



Intersections

Stories from Franconia Mennonite Conference

Winter 2020

Together Once More


It was a potentially historic day for two Mennonite conferences that split over 170 years ago.

On November 2, 2019, delegates from Franconia Mennonite Conference and Eastern District Conference met together at Souderton (PA) Mennonite Church to determine if reconciliation, which seemed unattainable in 1847, would now be possible.

After a meaningful joint worship in the morning, when credentialed leaders of both conferences who had passed away during the past year were remembered and newly credentialed leaders were introduced, anointed, and then commissioned to anoint others, the two conferences joined together for the afternoon session.

The three-year process toward reconciliation, led almost exclusively by conference volunteers, was introduced by the Structure and Identity Task Force. The task force had done its work, as few delegates posed questions or expressed any sense of hesitation with the proposal. The two conferences divided, for the last time, to discern and vote.

continued on page 2



Conference Assembly coordinator Brooke Martin collects ballots during the vote for reconciliation on November 2.

Photo by Cindy Angela

Find more at www.franconiaconference.org

Editorial

Conference delegate Steve Zacharias from JKI Anugerah in California told me he felt honored to vote for such a historic decision at assembly. Although his congregation has only been a member of Franconia Conference for a few years, he felt the weight and witness of what would become a unanimous vote to reconcile with Eastern District Conference. For me, the gravity and witness continue to sink in as we move toward our February 2020 date of a reconciled conference with a new name.

We have voted to become a new Conference. The next months and years will give us an opportunity to embody and enact this reconciliation. We are unique in Mennonite Church USA to have experienced, by the grace of God and power of the Spirit, this reconciliatory move of a single community in a time when so much around us is driving people apart rather than drawing them together. Because this work of the Spirit moves against our contemporary cultural current, we will have opportunity to work hard to create something new to bear witness to the peace of Christ that we have experienced and extended together.

— Steve Kriss, Executive Minister



Meet New Leaders



Newly credentialed leaders anoint members of Franconia and Eastern District Conferences after they are recognized during Saturday morning worship at Conference Assembly. Get to know conference leaders by reading their stories on our website: franconiaconference.org/call.

continued from page 1

With the delegates reunited after the vote, John Goshow, Franconia Conference moderator, and Jim Musselman, Eastern District moderator (Zion congregation), shared the results of the historic vote: together, the conferences had voted unanimously for reconciliation.

Spontaneous applause and cheers of affirmation from the delegates erupted while leaders from both conferences shared hugs and broad smiles. Together, the enthusiastic group sang, “Hosanna, Let Jesus be Lifted Up” and “Praise God from Whom” with gusto and gratitude.

The day’s events closed with a traditional action, which has been spoken by Franconia delegates to conclude their assemblies for more than a hundred years. On this day, however, delegates of both Franconia and Eastern District made the commitment together, as one gathered body:

“We affirm our desire to continue in and witness to the nonresistant and simple faith in Christ, looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ.”

— Sue Conrad Howes,
West Swamp congregation

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For future copies of Intersections in Cantonese, English, Indonesian, Spanish, or Vietnamese, contact office@franconiaconference.org.



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FranconiaMC

Welcoming a New Congregation

Ebenezer Mennonite Church began in June 1958 as part of the Hispanic ministry of Grace Mennonite Church in Lansdale, PA. It started as a community for Puerto Ricans who came to the area to work in summer agriculture.

In 2005, the church became independent from Grace and changed its name to Ebenezer Mennonite Church. In November 2009, the church moved to Zion congregation's building (Souderton, PA), where they continue to meet.

"God in his mercy has been present in our congregation, manifesting his power and sovereignty in the midst of trials," says Hilda Vincas, a leader in the church. "We have had sick members [receive] healing, and we feel his Holy Spirit in our midst because he has strengthened us when church members have passed away."

"The Latinx community continues to grow in Bucks and Montgomery counties where many of our congregations have been rooted for generations," Franconia's Executive Minister Steve Kriss reflects. "We hope that with the sisters and brothers at Ebenezer, we will continue to cultivate a vibrant Anabaptist witness and community together."

— Jennifer Svetlik, Salford congregation



Members of Ebenezer Mennonite Church are welcomed during the business session at Conference Assembly. Photo by Cindy Angela.



Board member Beny Krisbianto (Nations Worship Center) prays for the leaders of Franconia's new Conference Related Ministries. Photo by Cindy Angela.

Welcoming New Conference Related Ministries

At our Conference Assembly, we welcomed four new Conference Related Ministries.

Taproot Gap Year, a ministry of Philadelphia Praise Center, provides young adults with an opportunity to live in Indonesia with homestay families, learn a new language, go to class, serve in internships, explore new places, and learn tools that help develop their faith and identity.

Peace Proclamation Ministries

International, out of Plains congregation,

trains pastors, pastors' wives, and youth in India and supports the ministry of local Indian congregations through eye clinics and providing practical tools such as megaphones, bicycles, and sewing machines.

Healthy Niños Honduras, an outgrowth of the MAMA Project, helps children and their families beat the ravages of malnutrition and poverty through a residential nutrition center, deworming, water filtration systems, medical and construction brigades, and preventive health education.

Ripple Community Inc., started by Ripple congregation, serves over 150 Allentown residents through the only day center in Allentown that is open to the public and the first permanent, community-supported, affordable housing program in Allentown.

— Sharon K. Williams,
Nueva Vida Norristown New Life

Get to know other congregations in Franconia and Eastern District Conferences at:
franconiaconference.org/profiles.

Conference Financial Update

November 2019

10 Months (FY 2019-20 unaudited)

Operating Budget	Actual	Budget	Last Year
REVENUE			
Congregational contrib.	\$206,613	\$200,540	\$225,769
Properties Subsidy	\$333,330	\$333,330	\$333,330
All Other Sources	\$ 62,015	\$ 98,570	\$ 64,664
Total Revenue (+)	\$601,958	\$632,440	\$623,763
EXPENSES			
Ministries/Programs	\$525,667	\$574,751	\$493,281
Support Services	\$164,700	\$169,498	\$185,992
Total Expenses (-)	\$690,367	\$744,249	\$679,273
NET	\$ (88,409)	\$ (111,809)	\$ (55,510)



Delegates from both Eastern District and Franconia Conferences gathered after the reconciliation vote to serve one another communion. Photo by Cindy Angela.



Pastor Letty Cortes (Centro de Alabanza) leads in prayer and Pastor Marta Castillo (Wellspring congregation) interprets. Photo by Javier Marquez.



In addition to teaching a workshop for youth leaders, Michele Hershberger (Hesston College) preached at Friday evening worship: "The heroes of faith and Jesus need us." Listen to her full message on our website. Photo by Cindy Angela.



Worshippers join hands during the prayer. Photo by Cindy Angela.



Delegates enjoyed Indonesian Fritters, tamales, sandwiches, ice cream, and more at Conference Assembly this year. Photo by Cindy Angela.