

Pastors from across Ohio Conference meet Jan. 13

Wednesday, Jan. 13, the Leadership Team of Ohio Conference sponsored and All-Ohio Conference Pastors' Meeting in Belleville, Ohio, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. By our best count 62 participants were in attendance, mostly pastors, but also including three or four Leadership Team facilitators. We counted 41 congregations as being represented by pastoral staff.

We began our day with consideration of portions of 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 in table groups. This passage, which had been given earlier as a focus for biblical consideration, was used to consider how "love" might be our guide in Ohio Conference around certain issues of concern.

Participants engaged in an exercise naming what is stressful in Ohio Conference at this time, focusing on what we can change and considering how we might plan to cope with things we cannot change.

We also gave consideration to two items intended to be among delegate business at ACA 2016. The first was the most recent revision of a membership proposal for Ohio Conference congregations. The resolution, presented as a "stabilizing" approach to the sense of some tensions around connection with Mennonite Church USA, is intended to give some congregations sufficient "space" to remain as members of Ohio Conference as "Conference-only members."

Discussion was active and straightforward. Understandings seem to be that this resolution may be helpful to a smaller number of congregations, but that other approaches also would be necessary as we move forward as Ohio Conference.

The second proposal involved the Leadership Team call to all Ohio Conference congregations to enter into "A One-Year Covenant for Ohio Conference Congregations, Pastors, Conference Leaders, and Staff." This proposal seeks to deepen and mature the relational life of Ohio Conference through an intentional process beginning at ACA 2016.

Some aspects of the Covenant include commitment to give ourselves to God and to one another, commitment to a Year of Mission together, commitment to consistent involvement in the activities of the covenant year, and commitment to consistent financial support of regular operating expenses of Ohio Conference as each congregation is able.

This proposal was by its very nature somewhat challenging. Nonetheless, this proposal seemed to also offer more hope for producing a more unified and missionally active conference for moving into the future.

We are very grateful to all the pastors who devoted a day out of their packed schedules to attend and participate in our time together.

Next steps on these items will be some refinement from what the Leadership Team heard and learned from discussion at the meeting, and presentation of these items to delegates at area cluster meetings.

Please pray faithfully for all parties involved in this process as we try together to discover by the guiding of the Holy Spirit how Ohio Conference can best follow and serve our Lord in the years before us.

— Transitional Conference Leader George O'Reilly