

Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference (PNMC)
Conference Communications Council
Zoom meeting - February 4, 2023

8:30 - Opening, Welcome and Prayer

Opening and prayer were led by Eric Massanari, PNMC Executive Conference Minister. Eric acknowledged the Leadership presence of the PNMC, CIHAN boards, Pastors and Congregational representatives and appointees from the varied ministries and special guest speaker Malinda Berry. Special thanks were given to Megan Ramer and Bryce Miller for serving as Zoom host for the meeting, and to Danny Arguello for serving as our Spanish language interpreter, and Barb Buxman administrator for the conference. Eric reviewed the PNMC mission statement and led the group in a posturing prayer.

Scripture reading was Luke 2:22-38 where the elders Simeon and Anna welcome baby Jesus. One lesson realized from this story is the vision that both Simeon and Anna had to recognize the Christ after many years of waiting for the promise to be fulfilled. Congregational representatives were asked to answer how their congregations welcome and bless the presence of Christ in their midst. Each was asked to also state how we can pray for their congregations.

9:00 am Congregational Role Call

Iglesia Anabautista Ebenezer- Pastor Jesus Fuentes – First of all, we thank God because he has given us a temple to meet to worship the Almighty every Sunday. We welcome the Holy Spirit in prayer before worship, during praise, and during the Sermon. Our Lord Jesus Christ is inside and the Head of our congregation. We ask all of you for your prayers so that we can grow as a congregation since it has not been easy, but we already have our services every Sunday with an attendance of 25 people. God bless you.

Community of Hope Church- Affiliated Church plant -Rachael Weasley, Pastor reported that their group welcomes Christ in creation. The group meets outdoors and on zoom. They have been meeting for one and a half years and ask for prayer in discernment of their structure and timing that God sets for them.

Albany Mennonite Church – Peter Epp, Pastor states the congregation recognizes Christ through connectedness. Through the pandemic the group was able to work on their renewal process through zoom and worked on relationships, connectedness and hospitality. Pray for wisdom for this congregation to pace their process and be patient.

Bend Mennonite Church- Sam Adams, lay leader contact shared that their group meets on Saturday evenings on a sporadic basis. They have a welcome and intimacy in sharing with each other. Pray that they would find a sustainable rhythm of frequency for meeting.

Calvary Mennonite Church- no report given. Pastor Kevin Schumacher

Comunidad Cristiana Vida Nueva - reports from brothers Mariano Orta Valdovinos and Florencio Bautista report receiving Jesus as the group receives others with open arms and are willing to listen, share and hoping to learn from the meeting today.

Corvallis Mennonite Fellowship – Lay led, Jerry Langstraat and Dave Hockman-Wert reported that their fellowship is 30 years old and intentionally without a pastoral structure. They have good worship services and small groups but the leadership is growing weary. The group was recently bequeathed a considerable gift to use. Pray they would discern how best to move forward in their future plans.

Emmaus Christian Fellowship (new name **Meridian Mennonite Church**) Rick Bollman, Co-Pastor reports recent new congregants have prompted conversation on deconstructing “rules of attending church.” They welcome Christ by living in love. They ask for prayer as they rename their group and make changes in their church life. They currently meet in a rented facility on indigenous native land.

Eugene Mennonite Church- Steve Kimes, Pastor states their group is imitating the actions of Jesus by going out to people living on the streets. They are serving and encouraging service by providing supplies to a houseless camp regularly. Pray for JoJo, a homeless woman who is recovering from a stroke. Also, the group is grieving the loss of Randol Friesen who served as treasurer for the church for the past 50 years. They are feeling a great loss as Randy was a central part of the treasurer congregation. Pray for the group to find someone to fill the void as a treasurer.

Evergreen Heights Mennonite Church - Kathy Bilderback, pastor reports their group greets Jesus by the welcome and blessing they give each other. The group is starting to meet on Sunday evenings one night each month. They share a meal around a table. Pray for this group as they share property with their community and are revamping their goals.

Evergreen Mennonite Church – Sandra Larson, Interim Pastor reports selling an MVS property recently. Their group asks for discernment of how to use the funds in the community. Pray also for the new pastoral search process.

Filer Mennonite Church – Ron Hershey, Pastor reports their building is a 109-year-old facility. They had a major flood of the basement with sewage. MDS groups came to help with the clean- up. The congregation has learned how to be served in this process as well as the situation being an outreach opportunity to the community. Prayer is asked for George Leppert and his wife who have recently moved to an inpatient care facility. Ron has been working to refurbish the old beams of the structure not wanting to cover up the scars of the past.

First Mennonite Church of Aberdeen – Lyn and Jeanie Hershey, Interim Pastors. They see Jesus in the good things God has for the Aberdeen group. The prayer request is to understand what the future of the church is to be. The building is a beautiful building 120 years old. They have capacity for 150 and have an average attendance of 35-40 without many young people. Pray for the use of the facility and their search for a new pastor.

Hyde Park Mennonite Fellowship – Christie Dahlin, Pastor stated they are welcoming and blessing Christ in their visioning process with consultant Betty Pries. The prayer request is for discernment in the visioning process.

Iglesia Rio de Vida – Simon Rendon, Pastor. No report

Jerusalén Iglesia Menonita – Angel Campo, Pastor reported they have been meeting by Zoom with several churches in Mexico. Eva Flores will transition to the CIHAN moderator position at the next meeting. Pray for Angel and the church as Angel’s health has declined.

Menno Mennonite Church – Bryce Miller and Emily Toews, Co-Pastors – Their group has been impacted by wildfires with 5 homes lost and helping families rebuild their lives. The prayer ask is for first responders and the trauma they face daily. Also, to continue listening to each other and find common ground with the sensitivity of Simeon and Anna with their eyes wide open.

Ministerios Restauracion – Samuel Moran, Pastor. No report though it was noted Samuel is on a mission trip to Guatemala.

Mountain View Mennonite Church – Elaine Kauffman, Treasurer and Miriam Mauritzen, Interim Pastor, reported welcoming children in their midst, delighting in the addition to their mix. They are working on developing a Safe Sanctuary with the children and families. Pray for this church as they re-initiate a program of “Windows to the World”, a program to provide hospitality to immigrants and sending humanitarian relief aid to those in need.

Pacific Covenant Mennonite Church – Wilbur Kauffman, contact - no report

Portland Mennonite Church – Rod Stafford, Lead Pastor – noted that the leadership team was at a retreat. Eric Massanari reported the congregation celebrated their 100 year anniversary in 2022 and they have welcomed Kristen Swartley as a new associate Pastor.

Prince of Peace Mennonite Church – Alana King-Weaver, lay leader reported they continue to meet in hybrid and Zoom meetings as they are searching for meeting space. The church is lay-lead and have contracted speakers via Zoom which provides respite for the lay leaders. The Service Adventure Unit house is being used to house an immigrant Ukrainian family while the church is taking a break from Service Adventure.

River of Life Fellowship – Simon Rendon, Pastor- No report

Salem Mennonite Church – Jerrell Williams, Pastor was attending a “Hope for the Future” meeting of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) of MC USA. Jennifer Gingerich reports their group is looking forward to re-opening of their Community Center on Friday evenings. They ask for prayer for this process of outreach.

Seattle Mennonite Church – Megan Ramer, Pastor. Deren Kellogg reported that a family recently hosted a feast for the unhoused community around them in memorial of a loved one. Pray for this church as they continue with advocacy for the homeless in their neighborhood.

Shalom Church – Reanette Boese and Jan Yoder, representatives reported they continue to meet in a hybrid In-person/Zoom meeting with a wide span of members included. Pray for this group as they grieve for the loss of long- time member Jerry Miller.

Western Mennonite Church – Terry Rediger, Interim Pastor states the church had a worship service celebrating their history as a group prior to a pause in meetings. A new start up has seen a welcome of several families with children. Pray for the Launch team as they begin anew in a new history.

Zion Mennonite Church – Steve Bomar, Pastor reported being on the pastoral team for the past one and a half years. He recognized how Jesus brings cognitive dissonance. The church group is made up of many devout, faithful, righteous people following Jesus. They are looking at their church identity as followers of Jesus. Pray for the blessing of new attendees and how the church will empower future generations, handing over the keys well.

10:45 Presentation on Nonviolent Communication and Empathic Connections by Malinda Berry, Professor of Theology & Ethics, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (Elkhart, IN).

Nonviolent Communication defined:

Nonviolent Communication is the integration of 4 things:

Consciousness: a set of principles that support living a life of compassion, collaboration, courage, and authenticity

Language: understanding how words contribute to connection or distance

Communication Skills: knowing how to ask for what we want, how to hear others even if in disagreement, and how to move towards solutions that work for all

Means of Influence: sharing “power with others” rather than using “power over others”

Nonviolent Communication serves our desire to do 3 things:

Increase our ability to live with choice, meaning, and connection

Connect empathically with self and others to have more satisfying relationships

Share our resources so everyone is able to benefit

12:10 PNMC Leadership Sharing

Jack Swaim, Interim Moderator introduced the board members including Eric Massanari, Executive Conference Minister (term started 11/1/2022) and reviewed his position as interim moderator. Jack shared about the January board meeting and the decisions regarding the Delegate session of 2022 and the vote to rescind the MC USA Membership Guidelines. Delegates affirmed repentance and healing for damage done to many people

including pastors. The PNMC board determined that we did not have rationale to keep the associated PNMMC policy and voted to rescind said policy.

The board strongly affirmed the diversity within our conference and we will continue to treat one another with a spirit of forbearance, grace, trust and love on this issue and other issues that may divide us. Jack then identified four points of what remains the same.

- 1) We as a conference are attracted and pulled together by Christ.
- 2) Holding to the centrality of following Jesus we value diversity and inclusion
- 3) The Confession of Faith remains solidly in place. There are no plans to change it or rewrite it.
- 4) Congregations continue to be empowered to make their own decisions on these matters, based on their own local context.

Eric shared highlights from his first few months as Executive Conference Minister. He related the time as if drinking from a firehose or stepping into a rapidly rising river. On his return to the North West, he and his spouse Yolanda, are living in Bellingham, Washington. They are connecting with the Seattle Mennonite Church as well as the local Bellingham Community of Hope church. Eric's priority is building relationships with the PNMC churches. Eric is hoping to make visits to many more of our PNMC congregations in the coming year. He has made connections with the Chaplains, Camp directors, MC USA, participated in the Conference Leadership Council meeting.

Eric recognizes this is a time of reformation for many congregations – dealing with great changes. We will work to center ourselves and to hold onto the love of Jesus.

Question and Answer period

Gary Jewell reminded all churches that PNMC has a Healthy Congregations Grant Fund which is available to all. A property was sold with proceeds designated by PNMC for this fund. These funds can be used by any PNMC congregation for outreach including church plants.

Q: The question was asked how often the board meets. A: Four times per year, four Zoom meetings four hour duration (8:30-12:30). (Next PNMC board meeting 4/24/23) The board also meets at the Annual meeting as well as holding a retreat annually.

Q: When will the Annual meeting plans be known? A: The planning begins soon after the CCC for the annual meeting. The meeting will be held June 23 & 24, 2023 at Portland Mennonite Church. A pastor and spouse dinner are held on Friday evenings of conference. Children's programming is based on the number of children registered. Portland Mennonite Church has an outdoor playground and nursery. Many stated that attending conference as a child is a cherished memory that they would like our children to experience. Register children early! <http://pnmc.org>

Chris Nord, Moderator Elect closed the meeting in prayer.

Submitted,
Julia Todd, PNMC Secretary