



Evangelical Anabaptist group leaders explore affinity



About 40 leaders representing six evangelical Anabaptist groups gathered Aug. 6-8 for prayer and worship at Rosedale Bible College in Irwin, Ohio.

The meeting was initiated by John Troyer of Goshen, Ind., executive director of the Evana Network.

"We basically spent time worshiping and taking time alone with God and coming back and sharing what we heard," Troyer said.

The organizations represented were Evana, Lancaster Mennonite Conference, U.S. Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, Conservative Mennonite Conference, Brethren in Christ U.S. and The Brethren Church (an evangelical Brethren denomination founded in 1883).

"There were a lot of new relationships built; many of them had never met each other," Troyer said.

Combined, the groups have more than 100,000 adherents.

Troyer said the purpose wasn't to produce a formal alignment between the groups but simply for the leaders to meet each other.

"It was a productive conversation and just very positive in terms of relationship-building," he said.

LMC staff member Brinton Rutherford said in an emailed statement that the meeting was a great opportunity to network.

"I was amazed at the high degree of similarity that exists," he said. "These groups share many of the same strengths and struggles."

In his report to the CMC ministers' business meeting on July 20, RBC President Jon Showalter said the prayer meeting's goal was "to discuss how these historically Anabaptist groups might collaborate more in the future than they've done in the past."

Although the meeting was held on RBC's campus, it was not an official event of the school.

The meeting was in keeping with Evana's vision expressed during its delegate sessions in July to collaborate with other evangelical Anabaptist denominations rather than compete with them.

Troyer said he began thinking about networking with evangelical Anabaptist groups before Evana announced its formation. He said he had a dream in 2015 right after he was asked to become Evana's executive director.

"I received a clear sense that there would be a lot of doors opened for me to interact with other Anabaptist groups," he said. He also heard a call in the dream to prayer, fasting and repentance.

Since then, he and leaders from other evangelical Anabaptist groups have been meeting by online video conference a couple of times a year, eventually including the six organizations represented at the August meeting.

"These were groups that seemed well within the evangelical Anabaptist framework," Troyer said.

The conversation focused on relationships, theology and sharing resources, he said.

"We definitely weren't pursuing any sort of formal attempts to connect," he said.

In an emailed statement, USMB national director Don Morris said he appreciated the opportunity to get to know people from other evangelical Anabaptist groups.

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“The time spent was well worth it, particularly in the areas of fellowship and understanding the myriad of resources that are available through other like-minded denominations,” Morris said. “I hope that we don’t soon forget what others in the family bring to the table and that all of us appeared to be willing to share those resources in the future.”

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Introducing: That Church Downtown

What started with a dream of red carpet and a heart for the lost, led Gil Michel to purchase a rundown building near the heart of downtown South Bend, Indiana. Today he pastors that church with his wife Marketo, a church simply called, **That Church Downtown**.

As they have strived to create a culture of deep relationships while ministering to those right in their own neighborhood, they found a common heartbeat with Evana. This summer we proudly welcomed That Church Downtown as a partner congregation!

Read more of their story in next month's issue.

Announcements

- Evana has now opened a search for the next Executive Director.
Info & Updates: evananetwork.org/execdir
- Registration is now open for **Flourishing 2019**, Evana's pastor retreat. Featured speakers will be Johnny & Anne Crist and Noemi & Joshua Chavez.
Registration: evananetwork.org/flourishing

A Word from the Executive Director



Follow Jesus. Nothing captures the purpose of this newsletter better than these two words. No exceptions. No apologies. Just go where He goes. He is Truth, He is Power, and He is Sacrifice. We easily look for substitutes but nothing replaces sitting with Jesus each morning and hearing His direction for the day.

About a year ago, I was listening to a podcast and heard Gil Michel for the first time. His story was so compelling I felt a nudge from the Lord to have a conversation with him. I was surprised to find that he lived nearby in South Bend, IN, and we had a number of mutual friends. Joel DeMott, the youth and young adult pastor at my church, and I went to have lunch with him and his wife Marketo. As they have gotten to know us over the past year, they decided they belonged with us. We're excited to welcome them into our midst as a partner church. We met because Jesus asked me to go meet them.

Research clearly shows that daily happiness, resilience, meaning, community, and integrity are all tightly connected and belong together. When one becomes stronger, all have the potential to grow. When one is diminished, the others are also threatened. When Jesus is at the center, these five areas will be built up in our lives. When we find the joy of the unexpected, and the satisfaction of the doing the right thing even when it's hard, we see a new side to ourselves. We see the potential for our lives. **Follow Jesus.** You'll be surprised where those nudges take you. — *John Troyer*

Vital Impact Assessment

Evana is excited to announce the release of Vital Impact Assessment! This church survey is designed to measure church life and impact in deeper and more specific ways.

The assessment will help church leaders understand how to minister best using real measurable data from their congregation and comparing the data to churches around the country. It explores issues relating to personal health, quality of relationships, spiritual formation practices, and perception of the church.

Survey information will be confidential, and there will be no requirement for participants to answer every question.

Learn more: vitalimpact.church