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## **Conference Minister Annual Report** July 29, 2014

Once again, 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. This year, we have implemented the "Accountability and Growth Plan", a document that was approved by the Leadership Council, and is in keeping with the agreement that conferences have with one another across Mennonite Church USA to encourage continued growth and accountability. It is a tool that encourages the pastor to do some self-evaluation and create goals for him or herself for the coming year. I anticipate using it to provide additional conversation points at our regional pastors meetings in the spring of 2015. I have found that the completed forms assist me in understanding our pastors more deeply.

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

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 representatives from Everence to meet with pastors for a day-long seminar on finances. Those who attended this seminar expressed appreciation for this day. We did not have a Pastors Retreat this year because we are moving from a spring weekend to a fall weekend. This change was made to better spread out the times when pastors are asked to gather. The next Pastors Retreat is scheduled for October 10-12, 2014. The annual Spring Study was held April 28-May 1, 2014 with George Brunk III leading us in a study of reading the Bible through an Anabaptist lens. Next year's Spring Study will be held on April 27-30, 2015. Perry Yoder will be leading us in a study of Leviticus, drawing upon his work as editor of the Believers Church Bible Commentary on the same book. This year I invited Terry Shue, Denominational Minister for Mennonite Church, to lead the pastors in a day-long seminar which will be held on August 1 before the start of Celebration 2014. In the morning session we will focus on debate, dialogue, and discernment. In the afternoon session, Terry will lead us in finding ways to articulate where we are at personally on the issue of homosexuality while listening respectfully to other pastors expressing their own hearts on the issue.

- ❖ Meet regularly with pastors on a regional basis.

I meet with Eastern Regional pastors once a quarter. I meet with Casselman Valley, Johnstown, and Western Regional pastors every other month. I 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 continue to visit conference congregation on Sunday mornings. Sometimes these visits are initiated by the congregation or pastor and other times I invite myself. These times of visiting are very helpful in becoming aware of congregational strengths and weaknesses. 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.

Last year, I developed a sermon that introduced Mennonite Church USA's Purposeful Plan to congregations and was privileged to offer this sermon to 1/3 of our congregations, as well as to the Leadership Council during their 2014 retreat. The Purposeful Plan is a wonderful tool to help us in evaluating our present and visioning for the future. I have not focused my time so intentionally on any

one area of assistance this year but do try to keep pastors and congregations informed regarding class offerings and resources that are available from Mennonite Church USA. This coming year, one of our own congregations, Kaufman Mennonite Church, will be the host site for a class on First and Second Corinthians, being offered by Eastern Mennonite Seminary Lancaster. Anyone wanting more information may contact Kaufman or me.

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

A number of pastors have sought my council as they have considered whether God was inviting them into a new ministry, or into retirement. Others have invited me into their discernment process regarding ordination. I welcome these conversations and count it a privilege to be able to journey with pastors at these points in their lives. Occasionally, I have the joy of talking with someone who is considering pastoral ministry for the very first time. I attend both Eastern Mennonite Seminary's and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary's annual pastors' events in order to meet and talk with students who will be seeking pastoral positions. 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 pointed 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 pastors, and would also talk with congregations about this possibility if 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. I have had conversation with people and congregations who are currently uncomfortable in their relationship with Allegheny Mennonite Conference.

❖ 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. Currently, this support team requires some attention due to people who have or are moving out of the area. I've been in conversation with the remaining members, as well as the pastor to learn what skills/expertise they believe are necessary as I look for replacements for the people who no longer are able to serve on the Shalom Support Team.

### *C. With conference*

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

I continue to work with the Leadership Council as we, together, vision for the future. Delegates have been invited into visioning this year in particular as we have evaluated our current structure and as we considered whether or not to continue with the work of the Reconciliation Discernment Committee.

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

I have set up credential teams for each of the four regions. All four regions have had opportunity to meet with persons for credentialing purposes. The most recent credentialing interview took place via SKYPE, with Allegheny folks gathered in one place, connected electronically to the interviewee through our computers. 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.

The focus continues to be 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 2013; the Sept. 12, 2013, April 10, 2014, July 10, 2014 Leadership Council meetings, Jan. 17-19, 2014 Leadership Council Retreat; the November 2, 2013 and March 1, 2014 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 2014.

#### ❖ 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 liaison to the Reconciliation Discernment Committee and as representative on the World's Attic Board, until Wayne Yoder became the representative, 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.

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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 2013-2014 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, Constituency Leaders Council and Atlantic North East Conferences 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 area church 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 served as the co-worship facilitator for the March 2014 CLC meeting. Since then, I have agreed to complete the unexpired term of worship facilitator at the October 2014 and March 2015 CLC gatherings. I expect to attend Kansas City 2015 and serve as a table leader during the delegate sessions next 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. Most recently, conference ministers and moderators were invited to attend a conference phone call regarding the counsel that had been given to the Executive Board by an appointed task force regarding Mountain States Conference's decision to license a woman in a same-sex committed relationship. I did attend that meeting, and I also served on that task force. I write reports about Allegheny Mennonite Conference for CLC meetings and provide other reports as needed.

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

Normally, I attend Atlantic Northeast Conference day-long meetings, which happen two times a year.

This year, I had scheduling conflicts for both meetings. However, Allegheny Mennonite Conference was well represented by Lawrence Brenneman.

#### *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. 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 or employment portions in this report. As to the accountability portion, I will say that we have implemented an accountability and growth document for our pastors, and I promised that I will not ask pastors to do anything that I am not willing to do. Therefore, I completed the accountability and growth plan for myself and 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.

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.

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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.