

Greetings to my Brothers and Sisters in Christ in the Central Plains Conference,

I am pleased that your conference has chosen to engage in discussion about complex issues. I hope that it will be a fruitful conversation. I do not anticipate that all will come to agreement, but I truly believe that the ability and commitment to respectful dialogue with those whom we disagree is central to the call to biblical peacemaking and shalom.

Anabaptist commitments to peace and nonviolence developed from the beginning of the Radical Reformation, based on seeking to faithfully follow Jesus. As a Mennonite college, peacemaking has thus been core to our identity at Goshen College from the very beginning, and has taken many forms: international education, mission work, activism, service to our neighbors, and infusion in the curriculum, to name a few. Goshen College's peace commitment has never wavered, even as practices have varied. This is a college where the Anabaptist Vision was birthed, where a number of the Mennonite young adults who participated in Vietnam War draft resistance studied and where it was decided by leadership to fly the American flag alongside the United Nations flag following that war.

In the last two years, we have more clearly and publicly articulated the essence of what we are about at Goshen College – making peace in all its forms. In describing ourselves and what makes this a unique learning environment, we are committed to using vivid, positive, affirming, contagious language as a college that promotes Christ-centered peace.

As I have devoted my entire adult ministry to bringing into the Mennonite church hundreds of new members and mentoring leaders for the church, I have come to believe that the peacemaking way of Christ is best shared with a welcoming spirit that does not challenge perspectives at the door, but invites consideration of new perspectives over time and in community. That continues to be part of our missional approach at Goshen College.


I am committed to retaining the best of what it means to be a Mennonite college, while opening the doors wider to all who might come to embrace our core values of Christ centeredness, passionate learning, servant leadership, global citizenship and compassionate peacemaking. We have such faith in these values that we are staking our future on them and integrating them in the classroom, the board room, the break room and every where in between, so all who are part of this community better understand the Anabaptist faith.

I believe that when the Mennonite church and Goshen College are clear about our core values, we can be a bit more flexible about practices related to them. What's most important is that people are headed or welcomed toward the core and not driven away from it, for who a person becomes after being fully engaged in a college or a church matters more than who they are when they enter.

Regardless of the practices that might change from year to year at Goshen College, the values and mission remain the same. We will continue to provide a transformative Christ-centered liberal arts education as we carry forth the vision of becoming even more of an intercultural, international and integrative learning community.

Thank you for the ways your conference has engaged with us in that vision through your prayers, support and continually sending your young people to learn and grow with us.

Peace to you all,



Goshen College President Jim Brenneman