

Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference
June 23-24, 2023
Portland Mennonite Church – Portland OR
“Rooted and Grounded in Love” (Ephesians 3:14-21)

Saturday June 24, 2023 Opening Worship and sharing from Congregations

Eric Massanari opened the meeting by inviting participation in a land acknowledgment and recognition of the indigenous peoples who historically occupied and presently make their home on the lands where we gathered. Appreciation was expressed to many individuals for their assistance in planning for this conference. Thanks was also expressed to Curt Weaver for the development of the logo for the conference theme “Rooted and Grounded in Love.” Prayers were offered for Curt Weaver and Megan Ramer who both had health concerns keeping them from attending conference.

Host Pastors from Portland Mennonite Church and Ministerios Restauración, Rod Stafford and Samuel Moran respectively, welcomed the conference attendees.

Worship music was led by singer/song writer Rachael Weasley, Pastor of Community of Hope Church (current church plant of PNMC).

Ephesians 3:14-19 was the basis for the theme, Rooted and Grounded in Love.”

Delegates were asked to report on what is happening in their local congregation and what is giving each one strength in their inner being and allowing them to remain rooted and grounded in Christ’s love. The order of reporting was done by states, starting with Alaska, Montana, Washington then Oregon. Written reports were also submitted in the delegate handbook.

Roll Call

Albany Mennonite Church - (OR) Angie Nord, delegate, reported that the outreach ministry has included providing support for a Honduran refugee, working with/providing support for the city of Albany small homes project, providing an adult education class on grief support and working with the Anabaptist 500 Bible study. They have begun having a series of barbeques and picnics through the summer. Diane Hooge is serving as Interim pastor during Pastor Peter Epp’s sabbatical.

Bend Mennonite Church (OR) – Sam Adams, pastor, reported that they have been meeting for 17 years with a shared leadership meeting on Saturday afternoons. Friendship through various life experiences is keeping this group grounded in Christ.

Comunidad Cristiana Vida Nueva (Salem, OR) – Misael Araujo, delegate, shared of the 25 years meeting at Salem Mennonite. They have seen a resurgence of a missionary movement attributed to the radio ministry of Florencio Bautista. Misael’s fifteen-year-old daughter is serving as a missionary in Europe.

Corvallis Mennonite Fellowship – (OR) Dave Hockman-Wert, delegate, reports their group continues with weekly potlucks. The volunteers who share leadership are becoming weary of the responsibilities. They have been working on Healthy Congregations information from Bill Blank, speaker at PNMC 2022 conference.

Eugene Mennonite Church – (OR) Steve Kimes, Pastor, reported their group has been engaged in a joint Bible study with Seattle Mennonite and Portland Mennonite churches for the Anabaptist 500 project. The discussions have grounded them together in the discourse. The church has had a number of service opportunities with houseless neighbors including Dignity Barbeques. They have a special workday to complete a large number of refugee school kits for MCC.

Evergreen Heights Mennonite Church – (Caldwell, ID) Kathy Bilderback, pastor reported planning and sharing hospitality with their neighbors in community gardens and sharing food boxes at the local elementary school

Evergreen Mennonite – (Kirkland, WA) Kathryn Smith Derksen, delegate reported a slow comeback from the Zoom format for meetings with Advent 2022 being their first in-person services. They continue to have a Zoom prayer time weekly.

Filer Mennonite Church – (ID) Ron Hershey, pastor, reported they have learned how to be served by others as a gift. The church basement flooded with sewage last fall and MDS has been helping them to clean up and rebuild.

First Mennonite Church of Aberdeen – (ID) Ron Hershey reported that Lyn and Jeanie former interim pastors, were attending a special event in the Aberdeen community. The congregation is in a pastoral search process.

Hyde Park Mennonite Fellowship – (Boise, ID) Christie Dahlin, Pastor reports being in a visioning process at the implementation stage. They are having “out of the box” services.

Menno Mennonite Church - (Ritzville, WA) Emily Toews/Bryce Miller co-pastors report finding deep roots in Jesus.

Meridian Mennonite Church – (ID) Craig and Karla Morton co-pastors report having a new music group. They are lining up for love, and spreading love like glitter in a far-reaching approach.

Ministerios Restauración – (Portland, OR) Pastor Samuel Moran reports they are setting down roots in Christ. They are celebrating married life, strengthening marriages, even encouraging marriage! The church has celebrated two weddings. Six people are being prepared for baptism. The church is participating in a Family Promise Program working with three other congregations in Portland

Mountain View Mennonite Church - (Kalispell MT) – Libbie Lapp, delegate reported that the church is organizing a leadership team. They have broken ground on a peace garden which has been a long- term project.

Pacific Covenant Mennonite Church- (Canby, OR) Wilbur Kauffman delegate, reports: This group has found better connections using Zoom technology over the past several years. The church has many traditional Mennonites and find they rely on all as a spiritual family.

Portland Mennonite Church – (OR) Kristen Swartley, Pastor of Community Life & Outreach reported their congregation celebrated their 100th year anniversary in November, they have been having great interaction with adult Sunday School and the Anabaptist 500 study and connectedness with the Family promise program. The church has been hosting a homeless family.

Prince of Peace Mennonite Church – (Anchorage AK) No report

Salem Mennonite Church – (OR) Marj & Brent Mobley-Oorthuys reported as Pastor Jerrell Williams was at Drift Creek Camp for a baptism of one of their congregational

youths. (Pastor Jerrell has accepted a pastorate in Kansas and will leave Salem in July) The congregation has been studying the book 'Anabaptist Essentials' recognizing that Anabaptists interpret scripture through the teachings of Jesus. The study has also been helping them grow into their LGBTQ inclusion.

Seattle Mennonite Church- (WA) Deren Kellogg, delegate reported for the church. The congregation has been using worship responses to the teaching through participatory actions. One example was of each person placing a bead in a common jar as representation of their response. The group has been participating in Anabaptism 500 examination of a scripture passage.

Shalom Church – (Spokane, WA) Jan Yoder, delegate, reported a bit of their history. The group started in 1981 and grafted with the United Church of Christ in 1990's. The group finds joy in giving to their community. Zoom continues to provide steadfastness for the group.

Western Mennonite Church – (Salem, OR) Terry Rediger Interim pastor reports this group has been holding alternate weekend activities of worship one weekend and having fellowship time of playing games. The group has new excitement with five new families with a total of nine children participating with them. This is the first time in a very long time to have children in the congregation which provides a spirit of hope.

Zion Mennonite Church – (Hubbard, OR) Steve Bomar, Pastor shared that the congregation has incorporated the use of colors of the church year in their worship space as they connect to the life of Jesus. The group has worked through intense focused communication on discerning if gender identity and sexual orientation should impact church participation. They arrived at consensus despite the diversity of perspectives. Fellowship time, meeting together and sharing meals are keeping them grounded as a group.

PNMC affiliated church plants

Community of Hope Mennonite Church – (Bellingham, WA) Pastor Rachael Weasley reports they have begun monthly gatherings in person. Many have dual memberships in the congregation. Meetings are held outside in various locations as they connect with nature and each other.

Iglesia Anabautista Ebenezer – (Keizer, OR) Pastor Jesús Fuentes reports they have been meeting as a group since 2020 in the Keizer area. Their group varies between 8-20 people on a Sunday. They have a large following on Facebook with around 200 followers. They have been blessed by the Methodist church for the use of their building for worship. Pastor Fuentes express great appreciation for the support received in the passing of their eldest son in March. Pastor Fuentes wife Rosa also expressed appreciation for the prayers during their time of grief and they hope in Jesus as the rock of their faith as they work to bring others to Christ.

Delegate Session – Tending to the life of the Conference

Jack Swaim – Moderator - opened the meeting with a welcome and an acknowledgement that we have had losses in fellowship and communion with six churches that have withdrawn membership from PNMC since our last annual meeting. The churches are Lebanon Mennonite, Calvary Mennonite, Iglesia Menonita Roca-de-Salvación, Iglesia Río de Vida, Jerusalén Iglesia Menonita and River of Life Fellowship.

While this is a painful parting, these churches have been discerning these steps for years and it is with mutual care and respect to hold each other in care in the body of Christ through this process. Dialogue was encouraged during this process and each congregation was asked to write a letter to the PNMC stating their discernment process which were included in the conference handbook.

Introductions were made to guests from the wider church including:

Dr. Malinda Berry from AMBS;

Iris de León-Hartshorn, Associate Executive Director for Operations, MC USA;

Rachel Ringenberg Miller, Denominational Minister for Ministerial Leadership, MC USA;

Duncan Smith, Director for the Corinthian Plan of MC USA;

Marisa Smucker, Interim Executive Director for Mennonite Mission Network.

Delegates were acknowledged for their role as communicators and representatives for PNMC. Hosts and PNMC Board were thanked and acknowledged for their roles.

Rachel Ringenberg-Miller addressed the conference giving a brief overview of the role of MC USA for conferences. The Memo of Understanding for Pastors has been revised and she encouraged all to read the revisions on the MC USA website. A welcome was extended for all attending MC USA general meeting to be held July 3-7, 2023.

Marisa Smucker spoke of her work with Mennonite Mission Network and the collaboration with other church wide organizations on racial justice.

The minutes from the 2022 Annual conference of PNMC were noted with the correction that Rachael Weasley was licensed for a specialized ministry and not for ordination. The motion was made to accept the minutes as corrected by Rod Stafford, seconded by Terry Rediger. Motion carried.

The ballot for leadership roles was presented. The Gifts Discernment Team (GDT) uses input from churches which are matched with the gifts, skills and willingness to serve in positions. Consideration is made for geographic location, experience, gender identity, and cultural background. The PNMC board approves the ballot. The delegate role is to mark the ballot including suggestions for future candidates. Ballots were collected and tallied by Chris Nord.

Executive Conference Minister's Report – Eric Massanari

Eric spoke of hope through scarcity as we live through a period of reformation in the church. Using the acronym of PNMC Eric's report shows how Promoting spiritual development, Nurture of healthy congregations, in Making strong connections throughout the conference and beyond and Calling each other to fulfill God's purpose for the world have been worked at over the last year. We know we are being changed as people and the church has a role in this reformation. Scarcity thinking is replaced by an abundance of God's love.

"There is no end to grace. And we are all instruments of grace. The more we give it, the more we share it, the more we use it, the more God makes. There is

no scarcity of love. There is plenty, and always more.” Rosemary Freeney Harding (1930-2004)

Acknowledgement was made for the District Pastors, Eric expressed gratefulness for their ministry. It was noted that Merritt Welty and Bob Buxman have both retired from being district pastors in the last year.

Board of Director’s Report – Jack Swaim

Jack expressed thanks to Eric for his report and the work he is doing for PNMC. Eric’s focus is on the operational aspects of PNMC. He works directly with people, Pastors, district pastors, congregations, church plants as well as participating in the PNMC board meetings.

The volunteer Board’s focus is on longer-term direction, making sure that PNMC has resources (staff) to support our congregations. The board looks for people resources, financial resources and policies to support the congregations.

The board formed a search committee to fill the role of Executive Conference Minister (ECM) after Katherine Jameson Pitts retired. We are delighted that we found a mutually attractive match. Eric started his term November 1, 2022.

Kevin Chupp, moderator elected for a two-year term in 2022, was called to a new pastorate resulting in the board asking Jack to complete a one-year term October 1, 2022. Chris Nord, moderator elect will serve a two- year term as moderator starting June 24, 2023. The Gifts Discernment team (GDT) consisting of the Moderator, ECM, Moderator-Elect and two non-board members, Rick Bollman and Jennifer Gingerich located person’s willing to serve on the slate for the delegate consideration.

The board set aside support for the Healthy Congregational grants and created a process to award grants that would support congregational projects. About \$44,000.00 has been awarded for 25 different grants since the process started.

Policies are reviewed and adjusted to stay current. After the MC USA denominational Membership Guidelines were retired the board realigned our policies accordingly. A policy on digital security is being developed. Board meeting minutes are posted on the PNMC website (pnmc.org).

Treasurer Report – Dave Hockman-Wert

The report was referenced in the delegate handbook. Dave reports being on solid financial footing. Congregational contributions have increased and less expenses than budgeted created a net operating income of \$27,000.00. A small loss is projected for the 2024 budget year. We have had five net positive years in a row.

Question & Answer period

Q: The question was raised as to the investment funds and if any restrictions to use have been applied.

A: Currently there are no restrictions on the investment funds and the funds are used to support operations as needed. The amount allocated has been 4% per annual year.

Q: How did we end up with \$18,000.00 less expenses than budget?

A: A larger amount was budgeted for a new ECM, not knowing the length of time between the ECM’s and funds needed for transition.

Q: What is the role of delegates regarding the budget? Is there access to more details in the budget, to see more line items.

A: The Finance Team, Dave, Deren Kellogg and two others appointed to the committee work on the details of the budget and reports.

Q: How do I find the grant application for the Healthy Congregational Grant fund?

A: On the PNMC web page, enter the Members tab. Contact Barb Buxman for help.

Announcements

- Lin Rush with the Pacific Northwest Historical Society invited everyone to see the Voices of Conscience exhibit coming to the Watzek Library Lewis & Clark College, 615 Palatine Hill Road, Portland Oregon 97219, from July 28-September 24, 2023. Hours are 9:00 am-6:00 pm July and August, and 8:00 am to Midnight during September. This is a “traveling exhibit remembering the witness of peace-minded people against the First World War 1914-1918.” For more information visit the website www.pnmhs.org.
- Please see Barb Buxman to update any information in the PNMC directory.
- Chaplains were invited to join Teresa Moser for lunch today.
- Reminder to the Board Members to meet during lunch for a meet and greet.

Ballot Results

Chris reviewed the ballots and the delegates affirmed the ballot.

Elected by Delegates:

New board members:

- Karla Morton (Moderator Elect)
- Gary Jewell (board member)

New term and continuing board member:

- Dave Hockman-Wert, Treasurer

Gifts Discernment Team (GDT)

- Gloria Nussbaum,
- Rick Bollman

Appointed by the Board of Directors:

Jennifer Gingerich -Pastoral Leadership Team (PLT)

Kathy Bilderback – Finance Team (FT)

Thanks was given to those completing their terms:

- Leonard Nolt, 4 years on the Board and policy guru
- Harold Nussbaum, Finance team
- Rod Stafford, multiple terms on PLT
- Dianna Eshleman, past Moderator (for ongoing support)

The delegate session was closed with prayer.

Break for lunch

Presentation by Dr. Malinda Berry – Defining Nonviolent Communication

Nonviolent Communication is the integration of four things:

- Consciousness: a set of principles that support living a life of compassion, collaboration courage and authenticity
- Language: understanding how word 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”

Source Puddle Dancer Press www.nonviolentcommunication.com/learn-nonviolent-communication

Worship

Dr. Malinda Berry spoke of being “Rooted and Grounded in Christ.” In this devotional the church was presented as a tree. The roots are the congregation rooted and grounded. The trunk is the main support represented by pastors and leaders. The trunk supports the branches. The branches represent the broader church. All parts of the tree need to be connected.

An anointing service was held for Eric Massanari as the new Executive Conference Minister for PNMC led by Rachel Ringenberg Miller. Chris Nord was installed as the Conference Moderator for PNMC led by Jack Swaim.

Communion was celebrated with an affirmation of faith and prayer led by Eric Massanari.

Invitation to the 2024 PNMC Annual Meeting

Moderator Chris Nord invited everyone to attend the next annual meeting to be held June 21-23, 2024 in Bend, Oregon with the Bend Mennonite Church!

The worship service was closed with a benediction led by Chris Nord.

Submitted, Julia Todd, PNMC Secretary