

Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA
Ministry Development Team Meeting #3
Sept. 12, 2012
Martins Mennonite, Orrville, Ohio

Present: Marion Beyeler, Lois Bontrager (morning only), Norma Duerksen (chair), David Elkins, Dean Falb, Sherah-Leigh Gerber, Matt Hamsher (afternoon only), Tom Kauffman, Judy King, Ann Leaman, Mattie Marie Mast, Randy Murray, Mary Newcomer, Ralph Reinford, Vikki Pruitte Sorrells, Tim Zuercher

Absent: Wanda Stopher, David Tijerina

M20. **Welcome and Devotions.** Norma led our devotional time, reading and reflecting on I Timothy 4:6-10. Prayer.

M21. **Mission Statement.** To remind us of the work we are to be doing, we read the Ohio Conference Mission Statement together.

M22. **Minutes.** The minutes of the May 16, 2012, meeting were reviewed and approved. A thank-you note was shared by Norma on behalf of Summit Mennonite Church for the grant they received to prepare their facility to house the community food pantry.

M23. **Reports on programs we have funded.**

- Ohio Youth Event. Sherah-Leigh Gerber reported that we had 100 youth and sponsors in attendance at this event at Bluffton University June 29-July 1. In spite of power outages caused by a storm immediately prior to the event, it was a great weekend. She reported that due to the registration receipts, not all of the money MDT granted for the event was needed. The evaluations were very positive, and another youth event will be planned for 2014.
- New Pastor Event. Ralph Reinford reported that he and Sherah-Leigh Gerber facilitated this event for newer pastors. Seventeen family members from six congregations were present. It was a way for newer pastors to become familiar with what Ohio Conference has to offer. The event began with a time of swimming and fellowship at the Comfort Inn, taking advantage of the complimentary yearly Sunday evening stay the hotel provides for pastors. On Monday morning, the group visited Behalt (the Amish and Mennonite Heritage Center) and Heini's Cheese. After lunch at the Amish Door, the group visited the Conference office in Kidron for a question-and-answer time with Tom Kauffman, conference minister. They also visited MCC Connections, Central Christian School, Everence and Camp Luz. This event helped to give a sense of identity and connectedness to those present. Ralph recommended that we continue to offer this event every two to three years.
- Voluntary Service Conversation. Ralph Reinford distributed and reviewed a report of the July meeting that was attended by several persons interested in voluntary service initiatives, some Conference staff members and Dean Heisey from MMN (Mennonite Mission Network). MMN will continue to be available to orient volunteers and for consulting purposes, but they blessed Ohio Conference to move ahead on our own. Ralph suggested that we keep these emerging ministries visible by featuring them in *Ohio Mennonite Evangel*, and also on our website. He also recommended that these groups continue to network and collaborate together, including with MMN, and that Ohio Conference supports, nurtures and cares for the development of these grassroots initiatives.

M24. **Upcoming Programming.** Programming ideas from the MDT retreat were assigned at our May meeting. The following are some of those ideas and what the plans are at this time.

- Online Worship Library—sharing worship resources. Tim Zuercher and David Elkins have been looking into various options and formats for this project. A blog format would be the easiest way to get a site up and running. The primary focus would be the sharing of worship resources. David sees this primarily as a collection of user-submitted resources that have been used and were helpful. We will need someone to gather and post some initial resources and then someone to maintain, monitor and update the site. A domain name is needed. Suggestions may be sent to Tim or David. An update will be shared at our November MDT meeting with a goal for a soft launch in January and a formal launch at ACA.
- Training for Multiple Staff Ministry Teams. Plans were made to offer a kick-off event in both the eastern and the western part of the state. The kick-off event in the east will be at Camp Luz on Sept. 19. Not enough persons could attend the kick-off event in the west, but there is interest in follow-up for this year-long program. Tom Kauffman gave an overview of some of the topics that will be covered, based on the

resource book they will be using, *When Moses Meets Aaron*. The Ohio Conference ministry staff will be the facilitators for this training.

- Church Renewal Institute: Engaging the Community – networking with congregations who are engaging their communities. Mattie Marie shared that she envisioned dedicating an ACA (Annual Conference Assembly) to this topic. Themes have already been chosen for the 2013 and 2014 annual meetings, so this could be the theme for 2015. There was discussion around new ways of doing church. It was suggested that we highlight various locations in Ohio Conference where this is happening already. This could be done through articles in *Ohio Mennonite Evangel*, video clips shared at ACA or posted on the website, or even field trips to these locations. Another idea that was shared was to have a resource day to network for those congregations that are interested in ideas for engaging their communities, similar to the seminar that was done for small congregations. Mattie Marie will work with Sherah-Leigh to move forward with some ideas.
- Women in Ministry Retreat. Sherah-Leigh reported that this retreat will take place at Mohican Lodge on Oct. 15-16, 2012. Wanda Stopher is resourcing the event and Anita Roth (Central Mennonite) is leading the music.
- Flat Menno. It was suggested that we launch a Flat Menno project whereby laminated copies of Flat Menno are distributed to each congregation over a period of time and each congregation documents Flat Menno's activities during the time he visits their congregation. Mountain States Conference did this with their conference minister (Herm Weaver) while he was on sabbatical. Flat Herm stayed with each congregation for two weeks and his activities were documented during that time and then sent on to the next congregation. They used two for 22 congregations. We would need more than that so it won't take so long. We will ask congregations to document normal activities in the life of their congregation during that two-week period by having Flat Menno present and taking pictures. Pictures will be sent to Ann for use on the Conference website and in Conference publications. We plan to commission them at our next MDT meeting and have the kickoff at that time.
- Pastor Wives Retreat. This event is scheduled for April 12-14, 2013, at Our Lady of the Pines Retreat Center in Fremont. Karen McClellan will be the speaker, focusing on the theme, "Sometimes I Don't Feel Very Spiritual!" Wendy Falls will be the worship leader.

M25. Regional Pastor Reports.

Ralph Reinford reported on some of the questions and comments he has been hearing.

- How do we reach the unchurched and build relationships with them? In eastern Ohio, how do we meet the needs of gas and oil workers that are coming into the area? How do we meet the spiritual needs of new people in the community?
- What are some creative worship resources and how do we find them? What are some good sermon ideas for the summer months?
- How can we help our young pastors? (Both young in age and young in ministry experience.) How do congregations come alongside young pastors and help them grow?
- How can we plant a new church successfully?
- How do we encourage more men's fellowship? Ralph led the Men's Retreat at Camp Luz this year and it was a very small group. He has spoken with Mennonite Men's president, Don Yoder, who is interested in working at ways to increase men's fellowship.
- He has been hearing that a number of congregations are working at Biblical literacy, either by reading through the Bible or participating in the Twelve Scriptures Project introduced by the denomination.

Tom Kauffman reported that he serves as the regional pastor for one congregation. This congregation is currently going through a transition. Tom agrees with Wanda's statement in her report (see below) that we need to try to foster the thinking that, rather than seeing the transition as something that happens only with a pastor change, that they continually work at the business of learning what it is to be the people of God. The thinking needs to change from being in a temporary transitional mode to being in an ongoing learning process.

In Wanda Stopher's absence, Tom read the report that she had sent. She noted that:

- She made an annual contact this summer with each of the pastors in western Ohio congregations. They are committed, gifted, solid leaders.
- She is wondering how to best communicate with the churches she serves.
- Even though the kickoff event for multi-staff ministry teams will not happen in western Ohio, there is interest in the resourcing in general.
- The transitional time between pastors is very valuable, and even those congregations that have

experienced this time of identifying and refocusing vision fail to view it as ongoing, as opposed to an event of congregational life. She wonders how we might lead congregations in developing identities as “learning communities.” Instead of waiting to work at these things during transitional times, that it would become business as usual and we would become communities continually transformed.

There was an invitation to reflect on what we heard so far and what we might resource. The value of mentoring young pastors was once again mentioned. Because our church members are busier than ever, this creates a higher expectation of our pastors to do more. What kind of resourcing can we offer and when should it happen – during the search process or after they are in place? Would it help to connect with transitional pastors concerning what it means for a congregation to call a young pastor? Might this be covered in the multi-staff training? There were many questions and no clear answers. It was noted that pastor peer groups are helpful, and there would be great value in getting a mentor relationship in place quickly.

Another suggestion that came out of our listening this morning was to consider an ACA workshop around the learning model for congregations that was mentioned in the regional pastor reports.

M26. **Lunch break.** A delicious haystack lunch was prepared and served by Valerie Weaver.

M27. **Accumulated Surplus Funds.** The suggestions that were made by the delegates at ACA for using these funds were read. After reviewing the grant applications that were submitted, nine grants were approved for funding, with two additional grants on hold, pending further action.

- Christina Joy Miller – Does not meet the criteria.
- Solon Church Plant – Approved \$6,000 and suggested they check with the East Ohio Church Planting Resource Team for additional funding.
- Tedrow community paper pantry – Approved \$1,500.
- Open Arms. Exploratory trip to Guatemala to see how they can help Jacinto and other pastors in Guatemala – Approved \$3,000.
- Chris Foust, Jubilee-Defining Mennonites to the public through newspaper ads – \$1,000 on hold pending they check with the other area Mennonite churches for joint support.
- North Clinton, Back Bay. Approved \$4,000 for the purchase of additional equipment, supplies and improvements, rather than ongoing expenses.
- LifeBridge. Internship of two students this past summer – Approved \$1,000.
- Beau Hummel. Marriage....for Life seminars at Walnut Creek Mennonite Church – Approved \$2,500.
- Alex Dye, West Liberty Vegetable Garden – Approved \$1,000.
- Nan Kanagy, Friendship, City Fresh Market – Approved \$1,000.
- Darin Nissley, Lighthouse van replacement – Approved \$4,000.
- Matt Flinner, Martins Creek – Three community outreach programs. No funding. These are ongoing programs that are already supported by the congregation.
- Keith Hostetler, Crown Hill – Super MYF for small youth groups – \$3,000 on hold pending further details.

It was noted that it should be clear that these are one-time grants, not for ongoing grant requests year after year. We will also stipulate in the letter that if the funds are not used for the purpose of the grant, the funds should be returned. Norma will write the response letters. A “use of grant funds report” form will also be sent along with the letter for reporting how the funds were used.

M28. **Next meeting.** Our next meeting is scheduled for Nov. 7, 2012, at Berlin Mennonite.

M29. **Prayer and adjournment** at 3:25 p.m.

Judy King, recorder