

# Intersections

Stories from Franconia Mennonite Conference

Winter 2019

## A Place of Gracious Hospitality

Bethany House sits on Emily Street: a three-story, red-brick townhouse whose stoop rests directly on the sidewalk along a narrow city street.

For a number of years, members of the conference community have been concerned about the rising cost of housing in South Philadelphia. As the city has experienced an influx of immigrants and a renewal of its urban core, the neighborhoods surrounding Franconia's South Philly congregations have seen a quick and dramatic increase in housing costs.

In response to growing support among the conference constituency, the board decided that now was the time to act, while the purchase could still be considered an investment in the rapidly growing housing market.

In December, upon the review and recommendation of the Properties and Finances Committees, Franconia Conference purchased the house on Emily Street to be used as a conference-owned parsonage. This home will be available for

*continued on page 2*



Leticia Cortes and Fernando Loyola with their daughters, Fernanda and Daniella, outside their new home.

*Photo by Hendy Stevan.*

Find more at [www.franconiaconference.org](http://www.franconiaconference.org)

## Editorial

After two years of leading our conference, I'm recognizing the constancy of change. For centuries, our conference existed in relative stability. The surnames in many of our congregations remained the same. Our leaders were called from within extended family systems. Being rooted in Pennsylvania—the state which is most likely to have life-long residents—our conference has known stability, longevity, and deep-rootedness.

In the last year, we have celebrated a centuries-old tree that has stood since the time of our nation's independence from European rule. And we mourned the loss of this massive oak with a neighborhood who felt connected to their own history under its branches. We celebrate like the congregation at Methacton in the beauty of what has gone before. We honor the possibility of what is yet to come. In doing so, we imagine a next generation, planting their own trees to bring shade to future generations.

We live in a time of great human movement with people taking risks to cross cultures, oceans, and borders, mostly toward urban areas. We continue to be shaped and reshaped by these movements while being deeply rooted. The Spirit continues to invite us to extend God's love, our resources and even our identity as people of Christ's peace. And by God's grace, the legacy of work and hope continues even in the midst of great change.

— Steve Kriss,  
Executive Minister



## Meet Ben Walter

Ben is one of four co-pastors at Ripple congregation in Allentown, PA. His role includes leading worship services, facilitating small group discussions, helping with the kids' ministry, kitchen and clean-up duties, and planting and tending Ripple's community garden.

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



*continued from page 1*

conference congregations in South Philadelphia to use when, and for as long as, needed.

Bethany House's first residents are Leticia Cortes and Fernando Loyola. The pastoral couple of Centro de Alabanza de Filadelfia, Cortes and Loyola have been struggling to find a safe and stable living arrangement for their family for eleven years. Because Bethany House is close to their congregation's building, Cortes and Loyola anticipate that living there will open up new possibilities for outreach in their community as they get to know their neighbors better. Members of Centro de Alabanza are excited about the move and have already been busily at work on the house, making repairs and painting.

The purchase of this property not only shows conference support of Philadelphia churches, explained conference moderator John Goshow, but also provides an opportunity for the rest of the conference to partner with our South Philly congregations in building God's kingdom, as "the entire Franconia Conference community works together to point people to Christ."

"The Bethany House continues Franconia Conference's tradition of mutual care for our pastors," described executive minister Steve Kriss. "It will ensure healthy leadership for what has been a rapidly growing part of our conference community." The house was named after the village where Jesus went for rest, care, and friendship (John 12:1-8), Kriss said, "a place of gracious hospitality."

—Emily Ralph Servant,  
Interim Director of Communication

Contributions can be made online or by sending a check with "Bethany House" in the memo.

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FranconiaMC

## Conferences Gather as One in the Bond of Peace

Eastern District and Franconia Mennonite Conferences again gathered jointly for fall assembly, November 2-3, 2018 at Souderton Mennonite Church. Under the theme of “We are one in the Spirit, through the bond of peace,” over 300 persons gathered for a historic reconciliation worship between the two Conferences.

The worship service was planned as part of a second phase of process leading toward the possible reconciliation of the Conferences in 2020. A reconciliatory action offered words of apology and forgiveness symbolically, that the two Conferences might “look well upon each other.”

Saturday sessions included more conversation in smaller “Digging Deeper” groups, led by the structure team members. The teams received extensive feedback, which will be used to form a proposal for a reconciled Conference structure at a joint spring assembly to be held May 4, 2019.

The day ended with each Conference meeting in separate business sessions. This session included recognizing new and re-emerging Partners in Ministry relationships with the Counsel of Evangelical/Anabaptist/Mennonite Churches of Mexico and Slate Hill Mennonite Church of Mechanicsburg. San Francisco Chinese Mennonite Church was also welcomed as a new member congregation after a year of relating and exploring the meaning of membership.



*Joshua So, pastor of San Francisco Chinese congregation, greets the delegates after his congregation was welcomed into membership. Photo by Andrew Huth.*

## Celebrating Nations and Generations in South Philly



*Hendy Stevan, Indonesian Light, and Chantelle Todman Moore, Intercultural Leadership Coach, open Renewing Nations & Generations. Photo by Marissa Smucker.*

It was a taste of heaven as people from different nations sang together in different tongues. We played together, laughing as we tried to draw portraits of one another. We connected over Indonesian and Mexican foods. Those of us who arrived feeling tentative or shy found courage as we made new friends and discovered that this was a safe space to be honest about our experiences in the past and our desires for the future.

*-Aldo Siahaan, Leadership Minister,  
with Chantelle Todman Moore, Intercultural Coach*

We walked silently through the streets of South Philadelphia. Pastor Joshua and Anita So from San Francisco and I focused on praying for the people and for the city. No interruption of cell phones. No chatting. We built our relationship with one another through our prayer. It was a dream come true for me.

On November 1, 2018, the Renewing Nations & Generations gathering met at Nations Worship Center in Philadelphia for an afternoon and evening of prayer, worship, visioning, and connecting. For the first time, ministers of color in Franconia Conference had a space to hear from each other as we listened to the Holy Spirit together.

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

# Conference Financial Update

December 2018

11 Months (FY 2018-19 unaudited)

Operating Budget	Actual	Budget	Last Year
<b>REVENUE</b>			
Congregational contrib.	\$276,526	\$281,873	\$270,908
Properties Subsidy	\$366,663	\$366,663	\$338,250
All Other Sources	\$ 72,479	\$125,764	\$ 62,159
<b>Total Revenue (+)</b>	<b>\$715,668</b>	<b>\$774,300</b>	<b>\$671,317</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Ministries/Programs	\$530,671	\$602,150	\$474,504
Support Services	\$204,556	\$225,609	\$210,992
<b>Total Expenses (-)</b>	<b>\$735,227</b>	<b>\$827,759</b>	<b>\$685,496</b>
<b>NET</b>	<b>\$ (19,559)</b>	<b>\$ (53,459)</b>	<b>\$ (14,179)</b>



Towamencin and Centro de Alabanza congregations shared a baptism service at the Branch Creek. Photo by April Clemmer.



Garden Chapel congregation opened their doors to leaders, law enforcement, and local neighbors in Morris County, NJ for a special forum on opioids and addiction. Photo by Marjorie Lydiksen.



Nicolas and Jonathan Morales (Souderton) created a drum from the "Methacton Oak." The boys' dance group, La Danza Azteca, blessed the land where a seedling from the old oak is growing. Photo by Sandy Drescher-Lehman.

Mike Ford (Blooming Glen), John Stoltzfus (Plains), and Ben Wideman (formerly at Salford), rode bikes from Philadelphia to DC to advocate for environmental care legislation.



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