



Conference Minister's Corner

**Feeling disconnected, conference-wise?
These things might help...**

By Amy Zimbelman, Conference Minister



"If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad. All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it." 1 Cor 12:26-27

How do we connect with one another more effectively?

When one of our churches is right outside of the police tape of a horrible tragedy that has garnered international attention, we lift up our prayers. As we must, for the healing of us all. This event has reminded us that when one part of our body is throbbing, the rest of us feel it too.

But what about the day-in day-out experience of being church? The small joys and sorrows? The sometimes-skipping and sometimes-slogging that makes up our community's walk with God? How do we share our lives in those times too?

Right now, we do have some gatherings and publications that connect us. We have the Zing! coming out monthly and a social media presence. We have our annual Faith & Life Forum this Saturday, April 10th. We have a hybrid Assembly at the end of July this year. We have regular Prayerstream gatherings. We have various nonprofits like Mennonite Disaster Service, Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, RAWtools, and more that bring people together from various congregations to socialize and serve.

But as I've preached at about half of the churches in our conference, I've heard this refrain: "Pastor Amy, I know intellectually that there are 17 churches in our conference, but I don't know much about them. How can we feel more connected to each other?"

In response to this, some of the pastors and I have come up with two additional ideas to help us connect more:

Starting this month, we'll be adding something to the bulletin announcement emails: Conference Connection. This will be a couple sentences of a prayer request: a joy and/or concern submitted by one of the churches or passion ministries in our conference. Each week we'll be praying together for that ministry. This is an easy way for our churches to honor and learn about one another over the course of the year—all we have to do is add the bulletin announcement to our weekly written and/or verbalized prayer requests and there we are: more connected with each other! (Also, post-prayer, calling or sending a text to an old friend you haven't talked to in a while at said church is also encouraged.)

Secondly, I'm offering to facilitate Pulpit Swap 2021, as there's been interest from various pastors. Pastors can opt-in and then will trade pulpits with another randomly-selected church in our conference. So be on the lookout for a strange and interesting new pastor coming your pulpit's way!

These ideas won't solve everything, but they're a couple more ways we can be reminded that we are one body connected to each other.

Got any more ideas for connecting our churches? Talk to me! (Warning: I may ask you to volunteer to help with any ideas you share): amyz@mountainstatesmc.org.