



***Our Purposeful Plan* – Report to Delegate Assembly on 2013-2015 goals**

The goals and priorities in *Our Purposeful Plan* point to the growing edges of the work of the Executive Board staff, beyond the many routine ministries and resources available to conferences and congregations. As part of our accountability to the delegates, we report on the progress toward these goals each biennium. Below, in response to each of the goals listed in *Our Purposeful Plan* (lines 933-1073) for the 2013-2015 biennium, we offer brief italicized comments on whether or not these goals have been achieved. The date in parentheses at the end of each goal indicates the hoped-for date when the goal would be achieved.

1. Christian Formation

Outcome we seek: To increase our capacity as a community of faith to be and make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Goals we intend to pursue:

- Produce an evangelical/Anabaptist discipleship training resource in English and Spanish called “Begin Anew” with Palmer Becker, in cooperation with Mennonite Church Canada (2014). *This resource has been completed and is available in English and Spanish. It is available as a free downloadable pdf at www.MennoniteUSA.org and can be ordered in print from Amazon.com. It is being translated into Portuguese. We are also processing requests for other languages.*
- Discern the nature and scope of a possible new song collection, in collaboration with Mennonite Church Canada and MennoMedia (2015). *MennoMedia has taken the lead in this project. Their staff has developed a structure, budget and timeline. They are currently forming a steering committee with formal representation from Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada. This steering committee will appoint advisors and hire staff to coordinate the project, which will be structured differently than a traditional hymnal.*
- Update the Mennonite Ministers Manual in cooperation with Mennonite Church Canada and MennoMedia (2016). *This project has been put on hold.*
- Negotiate with other-than-Mennonite seminaries to offer our seminaries’ online Mennonite Faith and Polity course and other Anabaptist courses to their Mennonite students (2014). *This goal has been discussed with conference ministers and seminary leaders. We have yet to determine the exact approach we will take, since we have Mennonite students in a variety of seminaries.*

2. Christian Community

Outcome we seek: To deepen our capacity to engage in Biblical/communal discernment and deal with our differences in a Christ-like manner.

Goals we intend to pursue:

- Develop resources for Biblical/communal discernment to be used in congregations, area conferences, and other settings where believers seek to discern God’s will regarding important

matters as a church (2015). *We have recommended Ruth Haley Barton's resources and she has presented in settings across the church, including the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC). Central Plains Mennonite Conference also produced a set of resources on communal discernment which we recommend to other conferences:* <http://www.centralplainsmc.org/discernment-study.html>.

- Develop a covenant to express the relationship of the area conferences with the national conference and each other as an update to the Membership Guidelines (2015). *We have discussed this idea in the CLC, but have not found a way to do this which draws broad support. Central Plains Mennonite Conference is in the process of developing such a covenant among congregations within the conference which some have seen as a model for the relationship between area conferences.*
- Create a denominational statement of apology and a public service of lament for the abuses perpetuated by credentialed leaders in our denomination (2015). *In addition to the Churchwide Statement on Sexual Abuse to be considered by delegates, we have developed a litany to be used as part of our Delegate Assembly and we have planned for a Service of Lament and Hope for Friday evening, July 3, 8:45-10:00 p.m. in the Grace and Holy Trinity Cathedral.*

3. Holistic witness

Outcome we seek: To deepen engagement across the church in an interwoven fabric of service, peacemaking, evangelism, witness for justice and helping to birth new communities of faith.

Goals we intend to pursue:

- Convene a church planting summit to enable practitioners, conference leaders, historians, missiologists and theologians to explore what we can learn from our past experiences in church planting and to discern God's calling for the future (2015). *We have tested this initiative in multiple conversations with leaders across the church. Plans are now being laid for a two-day event, possibly in southern Florida, at the end of April 2016. The planning committee is being selected at this convention.*
- Create a written resource that encourages reflection and action for incarnational, missional church development from an Anabaptist perspective (2016). *Mennonite Mission Network staff have solicited and edited materials for a book with over 50 voices from across the church entitled, Fully Engaged: Missional Church in an Anabaptist Voice. We hope to make it available for delegates in Kansas City.*
- Establish a network of pastors, spiritual directors and other qualified individuals to elucidate core "spiritual practices of a peacemaker" (2015). *A reference group has met regularly to share their experiences and to identify core practices to share with the broader church.*
- Develop training and resources to equip congregations to build relationships with returning veterans (2013-2015). *The Peace and Justice Support Network (PJSN) worked collaboratively with Mennonite Central Committee to develop a six-unit curriculum entitled "Returning Veterans, Returning Hope" which is available for use in various settings across the church. It is available online at <http://www.pjsn.org/vets/Pages/Returning-Veterans-Returning-Hope.aspx>.*
- Assist Mennonite pastors and other leaders to participate in Israel/Palestine learning tours in keeping with the commitments we expressed in our response to the *Kairos* document (2013-2018). *We arranged for the participation of 44 pastors and denominational leaders in Israel/Palestine tours in the past two years. We are working with area conferences to plan for tours in the fall of 2015 and spring of 2016.*

Beyond the five specific Holistic Witness goals named above, staff have partnered with area conferences on organizing church planting retreats and scouting trips in several regions. Together with conference leaders and church planting coaches, staff drafted and tested "Shared Theological and Missiological Commitments for Church Planting in

Mennonite Church USA,” which has now been printed in English and Spanish. Staff developed Peace Sunday materials on Israel/Palestine, helped organize several regional teaching weekends, and organized a webinar.

4. Stewardship

Outcome we seek: To reflect God’s abundance through our generosity as God’s stewards, to the end that we achieve missional goals across all parts of the church.

Goals we intend to pursue:

- Provide stewardship training and education for immigrant congregations that address the unique cultural issues they experience (2013-2015). *Everence staff have written regular articles on stewardship for Meno Acontecer, the online Spanish newsletter produced by Mennonite Education Agency in cooperation with The Mennonite. Everence staff has worked with Darryl Dablheimer, program director for the Luther Social Services budget and debt program to expand the phone-based counseling service (free to Mennonite congregations) to include Spanish-speaking counselors.*
- Identify or develop websites that explain the stewardship implications of Anabaptist values for individuals and families and provides tools and resources for implementing them (2013-2015). *Glen Guyton, chief operating officer, has managed a stewardship blog. Everence staff contribute materials to this site, in addition to revising and updating the Everence website, which includes educational tabs linking financial calculators and free, downloadable stewardship education resources. These include two new six-session curriculum guides—“End-of-life-planning” and “All the days of my life.”*
- Identify or develop resources to assist congregations and conferences to create and manage healthy financial plans for sustaining missional sustainable futures (2013-2015). *Glen Guyton facilitates regular calls to conference treasures, joined by Beryl Jantzj of Everence. Everence has successfully led “Creating Congregational Cultures of Generosity” training sessions in 15 different conference settings from 2013 to 2015. They also developed additional workshops for congregations and conferences including “Budget basics for congregations” (webinar) and “Ministry, money and me” training for pastors. Everence has also provided retirement preparation seminars for pastors in several conference settings.*
- Provide resources for congregational study via the Mennonite Creation Care Network (MCCN) to deepen our Biblical undergirding for creation care issues (2013-2015). *The MCCN has developed a 12-week congregational curriculum for creation care called “Every Creature Singing.” It guides the study group through the following three units: Biblical and Theological Foundations, Pursuing Peace and Justice and Choosing a Simple Lifestyle. Everence has also worked at creation care issue through its initiatives in social screening for financial investments.*
- Proactively assist young adults and young families to navigate the “new normal” economy as they deal with financial challenges (low paying or nonexistent employment, education debts and high cost of living) (start in 2013). *Everence developed a program called “Household finances from a Christian perspective” that equips individuals to move towards becoming financially fit and couples toward becoming financially “one.” Everence has also trained seminarians on the use of personal finances and plans to significantly expand this effort.*

5. Leadership Development

Outcome we seek: To call, train and nurture church members with leadership gifts in Anabaptist theology and practice, and work together in various teams so that both credentialed and lay leaders can be empowered to fulfill the church’s missional vocation.

Goals we intend to pursue:

- Revise the *Mennonite Ministerial Polity* handbook, in collaboration with Mennonite Church Canada, to reflect both current practices and aspirations of the church we are being called to become (2014). *The working document, A Shared Understanding of Church Leadership, was completed in 2014 and commended for use by the Executive Board. The document will be brought to the Delegate Assembly for feedback.*
- Develop resources for leaders of boards in congregations, area conferences and agencies, to be delivered via multiple media, including personal coaching, online video sessions and reflective participant handbooks (2014). *Leadership development staff has prepared a participant's guide workbook, and various agency leaders have helped to develop training videos. The work on this goal will continue in the next biennium.*
- Build upon the 2008 Missional Lens paper by identifying 35 congregations or networks of congregations as "Anabaptist Learning Centers," sharpening their unique God-given gifts and experiences so they can share and resource other congregations, at times in cooperation with our schools and our agencies (2013-2017). *A growing number of clusters of congregations have begun to work in this fashion over the past several years. We will continue to focus and encourage such expressions of local leadership development.*
- Plan and execute a Women Doing Theology Conference to assist women seeking to follow God's call as women (2014). *The conference was held in 2014, with enthusiastic participation and requests for more of such conferences in the future.*
- In collaboration with Mennonite Education Agency, introduce and develop 10 centers based in Mennonite Church USA congregations to the Anabaptist Biblical Institute (IBA) program in English (2015). *The curriculum has been translated into English and is being used currently in several of the centers. This work will continue in the years ahead.*

6. Undoing Racism and Advancing Intercultural Transformation

Outcome we seek: To overcome antipathy and alienation among different cultural groups through a dismantling of individual and systemic racism in our church, making the way for people from every Racial/Ethnic group to have just and equitable access to church resources, positions, and information as manifestations of the one new humanity we have in Christ

Goals we intend to pursue:

- Complete an updated Immigration Statement and coordinate/provide resources for its implementation where needed (2015). *We completed this statement, which was approved by the Executive Board in February 2014.*
- Complete a six week on-line Bible study for congregations featuring Danny Carroll, Saulo Padilla and Tammy Alexander (2014). *We completed the Radical Hospitality video study guide in 2014. It is available for free at www.MennoniteUSA.org.*
- Provide at least 12 Intercultural Competency Workshops to groups around the church (2015). *In response to the many requests, the staff has exceeded this goal by completing 18 trainings across the church.*
- Train at least 50 people as Communities of Hope facilitators in partnership with area conferences (2015). *Because of the demand for this service, this goal has been modified to train several facilitators as certified administrators, who can in turn train facilitators. Two administrators have been trained, with the goal to train four more by end of 2015. This goal continues through the next biennium.*
- Coordinate a "Hope for the Future" event for People of Color and guest leaders from the dominant culture in the church to discuss aspirations for the future of People of Color leadership in the

church in (2014). *Staff coordinated these events in 2014 and 2015. Because of the hope this brings to people of color, these events will continue to be an annual gathering*

7. Church-to-Church Relationships

Outcome we seek: To give and receive gifts within the broader body of Christ as a witness to the unity to which God calls us and to help us be more faithful to God’s mission in the world.

Goals we intend to pursue:

- Collaborate with the planners of Assembly 16 for Mennonite World Conference to provide a wide and hospitable welcome for international guests to our 2015 biennial convention (2013-2015). *We are planning a reception for international guest at our convention, and we have invited César García, the general secretary of Mennonite World Conference, to address our Delegate Assembly.*
- Complete the proposed covenant arrangement with the *Communauté Mennonite au Congo* (CMCo) or Mennonite Church in Congo and complete context specific guidelines for church-to-church relations between the Mennonite Church USA congregations, CMCo and Congo Evangelical Church (CEM) in conjunction with Congo church leaders (2015). *We have worked at this goal in several settings with limited success. We hope to meet with the Congolese groups at the Mennonite World Conference assembly in July to see if there is sufficient interest to achieve this goal.*
- Respond to the queries from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America about how we see our relationship to each other in the body of Christ, and to affirm the Mennonite World Conference – Lutheran World Federation dialogue on baptism (2013-2015). *After extensive processing through the Interchurch Relations reference group, and with the support of the Executive Board, Ervin Stutzman sent a letter on these matters to the ELCA Presiding Bishop in July 2014. The letter was received and acknowledged with deep appreciation for the relationship that has developed over the past few years.*
- Re-launch the Believers Church Conferences as an arena for exploring and articulating “free church” understandings with other denominations that practice adult baptism and share a believers church ecclesiology (such as Baptists, Pentecostals, Disciples and others) (2013-2016). *A Believers Church Conference will be hosted June 22-25, 2016 by Acadia University in Nova Scotia, with hopes to form an ongoing steering committee.*
- Develop partnerships and alliances with historic African-American and Hispanic churches and faith organizations (from denominations and traditions other than Mennonite Church USA) in order to expose and engage the prison industrial complex and the system of mass incarceration/immigrant detention in our country (2013–2018). *Staff began by building relationships with Mennonites working on these issues, often in close collaboration with ecumenical partners. We participated in several ecumenical conferences on these topics and collaborated with a large African-American congregation in Chicago on a film festival related to mass-incarceration.*

Beyond these specific Church-to-Church goals, staff cultivated interchurch relationships through annual meetings with Christian Churches Together and facilitated Mennonite participation in the Church of God (Cleveland) assembly, the Society for Pentecostal Studies and the Faith and Order Convening Table of the National Council of Churches.