

Waterford  
Mennonite Church

June 27, 2021

# *buzz*

## Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference Sessions

### Report on IMMC annual sessions

The theme this year for IN/MI conference was "Becoming One," sculpted from Ephesians 4:1-16, unity in the body of Christ. What unites us together and encourages us to walk together? How can we work toward being an intercultural witness, being inclusive to diversity and using gifts the Holy Spirit has given to each of us?

Our time together included times of worship through word and music, worshipful work, acknowledging milestones of accomplishment and recognizing, as followers of Christ, our "work" is ongoing and challenging at times.

A major highlight for me was hearing stories from multicultural congregations I was less familiar with; Community Christian Fellowship (Detroit), Emmanuel Living Christian (Indianapolis), Morning Star (Muncie), New Foundation United in Hope Fellowship (Elkhart) and Fairhaven (Ft. Wayne). North Goshen and representatives from these congregations planned this year's conference.

Elder Wanda Bradford of Community Christian Fellowship shared her message on "An Invitation to Becoming One" based on the Ephesians verses and challenged us to set goals and objectives to "become one:"

Know who you/we are – what role do you/we play

Know your/our posture – how are you/we to act; how do you/we treat others in the body of Christ

Remember our precept of Pentecost and how the church became one – all nationalities were baptized; one body (the church); one spirit (The Holy Spirit); all Christians heading toward the same destination; the same God and same Father

Each of us must participate in doing the work you/we were called to do – you/we have each been given a gift(s) to use; this is your/our assignment

Know the purpose – know what you're/we're working toward

The comings and goings of pastors and churches in the IN/MI conference were recognized.

A time of recognition and remembrance for pastors who have died included our own Eldon Stoltzfus and Terry Zehr.

Dan Miller concluded his leadership of the conference. Newly confirmed conference ministers are Sharon Yoder and Joanne Gallardo.

A recently formed congregation, Piedra Viva, meeting at Sunnyside Mennonite church was welcomed to the conference. Naún Cerrato and Rolando Sosa are providing pastoral leadership for the congregation.

I leave you with a blessing from over 65 UK churches used to conclude a time of worship (youtube.com – The Blessing UK) "May the Lord bless you and keep you."

Our buildings may have been closed but the church is very much alive!

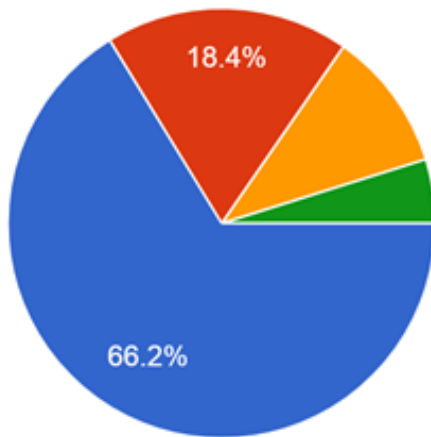
—Joy Yoder, WMC IMMC Delegate

## Community Life

### “Taking a Pulse” Results

At our congregational meeting on May 16, Ministry Leadership Council (MLC) introduced a “Taking a Pulse” survey. The goal of this survey was to aid MLC and Pastoral Team in getting a better sense how you desire for WMC to care for the spiritual needs of our LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters.

First I must begin with our appreciation. Your strong engagement with this survey overwhelmed us with gratitude. Thank you! We have had a total of 231 responses, including responses that were mailed in from those without email access (#1 – 66.2%; #2 – 18.4% ; #3 – 10.5%; #4 – 4.8%). Thank you also for the 42 comments with questions or explaining your choices. The pie chart below shows the breakdown of all of the responses.



MLC met with the Pastoral Team in our monthly meeting last week and reviewed the pie chart and comments. We would like to share several of our observations with you. First, we see that the pie chart shows some leaning toward desiring welcome and inclusion here at WMC. Second, it is also clear that we at WMC are not all of one mind on the desires we hold. Third, our goal is to create a process in which everyone will be invited to conversation to share and hear our stories. As leaders, we desire that together as a congregation we will submit ourselves to the Spirit’s leading as we seek to discern the way forward within our Anabaptist understanding of communal

discernment. Finally, your strong response confirmed our belief that now is the right time for our congregation to engage in this discernment.

So what happens next? Our immediate step is for a small group from MLC and Pastoral Team to meet with a local consultant, Joe Liechty, to begin to flesh out what a discernment process might be for us at WMC.

We as leaders are committed to doing all we can to create a process that invites each of you in our Waterford faith community to share safely and also listen compassionately to one another. We trust that the Spirit will be in, among, before, and behind us for every step of this journey. We ask your prayers for our congregation and for us as leaders as we discern upcoming steps. As always, please reach out to me or another member of MLC or Pastoral Team if you have questions or concerns.

—Rachel Stoltzfus, Chair MLC

### Survey Questions:

- I desire for WMC to be a congregation fully inclusive and welcoming. Within the inviting and welcoming of all, I desire for all persons, including LGBTQ+ persons, who proclaim Jesus as Lord to be welcomed and invited to fully participate in the life of our congregation, including through membership, baptism, marriage, leadership, and pastoral ministry.
- I desire for WMC to be a congregation that acknowledges the beauty of our diversity and creates room to invite and welcome all into the life of our congregation. While we do not all agree, we do desire to extend grace to each other. Within the welcoming of our diversity, I desire for all persons, including LGBTQ+ persons, to be welcomed and invited into the life of our congregation. This would include through membership, baptism, and lay leadership as long as they are committed to living a celibate lifestyle (with a celibate lifestyle being the same expectation of single persons with a heterosexual orientation).
- I desire for WMC to be a congregation that lives out the understood traditional biblical understanding of marriage (God’s design as marriage between one man and one woman for life) and of sexual orientation (God’s design is a heterosexual orientation and other sexual orientations and practices are not in God’s design). I desire for our congregation to live out this understanding by not performing same sex marriages and by not welcoming or inviting LGBTQ+ persons into full membership, baptism, leadership, and/or pastoral ministry.
- I am still discerning my desires for how WMC might function in relationship to LGBTQ+ persons. Therefore at this time I am unable to select one of the above statements.

## IMMC

### Report on One part of IMMC annual session on June 19, 2021

First of all, what does that date say to you?

Meetings were held in the Pavilion. Outdoors. In the shade.

All members of the planning committee were members of diverse ethnic groups. (I'm not even sure that is appropriate nomenclature.)

For me, the most significant event was the introduction of the "Growing Our Intercultural Witness" document. The link to that document is in the following link:

[Growing-Our-Intercultural-Witness-June-2021.pdf \(mennonite.net\)](https://mennonite.net/growing-our-intercultural-witness-june-2021.pdf)

I applaud the IMMC Ministry Leadership Team for showing courage and fortitude to push us all to broaden our understandings of diverse cultures and boldly stating that we need to be "confronting White supremacy."

I encourage all Waterford attenders to read and digest this document. The processes described should involve the whole congregation.

—John Kaufman, WMC Delegate to IMMC

## Congregational Coach Transition

After nine years, Ron Guengerich has concluded his time as Waterford's congregational coach. During this time Ron assisted with several pastoral review groups and pastoral search committees, as well as providing consulting support to Pastor Neil, the other pastors and Ministry Leadership Council. Most recently, he gave valuable service to MLC and pastors by providing summary and analysis from a leadership summit that set the stage for movement toward an eventual LGBTQ+ discernment process. We heartily thank Ron for his wisdom and listening ears during numerous challenges and transitions in church life.

A congregational coach (formerly known as overseer) is someone with significant pastoral experience, arranged through Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, who is available to walk alongside congregational pastors and leadership groups for support. We are working through Conference channels currently to arrange for a new congregational coach.

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· Velma Swartz

*Interim Pastor of Senior Ministries*

· Cindy Voth

*Pastor of Community Life*

The *Waterford Buzz* is normally published weekly for members of Waterford Mennonite Church. Items for inclusion should be sent to the editor by 5 p.m. Monday preceding publication.

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