

OHIO MENNONITE EVANGEL

News & Views of Ohio Conference

NOV/DEC 2021



ohiomennoniteconference.org

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Join us for a Conference-wide book study

Coming in January: The Ohio Conference Winter Read. This winter Ohio Conference is trying something new, a Conference-wide book study offered via Zoom. This year we will be discussing Latasha Morrison's book *Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation*.

Discussion leaders will be Pastor Vikki Pruitte-Sorrells of Lee Heights Community Church in Cleveland and Pastor Kevin Himes of Salem Mennonite Church in Kidron.



These pastors led their congregations in a joint study of the book last winter.

The discussion will take place online on Zoom from 6:30 to

7:45 p.m. on five Thursdays — Jan. 6, 13, and 20, and Feb. 3 and 17.

To register for these online

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Making disciples who make disciples

How do we transform individuals into active disciples of Jesus Christ? In the past several years, many Ohio Conference congregations have worked toward this goal by participating in the Missional Discipleship Initiative (MDI). This initiative was first offered by Mennonite

Mission Network. A main goal of MDI is making disciples of Jesus Christ who

in turn make other disciples.

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EDITORIAL

Are we disciple-makers?

As I was putting together this issue of *Ohio Mennonite Evangel*, I took another look at a resource from Mennonite Mission Network which is mentioned on page 6, “Not just disciples, but disciple-makers.” This booklet was written by Marvin Lorenzana, who pioneered the Missional Discipleship Initiative at Mennonite Mission Network. He now serves as president of Eastern Mennonite Missions.

One paragraph from this booklet stood out to me: “The Missional Discipleship Initiative (MDI) described in these pages is not the only, nor necessarily the best or most perfect model for doing disciple-making formation. Our concern here is much less about the instrument that is used than about the importance of adopting some kind of intentional approach to move beyond simply making disciples—as absolutely important as that is—to the

goal of calling forth and equipping disciples to become themselves disciple makers.”

Especially in the time of a pandemic, it’s easy for our congregations to focus on just surviving and taking care of those in our own church families. But I think this call to make disciples is important. How does your congregation work at disciple-making? Does your church focus on disciples making other disciples?

— ahl

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Conference Winter Read

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discussions, please go to <https://bit.ly/2022OCWinterRead>.

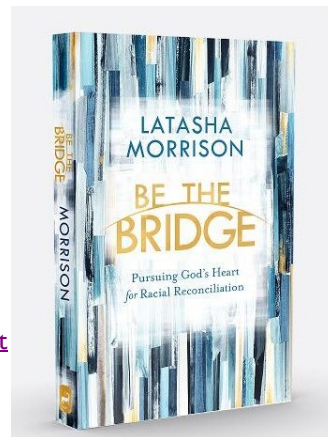
The book is available as a paperback or on Kindle on the Amazon website:

<https://bit.ly/BeTheBridgeBook>.

Vikki Pruitte-Sorrells and Kevin Himes have previously talked about the process of jointly studying *Be the*

Bridge with their congregations during a webinar hosted by Ann Jacobs of Mennonite Mission Network. If you would like to view a recording of that webinar, titled “Speak the Truth in Love,” go to

<https://www.mennonitemission.net/events/4416/Speak-the-truth-in-love>. ■



Personnel of the Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA

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Making disciples who make disciples

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Starting in January Ohio Conference will offer training in MDI to a new cohort of church leaders. This online training, which is open to both pastors **and** lay leaders, will take place from January through June. Participating church leaders will meet online twice a month.

In addition to training leaders, MDI utilizes Missional Discipleship Groups in each congregation participating in the program. Missional Discipleship Groups are three-person small groups which meet face to face each week. Read on to learn about these disciple-making groups:

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

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How can MDI affect your church?

If you're wondering how the Missional Discipleship Initiative would impact your church, read these testimonials from pastors of Ohio Conference congregations:

"I hesitated for a long time before participating in Mennonite Mission Network's Missional Discipleship Initiative (MDI), telling myself, 'Here we go. One more thing. When will I find time to do this, and how will forming Missional Discipleship Groups at Salem ever fly when everyone's already so busy?' Despite my initial reluctance and skepticism,

I've completed the training, and Salem has just launched its third Missional Discipleship Group. Laypeople are leading and participating in Bible studies for the first time in a long time, and we're following Jesus in ways that Sunday morning simply doesn't allow time for. I highly recommend MDI!"

— Kevin Himes, pastor of Salem Mennonite Church in Kidron

"The MDI has reinvigorated discipleship ministry in our church by creating a

vehicle for life-on-life transformation, missional resourcing, and spiritual growth. We have experienced over the past year new vitality and purpose."

— Jacob Dodson, pastor of Wooster Mennonite Church

"The MDI has taken our church back to the basics of discipleship. People are encountering Jesus in powerful ways on a daily and weekly basis. Sometimes it feels familiar. Sometimes it feels totally new!"

— Corben Boshart, collaborative minister at Zion Mennonite Church in Archbold

CONFERENCE MINISTER MUSINGS

The Annunciation of the Incarnation

By Dick Barrett
Conference Minister

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

³⁵ And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸ And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of

the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. — Luke 1:26-38 (ESV)

Having been raised in and spending the first 20-plus years of my life in the Roman Catholic Church, I struggled with the veneration of Mary, the mother of Jesus. There was a lot in the Catholic tradition about Mary about which I just could not find biblical support, especially the belief in her perfection and perpetual virginity, both before and after Jesus' birth. Unfortunately, for the second quarter of my life I failed to give Mary the honor she was due. It's only been during the past 20 years that I have come to appreciate who she was and the model she represents.

Now, being part of the Mennonite Church, which puts so much emphasis on discipleship, I find Mary to be one of Jesus' disciples, if not the greatest of them. In fact, it is not her perfection that makes her so appealing; it is her humanness. I marvel that God would choose someone from such a low position, a young, poor, virgin girl, to incarnate the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ. Mary found favor with God not because of her perfection or anything she had



done. Mary found favor with God because God chose her. And it appears that the only reason God chose her to incarnate his Son to the world was that he knew what Mary's response was going to be: "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

In the Annunciation and Incarnation of Jesus in Mary we find the entire Gospel message. Henri Nouwen expresses it this way in his book, *Jesus: A Gospel*:

"God chose to take flesh in the woman who had found favor in God's eyes and had responded to that favor with a full 'yes.' Her response was not only an initial agreement but a lifelong obedience to God's redemptive presence. In this obedience she followed Jesus in the most perfect way. Her life was a life of always fuller abandonment to the divine will, a total emptying in faith, a full entering into the darkness of her Son's death. There is no other human being

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"Mary found favor with God because God chose her. And it appears that the only reason God chose her to incarnate his Son to the world was that he knew what Mary's response was going to be."

Making disciples

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FIVE KEY QUESTIONS

Five key questions 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

If you are interested in participating in the upcoming MDI training, contact Kevin Himes at pas-torkevin@salemennonitekidron.org.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Note: For more information about Missional Discipleship Groups, see these articles:

<https://ohiomennoniteconference.org/2019/07/when-disciples-make-disciples>

<https://ohiomennoniteconference.org/2019/11/wind-of-the-spirit-enlivens-mdi>

The Ohio Conference Cast podcast also includes several



episodes about Missional Discipleship Groups. You can find podcasts on the Ohio Conference website at <http://bit.ly/OhioConferenceCast>. ■

Marvin Lorenzana, formerly of Mennonite Mission Network (MMN), describes the Missional Discipleship Initiative in a booklet titled “Not just disciples, but disciple makers,” which is part of MMN’s *Missio Dei* series. This booklet raises important questions about the difference between being disciples of Jesus and being Jesus’ disciple makers. To download a copy, go to <http://bit.ly/MMNDiscipleMakers>.

Musings

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in whom we can see so fully what it means to receive the love of God who loves us so much that he sent his own Son. She has known more blessing and more suffering than anyone else in all humanity. In her we see most fully what it means to be redeemed.”

The same opportunity that God gave Mary to have his Son born within her has been offered to everyone. Will we say ‘yes’ to Jesus being made incarnate in us, and will we allow it to be done according to God’s word, God’s will, and God’s way? That is the main reason for the sea-

son of Advent and Christmas which we are about to enter into. May we respond in the affirmative for the glory of Jesus’ name. ■

RESOURCE CORNER

Check out these Advent resources



**By Ann Leaman
Resource Advocate**

As we move into the season of Advent, Mennonite Church USA and CommonWord have Advent resources for individuals, families and congregations.

Once again this year, Mennonite Church USA (MC USA) has prepared an Advent at Home worship guide which can be used by individuals or families.

The 2021 guide follows the theme “Dare to Imagine!” You can download it from MC USA’s Advent at Home 2021 webpage at <https://bit.ly/2021AdventatHomeGuide>. This resource offers weekly and daily scriptures, worship rituals, prayers, activities, and background information. It is written by Talashia Keim Yoder, pastor of Christian Formation at College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Indiana.

This Advent at Home guide offers seven weeks of devotional materials, beginning with the first Sunday of Advent, Nov. 28, and ending on Epiphany, Jan 6, 2022. “Dare to imagine!” walks participants through the biblical ac-

count of Jesus’ birth, beginning with the prophecy of the Messiah’s arrival in Jeremiah and ending with the Magi visiting Jesus.

COMMONWORD

Another online source for Advent resources is CommonWord, which is a collaboration of Mennonite Church Canada and Canadian Mennonite University. CommonWord has compiled a curated list of worship, drama, family, and other resources for Advent. To view these resources, go to www.commonword.ca/go/2190.

One notable resource is a script for an online Christmas Eve drama, “Zooming in On the Nativity: A Virtual Christmas

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Ohio Conference invites you to a missional conference featuring Howard and Cathy Wagler



What does it mean to befriend our neighbors as Christ’s disciples? Join us as we explore how to befriend the neighborhoods to which God has called us to be servants and witnesses. With Howard and Cathy Wagler, Network Directors of South Central Mennonite Conference, as our speakers, we will hear stories and teaching on how God is at work every day in local communities like ours. Together we will reflect on Scripture, pray and imagine how God’s Spirit is leading us to be his witnesses right where we live.

Registration information will be available in December at www.ohiomennoniteconference.org

Women in Leadership Retreat set for February

Registration is now open for Ohio Conference's Women in Leadership Retreat, which will take place Feb. 18-19 at the St. Francis Spirituality Center in Tiffin. The theme of the retreat is "Empowered by the Holy Spirit to lead like yourself."

The speaker for this retreat will be Rebecca Slough, academic dean emerita and professor emerita of worship and the arts at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical

Seminary. **Retreat planners are encouraging every Ohio Conference congregation to send at least one woman to this retreat.**

Cost of the retreat is \$75 per person. For more information, please see the retreat brochure at <https://bit.ly/2022WomeninLeadership>



[Brochure.](#)

To register, go to <https://bit.ly/WomenInLeadershipRetreat>. ■

Prepare/Enrich training focuses on marriage

Recognizing that pastors are often called upon to counsel engaged and married couples, this fall Ohio Conference offered pastors training in a program called Prepare/Enrich. The Conference offered two opportunities for pastors to participate in this training, on Sept. 30 at Salem Mennonite Church in Kidron and Oct. 19 at West Clinton Mennonite Church in Wauseon. The training sessions were led by two pastors of Ohio Conference congregations, Bill Seymour, pastor of Orrville Mennonite Church (on Sept. 30) and Ryan Harker, lead pastor of West Clinton Men-



nonite Church in Wauseon (on Oct. 19). A total of 12 pastors participated in the training.

This training equips pastors to use the Prepare/Enrich assessment with engaged and married

couples. With almost 40 years of research validation, Prepare/Enrich has proven itself to be the most trusted, comprehensive relationship assessment for couples at any stage of life. ■

Ohio Conference offered Prepare/Enrich training to pastors this fall. Six pastors participated in each training event. The small groups allowed for pastors to observe social distancing. In this photo, Ryan Harker leads discussion during the Oct. 19 training at West Clinton Mennonite Church in Wauseon. Photo by Tony Doehrmann.

Resource Corner

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Pageant," by Carol Penner. This free script is for a 25-minute drama featuring 14 or more actors.

Another resource that I'd like to highlight is a "25 Days of

Advent Family Devotional" created by Mosaic Mennonite Conference. This resource, which can be downloaded for free, is available in several different languages. This family faith for-

mation activity divides the Christmas Narrative leading up to Jesus' birth into 25 days. There is one card for every day in December leading up to Christmas. ■

ABOUT PEOPLE

Pastoral notes

Zion Mennonite Church celebrated the retirement of Cliff Brubaker, collaborative ministry team member, on Aug. 29. Cliff and his wife, Marilyn, have relocated to Harrisonburg, Virginia.



On Sunday, Aug. 29, Zion Mennonite Church in Archbold, celebrated the retirement of Cliff Brubaker, collaborative ministry team member at Zion.

Cliff's many years of ministry included service in several states and conferences. He served as a regional pastor in the Ohio Conference from April 2016 to September 2019.

Following his retirement, he and his wife, Marilyn, have relocated to Harrisonburg, Virginia, where their children are living.

Regional Pastor Ralph Reinford (left) leads a time of prayer for Matthew Reed, pastor of Beech Mennonite Church, at Matt's ordination service on Sept. 26. Also pictured is Matt Hartzler, a member of the elder team at Beech.



Matthew Reed, pastor of Beech Mennonite Church in Louisville, was ordained for Christian ministry on Sunday, Sept. 26, during the morning worship service.

Regional Pastor Ralph Reinford preached the sermon, titled "The Church as God's Idea," based on Philippians 2:1-18. Ralph Reinford also led the or-

dination ceremony, including a time of prayer.

Janet Reed, Matt's wife, shared words of affirmation for Matt's ministry, and she and Amy Glick played a special song, "When God Ran." Matt Hartzler, one of the church's elders who had also served on the pastoral search committee, reflected on the process of calling Matt Reed to serve as pastor, and affirmed Matt's gifts for ministry. The congregation gave Matt a gift certificate to P. Graham Dunn.

After the worship service, refreshments were served on the church's front porch.

ABOUT PEOPLE Continued from page 8

Sean Swanson, pastor of First Mennonite Church in Canton, was ordained for Christian ministry on Sunday, Sept. 19.

Regional Pastor Ralph Reinford led the ordination ceremony, which included anointing and prayer. He presented Sean with an ordination certificate with a Fraktur design.

Sean's friend, Ryan Yazel, who is city connection pastor at South Bend City Church in South Bend, Indiana, preached the message.

The congregation presented Sean with a painting of the Canton skyline. ■



Sean Swanson, pastor of First Mennonite Church in Canton, displays his ordination certificate. Also pictured are his son, Pax, and wife, Ally. Sean's ordination service was held Sept. 19.

On Sunday, Sept. 26, Brenna Harker was installed to serve as children's pastor at West Clinton Mennonite Church in Wauseon. Ohio Conference Minister Dick Barrett led the installation ceremony and preached the morning message, "All are Chosen to Serve, Some are Called to Lead," based on John 13:1-17. Brenna was recently licensed towards ordination by the Credentialing Ministry Team.

Brenna's husband, Ryan, serves as lead pastor at West Clinton. They have two young children, Benjamin and Junia. West Clinton has also called an associate pastor, Linda Riegsecker, to complete its pastoral team. ■



Conference Minister Dick Barrett (left) installed Brenna Harker as children's pastor for West Clinton Mennonite Church in Wauseon. Also pictured is Brenna's husband, Ryan Harker, who serves as lead pastor at West Clinton. The installation service took place Sept. 26.

ABOUT PEOPLE Continued from page 9

Good Shepherd Mennonite Church in Archbold held a celebration Sept. 19 to mark the retirement of Pastor Israel Aguilar and his wife, Eloisa.



On Sept. 19 Good Shepherd Mennonite Church in Archbold celebrated the retirement of Pastor Israel Aguilar and his wife, Eloisa. Pastor David Tijerina brought the message during the worship service.

The Aguilars are planning to spend winters in Texas.

The congregation is putting together a pastoral search team, and Pastor David Tijerina and Lay Pastor Valentine Iroha will be serving together as an interim pastoral team until a new pastor is called. ■

Regional Pastor Tony Doehrmann (left) licensed Meredith Caldwell for ministry and led the ceremony marking her installation as pastor of Salem Mennonite Church in Waldron, Michigan. Pictured in the background is Joe Ladd, a member of the congregation's Vision Team.



Meredith Caldwell was licensed for ministry and installed as pastor at Salem Mennonite Church in Waldron, Michigan, on Sunday, Sept 12, during the worship service.

Regional Pastor Tony Doehrmann led the licensing ceremony. Janice Sutter, pastor of worship and preaching at Kern Road Mennonite Church in South Bend, Indiana, brought the message. Janice also served as Meredith's mentor while Meredith attended Kern Road Mennonite.

The congregation provided a fellowship meal following the service. ■

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ABOUT PEOPLE Continued from page 10

Steve Heatwole, pastor at Lockport Mennonite Church in Stryker, has retired from pastoral ministry. On Oct. 24 the Lockport Mennonite Church marked his last Sunday with the congregation. During the worship service, he preached the sermon, "Shout for Joy," based on Psalm 98.

During the Sunday school hour, the congregation gathered in the sanctuary to share stories and memories.

Steve and his wife, Bonnie, received several presents from



the congregation, including a quilt made by Lockport Mennonite Women. A time of re-

freshments followed the worship service. ■

Steve and Bonnie Heatwole examine and display the quilt they received from Lockport Mennonite Women to commemorate Steve Heatwole's retirement as pastor of the Lockport congregation.

Ohio Conference Leadership Team

Due to an increased workload as interim head administrator at Central Christian School and the complexities that position requires at the present time, Terry Shue has regretfully resigned his position as modera-

tor of Ohio Conference, effective Sept. 16.

Paula Snyder Belousek, who has been serving as assistant moderator, has been appointed to serve as the interim confer-

ence moderator until the Gifts Discernment Ministry Team can do its work and the Leadership Team can confirm a new moderator to complete Terry's term. ■

Mennonite Church USA

Thomas Dunn, co-pastor of Crown Hill Mennonite Church in Rittman, is one of seven new members of the Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA (MC USA). He is a former assistant moderator of the Ohio Conference.

The 15-member Executive Board is made up of people of diverse ages, gender, geographical location, race and occupation.

The Executive Board held its first meeting of the biennium on Sept. 23-25, 2021. During the hybrid online and in-person session, board members fo-



cused on board development, collaborative agency relationships, congregational leadership cultivation and the upcoming special delegate session on May

27-30, 2022, in Kansas City, Missouri. To learn more, see the MC USA website: <https://bit.ly/EBSept2021>. ■

The MC USA Executive Board met Sept. 23-25. Pictured are front row (left to right): Chaiya Hadtasunsern, Michelle Dula, Linda Dibble, Emily Merolli; Karen Zehr. Back row (left to right): Mitch Kingsley, Leslie Francisco III, Richard R. Aguirre, Thomas Dunn, Todd Lehman, Jim Caskey. Not pictured: Jon Carlson, Susan Hart, Margie Mejia-Caraballo, Zenobia Sowell-Bianchi.

Conference Calendar

NOV

- 12-14 Pastor-Spouse Retreat, Mills Park Hotel, Yellow Springs
- 18 Leadership Team Meeting, online meeting

JAN 2022

- 6 *Be the Bridge* online book study, via Zoom
- 13 *Be the Bridge* online book study, via Zoom
- 13 Ministry Development Team Meeting, online meeting
- 20 *Be the Bridge* online book study, via Zoom

FEB 2022

- 3 *Be the Bridge* online book study, via Zoom
- 17 *Be the Bridge* online book study, via Zoom
- 18-19 Women in Leadership Retreat, St. Francis Spirituality Center, Tiffin

MAR

- 3-4 Missional Conference, Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold
- 4-5 Annual Conference Assembly, Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold

MAY

- 27-30 Mennonite Church USA Special Delegate Session, Kansas City, Missouri

person or virtually. In preparation for this gathering, consider reading *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church* by Alan Kreider, as it provides themes about formation, church and leadership. Learn more at <https://www.ambs.edu/lifelong-learning/pastors-and-leaders>.

Anabaptist World now has a YouTube channel. Each month *Anabaptist World* shares an *AW Monthly* brief video recap of the most relevant news of the month. You can view these videos at <https://bit.ly/AnabaptistWorldVideos>.

How do you prevent anxiety from becoming a toxic force in your congregation? "Healthy Congregations," a workshop presented by Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, can help your church stay focused on its true mission by teaching its leaders how to prevent or minimize destructive conflict. This online workshop will be held Dec. 2 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. CT. A group discount is available. For more details, see the workshop flier at <https://bit.ly/2021HealthyCongregations>. To register, go to www.LMPeaceCenter.org/all-events/. ■

Back page briefings...

Mennonite Mission Network staff would love to join your congregation in worship through preaching, teaching and sharing stories of God at work around the world. Whether you need a sermon or a Sunday school leader, Mission Network can help. Visit <https://bit.ly/>

[MMNSpeakerRequest](#) to learn more.

Save the date for the Deep Faith/Pastors & Leaders conference, Feb. 21-24 at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana. You can attend this conference in

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News & Views of Ohio Conference

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