

# OHIO MENNONITE EVANGEL

*News & Views of Ohio Conference*

MAY/JUNE 2022



[ohiomennoniteconference.org](http://ohiomennoniteconference.org)

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## Consultant chosen to assist in Conference review

**The Ohio Conference Leadership Team has approved entering into an agreement with Design Group International to assist in a three-part Conference review. The Leadership Team is taking this step based on feedback from delegates at the March 2022 Annual Conference Assembly. Delegates overwhelmingly affirmed the idea of using**

**a process consultant to assist the Conference over the upcoming two years.**

Design Group International has more than 20 years of experience offering strategic planning and process consulting to businesses, nonprofits, educational institutions and faith communities throughout North America and beyond. Many of the group's consultants have Anabaptist faith backgrounds. You can learn



**Jeanne Zimmerly Jantzi**

Continued on page 3

## Ministry Grants fund local projects

**Ministry Grants are back! Aug. 1 is the deadline to submit a grant proposal to the Ohio Conference Ministry Development Team (MDT). The MDT is accepting proposals from Ohio Conference congregations and related ministries for projects and mission initiatives. This year the MDT has**

**\$15,225 available for grants.**

Since 2012 the MDT has awarded grants each summer, providing funds for a wide variety of projects and mission initiatives. If your congregation is looking for a way to fund a ministry that would impact your community, consider applying for a Ministry Grant.



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## RESOURCE CORNER

# Resources address challenging issues

**By Ann Leaman  
Ohio Conference  
Resource Advocate**

This month I would like to highlight a new Sunday school resource from Mennonite Central Committee and RAWtools, as well as a webinar from Anabaptist Disabilities Network and Everence.



### FEAR NOT

How do we respond to violence in our homes and churches? Does our faith have anything to say about how we understand safety and how we put into practice habits of safekeeping in our homes, churches and communities?

MCC U.S. and RAWtools have partnered on a Sunday school curriculum designed to help congregations consider the balance of physical safety with a commitment to nonviolence in the face of active violence.

The 12-week study guide is titled *FEAR NOT: Creating a plan to respond to active violence*. This curriculum can guide congregations to consider what they believe about situations of active violence and how they can respond effectively and faithfully as followers of Jesus Christ.

The goal of this curriculum is not to prescribe answers but rather to raise important questions that will propel a congregation toward making a plan for its unique context.

This free curriculum can be downloaded at [mcc.org/fear-not](https://mcc.org/fear-not).

### AFTER WE'RE GONE

Caring for someone who is dependent due to a significant disability is a major responsibility. Making provisions for that person's physical, emotional, and financial well-being after the death of the caregiver can be complex and confusing.

On March 31 Anabaptist Disabilities Network (ADN) and Everence offered a webinar which focused on these issues. The webinar, titled *After We're Gone: Disabilities and Estate Planning*, featured Dennis LeFevre, Jennifer Lyle, Jeanne Davies (ADN executive director), Lyle Miller (Everence), and Mitchell Stutzman (Everence, ADN Board of Directors). To view a recording of this webinar, go to <https://bit.ly/after-were-gone-webinar>. ■

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# Conference review

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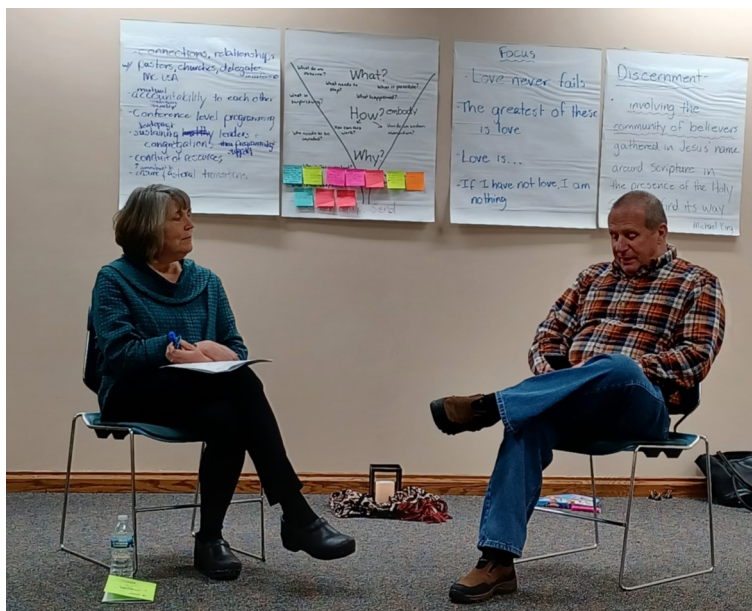
more about the group at <https://www.designgroupinternational.com>.

The primary consultant will be Jeanne Zimmerly Jantzi. Jeanne has almost 30 years of experience in strategic planning and process consulting with Mennonite Central Committee in DR Congo, Nigeria, Indonesia, Southeast Asia and in U.S.-based settings. Jeanne is a member of Orrville Mennonite Church.

The feedback from many of the delegates at Annual Conference Assembly stressed the importance that the consultant be of Anabaptist/Mennonite faith and have some knowledge of the inner workings of our congregations and Ohio Conference, while not being so close that he or she might not be able to be objective and unbiased. The Leadership Team feels that Jeanne's faith background, her qualifications and experience, and the fact that she has not been an active part in Ohio Conference life for the past 30 years make her the right choice for Conference at this time. Further information about Jeanne can be found at <https://www.designgroupinternational.com/about-jeanne-zimmerly-jantzi>.

Jeanne has been tasked with facilitating the work of Conference staff and volunteers in three main areas:

1. Developing a process to review and make a decision about our future affiliation with MC USA;



2. Developing a structure that fits with who Ohio Conference is today based on our new mission statement that was unanimously affirmed by our delegates at the 2022 Annual Conference Assembly; and

3. Revising our Constitution.

**The Leadership Team sees all three of these areas as being interrelated, needing to be addressed together as we discern God's vision and purpose for Ohio Conference and our congregations into the future. While there will be some overlap in the two-year process, we envision that much of the first year will be focused on the discernment and decision making, and the second year focused on the implementation of the decisions and the revising of the Constitution.**

The strategic planning process will actively involve stakeholders from across the Conference with the desire to build enthusiasm, cohesiveness and forward thinking for Ohio Conference. This process is an opportunity to be proactive rather than reactive. Among many other things, the two-year agreement includes the following commitments by the consultant:

- Facilitating an all-day Leadership Team retreat on April 28, 2022
- Facilitating a gathering of the Ministry Development Team in late spring or early summer 2022
- Facilitating a gathering of all credentialed ministers in late summer/early fall 2022
- Facilitating the gatherings of delegates in the fall 2022 and early 2023

Consultant Jeanne Zimmerly Jantzi and Conference Minister Dick Barrett participate in a Leadership Team retreat on April 28. Photo by Sherah-Leigh Gerber.

**“The strategic planning process will actively involve stakeholders from across the Conference with the desire to build enthusiasm, cohesiveness and forward thinking for Ohio Conference.”**

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CONFERENCE MINISTER MUSINGS

# A Year of Discernment

By Dick Barrett  
Conference Minister

**There is no doubt that the past two years have been both different and difficult on our churches. In one sense, as Mennonites/Anabaptists we don't find ourselves to be any different from other Christian churches throughout America. Almost all congregations can say that their church has lost members and attenders, and the church doesn't look the same as it did before the COVID pandemic began.**

Many in our Mennonite churches have been drawn to the writings and podcasts of Conrad Kanagy titled "A Church Dismantled." His main thesis is that through all that is occurring in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, including the COVID pandemic, God is allowing his church(es) to be dismantled. It is our responsibility as Christians (pastors, leaders, members and attenders) to see how God is working during this dismantling season and embrace who he is calling us to be as we move to the middle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In the second volume in his series, Kanagy writes, "Any church meeting that begins without asking what the Spirit is saying and acknowledging that

Christ is present, will never be the church that is able to break the rules needed to make the changes required in this dismantling season."— *Ministry in a Church Dismantled*, p. 43

One definition of Christian discernment says that it "involves the community of believers gathered in Jesus' name around Scripture in the presence of the Holy Spirit to find its way through." It is no coincidence that the author of this definition, Michael King, is a Mennonite. This definition incorporates what have been the essential elements of discernment for Mennonite/Anabaptist Christians throughout our 500-year history — it is done in the community of believers who are gathered in Jesus' name, grounded in Scripture, and in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

At our recent Ohio Conference Annual Assembly our delegates approved a new mission statement as we move into the future: "The mission of Ohio Conference is to Gather, Equip and Send our congregations by the power of the Holy Spirit to live out God's Greatest Commandments (Mark 12:29-31) and Jesus' Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20)."

The next task for us as the community of believers making up Ohio Conference is to discern together, around Scripture and in the presence of the Holy Spirit, where God is leading us in the years ahead after this



dismantling season. What should the structure of Ohio Conference look like to empower us to live out our new mission statement in the years ahead, and will our affiliation with Mennonite Church USA help or hinder us in faithfulness to that mission?

We are blessed to have Jeanne Zimmerly Jantzi of Design Group International, a lifelong Mennonite/Anabaptist Christian and a member of one of our congregations, to help guide us in the discernment that will take place over the next year. On April 28, 2022, she facilitated a daylong retreat for the Leadership Team and pastoral staff. It was a great day of relationship building and discernment to get a sense of how Conference leadership sees God at work in our Conference and among our congregations. Her next steps will be to gather our credentialed ministers for a one-day retreat in late summer

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**"The next task for us as the community of believers making up Ohio Conference is to discern together, around Scripture and in the presence of the Holy Spirit, where God is leading us in the years ahead..."**

# Many work together at Ohio MCC Comforter Bash

Many people came together to support Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) at the Ohio MCC Comforter Bash on April 22-23.

A total of 129 comforters were knotted during the two-day event at the Kidron Community Park Building, with 150 volunteers participating in the work on Friday and 75 volunteers on Saturday. MCC will distribute these comforters to people in need around the world. For a gallery of photos from this



LaJane Moore binds a comforter at the Ohio MCC Comforter Bash. More photos of this event can be seen at <https://bit.ly/2022ComforterBash>.

event, please see <https://bit.ly/2022ComforterBash>. All

photos by Jennifer Steiner of MCC Great Lakes. ■

## Conference review

Continued from page 1

- Supporting a Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Committee as they compile a concise Strategic Plan to be ready for a delegate vote at the Annual Conference Assembly, March 3-4, 2023. The Strategic Plan will include a new leadership structure to provide a leaner and more effective way to implement the vision and mission of the Conference as well as affiliation options.
  - With the Strategic Plan in place, the work of 2023 will be to revise the Ohio Conference constitution, preparing for the final revision to be voted on at the Annual Conference Assembly in March, 2024. The consultant will facilitate the work of an ad hoc constitution committee.
- As the Leadership Team, we are looking forward to Jeanne helping us, our other leaders and staff, our credentialed ministers, delegates, and other congregational members as we discern God's future vision for us as a conference. If you have any questions about this process, please contact one of the members of the [Leadership Team](#). If you would like to review the full agreement between Ohio Conference and Design Group International, please contact Judy King at the Conference office at [ohmc@zoominternet.net](mailto:ohmc@zoominternet.net) or 330-857-5421. ■

## Musings

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and to facilitate discernment with our delegates at regional cluster meetings in early fall.

The discernment that will take place over the next year is not one for us to take on alone.

We will need Scripture and the power of the Holy Spirit to guide us. We will need prayer and fasting from many, and it must all be done in the name of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

For more information about Conrad Kanagy and his work, please see <https://achurchdismantled.com>. ■

# Ministry Grants

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The MDT will use several criteria in reviewing the applications:

— Does this proposal fit with the Conference priorities of Loving God, Loving Others, and Making Disciples of Jesus Christ?

— Does this project respond to the priorities identified by Ministry Development Team?

- Start-up ministries/new initiatives
- Community outreach
- Church planting
- Focus on children or youth ministry that includes an outreach component
- Missional coaching
- Peacemaking education/action
- Immigration education/action
- Antiracism education/action

- Initiatives which cross cultural boundaries

— Is this proposal a collaborative effort among Ohio Conference congregations and/or related organizations?

Please note that this is a one-time grant. Grant monies are not intended to be used for staffing.

Grant proposals are due by **Aug 1, 2022**. More information and an online application are on the Ohio Conference website: <http://bit.ly/OCMinistryGrants>. If you prefer, you may download a grant form and mail it to the Ohio Conference office.

The Ministry Development Team will consider all grant proposals at its August meeting.



Over the years, the Ministry Development Team has approved grants funding a variety of missions, including community gardens, a homework help program, a variety of workshops, and a video series on racial reconciliation, among many others. To learn more about these grants from previous years, see <http://bit.ly/OCMinistryGrants>. ■

Ministry Grants have been used for a variety of local missions. Pictured is Orrville Menonite Church's community garden. In 2020 the congregation received a grant for improvements to the garden. To see descriptions of other grants which have been awarded, see <http://bit.ly/OCMinistryGrants>.



## Peace Mennonite merges with North Olmsted church

On Sunday, April 10, Peace Mennonite Church in Elyria held its last service as Peace Mennonite. Over the past several months its members have gone through a discernment process that led the congregation to merge with North Olmsted Evangelical Friends Church. Peace Mennonite's Church building will become the Elyria campus of North Olmsted Evangelical Friends Church.

Conference Minister Dick Barrett was present April 10 to help celebrate Peace Mennon-



Peace Mennonite Church in Elyria has merged with North Olmsted Evangelical Friends Church.

ite's last worship service and to offer a blessing on behalf of Ohio Conference as they begin the next stage of their journey together. Plans are in the works for a Sunday gathering in early

summer to give thanks to Pastor George Dunn and his wife, Mary, for their service to the congregation over the past several years. ■

## 'Joy in the Journey' is retreat theme

Ohio Conference will hold a retreat for wives of Ohio Conference pastors on Nov. 4-6, 2022, at the St. Francis Spirituality Center in Tiffin, Ohio.

Miriam Zehr, associate pastor of Oak Grove Mennonite Church in Smithville, will be the speaker for this retreat, which will explore the theme

"Joy in the Journey." Using the Psalms, participants will reflect on the ups and downs of life and how to glean joy along the way.

Several scholarships are available for those who need financial assistance. For more details, please see the retreat brochure: [https://bit.ly/2022JoyintheJourneyBro](https://bit.ly/2022JoyintheJourneyBrochure)



[chure](https://bit.ly/2022JoyintheJourneyBrochure). Online registration is available at [https://bit.ly/2022JoyintheJourneyBro](https://bit.ly/2022JoyintheJourneyBrochure)

## Conference youth worker webinar series continues

Ohio Conference is continuing its series of **free** online seminars for youth workers during the month of May. "Jesus as Model: Youth Ministry Reimagined" is the theme of this series, which began in late March.

The final three online seminars will be held from 7 to 8:15 p.m. on May 10, 17 and 24.

In addition to hearing from presenters, seminar participants are able to connect with other youth workers from around the Conference to share stories of their successes and challenges.



To register, go to <https://bit.ly/2022YouthWorkerSeminars>.

## ABOUT PEOPLE

### Pastoral notes

Matthew Peterson was ordained for Christian ministry March 27. Pictured left to right are Matthew Peterson, Christiana Peterson, Regional Pastor Sherah-Leigh Gerber and retiring Regional Pastor Ralph Reinford.



Matthew Peterson was ordained for Christian ministry at Midway Mennonite Church in Columbiana on Sunday, March 27, during the morning worship service.

Regional Pastor Ralph Reinford preached the sermon, “Called to Serve,” based on Hebrews 10:19-25. He also led the ordination ceremony. Congrega-

tional leaders Sherri Ball, Charlotte King and Joseph Shewell shared words of affirmation for Matthew, and there was a congregational commissioning prayer for him. Matthew also received tokens of affirmation from the church board and leadership team, the youth of Midway, and the entire congregation.

Following the worship service the congregation had a fellowship meal, and members of the congregation shared stories celebrating God’s call to Matthew and the evidence of his gifts for ministry. The fellowship meal also included a time of farewell, thanksgiving and blessing for Ralph Reinford, acknowledging his retirement from Ohio Conference work at the end of March. In addition, the congregation also welcomed Sherah-Leigh Gerber, who is the new regional pastor for the eastern part of the Ohio Conference. ■

### Mennonite Church USA

Mennonite Church USA has announced the worship speakers, led by Dr. Samuel Sarpiya, for the Special Session of the Delegate Assembly, May 27-30, in Kansas City Missouri.

Two pastors from Ohio Conference congregations, Jeff Hochstetler of Berlin Mennonite Church and Vikki Pruitte-

Sorrells of Lee Heights Community Church in Cleveland, will be sharing during the four-day gathering.

Jeff Hochstetler will be one of four speakers during the Friday night worship service, which will explore the theme “Emerging Through the Storms of Leadership.”

On Saturday Vikki Pruitte-Sorrells will participate in a panel discussion on the theme “Perspectives: Ministry in Context.”

To learn more, please see <https://bit.ly/2022AssemblyWorshipSpeakers>.

## ABOUT PEOPLE Continued from page 8

### Immigration Resource Team

Ohio Conference would like to express its appreciation for the work completed by the Immigration Resource Team (IRT) from 2018 to 2022. This resource team was convened to investigate, evaluate and help congregations implement the resolution on immigration which delegates affirmed in 2019. This group created a list of immigration resources as well as a biblical guide to immigration. In addition, they worked at highlighting various aspects of immigration to the Conference through articles, online posts and a giving project



to San Antonio Mennonite's Casa de Maria y Marta. Special thanks goes out to all previous members of the IRT: Megan Bettelon, Greg Bowman, Dan

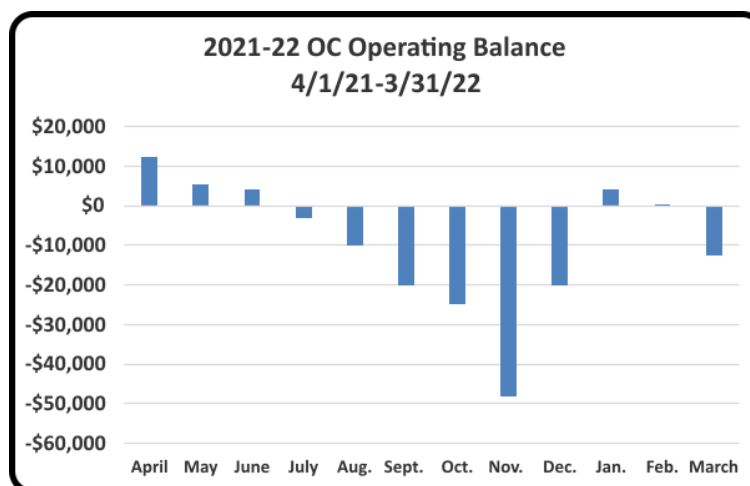
King, Krisha Pagniano, Alysa Short, Hannah Troyer, Kelsey Troyer, and Mara Weaver Boshart. ■

The Ohio Conference Immigration Resource Team has completed its work. In this photo from 2019, the team presents a resolution on immigration to Annual Conference Assembly delegates. Pictured are (left to right) Kelsey Troyer, Hannah Troyer, Mara Weaver Boshart, and Dan King. Several others have served on the team over the years.

### Conference ends fiscal year with a deficit

Ohio Conference ended its 2021-22 fiscal year with a deficit of \$12,504, according to figures provided by Financial Coordinator Stan Helmuth. The fiscal year ended March 31, 2022.

The Conference began March with a small positive operating balance of \$245. Receipts for March totaled \$29,465, including \$28,676 in giving from congregations. Expenses for the month totaled \$42,214, resulting in a deficit of \$12,749 for the month. ■



### MCC webinar to explore 'Gardening for good'

Interested in creation care? On May 26 at 8 p.m., Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) will host a webinar, "Gardening for good: Creation care tips for your backyard and stories from Bolivia." In this virtual visit,

MCC will explore what it looks like to care for the planet – from our own backyards to remote Bolivian communities. This presentation will include gardening and conservation tips for your own garden, as well as

stories from MCC's projects in Bolivia. Register at <https://bit.ly/GardeningForGood>. A webinar recording will be available. ■

## Conference Calendar

### MAY

- 10 Youth Worker Seminar, online
- 12 Leadership Team Meeting, online
- 17 Youth Worker Seminar, online
- 24 Youth Worker Seminar, online
- 27-30 Mennonite Church USA Special Delegate Assembly, Kansas City, Missouri

### JUN

- 10-12 Latino Family Retreat, Camp Luz, Kidron
- 15 Congregational Pastors' Gathering, Der Dutchman Restaurant, Plain City
- 23 Leadership Team Meeting, online

### JUL

- 5-10 Indonesia 2022, Mennonite World Conference Assembly 17, Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia, and online

### AUG

- 5-6 Ohio Mennonite Relief Sale, Wooster
- 23 Consultant Meeting with Credentialed Pastors, Upper Sandusky Library
- TBD Ministry Development Team Meeting

### NOV

- 4-6 Pastors' Wives Retreat, St. Francis Spirituality Center, Tiffin

around the world, and it is planning to do the same in 2022. Learn more at <https://bit.ly/MCCHartvilleThrift>.

**Mennonites Against Militarism** — a collaboration of Mennonite Central Committee, U.S. (MCC) and Mennonite Church USA (MC USA) — is seeking to launch an initiative to counter military recruitment of U.S. youth. The vision for the project, Alternatives to Military Enlistment Network (AMEN), is to connect young people with volunteer advisors who can help them find non-military career, service and training opportunities. To learn more, please see <https://bit.ly/MilitaryRecruitmentAlternatives>.

**New Vision issue on "Music and the arts" is available for free online.** The Spring 2022 issue of *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* is guest edited by Jonathan Dueck, PhD. Contributors share about becoming more aware of worship's relational qualities and expanding singing and worship to invite and include the church across all kinds of difference. See [ambbs.edu/vision](https://ambbs.edu/vision). ■

## Back page briefings...

**Service isn't just for individuals;** groups can serve together, too! Gather your friends, small group, or Sunday school class and spend some time doing meaningful work together with SOOP. Visit [www.mennonitemission.net](http://www.mennonitemission.net)

[/Serve/SOOP](#) to learn more or contact Eric Frey Martin at [EricFM@MMNWorld.net](mailto:EricFM@MMNWorld.net).

**Last year the Hartville MCC Thrift Shoppe** donated \$1 million in profits to Mennonite Central Committee programs

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