God!

Here are a few things that have been happening around the conference in the past year:

- Imagine that your lead pastor has resigned. You have called a transitional pastor and are looking forward to beginning a search for a new pastor. Then, the week your transitional pastor begins, a global pandemic requires you to shut down in person worship and meetings. How do you move forward?
- Or, Imagine that your pastor has resigned but your congregation has been meeting only on Zoom. How do you say good bye and find an interim pastor much less do a pastoral search?
- These situations were faced by two of our PNMC congregations. Through the leading of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of creative and committed leaders, they both have had meaningful interim periods and have called new settled pastors.
- I am pleased to let you know of two new pastors in PNMC -- **Stephen Bomar**, who began as lead pastor at Zion MC in June, and **Christie Dahlin** who will begin as pastor at Hyde Park MF on September 1<sup>st</sup>. I hope that you will have the opportunity to meet them in the months ahead.

Our District pastors provide support and relationship to our pastors and congregations. I am grateful for the gifts of wisdom and love for the church that **Marlene Bogard, Linda Dibble, Renee Johns, and Matt Swora** shared with congregations in PNMC over the past few years. They will be missed.

I am grateful for those continuing as District Pastors – **Gary Jewell, Brent Kauffman, Samuel Moran, Terry Rediger, Sylvia Shirk, and Merritt Welty, Bob Buxman.**

Please join me in praying for these leaders in our conference – District pastor and pastors, new and old.

- Now imagine that your congregation has a need that wasn’t there when you planned your budget. That’s where Healthy Congregation Grants come in. We have distributed 13 Healthy Congregation Grants since the program started in 2019. Because some of these grants went to groups of congregation who applied together, over half of PNMC congregations have benefited from these funds. They have

covered the purchase of simultaneous translation equipment and sewing supplies, sponsoring a dramatic presentation, obtaining the services of consultants to aid congregational discernment, assisting with costs for a youth retreat, for a women's retreat and for a congregational planning retreat, covering pulpit supply during a pastoral sabbatical, supporting different types of educational programs for pastors and leaders and more. I have invited three of the most recent recipients to share with you what this grant allowed their congregation to do:

- Eugene – **Steve Kimes**, Laundry Unicorns

About 2 years ago we decided to do laundry work among houseless folks. We started going to camps, and taking clothes to the Laundromat. We participate in 17 houseless camps, some are sanctioned by the city, and some are not. This summer one camp is an RV camp with 40 vehicles. During the heat wave we purchased 100's of water bottles and froze them then delivered solid frozen water bottles on days that reached 90 degrees

- Evergreen Heights – **Kathy Bilderback**, Hospitality Room

Our property is located on a hill that overlooks the Caldwell area. It is a converted event center. The grant we received was for a hospitality suite. We installed a custom made wall bed. We have opened it up to pastors to come be our guests, for restoration, to be among us. Come for a day or a week if you want to get away, rest, find rejuvenation. I invite you to come and be our guest. We are grateful for the grant funds.

- Menno Mennonite – **Bryce Miller**, Immigration legal expenses

The immigration system is very complicated and doesn't always work the way it is supposed to. We are grateful to have had the funds to work at getting Emily a work visa which meant she could start work on Jan 1 and to continue the application process for a green card

Due to a generous gift from one PNMC congregation, our fund remains robust and available to help more congregations. This grant program is one way we help each other in PNMC to follow where the Spirit is leading, to try new things, to support our pastors and leaders, and to reach into our communities with God's love. If your congregation is longing to do something that isn't in your budget, contact me and together we can look at the application process and see if a Healthy Congregation Grant might be available to you.

- Finally, imagine that God is calling you to do a new thing, to plant a new church or gather a new faith community. One of the great joys of the past year has been seeing two new church plants emerge – Community of Hope in Bellingham WA led by Rachael Weasley and Iglesia Anabautista Ebenezer, led by Jesús Fuentes. They are building community and connecting online with those who are eager to know God's love, both in person and online. You can read a little bit about them in the Delegate Book. These groups are not yet ready to become member congregations of PNMC but they are on the journey where God leads toward home as they follow God's call.

I know that people are weary. I know that we don't know what lies ahead. But love will lead us home as God's people. I am grateful for all that you do in your communities and most of all for the way you love one another. I could not imagine a more faithful group of congregations to care for.

Treasurer's report – Dave

PNMC is on solid footing financially. We have not accessed the reserve funds yet. The Finance team monitors our investment funds, watches the rise and fall of the stock market. A letter was sent to each congregation from the finance team. We want to connect with treasurers – 10 have responded. We invite others to respond or connect us with your treasurer. The amount of our investment is a live conversation at each board meeting. The finance team asks for feedback and suggestions as to the best practice in management of the money.

## Break

### Moderator report -- Dianna

All of our meetings this year have occurred online using ZOOM. Our next quarterly regular board meeting is scheduled for Saturday, September 11.

### Board activities this year included:

1. Policies needing review or development of new policies were addressed for discussion by board member Leonard Nolt.
2. The Finance Team (comprised of board member Deren Kellogg, board treasurer Dave Hockman-Wert and non-board members Jack Swaim & Brett Tieszen) were very helpful in making recommendations for the board to consider in budgeting and finance management. The board is grateful that both Jack & Brett have agreed to continue this coming year as part of the Finance Team.
3. The gift discernment team (ECM, the board moderator and this year's two non-board members, Joseph Penner and Renee Johns) were happy to locate people willing to serve and volunteer their time for this year's ballot that we have presented. We will miss Renee as her term ends this year.
4. We will miss departing board secretary, Twila Lehman, and the wisdom she brought in her time of service on the PNMC board.
5. It has been exciting to see new pastors come to our conference. We also follow with interest any new congregation development possibilities.
6. The board is grateful to all of you who participated in the ECM review. Those positive responses about Katherine's role as ECM enabled the board to offer a renewal contract with confidence. We were pleased she agreed to continue for an additional 1.5 years.
7. The board is interested in building connections across the conference as well as with the wider church. We watched with interest as some of the congregations have made use of the Healthy Congregation grants offered by PNMC. The application process for up to \$3000 is available to every PNMC congregation. We feel fortunate to have this fund available for use to help nurture your congregation in special ways that you identify.
8. The board chose to further educate board members by participating in Intercultural Diversity Training led by Duncan Smith. We have plans to continue thinking some new thoughts with a follow up when we can meet in person.
9. The PNMC board is interested in transparency. The board meeting minutes are posted on the web site after each meeting. <https://pnmc.org/resources/documents/board-minutes>. Also, I encourage you to read the e-bulletin. The link is also found on the pnmc.org website under the Resources tab in the top menu, then select "Publications".

### Presentation and Vote on Ballot.

### Wider church connections – persons were introduced

- **Michael Danner**, Associate Executive Director for Church Vitality for Mennonite Church USA. The Theme for next year is "Being transformed" Michael is also Director of MEA which he described as a joint staffing adventure
- **Rhoda Blough**, Stewardship Consultant, Everence  
This year Steve and Diane Kimes from PNMC were given the Everence Regional Journey Award, which is an award to persons who model stewardship. \$500 is given to a non-profit of their choice

- **Duncan Smith**, Director of The Corinthian Plan  
PNMC has 18 contributing congregations in the plan. Last year in May we had a premium holiday where we invited congregations to contribute to the plan. We were blessed to receive \$120,000. Everyone is eligible to apply for the wellness incentive which is \$150 per person, even if you are not on health coverage.
- **Marlene Bogard**, Networking Consultant for PNMC Churches on behalf of MCC  
Thank you for your support of MCC through sales and giving  
Look – page 25 has the West Coast MCC report  
Support – There are needs everywhere – today the focus is Haiti  
Resource – There is a new curriculum for adults - peacemaking practices

Breakout sessions -- Suggested conversations

- 1) Share: Where have you felt most at home? Where would be your dream home?
- 2) Discuss: Should Conference Communications Council remain an online gathering? What are the main barriers to participation in conference gatherings in your congregation?

After the breakout session participants were polled on the question of how to hold Conference Communications Council. The preferred method was a hybrid (in-person with on-line access). The board will consider the CCC venue bearing this in mind.

Reporting from breakout groups—What are main barriers? See Google doc

Blessing for board –

- Dianna announced the results of the ballot as receiving unanimous approval.
- She introduced all board members
  - ⊖ Dianna Eshleman, Kevin Chupp, Dave Hockman-Wert, Katherine O'Brien, Nelly Moran-Ascencio, Deren Kellogg, Leonard Nolt, Megan Ramer, Jan Yoder, Kiara Yoder
- Gifts Discernment Team
  - ⊖ Dianna Eshleman, Kevin Chupp, Joseph Penner, Rick Bollman
- Pastoral Leadership Team.  
Rod Stafford, Sam Adams, Angel Campoz, Amy Epp, Rob Hanson  
Michael Danner gave a blessing prayer for the leadership of PNMC and the congregations.

Closing song -- *The Love of God*

Being together in our relationship as PNMC congregations is an important time. I enjoyed hearing a bit about each congregation's life during the roll call and the sharing from the breakout sessions. We claim the promise in Romans 8:28 "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him and are called according to His purpose."

The weekend of June 18 has been chosen for the 2022 Annual Meeting date. Watch our e-bulletins and other methods of communication for updated information. Save the date.

Closing Prayer - Dianna