

## **Ervin R. Stutzman named Mennonite Church USA executive director**

By June Krehbiel, interim identity director for Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership

NEWTON, Kan. and ELKHART, Ind. — Mennonite Church USA Executive Board named Ervin R. Stutzman of Harrisonburg, Va., the denomination's next executive director at a special meeting held Aug. 25.

"Ervin is the right person for this time in our denominational history," says Mennonite Church USA moderator and Executive Board member Ed Diller, Fort Thomas, Ky. "His experiences in the church and his commitment to the healing and hope vision of Mennonite Church USA will serve him well in this role."

Stutzman is vice president and seminary dean as well as professor of church ministries at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) in Harrisonburg. He served on the Executive Board for Mennonite Church USA from 1999 to 2005 and as denominational moderator from 2001 to 2003.

He expects to begin as executive director in early 2010.

A search committee of 10 members from across the denomination unanimously recommended Stutzman during meetings held earlier this month.

"Ervin is an energetic, strong pastoral leader with exceptional organizational and administrative gifts. He is a good listener and focused collaborator," says search committee chair David L. Sutter, South Bend, Ind. "I believe Ervin will lead with Christ at the center as together we consider and live into new directions in line with the dreams God has for Mennonite Church USA."

Born in Iowa, Stutzman grew up in Kansas. He served on pastoral teams at Mennonite Christian Assembly in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Mount Joy Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa. He worked as associate director of home ministries at Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities. An ordained minister and bishop, he was moderator of Lancaster Mennonite Conference before beginning at EMU in 1998.

"I love Mennonite Church USA," says Stutzman. "It's an affirmation and a privilege to be asked to serve in this role. It's also a sober responsibility. The Spirit-led search process gives me confidence that God is calling me to this role. By God's grace, we as a Mennonite church can face the future with hope. We have a significant place in God's mission in the world. As we collectively walk in the Spirit, we will experience God's amazing power happening at all levels."

Appointed in January, the search committee talked with and listened to the church, contacted and interviewed leaders and listened for the Holy Spirit's guidance.

"We were very fortunate to have many gifted leaders to choose from," says search committee member Patricia Shelly, Newton, Kan. "Ervin's proven record of serving people and the church in a variety of capacities and his experience in key denominational roles set him apart. He is respected by many people."

The search committee also sees the new executive director as an excellent communicator and trusted leader, according to member Juanita Nuñez, Ocoee, Fla. “Ervin will articulate the vision, mission and priorities of Mennonite Church USA well. He is committed to God and the church.”

Stutzman received his bachelor’s degree in Bible and Christian ministries at Cincinnati Christian University. He graduated with a master’s degree in communication arts from the University of Cincinnati, a master’s of arts in religion degree from Eastern Mennonite Seminary and a doctorate in rhetoric and communication from Temple University, Philadelphia, Pa.

Stutzman has authored several books. Among his recent Herald Press publications are “Emma: A Widow Among the Amish,” “Tobias of the Amish” and “Being God’s People: Embracing Christian Faith from a Mennonite Perspective.” His historical study on Mennonite peace rhetoric is expected to be published next year.

Stutzman will continue his work at EMU through December.

“Ervin has provided wise and innovative leadership to the seminary, enhancing the quality of its program and extending its reach,” Fred Kniss, Eastern Mennonite University provost, says. “While we at EMU certainly regret losing him as a colleague and administrator, we know that Mennonite Church USA will benefit from his skills and experience. We view his departure as a gift we make to the mission of the larger church.”

Stutzman and his wife, Bonita Lee Stutzman, attend Park View Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg. They have three adult children — Emma, Daniel and Benjamin.

*Stutzman replaces Jim Schrag, who announced his retirement last October. Schrag concluded his executive director position July 31 after 36 years of ministry, including 13 years of denominational leadership. Acting executive director Ron Byler has been appointed to lead the church body until Stutzman begins.*