

Church planting explored in western Ohio

In the past several months, Ohio Conference has been meeting with representatives from the Church of the Brethren to explore the possibility of planting churches in the Hispanic population in western Ohio in the area around I-75. Paul and Ann Conrad, working with Brazo en Brazo, are representing Ohio Conference, and Ervin and Nancy Heischman in New Carlisle are represent-

ing the Church of the Brethren in Ohio.

Currently, this core group is planning to sponsor “fiestas” in areas in which Ohio Conference and the Church of the Brethren already have existing congregations. These gatherings would help organizers to see if there may be enough interest in developing a church plant.

Vietnamese church plant does not move forward

Back in October 2011 Ohio Conference received a request to assist in planting a Mennonite presence in the Middleburg Heights area of Cleveland. It came from a Mennonite evangelist visiting from Vietnam, Pastor Nguyen Quoc Cuong, who discovered several families who desired a Vietnamese fellowship.

Since Pastor Cuong is Mennonite, he wanted a Mennonite fellowship. After several visits and inquiries with others involved in Vietnamese work, it was decided to broaden the leadership potential and invite another Vietnamese pastor from Allentown, Pa. Pastor Thanh Pham visited twice and made many contacts but ultimately decided that there was not a core group in-

terested in being Mennonite. In addition, most of the second-generation Vietnamese were already assimilated into English-speaking churches, and that is where they wanted to be. It was decided that until we had a core group wanting to be Mennonite that this was not the right time to begin a new fellowship, but we will continue to pray and explore God's leading.

Our thanks go out to the East Ohio Church Planting group and the four persons on the support team namely, Mike Mast, Robin Miller, David Eshleman, and Chet Miller-Eshleman for their time and energy in exploring this possibility.

Ralph Reinford
Regional Pastor

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Ann Leaman, editor: ohioevangel@earthlink.net



Church planting efforts continue

Throughout the Ohio Conference, a number of church planting efforts are happening. Featured in this publication are two current church plants, Lee Heights Community Church Solon and LifeBridge Community North in Stras-

burg. Also included is information about the exploration of church planting among the Hispanic population of western Ohio in the area around I-75.



Lee Heights outreach in Solon grows

What began as an outreach effort by Lee Heights Community Church in Cleveland has grown into a new church plant in Solon, Ohio — Lee Heights Community Church Solon.

The Lee Heights congregation licensed Larissa Moore as a minister of evangelism to work in the Solon community. She volunteered her services as a minister to a nursing home in Solon, and eventually she was asked to do a worship service at the nursing home on Sundays. While at first only nursing home residents attended the worship services, soon they began to invite



Church planter Larissa Moore, shown at left, is building relationships with nursing home patients and staff members.

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Supporting
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congregations

Lee Heights Community Church Solon

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their relatives, and word spread in the community. Because of the growing interest, the Lee Heights congregation discerned that God was calling them to plant a church with Larissa Moore as lead pastor.

With support from Lee Heights Community Church and a grant from the Ohio Conference Ministry Development Team, Moore accepted the call to plant a new church. Currently, she leads a community Bible study on Wednesdays from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., and a weekly church service on Sundays from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. She is assisted in the worship services by a worship band which includes a vocalist, drummer, keyboardist, electric guitar player and bass guitar player.

The new congregation is continuing to work at ways to connect with those around them. On Dec. 5 the church conducted an outreach program for residents of the nursing home. More than 64 people in the nursing home don't have family members to come to visit them, Moore said. The church held a

Christmas concert and distributed items for these residents, including items such as blankets, socks, shirts and personal hygiene items.

In addition to conducting Bible studies and worship services, Moore's ministry includes quite a bit of time spent visiting people. She makes hospital visits, and visits family members of those who are residents of the nursing home. As she makes contacts with people, she sees God at work. "God is doing great things," she said, noting that several people have experienced physical healing.

Moore, who had been employed at PNC Bank, recently resigned her job at the bank in order to concentrate more fully on her ministry and seminary studies. She is currently taking a full course load at Eastern Mennonite Seminary through its distance learning program. Full-time seminary study and ministry make her schedule very busy, but she has strong support from the Lee Heights congregation, Lee Heights Pastors Robin Miller and Vikki Pruitte-Sorrells and her family, for which she is very grateful.



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LifeBridge North reaches out to community

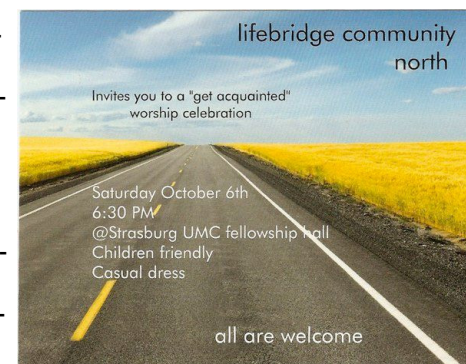
More than a year after church planters Jason and Heather Rissler were called to start a new church in Strasburg, Ohio, the church plant, now known as LifeBridge Community North, continues to develop.

This summer the congregation, which has the backing of 11 supporting Ohio Conference congregations, began meeting for worship on Saturday nights at the Strasburg United Methodist Church. A special focus for the new congregation has been young families, making connections and getting to know them and praying for them. More children are participating on Saturday evenings.

A highlight from the past few months was a get-acquainted worship celebration in October. The congregation sent an invitation to every household in the entire ZIP code, including the members of the Methodist church where LifeBridge North is meeting. "That was a good evening together," Jason said.

Once a month the congregation plans some kind of connection event in the community. In November the Risslers hosted a Thanksgiving meal in their home. In December the congregation hosted a gingerbread house-making party.

One way that people in Ohio Conference can support LifeBridge Community North is through prayer. A current prayer request is that volunteers could be found who would be willing to work with the children on



Every household in the ZIP code was invited to the Oct. 6 worship celebration, and the celebration included quite a few children, some of whom are shown below.



Saturday nights when the congregation meets.

To learn more about LifeBridge Community North, check the congregation's page on Facebook. Information about activities and photos can be found there, as well as photos of the latest addition to the Rissler family, Hannah Elise, who was born Oct. 17.