

Ministerial Leadership Commission Annual Report 2024 (covering June 14, 2023-June 12, 2024)

Submitted by Cynthia Neufeld Smith, chair of MLC

MLC Members: Cynthia Neufeld Smith (chair), Gilberto Flores, Gail Graber, Micah Hurst (ended his service 3/1/24), Elizabeth Melendez (began 6/1/24), Todd Schlosser, Samuel Voth Schrag
Staff liaison: Heidi Regier Kreider, conference minister

The Ministerial Leadership Commission fulfilled its constitutional duties in the past year in the following ways:

Monitoring changes in ministers' credential status:

Key to credential status: A = Active, AWC = Active Without Charge, I = Inactive, R = Retired, W = Withdrawn

New or extended credentials (Licensing Toward Ordination or License for Specific Ministry)

6/14/23 - Bev Baumgartner - Reactivation of Ordination credential granted

8/02/23 - Elizabeth Schmidt - License for Specific Ministry granted; continued as Congregational Care Coordinator at Bethel College MC

10/11/23 - Andrew Dungan - License for Specific Ministry granted; continued as Interim Pastor at Summit Street Church, Beatrice, NE

10/11/23 - Melissa Atchison - License Towards Ordination extension granted; continued as Pastor at Manhattan MC, Manhattan, KS

11/08/23 - Josh Janzen - Ordination credential granted; continued as Pastor at First MC, Beatrice, NE

12/13/23 - William Cork - License Towards Ordination granted; continued as Chaplain at Michael E. DeBakey Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Houston, TX

1/10/24 - Luke Unruh - License Towards Ordination extension granted; continued as Pastor at First Mennonite Church, Newton, KS

Credential changes (Transfers, Active to Active without charge, Active without charge to Active, Reactivation of Inactive Ordination credential, Active to Retired, Expired, Change in assignment, Withdrawn, etc)

- 6/10/23 - Luann Yutzy Ended as Transitional Pastor at Shalom MC, Newton, KS; 6/22/23 - Began as Interim Pastor at Community MC, Harrisonburg VA; 11/22/23 – Ended as Transitional Pastor at Community MC, Harrisonburg, VA; 1/6/24 - Began as Transitional Pastor at Alexanderwohl MC, Goessel, KS; 1/8/24 - Began as Transitional Pastor at Salina MC, Salina, KS
- 6/28/23 - Brett Klingenberg; Credential status changed from AWC to I
- 6/30/23 - Karen Andres ended as Associate Pastor at Zion MC, Elbing, KS
- 6/30/23 - Ray Reimer ended as Pastor at Zion MC, Elbing, KS

-6/30/23 - Kristine Regehr ended as Transitional Pastor at Faith MC, Newton, KS; 11/1/23 – Began as Transitional Pastor at First MC, Hillsboro, KS

-7/1/23 - Bev Baumgartner began as Interim Associate Pastor at Eden MC, Moundridge, KS

-7/5/23 - Jim Mellinger - Credential transferred to WDC from Virginia Mennonite Conference

-7/31/23 - Dawn Yoder Harms ended as Interim Pastor at Lorraine Avenue MC, Wichita, KS; 8/28/23 - Began as Chaplain at Kidron Bethel Village, North Newton, KS

-7/31/23 - Caleb Yoder ended as Lead Pastor at Alexanderwohl MC, Goessel, KS; 9/6/23 - Credential transferred from WDC to Central Plains Mennonite Conference

-8/1/23 – Micah Hurst began as interim pastor at Zion MC; 1/8/24 - Ended as Interim Pastor at Zion MC, Elbing, KS

-8/1/23 – Jerrell Williams began as lead pastor of Shalom MC; 8/2/23 - Credential transferred to WDC from Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference

-8/15/23 - Tim Amor, credential transferred from WDC to Mennonite Church Eastern Canada

-8/16/23 - Kim Becker, Credential transferred to WDC from Central Plains Mennonite Conference; 8/20/23 - Began as Pastor at Austin MC, Austin, TX

-8/27/23 - Joel Schroeder ended as Interim Pastor at Hesston MC, Hesston, KS; 9/12/23 - Began as Pastor at Faith MC, Newton, KS

-8/1/23 - Eldon Epp began as Interim Associate Pastor at Lorraine Avenue MC, Wichita, KS; Continued as Chaplain at Bethesda Home, Goessel, KS

- 9/6/23 - Tom Harder – Credential changed from Active to Retired

-10/1/23 - Lynn Schlosser began as Pastor at First MC, McPherson, KS; Continued as Pastor at Mennonite Church of the Servant, Wichita, KS

-10/6/23 - Dianne Schmidt - Credential transferred from WDC to Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference

-10/6/23 - Dennis Schmidt - Credential transferred from WDC to Indiana Michigan

-12/31/23 - Christina Litwiller - Ended as Pastor at Salina MC, Salina, KS

- 1/18/24 - Weldon Schloneger – Credential changed from Retired to Withdrawn (per his request)

- 1/24/24 - Norma Duerksen – Credential changed from AWC to Retired

-1/25/24 - Susan Jantzen - Credential changed from AWC to Retired

-1/28/24 - Rose Marie Zook Barber - Ended as Interim Pastor at Faith MC, Newton, KS; 6/1/24 - Began as Associate Pastor at Faith MC, Newton, KS

-2/19/24 - Jill Schmidt Weaver - Credential transferred to WDC from South Central Mennonite Conference; Continued as Chaplain at Schowalter Villa, Hesston, KS

-6/9/24 - Marshall Anderson – Credential changed from Active Without Charge to Inactive

-6/10/24 - Joanna Harader - Ended as Pastor at Peace Mennonite Church, Lawrence, KS;

Deceased

-9/4/23 - Patricia Shelly, retired minister

-10/29/23 - Eldon Epp, Chaplain at Bethesda Home, Goessel, KS, and Interim Associate Pastor at Lorraine Avenue MC, Wichita, KS

-12/18/23 - Donald Kaufman, retired minister

-2/21/24 - Elizabeth Raid, retired minister

Supporting personal and spiritual growth for pastoral leadership through counsel, personal evaluation, continuing education and professional assistance.

- Approved 29 Continuing Education grants for credentialed ministers, totaling \$3,011.70
- Approved 2 Sabbatical grants, totaling \$700
- Approved 1 Hope Fund Grant for Ministerial Counseling, totaling \$400
- Approved 4 seminary scholarships, totaling \$2,515.63
- Provided mentors for new ministers
- Supported congregations and pastors navigating conflict and change, and pastoral review, accountability and discernment processes, using our Congregational Development Fund.

Supporting a code of ministerial ethics in keeping with Mennonite Church USA documents.

- Carried out the policy requiring all ministers to take Healthy Boundaries training.

Resourcing ministry teams that include pastors and deacons through workshops, retreats, and other appropriate events.

- MLC co-sponsored with Everence an English language Pastors' Retreat at Crosswind Retreat Center, Hesston, KS, on April 16-17. Resource persons: Sara Dick and Chywonna Gonzalez. Music/Worship leaders: Doug and Jude Krehbiel. A Spanish language retreat is being planned for Sept. 27-28 at Lakeview Retreat Camp/Retreat Center, Waxahachie, TX, with resource person Luis Tapia from AMBS.
- Two females have been appointed to an Abuse Prevention and Response Resource Team that can be available to congregations and to the MLC. An additional male is still being sought.
- MLC is planning a "come and go" reception for pastors at the Annual Assembly of WDC.
- MLC continues to work on developing a series of resourcing topics to be offered for pastors and congregational leaders.
- MLC meets monthly to tend to the larger picture of ministerial leadership in WDC and support the conference ministers in their work.

The MLC affirmed that they recognize ministerial credentials granted by South Central Conference while they were fellow members of MCUSA, and will accept transfers of ministers in good standing with South Central. We will offer them the normal orientation for new ministers in WDC. We will ask ministers to fill out the annual accountability plan upon receiving their credentials. Our preference would be for all the ministers to have a Ministerial Leadership Information form, but do not mandate it. MLIs of incoming transfers will be made available to the MLC.

The MLC continues to consider our role in repentance and transformation as called for by the MCUSA resolution approved at the Special Assembly in 2022 in Kansas City. We acknowledge that the MLC played a role in excluding LGBTQ persons from ministry in the past. We are reaching out to apologize to pastors who we know were denied pastoral positions in WDC because of their sexual orientation.