

### **#1 – Celebration of Congregations and Conference – August 4-6**

When a decision was made over a decade ago to call our annual meeting a “celebration,” the first question was what are we to celebrate? And if you notice the order of the rest of the handle, you see that *congregations* precede *conference*. That was intentional. In order to celebrate what we are together, we first must recognize who are and what we bring, each one, to the collective. It’s a little like saying “love your neighbor as you love yourself.” You need to first understand that healthy self-love is deeply important if we want healthy neighbor love. Both are essential.



So, we come together – to worship, fellowship, laugh, sing, seek, collaborate, challenge, listen, share a table. Getting together is a fruitful exercise. MC USA delegates just rejected a proposal to meet less frequently. And this year we welcome Glen Guyton, Executive Director of MC USA. Welcome, Glen!

We expect to learn and to seek vision and ministry together, in the name of Jesus Christ. MC USA is not immune to the maladies our sister denominations are experiencing. We pray for them. We pray for ourselves as we seek to find the path toward a transformational vision, of a new creation in Christ - aligning with the direction the Spirit is blowing in this generation. Or maybe, we dare to join what is difficult to domesticate – “a sound from heaven like the howling of a fierce wind (which) filled the entire house.” A collective, but “what seem(s) to be individual flames of fire alighting on each one of (us)” (Acts 2:2-3 CEB). What a transformation that would be!

### **#2 – Pastors/Leaders Appreciation Dinner**

Some 25 pastors and leaders are registered for a special forum and dinner on Friday afternoon to kick-off the annual Celebration festivities at Laurelville. Beginning at 3:00 PM, Glen Guyton will join conference pastors and leaders for an informative conversation about the future vision for Mennonite Church USA, using his recent book – **reawakened** – as background. At 5:15, the group will share in an “Appreciation Dinner” to honor and celebrate those who are leading our congregations. Because of several generous donations, the dinner is fully funded for leaders of congregations and the leadership council. Thank you to the generous donors for this event.

### **#3 – Financial Update – Year End Status**



Final numbers are in. There is room for both celebration and pause. Revenue exceeded budget in a few significant categories – Celebration income, Spring Study, Individual giving and interest income. Revenue from Congregations was significantly less than budget – by almost \$20,000. A combination of keeping expenses within budget (for the most part) and under-spending our youth ministry budget by \$10,000 kept us to about \$5,000 in actual negative net income. Extraordinary expenses from the pastor misconduct investigation reduced our reserves by almost \$6,000 for the year. We have a total assets balance of just over \$154,000. You will receive a more detailed report from our treasurer, Karin Miller, during the Saturday morning “Worshipful Work” delegate session.

In the new fiscal year (July 1), annual administrative fees are arriving to support our work (they were increased this year to \$750 per congregation, up from \$500, to have congregations share in more of the basic administrative expenses). Also, several congregations have already increased their giving based on the preliminary year-end report sent in late June. Thank you for your ongoing support of the ministry of Allegheny Mennonite Conference!

### **#4 – Pastor Peer Gatherings to resume in October**

An in-person pastor peer gathering is scheduled in Bedford, PA for October 17, from 9am-3pm, based on the results of a recent poll. Those who cannot attend have the option of joining by Zoom.