

OHIO MENNONITE EVANGEL

News & Views of Ohio Conference

JAN/FEB 2021



ohiomennoniteconference.org

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'Come and See! The Mission of the Church in God's Country' is theme of gathering

ACA to be held online in 2021

For the first time in the history of the Ohio Conference, delegates from Conference congregations will not gather in person for Annual Conference Assembly (ACA). The 2021 ACA will be a virtual, one-day event, taking place March 6 on the Zoom videoconferencing platform.

The theme for the 2021 ACA is "Come and See! The Mission of the Church in God's Country," based on John 1:35-51 and 1 Peter 3:15-16a. ACA will begin at 8:30 a.m. with orientation for new delegates and a prayer session. Business sessions will

begin at 9 a.m., and ACA will conclude at 2:30 p.m.

The day's schedule will include business sessions and



worship. Brad Roth, the presenter for Ohio Conference's 2021 missional conference, will be the special speaker during worship. (See the article below for information

about the missional conference.)

Because of the abbreviated schedule of this year's Annual Conference Assembly, workshops will not take place on March 6. Instead, workshops will be offered later throughout March, April and May.

The registration fee for ACA is \$20 per person. After Feb. 26, the registration fee increases to \$25 per person.

For more information about ACA, please see <http://bit.ly/ACAInfo2021>. Online registration is available at <http://bit.ly/OCACA2021>. ■

Missional conference to focus on the rural church

Ohio Conference will hold an online missional conference during the evenings of March 4-5, just prior to Annual Conference Assembly.

The theme of this conference will be "Come and See! The Mission of the Church in God's Country." Brad Roth, pastor

and author of the book *God's Country: Faith, Hope, and the Future of the Rural Church*, will be the featured speaker.

It is sometimes hard to expect renewal and new expressions of mission to emerge from the rural church, but mission can flow from there. Based on John 1:35-51 and 1 Peter 3:15-16a,



Brad Roth

this conference will focus on the work of God in our rural churches and communities.

Continued on page 3

RESOURCE CORNER

CommonWord offers Lenten resources

**By Ann Leaman
Ohio Conference
Resource Advocate**
**This year Lent begins
on Feb. 17, which
means now is a great
time to look for worship
and devotional re-
sources related to Lent.
If you are looking for
new Lenten resources,
check out the website
for CommonWord, a
collaboration of Men-
nonite Church Canada
and Canadian Mennon-
ite University.**

In preparation for Lent, CommonWord has curated a collection of resources for this season of the church year. Included in the collection are books, songs, brief videos for children, and worship resources such as sermon starters, poems, prayers and calls to worship.

Some of the items are available as free downloads,

while others must be purchased from other websites. In those cases, links to the other websites are included. To browse this collection, visit <http://bit.ly/2021LentenResources>

LENTEN GUIDED PRAYER

CommonWord is also highlighting a Lenten devotional resource. “Deep Calls to Deep” is the theme of a Lenten guided prayer resource for 2021. This resource is offered by the Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern Canada.

“Deep Calls to Deep” is a contemplative prayer resource which can be used by individuals, small groups, or congregations. It includes weekly prayer sheets, an invitation to share with others (in person or online), and opening and closing liturgies for the Lenten season.

Jane Kuepfer, Lenten guided prayer coordinator,



notes that this resource is well suited to this time of pandemic: “Prayer sheets are easily distributed by email to the whole congregation on a weekly basis for individual use....When people are unable to meet together in person, small groups work well on platforms like Zoom.”

The cost of this resource is \$20 for individuals, \$10 for students, and \$40 for groups/congregations.

To see a sample weekly prayer sheet, go to <http://bit.ly/2021GuidedPrayerSample>. To register online for this resource, please go to <http://bit.ly/2021LentenGuidedPrayer>. ■

VOL. LXXV, NO. 1 JAN/FEB 2021

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Ohio Mennonite Evangel is published six times per year by the Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA, Box 210, Kidron OH 44636, telephone (330) 857-5421.

All material for publication should be submitted to the editor at 5854 Sunland St. NE, Louisville OH 44641, or via telephone: 330-453-0150, or e-mail: ohioevangel@gmail.com, one month prior to desired publication date.

Ohio Mennonite Evangel is distributed to all households of Ohio Conference congregations, other interested individuals and church agencies.

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Missional conference

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Come and See!

The mission of the church
in God's country

Everyone in the Ohio Conference is invited to participate in this online conference and join others seeking a new vision for mission in God's country.

The missional conference will

take place from 6:30 to 8:45 each evening. A conference schedule with more details is included on this page.

Registration cost is \$20 per person, with a special price of \$10 for young adults under age 30. After Feb. 26, the registration fee increases to \$25 per person. Please register online at <https://bit.ly/2021MissionalConference>.



2021 Missional Conference Schedule

Thursday, March 4

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 6:30-7:40 p.m. | Session 1: What are you looking for? Thinking about Rural Context and Why It Matters (John 1:31-51) |
| 7:40-7:45 p.m. | Break |
| 7:45-8:45 p.m. | Session 2: They Remained with Him That Day: More with Less in the Rural Church |

Friday, March 5

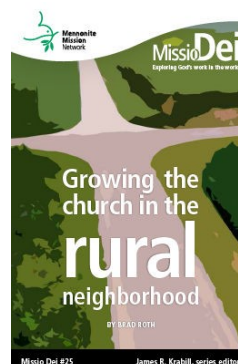
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|----------------|--|
| 6:30-7:40 p.m. | Session 3: Come and See: Rural Mission and Evangelism (1 Peter 3:15-16a) |
| 7:40-7:45 p.m. | Break |
| 7:45-8:45 p.m. | Session 4: What Are You Seeking? Prayer in God's Country |

Get a missional conference preview

If you would like to learn more about Brad Roth, the speaker for Ohio Conference's missional conference, you can get a missional conference preview by reading some of his writing on the topic of mission and the rural church.

You can access highlights of Brad Roth's book, *God's Country*:

Faith, Hope, and the Future of the Rural Church, by downloading "Growing the Church in the Rural Neighborhood," a *Missio Dei* booklet from Mennonite Mission Network. This booklet is available online at <http://bit.ly/GrowingRuralChurch>. ■



CONFERENCE MINISTER MUSINGS

Behold the Lamb of God

By Dick Barrett
Conference Minister

I write this in preparation for our 2021 Annual Conference Assembly, scheduled to be held virtually this year on Saturday, March 6. On March 7, 2020, we were able to meet in person at Sharon Mennonite Church. Little did we know that in less than a week our world would be turned upside down as the coronavirus spread throughout America, as well as much of the world. Most of our churches stopped meeting in person and despite a slowdown in its spread throughout the summer months, the virus returned with vengeance as fall and winter came upon us. While hope has come with a vaccine, we still do not know how many lives will be claimed.

The year 2020 was also one in which we witnessed racial unrest, the killings of black men by police officers in numbers disproportionate to those of white men, and violence in many American cities. The year ended with a presidential election that left the nation of America divided. That division seems just as prevalent in and among our churches as it does in the nation. I am reminded of the words of the prophet Jeremiah

(6:14), “They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. ‘Peace, peace,’ they say, when there is no peace.” Today, very few of us would even say there is peace.

Our theme for ACA 2021 is “Come and See: The Mission of the Church in God’s Country.” While much of the focus will be trying to (re)discover God’s mission for our rural churches, we need to remind ourselves that God is on a mission to save the world. That was the mission that he gave his son some 2,000 years ago. “*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life*” (John 3:16).

All four gospel accounts begin with John the Baptist coming to prepare the way for Jesus’ coming, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The preparation for Jesus’ first coming 2,000 years ago was the recognition that each person and the whole world were in need of a savior. If there is anything that the events of 2020 should have taught us, it is that each of us and the world are still in need of a savior.

The gospel passage for this year’s assembly is John 1:35-51 with John the Baptist pointing out Jesus: “*Behold, the Lamb of God!*” The previous day John had done the very same thing with the words, “*Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the*



sin of the world!” After discovering who Jesus is, Andrew goes and tells his brother Simon. The next day Jesus himself finds Philip. When Philip recognizes Jesus as the long-awaited promised Messiah, he goes and finds Nathanael and reports the good news to him.

Word of mouth is how the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ was spread when Jesus walked the earth, and it was how the good news was spread in the early days of the church. My fear is that many of us in the church today have lost the sense of Jesus’ primary calling on our lives as his disciples. Jesus’ first words as recorded in the Gospel of Mark are, “*The time has come, the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!*” followed by, “*Come, follow me and I will send you out to fish for people.*”

In the year 2021, what each person in the whole world needs to hear is that we are in

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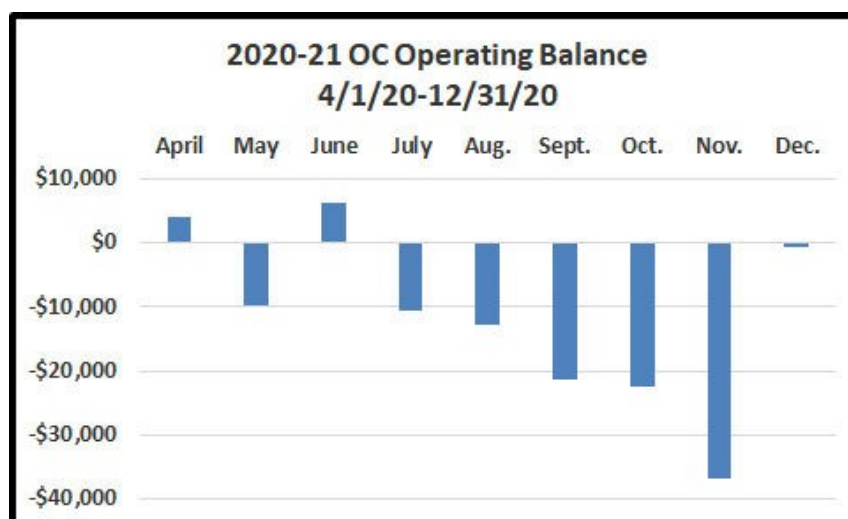
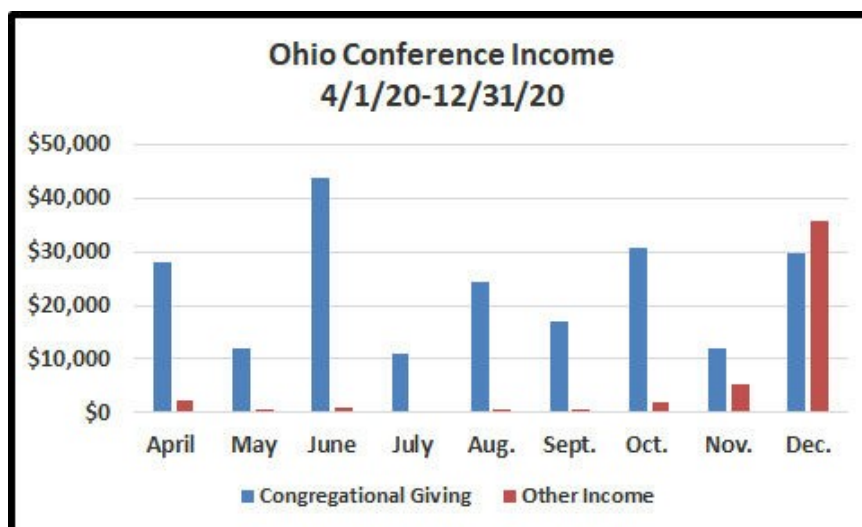
“We need to remind ourselves that God is on a mission to save the world. That was the mission that he gave his son some 2,000 years ago.”

Giving to Conference increases during December

Giving to Ohio Conference increased greatly during December, according to figures provided by Financial Coordinator Stan Helmuth.

Receipts for December totaled \$65,389. Of that amount \$29,710 came from congregational giving. During December giving from individuals was very strong. In response to a year-end appeal letter from Conference Moderator Lynn Miller, individuals gave a total of \$31,535. That amount far surpassed the amount given by individuals in any other month during the current fiscal year.

Expenses for the month totaled just \$29,169, resulting in a surplus of \$36,220 for December. That amount was not quite enough to completely erase the year-to-date operating deficit, but it came close. As of Dec. 31, the Conference was running a deficit of \$642 for fiscal year 2020-21. Many thanks to all who contributed! We greatly appreciate your support. The Conference fiscal year ends March 31, 2021. ■



Musings

Continued from page 4

need of a savior, as well as the good news that the Savior has already come, and that he is Jesus Christ. Yes, Jesus' Great Commission tells us to "*Go and make disciples of all nations,*" but the truth is one does not become a disciple of Jesus until

she or he recognizes their own need for a savior from sin, and that salvation is found only in Jesus Christ. Evangelism comes before discipleship. Jesus becomes one's Savior before he becomes one's Lord. We do not save the world; Jesus saves

the world. But we disciples are his ambassadors, called to share the Good News and to point people to him: "***Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!***" ■

Glimpses into an unseen world

By Dan King

About a year ago, pre-pandemic, one of my Guatemalan students invited me to her quinceañera. (For those who may not know, a Hispanic girl's 15th birthday is an occasion for a no-expenses-spared party to signify her "coming of age.") It was to be held at her evangelical church. I arrived a few minutes late, assuming the celebration would begin on Spanish time, only to find myself slipping into the back of a crowded, brightly decorated sanctuary, with lively praise music already underway.

I noticed two other Anglos sitting several rows in front of me, friends of mine from another church. Although I am an ADHD type person, I managed the first hour and a half of music, a sermon from the pastor, special music, a second sermon from the pastor, special rituals, prayers for Maria, and testimonials. Then, upon learning that there would be another sermon by someone else, followed by cake and ice cream, I quietly exited.

Several days later I met one of the Anglos, who told me she and her friend had lasted the entire celebration. Then she added, "Jane said she thought she had fallen down a rabbit hole into another world."

This is the image of much of the Anglo-Hispanic interchange in the Dover-New Philadelphia area. Or to frame it in a more egalitarian (and wintertime) image, we could see it as stepping through the wardrobe in *The Lion, Witch, and Wardrobe* into a different reality. So much of the lives of Guatemalan immigrants is hidden from the awareness of many in my neighborhood. Passing short, brown-skinned people in the aisles at Walmart. A woman in brightly-colored, typical dress walking the sidewalk with a baby wrapped tightly to her chest. Speeding down I-77 and noticing a soccer game underway nearby, with brightly colored uniforms and cheering spectators on the sidelines.

But anyone who takes a little time, with eyes and ears open, will become aware of so much more! The following quote on my computer desk reminds me often of this truth: "*Blessed are those who see beautiful things in humble places where others see nothing.*" — Camille Pissarro

Here are some of the things we might see if we keep our eyes open: High school students sitting camouflaged in normality, while working 8-12 hours at night in factories. Sending money back to their families in Guatemala. Trying to stay awake in class and pass tests and homework in their third language. Falling further behind since COVID-19 has required schools to convert to online learning. Multiple families living together in crowded apart-



ments, afraid to confront their landlord about needed repairs on heating, plumbing and electrical, lest they be evicted. A single mother with three young children on the verge of homelessness.

In spite of these and many more challenges within the Hispanic community here, I have seen such beauty, such resilience, such a complete dependence upon God's grace (and the kindness of English-speakers), that I am both blessed and humbled. I recall the tears of joy I shed several months ago when, after helping a young man prepare for his driver's license, he

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"Blessed are those who see beautiful things in humble places where others see nothing."
— Camille Pissarro

ABOUT PEOPLE

Pastoral notes

On Nov. 22 Inlet Mennonite Church in Wauseon marked a transition point in the life of the congregation. During the Sunday morning worship service, Regional Pastor Tony Doehrmann held a commissioning service for the congregation's new pastoral team.

As part of the worship service, Regional Pastor Tony Doehrmann expressed thanks and acknowledged the contributions of Sandy Stuckey, who served on Inlet's pastoral team along with her husband, Gary Stuckey, for several months after the death of the congregation's previous pastor, Rick Jones. Sandy concluded her work at Inlet on Oct. 1.

The worship service also included a time of commissioning for the congregation's new pastoral team, Sarah Short and Gary Stuckey.

Sarah Short officially began her ministry at Inlet on Nov. 1, and she preached during the Nov. 22 worship service. Her primary role is preaching, but she is available to serve the congregation in other areas as needed.



Top photo: Regional Pastor Tony Doehrmann (left) commissions Sarah Short and Gary Stuckey for ministry at Inlet Mennonite Church in Wauseon on Sunday, Nov. 22. Bottom photo: Regional Pastor Tony Doehrmann acknowledges Sandy Stuckey's contributions to Inlet Mennonite Church during her service as an interim pastor. She concluded her service at Inlet on Oct. 1.



Gary Stuckey has agreed to continue serving on the pastoral team. He is sharing preaching

responsibilities with Sarah Short, as well as providing crisis care and doing visioning. ■

An unseen world

Continued from page 6

passed both written and driving -skills sections with flying colors. Many more stories could be told if space permitted!

I am well aware that God's call on each of our lives is personal and unique. Yet I wish to en-

courage all readers to step occasionally into the wardrobe, where you will see "beautiful things in humble places" among our Hispanic neighbors.

Dan King is a member of the Ohio Conference Immigration Resource

Team and the Ohio Conference Ministry Development Team. A retired pastor who lives in Tuscarawas County, he works part time as an interpreter in the Dover City Schools, working with high school students. ■

Conference Calendar

JAN

21 Leadership Team Meeting, online via Zoom

FEB

- 2 Wayne-Holmes Regional Meeting for Delegates, online meeting
- 4 West Central/Southwest Regional Meeting for Delegates, online meeting
- 9 Northeast Ohio Regional Meeting for Delegates, online meeting
- 11 Northwest Ohio Regional Meeting for Delegates, online meeting
- 16 The Joy of Rest Retreat (A Spiritual Direction Event), online via Zoom

MAR

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

APR

- 22 Ministry Development Team Meeting, online via Zoom

JUL

- 6-10 MennoCon21, Duke Energy Convention Center, Cincinnati, as well as online

NOV

- 12-14 Pastor-Spouse Retreat, Mills Park Hotel, Yellow Springs

baptists approached Scripture both similarly to and differently from Catholics and other Protestants. This six-week online short course from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary now includes weekly video conversations with Loren. See www.ambs.edu/shortcourses for details.

The Center for Anabaptist Leadership and Learning at Hesston College will host a special online Weekend College event for pastors, congregational leaders and conference leaders on Feb. 20. The event is titled “What If They Don’t Come Back? Pastoring through COVID.” Event attendance is open to all. Register online at www.hesston.edu/weekendcollege.

Check out the new “On the Move – En Movimiento” podcast from Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) that uses storytelling to challenge current narratives of migration. In the first episode, Ron Byler, recently retired executive director for MCC U.S., reflects on his January 2020 pilgrimage along the southern U.S. border. To listen to the podcast, visit mcc.org/move-en-movimiento. ■

Back page briefings...

SOOP (Service Opportunities with our Partners) is accepting applications. Use your gifts and skills to work alongside others in a network of ministries across the church. This program is flexibly designed for retirees, families and adults over 25. Visit

MennoniteMission.net/SOOP to learn more.

Online through AMBS: Understanding Anabaptist Approaches to Scripture (Feb. 10 – March 23). Join Loren Johns, Ph.D., to study ways in which 16th-century Ana-

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