

**Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA
Ministry Development Team Meeting #1
May 11, 2015
Wooster Mennonite Church, Wooster, Ohio**

Present: Dean Beck, Jacob Dodson, Thomas Dunn (chair), West Graber, Keith Hostetler, Kevin Kanagy, Alan Kauffman, Judy King, Ann Leaman, Jodi Miller, Ralph Reinford, Jason Rissler, Alysa Short, Dana Short, David Tijerina

Absent: Tom Kauffman, Wanda Stopher

- M1. **Welcome and devotions.** Thomas led our devotional time around the topic of community. He asked for definitions of community and secondly, authentic Christian community. A book that he is reading notes that according to Paul and Jesus, God's family was to be prioritized as the most important thing, biological family second and everything else after that. In our society today, we put God first, family second and church third. Our mind set has changed on what community is. Is it possible to get back to what Paul was teaching about God's family? What does that mean for our churches? Discussion followed. Prayer requests were shared which included a family that was in a car accident and Nancy Kauffman and her family as they mourn the loss of Nancy's husband, Joel. Thomas led in prayer.
- M2. **Introductions.** Introductions were made around the table.
- M3. **Minutes.** The minutes from the March 2, 2015, meeting were approved as presented.
- M4. **Review of our purpose/role.** Thomas introduced the purposes of the Ministry Development Team (MDT) from the Policy and Operations Guidelines and from the Ohio Conference constitution. The role of the three focus leaders was reviewed, and ideas were shared about what worship, faith and witness mean.

Following this discussion, suggestions were given of things we might offer:

- a campaign of some sort around funding or technology – things that can be done better on a larger scale than congregations can do individually.
 - Dean reported on an electronic survey that MDT conducted last summer to find out where resourcing was most needed and requested. The results of the survey showed that materials were requested more often than workshops. The areas receiving the most interest were discipleship, marriage enrichment, and worship, including prayer and the involvement of children and youth.
 - Church planting initiatives. How can we be more helpful? Who takes ownership of this group? It is not clear if the church planting group is still considered a resource team of Ohio Conference. How can we work together?
 - What about sponsoring a conference, going bigger than just a workshop, bringing in a big-name speaker and focusing on one topic such as missions or worship?
 - What about family conferences as a way to get families together from smaller congregations? Kevin mentioned a Seeds Family Worship event as a possibility. It helps families memorize scripture through song.
 - Crown Hill offered an Alpha Course a couple of years ago and it could be encouraged to be used around Conference as a tool. Crown Hill also had a speaker recently who is involved in the Revive Indiana project. These could both be highlighted in *Ohio Mennonite Evangel* to share ideas with other congregations
 - We could offer resources around the topic of outreach.
 - We could offer something around the topic of Creation Care. It was explained that an ACA workshop on this topic was planned for ACA this past March, but the speaker had a conflict and had to decline.
 - It was suggested that when we do offer resourcing, that it be done by cluster areas. It was explained that many events have been offered at least in the east and in the west. Sometimes attendance is decent, and sometimes it is very slim. We talked about why people do not come out in large numbers. It seems that people are busier than they used to be.
 - We could offer a workshop for pastors on how they use the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, sharing best practices.
- M5. **Coordinator of Volunteers report.** Alysa distributed an event schedule of upcoming events. They included the following:

- Ongoing Youth Sponsor meetings with Randy Keeler – finishing up in May
- Mentor/Mentee Retreat for pastors – May 19, 2015
- New Pastor Orientation – June 7-8, 2015
- LEAD3D – Aug. 14-15, 2015 and Feb. 12-13, 2016
- Women in Ministry Retreat – Oct. 6-7, 2015
- Pastor/Spouse Retreat – Nov. 13-15, 2015
- Pastor/Elder Retreats – Feb. 5-6, 2016 in the west and Feb. 19-20, 2016 in the east

Alysa asked for counsel regarding the Ohio Youth Event. One successful event occurred in June 2012. It was planned again for June 2014, but was cancelled due to low registration numbers. Comments were in favor of exploring the possibility of offering this event again in 2016.

- M6. **Regional pastor report – Wanda Stopher.** In Wanda's absence, Thomas read Wanda's report. As reported in January, conversation continues to be the focus of her work these days. She has been using the circle process in pastor peer groups and in congregations. Pastor peer groups are currently working at discerning God's will together based on the book *Pursuing God's Will Together* by Ruth Haley Barton. The combination of using the circle process and working at discernment together have shaped pastor peer group for the last couple of months. One particular area of need is finding ways to live together in unity when we disagree. This could be a life-giving focus for a resource team that could also be a gift to our congregations.
- M7. **Conference Minister report.** Tom was absent, but submitted a written report prior to the meeting. He raised the following questions:
- Should we be actively seeking input from congregations to help shape the work of MDT? Since there wasn't opportunity to do so at ACA this year, how might we do this?
 - What about resourcing for retired folks? Might this be an area that we consider as we project programming for this or future years in Conference?
 - We do an excellent job of resourcing our pastoral leaders, but not so well in resourcing our lay members. Should we be thinking about giving more attention to offering programs that encourage and empower our lay members?
- M8. **Regional pastor report – Ralph Reinford.**
- Ralph reported that he also hears often that retired folks don't know where they fit in with Conference.
 - He affirmed Wanda's use of the circle process and thinks we need to explore using it more.
 - The anxiety in Ohio Conference continues to be very high. His pastor peer groups are divided.
 - These are challenging times for pastors trying to lead when some of their congregations are also very divided. Discussion times are needed that are open and uplifting and edifying.
 - He would like to see us do more in terms of stimulating congregations to do more in the areas of outreach and worship. How do we make worship more friendly? He would love to see a push towards encouraging our congregations to become more involved in outreach and church planting.
 - Area pastors need help with how to lead in turbulent times. How do we keep people together? How do we deal with anxiety? Our goal is to equip congregations to be healthy and to encourage good communication.

Comments and responses to the ministerial reports:

- A resource team was suggested to look at working through conflict
- How do we find out about retirees who might have interest and also have the time to serve? We could post something on the website listing opportunities. They could also be listed in our bulletin inserts.

- M9. **Lunch.** Thanks to Wooster Mennonite for providing today's lunch. During our lunch break, Kevin Kanagy shared a mock-up of the new Ohio Conference website that is currently under construction. He has been helping bring organization to the development of the website.
- M10. **Grants for 2015.** Keith Hostetler reported that the Stewardship Ministry recommended including four to five percent of the earnings from the Endowment Fund (approximately \$8,000) to the 20 percent from the Long Term Accumulated Surplus Fund (approximately \$30,000) for a total of approximately \$38,000 available for the grants that we offer this year. The deadline will be two weeks prior to the next scheduled MDT meeting. Ann will begin promoting the grant program as soon as she has final details.

M11. **Action steps** to take before our next meeting:

- Alysa will begin the process of planning an Ohio Youth event for 2016, starting out with a survey of youth sponsors and youth pastors.
- The grant program for 2015 will be announced and publicized, and the application form will be made available on the Conference website.
- Thomas and Ralph will meet with the chair of the East Ohio Church planting resource team.
- In response to the idea of having a large conference event around a particular topic, Jason Rissler and Kevin Kanagy will gather some information about bringing in a particular speaker, Alan Hirsch, who has connected with Lancaster Conference in the past.

M12. **Next meeting.** The next MDT meeting was scheduled for Aug 31, 2015, at 9 a.m. with location to be determined.

M13. **Adjournment** at 1 p.m.

Judy King, recorder