



Resources for faith formation and leadership development

Academic programs

AMBS serves the church as a learning community with an Anabaptist vision, educating followers of Jesus Christ to be leaders for God's reconciling mission in the world. Our programs integrate academics, spiritual formation and practice. Join us — whether in person or at a distance — and deepen your understanding of Scripture, faith and Anabaptist theology!

- **Study at a distance**
 - **Master of Divinity Connect** (online and hybrid courses)
 - **Master of Arts: Theology and Global Anabaptism** (fully or partially online)
 - **Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies** (fully or partially online; customizable)
- **Study on campus**
 - **Master of Divinity Campus**
 - **Master of Arts in Christian Formation**
 - **Master of Arts: Theology and Peace Studies**
 - **Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies**
ambs.edu/academics
- **Financial aid:** AMBS offers generous need-based financial aid, matching grants and scholarships to help make your education affordable. ambs.edu/financialaid
- **Want to explore seminary study?** Take an online, campus or hybrid class, even if you're not yet admitted to AMBS, and your first class is 50% off! Check out our upcoming offerings: ambs.edu/onecourse
- **Experience AMBS:** Talk with students, faculty and staff and learn what AMBS has to offer! ambs.edu/visit

Center for Faith Formation and Culture

- **!Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth:** Students in grades 10–12 can explore ministry and theology, grow in spiritual practices and listen for God's call through a summer congregational internship and a Group Experience. Participants receive a \$1,000 stipend. Tap a shoulder! ambs.edu/explore

AMBS Master of Divinity students from CPMC

- Randall Koehler (Hutterthal); Megan Miller and Angela Widmer (Washington); Kristen Swartley (Cedar Falls); Matt Troyer-Miller ('21) (Wood River, Salem)

AMBS statistics

- In May 2021, 13 men and eight women from seven countries graduated from AMBS. Eight of them studied from a distance.
- In 2020–21, AMBS's graduate student body included 128 students — 92 admitted students and 36 guest students. Eighty-two were from the U.S., nine were Canadian, and 37 were international students. AMBS's nondegree Journey program had 24 students in the U.S., Canada and Southeast Asia.

Lifelong learning

AMBS's Church Leadership Center offers various nondegree options for you to continue your education and strengthen your leadership skills:

- **Online short courses:** Join the forum discussions in these six-week online courses:
 - Exploring Anabaptist History and Theology
 - Exploring Peace and Justice in the Bible
 - Understanding Anabaptist Approaches to Scripture: What's Different and Why?
 - Transforming Congregational Conflict and Communication
 - A Worship Leader's Intro to *Voices Together*
 - A Song Leader's Intro to *Voices Together*ambs.edu/shortcourses
- **Pastors and Leaders 2022** (Feb. 21–24)
ambs.edu/pastorsandleaders
- **Journey: A Missional Leadership Development Program:** This two-and-a-half-year nondegree program offers mentor-mentee partnerships, distance-learning opportunities and community support. ambs.edu/journey
- **Spiritual Direction Seminars:** Cultivate your ministry of spiritual direction. ambs.edu/seminars
- **Invite AMBS!** Faculty and staff are available to interact with you via videoconference on topics such as trauma-informed caregiving, intercultural competence, undoing racism, leadership for God's reconciling mission, and more. ambs.edu/invite

Our academic year started out different than usual with a high-flex delivery of courses. Faculty and students participate in a combination of in-person, and virtual formats. We hold a weekly virtual lunch to maintain community when we can't be physically together. Our Tuesday seminary chapel gatherings are live streamed at 11:00 a.m. on the Seminary Facebook page. Please join us for our chapel gathering!

2021 School for Leadership Training: January 11-15

We held our first virtual School for Leadership Training (SLT) the week of January 11. This was our 52nd annual SLT. The theme was “*From Surviving to Thriving...God Breathes Fresh Hope*” with speakers Meghan Larissa Good, David Fitch and Michael Gulker. Having “breath” in the theme drew both on COVID (how it spreads) and the movement for racial justice (“I can’t breathe”). God’s breath brings hope as the church works and responds to both.

Visit <https://emu.edu/seminary/slt/> to view the keynote recordings

Seminary Options

Consider pursuing seminary studies. We offer a Graduate Certificate in Christian Studies, MDiv, MA in Christian Leadership, and MA in Religion. You are also welcome to take a course for academic credit or participation audit.

Join a Fall course August 31st – December 17th via Zoom:

Book of Isaiah, Tuesdays 6:00 pm -9:00 pm

Formation in God’s Story I, Wednesdays 1:30 – 4:10 pm

Missio Dei, Thursdays 8:00 – 10:40 am

Old Testament Text in Context, Tuesdays 8:00 -10:40 am

Living Theology, Tuesdays 8:00 – 10:40 am

Anabaptism Today, Thursdays 2:25 – 5:05 pm

Introduction to Spiritual Guidance, August 25-27 9:00 am – 4:00 pm & Tuesdays 6:30 – 9:30 pm

Seminar in Youth Ministry, Tuesdays & Thursdays 1:00 – 2:15 pm

Visit <https://emu.edu/seminary/courses/> for more information about classes

Statement of Purpose

Eastern Mennonite Seminary prepares men and women to serve and lead in a global context. In response to God’s saving grace, we educate students to bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of God’s Spirit as wise interpreters, mature practitioners, discerning communicators, and transformational leaders.

- ▶ **Susan Schultz Huxman**, president
- ▶ **Sue Cockley**, seminary dean
- ▶ **Nancy Heisey**, associate dean
- ▶ **Veva Mumaw**, seminary admissions, placement & church relations

For the most up-to-date information on EMS, give us a call, visit us on the web, “Like” us on Facebook!

emu.edu/seminary
540-432-4257



*Prepared to serve and
lead in a global context*

SUMMER 2021

CENTRAL PLAINS CONFERENCE

EMU ANNUAL REPORT

President Susan Schultz Huxman sends warm greetings to the Central Plains Conference

Greetings to our many congregational communities across the Church. Spring is here, light has replaced darkness, and we have experienced signs of health, beauty and wonder throughout this semester.

Earlier this semester dozens of students, faculty and staff responded to the question: “*What is your greatest hope for 2021?*” Their heartfelt words, accompanied by beautiful photos of the EMU campus, can be found [here](#). Enjoy this reflective and spirited anthem of hope from our EMU community.

We have been blessed with some key indicators of good health in 2021:

- Our student retention rate from fall to spring was exceptionally strong (91%). Despite all of the changes this year brought to our students, they have demonstrated strength and resilience.
- Our sense of community and care for one another in spring and fall 2020 was rated well ahead of many of our peer colleges and universities on a recent national student survey that measured campus connectedness.
- Our calling as a peace and justice university is on display in robust ways. We hired our first executive director of diversity, equity and inclusion, Dr. Jackie Font-Guzman. You can learn more about her [here](#). Our MLK Day activities were robust (12 events) and well attended by the campus community and beyond. Education around racial justice has continued throughout the semester.
- Our fundraising efforts are running ahead of last year-- 15% overall and 3.5% for our annual fund—and we had a good year last year! On April 7, we experienced a record-setting [LovEMU Day](#), raising \$280,654 in funds to make an EMU education possible for our current and future students. This is just amazing in the midst of a pandemic. We are so thankful for our many generous supporters who choose to invest in us with joy and enthusiasm. I invite you to check out our [Forward Together campaign](#), which focuses on university resilience, student access to EMU, and diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

Indeed, “*hope springs eternal*,” as poet Alexander Pope first penned. The holiness of hope can be found in the courageous call of the Magi—our theme for Opening Convocation. It is an enduring story of light over darkness—of God’s inbreaking love for us—if we just pay attention. It is a counter-cultural story as relevant to our day as to the day wise stargazers followed a bright light to worship the Christ child and chose another path home.

May the God of hope fill you with joy and peace.

Harrisonburg, Virginia

www.emu.edu

churchrelations@emu.edu

How can EMU serve you?

Contact the church relations office to schedule the president or a faculty guest speaker:
540-432-4597 or
ChurchRelations@emu.edu

Central Plains Conference Connections to EMU

Undergraduate Students

Four undergraduate students from Central Plains Mennonite Conference were enrolled in the spring 2020 semester.

Giving

Central Plains Mennonite Conference churches gave \$10,112 in matching church grants during the year ending June 2020.

- ▶ **Susan Schultz Huxman**, *president*
- ▶ **Kirk Shisler**, *vice president for advancement*
- ▶ **Jasmine Hardesty**, *director of development & planned giving*
- ▶ **Braydon Hoover**, *director of development & annual giving*
- ▶ **Matthew Ruth**, *director of admissions*

Our Vision

We will open new pathways of access and achievement for all students who aspire to grow as unifying leaders equipped with intercultural competence, oriented toward peace and justice, and rooted in an active faith modeled on the life and teachings of Jesus.

*Commit your work to the
Lord, and your plans will
be established.*

– Proverbs 16:3 (NRSV)

Invest in what lasts

Everence 2021 report

Central Plains Mennonite Conference
June 18-20, 2021

Strong church partnerships a vital part of Everence mission

Everence Financial® works closely with churches and their members, as we have since our organization started as Mennonite Mutual Aid in 1945.

We started our year-long 75th anniversary observance in July 2020 – somewhat differently than planned because of safety precautions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While adapting to changes related to the pandemic, Everence holds true to our commitment to help our brothers and sisters in Christ “build up the common life” through decisions about their money and other resources.

We’ll continue serving the faith community as partners in stewardship throughout 2021 and beyond.

Sharing Fund is part of special pandemic response

The Everence Sharing Fund has distributed millions of dollars to our partner congregations over the years, and we added COVID-19 relief to the mix in 2020.



Everence doubled the amount of eligible Sharing Fund grant money available to congregations with Everence stewardship advocates for a large portion of last year.

In addition to the Sharing Fund, Everence joined with Mennonite Disaster Service and Mennonite Central Committee U.S. to establish the COVID-19 Congregational Relief Fund, providing grants to help racially and ethnically diverse churches facing financial crises because of the pandemic.

Broaden your knowledge with informative webinars

Webinars are a convenient way to learn, and they became even more useful when the COVID-19 pandemic kept many of us in our homes.

Even as we hope that gathering in person for seminars or workshops becomes more common again, webinars can inform you anytime you’re ready, day or night.

So grab your favorite digital device and head to everence.com, where you can find webinars on stewardship education and other topics – several available in Spanish – designed to help pastors, church leaders and the people who attend your church.

And we introduce new live webinars periodically to help you and your

church, so talk to your Everence stewardship consultant to make sure you’re on the mailing list for invitations.

You can support your church by using the My Neighbor card

The MyNeighbor credit card from Everence Federal Credit Union has helped people generate money for their favorite nonprofits since the card was launched in the spring of 2017.

Members use the MyNeighbor MasterCard the same way they’d use any credit card, and Everence donates 1.5% of each transaction total to the charity the cardholder chooses from thousands of possibilities, including churches.



“The MyNeighbor card gives people a simple and effective way to support the charities dear to their hearts,” said Kent Hartzler, President and CEO of Everence Federal Credit Union.

Visit everence.com/myneighbor for details.



Report from Freeman Network for Justice and Peace

Annual Meeting Report for 2020-2021

Because of Covid-19 we stopped meeting in person for six months. Our chairperson, Gloria Graber, resigned and Dennis Lehmann agreed to be chair. We then began meeting via Zoom once a month on a Thursday evening. In the meantime, we had agreed that we would take turns writing up an experience of peacemaking and sending them out to members via e-mail. These have been a good way to continue to share with each other.

Gary and Gloria Graber have continued to maintain contact with the Flandreau immigrant folks. We offer financial and other support to the Brookings group, *Bienvenidos*, who are closer and are making most of the contacts.

Dennis Lehmann is our main liaison person with the Wagner group. That group is organizing an event in their park in June, and we are intending to support that effort by some of us going to that event in Wagner. Dennis has arranged for the resumption of a column in *The Courier* by Vince Two Eagles. Vince had taken a break and is now committing himself to again writing a newspaper column.

Dennis and Shirley Ries as well as Dennis have been working with MDS projects at the Pine Ridge reservation. S. Roy Kaufman had a book on rural issues published. And we sponsored an ad in *The Courier* in April depicting a pie chart on the proportion of defense spending in the US budget.

The rest of us have concerned ourselves with having respectful conversations with people politically different from us. A new member, Randall Koehler, attended an anti-racism workshop at AMBS, and he has continued to comment on how powerful that event has been for him. Most of us have used the year to read on peace issues and so each meeting often produces a suggestion for reading.

---Lois Janzen Preheim
Secretary

**CENTRAL PLAINS CONFERENCE OF MENNONITE CHURCH USA
ANNUAL ASSEMBLY REPORT
2021**

2020-21 Campus Theme Passage – (Exodus 16:4-6, NIV)

This passage was not the original one we had picked. We changed our selection in light of the COVID-19 uncertainties. This Exodus passage comes from the story of God raining down manna (bread) from heaven. These three verses offer us a perspective into our faith that has been critical for carrying us through this unique year of both our growth and facing unknowns. Here are some reflections on the verses: Verse 4 – The Israelites had to turn to God daily to receive their food for that one day. God provided what the people needed for that one day. No more, no less. Verse 5 – The only exception to verse 4 was on the sixth day when they could collect enough bread for two days so that the Sabbath would remain holy. Verse 6 – And when it was all said and done, make no mistake, it was God that kept the Israelites alive. It was impossible for them to stay alive in the wilderness without God's manna – a form of nutrition only God provides. Take courage that God is indeed walking with us. God has not abandoned us, and God will provide for us exactly what we need for each and every day. Through it all, let us never forget to thank God for His provision during this time.

Vision 2025 & “2+2” Programs – Vision 2025

represents Hesston College's current and future plans of programmatic innovation. This includes the expansion of four of our current 2-year programs, adding a “+2” option for pursuing a bachelor's in Nursing, Aviation, Management, and Engineering. This “2+2” program implementation led to the hiring of Johann Reimer, who is serving as the director to develop the school of Engineering's planned bachelor's degree program. A four-year degree in Management is launching this upcoming fall semester. Meanwhile, junior and senior students continue their studies in Nursing and Aviation, with the first four-year professional pilot degrees being conferred on graduates this year.

Strategic Plan & Campus Master Plan – Flowing from Vision 2025 is our Strategic Plan – the means by which we work toward and realize Vision 2025. This process includes the cooperation and collaboration of faculty and

staff from across the campus. As we move forward in this process, a significant component in implementation relates to a new Campus Master Plan, the development of which is already well underway.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) – We have entered into a renewed focus of DEI. Our DEI purpose statement reads, “Create and sustain a healthy campus climate that provides opportunity for full and equitable participation of all persons in the life of the college community, embracing differences and fostering a sense of belonging among all its members, including faculty, staff, students, and the broader community.” Just before the start of this past fall semester, our faculty and staff gathered into small groups – the first campus gathering since COVID had hit – to hear from our DEI Council and to converse over DEI-related concepts, issues, and terms. The work of DEI continues to evolve as students, faculty, and staff are coming together in formalized groups to listen, learn, and create institutional systems that align with our mission, vision, and values as viewed through the lens of DEI.

**Central Plains Conference
of Mennonite Church USA Connections**

Congregational Student Aid – 5 congregations provided \$7,400 in tuition assistance for 7 students.

Hesston College Board of Directors –
Steve Ropp, First Mennonite Church, Iowa City, IA

Dr. Joseph A. Manickam, President
Rachel Swartzendruber Miller, Vice President of Advancement
Phyllis Weaver and Andrew Sharp, Development Officers
Alma Huerta, Admissions Representative



Iowa Peace Network
PO Box 30021
Des Moines, IA 50310
iowapecenenetwork@gmail.com

March 8, 2021

Dear friends at the Central Plains Mennonite Conference:

The Joint Oversight Committee and staff would like to thank you for your continued support this year – 2020-2021. Thank you for your church's participation in the Joint Oversight Committee and for donations from congregations, individuals, and your state conferences. IPN is able to continue its work because of your gifts. This letter is serving as our Annual Report to member church organizations.

Our budget allows for about 20 paid hours for the coordinator per month. We maintain IPN's website, www.iowapecenenetwork.org, and a Facebook page. This includes adding two posts to our website monthly and updating the events page weekly. We publish and send newsletters to approximately 700 organizations, churches, and individuals three times a year.

We continue to do a weekly email update of peace events to a list of about 300. Now much of those events are online, so it includes national and internationally originated events such as webinars, petitions, and other presentations.

Because of COVID our in-person work looked a lot different this year. In 2020 the coordinator worked with other peace leaders in the Des Moines area over Zoom to plan & help plan several events including a socially distant and safe Nagasaki/ Hiroshima commemoration on August 6. The coordinator also collaborated with the Zoom group to write a letter to Iowa senators and Representative Axne for (July 2020) Tax Day about tax priorities, and more recently, to the senators, Rep. Axne, and other election officials to ask for a safe and fair election. Recently, this same group, on Zoom and email, coordinated a letter for the op-ed section in the Des Moines Register (published January 22) on the abolition of nuclear weapons. Two members of the committee put it together, and the rest of us gave feedback.

We did not hold a Holiday Open House & Gift Faire this year because of COVID, but the Joint Oversight Committee & coordinator worked to put together an online "IPN Gift Guide" which listed and explained several places for alternative gifts each of us suggested. Thanks to Jess (member of the JOC) for putting that together!

We did not take part in summer church conferences, as they were online or nonexistent. A few other annual events did not occur per COVID. We did cosponsor the "Weeping for our Children" online program for Feast of the Holy Innocents Day in late December. It was planned by the Des Moines Faith Committee for Peace. The coordinator was able to attend that online. We are also cosponsoring the "Protest and Palms" service being held online March 28, instead of the annual Palm Sunday Procession and Service for Peace, also planned by the Des Moines Faith Committee for Peace.

Last, the committee and coordinator are thankful to Des Moines Mennonite Church for continuing to rent us a room for our Des Moines office.

Again, we want to express our gratitude for including us in your giving. We thank you for helping us continue work for peace and justice in Iowa and around the world. Thank you!

The IPN staff & Joint Oversight Committee ~ Mark Leichty (Mennonite Church)-convener, Jess Hoffert (Church of the Brethren)- secretary, Myrna Frantz (Church of the Brethren), Joel Beane (Friends United Meeting), Joshua Steward (United Methodist Church), Keith Sheller- treasurer, & Christine Sheller- coordinator

2021 MCC Central States Executive Director Report

MCC Central States & MCC US Board of Directors

Prepared by Michelle E. Armster

MCC Central States is one of four regions in covenant relationship with MCC U.S., representing a 16-state area in the Midwest that stretches from the U.S./Canadian border to the U.S./Mexico border. It is home to about 500 Anabaptist churches. This land is the ancestral home of numerous Indigenous peoples, including Northern Cheyenne, Dakota, Houma, Kaw/Kanza, and many others who continue to live here through today. Much of MCC Central States's work focuses on dismantling systemic oppression, while seeking authentic relationships along a path of decolonization. Based in North Newton, Kansas, it has dispersed staff in various locations throughout the region. (composed by Andrew Wright)

Our work includes:

Administration

- Communications
- Human Resources

Donor Relations

- Constituency Relations
- Material Resources generation
- Regional Thrift Store coordination

Programs

- Immigration
- IVC (Indigenous Visioning Circle)
- Peace and Justice Education
- YAP (Young Adult Program)

DOT

- Monitor, coordinate and facilitate regional anti-oppression training and consciousness raising.
- Monitor, coordinate and facilitate regional cultural competency engagements.

Look at God! Reflections on MCC CS in these COVID 19 times.

Much has changed this year! Two weeks after the MCC CS's annual meeting, we had to close the MCC CS office in North Newton due to COVID 19. Up until that time, the office bustled with volunteers who loved to come in and create comforters, recycle, assemble the various kits and fellowship.

At first, we sprinted and held on to hope that this wouldn't last long. However, it became evident that, more than likely, the office would be closed and inaccessible to volunteers. So, the challenges became opportunities to pivot and explore:

- How do we continue to connect with our constituency?

- Is there a way for us to provide a safe avenue for volunteers to participate in the ongoing needs of MCC?
- How do we continue to fulfill our mission of relief, development, and peace in the name of Christ-differently?

First, I am grateful for the staff of MCC CS. Because of their commitment to the mission of MCC and their work, they were energized by the challenges and eager to turn them into accomplishments. Examples of this are:

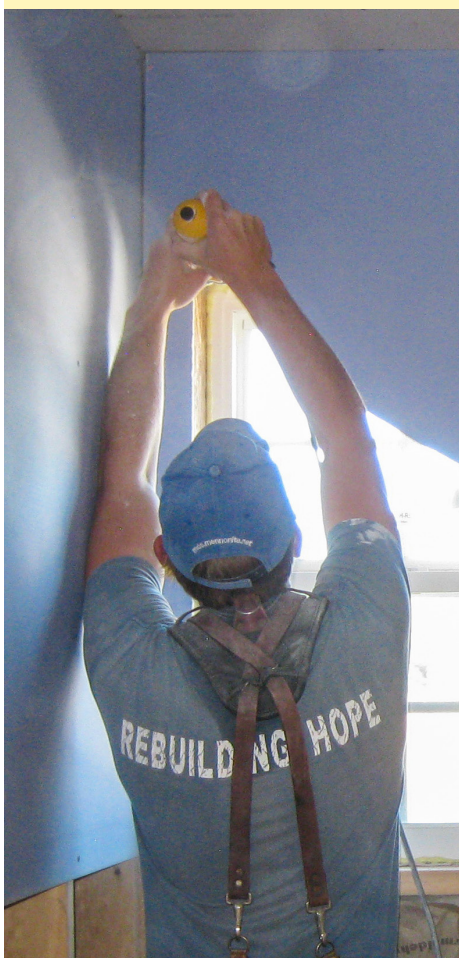
- MRC coordinated and established protocols for smaller groups to come into the warehouse and workroom.
- All of us are engaged, with Donor Relations, to connect with constituency. A “gift” of these times has provided more of us the opportunity to connect with more constituents, virtually. I have had more opportunities to speak and preach at events and in churches than ever before.
- Our programs have created online learning opportunities that have been successful. Human Resources and YAP have collaborated to engage in virtual recruitment opportunities.

So, I rejoice- Look at God! God has allowed us to continue our work in amazingly creative and new ways in order that we can continue the mission of MCC.

February 12, 2021



MDS volunteers served
48,480 days
 helping
487 households
 recover from disasters.



Faith, hope and love abide

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
 1 Corinthians 13:7

MDS ANNUAL REPORT 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

During a year like no other, Mennonite Disaster Service is able to look back with humble gratitude for the volunteers, donors and partners whose faith and love helped so many people find their way back to hope.

More than 6,000 volunteers from across the United States and Canada put their compassion into action by cleaning up after disasters, building bridges, and repairing and rebuilding homes.

From the creative work of local MDS units that positively impacted so many communities, to the steadfast leadership of the MDS board that kept MDS true to its mission, the results have defied the odds during a year of unprecedented challenges.

As Ned Sparks, from Willow, Alaska, said to volunteers who built his new home: "What you've done is tremendous beyond belief."

MDS volunteers helped restore people's belief that there is hope for the future. And this work managed to take place despite the grave challenges posed by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The many numbers in the Annual Report—especially the 48,480 volunteer days served—are impressive, but even more gratifying is that these figures reflect the abiding love of our entire MDS family. That's the greatest gift of all.

For the full MDS Annual Report 2020 go to:
<https://mds.mennonite.net/annual-reports/>



6,048 volunteers
 from across Canada and the U.S.
 gave their time, skills and
 compassion to build

79 new homes,
 complete

280 repairs,
 finish

91 cleanups,
 and build

3 new bridges

for households who experienced
 a disaster. This volunteer labor is a
 value* of

**\$10.4 million USD/
 \$13.6 million CDN**

Statistics from Aug. 1, 2019 through July 31, 2020.

* Based on a volunteer rate of \$27.20 USD/hour
 — www.independentsector.org

Respond. Rebuild. Restore.



**Mennonite
 Disaster
 Service**

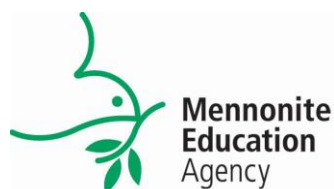
mds.mennonite.net

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MDS Canada Office

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 toll-free: 866-261-1274
mdscanada@mds.mennonite.net



The education agency
of Mennonite Church USA

Mennonite Education Agency Report to Central Plains Mennonite Conference April 2021

Board of Directors

Nathan Alleman

Western District Conference
Professor

Addie Banks

Atlantic Coast Conference
Pastor and founder/CEO of
the Groundswell Group

Lynette Bontrager – secretary

Ohio Conference
Registered Nurse, retired

Melissa Hofstetter

Pacific Southwest Conference
Minister and Professor

Alicia Manning

Virginia Mennonite
Conference
Minister, Educational
Consultant and Director

Linwood Rush – treasurer

Pacific Northwest Conference
Hospitality Services Director,
retired

Richard Thomas – chair

Atlantic Coast Conference
Superintendent, retired

Roy Williams – vice chair

Mosaic Mennonite Conference
Pastor

Mission Statement: *MEA will strengthen Mennonite education for restorative leadership, work, and service throughout the church and the world.*

Prayer requests for a weary land: As we all know, the hardships from 2020 have shaken us deeply. Race-based brutality and injustice, political unrest and violence, and a year of quarantine, masks, sickness and death. Our very souls cry out in fear and weariness. For Anabaptist Christians, Jesus is our rock in a weary land, a chorus I remember well from my childhood. In these weary times, we are more grateful than ever for the Anabaptist-Mennonite ties that bind us together as a community of believers. Our schools are forming students in ways that are distinctively Anabaptist, following the **Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective** and the **Shared Convictions of Global Anabaptists**. We believe these foundations will be a rock in a weary land for our students throughout their lives. Join us in prayer for our students and schools, that they would seek God, our shelter in this time of storm. To join us in praying in specific ways for our schools, consider subscribing to MEA's monthly **Prayers for Mennonite Education** by emailing JoleneV@MennoniteEducation.org

Cross-Agency Action with Mennonite Mission Network (MMN): We know that when young people participate in Mennonite service opportunities and/or attend Mennonite schools, they are more likely to attend Mennonite congregations as adults. Mennonite education and service work are formational opportunities, as many leaders in the church can attest from personal experience. **MEA and MMN are partnering to promote both Mennonite education and service as a recommended vocational path.** Toward this goal, we are exploring how to pool resources and share this message, not only with Mennonite youth and their families, but also with the schools and congregations.

- **College credit for service:** MEA has coordinated with the schools' admissions staff and registrars to help participants with MMN's Service Adventure program complete the necessary enrollment requirements at MEA-affiliated schools. MEA and MMN will be sharing more about how to earn college credit through service at the MC USA convention this summer.
- **Youth Census:** The schools and service programs rely on data from MEA's congregational Youth Census to communicate critical information and opportunities to students and families. The Census is a family's

gateway to formational opportunities in Mennonite education and service, so we're very thankful for your help to communicate about the importance of sharing youth data with MEA.

Hispanic Ministries Education partnerships: MEA operates a Hispanic seminary, the Seminario Bíblico Anabautista Hispano, known as SeBAH, which offers strong biblical and Anabaptist-based theological education for Latino and Hispanic leaders in the Mennonite church that is both affordable and accessible. In the past year, SeBAH has secured partnerships with Hesston (Kansas) College and Palm Beach (Florida) Atlantic University (PBA), enabling SeBAH graduates to earn transfer credits and automatic admission. PBA is also offering scholarships of up to \$1,100 per semester. SeBAH is pursuing a similar agreement with Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Indiana. These partnerships strengthen the Hispanic Ministries program and offer Latino and Hispanic students access to broader educational opportunities within the denomination and beyond, many of whom pay their own way at great sacrifice.

Financial Review

MEA Investment Fund: The MEA Investment Fund serves various schools, congregations, area conferences and other education-related programs within Mennonite Church USA. These institutions have partnered with MEA for the management and investment of certain endowment funds, scholarship funds and other financial assets owned by the institutions that are integrated into an investment pool. Pooling funds increases efficiency and allows investors access to investment vehicles that may not be available to individual institutions due to minimum investment requirements. Fee reductions are also available based on the size of the portfolio. For pool participants who prioritize socially responsible investing, there are substantial cost savings.

- The Total Fund was valued at **\$190.0 million**.
- For the trailing one-year period, the Total Fund advanced **20.07%**, outperforming the Relative Objective benchmark of +19.95%.
- Over the five-year annualized period, the Total Fund gained **10.98%** compared with the Relative benchmark of +10.60%.
- The **+7.28%** returns for the ten-year period slightly outperformed the relative benchmark of +7.18%.

Health insurance pool refunds: The Mennonite Educators Benefit Plan (MEBP) is a group of schools – organized by MEA and administered by Everence Financial – who collaborate in a health insurance pool. The design of the plan enables the pool to be owned by the participants, to offer mutual aid to each other, and to negotiate collectively for the best rates and service. As a non-profit, Everence accumulates the “profits” into reserves and when the reserves have grown, they can be returned to the schools. **MEA staff recently calculated the refunds that each school has received for the plan years 2019 and 2021: a total of \$4,133,101.00.** This is the equivalent of 89 years of the schools’ support to MEA. Both the MEA Investment Fund and the MEBP are strong examples of the value of Anabaptist ideals and partnerships across Mennonite education.

Board chair gatherings: At their request, MEA has facilitated virtual gatherings of the higher ed board chairs and the chairs of the preK – 12 schools. MEA is uniquely positioned to offer connection and support to these groups, both individually and collectively.

Spring it Forward campaign: MEA collaborated with MennoMedia and the Executive Board of Mennonite Church to encourage constituents to consider donating the third wave of federal stimulus dollars to a campaign called Spring it Forward. The dollars raised in the campaign will be used by the three organizations to nurture faith formation in our church youth. MEA’s portion will fund grant requests from

the preK – 12 schools for projects offering COVID-19 relief. We are especially mindful of student and staff needs and additional expenses the schools have incurred to provide safe learning environments for their students.

Theological Education committee: Some Conference Ministers have raised concern about the waning interest in biblical and ministry studies. They asked, **“From where will our pastors and church leaders come?”** This committee is studying the barriers to ministry and how to create new and accessible pathways to strong Anabaptist theological and biblical education. The committee includes the following people: **David Boshart**, president of AMBS; **John Powell**, pastor and teacher; **Marco Güete**, director of Hispanic Ministries Education for MEA; **Michael Danner**, associate executive director of Church Vitality for MC USA; **Michele Hershberger**, professor and department chair of Bible and Ministry at Hesston College; **Sarah Nahar**, doctoral student of religion and environmental studies; **Tom Stuckey**, interim executive director and CEO for MEA; and **Jolene VonGunten**, executive assistant for MEA (recorder and administrative support).

Mennonite Schools Council (MSC): The administrators for the preK-12 schools are being regularly resourced, both individually and collectively, by MEA Interim Director for preK-12 Schools Dawn Graber. Dawn offers a background in executive coaching to help leaders clarify their values and vision and to test and discern next steps to meet their personal and organizational goals. There has been strong interest in individual coaching sessions with Dawn. In addition, she has helped plan and coordinate virtual professional development experiences on a bi-monthly basis about relevant and emergent subjects, such as navigating polarization on campuses, emotional Intelligence, and how self-aware leaders can help create effective and influential relationships.

Washington Community Scholars’ Center (WCSC): WCSC is a cross-cultural urban studies, internship, and community living experience located in the nation's capital, operated by Eastern Mennonite University. For a semester or the summer, WCSC offers career building and vocational reflection through local internships, interactive coursework engaging with the city and the forces that shape it, living in intentional community, building social leadership skills, and navigating new experiences in a diverse urban setting. **The program is not limited to EMU students;** in fact, Bethel College and Bluffton University regularly send students to WCSC. MEA is helping to extend the invitation to all of the Anabaptist-Mennonite higher ed schools as well as high schools.

Anti-racism and Anti-Oppression: The MEA staff and board are committed to dismantling racism and oppression. As a step in our individual journeys and to broaden our understandings collectively, the MEA staff studied the book **Who Will Be A Witness? by Drew Hart** and published by Herald Press. Studying this book together has been meaningful and illuminating for the MEA staff, and we would encourage your congregations – small groups, Sunday school classes – to consider a similar book study.

Executive Director Search: A search committee is working to find the next Executive Director/CEO. Dick Thomas, MEA Board chair and the chair of the committee, worked to include a broad and inclusive range of voices: **Addie Banks**, MEA Board member; **Jon Carlson**, MC USA Executive Board member and Pastor of Forest Hills Mennonite Church; **Marco Güete**, Director of MEA’s Hispanic Ministries Education programs; **Glen Guyton**, MC USA Executive Director (ex officio); **Lisa Heinz**, MEA CFO; **Joe Manickam**,

President of Hesston College and representing the Mennonite Higher Education Association; **Carol Roth**, Moderator of the Racial Ethnic Council; **Conrad Swartzentruber**, Superintendent at Dock Mennonite Academy and representing the Mennonite Schools Council (preK – 12); **Dick Thomas** (Chair), MEA Board Chair; and **Jolene VonGunten** (Committee Staff), MEA Staff. We hope to have a candidate selected by the summer. **Please join us in praying for the committee and ask God to call the right person to lead the agency.**

On behalf of the MEA board and staff, thank you for the many ways you support Mennonite education.

*Submitted by Tom Stuckey, Interim Executive Director and CEO
April 26, 2021*

TS/jvg



MennoMedia

An agency of Mennonite Church USA
and Mennonite Church Canada

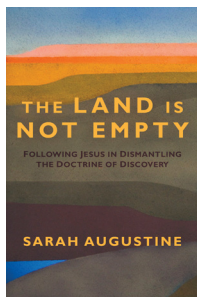


REPORT TO CENTRAL PLAINS MENNONITE CONFERENCE

Spring 2021

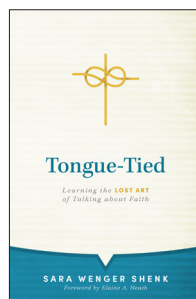
At MennoMedia we publish curricula and books that call readers to follow Jesus in word and deed. We publish resources about Christian discipleship, spirituality, reconciliation, justice, and theology from an Anabaptist perspective. Our curricula, periodicals, and hymnals reach a broad spectrum of evangelical, mainline, and Anabaptist readers and congregations, cultivating passion for faith formation and an active life of discipleship.

NEW RESOURCES FOR THE ENTIRE CHURCH, FROM HERALD PRESS



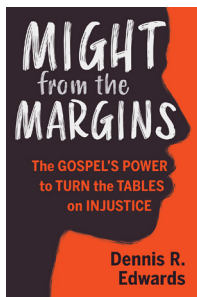
The Land Is Not Empty

Following Jesus in Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery Sarah Augustine unpacks the harm of the Doctrine of Discovery—a set of fifteenth-century laws that gave Christian governments the right to seize lands they “discovered.” Augustine, a Pueblo woman, reframes North American colonization as she investigates ways that the Doctrine of Discovery continues to devastate indigenous cultures and the planet. The good news of Jesus means there is still hope for the righting of wrongs.



Tongue-Tied

Learning the Lost Art of Talking about Faith In an era of dying churches, polarizing cultural arguments, and environmental and humanitarian crises, we long for deep conversations about things that matter. Theologian Sara Wenger Shenk investigates the reasons that people who claim the name of Christ are so reluctant to talk about him. We need a language of faith that is authentic, candid, and robust enough to last.



Might from the Margins

The Gospel's Power to Turn the Tables on Injustice The power of the gospel is often most visible among those who have been the least respected. Yet in many faith communities, these are the people whose leadership gifts are least likely to be recognized. Author Dennis R. Edwards affirms the power already present among marginalized Christians and calls the church to embrace this power for the sake of becoming more like Christ.



Dear White Peacemakers

Dismantling Racism with Grit and Grace Peacemaking requires white people to step out of their comfort and into the work of anti-racism. Rooted in the life and teachings of Jesus, this book is a call to transform white shame, fragility, saviorism, and privilege. Written in the wake of George Floyd's death, *Dear White Peacemakers* draws on the Sermon on the Mount, Spirituals, and personal stories from Osheta Moore's work as a pastor.



The Jesus Way

Small Books of Radical Faith

The Jesus Way series delves into big questions about God's work in the world. These concise, practical books are deeply rooted in Anabaptist theology. Crafted by a diverse community of scholars, pastors, and practitioners, The Jesus Way series helps readers deepen their faith in Christ and enliven their witness.

VOICES TOGETHER

Voices Together is a new worship and song collection for the Mennonite church to deepen our lives of faith, available now for congregations and individuals.



Voices Together offers:

- Pew Edition
- Large-Print Edition
- Projection Edition
- App Edition, available through the Hymnals app
- Accompaniment Edition
- Worship Leader Edition
- Audio recordings featuring choirs from Mennonite colleges and universities

Visit VoicesTogetherHymnal.org for more information.



2020 Annual Report to Area Conferences

Mennonite Men is the men's organization of Mennonite Church USA. All men in MC USA congregations are members of this body and are invited to participate in our ministries. Through the COVID-19 pandemic we found ways of joining God's restorative work in the world.

Supporting New Churches with *JoinHands*

Despite the pandemic, we had our biggest year ever with JoinHands to help new churches acquire their first building. Thanks to the remarkable generosity of our donors, we extended \$170,000 to five congregations! Mennonite churches we assisted this year were all ethnic-racial congregations serving our African, Chin, Haitian and Latinx sisters and brothers. To learn more, visit mennonitemen.org/joinhands



Promoting Healthy Masculinity with *JoinMen*

We continue to have positive responses to our book *Peaceful at Heart: Anabaptist Reflections on Healthy Masculinity*, produced with the Institute of Mennonite Studies. The Ontario office of

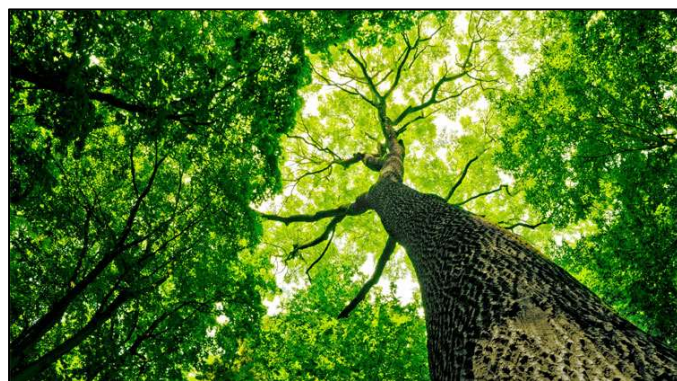
Mennonite Central Committee produced a study guide for this book and a video series based on *Peaceful at Heart* is being developed to help promote healthy masculinity.

For copies of this book and study guide, and to see other resources and retreats we provide for men, visit mennonitemen.org/joinmen



Restoring God's Earth with *JoinTrees*

Last fall we launched our JoinTrees campaign to plant one million trees by 2030 to help restore the earth. Targeting the problem of climate change with



its harmful impacts on God's creation and people, we call on all ages and genders to participate in this campaign. We're working with households, congregations, and Mennonite organizations for this creation care campaign. Visit MennoniteMen.org/JoinTrees for more information and how to get involved.

Thank you for supporting and participating in our ministries to serve God's restoration of the world.

Steve Thomas, U.S. Coordinator

Be local. Be global. Be the Gospel.

Note: Underlined words indicate active links.



Central Plains Mennonite Conference + Mennonite Mission Network

Worker support around the world



1 Global Mission Partnership

Central Plains Mennonite Conference, Colombia Mennonite Church and Mennonite Mission Network partner in both Ecuador and Venezuela. The mission partnerships support the development of Mennonite churches and their theological education and ministries. In Ecuador ministries include work with refugees, community children, peace education and indigenous churches. Venezuelan ministries also involve cooperative games for peace, sharing food and community work.

Worker support

2 Delicia Bravo Aguilar and Peter Wigginton

serving in Quito, Ecuador
» CPMC Partnership support
» East Union Mennonite Church
» Washington Mennonite Church
» West Union Mennonite Church

3 Robin Gingerich, serving in

Klaipeda, Lithuania
» First Mennonite Church of Iowa City

4 Mary Raber, serving in Odessa, Ukraine

» Beemer Mennonite Church
» Bethel Mennonite Church

5 Jane and Jerrell Ross Richer, serving in the Eastern Rain Forest Region of Ecuador

» Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman
» Salem-Zion Mennonite Church
» Sugar Creek Mennonite Church

6 Kate Widmer, serving in Montbéliard, France

» Sermon on the Mount Mennonite Church
» Pleasant View Mennonite Church

Mission banks

\$215

» Cedar Falls Mennonite Church

Service participants



Service sites

SOOP

» Crazyhead Springs Mennonite Camp
» Crooked Creek Christian Camp
» Swan Lake Christian Camp

Mennonite Voluntary Service

7 Polly Carlson, serving in San Francisco, California

SOOP

Mary and Roger Farmer, Glendale, Arizona

Calvin and Shirley Hochstedler, Glendale, Arizona

Donald and Shirley Kempf, Glendale, Arizona

Rick and Wanda Stauffer, Glendale, Arizona

Prayer partners

43

Congregational giving to Mission Network



During Mission Networks' past fiscal year, August 1, 2019, through July 31, 2020, Central Plains Conference congregations gave **\$207,166**. **Thank you!**



It is an honor to be in partnership with you, as we pursue God's calling on our church together. Navigating the unprecedented challenges of a pandemic, we may draw encouragement from God's promise in Isaiah 43:19: "I am making a way in the wilderness (NIV)." These are words of hope we can count on. God is working in our world, in our church, and in each of us. Thank you so much for your generous support and partnership in prayer. The Lord's grace, peace and wellness be with you!

Mike Sherrill

Mike Sherrill
Executive Director



May you know God's blessings through your tried-and-true investment in the worldwide body of Christ, through Mennonite Mission Network!

Joe Sawatzky

Joe Sawatzky
Church Relations Representative

Thank you for your continued partnership in God's mission!

www.MennoniteMission.net Toll-free: 1-866-866-2872

As of the end of April 2021 our country is still dealing with the COVID-19 Outbreak, though with vaccines being issued things are changing. This is good news! For The Corinthian Plan (TCP) some activities put off in 2020 are now receiving attention, such as review of our Dental Plan. However, TCP recognizes the loss of loved ones and community members, as well as those who contracted COVID-19 who are dealing with long-term effects. This annual report for Central Plains Mennonite Conference focuses on our COVID-19 coverage for 2020-21.

In May 2020 The Corinthian Plan (TCP) offered a premium holiday for congregations/conference offices. The premium bill for May was \$0. Congregations/conferences were invited to contribute to a fund that would provide ongoing COVID-19 premium assistance. There was a very generous response. Congregations participating in TCP that would benefit from a premium assistance grant, because of the financial impact of COVID-19, contact [Duncan Smith](#) or go to the [TCP webpage](#) for more information.

TCP also responded with cost-sharing waivers for COVID-19 expenses. The details of health coverages, without further cost to the participant, can be found on our [TCP webpage](#). Temporary eligibility exceptions for participating employees who are furloughed or with reduced hours continue through June 30, 2021. These details can also be found on the TCP webpage.

As we move through the COVID-19 Outbreak you are encouraged to continue to observe Central Disease Control (CDC) guidelines as the United States becomes more fully vaccinated as a country.

TCP adapted our Wellness Incentive through the end of this Incentive cycle, ending February 28, 2021, related to the impact of COVID-19. We have returned to our normal Incentives. For more information go to the TCP [Wellness Incentive webpage](#). Wellness Coordinator, [Ingrid Friesen Moser](#), is available if you have questions, as well.

This year of 2021 we will be focusing on strengthening our communication with participating congregations and staff, including how we intersect with annual conference meetings that may be going online. We will continue, as always, to review our Plan design so that it may most benefit you. Participant input is welcome as to your experience. Contact links are in the last paragraph, below.

Central Plains participates in the following ways. Thank you!

- 20 Central Plains Mennonite Conference congregations/Conference office participate in TCP
- 13 congregations and the conference office carry active (CEP) health coverage
- 4 congregations and the conference office participate by waiving health coverage
- 3 participate without an eligible employee
- 2 receive a subsidy from the TCP Fair Balance Fund

We appreciate the partnership with Everence as Third-Party Administrator. [Teresa Pickens](#) is the TCP Area Advocate for Central Plains. Teresa's and [Duncan Smith's](#) information can be found [here](#).

Blessings and good health to each of you! Duncan Smith, TCP Director