



# Intersections

Stories from Franconia Mennonite Conference

Summer 2019

## A Conference Assembly of an Extraordinary Kind

At the gracious invitation of Eastern District Conference, Franconia Mennonite Conference delegates joined in Eastern District's Spring Assembly on May 4. The purpose of this unique gathering at Zion Mennonite Church in Souderton, PA was to receive and discern recommendations for the possible formation of a new conference arising from the reconciliation of the conferences.

What transpired at this assembly likely exceeded everyone's expectations. The members of the Structure and Identity Task Force guided us through their prayerfully conceived recommendations for an annual assembly, conference board structure, delegate representation, member congregations, and Conference Related Ministries. Delegates shared questions and gave thoughtful feedback in break-out groups. The positive spirit and "humble confidence" of the task force (as noted by Steve Kriss, Franconia's Executive Minister) was contagious.

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**Rina Rampogu, Plains congregation, shares recommendations from the Structure and Identity Task Force.**

*Photo by Emily Ralph Servant*

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## Editorial

The story of Pentecost (Acts 2) reminds us that the Spirit of God brings unity in difference, inspiring vision for a new, diverse church and emphasizing the importance of imagination, relationships, and connection.

As our conference continues to expand and change, we too need imagination, participation, and commitment to remain connected to one another. Through God's Spirit, unity in the midst of our different contexts, interpretations of scripture, languages, cultures, and geographies will be essential for our vitality.

Recent stories give evidence of God's Spirit moving among us, creating strong relational connections and participation. The reconciliation process and the new congregations exploring membership promise new ways of relating. New leaders and staff members of all ages are coming to the conference: bi-lingual, with diverse ministry experiences, from different nations and faith backgrounds. Pastors are connecting and supporting each other in learning communities while youth connect at conference events for fun, fellowship, and nurture. Congregations are birthing new ministries by utilizing Missional Operation Grants to reach beyond themselves.

May the spirit of Pentecost continue to inspire us to imagine, create, and implement the dreams of our members regardless of their age, experience, gender, status, culture, or gifts!

— Mary Nitzsche,  
Associate Executive  
Minister



## Meet Hadi Sunarto

Hadi Sunarto is the Minister of Community Life for Philadelphia Praise Center. He serves the Indonesian community in his neighborhood by helping with immigration documents and identity cards, English classes, translation, and navigating life in a U.S. city.

Get to know Hadi and other leaders in Franconia Conference by reading their stories on our website: [franconiaconference.org/call](http://franconiaconference.org/call)



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The recommendations represent the best practices of both conferences' cultures. Careful consideration was given to representing all our congregations according to size, ethnic backgrounds, and locations. What should have been a boring trudge through a proposal for reorganization was an amazing gift in our reconciliation process, enlivened by the Holy Spirit.

Eastern District's Spring Assembly style is delightful. Scott Roth (Eastern District executive minister) "strongly encouraged" delegates to "brag" about how God is working with our congregations to share the gospel with our communities. Time for informal conversations was deliberately left open in the assembly schedule. I had several interesting conversations with delegates of different demographics.

Some people acknowledged the real potential for "the big fish to swallow the little fish." But my Eastern District friends reminisced about cooperative, fruitful joint efforts in lay leadership training, prison ministries, education, and missions dating back to the 1960s. In many situations, reconciliation between neighboring Eastern District and Franconia congregations has already been found. Delegates from our newer congregations are patiently waiting for this work to be accomplished and are glad to be witnesses to the possibilities of this reconciliation. All agreed: why have we waited so long?

—Sharon Williams, *Nueva Vida*  
*Norristown New Life congregation*

Stay up-to-date on news from the reconciliation process and get to know other congregations and leaders from Eastern District and Franconia Conferences by subscribing to our biweekly email newsletter, Bridges, at [franconiaconference.org/media/bridges/](http://franconiaconference.org/media/bridges/).

### Intersections

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### Franconia Conference

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For future copies of Intersections in Chinese, English, Indonesian, Spanish, or Vietnamese, contact [office@franconiaconference.org](mailto:office@franconiaconference.org).



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## Sharpened in Community (the “Learning” Kind)

How do we sharpen who we are? We do it in relationship with others. Such has been the experience of a Learning Community I’m a part of.

Encouraged by Randy Heacock and partially funded by Franconia Conference, our group of four pastors (Jessica Miller from Perkasio congregation, KrisAnne Swartley from Doylestown congregation, Franco Salvatori from Rocky Ridge congregation, and myself) has met together monthly for conversation, prayer, personal/pastoral development, and the kind of sharpening that comes from sharing our lives with one another. Walter Sawatzky serves as our coach and facilitator.



*KrisAnne Swartley, Jessica Miller, Walter Sawatzky, Franco Salvatori, and Josh Meyer.*

This circle has been deeply meaningful for each of us, despite the fact that we come from very different contexts. We’re not all the same age. We don’t all share the same theology. We don’t all have the same experiences. We don’t all come from Mennonite backgrounds. We serve very different kinds of churches.

Despite these differences, however, we have much in common. Finding a place where what unites us is a higher priority than what divides us has been refreshing for my soul and has sharpened me as a person and pastor.

*~Josh Meyer, Franconia congregation*



*Sandra and Marco Güete worship during a Southeast Mennonite Conference annual assembly. Photo by Andrew Bodden.*

Where is this going? We don’t know. We want to be open-handed in relating to the communities in Florida. I believe strongly that “to those whom much is given, much is required.” We are in conversation with Mennonite Church USA leadership about how this may evolve.

The Spirit continues to shake up the structures of the church. God continues to bring new possibilities for relationships and renewal that might extend right fellowship to people both near and far. We will continue to work and hope.

*~Steve Kriss, Executive Minister*

## Work and Hope in Florida

In April, Noel Santiago and I traveled to Fort Meyers, Florida to represent our conference in a conversation with congregations who are interested in remaining in relationship with Mennonite Church USA after the withdrawal of their conference.

Several years ago, Franconia helped to lead an equipping event with Southeast Conference leaders in Sarasota. There’s been a warmth between some of our conference leaders and these Floridian communities since then. In the spring, we received a request to come alongside some of those congregations to provide additional leadership resources and accompaniment.

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# Conference Financial Update

May 2019

4 Months (FY 2019-20 unaudited)

Operating Budget	Actual	Budget	Last Year
<b>REVENUE</b>			
Congregational contrib.	\$ 63,615	\$ 65,672	\$ 82,030
Properties Subsidy	\$133,332	\$133,332	\$133,332
All Other Sources	\$ 23,844	\$ 35,018	\$ 7,165
<b>Total Revenue (+)</b>	<b>\$220,791</b>	<b>\$234,022</b>	<b>\$222,527</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Ministries/Programs	\$198,152	\$220,160	\$171,095
Support Services	\$ 58,739	\$ 64,752	\$ 71,792
<b>Total Expenses (-)</b>	<b>\$256,891</b>	<b>\$284,912</b>	<b>\$242,887</b>
<b>NET</b>	<b>\$ (36,100)</b>	<b>\$ (50,890)</b>	<b>\$ (20,360)</b>



(above) Dock Academy was packed for the Jr. High Late Night Bash as 190 youth from 15 congregations enjoyed games, music, food, and spiritual encouragement. Photo by Jess McQuade.



In April, delegates affirmed Ken Burkholder (above left) as the next Conference Moderator. The conference staff has expanded to include (left to right) Danilo Sanchez, Brooke Martin, Hendy Stevan Matahelemual, Josh Meyer (page 3) and Marco Güete (page 3).

Join our conference community in learning about and praying for one another each week—watch your bulletin for more! (below) Children share the gift of dance at Alpha (NJ) congregation.

(right) Whitehall (PA) congregation received a Missional Operational Grant last year, which they used for leadership development among their Karen (Burmese) members.



Read the full stories at [franconiaconference.org/intersections](http://franconiaconference.org/intersections)