

Minutes of 42nd Annual Conference Assembly (ACA)
Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA
Central Christian School, Kidron, Ohio
March 11-12, 2011

Theme—Abide, Love, Grow

Friday, March 12, 1:30 p.m.—Business Session #1 (Gym 1)

A1. **Call to Order** – Marion Beyeler, moderator, welcomed everyone and made some preliminary announcements. He introduced those leading the opening invocation and song.

A2. **Invocation** – Tom Kauffman, conference minister, led in an opening prayer.

A3. **Opening Song**—Kevin Himes, associate pastor at Longenecker Mennonite, led in a singing of the Lord’s Prayer.

A4. **Moderator Comments** – Marion shared some reflections about his first year serving as moderator and in getting to know the Conference. He noted that the explanation of the role of delegates could be found in the report book. Marion reflected on the work of many volunteers in the Conference, highlighting the Credentialing Ministry and the support that is offered to pastors.

A5. **Resolutions Committee** – Marion noted where delegates can find the resolution process outlined. He introduced the committee: Larry Augsburger, Beulah Steiner, and Carl Wiebe. Tom noted that there is a designated space for concerns or comments to be written, which will be reviewed after each session.

A6. **Roll Call**— Tom Kauffman introduced a PowerPoint presentation that named all 77 congregations and their leadership.

A7. **Minutes of 2010 ACA** – Marion gave opportunity for additions or corrections to be made to the minutes. **There was a motion to accept the minutes as written. M/S/P (no opposed)**

A8. **Gifts Discernment Slate** – Marion introduced Bruce Glick, chair of Gifts Discernment, who introduced the slate for 2011-2012. Bruce outlined the process used to nominate persons for these roles. He thanked those who have served as well as those who are allowing their names to be considered. Bruce also highlighted the nominations form, encouraging delegates to submit names for the Conference to consider. Opportunity was given for people to vote, and the ballots were collected. Marion recognized Bruce’s term of service and thanked him for his work on behalf of the Conference.

A9. **Prayer Ministry** – Mattie Marie Mast, Prayer Ministry coordinator, noted that there are two “prayer walls” at Conference. She encouraged delegates to record their prayers and add them to the wall. She recognized the local pray-ers who are covering our time of meeting with prayer. She also highlighted the Prayer Room which is available throughout the meetings.

A10. **Table Group Introductions**— Marion invited delegates to introduce themselves around tables as well as designating a recorder. Delegates were also asked to list any potential discussion topics or resolutions for the next ACA.

A11. **Maple Grove Congregation**—The Maple Grove Mennonite Church in Hartville has requested to join Ohio Conference. Tom noted that this has been a five-year conversation; he invited Myron Weaver and other congregational representatives to share about their discernment process. Myron introduced the delegates and shared about the connection between Central Christian and drawing the congregation towards Ohio

Conference. He shared about the excitement the congregation has for joining both the Conference and the Denomination. Tom noted that Maple Grove intends to hold dual conference membership with Conservative Conference for the next few years. Opportunity was given for discussion around tables as well as open mic time. Words of affirmation were given for the ministry of Maple Grove and having them join Conference. It was noted that this will be the first congregation within the Ohio Conference with dual-denomination affiliation.

The Leadership Team of Ohio Conference recommends the acceptance of Maple Grove Mennonite Church into Ohio Conference. A vote was taken by standing. M/S/C (No opposed)

A12. Missional Stories – Norma Duerksen, pastor at Summit Mennonite, reflected on her attempts to grow the church. Through this process, the congregation sought out partner congregations, one of which is Hartville Mennonite. Joe Troyer, youth pastor at Hartville Mennonite, reflected on the impact this partnership has had on their congregation as well. Some of the exchanges have included providing musicians at Summit, assisting with the community outreach, and some financial support. Summit prepared a Wednesday evening meal for Hartville. Norma encouraged other congregations to consider partnerships.

A13. Welcome of New Pastors – Tom noted that it has been a busy year of pastoral transitions within Ohio Conference. Regional Pastors Andy Stoner and Matt Hamsher introduced the new pastors: Don Hamsher (Walnut Creek), Phil Slabaugh (Leetonia), Dean Miller (interim, Longenecker), Kevin Himes (interim, Longenecker), Dan Coburn (Midway), Sean Evans (Gilead), Jared Chase (Sharon), Hector Velez (Good Shepherd), Israel Aguilar (Good Shepherd), Glenn Coblentz (North Clinton), Walt Morton (transitional, Peace), Alex Dye (Oak Grove, West Liberty), Tim Lehman (transitional, Crown Hill), Doug King (Tedrow), Ryan Nafziger (Tedrow), Jacob Dodson (interim, Wooster), Gloria Beck (Lockport), Paula Snyder Belousek (Salem, Elida), Joel Shenk (Toledo), Tim Schultz (Aurora), and Jeff Kauffman (Zion). The pastors came forward for a prayer of blessing offered by Tom.

A14. Camp Luz—Deb Horst, Director, recalled that last year at ACA she shared with the delegates the new vision for the ministry of Camp Luz. She shared that she has tendered her resignation, effective in August. She requested prayer for the camp as they face this leadership transition. Deb shared about some of the congregations who sponsored community children to attend camp in response to the challenge she had issued. She also reflected on the challenges that came with the interactions that came through inviting these children. The new logo for Camp Luz was displayed and explained. Deb expressed her thanks for the prayers and support of the Conference congregations.

Jean Emery, chairperson for Ohio Mennonite Women, shared affirmation for the ministry of Camp Luz. She shared about an idea to have a pavilion at Luz with a wall that would honor those who have been mentors. The shelter, Pilgrim's Hostel, will be built overlooking the lake. She noted that there were forms available for supporting this initiative. She highlighted a number of Ohio Mennonite Women events that are upcoming.

A15. Schedule Review—Marion noted that a bell will be rung five minutes before the delegate sessions begin. He also highlighted the congregational ministry fair happening during the display time, and that there will be a \$500 scholarship drawing for the projects, which will take place during the next delegate session.

A16. Announcements and Welcome – Joel Otto, Central Christian, welcomed the delegate body to campus. He gave directions for finding the displays and snacks. He also had other staff member recognized who may be of help with finding their way around the facilities.

3:00 p.m. Poster Sessions and Displays with snacks(Gym II)

3:45 p.m. Business session #2 (Gym I)

A17. Opening song—Kevin Himes led in “Lord, I Lift Your Name on High.”

A18. Ministry Development Team Report – Ginny Cress, assistant moderator, introduced the members of the Ministry Development Team and thanked them for their work. Through a PowerPoint presentation she highlighted some events that MDT has sponsored this past year as well as future projects. Ginny highlighted the upcoming worship seminars (Eastern and Western) and youthworker resourcing event. Naomi Engle promoted the pastor-spouse retreat that will be happening in November. Ginny also encouraged congregations to participate in the Listening Project. She also requested delegate feedback for MDT project ideas. The *Prayer Prompter* was also highlighted. Millersburg Mennonite received the \$500 scholarship from MDT for their ministry based on their participation in the ministry fair.

A19. Recognition of MDT – Marion thanked Ginny Cress for her work in leading the MDT. He also recognized Sherah-Leigh for her work as Resource Team Coordinator; he noted that the job title is now “Coordinator of Volunteers” to reflect the expansion of the responsibilities of the position.

A20. Missional Story – Representatives from First Mennonite (Berne) shared about a farmer’s market initiative that was started by a new member at their church. The market is held in the church parking lot as a way to encourage people to become comfortable with the congregation. One special feature of the market is highlighting local artists.

A21. Introduction of Conference Visitors – Tom recognized the various visitors from partner organizations and agencies.

A22. Leadership Team Proposal — Marion reviewed the staffing proposal to be voted on in the next delegate session. He outlined how the proposal came together. Time was given for table discussion. There was time for open mic discussion. There was a question about the potential increase in the time for the Coordinator of Volunteer position if the five-year plan is implemented. The question was raised if some of the RP job description could be relieved through the work of volunteers. There was a request for explanation of the standing funds and how they have been designated. Affirmation/understanding the need for this capacity and encouragement for delegates to act on faith was expressed.

A23. Announcements – Marion highlighted the evening activities. Joel oriented people to restrooms as well as logistics for the workshops and meals. Joel offered a prayer for the meal.

4:45 p.m. Dinner, workshops, worship, art show, displays and Hometown performance

Saturday, March 13, 8:30 a.m.--Business session #3 (Gym I)

A24. Opening Song – Kevin Kanagy, pastor at Friendship, led in singing “If you believe and I believe.”

A25. State of the Conference– Marion welcomed everyone to the session. He briefly reviewed the agenda for the session. He noted the amount of feedback received from the table groups and the process that will be used to follow up with those comments and concerns. Marion addressed the blank slot on the ballot, which is a role that Leadership Team is in the process of appointing.

Marion highlighted the quality of leadership and volunteers that contribute to a healthy conference. He noted that while giving has been in decline, the Conference is committed to working towards clearer communication of the Conference needs with the constituency.

A26. Introduce spending plan – Lois Bontrager, chair of the Stewardship Commission, introduced the spending plan, the process by which it was formed, and explained the additional column of information which shows the 10-month financials for this fiscal year. She noted that the increase in the proposed budget is due to the proposed increase in staffing. She also explained the urban ministry director line item. There was time given for

questions. There was a request to see the financial disclosure and expenditures of the capital funds. There was a question about a discrepancy between the printed handout and the projected document. Stan noted that this shows the transfer from capital funds to balance the budget, while allowing the percentages to be reflective of giving. There was a concern raised about using capital funds to supplement the budget. There was a question about the consolidation of the youth ministry line item. Tom responded with the rationale about creating flexibility for the MDT spending. A question was raised about how long the Conference would draw from capital funds, which is addressed in the LT proposal in terms of evaluation.

A27. Leadership Team Proposal – Marion reviewed the proposal for the delegates and addressed some of the questions received from the table discussion time. Time was given for discussion around tables. Time was given for questions to be asked from the floor. There was a question about the increase in .25 time, which is not included in the dollar figure. There was a request that the Conference be more assertive in “selling” the proposal to get the giving to meet this need. There was a question about process if this budget doesn’t pass; if the proposal fails, those staff salaries and capital funds will be pulled from the proposal and then voted on. The vote was tabled until the afternoon session.

A28. Denominational report – Terry Shue, director for leadership development, brought greetings from Mennonite Church USA. He explained a bit about his role. He invited the delegates to recite together the Vision of Healing and Hope. He introduced other agency representatives from the Denomination: Amy Gingerich (Mennonite Publishing Network), Gene Miller (Mennonite Education Agency), Lois Bontrager (Everence), and Dean Heisey (Mennonite Mission Network). Mennonite Publishing Network is the featured agency. Amy introduced Norm Duerksen, Conference Resource Advocate. Amy shared about some of the resources available to congregations. She announced the new name of the merged MPN and Third Way Media will be Menno Media. The new company will be based in Harrisonburg, VA. The other representatives shared briefly about how they serve member congregations and each highlighted a new initiative of their agencies. Terry thanked Ohio Conference for all their support of the Denomination. He led in a prayer for Ohio Conference, staff and volunteers.

A29. Peace Mug Presentation—Ginny Cress introduced the peace mug, which is provided by the Peace and Justice Support Network of the denomination. This year the Leadership Team selected the Hispanic ministries of Ohio Conference, Open Arms and Brazo en Brazo, as the recipients. Ginny shared about the work of these organizations and why they were selected for this special recognition.

A30. Announcements—Marion invited those with additional questions about the Leadership Team proposal to meet in the delegate space for additional discussion. He also highlighted Herman Myers’ book signing. Joel reminded delegates to visit the art show; he also gave logistical instructions for the snack time as well as for the next activities. Marion thanked the Central Christian staff for their work.

10:00 a.m. Displays, snacks, worship, lunch and workshops

2:15 p.m. Business session #4 (Gym I)

A31. Opening Song – Kevin Kanagy led in “He came down” accompanied by Kevin Himes.

A32. Announcements—Ginny Cress reminded delegates of the response forms they should leave (evaluations, gifts discernment suggestions, name badge holders, etc). She noted that the summary DVD will be available at the Web site within a week and encouraged delegates to use this resource as part of their reporting back to their congregations. ACA 2012 will be held at First Mennonite in Berne, Ind. Ginny highlighted the Immigration Prayer Guide.

Caroline Yoder, representing Living Acts (Millersburg Mennonite), shared about this young adult intentional community in Holmes County, and she invited delegates to encourage interested young adults from their congregations to participate.

A33. Missional Story — Tim Myers from Tedrow shared about a pantry project that their congregation has started, which grew out of a meal that they offered. The Paper Pantry, which happens twice a month (Sunday and Wednesday), is an attempt to fill in the gap between local food pantries and food stamps. They have been serving 25 families each month.

A34. LT Proposal Decision—Tom shared about the regional pastor and conference minister job descriptions. A balance sheet summarizing the capital funds was shared. Tom explained that the Five-Year Plan was not intended to be a comprehensive financial statement, but the germane accounts. In response to the discussion, the full financial picture was presented (as of Jan. 1, 2011). Lois Bontrager presented an amended motion, and there was opportunity for open mic discussion. There was a question for clarification that the budget would be at a deficit with the amended proposal.

There was a motion that the Five-Year Increased Staffing Plan be accepted with the amendment that, if additional funds are needed, they would be drawn from the retained earnings fund. A vote was taken by a show of hands. M/S/A (3 opposed).

A35. Spending Plan—Lois re-presented the budget. After the motion and second, there was opportunity for discussion.

Motion to accept the spending plan for the 2011-2012 Conference year. A vote was taken by a show of hands. M/S/A (2 opposed).

A36. History Book Report—John Rohrer, former moderator, updated that the content of the History Book, which was available for pre-publication sale at the previous ACA, has been written and will soon be at the publisher. The reference group is in the process of doing final content edits. The book, *Like A Sturdy Oak*, is edited by Celia Lehman, who was recognized by the delegate body. John also reviewed key contributors.

A37. Central Christian Schools—Gene Miller, head administrator, expressed appreciation for hosting ACA. He shared that Central will soon be celebrating 50 years of educating. He expressed appreciation for the connection with Ohio Conference. Gene affirmed the quality of faculty and staff at Central. He shared about a new initiative, “The Heart of Central,” which is an important part of leadership formation. Central is also partnering with Bluffton University to offer up to 30 hours of dual enrollment credit, which will include live feed lecture and interaction with the professors. Gene also affirmed the resourcing and support of both Mennonite Schools Council and Mennonite Education Agency. He highlighted some of the recent and upcoming events that the students are part of. He shared his vision for the unique role of Christian education in forming leaders. He also gave thanks for the covering and accountability provided by the Conference delegates.

Marion thanked Gene for Central’s hospitality. He also gave special recognition to Joel Otto who has worked with staff to handle the logistics of ACA. Marion presented the list of corporation members. There was opportunity for discussion.

Motion to accept the corporation members as presented. A vote was taken by show of hands. M/S/A (No opposed).

A38. Recognition of Andy Stoner – Tom reflected on the many contributions that Andy has brought to Conference through his regional pastor role over the past 10 years. Andy Stoner took opportunity to offer thanks to God for the call to ministry. He also thanked the Conference (in particular leadership) for the opportunity to serve and minister. Andy recognized the pastors and their spouses and families, noting that it has

been a gift to be part of their lives and ministry journey. He also acknowledged the congregational leaders that he has enjoyed working with. Andy gave special recognition to his wife, Anita, for her support in this work. He shared that beginning July 15 he and Anita will be serving in Washington, D.C., as the host couple at the International Guest House. Andy received a standing ovation for his contributions to the Conference. Tom offered a prayer of blessing for Andy and Anita.

A39. Missional Story – Chet Miller-Eshleman from LifeBridge Community Church shared about church planting, connecting with some scriptural images. He noted that church planting is really a team effort. He recognized the team of partner congregations that supported LifeBridge, as well as the increased team considering a new church plant in Strasburg in summer 2011.

A40. Open Mic—A first-time delegate gave affirmation for the experience of being part of the business and worship; she encouraged other delegates to attend cluster meetings as a way to prepare for the ACA sessions. Tamara Gill also briefly reported on the three regional young adult gatherings that were hosted by Conference. Another delegate shared reflections about the health of dialogue and disagreement shared in the process as we discern and work together towards God's purpose. He noted that conflict is not the problem, but how we deal with conflict is important.

3:45 p.m. Worship (including commissioning and communion)(Gym I)

Recorded by Sherah-Leigh Gerber