

MENNONITE CHURCH USA EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORT TO AREA CONFERENCES 2016



“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love.” –1 John 4:18 (NRSV)

The theme for Mennonite Church USA this biennium—which will also be the theme for the 2017 Convention coming up in Orlando, Florida, in July—is “Love is a Verb.” It suggests that love is a kinetic concept, one that is only realized when it is put into action. Amid a challenging year for the church, the nation and the world, Mennonite Church USA continues to seek ways to live out God’s love in a variety of settings. Following are some glimpses of that work in 2016:

The **“Hope for the Future” gathering** held in Hampton, Virginia, looked at issues of racial/ethnic diversity and created an Intercultural Competence Call to Action to encourage continued transformation and undoing of racism in the church.

The Gathering Place (thegatheringplace.us) has continued to grow, offering a virtual space for youth workers to network and find resources and support. More than 40 youth workers met in person, as well, at “The Gathering 2016.”

Ervin R. Stutzman was appointed by the Executive Board to a third three-year term as executive director, through 2018. The board praised his “non-anxious style of leadership and his ability to listen well.”

The **Mennonite Church USA Archives** made the move from Goshen College (Indiana) to the denominational office in nearby Elkhart. Jason Kauffman was named full-time director of archives and records management.

The Executive Board’s Leadership Development office and Everence are partnering to make **debt reduction grants** available to pastors. With matching funds from the congregation, individual grants can be for as much as \$5,000. About 115 grants have been issued so far.

The **Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)** is now widely available across the church, with 16 people qualified as IDI administrators. Mennonite Church USA provided 10 scholarships for training.

More than 100 Mennonite church planters, coaches and other leaders met for a national church planting summit titled **“Sent 2016”** in New Orleans.

Culture Shock, Mennonite Church USA’s first leadership conference for youth of color, took place in Hampton, Virginia.

The Mennonite Church USA **Panel on Sexual Abuse Prevention** continues to refine and prioritize its work as the church grapples with this important topic. The panel’s term runs through 2017.

A reconciliation process begun in 2010 bore further fruit this year when the annual assembly of the Indiana-Kentucky Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America welcomed 25 local Mennonites to continue that story of repentance and forgiveness related to the historic persecution of Anabaptists.

Plans continued for the **2017 Convention**. A new model for the Delegate Assembly is envisioned, largely clearing the agenda to make space for consideration of church identity and mission.

The **“Deep Faith”** conference was a cooperative venture of several US and Canadian Mennonite entities, including Mennonite Church USA. It energetically looked at faith formation for all ages.

Joy Sutter, a hospital administrator from Harleysville, Pennsylvania, was nominated as moderator-elect of the church beginning in 2017.

A team of Mennonite Church USA scholars began a **series of conversations with Pentecostal counterparts in the Church of God** (Cleveland, Tennessee) to seek mutual understanding and common witness.

The **Mennonite Church USA Offices in Elkhart, Indiana**, are debt-free thanks to the generous giving of 23 donors, years ahead of schedule. The building was completed in January 2012.

Women from across the country gathered in Leesburg, Virginia, for the **Women Doing Theology conference, “I’ve Got the Power,”** exploring power at work in people and systems.