

The 2017 spring meeting of the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) was held in Elkhart, Indiana, two weeks before our Annual Conference Assembly (ACA). Ralph Reinford, Jessica Schrock-Ringenberg and I attended. We tested the process used at Orlando for the Future Church Summit. Many of the same areas of focus were used, but a few were changed to more closely align with the CLC agenda.

It was a joy to work together at identifying the aspects of the Anabaptist beliefs that are important to us. We celebrated the things we did and are doing well such as Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS), and Mennonite Women and mourned the areas such as the treatment of native Americans, minority groups and women, where we were lacking in granting them an equal opportunity to engage in the denomination. It was exhilarating to share our dreams and hopes for the denomination and CLC in the future.

It was physically exhausting as we spent more than 20 hours in meetings from Thursday noon until Saturday noon. But it was mentally refreshing to come away with the feeling that perhaps we can work together to strive to build the Kingdom of God in our midst.

The Future Church Summit at Orlando was more of the same. The hours were long, the table discussions were congenial, and the emerging picture of a people working together in unity despite our differences was a pleasant one. But we left with some trepidation for what it might mean for the future of Ohio Conference in the denomination.

The fall meeting of CLC was held in Kansas City with the three Ohio Conference representatives in attendance for most of the sessions. We had the opportunity to look at and critique the work of Mennonite Church USA's executive board as they considered the results of the Future Church Summit to set direction for the denomination.

The Future Church Summit is regarded as a two-year process which has now morphed into the Journey Forward. The Journey Forward plan is to engage further discernment into God's calling for us by inviting feedback from congregations. In the near future, we will be hearing more about that and also about how we can engage with the denomination.

Their proposal is to start with our core values as Mennonite Church USA ...

... **Grounded in the whole story of Jesus**, living out our faith in radical discipleship to Christ

... **Transformed by the Holy Spirit in community** as we share our lives together in reflection of the fullness of God's love and welcome to all people on diverse communities.

... **Empowered to join in God's reconciling work** as we extend healing and hope by witnessing to God's vision of shalom for all and standing with the marginalized through truth and action.

They have created a task force to prepare a curriculum for churches to use to give feedback to the board on this endeavor. The finished product will then be presented at the convention in Kansas City in 2019.

Again, I came away from this meeting with a renewed hope that we can as denomination work together to extend God's message of healing and hope to the world around us.

Bob Sauder