

Exploring Collaboration Opportunities

by Paul D. Leichty, Executive Director

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Over the course of the last few months, the MHF Board has shared its new Strategic Plan for Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship. The first three points can be summarized as follows:

1. [Focus the mission](#) on mutual support, education, mentoring, and mobilization for service.
2. [A Missional Budget Plan](#) to consolidate the assets of the organization for the total mission of MHF.
3. [A Funding Model for Mission](#) which continues the shift from "dues" to "contributions."

The final point of the strategic plan recognizes that MHF is part of a bigger vision of God's work in the world than what we as one small organization can carry out. Thus, MHF wants to **explore collaboration** with other organizations to maximize the strengths of both MHF itself as well as the other organizations.

The emphasis at this point is on the "exploring." What all of this means remains to be seen. However, here is a brief outline of the types of organizations with which MHF currently has some relationships. The assumption is that these existing relationships are the place to begin. **Mennonite and related group denominations and conferences.** Both of MHF's predecessor organizations, Mennonite Medical Association (MMA) and Mennonite Nurses Association (MNA) came out of the mission movement of the largest Mennonite denomination of the time, the Mennonite Church. There were also relationships with the General Conference Mennonite Church, so when the two groups realigned in 2002, it was natural to maintain connections with Mennonite Church USA since most members were in the U.S. However, MHF has been clear that anyone who identifies themselves with the Anabaptist vision as articulated in Mennonite World Conference's Shared Convictions as well as the mission of MHF itself is welcome to join MHF.

Thus, in these current years of further realignment of various Mennonite groups in the U.S., MHF will want to find ways of connecting with as many as possible. In addition, MHF hopes to have relationships with the international church through the connection with Mennonite World Conference.

Mennonite organizations which are also concerned about health. MHF often gets asked about its relationship with other organizations and conferences which have the word "health" in their names. Indeed, there are relationships, but they are often complex and grow out of a grassroots history that has emphasized concrete action at the local level first and then building associations of those with common interests. Among connections with health-related Mennonite organizations are these:

- **Mennonite Health Services (MHS)** serves Mennonite and Brethren in Christ related **organizations** with an Alliance as well as Consulting while MHF focuses on individual health **practitioners**. Obviously, there are points of connection. At this point, the two

major ones are that MHF cooperates with MHS Alliance on the planning committee for an annual Mennonite Health Assembly (MHA) which has different goals but often gets confused with MHF's Annual Gathering.

- **International Mennonite Health Association (IMHA).** IMHA operates in both the U.S. and Canada in building partnerships with Mennonites in developing countries around the world who are involved in community-based health-related initiatives. MHF and IMHA leaders already consult with each other several times a year and IMHA representatives have presented workshops at many MHF Annual Gatherings.
- **Mennonite Central Committee (MCC).** In its relief and development work around the world, MCC gets involved in health-related initiatives. The primary staff person for these initiatives, Beth Good, is also a member of the MHF Board of Directors.

Mennonite Mission agencies. Mennonite Mission Network, Eastern Mennonite Missions, and other smaller mission agencies rarely operate health-related programs these days. However, in their work of evangelization, church planting, and church development, there are intersections with health-related ministries. MHF currently cooperates with Mennonite Mission Network in the work of the Mary Jean Yoder Memorial Endowment Fund which offers financial assistance to Mennonite-related persons from developing countries studying in health-related educational programs.

Mennonite-related colleges and universities. With a renewed focus on young adults, education, and mentoring, MHF wants to build further connections with Mennonite-related schools. MHF already has informal relationships, particularly with Goshen College and Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) and to a lesser extent with Bluffton University, Messiah College, and AMBS. Faculty members from both Goshen, EMU, and Messiah have served on the Board or committees of MHF. Conversations are already beginning about some new collaborative initiatives.

Wider Christian organizations involved with health. Currently, one such connection is the Christian Connections for International Health (CCIH). CCIH accepts individual as well as organizational members and holds an annual conference which usually falls around the same time as MHF's Annual Gathering. CCIH's Executive Director Emeritus, Ray Martin, grew up in the Mennonite community, and is a member of MHF.

Global Anabaptist Health Network (GAHN). In addition to all of these existing organizations, there is another organization that is global in nature, emerging out of Mennonite World Conference. Coming out of a parallel event during Annual Gathering 2015 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, the Global Anabaptist Health Network (GAHN) is being formed as a network of both Anabaptist organizations and individuals involved in various aspects of healthcare. Several persons from MHF have been involved in some of the conversations coming out of the Harrisburg meetings. It remains to be seen what shape this network will take and how Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship may relate to it.

In the final analysis, MHF strives to line up with God's purposes in the world today. Organizations, agencies, institutions, and even denominations are continually changing as we

move with the winds of God's Spirit. The goal of MHF is to become a part of God's plan for greater health, wholeness, and shalom for the whole human family as we collaborate with others.



Paul D. Leichty, M.Div. is Executive Director of Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship (MHF). Paul has served as a pastor, church musician, computer support person, disabilities advocate, and administrator/organizer of a number of church-related ministries. In addition to responsibilities at MHF, Paul is Executive Director of Congregational Accessibility Network and Director of User Services at Mennonite.net. He is also active in music at Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship in Goshen, Indiana where he lives with his wife, Twila Charles Leichty.