

**Moderator Report – IMC Assembly 2023**

As leadership stated at the 2022 annual meeting, we paused our IMC discernment process until after the summer Special Delegate Assembly so churches who wanted to engage in those issues could give their time to that. Following our March assembly, the MLT and CLT discussed how to facilitate open meetings for conferencewide dialogue. (Had there been no 2022 Special Assembly, we would likely have done in 2022 what we are doing, now, in 2023.) Chuck Neufeld’s years-ago model of calling *Day of Discovery* gatherings for interchange around difficult issues, and generally keeping annual meetings free of open discussion around same sex marriage, seemed like the right fit.

Leadership met in early June after the Kansas City meeting. The sentiment emerged that before a general open meeting for churchwide dialogue, a retreat for pastors to get away and share about their churches’ current context would be good. We were pleasantly surprised that Malinda Berry (AMBS professor and speaker at Kansas City) was able to direct a day-retreat for pastors at Menno Haven in August. In person/zoom meetings for dialogue around IMC credentialing were held at Roanoke in November and Lombard in January.

Grants

In July Mennonite World Conference meetings were held in Indonesia. In May MWC contacted all MCUSA conferences and asked for financial support for the meetings that were going to be operating with significant deficits. MLT considered this appeal and contributed $8,000 for these meetings. (Reports are that the meetings were able to break even.) MLT also approved $6,500 in church Mutual Aid. IMC continues to support Nepali Outreach Ministry with $12,000 a year.

IMC Teams

Over 2020 and 2021, Gifts Discernment and MLT had unsuccessfully invited 14 people to serve on IMC teams. It is not uncommon to hear from other area conferences that it is hard to find individuals to serve on conference teams. And conferences do not want to take any leaders away from serving in their own congregations. Some conferences have cut back on the number of positions they try to fill. Right or wrong, IMC leadership has guessed that part of our situation may be a mindset of conflict avoidance. We are still functioning pretty well with who we’ve got and hope that there will be more willing persons once we conclude our discernment process regarding credentialing. Anne Munley and Curt Fenton have served two terms on CLT and have agreed to continue until we complete our process.

Conference Minister

Last March was David Miller’s last annual meeting as acting conference minister. (David finished in June.) At that meeting we asked IMC pastors to send us names of pastors they would like to see on a search team for a conference minister. In April we sent an email to pastors asking for names of pastors to serve on a search team. We received a nomination each for Richard Gehring and Debra Sutter. Both Debra and Richard became available to work on this search committee in October. We have spoken with a couple people but there have been no applications.

Churches change

In May pastor Tom Linderman at First Mennonite in Morton notified IMC by email that the congregation had voted to leave IMC and MCUSA and join LMC. I responded to Tom. On the way back from Kansas City, David was able to have an extended visit with Tom at the church.

David Miller had tried to contact pastor Jesse Dunigans of Bethesda Mennonite in St Louis to see if a visit was possible returning from Kansas City. That didn’t work but they had a good phone call anyway. Weeks later I received a call from pastor Jesse. And in July pastor Jesse called and said they were closing the church. David has tried to contact pastor Jessie for a follow-up conversation.

In November St Louis Mennonite Fellowship made the decision to move their conference affiliation to Central District Conference. This process will take about 18 months.

Darrel Miller IMC moderator

**IMC persons at Kansas City meetings**

Bethel Zenobia Sowell-Bianchi

Champaign Michael Crosby, Sheryl Dick

Freeport Ken Hawes

Hopedale Curt and Sarah Fenton

Lombard Richard Gehring

Normal Cindy Ropp, Shelly King, Emma King (youth), Darrel and Lynette Miller

N Suburban Anne Munley

Reba Place Church Charlotte Lehman, Carol Youngquist

Roanoke Bryan Miller

St Louis Jennifer Harris Dault, Wes and Carol Boshart