

**Fall Faith and Life Gathering**  
**November 3, 2018**  
at University Mennonite Church

The Fall Faith and Life Gathering of Allegheny Mennonite Conference was held on Saturday, November 3, 2018 at University Mennonite Church, State College, Pennsylvania.

The gathering began with worship led by Karen Brandes, songs led by Evelyn Bartsch, and remarks by Pastor Kate Heinzl, all from University Mennonite Church (UMC). Leah Lumeya read selected verses from Deuteronomy 30:11-20, and Kate Heinzl read Matthew 11:28-30. Both of these scriptures were used at Kate's installation service 2 weeks before, and she reflected on the concepts of choosing life and resting in Jesus.

Moderator Enos Tice called Session 1 to order, welcomed everyone, thanked University Mennonite, and mentioned a change in the order of agenda items.

Enos stated that Allegheny Mennonite Conference values:

- an Anabaptist approach to Christian faith and practice
- place-based ministry and congregational discernment
- collaborative and mutual accountability
- extending the reign of God

Members of Leadership Council were named. A prayer was offered for Darrel and Kathy Holsopple because Darrel is in the hospital for bleeding ulcers and Kathy is unable to attend the gathering.

Roll call was done by Youth Conference Minister Joy Cotchen and Molly Piwonka. There was a total of 44 delegates and 9 visitors for a total of 53 persons present.

Youth Conference Minister's Report – Joy Cotchen

- She wants to find out how many children and youth ages 0-20 are in each congregation. Pastors will be getting emails for this information.
- CDC (Central District Conference) is interested in AMC's youth ministry and is looking at how to share resources.
- The Youth Cabinet has 5 youth and 2 young adults.
- Fall-o-wer's Retreat at Pine Springs Camp November 16-18 for youth ages 14-20.
- SnoKamp is February 8-10 at Laurelville. She would like to look at a one-day camp at Laurelville for younger kids.
- They are recruiting Bible teachers for Summer Camp at Laurelville. The theme is "I Am," looking at the "I am" statements of Jesus.
- MennoCon19 will be July 2-6, 2019 in Kansas City. There will be joint worship for junior high through adult for all services. There will be 90-minute equipping seminars. Early registration begins February 6. Full and part-time volunteers are needed. There is not a theme other than using Journey Forward materials focusing on John 20:19-22.

### Conference Minister's Report – Dave Mishler

- He did a recent installation for University Mennonite pastor Kate Heinzl. He would like to find a better term than “installation” for the ceremony. Kate replaces Marv Friesen who left a year ago.
- Springs Mennonite will be remaining in AMC and will not be moving to Virginia Conference. Paul Versluis has been called to be interim pastor, and a search committee has been formed to find a pastor.
- CDC-AMC Affiliation Task Force has completed its work. AMC will remain on its own as a conference while keeping a strategic partnership with CDC. They will attend each other's events. Doug Luginbill, Conference Minister from CDC was present. The two conferences will continue to get to know one another and communicate regularly.
- The International Guest House continues in its ministry with some decline in occupancy. They are looking for ways to market it better to make it more current.
- He has been helping with search committees and credentialing.
- He is working on restoring relationships with old congregations, including credentialing a new pastor Richard McIntire at Masontown and having conversations with congregations who are considering joining AMC.
- Pastors are very involved in AMC.
- The conference goals of Jesus centered, collaborative, and committed to place-based ministry are being developed. May we be courageous as we walk in the way of Jesus.

### CLC Report – Phoebe Sharp

- CLC met recently in Chicago for a day and 2 half days with new MC USA executive director Glen Guyton. They used the green, yellow, and red system on whether progress is on track.
- The Executive Board plans to equip members to witness to God's peace, to follow Jesus, and to work on diversity and inclusion.
- They are looking for volunteers for sharing stories at the next conference event.
- MC USA Moderator David Boshart said that Anabaptist theology is shown in our structure with the relationship between CLC and the executive board and the percentage for MEA.
- They would like MEA to be involved in the training of tradespeople.
- They are working on the merger of *The Mennonite* and *Mennonite World Review*.

The minutes from the Celebration of Congregations and Conference on August 3-5 were reviewed. There were no corrections. **Action: Minutes from August 4, 2018 were approved.**

### Springs Mennonite Church update – LeAnne Zook introduced Doug Berg from Springs, who said:

- There was a long discernment process. The previous pastor tried to put off a vote as long as possible.
- An exploratory committee was formed in March of 2017 with Julia Tice as chair.
- They considered Virginia, Ohio, Atlantic Coast, Franconia, and Allegheny. Later Lancaster replaced Atlantic Coast for consideration.
- AMC ranked high in both positives and negatives.
- They liked Virginia best because there were no serious objections.
- They spent several Sundays discussing conference issues and decided to vote to choose between AMC and Virginia.
- They also voted to amend their constitution and bylaws to state that no pastor called to Springs could preside over same-sex weddings retained the 2/3 vote needed to leave the conference.

- The vote was 57% to move to Virginia and 43% to stay with AMC, which meant that they did not have the 2/3 vote to move and they would be staying with AMC.
- Question: What is the tenor of the congregation? Don Green, elder chair answered: A few have left. There is still an underlying tension because a minority got their way. There is overwhelming sentiment that AMC is a good place for the majority of people. They have had lay people preach. An interim pastor is starting soon and he will need to keep things on an even keel.
- The delegates from Springs were invited to come up front and others laid hands on them and prayed.

Stretch break

Enos opened Session 2 by saying that congregations have been sharing stories as a way of giving and receiving counsel and so that other delegates can pray for them.

Sharing Stories: 3<sup>rd</sup> Way Collective – Joyce Hall of the Student Ministry Advisory Committee and Kate Heinzl

- For years, UMC supported United Campus Ministry, which covered a number of denominations that did not have their own campus ministry. It folded in 2011. After that, there was an interest in forming some kind of Anabaptist campus ministry.
- After 2 years of discernment on Anabaptist and biblical principles of peace and justice, 3<sup>rd</sup> Way Collective was formed in 2014 as both a UMC ministry and a Penn State student group through the university.
- Ben Wideman started in October of 2014 as a full-time campus pastor supported mostly by the budget of UMC.
- University Baptist & Brethren Church in State College now provides significant financial support of 3<sup>rd</sup> Way Collective and several members of the Student Ministry Advisory Committee of UMC.
- Ben has worked on changing the focus from programming to presence to be more available for conversations and counseling with students.
- There is an intergenerational collaboration between 3<sup>rd</sup> Way Collective and Foxdale Retirement Community.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Way Collective has been involved in more than 400 activities in 4 years.
- Ben Wideman was unable to attend, but put together a video in which students, faculty, staff, and community members shared why they find value in 3<sup>rd</sup> Way Collective and why people should support it.
- Ben is available to speak to congregations, so get in touch if you want him to speak at yours.
- The website address for 3<sup>rd</sup> Way Collective is [www.3rdwaycollective.org](http://www.3rdwaycollective.org).
- Joy Cotchen led a time of prayer with Joyce and Kate in the middle and others gathered round laying on hands.

Copies of the AMC Policy and Purpose statement with proposed edits were distributed as necessary. The Leadership Council made a motion to accept the changes. In discussion, there was approval of making the wording more positive and looking toward the future. This document is necessary so that prospective congregations know more about AMC.

**Action: changes to the AMC Policy and Purpose statement were approved.**

Financial Update

- New treasurer Karin Miller was introduced. She does not have conference experience, but has much financial experience.

*Faith and Life Gathering  
11/3/2018 tba*

- Half of conference income is from congregations, with significant income also from reserve funds, celebration fees, and individual donors.
- Expenditures are not too much over budget for the first quarter, which is good.
- Many congregations left the conference after the meeting at Springs in 2015, with it declining to 12 congregations. Income was much reduced after that, and after a big drop the first year, it gradually declined each year after that.

An offering was collected for AMC. Enos led a prayer. Dave said that the slow, steady decline in income is a trend in all conferences. Each year, individual contributions have increased and have exceeded the budget for that category. This will be part of an ongoing budget strategy.

Final Report from the Affiliation Task Force – Dave Mishler and Doug Luginbill from CDC

- Reports were distributed as needed
- The work is completed after meeting for 5 or 6 times.
- After looking at a continuum of affiliation options, they opted for a 'strategic partnership'.
- The CDC theme for their annual meeting was “Come walk with us to God knows where.”
- Both look forward to a continuing relationship and plan to do things together in the future.
- Thanks to those who were on the task force.
- This affiliation is being looked at by other conferences.

Update from Pittsburgh Mennonite after the October 27 synagogue shooting – Dave Swanson

- Pittsburgh Mennonite used to be in Squirrel Hill and is now just one neighborhood over, and has long had numerous ties with Tree of Life Synagogue over the years.
- One person killed was a medical colleague of a member of Pittsburgh Mennonite.
- Interfaith efforts in Pittsburgh have been up and down in the past.
- The Muslim community raised the most money for the families of those killed.
- The coming together of different traditions feels very powerful, and there is hope that this will push people to forge new relationships in a long-term way.
- AMC made a mosaic of a tree in August during its Annual Celebration and suggests to make a gift of it to the Tree of Life Synagogue. (This mosaic was on display.)
- A hymn written after the synagogue shootings and set to a traditional Hebrew melody, “O God, This Day We Grieve,” was distributed and sung by those present.

Lunch break (with an offering collected for 3<sup>rd</sup> Way Collective)

Session 3 was called to order by Moderator Elect LeAnne Zook.

Sharing Stories: University Mennonite Church – Karl Keener and Gloria Horst Rosenberger

- Karl Keener shared how 55 years ago, 14 mostly young people created a charter and met on campus in Chambers Building. In 1980, UMC purchased the old Friends Meetinghouse, and when they outgrew that, they purchased the current building in 2007. The purpose of UMC has always been to support students, faculty, staff, and community people in spiritual growth and Anabaptist values.
- Karl shared the following UMC characteristics: community, members accept shared responsibility, Jesus is Lord and central to how we love, being a witness for peace, all members bring something to the table, walking

with Jesus is more important than doctrine, service is our watch word, and we want to keep strengthening our witness for peace in new ways.

- Gloria Horst Rosenberger gave a summary of UMC missions. With each new location, UMC has gotten more involved in the community. UMC supports Ken and Laura Litwiller with MCC in east Africa, Jae Young Lee and Karen Spicher with NARPI (Northeast Asia Regional Peacebuilding Institute) in South Korea, Good News Theological Seminary in Ghana, and the opening of a new Ten Thousand Villages Store in State College. UMC also supports local missions Park Forest Preschool (for low income children), Interfaith Human Services (many services for low income people), the State College Food Bank, Out of the Cold (winter shelter for the homeless), Bridge of Hope (help for homeless women and children), Centre Volunteers in Medicine (medical and dental care for uninsured), and prison ministries.
- Gloria also shared how UMC has a joint service each year with Albright/Bethune United Methodist Church during Black History Month and UMC joins with University Baptist and Brethren Church for the Palm Sunday Peace Walk each year. During the 10 months between pastors, we had many guest speakers, including Rabbi David Ostrich from Congregation Brit Shalom. Some people from UMC joined with people from many faith communities the night before at Congregation Brit Shalom to honor those killed at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh.
- People gathered round the UMC delegates for prayer.

Options to achieve a sustainable budget – LeAnne Zook and Dave Mishler

- The Summer Celebration had some small group activities on deciding who we are/top priorities.
- The goal is to be organizationally independent on the journey to financial sustainability.
- Ministerial staff priorities are: plan and resource pastor gatherings, assist congregations in pastor search and crisis management, marketing AMC by meeting with new congregations, and plan and coordinate youth activities at Laurelville and Youth Cabinet.
- AMC wants to be self-sustaining financially and to stop drawing from reserves. This likely will not come from increased congregational donations, so the focus needs to be on individual donations. Delegates will be getting a letter in December about finding donors.
- Comments included the suggestion to contact people who didn't want to leave the conference even though their congregation did, have extended family members sponsor a child for Youth Camp at Laurelville, and reach out to agencies or organizations whose values align with those of AMC.
- The largest conference expense is staff. If individual giving doesn't balance the current budget, staffing levels will need to be looked at. We need to think creatively. Ten congregations support AMC and we can't expect that to cover all that is in the staff priorities list.
- Doug from CDC said the viability question is still relevant in considering the strategic partnership. They have 43 congregations and a \$250,000 budget and their staff is at bare bones already.
- Suggestions from the Leadership Council include: creating a budget by 2021 that does not draw on reserves, send a full complement of delegates to national meetings without financial aid from other conferences, articulate a vision for giving and fundraising, and encourage membership of regional congregations who may be seeking a home in MCUSA.
- Organizations are encouraged to have 3-6 months of expenses as an emergency reserve fund. AMC currently has \$50,000 in reserves. The reserves came from the selling of a building, past fund raising, and a loan program for college students given to Everence and when the loans were paid back, they became reserves. This year's budget has \$13,000 from reserves and it may not all need to be used.

**Action: There was a motion brought by Enos and LeAnne stating that by voting to accept these suggestions, we are committing to make financial sustainability happen. If we can't do that, staff will need to be cut. We are going to develop a budget that will not use reserve funds. The motion was seconded and opened for discussion. Part of approval should include Leadership Council developing material to share with congregations. This allows Leadership Council, staff, and congregations to all be on the same page. A narrative budget would include a brochure with a breakdown of all that the conference does. There was a request for a hand vote and the motion passed unanimously.**

Additional suggestions – AMC congregations should send someone to a CDC congregation in the coming year and make a report. Reports will be published on the website. Direct staff to continue to share staff and resources. Encourage AMC pastors to invite CDC pastors and other pastors to participate in the 2019 Spring Study at Laurelville. Encourage AMC pastors to attend one CDC event in 2019 to continue to build relationships.

Open Mic – **Action: To commission Dave Swanson and Dave Mishler to give the Mosaic to the Pittsburgh Tree of Life congregation with a written explanation. Leah Lumeya will make photos of the Mosaic to keep a memory of it. Motion was seconded and passed.**

The spring location may be in Scottsdale but it hasn't been finalized.

Dave Mishler gave the closing prayer and benediction from Hebrews 13 followed by the singing of HWB 118, "Praise God from whom."

Respectfully submitted,  
Karen Rath