

Perspective



www.ohiomennoniteconference.org

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Thoughtful and prayerful reopening

All of our congregations throughout Ohio Conference are discerning when is the best time to start gathering together in person again and what steps need to be taken to try to prevent any spread of COVID-19. Most will be reopening in phases offering limited interaction (e.g. no Sunday school, no nursery care, no coffee and refreshments). Some will begin by meeting outside.

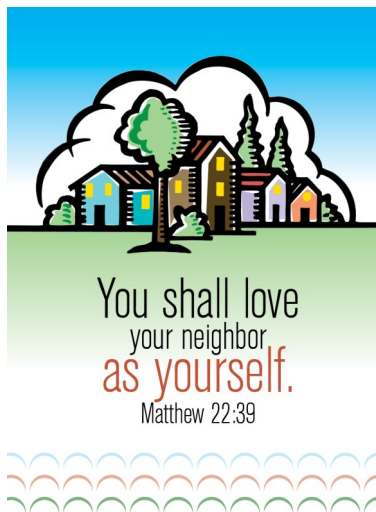
Of particular concern for us Mennonites who love singing is that studies have shown that singing has the potential to spread the virus at a higher rate than talking.* While many of the considerations are similar, each congregation is unique and will have different things to consider as well.

As Conference Minister, I want to encourage you to err on the side of caution. Hopefully, within the next few weeks we should have a better idea if and how rapid the coronavirus might spread across the state as things begin to reopen. Even if the best precautions are taken, there is a risk involved as we start getting together again. When Jesus was asked, "Which is the greatest commandment?" he replied, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.

And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:36-39). May the second commandment be the principle that guides our decision making in deciding when and how to reopen.

- Dick Barrett, Conference Minister

* For more information about the risks of COVID-19 transmission via singing, please see <https://bit.ly/COVID-19andSinging> and the May 19 MennoMedia blog post at mennobytes.com.



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.

MDS perspective

Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) has launched *On the Level*, a monthly online newsletter. The May issue includes the story of MDS volunteers helping a victim of multiple disasters return home even after closing down the project. Read *On the Level* online at <https://bit.ly/OnTheLevelMay2020>.

Please distribute Perspective copies to:

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

New podcast hosts sought

After more than three years, Bill Seymour and Thomas Dunn have decided to conclude their time as hosts of the Ohio Conference Cast podcast. The Ohio Conference Ministry Development Team is seeking new hosts for the podcast. If you are interested in hosting the podcast, or you have suggestions for new hosts, please contact Assistant Moderator Paula Snyder Belousek at pastor@salemennonite.com.

Bill and Thomas are planning to release one final podcast episode to reflect on their time as hosts. Would you like to hear previous podcast episodes? You can find them at <http://bit.ly/OhioConferenceCast>.

April receipts exceed expenses

Ohio Conference has begun the 2020-21 fiscal year on a positive note, according to figures provided by Financial Coordinator Stan Helmuth. Receipts for April totaled \$30,441, including \$28,038 in giving from congregations. Expenses for the month were just \$26,363, well below the \$31,774 forecast in the 2020-21 Ohio Conference spending plan.

Those lower-than-expected expenses allowed the Conference to end the month with a surplus of \$4,078. The Ohio Conference's fiscal year runs from April 1, 2020, to March 31, 2021.

Black Swamp Benefit canceled, donations sought

The 2020 Black Swamp Benefit has been canceled, but all are encouraged to contribute online to this fundraiser, which benefits Sunshine Inc. and Mennonite Central Committee. To donate, log on to Facebook and search for @blackswampbenefit. You can contribute to this fundraiser by clicking on the post with the "donate" button. The goal for this online fundraiser is \$10,000.

Webinar to focus on pastoral care, social distancing

MennoMedia is hosting a free webinar about pastoral care on June 11 at 2 p.m. *Pastoring from a Distance: Offering Pastoral Care while Social Distancing* will feature a panel discussion with Anabaptist pastors moderated by David Augsburg. The webinar will explore practical advice as well as theological considerations for providing pastoral care while practicing social distancing. To register for this webinar, go to bit.ly/PastoringFromADistance.

Website offers faith-based resources for abuse response and prevention

Mennonite Central Committee, with support from CommonWord, has launched a resource website addressing issues of abuse for faith communities and their members. The website includes resources on intimate partner abuse, healthy relationships, sexual violence, clergy sexual abuse, and how to offer support to survivors of abuse and assist those perpetrating harm. To access these resources, go to abuseresponseandprevention.ca.

Education perspective

Tom Stuckey, interim executive director and CEO of Mennonite Education Agency, discusses the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Mennonite educational institutions in a recent letter to congregational leaders and financial committees. "One opportunity this crisis offers is the chance to increase our mutual aid to care for one another," he writes. I would like to encourage your congregation to continue supporting your students financially." To read the full letter, see <https://bit.ly/MEAletterMay2020>.

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Mennonite Education Agency (MEA) has named Dawn Y. Graber their interim director of K-12 schools, effective May 18, 2020. This part-time role will extend through December 2020, pending further evaluation. For more information, see <https://bit.ly/DawnGraberMEA>.

Perspective deadlines

June 1 for June 4 issue

June 15 for June 18 issue
