

MENNONITE CHURCH USA EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORT FOR 2016-2017



“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 during the 2015-2017 biennium — also the theme for the 2017 Convention held in Orlando, Florida — was “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 has continued to seek ways to live out God’s love in a variety of settings. Following are glimpses of that work in the past year:

The **“Hope for the Future” gathering** held in Hampton, Virginia, looked at issues of racial/ethnic diversity and built upon an Intercultural Competence Call to Action to encourage continued transformation and undoing of racism in the church. About 70 people attended.

The Gathering Place (thegatheringplace.us) has offered 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 spring 2018, when he plans to retire. The board praised his “non-anxious style of leadership.” An eight-member search committee has been appointed.

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.

An initiative by Everence funded by a Lilly Foundation grant enabled the Executive Board’s Leadership Development office to make **debt reduction grants** available to pastors. With matching funds from the congregation, about 115 grants were issued for as much as \$5,000.

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.

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

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

Significant attention was given to sexual abuse response and prevention across the church, following an investigation **by D. Stafford & Associates** into abuse allegations. Implementation and follow-up on their recommendations continues — including an updated Protocol and Procedures for Ministerial Misconduct Files and a denomination-sponsored **Healthy Boundaries Training** by FaithTrust Institute.

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.

Planning for the **2017 Convention** was a major focus. A new model for the Delegate Assembly was envisioned, largely clearing the agenda to make space for consideration of church identity and mission at the **Future Church Summit**.

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

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. A mortgage-burning celebration took place at the offices in March. The building was completed in January 2012.

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