

Pastor Report for Congregational Business Meeting - August 2017

1) Summer Activities:

The summer months tend to be a time in which the pace of church life slows down a bit, as committees meet less frequently and as we enjoy the warmth and beauty of the season. It is also a time in which our area conferences and denomination gather to celebrate life in community and to be reminded that the church - the body of Christ - is much larger than what we experience as gathered congregations each Sunday morning.

This year our biennial denominational gathering took place in Orlando the first week of July and our church was represented at this gathering by Nathaniel Myers, Joel Weidner, Jim Rosenberger and myself. While Nathaniel and Joel took in the celebrative, worshipful, and service-oriented aspects of the youth gathering, Jim and I participated in a denominational church visioning exercise known as the Future Church Summit. We reflected on our past - both those things we celebrate and those things we lament; we talked about core values and what it means to be faithful disciples of Jesus; and we discussed what the church could look like moving forward - working at priorities for our denomination. As a delegate body we also passed one resolution related to the tensions in Israel and Palestine - "Seeking Peace in Israel and Palestine". You can find a copy of the resolution at: <http://mennoniteusa.org/menno-snapshots/seeking-peace-israel-palestine/>

Delegates and guests of Allegheny Mennonite Conference met for our annual Summer Celebration at Laurelville the first weekend in August. Our three worship times were led by AMC young adults and our own Ben Wideman began the weekend by offering a challenging sermon inviting us to consider who is our neighbor and what is the good news we have to offer. Our summer gathering tends to be a time in which we emphasize relationship-building but there is business as well. Since we are a much smaller conference than we were two years ago (now 12 congregations), we discussed our vision for the future and viability realities as well. One option that delegates are considering as we look forward is the possibility of joining with Central District Conference. CDC was represented by 4 members of their leadership team to observe and consider our compatibility. We

anticipate that at our November delegate gathering a more formal commitment will be made to explore what it would look like to become a part of CDC.

2) Looking Ahead:

As our conference and congregation engage in visioning for the future we continue to be drawn to three main themes - Jesus is the center of our faith; community is the center of our lives; and reconciliation is the center of our work. We recognize we are at our best when we are focused on place-based ministry - where we can engage our communities. This affirms much of the work we are already doing through 3rd Way Collective and the anticipated opening of a 10,000 Villages Store - alongside all the local agencies and ministries we support and participate in.

I would encourage our households to continue to consider ways in which we can connect with our neighbors - offering hospitality and focusing on building relationships - that are at the heart of our faith.

Lastly, a thought for your consideration. At elders group we have discussed the challenges in keeping our youth involved in the life of the church and have recognized that the "old ways" of doing things (programmatically) are not necessarily bearing fruit. While it is good for us to consider strategies for greater involvement we know that our youth (as are all of us) are drawn to those who express interest and care. So I would encourage us to pay attention to our younger folks - encourage them and include them in ways that show the depth of love we have for them.

Respectfully,

Marv