

## Report to Eastern District Conference

“Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action” (1 John 3:18).

Through its ministries, Mennonite Church USA seeks to demonstrate the love of God to one another and our world. Below, we’ve invited people to share how they’ve experienced love in action through Executive Board initiatives.

### The Gathering Place website

Through this website and virtual meeting space, youth leaders can connect, learn, support and inspire one another by participating in learning circles, webinars, peer groups and spiritual direction.

“The Gathering Place is a place to interact with others, increasing our own spiritual and life understandings, so that we can share love in a more comprehensive manner with the youth around us. This is a wonderful opportunity to establish relationships beyond our local community, helping us to become the persons we want to be in our communities!”



—**Merv Stoltzfus**, Smoketown, Pennsylvania  
Conference minister/youth, Atlantic Coast Conference

### Sexual abuse prevention

In 2015, the Discernment Group on sexual abuse and the church wrote a Churchwide Statement on Sexual Abuse, passed by the KC2015 Delegate Assembly. The group also created the Care and Prevention fund, which received nearly \$61,000 in contributions — approximately \$42,000 to go to victims of sexual abuse, and \$19,000 to be divided among Mennonite Women USA’s Sister Care ministry; the Women in Leadership Project of Mennonite Church USA; and Dove’s Nest, a church organization that works to keep children and youth safe from abuse.

“Love means that while we love each other like family, we acknowledge that we are capable of doing harm to one another. We don’t live in denial that abuse happens in our midsts — and in church. The Churchwide Statement on Sexual Abuse calls churches to make sure that child protection policies are in place and that reporting guidelines are followed. To me, this practical recommendation for all is love in action.”



—**Anna Groff**, Tucson, Arizona  
Executive director, Dove’s Nest

### Ministry with veterans

Resources for congregations supporting veterans as they seek healing for their emotional and spiritual wounds include a monthly newsletter, a Sunday school curriculum and a congregational training on relating to veterans. These are provided by the Peace and Justice Support Network (a partnership of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Mission Network) and Mennonite Central Committee U.S.



“Our group that used the *Returning Veterans, Returning Hope* Sunday school materials included veterans, relatives of veterans and two people with no military connections. Everyone contributed freely and listened respectfully and with great interest. Sometimes there were tears as stories from the battlefields were shared.

Even though there was a biblical setting for each study period, most of our time together was spent in telling and listening to personal stories. I want to thank Mennonite Church USA for taking the initiative to create this study for the church. It was needed.”

—**John Kreider**, Newport News, Virginia

Retired minister; member of Huntington Mennonite Church, Newport News

### Doctrine of Discovery educational initiatives

Since the 15th century, the Doctrine of Discovery (DoD) and the laws based on it have legalized the theft of land, labor and resources from Indigenous Peoples across the world and systematically denied their human rights. The Christian church has historically supported the DoD. Through partnerships with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and the DoD Working Group, Mennonite Church USA seeks to raise awareness, educate and involve the church in denouncing and dismantling the doctrine. See [dofdmennonite.org](http://dofdmennonite.org).

“The Doctrine of Discovery is aggressively exploiting and dehumanizing people every day. Through education and activism, we show what it means to love actively ‘in a world that is very rapidly losing its understanding of being human’ (to quote John Trudell).”



—**Erica Littlewolf**, North Newton, Kansas

Program coordinator, MCC Indigenous Visioning Circle

### Immigration justice work

Resources available to congregations and individuals include the free Bible study, *Radical Hospitality: Responding to the issue of immigration*, and the DREAMer Fund, which helps undocumented young adult immigrants with tuition fees and supports other immigration justice initiatives.

“In the upheaval around Pastor Max Villatoro’s detention and subsequent deportation, the outpouring and organization of community support were unprecedented. We found excellent support from a high-profile immigration attorney who came alongside our conference. This was expensive, however, and we wondered if we had the capacity to meet the costs of this action. We reached out to Mennonite Church USA staff, and it was a major show of support when the denomination immediately offered a grant to get us started in the fundraising campaign to cover legal costs and ongoing support for Max’s wife, Gloria, and their four children, who remain in the U.S.”

—**Shana Peachey Boshart**,

Wellman, Iowa  
Conference minister for  
Christian formation, Central  
Plains Mennonite Conference

