

Conference Minister Announcement

After many hours spent discussing the conference minister position and a very comprehensive search process, the Search Committee and the Leadership Team are in agreement that hiring someone at a half-time capacity is not a healthy thing for any candidate or the Conference at this time.

We apologize to the Conference staff and to those of you who have counseled us from the beginning that half-time was not a good idea. The plus side is that this discussion has helped us to focus on what it is we really expect from this position and where we as a Conference hope to direct our efforts.

I feel we did a good job of defining the duties of what the conference minister has done in the past. And we did a fair job of prioritizing those functions that were most important and things that could be left undone if and when time became a factor. At the same time, we added responsibilities that we felt were important in moving the Conference in the direction of becoming more mission-oriented.

I will say that I pushed the hardest to keep moving forward with the half-time position. My goal was to alleviate the extra burden and stress that we had put on the staff. In retrospect, I did not realize that in making this a half-time position, we would in effect be expecting the present staff to pick up the pieces that were not covered, increasing their workload and stress rather than decreasing it.

I apologize for that miscalculation. My sincerest hope was that I would be introducing a new conference minister at these meetings and that we could spend the next two years continuing to watch the Conference become a vital instrument in God's Kingdom work.

So, where do we go from here? Ralph Reinford has faithfully picked up many of the duties of the conference minister along with his full-time regional pastor's role for the past two years. But in the process, he has been stretched in unhealthy ways. In January, the Leadership Team offered Ralph a three-month leave with no strings attached. Ralph returned a counter-proposal to the Leadership Team in February. His proposal was to take the months of May – July for respite and regrouping. On his return he will continue his present duties until a conference minister is hired or until Nov. 1 when he will reduce his time to .5 FTE and resume only his regional pastor responsibilities. Leadership Team has committed to working with Ralph and Cliff Brubaker to determine ways in which we can keep their workload at that level.

Leadership Team has accepted this very gracious offer. We have asked the search group to reopen the search for a full-time conference minister with skills as a transformational leader who will equip us for navigating the opportunities and challenges for the church today. Interest in Anabaptism is rising, and Ohio Conference wants a conference minister to help us extend our witness.

The Leadership Team is committed to continuing to look for ways we can adjust staff responsibilities and workloads that will allow us to create what we believe will be an effective and sustainable job description for the conference minister. At the same time, we will do our best to continue to offer our congregations the support they need and maintain the energy and momentum that the Gathered and Sent initiatives have brought to the Conference.

Thank you for your prayers and counsel, and we ask you to continue to support us in the coming months as we move forward in the process of finding a conference minister.

— Bob Sauder, Moderator