

OHIO MENNONITE EVANGEL

News & Views of Ohio Conference

SEPT/OCT 2020



ohiomennoniteconference.org

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- 2 Resource corner
- 4 Relief sale goes online
- 6 Conference minister musings
- 7 About people
- 8 Back page briefings

Updates on visioning, leadership development, and other Conference initiatives

Pandemic curtails face-to-face meetings, but Conference work continues nonetheless

By Dick Barrett
Conference Minister

While these have been difficult times to be able to gather in person because of the coronavirus pandemic, through the use of technology we have been able to gather virtually to continue Ohio Conference work. Regional Pastors Tony Doebrmann and Ralph Reinford have continued to meet

with pastors, pastor peer groups, and search committees via the GoToMeeting video platform.

Coordinator of Volunteers Alysa Short and Administrative Assistant Judy King are working on plans for our 2021 Missional Conference and Annual Conference



Assembly, which will be held virtually March 4-6. Confer-

Continued on page 3

Ministry Development Team awards four grants

The Ohio Conference Ministry Development Team (MDT) has awarded four grants totaling \$7,000. The MDT approved these grants at its Aug. 27 meeting.

Grants will provide funds toward the following projects:

Student Study Center — Beginning in the fall of 2021, First Mennonite Church of Canton and Lighthouse Ministries plan to be an extension site of Bethel University (Indiana). Bethel is beginning a new program called the Bethel University Extension Program (BU-X) in which the university partners with local



Continued on page 5

RESOURCE CORNER

MC USA webinar offers ideas for children's faith formation

By Ann Leaman
Ohio Conference
Resource Advocate

How is your congregation handling faith formation for children during the COVID-19 pandemic? Are you seeking ideas for working with children?



Children's Sunday school during this time. Participants will also hear from leaders who have been experimenting with new ways to offer faith formation for children.

Shana Peachey Boshart, Mennonite Church USA denominational minister for faith formation, will be hosting the conversation. Bring your questions and come ready to share what's working for you. This webinar will be recorded and posted at www.mennoniteusa.org/webinars. To register, go to <http://bit.ly/Sundayschoolwebinar>.

Speaking of dealing with children, the staff of Dove's Nest would like to remind all churches that its *Circle of Grace* curriculum deals with many issues that children

and youth are facing during this time of pandemic.

In a recent blog post, the Dove's Nest staff noted, "During this pandemic, children are at risk for online abuse, for suicidal ideation, and for mental health concerns.... While we fully acknowledge that this curriculum cannot replace professional interventions, it is a wonderful reminder to children that God loves their entire selves and wants them to be safe — and that their Sunday school teachers and adults at their church care about their whole lives too!"

The mission of Dove's Nest is to empower and equip faith communities to keep children and youth safe in their homes, churches, and communities. See the Dove's Nest website for more information: <https://dovesnest.net/Children-Need-Circle-of-Grace-Now-More-Than-Ever>. ■

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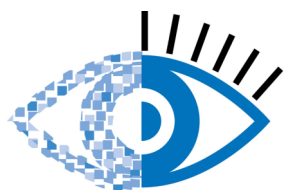
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Working together

Continued from page 1

ence Editor Ann Leaman continues to update our website and send resources out via the Internet.

The Credentialing Ministry Team is making plans for Healthy Boundaries training sessions for our pastors and other credentialed ministers to be held virtually in October and November. The Immigration Resource Team has continued to meet, and the Ministry Development Team just approved four grants to local congregations/ministries with a focus on racial justice.



Visioning Process

VISIONING PROCESS

Two other areas in which Conference continues to work are visioning and leadership development. The Leadership Team and the Conference's pastoral staff members have met with Howard and Cathy Wagler, leadership coaches from South Hutchinson, Kansas. The Waglers are helping us examine our current identity and mission statements and discern God's vision for Ohio Conference in the upcoming years.

We have come to realize that our current mission and purpose statements are now 15 years old. While they did speak to who Ohio Conference was back then, do they fit with who we are today? It seems that

God has led us to a different place, especially with our *Gathered and Sent* and *Missional Discipleship Group* initiatives of recent years. We also believe that God is calling us to develop a more concise, simpler, and biblical mission statement that points to the reality that Ohio Conference exists for our congregations. During August and September we are testing these ideas and asking for feedback from our pastors at the four regional pastor meetings.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Another area in which we are working is leadership development. The reality facing all the conferences of Mennonite Church USA and many other denominations is a shortage of pastoral candidates. There are many and varied reasons for this shortage, but it has become obvious that we need to return to identifying, calling, training and educating both men and women from our own congregations. There was a time when this method was the primary way that pastoral leaders were raised up, whether it was to serve in the church they were called from or somewhere else.

For several months now, a Leadership Development Resource Team has been meeting to work on both short-term and long-term goals for developing leaders from within our churches. Team members include Joel Shenk, Toledo Mennonite Church; Rebecca Kauffman, Bethel Mennonite Church; Regional Pastor Tony

Doehrmann; Danae King, Orrville Mennonite Church; Conference Minister Dick Barrett; Miriam Zehr, Oak Grove Mennonite Church (Smithville); and Shawn Hilliard, Martins Mennonite Church.

The team has been able to develop a list of educational institutions and ministry training programs that might meet the different needs of those who are at different stages of their ministry development journeys. The team will be posting those lists on Ohio Conference's website and making them available in other formats.



CHURCH PLANTING

Finally, while this pandemic has slowed us down in our church planting initiative, we are continuing to explore ways to plant new churches and missional communities throughout Ohio and the surrounding states. Mennonite Mission Network is starting a new eight-month SENT Network Church Planting cohort beginning Sept. 21. If you or someone you know has an interest in participating, contact [Conference Minister Dick Barrett](#) or [Regional Pastor Ralph Reinford](#) and/or check out the SENT Network on Mennonite Mission Network's website: <http://bit.ly/SENTNetwork>. ■

"...it has become obvious that we need to return to identifying, calling, training and educating both men and women from our own congregations."

Ohio Mennonite Relief Sale goes online

In mid-March, it all came to a stop. As with many other events, the global pandemic hindered the planning for the 55th annual Ohio Mennonite Relief Sale. Many relief sales around the nation and Canada were cancelled, leaving Mennonite Central Committee short on funding. With this in mind, the Ohio sale planning committee has committed to an online auction only, scheduled for Sept. 26 to Oct. 3.

BUY IT NOW

A hit at last year's event, Buy It Now is similar to the eBay sales method of the same name. The auction committees have selected a small number of quilts and other items to be available before the auction at a fixed price.

Buy It Now items will be available to purchase Sept. 14 through Sept. 24. Any items not sold via Buy It Now will be placed in the online auction for bidding. See ohiomccreliefsale.org to preview.

ONLINE AUCTION

Auction items will be available for bidding on Sept. 26. Donated items include more than 100 authentic Amish and Mennonite quilts and wall hangings, overnight stays at Carlisle Inn and Miller Manor, certificates for meals, a refrigerator and other appliances, a landscaping package, a garage door, and a variety of hand tools.

Donations to the Online Auction will be accepted until Sept. 22 and must be delivered to the Sprunger Building in Kidron on Sept. 24. Please contact Sandy Miller at 330-464-8867 for details.

Bidding will end at midnight on Oct. 3. Small auction items will be shipped at the buyer's cost; however, large furniture items must be picked up by the next week.

Bidders can be confident that their payment information will stay safe. Through supervising auctioneer Steve Chupp, the sale uses a secure bidding site, Proxybid, for all online sales. Bidders can register to bid at ohiomccreliefsale.org.

Quilts can be previewed online. Wood, tool and miscellaneous items can be previewed live on Sept. 25 in Kidron.

SOCIALLY DISTANCED LIVE EVENTS

With COVID-19 in mind, a downsized Kickoff Preview Event is scheduled for Sept. 25 and 26 at the Sprunger Building on the grounds of the Kidron Auction, 4885 Kidron Road, Kidron, Ohio.

On Friday, Sept. 25, at 6:30 p.m. there will be an outdoor socially distanced concert featuring two bands, Hometown and Girl Named Tom. Concert-goers are asked to bring their own lawn chairs and space themselves according to social distancing guidelines.

On Saturday, Sept. 26, a carry-out chicken barbecue meal will be available from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The food committee will be taking chicken dinner orders until **Sept. 16**. Dinners may be pre-ordered online at <https://bit.ly/2020ReliefSaleBBQ>. A limited number of chicken dinners will be on hand for walk-in purchases. Ice cream and pie will also be available for car-



ryout (no preorder required).

On Sept. 26, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. all auction items will be available to preview in the Sprunger Building. Visitors will be asked to wear a mask and socially distance.

Wrapping up the weekend's events is a special Relief Sale online concert by John Schmid on Sept. 27 at 4 p.m. Visit John's Facebook page to listen to his concert online: <https://www.facebook.com/commongroundmin>.

MY COINS COUNT

The "My Coins Count" collection will go on with several new twists. As in previous years, My Coins Count is specially designated for Mennonite Central Committee's water projects. However, the Sale Committee asks that churches and individuals count their own change and use the Relief Sale's PayPal account to send their money (ohiomccreliefsale.org/donate.)

VIRTUAL 5K/1K RUN FOR RELIEF

The annual Run for Relief will be a virtual race. Participants will be asked to run or walk their own course and send photos as proof of completion. Registration and instructions for the race are available at <http://bit.ly/2020RunforRelief>.

Continued on page 5

Ministry Grants

Continued from page 1

churches and community organizations to offer high-quality, affordable college degree programs to members of their communities. Grant funds will help to furnish a section of First Mennonite Church's building so it can be transformed into a student study center for the BU-X program.



Community Garden Expansion — Orrville Mennonite Church is providing community garden space to residents of a nearby apartment complex which offers housing for low-income persons. Grant funds will help bring a water line to the garden area and provide a shed for participants to store their gardening equipment.



Combined Church Video Series — Several Wayne County congregations are joining together to focus on intercultural ministry and racial reconciliation. Participating congregations include Salem Mennonite (Wooster), Salem Mennonite (Kidron), Crown Hill Mennonite, Orrville Mennonite, Martins Mennonite, Oak Grove Mennonite (Smithville), and Wooster Mennonite, as well as Open Arms Hispanic Ministries.

They plan to record videos with a variety of individuals who can share from their own experiences and expertise on racism in America. The videos will be bilingual, either spoken in Spanish with English subtitles or vice versa, depending on who is

being interviewed. Grant funds will help to pay an honorarium to Hospice of Wooster, which is not charging for the use of its facilities, equipment and staff to make the videos.

Racial Equity as a Christian Commitment — Central Christian School in Kidron is focusing on increasing capacity for racial equity as a Christian community. For several days in the spring of 2021, Central Christian will have a Christian/faith-based educator present on the topic of racial equity and reconciliation. The content and curriculum of the sessions will contain both pre- and post-session reflections and work for deeper transformation. Grant funds will help bring this presenter to Central.

Since 2012 the MDT has awarded grants each summer, providing funds for a wide variety of projects and mission initiatives. This year the MDT prioritized projects that address racial injustice and immigration issues. ■

Relief Sale

Continued from page 4

OHIO RELIEF SALE ONLINE STORE

Coming after the 2020 Online Relief Sale, a brand-new e-commerce store will be set up to sell small items year round. Items slated for the store include fabrics, books, and project UFO's (unfinished objects) from the popular Quilter's Corner. Also included will be crafty and artsy items from Artisan's

Marketplace. Most items will be priced at \$25 and under. Watch ohiomccreliefsale.org or join the email list for updates later in October.

WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO?

Staffed solely by volunteers, the Relief Sale's proceeds go to Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). MCC is the relief, service and development agency of

North American Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Churches. MCC seeks to demonstrate God's love through committed women and men who work among suffering people. MCC comes to the aid of suffering people all over the world, administering disaster relief, drilling water wells, education and building relationships in war-torn areas. ■

CONFERENCE MINISTER MUSINGS

The truth will set us free

By Dick Barrett
Conference Minister

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” — John 8:31-32 (ESV)

Jesus said to his early disciples, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” We live in a world of half-truths. The trouble with half-truths is that we never get to know the full truth, and we think that the answers to many of our problems, especially the big ones, are easy to find.

The events of the past six months in our nation and in the world, especially the COVID-19 pandemic, have caused me to spend a lot of time in prayer and reflection. Four things come to the forefront for me. They are not unique to me or meant to be limited, but these four stand out:

1. The reality of death here on earth

The death toll so far from COVID-19 is more than 194,000 in the United States and 925,000 worldwide. At the

end of 2020, will the total number of deaths be significantly different than in recent years? I don't know. But the number of deaths from COVID-19 has brought to the forefront the reality of death here on earth. The full truth is that the mortality rate for people here on earth has not changed — it is still 100 percent.

2. Individual and systemic racism

African American and Hispanic individuals have been affected by COVID-19 at disproportionate rates in the United States. That reality, along with the continued deaths of African Americans in the United States due to gun violence, and our struggle with immigration, have all highlighted the full truth that both individual and systemic racism exist in our country, as well as in the rest of the world.

3. The changing church

While there was much evidence to indicate that the church in America was changing before COVID-19, especially in its relevance to our culture, this time of pandemic over the past six months has caused the church to change much faster. All signs point to the full truth that when churches are able to fully gather again for worship inside, many, if not most, will look quite different.



4. Misplaced hope

Many people today seem to be putting their hope in things that do not have any lasting or significant eternal value — whether it be a specific political party, platform or candidate; a COVID-19 vaccine; guns for personal protection; a border wall; alcohol or drugs; a church that looks like it did 10, 20, or 50 years ago; and on and on. The apostle Paul tells us that if in Christ we have hope in this life only, or any of the things in this life, then we really have no hope at all (1 Cor. 15:19).

The full truth is Jesus is our only hope. If we truly abide in Jesus, then we are his disciples, and he will set us free. My prayer is that we will stop trying to find half-truths, easy answers, hopes that cannot fulfill, and we will look to the only one who offers full truth and everlasting hope.

In Christ Alone ■

“Many people today seem to be putting their hope in things that do not have any lasting or significant eternal value...”

ABOUT PEOPLE

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

ELKHART, Indiana (Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary) — **Mara Weaver Boshart** of Archbold, Ohio, participated in the Aug. 22 commencement and commissioning service of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Elkhart, Indiana. She graduated from AMBS in August 2020 with a Master of Divinity with a major in Theological Studies: History, Theology and Ethics. She also was selected to receive this year's Cornelius J. Dyck Award for Excellence in Church History from the seminary's History, Theology and Ethics Department.

Weaver Boshart previously earned a Bachelor of Arts in History and Secondary Education with a minor in Spanish from Goshen (Indiana) College.

Starting in September, she is working with Project Hope, a nonprofit immigration legal services provider in Archbold.

Weaver Boshart is a member of Zion Mennonite Church in Archbold, a congregation of the Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA. She is married to **Corben Weaver Boshart** (MATS 2017), and her parents are **Marge** and **Barry Weaver** of Bloomington, Illinois.

"I came to AMBS because I wanted a learning community that would help me articulate the faith I was already trying to embody and grow in my understanding of the God who is the foundation of that faith," Weaver Boshart reflected. "I found not only the learning community that I was seeking, but also a



Mara Weaver Boshart

faith community that embraced me, taught me to pray and emboldened my faith in the Living God."

Fifteen graduates were honored during the seminary's commencement and commissioning service, which was delayed from early May and held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. ■

Everence

KIDRON, Ohio — Two students from Ohio Conference congregations have received Everence Financial scholarships of \$1,000 each to pursue their college degrees.

Emily Daniels of Wooster, a member of Salem Mennonite Church in Kidron, is attending Taylor University.

Benjamin Troyer of Dalton, a member of First Mennonite Church in Canton, is attending Goshen College.

They are among 45 recipients of Everence college scholarships for the 2020-2021 academic year. The scholarship program encourages young people to explore the integration of faith



Emily Daniels

and finances while helping them on their educational journeys.

About 210 students from across the country applied for scholarships for 2020-2021.



Benjamin Troyer

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

- 19 Open Arms Live Online, online event
- 25-26 Ohio Mennonite Relief Sale In-Person Preview Events, Sprunger Building, Kidron Auction, Kidron
- 26-Oct. 3 Ohio Mennonite Relief Sale Auction, online event

OCT

- 10 Healthy Boundaries 201 Training, online event
- 20 Northeast Ohio Regional Meeting for Delegates, online meeting
- 22 Northwest Ohio Regional Meeting for Delegates, online meeting
- 27 Wayne-Holmes Regional Meeting for Delegates, online meeting
- 29 West Central/Southwest Regional Meeting for Delegates, online meeting

NOV

- 7 Healthy Boundaries 201 Training, online event

MAR 2021

- 4-5 Missional Conference, online event
- 6 Annual Conference Assembly, online event

sia, the Executive Committee of MWC has decided not to hold the international gathering in 2021 as originally announced. For more details, see <http://bit.ly/2022MWCAssembly>.

Malone University in Canton is co-sponsoring an online event focusing on immigration on Sept. 24 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. "Immigration Ohio 2020: Complex Questions and Solutions with Dignity" will feature keynote speakers Jill Stoltzfus and Ali Noorani. The event will also include panels of Ohio leaders in business, health care and immigration law. Go to www.malone.edu/immigrationOhio to register for this free event.

Open Arms Hispanic Ministries will hold an online program, "Open Arms Live Online," on Saturday, Sept. 19, at 6 p.m. The program will include updates on how Open Arms is working to meet the needs of Hispanics during the time of COVID-19. Speakers will include Open Arms Executive Director Haroldo Nunes and Dan King, who serves as chair of the Open Arms Board. John Schmid will lead music. To access this event, go to tinyurl.com/OAHMLive.

Back page briefings...

Five Mennonite colleges and universities are hosting a series of virtual Family Nights this fall for prospective students and their families. These information sessions will take place online via Zoom video conferencing. Participating colleges and universities include Bethel College, Bluffton University, Eastern Mennonite University, Goshen College and

Hesston College. For more information, please see <https://bit.ly/CollegeVirtualFamilyNights>.

Mennonite World Conference (MWC) has decided to postpone the global assembly until 2022. The new date of the assembly is July 5–10, 2022. In close consultation with the National Advisory Committee in host country Indone-

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