

Perspective



www.ohiomennoniteconference.org

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In an anxious time: Be still and know that I am God

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts.

The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress... He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.
— Psalm 46:1-7, 10-11 (NIV)

We find ourselves in some very anxious times. I have heard many commentators on television use the word "unprecedented." I would challenge that idea. Perhaps what we are experiencing today in the United States is unprecedented in most of our lifetimes, but it is certainly not unprecedented in the history of other countries and especially in the history of the world. As a biblical people, we know the Scriptures are full of stories of people who experienced situations similar to this, some much worse.

It is in times like these when we are forced to confront the reality that our life here on earth is temporal, whether or not we believe in a God who is beyond what is happening today. For me, Psalm 46 is a good reminder of that reality. It's at times like this that we need to remember that the Lord Almighty is still with us. He continues to say, "Be still and know that I am God."

It is also in times like these when we need to pause, reflect and remind ourselves of what is most important in our lives — our faith, our family, our church community. While many of us are able to gather around our most immediate family during this time, the ability to gather with extended family has become limited, and the ability to gather with church community in person is not a possibility for most. This is our opportunity as a community of

Perspective: 1) The inter-relation in which a subject or its parts are mentally viewed. 2) Point of view; capacity to view things in their relative importance.

Cancellation perspective

With the COVID-19 outbreak disrupting day-to-day life for millions across the United States, *The Mennonite* has compiled a list of Mennonite organizations, schools and gatherings that have been affected: <http://bit.ly/CoronavirusCancellations>.

Please distribute Perspective copies to:

- Pastor(s)
- Church chairperson
- Youth sponsor(s)
- Delegates
- Duplicate for other church leaders

churches to get creative. Fortunately, advances in technology allow us to communicate online, through social websites, to listen and watch sermons and worship music from our homes, and on and on. The opportunities are almost endless.

This is also a time not to forget those that are the most vulnerable (in many ways) — those who live alone, those who don't have family to check on them, the elderly, disabled, etc. Those are the people who really rely on their church communities for support. How might they feel connected during this time? Pick up the phone, write a letter, send a card. Not only do we need to use our modern technology, but we need to rely on the tried and true ways of communicating our love for one another.

It is in times like these when we need to pray. Pray for God's presence, pray for those who are the most vulnerable, pray for first responders and medical workers who are on the front lines in battling this pandemic, pray for our local, state, national and world leaders who are making decisions that affect millions of lives, and pray for God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Be still and know that God is God.

— Dick Barrett, Conference Minister

Giving slows in February

After strong levels of congregational giving in December and January, Ohio Conference experienced a drop in receipts during February. According to figures provided by Financial Coordinator Stan Helmuth, receipts for February totaled just \$14,770, including \$14,664 in giving from congregations. Expenses for the month totaled \$23,369, resulting in an operating balance of -\$8,559 for the month. Even so, that shortfall was not enough to bring the year-to-date operating balance back into negative territory. As of the end of February, the year-to-date operating balance stands at **\$13,555**. The Conference fiscal year ends March 31, 2020.

MCC postpones centennial picnic

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is carefully monitoring the evolving COVID-19 pandemic and adjusting plans to help mitigate its impact and keep people safe. Therefore, we have made the decision to postpone the MCC Great Lakes Centennial Celebration Picnic in Kidron originally scheduled for Saturday, May 2. We will keep you updated on plans to reschedule as those develop.

In the meantime, please check our website and social media pages for lots of good resources including 100 stories for 100 years (<http://bit.ly/MCC100Stories>), videos (<http://bit.ly/MCCVideos>), worship resources (<http://bit.ly/MCCWorshipResources>), and coloring book (<http://bit.ly/MCCColoringBook>). Stay up to date with MCC's centennial at <https://mcc.org/centennial>.

Thank you for your continued support of MCC as we celebrate 100 years of relief, development and peace in the name of Christ.

Prayer perspective

Gary and Sandy Stuckey began an interim assignment at Inlet Mennonite Church on Sunday, March 15. Prayers for them and the congregation would be appreciated.

Resource perspective

Mennonite Church USA (MC USA) has compiled a variety of resources for individuals and congregations responding to the spread of COVID-19. Links to these resources can be found at <http://bit.ly/RespondingtoCOVID-19>.

This web page has links to worship and devotional resources, information about livestreaming platforms, articles about caring and connecting with others, government health tips, and more.

Pastoral care perspective

Eileen R. Campbell-Reed shares guidelines for pastoral care during the coronavirus outbreak in a blog post for *Christian Century*. Read the blog at <http://bit.ly/CoronavirusandPastoralCare>.

Perspective deadlines

March 30 for April 2 issue

April 13 for April 16 issue
