

As this is written, Ralph Reinford, Jessica Schrock-Ringenberg and I have just returned from the Constituency Leaders Council meeting. The phrase I heard repeated many times was, "We are hearing about all the excitement and good things that are happening in the Ohio Conference." My response was, "I don't know that we are doing anything special, but it sure is exciting to see God at work in our congregations."

The year began with the pre-ACA missional conference led by Deb and Alan Hirsch. The sessions were characterized by an intense desire to learn, followed by animated discussion sessions of what it might look like to put Jesus Christ at the center of our efforts. The openness to listening and learning, and a common sense of purpose to become more like Jesus carried over into the Annual Conference Assembly (ACA) sessions. There was a sense of the Spirit of God among us in our business sessions. The passing of the healthy budget allowed us to begin the search for new Conference leadership and to continue to pursue the Gathered and Sent initiatives.

The Leadership Team asked Jessica Schrock-Ringenberg to give leadership to the missional movement. We ended up with her agreeing to volunteer as a missional consultant for the next year. One of the requests we made of Jessica was for her to replicate herself in our conference. While we were negotiating with her about this position, she informed us of her being appointed to a training cohort designed to train 60 young leaders in the United States to replicate themselves. She is now being trained to do what we asked her to do on someone else's dollar. What a win-win!

A planning group focused on the "Gathered" part of our Gathered and Sent initiative is planning a pastors' meeting in January to discuss what the journey forward might look like with Jesus at our center.

A search committee has been set up and is energetically searching for a conference minister with strong relational skills to take up the executive duties and to coordinate the various programs and ministries of the Conference.

The Ministry Development Team again approved grants totaling \$22,100 to help fund some exciting endeavors of individual congregations. We thank God for the opportunity to use these funds in the work of building His Kingdom.

Another positive note of encouragement is the increased giving of our congregations. Our giving is ahead of last year's giving, but with the passing of the healthy budget we are still needing to dip into the capital funds to meet our obligations.

We covet your continued prayers and participation as we try to determine the best way to continue to support and build healthy congregations which can effectively extend the healing and hope that Christ has so graciously given us to those around us.

Yours in Christ,

Bob Sauder, Ohio Conference moderator