

AMC Congregational Meeting

Oct 23, 2022 @ 7pm

Agenda

Facilitator: Marshall King

Presenters: Bethany Swope, Norm Kaufman, Scott Coulter, Randy Roth

Minute Taker: Barb Swartley

Please sign an attendance sheet.

- 1. Opening (Marshall King)**
- 2. Reparations Proposal – Second Reading (Bethany Swope)**
 - a. Presentation**
 - b. Questions**
 - c. Test for Consensus**
 - d. Congregational Response**
- 3. Repair Network Proposal – First Reading (Norm Kauffman)**
- 4. Reporting: Goshen Christian Montessori School Sponsorship Conversation (Scott Coulter)**
 - a. Responses to Congregation’s Questions (Handout)**
 - b. Ad Hoc Working Group will bring proposal to Nov meeting for a first reading**
 - c. Additional Clarifying Questions?**
- 5. Reporting: Recent Changes to COVID-19 Policies (Randy Roth)**
- 6. Closing**

Reparations-Inspired Proposal for Congregational Discernment

Reparations Task Force – September 6, 2022¹

I. Reparations: a succinct summary

The word “reparation” refers to the work of repairing; often in relation to a historical wrong, and often in the form of restitution (returning what was wrongly taken) and restoration (restoring the wronged to wholeness). In the last decade there has been renewed conversation in the U.S. about reparations to African-Americans for the legacy of slavery, and to Indigenous Peoples for the legacy of colonialization. A bill in Congress (H.R. 40) would explore a national apology and reparations for all African-Americans. But reparative acts of this sort needn’t wait for government action (which likely won’t come soon). Faith communities, as agents of repair and healing, are called to address the historic and ongoing harm of White supremacy² (see February 2022 sermon).

II. Proposal specifics

Based on years of congregational anti-racism education, our growing moral consciousness, and the movement of God’s Spirit, the Reparations Task Force³ proposes the following:

1. We collect monies for reparations-inspired action from the Two-Percent offering;
2. Twenty (20) percent of the Two-Percent Fund will go to reparations in 2023, with that percentage increasing over time. The goal is that eventually 45 percent of the Two-Percent fund will go to reparations, replacing the “local needs” portion of the Two-Percent Fund.⁴
3. The reparations portion will be administered and disbursed by a separate committee.
 - a. The work of the Reparations Committee shall be done in a manner consistent with our guiding parameters (see below) which includes engagement with Black and Indigenous peoples. The committee will also interact with reparation committees from other local congregations (should they come into existence), seeking ways to work collaboratively.
 - b. The Reparations Committee will inform the congregation where payments have been made, and of ways we might further support those receiving our funds.⁵

III. Guiding parameters and understandings

- a) Reparations are not charity, a gift, or an act taken to ease our conscience; rather, they are best understood as payment of an actual debt for harm committed (restitution) and answering the Biblical call to love God and neighbor (restoration).
- b) At their best, reparations are a spiritual act that enables transformation and healing for both those who give and for those who receive. White supremacy has robbed all of us of our humanity, and reparative acts are how we get our humanity restored.
- c) Our reparation-inspired funds will go toward restorative and anti-oppression initiatives which address harm caused to African Americans and Indigenous groups as a result of our White supremacist culture and colonialization.
- d) Releasing control, which includes heeding the voices of Black and Indigenous Peoples, is an important part of how White Americans renounce White supremacy, and it should be part of how largely White congregations, such as ours, engage in reparations.

¹ Underlined type is what has been changed from the May 2022 proposal

² *White supremacy* describes a social, cultural, and political order that disproportionately and deliberately benefits those deemed to be White. It was original to the founding of America, pervasive across its institutions, and enduring throughout its history. It is best understood as a massive, multigenerational project of theft – theft of power, of culture, of wealth, of land, of hope, and of the truth about the lives of people of color [Kwon & Thompson]

³ John Fribley, Sandy Fribley, Glenn Gilbert, Norm Kauffmann, Linda Schlabach Miller, Arden Shank, Meribeth Shank, Karl Shelly, Bethany Swope

⁴ See “Finance Committee and Reparations Task Force Agreement for how to Fund Reparations-Inspired Action.”

⁵ We want to be open to but not require ongoing relationships with groups who receive our funds (e.g. invitations to speak with honorarium if they want to, invitation to let us know of other actions we might take to support their work).

- e) Reparative work is fundamentally local. Our focus will be Goshen, Elkhart County and the Michiana region.
- f) White Americans have ongoing work to do learning about the historic and ongoing damage of White supremacy, speaking the truth of what they learn, cleansing their community of the damage White supremacy has wrought, and standing in solidarity with People of Color against racism.

IV. The Assembly Two-Percent Fund: what is it and how it would change.

Assembly's "Two-Percent Fund"⁶ embodies the congregation's historic commitment to restitutive giving.⁷ It is separate from the general budget; it includes a monthly ritual in worship where members pay restitution (2 percent of their income, above and beyond their tithe) in response to living in a country made wealthy through the exploitation of others. In recent years, the Two-Percent Fund has received and disbursed \$45,000-50,000 annually.

In recent years, it has become the key vehicle for contributing to organizations important to Assembly; a number of which were formerly in our general budget. This proposal will, over a number of years, move some of the organizations receiving funds for local needs to our general budget, and reclaim and refocus more of the Two-Percent Fund for reparations-inspired action.

Paying reparations will have both a familiar feel (giving will come from the Two-Percent Fund) but it will also be different in significant ways.

- It is a new congregational commitment to proactively address the legacy of White supremacy.
- It is a commitment we make publicly, highlighting the imperative to address White supremacy to others.
- It is a commitment to which we invite other congregations in our area to join, thereby building a larger movement of dismantling the culture and legacy of White supremacy.

V. Additional actions

The task of resisting oppression and repairing harm must take many forms including a) ongoing education about the roots and current expressions of racism, b) relationship-building with people across racial lines, and c) joining advocacy networks to change racist policies embedded in housing, education, health care, voting, and financial systems.⁸ Our work of repair is best done alongside acts of solidarity.⁹ Forming a *Solidarity Ministry Team* to guide the congregation in this could be one helpful way to ensure we not only pay up, but show up too.

⁶ It began to take form in 1974 as a "one-percent fund" and was later expanded.

⁷ For more on the history of Assembly's Two-Percent Fund, see this brief summary:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1DoutXBvjVReznrMOF8t4RUX2fndu4KpX/edit?usp=sharing&oid=100285087006693302723&rtpof=true&sd=true>

⁸ One important advocacy effort is for a national reparations policy (H.R. 40) that acknowledges the grievous harm to African Americans since the formation of this nation and establishes a financial system to assist those harmed.

⁹ Solidarity is "a conscious change in position, where those who are not threatened with oppression step across a line – from the sidelines to sharing the fate of the oppressed. When those who benefit from structural violence find they cannot tolerate the injustice any longer and join with those harmed by the systems of death, solidarity is the result." Sarah Augustine, *The Land is Not Empty* (Herald Press 2021), p. 169.

Finance Committee and Reparations Task Force Agreement on How to Fund Reparations-Inspired Action

The long-term goal for funding reparations-inspired action at Assembly is for the Two-Percent Fund to shift so that:

- a) forty-five (45) percent of the Two-Percent Fund goes to reparations-inspired action in our local area; and
- b) forty-five (45) percent of the Two-Percent Fund continues to go toward global needs arising out of U.S. exploitation of people and places beyond the U.S.¹⁰

Giving to local agencies and Mennonite institutions will come out of our annual spending plan.

However, we recognize that in the short-term, the large size of our mortgage payment necessitates phasing-in this goal over a number of years. Therefore, we propose the following phase-in:

- In 2023, the Two-Percent Fund will be apportioned 20% to reparations, 35% to local needs, 35% to global needs, and 10% to other needs which fit the spirit of restititional giving but don't fit our categories. (The reparations portion will be administered by a separate committee).
- In the same year, a line-item for local justice and service agencies will be added to the annual spending plan in the amount of \$5,000 (this will be distributed by the Two-Percent Committee). This line-item marks the beginning of a direction Finance Committee is recommending; that over time, more of our giving to local agencies comes through the annual spending plan rather than the Two-Percent Fund.
- In 2024 and each year thereafter, the apportionment of the Two-Percent Fund will shift, increasing the amount going to reparations and global needs with a corresponding decrease in the percentage going to local needs. Eventually, reparations and global needs will each receive 45% of the Two-Percent Fund. Regular increases in the local agencies line-item in the annual spending plan will occur as the budget process and congregational giving allow.

Ruth Ann Gardner, Larry Gautsche, John Nafziger, Karl Shelly, Bethany Swope

August 2, 2022

(Edited for clarity October 20, 2022)

¹⁰ Ten percent of the Two-Percent Fund will continue to be designated for needs which fit the spirit of restititional giving but don't fit our categories.

Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery (DDofD) Ministry Team Proposal for Assembly to join the Repair Network

A new 'ministry team' (which is the language AMC historically uses for groups that rise out of interest in the congregation) has formed which focuses on dismantling the doctrine of discovery (DDofD – see <https://dofdmenno.org/>) and supporting justice for Indigenous peoples. The focus of this ministry team dovetails nicely with our congregational work on reparations, and is a response to a growing witness within Mennonite Church USA to take Indigenous concerns seriously.

The DDofD ministry team is requesting that the congregation join the [Repair Network](#), which is a coalition of Anabaptist groups and congregations committed to this cause. Local members of this national network include Eighth Street Mennonite Church and Camp Friedenswald.

Joining the Repair Network gives us access to various resources from the network, and commits us to seven steps of action (see the second page of this [two-page description](#)). The ministry team will oversee the congregation's work on these action steps.

We'd be happy to share about this at an upcoming congregational meeting and in other ways. Current DDofD Ministry Team members are Norm Kauffmann (convener), Sharon Kauffmann, Anne Birky, Lois Nafziger, John Nafziger, Karl Shelly (staff). The team hopes more people will join as word of this ministry team widens in the congregation.

9/29/22, DDofD Ministry Team

Ready to take the next steps of repair beyond education and awareness about the Doctrine of Discovery?

Join our Repair Congregations and Communities Network!

We want to walk with you on that journey! In 2021, we launched a new network to support Mennonite communities in education, solidarity and reparative action alongside Indigenous peoples.

We also believe this network has the potential for healing for white settlers and Christians as we seek to undo internalized superiority.

Our commitments:

Our Coalition's volunteers and organizer(s) will accompany you and your congregation/ community in the work of repair! We commit to:

- Engaging your community regularly through sharing resources for worship, education, Bible study, and movement-building
- Inviting you to join Indigenous partners in their calls for prayer, advocacy and accompaniment
- Inviting you to quarterly meetings of the Repair Network, including our annual gathering (a great time for relationship-building and reconnection!)
- Offering feedback, cultural competence accompaniment, and practices toward building relationships with Indigenous peoples and addressing white supremacy and Christian supremacy
- Connecting our Coalition's work for repair with other struggles for liberation, such as Black and Palestinian justice movements
- Connecting you with fabulous guest speakers for worship, Adult Ed, retreats, etc.
- Sharing your work and examples with others in the Repair Congregations and Communities network and in our educational resources

<https://dofdmenno.org/get-involved/repair-network/>

Join and Commit to these Steps:

1) Education and lament

Engage with the educational resources on our website (and others) to learn about the Doctrine of Discovery and lament its impacts in your region and beyond. This is not just a mental exercise, but a heart and body experience of inner work, transformation and repentance for Christians and for settlers as we grieve the devastation caused by church-sponsored colonization and white supremacy.

2) Organize a committee or team

Create a group or task an existing committee to carry the work of repair forward beyond awareness-raising. Consider studying and adopting the [Mennonite World Conference Statement of Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples](#) and/or drafting your own repudiation statement of the Doctrine of Discovery.

3) Truth-telling

Work together to create a Land Acknowledgment statement for your congregation or community. See our Land Acknowledgment Guide for ideas on how to do this. Explore other forms of truth-telling as a congregation related to the Indigenous peoples and land where you live, such as creating public signage and memorials, remembering forced removals, and using Indigenous place names.

4) Restitution in the Budget

Work together to put restitution/ repair funds in your budget each year. You may choose to return wealth directly to Indigenous groups working for land return, sovereignty and justice in your region, or groups in other lands working to dismantle the DoD. In addition to restitution, we ask that you donate to the work of our Coalition so we can sustain and continue our reparative justice organizing (we contribute 60% of all donations toward an annual Indigenous "repair partner").

5) Respond to calls for solidarity with Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous lands and lives around the world continue to be threatened by extractive industry and violence because of the Doctrine of Discovery. Indigenous Peoples' struggles for land and life are all of our struggles! Join the solidarity campaigns that the Coalition is actively involved in, support our work through advocacy and through engaging your whole congregation, and grow this movement! You may also be called to participate and show up for justice alongside Indigenous communities locally or internationally as you listen and learn from them.

6) Connect the work of repair with creation care!

Earth groans as a result of colonization. Many of the roots of our ecological crisis can be traced back to the Doctrine of Discovery and relationships of extraction rather than kinship and care with and for the land. Find ways to engage in Earth care, such as community gardening, climate change action and advocacy, or river restoration, and connect the dots in your community with dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery.

7) Commit to being contagious!

Spread conversations about the work for repair and the impacts of the Doctrine of Discovery throughout your spheres of influence, including regional conferences, denominational gatherings, and beyond! Share your stories with the Repair Network and inspire new imagination for what is possible today

GCMS Q&A Sheet for Congregational Meeting Oct 23, 2022

At the Sept 18 Congregational Meeting ([see minutes](#)), we gathered questions about Goshen Christian Montessori School (GCMS), the preschool that rents space in the AMC Meetinghouse, and about their request that the congregation consider becoming their sponsoring church. This handout (created by Scott Coulter, Caleb Morris, and Anne Horst Hanby) attempts to summarize those questions and responses.

Next Steps: The AMC Leadership Group has created an ad hoc working group (Scott Coulter, Sandy Fribley, Larry Gautsche, Caleb Morris, Anne Horst Hanby, Arden Shank) to come to consensus around a proposal for the congregation, which would ideally be brought for a first reading at the Nov 2022 congregational meeting. Leadership Group thinks this group well represents the various concerns that were voiced at the September congregational meeting. Additional questions about the process can be brought to the working group.

Tuition & Scholarships

1. How much do families pay for their children to attend GCMS?
Tuition for the primary classroom (ages 3-5) is \$420/mo for longer days, \$245/mo for half days. Students can enroll for morning only, afternoon only, or both. GCMS serves primarily middle-income and some low-income families.
2. Does GCMS offer need-based scholarships?
This year GCMS started a small needs-based scholarship with space for 2-3 children.
 - Who is eligible for scholarships? *The application is based on the free/reduced lunch scale.*
 - How are those scholarships funded? *Through grant funds, fundraising, and GCMS operating funds.*
 - What percentage of current GCMS students are on scholarships? *There is space for 2-3 children in the scholarship program. GCMS serves about 30 children.*

Financial Implications for Assembly

If Assembly becomes the “sole operator” of GCMS:

3. Would GCMS staff become employees of Assembly Mennonite Church? *No. GCMS would remain a separate nonprofit corporation and employ its staff separately.*
4. Would GCMS funds become part of funds owned and managed by the church? *No. The proposed model would be for GCMS to be financially independent and sustainable on its own without the need for operating funds from the church budget.*
5. Would the church have a fiscal responsibility to cover any debts/liabilities that GCMS might incur, if GCMS were to run out of its own funds? *Our current understanding is that it could be structured so that there would not be an official legal financial responsibility for the congregation. We will seek legal consultation on this question before bringing a proposal to the congregation.*
6. Would there be any changes to the current rental costs/rental agreement between GCMS and AMC? *No, the agreement and costs would be unchanged. AMC lets GCMS use our space at cost (as we do with everyone else we rent space to), and GCMS and the Christian Ed committee would continue to negotiate use of classroom space.*
7. Would financial support for GCMS become part of the church budget? *GCMS is not requesting or expecting funds from the church budget as part of this conversation. If the congregation were to decide in the future to provide funds (ex. for scholarships) that would be welcome.*

Concerns about Liability

If Assembly becomes the “sole operator” of GCMS:

8. Would the church be legally responsible for any injuries to students or staff of GCMS?
Yes, there could be some implications for the church. Varied and layered risk management strategies remain important to operate a ministry that cares for children from the community. The working group can consider this carefully and seek consultation from some outside sources.
9. Would GCMS families be asked to sign a waiver indemnifying the church and its staff from liability?
Families currently sign liability release forms. Thus far, Assembly has not been named in those forms along with GCMS. GCMS can add Assembly to such forms even this school year if the church requests that.
10. Would GCMS or the church need to carry additional insurance on top of the currently held insurance policies?
GCMS and AMC both need an insurance review as part of considering a different structural relationship between the two entities. The working group will consider this in putting together a proposal. We will ask Assembly's insurance carrier what they recommend in the church's best interest.

Governance Implications

If Assembly becomes the “sole operator” of GCMS:

11. Would the board of GCMS be accountable to the congregation? *Accountability to the congregation could be part of the proposal; we think GCMS would be open to that.*
12. Would AMC representation on the GCMS board change? *It is ultimately up to AMC to decide what sort of representation the congregation has on the GCMS board. Having greater congregational representation on the GCMS board can be part of the proposal.*
13. Would the congregation be asked to make any decisions that are currently made autonomously by the GCMS Board? Would the congregation be consulted on any decisions that the GCMS Board currently makes independently? (For example, any decisions to expand in size?) *Our current thoughts are that the congregation would have a mechanism to select or affirm the people serving on the GCMS board (perhaps via Leadership Group or the Leader Selection Process), and that the GCMS board would handle governance of the preschool. Decisions that impact use of space (such as expansion into more classrooms or expanding days/hours) would need to be negotiated with AMC as part of the rental agreement, as is currently the case.*
14. Would the congregation (and not just members of the GCMS Board) have access to GCMS' financial records?
GCMS could give an annual financial report to the congregation similar to ones nonprofits typically make available to donors.

Questions about Alignment of Mission/Goals/Values:

15. How are the mission and values of GCMS an expression of the mission and values of AMC?
GCMS' mission statement is: “to create an environment that enables students to gain independence, confidence, emotional and social stability, and a greater understanding of the world around them.”
AMC's mission and values include nurturing and caring for one another, fostering healthy relationships, and welcoming “all who come our way”. AMC also values giving individual attention and care to children. These values are put into practice in the preschool beyond our faith community.
GCMS addresses the need for childcare options in the community and welcomes children of all races, religious backgrounds, and abilities. GCMS teaches pro-social behavior, cooperation and respect for self & others, and age-appropriate conflict resolution. GCMS also emphasizes learning world geography and world cultures, spending time outdoors and in nature-based play, and learning about and caring for the natural world.
GCMS expects that if Assembly takes on the role of sponsoring congregation, this will involve some shifts in faith statements, nondiscrimination statements, and related topics to align with Assembly's leadership and vision. The current GCMS board is prepared to approve these types of arrangements in conversation with Assembly.

16. What does the “Christian” in “Goshen Christian Montessori School” mean? *GCMS leadership is pursuing a name change to “Goshen Community Montessori School” or “Goshen Montessori School”. There are no religious requirements made of staff, students, or families. Some GCMS families are affiliated with Assembly, some with other local churches, some with another religious background, some have no religious affiliation. About 20 children from Assembly have attended GCMS over the past number of years.*
17. Does GCMS do religious education as part of its curriculum? *No, there is no Christian or religious curriculum.*

Other Questions

18. Is it being proposed that Assembly become the sponsoring organization for GCMS indefinitely, or for a limited term? (Such as, ___ years)? *The state ministry registration is a two-year term that currently expires Aug. 2023. A proposed two-year timeframe starting with the 23-24 school year would make sense.*

Questions about “Registered Unlicensed Child Care Ministry” Status

19. What does it mean that GCMS is “unlicensed”? Why is GCMS “unlicensed”?
“Registered Unlicensed Child Care Ministry” is a category of the state of Indiana. It involves having some state oversight (from the state board of health and the fire marshal), but not to the degree that a “licensed” school or day care would have.¹¹ Being “licensed” would place restrictions on the care GCMS would be able to provide.
20. Is this the same status that Eighth Street Preschool and Hively Ave Preschool have? *Hively Ave Preschool is an unlicensed program and has opted out of having state involvement (so they are not a “registered ministry”). We are still learning about Eighth Street Preschool’s model, but it is our current understanding that Eighth Street is also unlicensed.*

Edited by Scott Coulter, with input from Caleb Morris & Anne Horst Hanby
Oct 21, 2022

¹¹ According to <https://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/resources/child-care-definitions-and-exemptions-indiana>: “Registered day care ministry” means day care provided as an extension of a church or religious ministry that is a religious organization exempt from federal income taxation under Section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code, unlicensed but registered with the state board of health and state fire marshal’s office pursuant to IC 12-3-2-12.7(c). 470 Ind. Admin. Code 3-4.5-1.