

gospel evangel

connecting the congregations of
indiana-michigan mennonite conference

july/august/september 2022



Let Us Love One Another

Annual Sessions 2022 challenges IMMC to live into our call

By: Clayton Gladish, Administrative Coordinator

We gathered as **a community of congregations** on the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary campus in Elkhart, IN on June 17-18 with 25 Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference congregations represented. With little on the delegate docket, we chose to focus on worship and equipping for continued work on Growing Our Intercultural Witness.

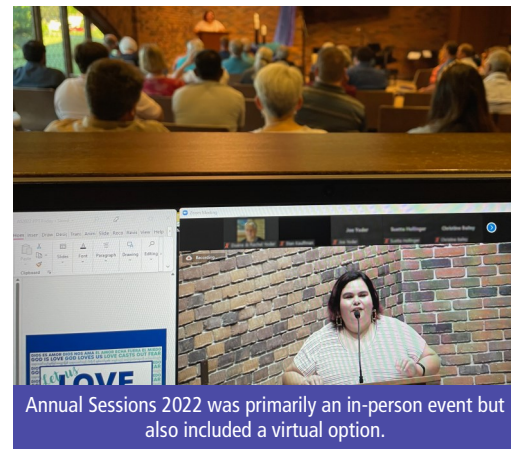


Musicians from Piedra Viva Mennonite Church (Left to right: Mauricio Chavez, Naun Cerrato, Mariela Sanchez, Ramón Tapia) led the music in the three Worship Services in the Chapel of the Sermon on the Mount on the campus of AMBS.

The Elkhart Pastors Cluster planned the worship services around the themes of love found in 1John 4:7-21, which helped us to remain **centered on Jesus** and

the love that we give and receive in the name of Jesus. During the times of worship, our music was led by a band from Piedra Viva Mennonite Church (Elkhart). Joanne Gallardo (Conference Co-Minister) inspired us to consider the vastness of God's love for us. Melody Pannell (Director, Diversity & Community Engagement, UVA Health, Harrisonburg, VA) shared a word of empowerment and encouragement toward enfleshing freedom: radical love as a practice of radical liberation. And Phil Waite (pastor at College Mennonite) proclaimed through story and scripture that love casts out fear.

During the worship services, stories were shared by members of IMMC congregations in Elkhart on how they have been **guided by the Holy Spirit** to live out God's love in their communities and around the world.



Annual Sessions 2022 was primarily an in-person event but also included a virtual option.

inside

- 2 Let Us Love One Another
- 4 Journeying with our pastors

(continued on page 2)

Let Us Love One Another

Several of those who attended responded with gratitude for the stories of God's love in action.

In addition to the worship services, seminars helped us to dig deeper into how we can be a conference that is **acting through grace, love, and peace**. The presenters helped us to confront our own past, systemic bias, and seek new ways forward. Melody Pannell shared from her family's story of both harm and harmony with the Mennonite Church in a way that helped us envision practical forms of justice-seeking. Regina Shands Stoltzfus (Director and Professor of Peace Justice & Conflict Studies, Goshen College) spoke to the history and elaborated on the content found in her book written with Tobin Miller Shearer, *Been in the Struggle*, giving more practical wisdom for making progress on the work of anti-racism. And Susannah Larry (Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies, AMBS) helped us to wrestle with troubling

texts from our Bible that include sexual violence, with a focus on how this can shift the way we respond to and care for victims of abuse in our own congregations.

While our time together was brief, we left with renewed call for **engaging the world God loves** through anti-racism and intercultural work. Joanne Gallardo announced that five individuals with intercultural experience and training have agreed to join our new Intercultural Working Group. This group will advise and work on behalf of the Missional Leadership Team to further advance our goals in intercultural competence both as a conference and as individual congregations.

We look forward to where God is leading us next and remain grateful for all who participated in Annual Sessions 2022!



Melody Pannell invited participants into her experiences of church and spoke prophetically of God's love as a means of liberation during the Saturday AM worship service.



Susannah Larry presented on her study of sexualized violence in the Bible during both of the afternoon seminar times.



Conference Moderator Brenda Hostetler Meyer offers a prayer, inviting our openness to the Holy Spirit as delegates gathered.



Lucy and Simon Muange were introduced to the conference and were invited to share about their vision for planting a church in Detroit primarily for Congolese persons.



Regina Shands Stoltzfus interacted with seminar attendees on her decades of anti-racism work and new book *Been in the Struggle*.



Quinn Brenneke (left, Co-Pastor at Prairie Street) and **Bob Yoder** (right, Post-Moderator) speaking in between the sessions in the Chapel of the Sermon on the Mount.



Janice Yordy Sutter (left, Pastor at Kern Road) catches up with **Kent Miller** (right, member of the Leadership Enhancement Team), as many did following 2 years of mostly online sessions.



Phil Waite (Pastor at College) spoke of the power of love to cast out fear, drawing on stories of God's faithfulness and ways he has seen God's love embodied in others.



Ursula Hess, a Journey Program student, shares about her learning experience and draws attention to the visual of God's love flowing into the space like a waterfall.

journeying with our pastors



Joanne Gallardo, IMMC Conference Co-Minister, reflects on her first experience of Annual Sessions as Conference Co-minister.

I am so grateful I was able to be a part of the Annual Sessions for the first time in my role as Conference Co-Minister. While this included participating in worship and workshops, this also involved getting to connect with so many of you on a personal level. While I've been making my way through IMMC churches for visits and preaching, I so appreciate one-to-one connections with pastors, leaders, and congregants in a beautiful setting like AMBS.

Something that stood out to me at our gathering was the number of younger people who attended, including younger pastors. As a young-ish pastor myself, I've often felt out of place at these types of gatherings. At an Annual Sessions gathering sometime in the late aughts, a 70-ish year old man told me John Howard told him that no one should study theology before the age of 30. This man wanted to know what I thought of that, knowing I was an AMBS student. All I could think of was that this man hasn't been by AMBS lately. So many of us were young! And I'm grateful to be a 37-year-old conference minister whose theological training started at college when I was 17.

Something that was said at our Special Delegate Assembly in May was that the number of young people who showed up was exciting, and that these folks aren't the "future" of the church, they *are* the church. And while Millennials like myself have been saying this for years, it is now time for us to recognize that Gen Z (ages 10-25) is growing and will, like the generations before them, try to find where the world's needs meet their passion. Can we make space in the church for those worlds to collide?

My question to us pastors is, are we making room? While we try to create space for all different voices, do those voices include the youngest among us? Are Millennials given the power and authority to lead authentically by generations that came before? Are Millennials helping Gen Z find their footing by providing mentorship and space?

It is my hope that as we continue to gather for Annual Sessions, our youth and young adult attendance grows and that we make room at the table for voices from every age.

ministry transitions

Beginnings



Cindy Voth was installed as lead pastor at Waterford Mennonite April 24, 2022.



Michelle Merchant was installed as pastor of Maple River Mennonite on May 15, 2022.



Grant Miller was ordained at Kalamazoo Mennonite Fellowship on May 22, 2022.



Craig Oury began as interim pastoral team member at First Mennonite Church on June 1, 2022. He continues as a pastoral team member at Shalom.



Becky Helmuth was credentialed for transitional ministry on June 5, 2022.

Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference—a conference of **Mennonite Church USA**—is a community of congregations in Indiana and Michigan.

We are a community of congregations, centered on Jesus, guided by the Holy Spirit, acting through grace, love and peace, engaging the world God loves.

Mailing Address & Contact Info:

PO Box 702, Goshen, IN 46527
(574) 534-4006

Email: imoffice@im.mennonite.net

Editor: Clayton Gladish, administrative coordinator

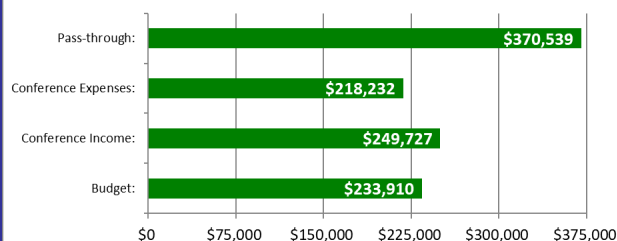
Missional Leadership Team:

Brenda Meyer, moderator, Goshen, IN; Steve Slagel moderator-elect, Traverse City, MI; Duane Yoder, treasurer, Ft. Wayne, IN; Naomi Yoder, secretary, Goshen, IN; Shawn Lange, Elkhart, IN; Rolando Sosa Granados, Elkhart, IN.

Gospel Evangel is published four times annually by Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference (Jan/Feb/Mar, Apr/May/Jun, Jul/Aug/Sept, Oct/Nov/Dec). It is printed and mailed by Duley Press, 2906 N. Home Street, Mishawaka, IN 46545. Periodical postage is paid at Nappanee, IN 46550 (USPS 575-940). Postmaster: Send address changes to Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, PO Box 702, Goshen, IN 46527.

financial report

Fiscal Year to Date 7/1/2021 - 6/30/2022



Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference

An area conference of Mennonite Church USA

This issue is available online:

im.mennonite.net/gospel-evangel

Endings



Jen Helmuth Shenk ended her time as part of the pastoral team at Kern Road Mennonite April 24, 2022.



Esther Lanting ended her time as pastor at Hudson Lake Mennonite on May 31, 2022.