

# OHIO MENNONITE EVANGEL

News & Views of Ohio Conference

SEPT/OCT 2019



ohiomennoniteconference.org

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## Lynn Miller is new OC moderator

**The Ohio Conference Leadership Team is pleased to announce that Lynn Miller of Tedrow Mennonite Church has agreed to serve as our Conference moderator.**

Lynn has been a part of Tedrow Mennonite Church all his life, and he has served as a delegate to Ohio Conference in the past both as a member of Tedrow and as a member of the Stewardship Ministry.

This summer he served as one of Tedrow's delegates to

the Mennonite Church USA Convention in Kansas City. He has also served as an elder at Tedrow.

In 1995 Lynn founded Solana, a software company. The company now has 30 employees at two locations in Wauseon and Toledo. He and his wife, Tami, have one son, Peyton, age 18, and reside in Pettisville.

Lynn has a strong sense that this is God's call on his life at this time and is excited about serving. He feels especially honored and humbled to be



Lynn Miller

completing the term of his late uncle, Bob Sauder, who passed away in April. ■

*Grant projects to support outreach, immigrants, education, arts*

## Conference awards nine ministry grants

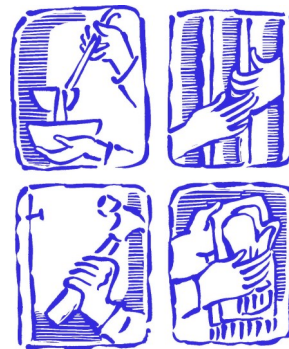
**The Ohio Conference Ministry Development Team (MDT) has awarded nine grants totaling \$24,750. The MDT approved these grants at its Aug. 19 meeting.**

Funding for these grants comes from surplus funds that had accumulated during years in which the Conference ended its fiscal year with

a surplus. The MDT has awarded these grants each year since 2012.

The grants will provide funding toward the following projects:

**Soccer Snack Outreach** — Sonnenberg Mennonite Church in Kidron is serving its community by providing snacks and drinks to children who participate in soccer



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## EDITORIAL

# Is your congregation growing leaders?

Where can we find leaders for our congregations in Ohio Conference? In the most recent episode of the Ohio Conference Cast podcast, Conference Minister Dick Barrett noted that not as many people graduating from seminary are looking to be pastors, and the number of pastoral candidates in the denomination's database has decreased considerably in the past few years. Consequently, Ohio Conference

needs to change the way it looks for and develops leaders. The Conference's new partnership with the Journey\* program at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary is one attempt to help develop leaders from our own congregations.

"It's almost like we're going back into our history of calling people from our congregations. So it's our responsibility as pastors and as members of the congregations to try and dis-

cover people that might have leadership gifts," Dick Barrett said.

So what about your congregation? Have you been identifying leaders and helping them to grow?

\*For more information about Journey, see the article about Journey from the July-August issue of *Ohio Mennonite Evangel*: <http://bit.ly/AMBSJourneyPartnership>.

## Vickie Yoder accepts new assignment

As of Sept. 1, Vickie Yoder has become the chair of the Credentialing Ministry, upon the resignation of Verle Brubaker. Verle has accepted a new ministry opportunity in Pennsylvania and is leaving the Conference.

Vickie is part-time interim associate pastor at Sharon Mennonite Church in Plain

City, and she recently retired from her work as a chaplain. She has served as a member of the Credentialing Ministry since 2016. She recently shared the story of how Shadow, a therapy dog, has assisted her work as a chaplain. You can read the story on the Ohio Conference website:

<http://bit.ly/TherapyDogInMinistry>. ■



**Vickie Yoder**

## Personnel of the Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA

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# Grants

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practice at the local soccer fields near the church building. In explaining how this outreach effort began, Jeremy Patterson of Sonnenberg Mennonite noted, “We recognized that offering snacks and drinks was a practical way to let parents and caregivers know we see their effort...and we wanted to help in whatever small way we could.” Grant funds will go toward the purchase of a sun canopy, coolers, a drink cooler and a table which can be used in this outreach.



**Youth Events** — Lee Heights Community Church in Cleveland is receiving funding for two youth programs intended to promote personal development, career exploration and faith formation, a Youth Exposure Trip and a Youth Mini-Retreat. The Youth Exposure Trip will take youth from Lee Heights to visit two historically black universities in southern Ohio, Central State University and Wilberforce University.

## FUNERAL



## Meal Ministry

**Community Funeral Meal Ministry** — Bethel Mennonite Church in West Liberty is beginning a new ministry. The congregation will offer hospitality and spiritual care to local families at the time of a funeral

or memorial service by providing a meal, a comfortable place to gather and eat, a caring presence, and optional grief resources. The congregation has learned from a local funeral director that families who don’t have a church home sometimes desire a place to have meal in connection with a funeral service. Pastor Rebecca Kauffman noted, “We want to offer the meals without giving a sense of obligation to repay financially or to attend our church, yet at the same time to convey a message of care and welcome to our congregation, being open to their spiritual questions.”

## Anabaptist



Discipleship Website

**Anabaptist Discipleship Website** — Zion Mennonite Church is developing a website intended to connect pastors and leaders with resources, training and discussion focused on missional discipleship. The website will function as a virtual platform for a missional discipleship learning community across Mennonite Church USA. Corben Boshart, one of the team pastors at Zion, is developing the website. The site will provide access to webinars, blogs, discussion boards, assessments, peer-to-peer coaching, and other resources.



## Faith and Racial Justice

— Central Christian School plans to create classroom libraries to make intercultural books available to the school’s mostly rural white students. “Teachers look for opportunities to share information and appeal to faith values through curriculum and classroom discussions on racial justice and diversity,” said CCS Superintendent Jeanne Zimmerly Jantzi. “Having intentionally diverse books available offers the opportunity to learn from those who have not had a voice at this school.”



## CCS Art Memory Project

— Central Christian School students will be participating in “The Memory Project,” a global initiative to connect students from around the world in acts of kindness and relationship building through sharing student art work with one another. The intent is to interact with children from countries which are

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CONFERENCE MINISTER MUSINGS

# A biblical people?

By Dick Barrett  
Conference Minister

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. — Hebrews 13:8 (ESV)*

Each year I try to read through the entire Bible, both the New Testament and the Old Testament, following different Bible reading plans. I must confess that I have not always been successful. I also often find myself struggling with parts of the Old Testament, trying to reconcile the God we find there with the God we find in the New Testament. But the Bible tells us that God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. It seems that we often dismiss the attributes and characteristics of God that we don't like and affirm the attributes and characteristics of God we like, thus creating a God of our own image, who becomes no God at all.

Recently I have been reading through the book of the prophet Jeremiah, wondering what God might be saying to our nation and our church today. If God would speak so severely to the people of Judah and Jerusalem, the people whom he uniquely chose to be his own, how would he speak to us today? I have been especially challenged by how he might speak to us, his prophets of today, who are called to speak his word to the people in our churches.

God speaks words to his people through the prophet Jeremiah, saying things like, "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD. They say continually to those who despise the word of the LORD, 'It shall be well with you,' and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, 'No disaster shall come upon you'" (Jeremiah 23:16-17), and "They have healed the wound of my people lightly; saying 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 8:11). We seem to live in a time and culture in which we are very welcoming of God's words of encouragement and affirmation, but have very little room, or no room at all, for his words of challenge and confrontation which are supposed to lead to correction and repentance.

What role does the word of God play, both in our churches and in our personal lives, today? I am not sure that words that we have used in the past such as "infallible," and "inerrant" are all that helpful to us today. But that should not change the authority which we give God's written word. Our current *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (1995) does a great job of capturing the meaning of the authority of Scripture in Article 4: "We acknowledge the Scripture as the authoritative



source and standard for preaching and teaching, about faith and life, for distinguishing truth from error, for discerning between good and evil, and for guiding prayer and worship. Other claims on our understanding of Christian faith and life, such as tradition, culture, experience, reason and political powers, need to be tested and corrected by the light of the Holy Scripture."

As someone who was attracted to the Mennonite Church because of its seemingly strong emphasis on seeking to be a biblical people (Article 4, Commentary 4), over the past decade or so my view of that emphasis has been challenged by what I have witnessed in our larger denomination, the colleges, universities and seminaries that are affiliated with Mennonite Church USA, and some of our churches. It is one thing to say that we are a biblical people and that we acknowledge the

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**"What role does the word of God play, both in our churches and in our personal lives, today?"**



# Grants

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experiencing tension with the United States. This year, students will create and receive artwork from Russia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and/or Syria. Previously only high school students at Central participated in this exchange. Grant funds will allow Central's elementary and middle school students to participate.

## Open Arms Hispanic Ministry Office —

With the support of partnering churches, businesses and generous individuals, Open Arms Hispanic Ministry has been welcoming Hispanic individuals to the community for the past 16 years. Recently, Orrville Mennonite Church has offered to provide office space for Open Arms Hispanic Ministry at no charge.



Having office space will create a stronger visible presence in the local community. Grant funds will assist in the purchase of office equipment and technology, as well as a sign.

**CajonTab Drum Classes** — Lighthouse Ministries in Canton is expanding its arts program to include drum classes in its after-school programs. Director Darin Nissley said, "We believe that many of our students are able to discover their God-given gifts through the exploration of the arts." Grant funds will support the purchase of 13 10-inch CajonTab drums. Following the purchase of these drums, the Lighthouse will be able to offer a drum class in addition to the other arts classes offered. To watch a video featuring a CajonTab drum, see <http://bit.ly/CajonTab>.



**Akron Congolese Community Van** — Crown Hill Mennonite Church in Rittman is working with the Akron Swahili Community Church to purchase a 15-passenger van. In the past several years, the International Institute of Akron has been resettling Congolese refugees in Akron. Crown Hill Pastor Thomas Dunn notes, "One of the major needs within the Congolese community is transportation. Some are beginning to purchase cars and getting a driver's license, but for many, having transportation is still a large need." The release of grant funds for this project is contingent on ownership and insurance details being finalized.



# Musings

Continued from page 4

Scripture as authoritative; it is another to live it out in our lives.

I must say that my experience at this year's Mennonite Church USA Convention in Kansas City was refreshing, especially with the emphasis on the word of God in almost all of the worship services and the Bible study on Paul's letter to the Ephesians during the delegate sessions. That had not been my experience at the previous several conventions. As I have

traveled around Ohio Conference visiting churches on Sunday mornings, I am also encouraged by our pastors who are trying to be faithful to the word of God in their preaching and teaching.

As Mennonites and Anabaptists we have traditionally tested our understandings and interpretations of Scripture in the community of faith, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and with the belief that God's fullest revelation of who he is and his will

for his people is found in the life, teachings, death and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ, who is the same, yesterday, today and tomorrow. My prayer is that our pastors and church leaders will continue to try and be faithful to the preaching and teaching of the word of God and that the people in our churches will continue to hold us accountable to doing so. May it be so for God's glory and honor! ■

# Church planting discussion planned

By Ralph Reinford  
Regional Pastor

**Are you interested in church planting? The Ohio Conference Ministry Development Team wants to initiate a conversation about growing new Visible Kingdom Communities, formerly known as church planting. This article is an invitation to anyone interested in, passionate for, or feeling a call to be a part of supporting new endeavors.**

We are planning a meeting at the Ohio Conference office (5358 Kidron Road, Kidron) on Oct. 15 from 1 to 3 p.m. to start a conversation about what this process of starting new church communities may look like in Ohio. We prefer face-to-face conversations, but if you can't make the drive to Kidron on Oct. 15, you may join the conversation by a video call via GoToMeeting. (See the sidebar for GoToMeeting instructions.)

We want to hear from you about what God is saying to you. What may God want us to do in unchurched areas of Ohio? What do we know about planting new seeds? Please join us for what we believe will be an exciting conversation. If you would like to take part in our conversation, please contact Coordinator of Volunteers Alysa Short at 419-572-1348 or [alysashort@gmail.com](mailto:alysashort@gmail.com). ■



**“What may God want us to do in unchurched areas of Ohio?”**

## Video conferencing instructions

### Visible Kingdom Communities

Tue, Oct 15, 2019 1 p.m. – 3 p.m. EDT

Please join this meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/884034605>

You can also dial in using your phone.

United States: [+1 \(646\) 749-3112](tel:+16467493112)

Access Code: 884-034-605

New to GoToMeeting? Get the app now and be ready when the meeting starts:

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/install/884034605>

# Summer festival to focus on mission

Plans are underway for an Ohio Conference missional festival, “Engaging Mission 2020,” to be held at Bluffton University June 26-28, 2020.

This event will be for people of all ages, including family groups. The festival will provide an introduction to missional living where participants will be challenged to create space for mission in their lives.

In the past several years, the Ohio Conference has held a missional conference in March immediately prior to Annual Conference Assembly. This gathering in 2020 will be held on a weekend in the summer in order to make it more accessible to people who find it hard to take time off from work during the week.



Future issues of *Ohio Mennonite Evangel* will include more details about this event. ■

# You are invited to make disciples

In Matthew 28, Jesus called for his disciples to make disciples of others. But the call to make disciples continues today. You are invited to join others in the Ohio Conference who are participating in the Missional Discipleship Initiative (<https://www.mennonitemission.net/MDI>).

## What is the Missional Discipleship Initiative (MDI)?

MDI is an initiative launched by Marvin Lorenzana and Mennonite Mission Network to help local congregations engage intentional-relational discipleship-making as well as leadership development by providing coaching and tools that have proven to be effective and highly transferable. One of these tools is a virtual Learning Circle or Huddle and the other is Missional Discipleship Groups.

## Virtual Learning Circle (MDI Cohort)

- Online coaching for a group of three to five (usually pastors) for a period of eight months.
- Meet twice a month with the purpose of learning missional church theory and practice.

- The MDI coach monitors, encourages, and further equips the Implementing Leaders.

## Missional Discipleship Groups (MDGs)

- Meet once a week to learn how to walk together as disciples of Jesus
- Provide the context in which discipleship takes place in an intentional and relational way
- Focus on accountability, Scripture reading, and prayer
- Call participants to pray for others and engage in mission in their own context

## Five Key Questions

Below are five key questions that are used in missional discipleship group meetings each week.

- Where have you seen God at work this week?
- What did you hear God say to you this week during your prayer time?
- What have you learned from the assigned Scripture reading this week?
- How have you shared the

love of Jesus with others this week?

- Where have you fallen short this week?

## Expectations for Participants in MDGs

- Meet once a week (for 8-12 months)
- Show vulnerability
- Make sure discipleship is taking place
- Ensure and protect confidentiality
- Facilitators participate in a monthly resourcing meeting

## Expectations for Pastors Participating in MDI

- Meet twice a month online for a virtual huddle with your cohort of pastors (for eight months)
- Organize monthly meeting with facilitators of MDGs in your church
- Participate weekly in a MDG

## How to Participate

If you have any questions or may be interested in participating, please contact Jacob Dodson at [pastor@woostermennonite.org](mailto:pastor@woostermennonite.org). New MDI cohorts are launching in October, and new MDGs can be launched at any time. ■

*“How have you shared the love of Jesus with others this week?”*

# Immigrant care kit drive is underway

Open Arms Hispanic Ministries is coordinating a drive to collect immigration detainee care kits, which are being distributed by Mennonite Central Committee Central States and its partner, the South Texas Response

Team. These kits, which contain clothing and hygiene products, are given to individuals who are being released from detention centers. On Oct. 2 Orrville Mennonite Church is hosting an immigration information update

and time for assembly of these care kits. For more information about this meeting or for a list of kit contents, see <http://bit.ly/CareKitAssembly>. ■

## Senior designs her own social work internship through Bluffton's Summer Discovery Program

BLUFFTON, Ohio — Rowena Zuercher, a member of Sonnenberg Mennonite Church in Kidron, is making the most of her college experience. The social work and Spanish double major from Apple Creek, Ohio, is a student ambassador, active on campus and spent a semester in Guatemala. This summer, she created her own internship through the Summer Discovery Program, which provides a \$1,500 grant for Bluffton students to develop an internship experience in order to explore their vocation.

"My adviser encouraged me to apply, and there's something satisfying about being able to explore opportunities on your own," said Zuercher. "The grant helped relieve my schedule so that I was able to spend more time doing social-work-related work and a little less time doing wage work. It is also an experience that I can put on my resume."

Zuercher completed the internship at Lighthouse Ministries in Canton, Ohio, where she focused the majority of her energy on the administrative side of the organization, while also finding time to teach a Spanish class for the organization's summer program. Her goal was to determine whether to pursue the clinical or administrative route of social work in graduate school.

"I think I am going to go the clinical route," said Zuercher. "It's going to allow me to work with people primarily, and as I

mature in my career and gain more experience, I'll be more comfortable moving up to the administrative positions. I think I'll eventually do that, but it's great to focus on the people first and having this experience showed me what is in store for my future."

Zuercher began working with Lighthouse Ministries as a teenager serving as a camp counselor. After she graduated from high school, she took a gap year in Los Angeles with the Mennonite Mission

Network service opportunity DOOR. There, she served in a social work agency focused on the homeless population.

Not really sure what social work all entailed, Zuercher was "tossed right into the middle of it."

"It was the boots-on-the-ground of social services," she explained. "As I wrapped up my year, I had to decide a major and I knew social work — with all of the good and the bad that I had seen — was what I wanted to study."

Entering her final year at Bluffton University, Zuercher is exploring graduate programs and preparing for her clinical field experience, but when she chose Bluffton, it was the only school she had visited.



Rowena Zuercher

"It just felt right, and I think a lot of students get that feeling," said Zuercher. "It's a small school, and the professors are invested in us. It's been great."

Looking forward in her career, she plans to use both of her majors to ensure Spanish-speaking clients are getting the care they deserve.

"This is in the social work code of ethics. Every client deserves a competent service provider and competent care," explained Zuercher. "If you can't communicate with clients, they're not receiving that level of competency. So, my goal is to have a fluency in Spanish so I am able to provide services, whether clients speak Spanish or English, equally." ■

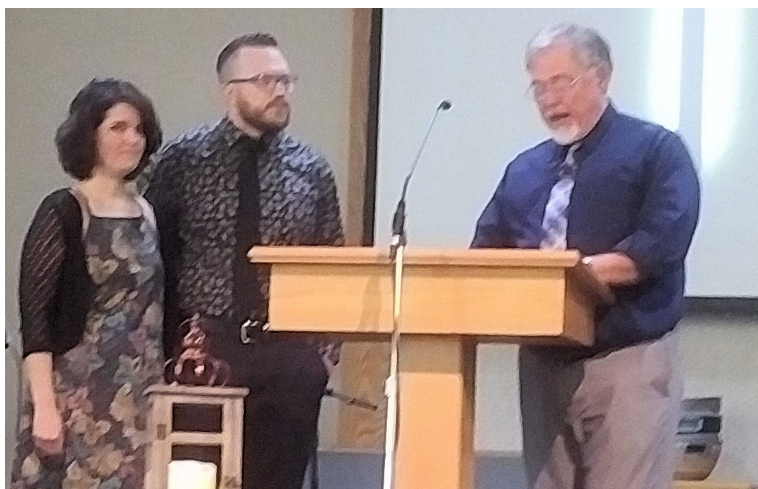


## ABOUT PEOPLE

### Pastoral notes

Alex Dye, associate pastor at Oak Grove Mennonite Church in West Liberty, was ordained for Christian ministry during the Sunday morning worship service at Oak Grove on Aug. 18.

Regional Pastor Cliff Brubaker preached the sermon, titled “Called, Tested and Commissioned,” based on three texts from the beginning of Jesus’ ministry: Luke 3:21-22, Luke 4:1-4 and Luke 4:16-21. From Luke 3:21-22, he noted that the gift of the Spirit and words spoken from heaven to Jesus are also words that all who are baptized can claim. From Luke 4:1-4, he noted that a primary work of the tempter was and is to get us to doubt our true identity as children of God. From Luke 4:16-21, he noted that the words that Jesus claimed as the focus for his ministry are ones appropriate for any Christian, and all three passages are appropriate for



Regional Pastor Cliff Brubaker (right) addresses the congregation during the ordination of Alex Dye (center) on Aug. 18 at Oak Grove Mennonite Church in West Liberty. Also pictured is Alex’s wife, Erin Dye.

Alex on the Sunday of his ordination.

Alex’s spouse, Erin, spoke strong words of affirmation for Alex’s ministry and his growth over the years of his licensing. During the laying on of hands by Oak Grove’s leadership, Oak Grove Interim Pastor Andy Stoner anointed Alex as a minister of the Gospel.

Regional Pastor Cliff Brubaker noted the growth he had seen

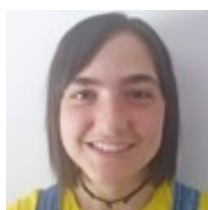
in Alex during the 3+ years Cliff has served as regional pastor. Cliff also mentioned the late Naomi Engle’s strong support of movement toward ordination for Alex while she served as the chair of the Ohio Conference Credentialing Ministry.

After the worship service, the congregation continued its celebration with an open house and greeting time for Alex during the Sunday School hour. ■

### Everence

KIDRON, Ohio — Two students from northeast Ohio have received Everence® college scholarships for the 2019-2020 academic year.

**Anna Ressler** of Sonnenberg Mennonite Church in Kidron received a \$1,000 scholarship to pursue a degree at Eastern Mennonite University.



**Emma Zuercher** of Sonnenberg Mennonite Church in Kidron received a \$1,000 scholarship to pursue a degree at Goshen College.



Everence announced that the two are among 42 recipients of Everence college scholarships for the 2019-2020 academic year. The scholarship program

encourages young people to explore the integration of faith and finances while helping them on their educational journeys.

More than 200 students from across the country applied for scholarships for 2019-2020. Recipients were chosen based on participation and leadership in school-related activities and community activities, along with responses to an essay question. ■

## Conference Calendar

### SEPT

- 12 All-Ohio Conference Credentialed Ministers' Gathering, Upper Sandusky Library, Upper Sandusky
- 13-15 Women's Retreat, Camp Luz, Kidron
- 22 Fall Fest Fundraiser, Camp Luz, Kidron

### OCT

- 2 Immigration Information Update/Immigrant Detainee Care Kit Assembly, Orrville Mennonite Church
- 15 Visible Kingdom Communities, A Church Planting Conversation, Ohio Conference Office, Kidron
- 22 Leadership Team Meeting, location TBD

### NOV

- 5 Ministry Development Team Meeting, via GoToMeeting
- 15-17 Pastor-Spouse Retreat, Mills Park Hotel, Yellow Springs, Ohio

### MAR 2020

- 7 Annual Conference Assembly, Sharon Mennonite Church, Plain City

### JUN

- 26-28 Engaging Mission 2020 (Missional Festival), Bluffton University, Bluffton

in Archbold shared their experiences for April Yamasaki's recent blog post, "When Your Wife's the Preacher." Sue is one of the three members of Zion's collaborative ministry team. You can read the blog post at <http://bit.ly/PreacherWife>.

**Make plans to attend** the fall webinar series from Mennonite Church USA for pastors and congregational leaders, "Putting Jesus on the Ballot: Anabaptism and American Politics," led by Scott Peterson, leadership pastor at Trinity Mennonite Church in Glendale, Arizona. This series will include three webinars, with the first on Sept. 17. Learn more and register at [thegatheringplace.us](http://thegatheringplace.us).

**Coming this fall at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS): Exploring Anabaptist History and Theology** (Sept. 11 – Oct. 22). Join Jamie Pitts, Ph.D., to examine theological topics early Anabaptists cared about: Jesus, the Holy Spirit and discipleship. This online AMBS course lasts six weeks. No grades, no papers! Cost is \$350 if you register by Sept. 6. CEUs available. Find out more at [ambs.edu/shortcourses](http://ambs.edu/shortcourses). ■

## Back page briefings...

**Every other month Ohio Conference Prayer Coordinator Dan Hooley** compiles a list of Ohio Conference-related prayer requests in *Prayer Prompter*, an electronic newsletter. To receive *Prayer Prompter*, please sign up online at <http://bit.ly/OCPublicationSignup> or email [ohioevangel@gmail.com](mailto:ohioevangel@gmail.com).

**Oscar Suarez Cabezas**, a native of Colombia, became part of the Orrville Mennonite Church family during his year of service in Ohio. Read about his experience serving with MCC's International Volunteer Exchange Program at <http://bit.ly/2019IVEP>.

**Stan and Sue Short of Zion Mennonite Church**

OHIO MENNONITE  
**EVANGEL**  
*News & Views of Ohio Conference*

For more Ohio Conference news, visit the Ohio Conference website: [ohiomennoniteconference.org](http://ohiomennoniteconference.org)