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Dear Pastor,

I write to you as part-time staff person for Interchurch Relations with Mennonite Church USA and out of my experience as Pastor of Missions at Kern Road Mennonite Church in South Bend, Ind. I know that as you proclaim and live the gospel of peace, especially in a time of war, many of you work in isolated and sometimes lonely situations. Pastors from other traditions sometimes feel even more alone and are also looking for meaningful ways to encourage, support and dialogue with others about how to teach, preach and witness to Jesus' way of peacemaking. **I am writing to share an opportunity and a resource which can encourage and equip you for ministry in your congregation. It can also connect you in significant ways with pastors from other traditions committed to Christian peacemaking.**

But first, I want to offer an example of how one Mennonite pastor encouraged and supported many other pastors in their ministry while he was personally wrestling with the challenges and opportunities of the gospel of peace. Twenty-five years ago parts of the Mennonite Church were intensely engaged with the question of war taxes, so much so that a special decision-making conference was called to discern this matter. The local Mennonite Church pastor in Minneapolis where the conference would happen received a call from a non-Mennonite pastor requesting more information on the event, which he had read about in the newspaper. Out of that call, a discussion was organized which over 200 pastors attended. That discussion eventually developed into an on-going forum for conversation and reflection on peace and the gospel, which continued for years and involved dozens of pastors across the city.

This discussion and action forum was not something that was engineered by local Mennonites but it would not have happened without local Mennonites and their willingness to engage in interchurch networks about the gospel of peace. Although the question of war taxes continued to be controversial for Mennonites, the fact that it was a matter for wider church discussion was good news to pastors from many traditions. It was a catalyst despite the elephant in the room, namely the voices of ambivalence in every congregation about a gospel that includes active peacemaking.

Today, I am writing to invite you to **consider hosting a half day or day-long training for pastors in local peacemaking with Gene Stoltzfus, former director of Christian Peacemaker Teams.** This could be either as part of an interchurch group or as part of your local Mennonite pastors group. Gene continues a ministry of peacemaking in many communities promoting congregationally based peacemaking, local peacemaker teams and the worldwide ministry of Christian Peacemaker Teams. He draws from a wide range of experiences and communicates very effectively with a wide range of people. An outline of what a workshop with Gene might look like is attached.

Please contact me at andregs@MennoniteUSA.org or phone 574-523-3060 if you are interested in this opportunity.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "André Gingerich Stoner".

André Gingerich Stoner
Director of Interchurch Relations
Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership

The Pastor and Local Peacemaking

This is a listing of the items that could be covered in a half day or whole day workshop led by Gene Stoltzfus, former director of Christian Peacemaker Teams. The thread of Bible teaching will be woven through the presentations and discussions.

There will be breaks and, depending upon the workshop size, small group discussions. A Saturday workshop could be kicked off by a public meeting with Gene on Friday evening. Local sponsoring groups are responsible for covering Gene's travel costs and an honorarium.

- **Workshop Introduction: My Story or Dilemma of Gospel and Peacemaking**
Stories of confession or celebration from participants
- **The World Wide Invitation to Peacemaking**
Discussion
- **Organizing the Local Congregation for Peacemaking**
- **Organizing in the Interchurch Community**
- **Creating and Organizing a public Event**
- **From Peace and Justice Committee to local Peacemaker Teams**
From Peace Education to Active Peacemaking
- **The Role of the Pastor in Getting Organized**
- **Closing Discussion: Plans for Next Steps**