

SABBATICAL PROPOSAL

To: Academic Dean's Office

From: Rev. Dr. Randall S. Keeler, Associate Professor of Religion

Date: Monday, October 7, 2013

Re: Proposed sabbatical for the 2014-2015 academic year

Introduction

This proposal will outline my proposed sabbatical for the 2014-2015 academic year. An outline of the project with three potential strategies will be given along with the description and benefit of such an experience.

Overview of the Project

The sabbatical I am proposing could take the following three shapes:

1. **A full-year sabbatical serving as a youth ministry resource to the Ohio Mennonite Conference.** Funding for this possibility will be through the Ohio Mennonite Conference at the level of half salary plus mileage expenses.
2. **A full-year sabbatical serving as a youth ministry resource to the Ohio Mennonite Conference and also participating in interim pastoral leadership.** Funding for this possibility will be through a combination of the Ohio Mennonite Conference and also the interim pastoral leadership position coordinating together to provide half-salary plus mileage expenses.
3. **A half-year sabbatical (fall, 2014) serving as a youth ministry resource to the Ohio Mennonite Conference.** Funding for this would be the conference providing mileage expense reimbursement.

Description of the Project

Context: The basic objective of this sabbatical proposal is to provide a context in which to test and evaluate my dissertation work on Anabaptist Youth Ministry. I have been in conversation with Tom Kauffman, the conference minister for Ohio Mennonite Conference and he is supporting this linkage between myself and Ohio Mennonite Conference. My larger goal is also to begin a book project that includes some of the work I've already done in my dissertation, but will include accumulating information from churches in the Ohio Mennonite Conference as to how they have already or could begin

implementing ideas from my work into their congregational youth ministries. The resource I hope to develop is one that outlines what an Anabaptist Youth Ministry looks like and how congregations have implemented these foci into their ministries through specific strategies.

Structure: The outline below describes the structure and methodologies for each of the three proposals. The exact proposal that will be implemented will depend on the funding level commitment that the Ohio Mennonite Conference can give to the project and also the availability of interim pastoral assignments in Ohio Mennonite Conference.

1. **A full-year sabbatical serving as a youth ministry resource to the Ohio Mennonite Conference.** Strategies to be used if this were how the sabbatical took shape.
 - a. Connect with each congregation in the Ohio Mennonite Conference in some form to explore the shape that their youth ministry takes and offer myself as a resource.
 - b. Explore the strategy that some churches have proposed concerning joint youth groups where the youth of two or more congregations come together for activities. Do some outside research of other denominations and/or Mennonite communities where this is already happening and discern how effective of a methodology it is.
 - c. At the end of the sabbatical year schedule regional workshops for congregational youth workers around the theme of Anabaptist Youth Ministry.
2. **A full-year sabbatical serving as a youth ministry resource to the Ohio Mennonite Conference and also participating in interim pastoral leadership.** Strategies to be used if this were how the sabbatical took shape.
 - a. Connect with as many congregations as possible in the Ohio Mennonite Conference in some form to explore the shape that their youth ministry takes and offer myself as a resource.
 - b. Explore the strategy that some churches have proposed concerning joint youth groups where the youth of two or more congregations come together for activities. Do some outside research of other denominations and/or Mennonite communities where this is already happening and discern how effective of a methodology it is.
 - c. During the interim pastoral work, in addition to the duties of pastoral work I will be paying attention to the youth ministry of that congregation as a model of Anabaptist Youth Ministry.

3. **A half-year sabbatical (fall, 2014), serving as a youth ministry resource to the Ohio Mennonite Conference.** Strategies to be used if this were how the sabbatical took shape.
 - a. Connect with as many congregations as possible in the Ohio Mennonite Conference in some form to explore the shape that their youth ministry takes and offer myself as a resource.
 - b. Explore the strategy that some churches have proposed concerning joint youth groups where the youth of two or more congregations come together for activities. Do some outside research of other denominations and/or Mennonite communities where this is already happening and discern how effective of a methodology it is.

Outcomes: Listed below are the outcomes of the project, the scope of which will depend on which possibility actually takes shape.

1. This project will allow me to get a better pulse of what is happening in Mennonite congregations regarding youth ministry and be a valuable resource in informing my future teaching.
2. If the interim pastoral work becomes a reality then I would have a context to see up close what is happening in youth ministry in the congregational setting.
3. The concentrated time spent on youth ministry will give me a focused context in which to begin planning out a book I will attempt to get published on youth ministry. During the sabbatical year I will be in touch with a publisher with my idea and begin outlining chapters and initial composition of those chapters.
4. I will submit an article to The Mennonite in the fall of 2014 to be published on youth ministry.
5. In the year following my sabbatical I will give a colloquium presentation on the research that I will have done on how Ohio Mennonite Conference congregations are implementing the three-fold foci (discipleship, community, and nonviolence) of an Anabaptist Youth Ministry.

Benefits of the Project

1. By participating in this project I will continue to establish myself as an expert on congregational youth ministry within the Mennonite Church and hopefully bring closer attention to our youth ministry program among Mennonite students.
2. Participating in this project will help to keep me current and in tune with youth ministry in congregational settings, and in turn, keep my teaching current for our youth ministry program.
3. Fulfilling the proposed strategies of my sabbatical will aid in completing the goals I have set for myself in my Individual Development Plan (IDP) and to

subsequently put myself in a position to attain full Professor status in the year after my sabbatical.

4. The service that I will hope to be to one of our constituency conferences should help in continuing to build and nurture the fraternal relationship between Ohio Mennonite Conference and Bluffton University.