

# gospel evangel

connecting the congregations of  
Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference



## Tri-lingual Worship Brings Unity

People of diverse languages and cultures come together to create a new thing at Prairie Street

By: Joanne Gallardo, Conference Minister

Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Elkhart has been doing a new thing. For a while now, they have been worshipping in 3 languages.

According to Pastor Quinn, "Prairie Street actually began as a bilingual congregation. An old bulletin from the 1800s lists a schedule of services in English and German. Many years later, we're returning to our roots by worshipping in the languages of our hearts." Ten years ago, the church started a Sunday School class where they summarized and discussed the sermon in Spanish. The heart for intercultural worship began to grow from there.

Pastor Quinn, who is bilingual, faced some barriers when the pandemic came. "As pastor, I needed to find a way to offer virtual worship and pastoral care in both English and Spanish. We began a Spanish-language WhatsApp group for all the Spanish-dominant speakers in the congregation, and I sent weekly sermons to the group." After Covid, the Spanish-speaking group became its own service.

However, the challenge that faced PSMC was how not to capitulate everything toward the dominant culture. Pastor Quinn said, "I called a

group of leaders in the congregation together to discuss the question, 'What would it look like to worship in two languages every week?' I was skeptical that we'd be able to reconcile our cultural differences without the more entrenched patterns becoming dominant. The leaders worked hard at this." French speakers also began attending the congregation, and it was a good time to experiment with adding French as a language spoken in worship. They started with a testing period of worshipping in 3 languages for 2 months, making sure to leave space for feedback. "It really seemed like God was doing something new at Prairie Street," said Pastor Quinn.

Pastor Quinn described their new format of worship: "The new worship pattern offered space for children, cultures, new leadership, connections, warmth, and joy. We meet for an hour in the sanctuary for 'vertical' worship, with a short sermon - everything is said in three languages. Then, we process (and dance!) with music to the Fellowship Hall where we gather at tables

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# Tri-lingual Worship Brings Unity

designated by language for sharing testimonies, prayer requests, and reflections from the sermon."

Due to my own scheduling difficulties, I watched the January 14th service online, with a plan to visit in person to see this "worship experiment" for myself.

The service begins with an intercultural ensemble playing prelude music, quiet and meditative. Pastor Quinn starts the service in English and acknowledges those present in body and those present online on this particularly cold and rather hazardous Sunday for Northern Indiana. This is followed by Patty Gorostieta speaking an interpretation in Spanish and Micheline Ilonga speaking another interpretation in French. The opening scripture was Psalm 150, quoted in each language. Speaking in all 3 languages, the congregation recited "Praise the Lord!"

Each person up front seems to know how to break up spoken words in manageable paragraphs to give each other the time to be interpreted. The French and Spanish language interpreters remained up front during the entire service.

The opening hymn was "Come, thou fount" from Voices Together. The sound was a wonderful cacophony of languages. I noted that close to the camera were people singing in French in harmony. As Voices Together does not include the words for the hymn in Spanish or French, they were projected from the front. This was followed by a song of praise in Spanish with the universal word, "Alleluia" sung throughout, loud and strong, with multiple harmonies, hands raised in adoration.

After the three had prayed in their respective languages, they finished with the Lord's Prayer together, creating a shuffling togetherness of voices.

The reading came from Mark 4:1-9, The Parable of the Sower. The speaker for the Sunday was Carolyn Gardner Hunt, a former pastor at



Micheline Ilonga (interpreting into French), Ellen Kraybill (interpreting into English), Viviana Machuca (preaching in Spanish).

Prairie Street. She started by highlighting the gardening instruments she brought for the visual up front, which seemed a bit difficult to interpret into other languages. Whenever one interpreter would falter, the other was eager to help. I would imagine the sermon part of the service might be the most difficult to interpret.

The offering time was also accompanied with a song, including people dancing to the front with their offerings, a tradition seen in other cultures around the globe. This was followed by the doxology in all 3 languages, once again, in many harmonies.

One observation I made is that interpretation obviously takes time and space. I did not observe impatience, or languages stumbling over one another. I observed grace and patience. I was delighted by how beautiful it was to see different cultures interacting on a Sunday morning, all together in one space, at one time.

Pastor Quinn concluded, "With everything still being so new, we have a lot of work before us, but there's energy and hope. God is proving to be full of grace as we experiment our way forward."



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# Celebrating Congregational Stories

## A Culture of Call and Affirmation at Walnut Hill

By: **Randall C Miller**, Member of Walnut Hill Mennonite Church

Recently, Walnut Hill Mennonite Church celebrated its seventh ordination ceremony in the last 11 years when co-pastor Carmen Horst was ordained by Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference minister Sharon Yoder, who told me, “This culture of call and affirmation of ministry leaders is noteworthy; we’d like to hear your reflections about this.” I will give it a try.

The seven, their places of origin, and ordination dates, are: Jane Miller, Goshen, 5/20/12; Randall Miller, South Dakota, 3/03/13; Linda Lehman Thomas, Ohio, 9/08/13; Brent Siegrist, Pennsylvania, 11/08/15; Ben Bouwman, Illinois, 10/27/19; Sharon Norton, Goshen and Walnut Hill, 10/02/22; and Carmen Horst, Argentina, 12/10/23.

First of all, since only one grew up at Walnut Hill, thanks go to the congregations that nurtured these folks in their youth and young adulthoods by letting them do things to develop their gifts. Where Walnut Hill excels in cultivating a “culture of call and affirmation of ministry” is its openness to leaders who have little experience, who may have some uncertainty about their gifts and abilities, and who might even have some flaws and previous failures (yours truly). I will not be surprised to someday hear of current youth who will find affirmation and possible ordination in other congregations.

Until a decade ago, there were fewer ordinations due to the long tenures of the previous pastors: Steve Thomas, 20 years and Jane Stoltzfus Buller, 25 years (even though a few others were ordained for various ministries along the way). When Steve resigned in 2010, I came as the transition pastor after having experimented with pastoral ministry 30 years prior. It didn’t take that first time but Walnut Hill welcomed me anyway. And when I moved on to my second transition assignment, of seven total, the congregation invited me to keep Walnut Hill as my home base and called for my ordination.

Brent then teamed with Jane SB until returning to international mission work after his wife Katrina finished seminary. Ben graduated from seminary and joined Jane. When she retired, Carmen joined Ben,

after having served an interim assignment in her home congregation. Thus, four “new” pastors arrived within a decade or so. It helps that the congregation also has a credentialing champion, Rachel Schertz, who readily serves in leadership roles and sees value in recognizing people’s calls to ministry within and beyond the congregation. In addition to the four pastors, Jane M was a Goshen Hospice chaplain, Linda is co-founder and director at Pathways Retreat, and Sharon N is the transition pastor at Fellowship of Hope.

What is remarkable about Walnut Hill could be this—the church is willing to let people fail, help them along, and let them try again. In rejecting perfection as a qualification for ministry (or membership) Walnut Hill encourages both personal and professional growth. Thanks be to God. While it’s nice for Walnut Hill to be noticed, and I’m certainly grateful that the congregation advocated for my ordination, I can’t help but wish we were baptizing new believers at a rate that was noteworthy. That too, it seems to me, would be remarkable.



Carmen Horst (left) at her ordination service on Dec. 10, 2023 with Sharon Yoder (right).

## financial report

### Fiscal Year-to-Date Report

7/1/2023 - 12/31/2023

Pass-through:	\$144,619
Conference Expenses:	\$129,278
Conference Income:	\$115,335
Budget:	\$134,748

## Save the Date: June 7-8

Annual Sessions is taking on a new feel and new name. Be on the lookout for more info on Summer Fest 2024!



# journeying with our pastors



**Joanne Gallardo**,  
IMMC Conference  
Co-Minister, reflects  
on being a Qualified  
Administrator of the  
Intercultural  
Development  
Inventory.

**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.

**Editor:** Clayton Gladish, administrative coordinator

## **Missional Leadership Team:**

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I've been blessed to have been trained to be a Qualified Administrator of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), sponsored by IMMC. This means I work with people who take the IDI to better understand where they fall on the spectrum of intercultural competence and help them form a plan to expand their knowledge and experiences.

I often hear people being frustrated where they land, or being frustrated with the gap between where they thought they were and where the IDI says they are. To be clear, the point of the IDI is to see how people from other cultures might experience you, not a test of how "racist" or "anti-racist" you are.

Many people with a church or social justice background can find themselves right smack in the middle, which is *minimization*. People in this phase push for equality and understanding. Also, they can minimize difference to keep peace or promote tolerance. It's possible they don't know how their own actions and thoughts are deeply embedded in their own culture. I often hear from some folks, "I don't have a culture!"

Let me assure you, we all do!

Finding common ground is great, but it can break down during conflict. It can also break down when commonalities can't be drawn upon. What do we do when we know we're alike and at the same time very different?

The beginning of understanding is first understanding ourselves. How are we culturally different? Do we have a high level of education, more than the average person? Did your family background include poverty? What were traditions and assumptions that made by people in your culture?

When we understand key differences between our culture and the culture of someone else, not only can we find common ground, but we can also celebrate differences and how multicultural understandings provide us with a rich experience. This can be true in church, in personal relationships, and where we work. We can even better engage in inevitable conflict! May we all live our lives in such a way that we are open to understanding the cultures of all of us.

## ministry transitions

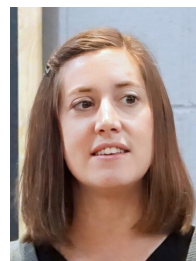
### Beginnings



**Suella Gerber** began serving as interim pastor at First Mennonite on August 21, 2023.



**Richard Kauffman** began serving as interim pastor at First Mennonite in mid-September.



**Maria Hosler Byler** began as pastor of Sunnyside on October 23, 2023.



**Nathan Graber-McCrae** ended as pastor of North Goshen on November 30, 2023.



**Rachel Nafziger Hartzler** ended as interim pastor at Sunnyside on December 31, 2023.



**Nick King** began as interim pastor at North Goshen on December 1, 2023.



**Carmen Horst** was ordained at Walnut Hill on December 10, 2023.



**Indiana-Michigan  
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This issue is available online:  
[im.mennonite.net/gospel-evangel](http://im.mennonite.net/gospel-evangel)



**Becky Helmuth** ended as interim pastor at Sunnyside on October 31, 2023.