



PO Box 12, 111 East Main St.
Somerset PA 15501
Phone: 814-443-2007
E: office@alleghenymennoniteconference.org
www.alleghenymennoniteconference.org

Conference Minister Annual Report June 25, 2013

This year I am using the Job description for Conference Minister as a basis for my report. The job description (green print) follows with my responses to the various areas inserted (black print).

Job description for Conference Minister

AMC's Conference Minister will lead and coordinate the activities of the conference to strengthen the nurture, worship, and mission of conference pastors and congregations. To do this, the Conference Minister will work closely with the Leadership Council and other groups so that the conference and its congregations may more fully join in God's redemptive activity in the world.

Duties

A. With pastors

- ❖ Become acquainted with conference pastors, understanding their strengths as well as areas needing growth and development.

Throughout the year, I have numerous opportunities to meet with pastors in a variety of ways—at pastor's meetings of various kinds, individual meetings as necessary, phone calls and email contacts, and while attending congregational worship and meetings. I use these opportunities to further develop relationships with the pastors of Allegheny Mennonite Conference. The more I know a person, the more I understand his or her strengths and areas needing growth and further development. Also, during this year, I have developed a document, called "Accountability and Growth Plan", that has been approved by the Leadership Council. This is a tool that encourages the pastor to do some self-evaluation and create goals for him or herself for the coming year. As this is implemented in the coming year, it will provide us with additional conversation points and assist me to understand our pastors more deeply.

- ❖ Listen to pastors' concerns and joys and provide understanding and challenge as necessary.

Calling people into a transforming relationship with Jesus and His Church

I meet regularly with pastors during regional meetings. During these meetings, I invite pastors to share what's happening in their congregations as well as in their personal lives. Following our time of sharing, we pray for one another. I am also available to pastors on an individual basis as needed. Pastors have contacted me through email, phone (both office and cell phone), text, and face-to-face, requesting some time. I try to meet these requests as quickly as I can whenever they come up. In these times of meeting, I certainly hope I am providing understanding as well as challenge, when needed.

❖ *Facilitate the development of training and professional renewal experiences for conference pastors.*

This past year I arranged for Dr. Melissa Hofstetter to meet with pastors for a day-long seminar on mandated reporting. This seminar was also open to those in our congregations who work closely with children. The Fall Pastors Retreat was held March 8-10 at Laurelville. Because this weekend falls so closely to the Spring Faith and Life Gathering, I worked with Laurelville to find a different weekend for this retreat. The next Pastors Retreat is scheduled for October 10-12, 2014. The annual Spring Study was held April 29-May 2, 2013. Duane Yoder led us in a study of John. Next year's Spring Study will be April 28-May 1, 2014 with George Brunk III leading us in a study of reading the Bible through an Anabaptist lens. This year I have been working with Steve Bustos of Everence to develop a pastors seminar involving finances which will be held on August 2 before the start of Celebration 2013.

❖ *Meet regularly with pastors on a regional basis.*

I meet with Eastern Regional pastors once a quarter. I meet with Casselman Valley and Western Regional pastors every other month. Until January of 2013, I met with Johnstown Regional pastors every month. However, in January of 2013, we restarted Pastor Peer. I now meet with pastors at Pastor Peer every other month, alternating with the Johnstown, Casselman Valley and Western Regional meetings. Some pastors from all four regions attend Pastor Peer.

B. With congregations

❖ *Become acquainted with each conference congregation, developing an awareness of both the strengths and the areas of weaknesses in each.*

I am nearing the completion of my goal to visit each conference congregation on a Sunday morning. This goal began with my interim assignment and continues on as conference minister. Many congregations have been visited more than once due to various things going on in the life of the congregation. I still have a few congregations that I have not yet been able to visit. My intention is to visit these congregations before the end of 2013. I also learn about congregations as I meet regularly with pastors. In my congregational visits, I have been impressed with the variety of worship styles that we have across the conference, as well as the spiritual vitality I find in the people of the congregation.

❖ *Offer tools and training to assist congregations in their growth and development.*

I have developed a sermon that introduces Mennonite Church USA's Purposeful Plan to congregations and have been privileged to offer this sermon to 1/3 of our congregations, as well as to the Leadership Council during retreat. The Purposeful Plan is a wonderful tool to help us in evaluating our present and visioning for the future. I have also led Morgantown Church of the Brethren in a weekend retreat to assist them in doing their own vision work.

❖ *Give assistance in times of pastoral transitions in securing, interviewing, and calling prospective candidates.*

Calling people into a transforming relationship with Jesus and His Church

A number of pastors have sought my council in the past year as they have considered whether God was inviting them into a new ministry, or into retirement. I welcome these conversations and count it a privilege to be able to journey with pastors in these times of transition. When a congregation is in need of a pastor, I help them through the process by providing information on next steps, orienting their pastoral search committee to the process, and then working with the search committee to provide them with potential candidates, and offering encouragement along the way. When a potential candidate is in need of credentialing, I arrange for an interview with the credentialing team from the appropriate region, orient the credentialing team, and participate in the interview. When a pastoral search has been completed, I work with the congregation to find a time for installation/credentialing and, when the day comes, officiate over this portion of the worship service.

❖ *Participate in congregational/pastoral reviews.*

I have appointed review committees to resources for pastoral/congregational reviews on the Mennonite Church USA website, offering advice about how to use these resources as needed, and participate in the review itself as appropriate to the needs of the congregation. Not all congregations in Allegheny Mennonite Conference do reviews, and of those that do, not all have asked for my assistance. But when I know a review is happening, I become involved as needed.

❖ *Advocate for the pastor in areas of salary; encourage sabbatical, study leaves, as needed.*

Particularly when a congregation is beginning a relationship with a new pastor, it is easy to enter into conversation with the congregation regarding salary, sabbaticals, and other items pertinent to the covenant that is being formed between the pastor and congregation. I have talked about the possible need for a sabbatical with one pastor, and would also talk with the congregation about this possibility if and when needed.

❖ *Find ways to offer resources and help in times of congregational crises and tensions.*

While I don't relish times of crises and tension, I am certainly ready and willing to look for ways and resources to help at such a time. Recently, I met with one congregation to assist with a pastoral review and spent about half of the meeting time talking openly with them about tensions they are having with conference itself.

❖ *Serve as spokesperson, along with moderator/moderator elect, in conversations with groups seeking affiliation with Allegheny Mennonite Conference.*

In the beginning of conversation with the Bhutanese-Nepali Church of Pittsburgh, I spent many hours on the phone or in person with their pastor as we discerned if this was the group they wanted to affiliate with or not. Since their affiliation with our conference, I serve on the support team for this church plant. I was also in numerous conversations with Shalom: a Peace Church of Brother Francis and Sister Clare before they became a church plant of Allegheny Mennonite Conference. I also found persons to serve as a support team for their pastor, and met with them for their first meeting. Sadly, I will need to pay further attention to this support team as one of the four, Marilyn Bender, is moving out of our conference. This may be true for the Bhutanese-Nepali Church support team as well, due to Sandeep Thomas' recent move to Kansas. However, for the time being his intention is to stay involved via SKYPE.

C. With conference

- ❖ Facilitate the development and processing of vision for the conference.

I have been working with the Leadership Council to plan for visioning events to take place at delegate meetings.

- ❖ Provide for the interviewing and credentialing of conference pastors.

I have set up credential teams for each of the four regions. All but the Eastern Region have had numerous occasions to meet with persons for the purpose of interviewing for licenses toward ordination, ordination, and licenses for a specific ministry. I send out appropriate materials to each credentialing team as the need arises so that they can properly prepare for the interviews, arrange for time and place for the interviews to take place, participate in the interviews, and then communicate decisions made by these teams to the appropriate persons.

- ❖ Maintain records of credentials and congregational information.

Records are kept internally within filing cabinets in my office. I regularly update our conference's listing on Mennonite Church USA's data base. I also maintain our congregational listing on Mennonite Church USA's data base, as well as list pastoral openings when they arise.

- ❖ Provide leadership and encouragement for the development of conference regions as requested.

At this point, the focus has been on pastors regional meetings.

- ❖ Participate in meetings of the Leadership Council, delegate assemblies, and other meetings as called by the moderators.

I have participated fully in Celebration 2012; the Sept. 5, 2012, Nov. 3, 2012, June 6, 2013 Leadership Council meetings, Jan. 11-13 Leadership Council Retreat; the March 2, 2013 Faith and Life Gathering, (there was no November Faith and Life Gathering), and meetings with our moderator and moderator-elect as called for by our moderator. I intend to be present at Celebration 2013 unless our first grandchild arrives during this time.

- ❖ Serve as staff for the Leadership Council.

I have been asked to do a variety of things as staff for Leadership Council, including (but not limited to!) serving as Leadership Council's representative on the World's Attic Board, which meets monthly, and keeping up portions of Allegheny Mennonite Conference's website. To the best of my ability, I have carried out all that has been asked of me by Leadership Council.

- ❖ Oversee the work of other conference staff.

I meet regularly with Kathy and Joy in formal staff meetings. We also talk freely of our work when we are in the office together. In this way, I have a good picture of the work conference staff is doing.

- ❖ Serve as spokesperson for the conference in relation to media requests.

I do this as the need arises.

- ❖ Serve as conference representative in legal activities.

When I served as interim conference minister, there was need to function in this role. Thankfully, conference has not been involved in any legal proceedings that needed my attention during the 2012-2013 year.

D. With the denomination

- ❖ Serve as a liaison between the conference and Mennonite Church USA.

I am in regular conversation with our Denominational Minister, Nancy Kauffmann. I try to keep congregations informed of items that come from the denominational offices, as appropriate by passing the information along to pastors. I keep Mennonite Church USA informed regarding our conference through our denominational minister and through conference minister and ANEC meetings.

- ❖ Develop and maintain working relationship with other conference and district ministers in Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada.

Conference ministers meet for a breakout session during the Constituency Leaders Council, and have an annual Conference Minister retreat. I attend both. During the retreat, we also meet with the district ministers of Mennonite Church Canada. These meetings are extremely valuable for developing and maintaining working relationships. I have experienced these meetings to be both times of learning as well as supportive. I appreciate the friendship and wisdom that I find as we gather.

- ❖ Serve as conference representative to the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) and delegate meetings of Mennonite Church USA.

I attend Constituency Leaders Council's two-times-per-year, which are 2 1/2 day meetings. I will be attending Phoenix and serving as a table leader during the delegate sessions this year.

- ❖ Provide feedback to the denomination through consultations, surveys, and written reports as requested.

Periodically, conference ministers are asked to attend conference phone calls to receive information and provide feedback. Sometimes we are asked to read and respond to emails. Currently, we have been invited to provide critique on several drafts as denominational ministers of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada work on a revision of the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. I write reports about Allegheny Mennonite Conference for CLC meetings and provide other reports as needed. This year, reports were requested regarding church plants in our conferences.

- ❖ Serve as conference representative to regional denominational gatherings, such as meetings of Atlantic North East Conferences (ANEC).

I also attend Atlantic Northeast Conference day-long meetings, two times a year. This year, both meetings were held at the Lancaster Conference offices. The most recent one, held on May 16, was an unusual meeting. Alan Hirsch, a South African-born missiologist, led us in a seminar on the missional church, reinventing ourselves to be relevant for our present culture, and church planting.

E. With other religious bodies

- ❖ Represent the conference in ecumenical discussions and activities.
- ❖ Interact and cooperate with other middle judicatory leaders serving in geographical areas in which conference churches are located.

I attend a Middle Judicatory meeting twice a year. Also attending this meeting are persons from the Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Church of the Brethren, Brethren in Christ, United Church of Christ, and Roman Catholic denominations. This past fall I attended a luncheon, sponsored by this same group, which included a lecture by Kendra Creasy Dean, author of *Almost Christian*. During these meetings I represent our conference, as well as interact and cooperate with other middle judicatory leaders. I believe this speaks to both of the above items.

There is more to this job description which I've printed below. I will not respond to the qualifications

Calling people into a transforming relationship with Jesus and His Church

or employment portions in this report. As to the accountability portion, I will say that I have been working on an accountability document for our pastors, and have promised that I will not ask them to do anything that I am not willing to do. Therefore, I have completed the accountability plan for myself and have turned it in to the Leadership Council. I write reports, or give oral reports as requested by the moderator for Leadership Council as well as to delegates. A mid-term review was conducted by the Executive Committee this winter. This review was reported to the delegates at the March 2 Faith and Life Gathering, expressing satisfaction in the work I am doing as your conference minister.

We certainly face challenges as a conference, and I continue to learn and grow as a conference minister, but overall, I find joy in serving our Lord as I serve you. I believe it is God who has called me and I thank you for giving me this opportunity to serve.

Donna Mast

Donna Mast, Allegheny Mennonite Conference Minister

Qualifications

The following are some of the qualifications and gifts Allegheny Mennonite Conference looks for in the person it hires as Conference Minister:

1. A person of vision for the future of the conference, its congregations, its pastors, and its leadership.
2. An Anabaptist in faith, values, and practice who is willing to join and participate in an Allegheny Conference congregation if not already a member.
3. A person with seminary training or one willing to receive graduate training after being hired.
4. One who has experience as a pastor in a Mennonite Church USA congregation.
5. A person with skills in team-building and leadership development.
6. Someone able to model leadership skills for conference pastors and other leaders.
7. A person with a good balance of people skills and evaluative skills.
8. A person with skills in maintaining, evaluating, and changing structures as deemed appropriate in cooperation with conference leadership.
9. One who knows the value of self-care and actively participates in personal and professional growth opportunities.

Accountability

1. The Conference Minister will be responsible to the Leadership Council through the moderator.
2. The Conference Minister will prepare reports to conference delegates as requested by the Leadership Council.
3. The Conference Minister will be evaluated mid-way through each term of service by the Executive Committee, acting on behalf of the Leadership Council.

Employment

1. Salary and benefits for AMC's Conference Minister will follow the guidelines for pastors and conference ministers of Mennonite Church USA.

Length of employment will be by three-year terms unless negotiated differently by the candidate and the Leadership Council.