

OHIO MENNONITE EVANGEL

News & Views of Ohio Conference

MAY/JUNE 2018



ohiomennoniteconference.org

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- 2 Editorial
Resource corner
- 4 Oak Grove Mennonite — A portrait of God's faithfulness
- 6 Online prayer meetings planned
- 7 Ralph Reinford begins three-month leave
- 8 What exactly is the Church, anyway?
- 12 Hispanic Encounters celebrate 15 years
- 13 About people
Ohio Conference Cast plans summer episodes
- 14 Back page briefings

Missional Network to begin in summer

By Jessica Schrock-Ringenberg
Ohio Conference
Missional Consultant

All Ohio Conference congregations are invited to join the Ohio Conference Missional Network. Representatives from this network of congregations will begin meeting and working together during the summer of 2018.

The purpose and expectation of those who sign up for Ohio Conference's Missional Network cohort is to equip congregations in both intentional discipleship (via Missional Discipleship Groups) as

well as to give them an experience with a missional community.

These missional communities will be approached as a laboratory for ideas. These missional lab spaces will vary. The purpose is not to "cut and paste" programs, but to gather ideas in order to develop rhythms, rituals and practices that will help inform the local congregation's context.

There is a level of commitment that is needed in order to make these cohorts successful. The intention of this



next two years is to establish equipped groups of people within Ohio Conference who will then be able to provide leadership within the Conference for missional work.

We are defining "missional" as essentially living as a mis-

Continued on page 3

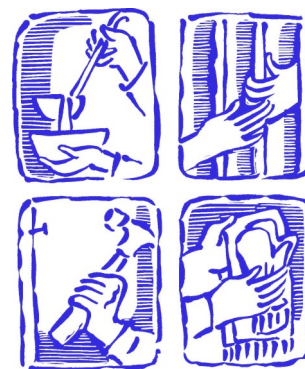
Grant program to benefit local ministries

Is your congregation looking for ways to fund a ministry that impacts your community? Consider applying for a grant from the Ohio Conference.

The Ohio Conference Ministry Development Team (MDT) is accepting grant proposals from Ohio Conference congregations and related

organizations for projects and mission initiatives. This year the MDT has **\$24,282** available for grants.

In light of the current Gathered and Sent initiative within the Ohio Conference, the Ministry Development Team will give preference to proposals that are particularly missionally oriented. Priority also will be given to projects



Continued on page 7



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Editor: Ann H. Leaman

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EDITORIAL

Is fear our default emotion?

You're probably tired of hearing this, but it's true all the same. In church, as in the rest of life, change is inevitable. And a lot of times lately, I see changes provoking worry and fear.

But should fear be our default emotion? At the last meeting of the Ohio Conference Ministry Development Team, we heard from Wooster Mennonite Church's pastor, Jacob Dodson, who is a member

of the Missional Planning Team. He encouraged us to look at how God is at work as we face changes.

Referring to concepts presented in Elaine Heath and Larry Duggins' book, *Missional. Monastic. Mainline.*, he said, "The Kingdom story is not a story of fear and decline." Instead of focusing on difficulties, members of established churches should be invited to hear the message, "You are gifted, and

you can be a part of a new thing that can be emerging." Established "legacy" churches can serve as an anchor to support new missional communities as they develop.

"The Kingdom story is not a story of fear and decline." What story have we been telling ourselves and others? And are we open to changes that the Holy Spirit brings?

— ahl

RESOURCE CORNER

CommonWord offers lectionary resources

Does your congregation follow the common lectionary in your worship services? Are you looking for worship resources related to lectionary scriptures? CommonWord, a worship resource website offered by Mennonite Church Canada and Canadian Mennonite University, has an online lectionary worship calendar

at <https://www.commonword.ca/Content/revised-common-lectionary>.

The calendar has links to resources related to lectionary texts. Some resources may be downloaded for free, and others are available for purchase. (Please note that although some items are listed as available for borrowing,

only Canadian residents may borrow items from CommonWord.) The lectionary calendar also has links to free online children's stories related to the Gospel lectionary texts. CommonWord also has a special occasions worship calendar located at <https://www.commonword.ca/Content/worship-calendar>. ■

Personnel of the Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA

Moderator: Bob Sauder — sauderbob2@gmail.com
Assistant Moderator: Thomas Dunn — thomas@crownhillmennonite.com
Credentialing Ministry Chair: Andy Stoner — rpandy@juno.com
Gifts Discernment Ministry Chair: Mel Hathaway — smcpastor@embarqmail.com
Stewardship Ministry Co-Chair: Melanie Miller — mgfmiller@gmail.com
Regional Pastor: Ralph Reinford — ralphreinford@gmail.com
Regional Pastor: Cliff Brubaker — cliffbru7@gmail.com
Administrative Secretary: Judy King — ohmc@zoominternet.net
Finance Coordinator: Stan Helmuth — cboh1@zoominternet.net
Conference Editor: Ann Leaman — ohioevangel@gmail.com
Coordinator of Volunteers: Alys Short — alysashort@gmail.com

Missional Network

Continued from page 1

sonary in your own community.

Missional is not just a “MISSION” or “SERVICE” event.

Missional = “Mission” + “Intentional Discipleship” + “Relationships” + “Sharing the Good News.”

This does not happen overnight. It takes time, maybe even years. However, you **can** learn the steps to work towards becoming missional.

PHASE ONE (2018-19)

1) Intentional Discipleship

Each person signed up will be expected to start at least one (or more) Missional Discipleship Group from their congregation. They will choose one person from the congregation who they believe is hungry for a deeper relationship with Christ. Those two will meet together to discern a third person from the congregation who will be invited to meet with them.

These groups will meet **once a week for an hour** or so for intentional Bible study, prayer and accountability. The purpose of this one group will be to train/equip others to start another group within the next year. Jacob Dodson and Jessica Schrock-Ringenberg coach these groups. We will meet either face to face or **via online twice a month for an hour**.

2) Missional Labs Space

All are invited to send missional lab proposals from across the Conference. If you believe you have a potential site to help

teach others in Conference how to be missional, please send the proposals to Jessica Schrock-Ringenberg. Jessica and the Missional Task Force will help give suggestions to enhance your group’s missional activity in order to become a missional lab space. This may include inviting the site to join the Missional Discipleship Groups, if intentional discipleship is what is needed. The expectation will be to take this year to prepare the lab space for teaching others.

3) Occasional statewide gatherings may be coordinated for teaching sessions. This will include examining the missional lab space and discussing how to make these spaces more missional. Dates and times will vary.

PHASE TWO (2019-20)

1) SENT: Each person will be paired up with others in their area to *BE SENT* and experience a missional community. **This will happen once every other month.** The purpose of this is to watch and experience what robust and fruitful “missional” activity looks like. They will go as teachable ones in order to ask questions, etc.

2) GATHERED: *THEN* after we have groups experiencing the missional communities, they will BE GATHERED to discuss what they witnessed and learned. The eastern cohort will meet in the Cleveland area and the other group in the Lima area, **in the off month** from the missional lab experiences. **Please note:** There may be times we meet via ZOOM conference

online.

TOTAL TIME COMMITMENT:

PHASE ONE (2018-2019): Six hours a month for Missional Discipleship

Groups: One hour a week with the Missional Discipleship Group, plus two hours a month with the cohort to receive coaching.

PHASE TWO (2019-2020): SIX hours a month for Missional Discipleship

Groups: One hour a week with Missional Discipleship Group, plus two hours a month to *provide* coaching to leader (or leaders) of new groups within the congregation. **One day a month for “GATHERED” or “SENT” activities.** The number of hours per meeting in the “SENT” portion will vary depending on travel and missional experience, but we expect the “GATHERED” portion to be at least three hours, plus travel time if we meet in person. **(TOTAL = one day + Missional Discipleship Group.)**

The First Learning Community will begin in June 2018, with meetings in Cleveland for those in the East and meetings in Lima for those in the West. You are free to attend the meeting that works for your schedule.

PLEASE CONTACT IF INTERESTED:

Jessica Schrock-Ringenberg — jsringenber@gmail.com or 419-551-1315. ■

“We are defining ‘missional’ as essentially living as a missionary in your own community.”

Missional is not just a ‘MISSION’ or ‘SERVICE’ event.”

Oak Grove Mennonite Church

— A profile of God's faithfulness

Marilyn Jaquet, right, shows Carolyn Warren a detail on the "Places We've Served" map. At left, Emma Stutzman.

In the right-hand photo, guest speaker Jason Kauffman, Director of the Archives of Mennonite Church USA, reflected on the value of considering our stories.



By Paul J. Miller

By 1815, at least 16 Amish families were land-owners in Wayne County, Ohio. The small community had its first resident minister, Christian Brandt, who was ordained in Switzerland. Bishop David Zook moved into the region from Mifflin County, Pa. With ministerial leadership present, the Amish families began to meet as a congregation by 1818. By 1820 there were 25 families in the congregation.

Today, 200 years later, Oak Grove Mennonite Church of Smithville, Ohio, continues to serve the Wayne County community. Douglas Zehr pastors

about 380 members. Miriam Zehr, associate pastor, is minister of worship and Christian education.

Oak Grove is marking its bicentennial with three special weekend celebrations. The first — a Historical Reflections Weekend — occurred on April 14-15. July 14-15 marks a celebration of music. Pianist George Bixler will present a concert on Saturday evening. On Sunday afternoon a congregational singing will sample the hymnals used at Oak Grove in the 20th century. Also, a birthday party is planned for the church.

Oak Grove's Harvest Home celebration on Oct. 13-14 will feature a choral music program directed by former member Byron Kauffman, now of West Liberty, Ohio. A Sunday school reunion is planned on Saturday afternoon and evening. Sunday



worship will be led by Mark Schloneger, pastor of North Goshen (Indiana) Mennonite Church. Mark is son of Bob and Enid Schloneger, members of Oak Grove.

Jason Kauffman, Director of Archives and Record Management for Mennonite Church USA, Elkhart, Ind., was guest speaker for the Historical Reflections Weekend. Jason, born and raised in Dalton, Ohio, attended Orrville Mennonite Church. A graduate of Central Christian School and Goshen College, Jason earned his doctoral degree from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

A two-century timeline of Oak Grove history was unveiled at the Saturday observance. The timeline follows three strands — historical events in the life of

Continued on page 5

Oak Grove Mennonite

Continued from page 4

Oak Grove; significant developments in the broader Mennonite and Christian Church; and world events. Art Neuenschwander plotted the timeline on a digital design program, and the printed panels are mounted around the church sanctuary. A short historical booklet, *Sketches of God's Faithfulness*, by historian Levi Miller, also was released. Miller interwove sketches of current members with past members, the great "cloud of witnesses" of God's faithfulness.

Jason Kauffman suggested three reasons for considering our history. First, as observed by John Roth, Goshen College history professor, Mennonite theology has been shaped by story. History puts us in touch with those stories. Second, history provides tools to clarify our identity. And, third, history helps us reassess and come to terms with difficult issues of our past.

Kauffman noted that Oak Grove has numerous collections of documents, photographs and files in the archives at Elkhart. Several themes make the congregation an interesting study for researchers. Oak Grove early on revealed a distinct congregational approach to authority and leadership. Second, Oak Grove developed an early and sustained support for Mennonite higher education, particularly Goshen College and Bluffton College. Third, there was early and sustained support by Oak Grove for mission and service.



On Sunday, the Christian Education hour was devoted to sharing legacy stories. Kauffman recounted the life and service of Crissie Yoder Shank, born in Holden, Missouri, but raised in the Smithville community. She married Charles L. Shank, and then they went on a mission to India in 1915, returning in 1919 after a daughter's illness. Crissie was the missions editor for *The Christian Exponent* periodical, and published a journal of her experiences in 1924, *Letters from Mary*. Kauffman observed that she was the first published female author in the Mennonite Church. Crissie filled many roles in the life of the church, but in particular served as chair of the Ohio sewing circles. Among her children many served in various capacities of church life and mission service.

Paul Miller recounted the lives of four young men of Oak Grove, all contemporaries in the early 1915-25 era. They were Jacob C. Meyer, Vernon J. Smucker, Jesse N. Smucker, and Orie Benjamin Gerig. Jesse was ordained as a minister of Oak

Grove at age 23, while he was a student at Goshen College. All of them went to Europe in reconstruction service, except for Vernon Smucker, who was appointed by the Mennonite Church to a team to go to Europe and investigate service options. They joined their passions for Young People's Conferences, and came home to participate in three such gatherings before the conferences died under the criticism of church leadership.

During the worship hour, Kauffman assessed the impact of the Young People's Conference Movement. Though the movement failed by 1923, it called for renewal and practical applications of a nonresistant peace stance. And though some did not evolve until years later, the development of the Civilian Public Service program, Mennonite Central Committee, a broadened missions program, Mennonite Disaster Service, Mennonite World Conference, and seminary education programs for ministers can be

George Bixler presented a piano arrangement of "Great is Thy Faithfulness," the theme song selected for the Oak Grove bicentennial.

"Several themes make the congregation an interesting study for researchers. Oak Grove early on revealed a distinct congregational approach to authority and leadership. Second, Oak Grove developed an early and sustained support for Mennonite higher education..."

Continued on page 6

Oak Grove Mennonite

Continued from page 5

Pastor Doug Zehr led worship for the special anniversary service April 15 at Oak Grove Mennonite Church in Smithville.



traced to the concerns of the movement. Kauffman asked what lessons can be learned from the Young People's Conference Movement as the Mennonite Church deals with a new era of conflict and disagreement. The Church must navi-

gate new areas of tension between factions and generations.

Guests — some registering from New York, Virginia, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin — joined local Oak Grove congregants for the three sessions of historical reflections. They

browsed the foyer filled with displays of multiple avenues of service through the years.

Pastors and ministerial student interns shared memories. Three were present and shared briefly — Bob Schloneger, a student intern and recently interim pastor with Enid Schloneger; Lawrence Yoder, who interned in 1987 and then served as a missionary with Shirlee in Indonesia before returning to teach at Eastern Mennonite University; and Sher Speigle Byler, associate pastor from 1988-92, now a counselor in Canton, Ohio. Other pastors sent greetings.

All are welcome at the upcoming July and October bicentennial observances. For more information, check the Oak Grove website,

www.oakgrovemc.org. ■

Online prayer meetings planned for conference minister search

By Dan Hooley
Ohio Conference
Prayer Coordinator

Unite for the Search: Online Meetings for Prayer. Please join us as we unite in prayer for the conference minister search process. Using the GoToMeeting Web conferencing program, we'll connect on Thursday, May 31, from 11 a.m. to noon, and on Saturday, July 7, from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m.

A link for logging in to the online meeting will be available on the Conference website several days before each prayer meeting. To get the link for the May 31 meeting, go to <http://bit.ly/May31PrayerMeeting>. To get the link for the July 7 meeting, go to <http://bit.ly/July7PrayerMeeting>. If you are new to [GoToMeeting](http://www.gotomeeting.com), be sure to give yourself a few minutes to familiarize yourself beforehand.

To learn more about the conference minister search process, please see <http://bit.ly/ConfMinisterSearch>. The Conference Minister Search Committee is accepting applications through June 30.

In the meantime, please feel free to remember the conference minister search in your daily prayers. I don't think anyone would mind if we start praying before May 31. Thanks! ■

Grant program

Continued from page 1

that are new initiatives or projects that could not be carried out without the grant funding.

The MDT will use the following criteria in reviewing the applications:

- Does this proposal fit with the Conference priorities of worship, faith and witness?
- Does this project respond to the priorities identified by Ministry Development Team?
 - Start-up ministries/new initiatives
 - Community outreach
 - Revitalization of a congregation
 - Church planting
 - Focus on children or youth ministry
 - Resources for marriages and/or parenting
 - Missional coaching
- Strengthening congregation-to-congregation relationships within Ohio Conference
- Peacemaking education/action
- Is this proposal a collaborative effort among Ohio Conference congregations and/or related organizations?

Please note that this is a one-time grant. Grant monies are not intended to be used for staffing.

Grant proposals are due by **Aug. 6, 2018**. More information and an online application are on the Ohio Conference website: <http://bit.ly/OCMinistryGrants>. If you prefer, you may download a grant

form and mail it to the Ohio Conference office.

The Ministry Development Team will consider all grant proposals at its Aug. 23 meeting.

In 2017, the Ministry Development Team approved six grants. To learn more about these grants, see <http://bit.ly/OCMinistryGrants>. One of the six grants was given to Wheelhouse — A Christian Bike Cooperative, located in Lima, Ohio. This ministry refurbishes bicycles and makes them available to people in need. To learn more about this ministry and the grant which it received, listen to the Ohio Conference Cast podcast about the Wheelhouse. You can find it on the Ohio Conference website: <http://bit.ly/WheelhouseLima>. ■



Ralph Reinford begins three-month leave

As was announced at Annual Conference Assembly, Regional Pastor Ralph Reinford is taking a three-month leave from his duties with Ohio Conference. His leave will last from May 1 until the end of July.

During May, June and July, contact Regional Pastor Cliff Bru-

baker for any regional pastor work needed. You may email Cliff at cliffbru7@gmail.com or call him at 517-398-2172.

For any other questions during Ralph's leave, please contact Judy King, Ohio Conference administrative assistant, at

ohmc@zoominternet.net or 330-857-5421.

After his leave, Ralph will return to his work as regional pastor. He will transition from a full-time to a half-time position as regional pastor on Nov. 1, or when a new conference minister is in place. ■

What exactly is the Church, anyway?

By Hannah Troyer
Summit Mennonite Church

Hannah Troyer is a member of Summit Mennonite Church. She shared this sermon at Summit Mennonite in September 2017.

When I was growing up, I attended a church that met in the old auditorium at Stark State College in Canton. I remember as a little girl, running around playing tag with all the other kids, having to set everything up and take everything down every Sunday, because college students were going to be flooding the halls the next day. I remember knowing exactly what rooms we were allowed in and what rooms we were not allowed in. I remember meeting in people's houses during the week because we didn't have access to our "church" except for from 10 a.m. to noon on Sundays.

When I was in elementary school, the announcement was made that we were going to be building our own church building. I remember everyone being so excited about it. I remember people talking about how we'd be able to use the building during the week, we'd be able to do more programs and have meals on Wednesdays and all these other cool things that other churches got to do. We were taking the next step in "church growth."

I was a senior in high school when I realized I missed the days of that church that met in the auditorium. I missed the innocence and the authenticity of the old school projector that they used to let the kids project the song lyrics on, the Sunday school rooms that got set up and put away every Sunday, the old burnt orange seats and the '70s paneling on the walls.

Somehow, the gathering seemed more genuine in that space.

Having a church building isn't inherently bad. A building of our own opens lots of doors for things we could never do before. Here at Summit Mennonite, our church building serves as a place where thousands of people can gain access to food every week. But having a church building does come with responsibility; there are certain things we must guard against: becoming too comfortable, allowing the building to come before the real Church.

So, church.

How does the Bible define church? How does Jesus define the Church? Is it the building? The people? What qualifies? Do we use a big "C," or a little "c"? Can we call the building, the people, and the act of meeting on Sunday all "church"?

This summer, I've personally been reading through Acts. We can get a pretty vivid picture through reading the stories and experiences of the early Christians, of what the Church is to look like, act like, etc.



Hannah Troyer

They were bold, they were committed, trusting, and very human.

Check out this passage: Acts 2:42-47 — "The community continually committed themselves to learning what the apostles taught them, gathering for fellowship, breaking bread, and praying. Everyone felt a sense of awe because the apostles were doing many signs and wonders among them. There was an intense sense of togetherness among all who believed; they shared all their material possessions in trust. They sold any possessions and goods that did not benefit the community and used the money to help everyone in need. They were unified as they worshiped at the temple day after day. In homes, they broke bread and shared meals with glad and generous hearts. The new disciples praised God, and they enjoyed the goodwill of all the people of the city. Day after day the Lord added to their number every-

Continued on page 9

"But having a church building does come with responsibility; there are certain things we must guard against: becoming too comfortable, allowing the building to come before the real Church."

The Church

Continued from page 8

one who was experiencing liberation.”

Is this what our Church resembles today? Not really. Is that okay?

You all have experienced a spiritual high, right? I got to get high on Jesus every summer at camp. It was awesome. Maybe it was at a camp or conference or a missions trip or at a super inspirational church service. You want to stay there forever and just soak in Jesus.

But, you can't.

And then you have to go back to “normal” and figure out how you're going to “apply all this stuff to your everyday life” and make it through until the next time you can get high on God.

I remember having spiritual highs and then long periods of lows throughout most of my childhood, all the way into high school. Looking at the way we educate kids and young adults in the faith, this is pretty much how it's set up. Get them SUPER excited and emotional, immerse them in Christian culture, and hope that somehow it sticks until the next spiritual experience.

Our culture is failing to learn, accept, and teach the everyday Christianity, what it means to walk with God and with a community of faith.

Shane Claiborne refers to this as spiritual bulimia: gorging ourselves on all the products of the Christian industrial complex, then vomiting it all back up for pastors, small groups, and friends, without allowing it to really digest.

This. Is. Unsustainable.

Pentecost was probably a spiritual high more intense than any of us could imagine. They most likely rode on that for a while. But, like any “high” it fades away.

When did the newness fade away? When did the Church start to stray from the structure we see in the New Testament?

Humans were made to live in deep community with other humans. No matter what your occupation is, where you live, if you're an introvert or an extrovert.

Now, I have to admit, I've never lived ‘in community’ before, as in living intentionally in the same house or the same close community with several other people.

The closest thing I have to living in community is living with my husband, William. We share pretty much everything. And there are ups and downs and good and bad, and we just go through it all together.

We read that the early Christians didn't just get together once a week for a worship service. They shared their entire lives with each other. Even when they got mad at each other. Even when they disagreed. Even when they doubted. They were committed to one another.

They took Church seriously, and they were committed to the work of the Church.

So is it okay when church is just something that happens on Sun-

day morning with just the people that show up for the service? Is it okay to seek spiritual highs and then continue living our lives like we do until the next one comes along? Should we be continuing with our current form of “church,” or should we be looking back into Acts, into the example of the early Church, to reframe and reimagine what Church could look like here?

I want to share another experience that I had, this summer while we were in Turkey, visiting William's cousin.

William's cousin is a Franciscan friar. He converted to Catholicism in Turkey, where his family was living at the time, doing missions. He was raised Mennonite, and although his conversion was very difficult for his family, they are now seeing the ways that God is working through him in the Roman Catholic tradition.

We traveled to Turkey, because Andrew was being ordained as a priest this summer. We got to be there for his ordination, and travel around Turkey with him, his family, and his Brothers (other friars) the week after.

Seeing the way that the friars lived in community with each other, the way that they were so committed to each other, was an entirely new experience for me. They held each other accountable, they affirmed each other, they wrestled through the hard things with each other. They had committed to the

“Should we be continuing with our current form of ‘church,’ or should we be looking back into Acts, into the example of the early Church, to reframe and reimagine what Church could look like here?”

Continued on page 10

The Church

Continued from page 9

faith and to each other for the long haul. They walked through the daily ups and downs of life together.

Couple this with the 4th century cave churches that we were touring and the early Christian history that we were learning, and the early Church became as real as it has ever been for me.

I wanted to include a reading from the Gospel today, because if we don't have the Gospel, we don't have a reason for Church. When I racked my brain (and then the Internet) for passages in the Gospel about "church" I couldn't seem to find what I was looking for.

Then I came across Matthew 18:20: "For where two or three gather in my name, I am with them."

I realized that I couldn't find what I was looking for, because Jesus never tells us that we must attend Sunday church service. Jesus doesn't necessarily give us a structure for "church." We made that up mostly on our own. But in Matthew he says, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there."

When we're gathered around a bonfire talking about our deepest dreams and desires in life, that's Church.

When I'm sitting at the bar with my friends talking about how to dismantle systemic racism and sexism in our communities, that's Church.

When the homeless person I'm almost positive is lying to me

about what he's doing and where he's going asks me to "please pray" with him, that's Church.

When we're building relationships with the neighborhood kids, that's Church.

When I'm holding a sign alongside members of my community that denounces racism and invites conversation, that is Church.

When we are packing school kits to send to children so that they can continue their education with one less hindrance, that is Church.

And yes, when we're all singing hymns together on a Sunday morning and watching the children come up for children's time and eating a potluck lunch, that is also Church.

I have to remind myself constantly that all these things are Church because I too had a time of significant doubt. I had to discover and realize that I didn't have to go into the building where we held Sunday services to find God.

I could find God in the morning on my porch with a book and a candle. I could find God in the streets with my friends, standing up with people who were being oppressed. And, I could find God in a coffee shop over a delightful cup of Ethiopian coffee, talking with a friend who was struggling to understand church just as much as I was.

You can often find me whispering to myself, "this is church" as I contemplate the trees, hold up

my sign, and take a sip of my coffee.

Rachel Held Evans says in her book, *Searching for Sunday*, "Church is not a building or a denomination or a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Church is a moment in time when the kingdom of God draws near, when a meal, a story, a song, an apology, and even a failure is made holy by the presence of Jesus among us and within us."

As a young person in the Mennonite faith who does go to "church" pretty regularly, I often get asked the question, "Why aren't more young people coming to church?"

I want to address this because I think it's important in the conversation of how to move forward as the Church.

There is certainly not one answer to this question; everyone has their own story. I can only truly speak for myself.

What I'm hearing and seeing from my fellow young people though, is that we are searching for something different.

For a church that is authentic.

A church where we don't have to choose between science and religion and where asking questions is not only okay but encouraged.

We are looking for a church that isn't trying to "sell" us anything, because we've been marketed to our entire lives, and we can tell when something's not genuine.

Continued on page 11

"As a young person in the Mennonite faith who does go to 'church' pretty regularly, I often get asked the question, 'Why aren't more young people coming to church?'"

The Church

Continued from page 10

We are looking for a church that isn't soaked in political affiliation on either side.

We are looking for a third way church where we can be loved and where we can have really tough discussions free from the simplistic answers that we've been given up until now.

We are not looking for hip pastors who wear cool clothes, and we're definitely not looking for free giveaways.

We want somewhere where we can go to wrestle and rest and be affirmed and be filled by the Holy Spirit.

I also see many Millennials who are "doing church" during the week. Volunteering in their communities, having emotionally and spiritually draining conversations with friends and family, working in demanding jobs....

Getting up every Sunday morning to listen to another sermon about how they should live, where they have to act like their life is going great to everyone that asks, just isn't something that they're interested in.

But, I do see a shift towards the Church of Acts in the younger generation. I see a shift towards more intentional community. I see a shift towards transparency. I see a shift towards living life together and worrying less about the formalities and the details and what it looks like to everyone else.

So, can we still call the building, the designated time on Sunday, and the body of believers, all "church"?

If you didn't know, something else Millennials are very concerned with is words, language, and labels.

Personally, I like to call the building what it is, the building. I don't like to attach the name of "church" onto it, because it's already muddied the waters enough, and just the word can bring up hurtful and damaging past experiences.

I like to call what we do on Sunday morning, Sunday service. Calling what's happening here church, gives the impression that this is it, that this is all we have to offer. And that's surely not the case.

Finally, the body of believers. I call this the Church. And to be the church? To actively live a life that follows the radically scandalous ways of Jesus.

To call the body of believers the Church, is to create unity. Unity beyond denominations, cultures, races, and doctrines.

So, what do you see laid out in Acts that we could apply to our lives, collectively, so that we could be the Church better?

There is a sign hanging in the foyer of our church. You can't miss it when you walk into the entrance. My sister painted it last summer. It dawns the colors of the rainbow and begins with the phrase, "Be the Church."

I've talked to many young people who've come to me telling me that they want to reject Christianity and stop going to church. I always tell them, "Don't let the church ruin Jesus for you. Don't go to church, BE

the Church."

What does it look like in our community, to be the Church?

I want to affirm some of the things I see Summit Mennonite already do well.

We eat together. Sharing meals is a deep part of our tradition as Mennonites, and some of the best conversations I've had with other members of our congregation have been over potluck meals.

We invite the hard conversations. We've wrestled with things that other churches I know wouldn't even touch. Being able to discuss these things together knits us that much closer.

We affirm each other. Listen, I don't know a lot of other churches who'd let a 20-something woman who didn't go to college stand up and give a sermon on a Sunday morning. I've never felt a shortage of affirmation for the younger generation here. You continuously invite us to participate and empower us in ways that allow us to rise into our roles as church leaders.

These are just a few things I've experienced in our four years at Summit Mennonite.

As we recognize these things, we also need to examine the places where we can grow. How can we become closer to the Church we're called to be? How can we become more of a refuge for those we've hurt as the collective Church? How can

"How can we become closer to the Church we're called to be? How can we become more of a refuge for those we've hurt as the collective Church? How can we better serve our neighbors?"

Continued on page 12

The Church

Continued from page 11

we better serve our neighbors? How can we live more simply, for the benefit of the rest of the community? How can we cultivate that “deep sense of togetherness”?

The last verse of Acts 2 talks about how many believers were added to their number.

It’s no secret that congregations these days want to grow.

They’re always looking to add to their number of people who show up on Sunday morning. So they have meetings to talk about how they can draw more people to their church. They try to convince people why they should come here rather than go there, and why they should DEFINITELY not just be sleeping in on Sunday mornings. They try to lure kids in with fun

youth group activities, free stuff, flashy services, rock bands, and pastors in skinny jeans.

They’re missing the type of church we see in Acts 2. They think people couldn’t possibly be interested in joining a group of mildly crazy people who sold all their stuff and ate meals together all the time. But maybe, that’s exactly what people are searching for.... ■

“Our Hispanic Mennonite churches are working to support and give hope to these families, the hope that Jesus Christ gives to those who give themselves to Him.”

Hispanics of Ohio churches to celebrate the 15th year of Hispanic Encounters

By Haroldo Nunes

The 15th year of Hispanic Family Encounters will take place at Camp Luz, Kidron, Ohio, during the weekend of June 15-17. This year we will have a celebration of 15 years (called “quinceañera” in Spanish). Hispanics from various Ohio Mennonite churches will come together for the celebration. The topic for the weekend is “The security of the Believer is Jesus Christ,” focusing on Romans 8:37-39: “...in all things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us....”

The main speaker for the weekend will be Pastor Andrew Bodden, who has served in Central America, South America, Mexi-

co, the Dominican Republic, and the United States. He is an ordained minister of Southeast Mennonite Conference and is presently serving as a district minister from the south Florida area.

Hispanic Mennonites give a testimony of honesty and of being hard-working people and with a strong sense of community. They desire to be a part of a great nation, the United States. Unfortunately, the Hispanic community is suffering from the current immigration laws and an outdated immigration system. Entire families are being separated. They are feeling the loss of their unity and their peace, and there is fear on the streets and at their work plac-

es. Our Hispanic Mennonite churches are working to support and give hope to these families, the hope that Jesus Christ gives to those who give themselves to Him.

For the sixth year in a row, we are expecting a record number of Hispanics to attend the Hispanic Family Retreat. Camp Luz has a capacity for 150 people, but we can’t stop more from showing up. Hispanics rejoice that they can come with their complete families to relax, have fun and worship the Lord in their mother language, Spanish. Families that participate are from South America, Central America and North America, including Hispanics from 10 different nations. ■

ABOUT PEOPLE

Pastoral notes

Tony Doerhmann was installed as a short-term transitional pastor at Salem Mennonite Church in Waldron, Michigan, on Sunday, March 4. Regional Pastor Cliff Brubaker led the installation ceremony.

Until the end of 2017, Tony served as the pastor of Jubilee Mennonite Church in Bellefontaine. He has roots in the northwest Ohio area, having grown up in the Zion Mennonite congregation and attending Lockport Mennonite as an adult until he attended Hesston Col-



lege's pastoral ministry program. He is commuting to

Salem Mennonite from Marysville, Ohio. ■

Regional Pastor Cliff Brubaker (left) led the installation ceremony for Tony Doerhmann at Salem Mennonite Church in Waldron, Michigan. Tony is serving as a short-term transitional pastor. Also pictured is his wife, Rhonda Doerhmann.

Plug into Ohio Conference Cast podcasts

Ohio Conference Cast podcasts are a great way to learn more about Ohio Conference and the broader Mennonite Church. Have you listened to Ohio Conference Cast lately?

During April and early May, hosts Bill Seymour, pastor of Orrville Mennonite Church, and Thomas Dunn, pastor of Crown Hill Mennonite Church in Rittman, have talked with Paula Snyder Belousek about the search for a new conference minister for the Conference, and they have talked about Mennonite Education Agency (MEA) and Mennonite Church USA colleges and seminaries with Carlos Romero,

executive director MEA; and Darrin Snyder Belousek, a member of Ohio Conference's The Voice Task Force.

For the summer, Bill and Thomas have a busy schedule of podcasts planned. Upcoming episodes will feature Glen Guyton, the new executive director of Mennonite Church USA; Sally Youngquist of Living Water Community Church in Chicago, Illinois; Midway Mennonite Church's Christiana Peterson, author of the new Herald Press book *Mystics and Misfits*; and Terry Shue, who is concluding his work as director of leadership development for Mennonite Church USA.

You can subscribe to Ohio Conference Cast on iTunes. In



With hosts Thomas Dunn and Bill Seymour

addition, Links to Ohio Conference Cast episodes can be found on the Ohio Conference website: <https://ohiomennoniteconference.org/podcasts>. If you would like to receive email notices when new podcast episodes are published, please register on the podcast page of the website. ■

Conference Calendar

MAY

31 Online Prayer Meeting for Conference Minister Search, via GoToMeeting

JUN

15-17 Hispanic Family Retreat, Camp Luz, Kidron

JUL

7 Online Prayer Meeting for Conference Minister Search, via GoToMeeting

AUG

23 Ministry Development Team Meeting, Upper Sandusky Library

OCT

26-27 Pastor-Leadership Team Retreat, Bellville

NOV

2-4 Pastors' Wives Retreat, St. Francis Spirituality Center, Tiffin

gregations, conferences and organizations. The booklet is now available online. See <http://bit.ly/PreventionandResponse> to download a copy.

“The church and young adults” is the theme of the Spring 2018 issue of *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology*. This free online journal is produced by Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary and Canadian Mennonite University. Go to <http://bit.ly/VisionSpring2018> to download any or all of the articles.

On Sept. 27–29, 2018, Rooted and Grounded: A Conference on Land and Christian Discipleship will take place at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana. Imagine and embody alternative ways of relating to the land that cultivate *shalom* among human beings, the rest of creation and God. This three-day event will weave together worship, theology, biblical study and praxis. Keynote speakers will be Valerie Bridgeman, Ph.D., and Karenna Gore. See ambbs.edu/rootedandgrounded for details. ■

Back page briefings...

Save the Date: Ohio Conference will hold a Pastor-Leadership Team Retreat Oct. 26-27 at the Quality Inn & Suites in Bellville. Speaker Duane Beck will help church leadership teams consider the topic “Leading the Church: Finding God in the Changes.”

Mennonite Church USA is inviting congregations and individuals to engage in a churchwide day of prayer for North and South Korea on Sunday, May 20, 2018,

using Mennonite Central Committee’s “A prayer for peace in North Korea.” Learn more about this “Learn, Pray, Join” initiative at <http://mennoniteusa.org/korea>.

After two years of work, the Panel on Sexual Abuse Prevention has created guidelines for response when non-credentialed individuals are accused of sexualized violence in the context of con-

OHIO MENNONITE
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News & Views of Ohio Conference

For more Ohio Conference news, visit the Ohio Conference website: ohiomennoniteconference.org