

**Ohio Conference  
of Mennonite Church USA**

“Who are we?”

Affirmed by Leadership Team April 24, 2019

*God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God’s healing and hope flow through us to the world.*  
— Mennonite Church USA Vision for Healing and Hope

**Identity — Who we are**

The Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA is an Anabaptist faith community of approximately 50 congregations across Ohio and the surrounding area. **We believe that Jesus Christ is at the center of who we are and all that we do.**

**Mission —**

**The mission of Ohio Conference is to be a people and congregations dedicated to passionate worship of, vibrant faith in, and bold witness for Jesus Christ.**

As God calls us to walk in the Way of Christ, the Holy Spirit empowers us to share the good news of Jesus. Embracing an Anabaptist perspective, our prayer is that:

- Our **passionate worship** flows from our confession of God as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.
- We have a **vibrant faith** in God as Lord of all, who is at work reconciling the world.
- Through our **bold witness** others will accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and will build peace with all humankind.

In order to fulfill our mission, the focus of Ohio Conference is to support, connect and lead in ways that equip and empower our congregations to enlarge the faith community in obedience to Jesus Christ.

**Purpose —**

**The primary purpose of the Conference is to cultivate healthy congregations through the equipping of leaders in the areas of worship, faith and witness.**

The Conference will help congregations clarify their own identities to meet the needs of their communities.

The Conference will strengthen relationships between churches within the Conference, providing networking and resourcing possibilities between churches with similar circumstances and needs. The Conference will also strengthen relationships with church-wide agencies and institutions as well as with community agencies that share Conference beliefs and mission.

**Confession of Faith —**

As a conference of Mennonite/Anabaptist congregations, we affirm the 1995 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* as the teaching position of the Conference and as a guide for our life together.

### ***Gathered and Sent Initiative*** —

Since 2017 Ohio Conference has been engaged in a “*Gathered and Sent*” initiative: “*Gathered in Covenant, Sent in Mission.*” The *Gathered* part helps us to tend to our center, acknowledging that we are “one body in Christ,” causing us to focus not so much on what our differences might be but on what God is calling us to do together. The *Sent* part provides us with resources, tools, training and support to enable us to reach out and to grow as missional communities.

“The mission of the church involves both word and deed, evangelism and service, proclaiming Christ’s message and demonstrating, by the life of the church, the nature of the new creation in Christ.” — *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, Article 10, comment 2

1. Mission is Being Sent – John 20:21-22
2. Mission is Making Disciples – Matthew 28:18-20a
3. Mission is Bearing Witness – Acts 1:8
4. Mission is Bringing Reconciliation – 2 Corinthians 5:19-20a
5. Mission is Transforming Brokenness – Luke 4:17b – 21

### **Local Church = Missional Community**

A missional community is a local body of believers in Jesus Christ who fulfill God’s Great Commandment (Mark 12:30-31) and God’s Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20a) in the world.

### **Statement on Marriage** —

Ohio Conference is one of 17 area conferences across Mennonite Church USA. Over the past several years there has been a lot of conflict and dissension within Mennonite Church USA of how best to respond to same-sex marriage. Different conferences have come to different places regarding how to respond. In agreeing to “bear with one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2 and MC USA Forbearance Resolution), we humbly acknowledge that there are different interpretations of Scripture and different pastoral responses. Ohio Conference of MC USA affirms the following resolution passed by its delegate body in 2015:

*While fully supporting all 24 articles of the 1995 Confession of Faith in Mennonite Perspective, given the context we inhabit, both in the wider church and the outside culture, we emphasize our support of Article 19, “Family, Singleness & Marriage.”*

*In light of that, the Ohio Conference Credentialing Ministry Team:*

- *Will not recognize a congregation’s request to credential a pastor in a same-sex relationship.*
- *Will suspend the credentials of any Conference-credentialed pastor who performs a same-gender ceremony, until a review to determine whether to reinstate (with repentance and recommitment) or to terminate or withdraw credentials.*

We also acknowledge that congregations within Ohio Conference have members and attendees who are in different places across the spectrum regarding how to relate to LGBTQ persons. We encourage our congregations to do so in a way that affirms the dignity of all human beings and keeps Jesus as the center of who we are and all that we do.