

# OHIO MENNONITE EVANGEL

News & Views of Ohio Conference

JAN/FEB 2023



ohiomennoniteconference.org

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- 2 Resource corner
- 4 One person's start on the anti-racist journey
- 6 Conference minister musings
- 8 Dwelling in the Word
- 10 Missional Workshop
- 11 About people
- 12 Back page briefings

*'Doing Life Together: Rooted and Grounded in Love' will be Assembly theme*

## Central Christian School to host ACA

**Central Christian School in Kidron will host the 2023 Annual Conference Assembly (ACA) March 3-4. The theme of this year's gathering will be "Doing Life Together: Rooted and Grounded in Love," based on Ephesians 3:16-21.**

In a letter to delegates, Conference Moderator Ken Sims wrote, "We look forward to gathering as a community of believers to do the work to which God

### Doing Life Together



**Rooted and Grounded  
in Love**  
Ephesians 3:16-21

has called us. As we focus especially on the direction and affiliation of Ohio Con-

ference, there will be deliberate time for discernment and spiritual practices. We pray that the format of this ACA will unite us as we gather to follow God's guidance and direction."

The first event of ACA, the Pastor Appreciation Meal, will begin at 11:30 a.m. on Friday, March 3. Registration will open at 12:30 p.m., and the first delegate session will begin at 1:30 p.m. ACA will conclude at 4 p.m. on Saturday, March 4, at the end of the final worship session.

Continued on page 3

## Winter Read discussion begins

**The Ohio Conference Winter Read has returned! Once again this winter Ohio Conference is holding a Conference-wide book study using the Zoom videoconferencing platform.**

2023 marks the second year for the Winter Read. Last year, more than 60 people participated in discussions about the book *Be the Bridge* by Latasha Morrison. This year Winter Read participants are study-



Continued on page 3

RESOURCE CORNER

# CommonWord offers Lenten resources

By Ann Leaman  
Ohio Conference  
Resource Advocate

**This year Lent begins on Feb. 22, which means now is a great time to look for worship and devotional resources related to Lent. If you are looking for new Lenten resources, check out the website for CommonWord, a collaboration of Mennonite Church Canada and Canadian Mennonite 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. To browse this collection, visit <https://bit.ly/2023LentenResources>.

## LENTEN PRAYER GUIDE

CommonWord is also highlighting a Lenten devotional resource. “Shaped and Called” is the theme of a Lenten guided prayer resource for 2023. This resource is offered by the Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern Canada.

“Shaped and Called” 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.

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

For more information or to register, please see <https://>



**2023 Lenten Guided Prayer Experience**  
Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern Canada

[www.commonword.ca/go/2221](http://www.commonword.ca/go/2221).

## LENT WORSHIP PLANNING WEBINAR

Anabaptist Worship Network will host a Lent Worship Planning webinar on Facebook on Wednesday, Feb. 1, at 7:30 p.m. EST. This webinar will explore Lenten worship resources from *Leader* magazine and *Voices Together*, as well as offering time for brainstorming creative ways to gather during Lent. See <https://www.facebook.com/events/692537162581966> to sign up. ■

**VOL. LXXVII, NO. 1  
JAN/FEB 2023**

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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](mailto: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.

Send subscription information and email address changes to the editor at [ohioevangel@gmail.com](mailto:ohioevangel@gmail.com).

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# Winter Read

Continued from page 1



Participants in the Ohio Conference Winter Read meet on Zoom to discuss the book *Just Mercy*.

ing *Just Mercy*, a book by Bryan Stevenson which deals with the criminal justice system.

Bryan Stevenson was the speaker at Eastern Mennonite University's spring 2022 commencement ceremony. He is the executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Alabama, and a professor of law at New York University Law School.

Discussion leaders for the Ohio Conference Winter Read are

Nathan Beachy and the Rev. Rosalind Young, both of Lee Heights Community Church in Cleveland.

Winter Read discussion sessions are taking place on Zoom on Tuesday evenings. The first session was held Jan. 10, and sessions will take place weekly, concluding Feb. 28. Sessions will begin at 6:30 p.m. and end at 7:45 p.m.

Interested in joining the discussion? It's not too late to join

the Winter Read. *Just Mercy* is available as a paperback or on Kindle on the Amazon website: <https://bit.ly/WinterReadJustMercy>.

A reading schedule for this series is available: <https://bit.ly/2023WRSchedule>. To receive the Zoom login for the Winter Read, please register online: <https://bit.ly/2023WinterRead>. ■

# Annual Conference Assembly

Continued from page 1

In addition to business sessions, ACA will include worship services, prayer time on Saturday morning, times for spiritual disciplines, and displays from church-related agencies.

The registration fee for ACA is \$45 per person if received by **Feb. 10**. After that date, the registration fee increases to

\$60 per person. There is an additional charge for meals.

Registration forms and more information about ACA are available on the Ohio Conference website: <https://bit.ly/2023ACAInfo>. To register online, go to <https://bit.ly/2023ACARegistration>. ■



# Humbled from the start: One person's start on the anti-racist journey

By Greg Bowman

## PART I

### “When did you begin to grapple with being White?”

The answer to this question is fairly straightforward: about 2001.

The back story is more revealing.

I was 49, living in eastern Pennsylvania in an all-white community, attending an all-white rural Mennonite congregation in Bally.

It was at a Saturday morning session of a weekend-long anti-racism training in or around Philadelphia. I was there due to a part-time role with Franconia Mennonite Conference (which is now part of Mosaic Mennon-

ite Conference). I came with a mixture of hopeful anticipation and apprehension. Sure — I wanted to be a less-racist person, but word on the street was that White folks often found these experiences upsetting and disorienting. The title “Damascus Road” should have been a tip-off.

At the 2001 training, we did the Black history timeline Friday evening, highlighting how little most White people know about significant events in the development of global Black culture, experience, and struggle. Discussion also showed how Blacks and most Whites in the



events very differently, from the death of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to the impact of the Reconstruction period/Jim Crow era of U.S. history (1865-1964).

**In my memory, personal stories by attendees of color and statistics on racial disparities in the U.S. opened up the Saturday input. We then met in small groups to talk about what we were hearing, and how it felt to us. At some point, we were given what seemed to me like a preposterous proposition to respond to. (I don't recall the particular question, only the unforgettable internal drama that followed.) I could see White people in groups around us — led by Black trainers — were struggling and uncomfortable, even disturbed. I felt our group's White trainer — Phil Morice Brubaker — would be able to sense my**

*“Discussion also showed how Blacks and most Whites in the room regarded the historical events very differently, from the death of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to the impact of the Reconstruction period/Jim Crow era of U.S. history (1865-1964).”*

## One step along the road

I had hosted an anti-racism Sunday School class some years prior to my Damascus Road training. The main takeaway for me was that I didn't know much about Black people and the lives they lived — despite having had several Black students on my floor in college and living next to an Afro-Cuban family in a majority-minority community of New Orleans for two years.

The class making that point most strikingly was led by Conrad Moore, a local Black man with a tremendous heart for the church's potential to em-

brace racial justice as a core tenet of being Jesus people. In his session, he talked about “living while Black” in eastern Pennsylvania. He gradually removed elements of his semi-formal church attire to end up with a decidedly “urban” look, from his do-rag to Nike sneakers. The stunned class members could only nod confessionally when he asked something like this: “If you would meet me on the street looking like this for the first time, you'd feel differently than you did a few minutes ago, wouldn't you?”

Continued on page 5

# Anti-racist journey

Continued from page 4

**good intention and keep things more on an even keel.**

I soon realized the response Phil wanted us to give was way beyond my White imagination. What began to work on me was his calmness and unhurried pace as I kept hoping he would move on. He seemed immune to the growing panic in my heart as the words and images of the previous hours ricocheted through my brain — and illuminated past memories of my history with Black people. For several moments I thought this White man was forcing me into an impossible situation.

To my horror, I finally grasped that he already knew exactly how I felt, because it's how most White men felt at that point in the trajectory of the weekend. This meant that I was not so special after all, and that I hadn't really begun to face the blindness and limitations of my White privilege (the term of that era, which I still find meaningful).

I don't even remember how the session ended. I do remember, however, the transformation of that moment. I realized I would be on a life-long journey to becoming anti-racist, to unlearn nearly half a century of being unselfconsciously White. I've learned since then that I still use my White privilege to opt out of the work I need to do, which includes a number of things: listening long and hard to a range of Black voices past and present, developing continuing accountable relationships with people of color, and show-

ing up at pivotal moments, public and private, when racial justice demands a witness from anti-racists in the making.

## PART 2

From what I've seen and experienced since that time, I affirm these thoughts of these two leaders:

1) Black Christian public historian and author Jemar Tisby developed a thought tool he calls the "ARC of Racial Justice" in his book *How to Fight Racism: Courageous Christianity and the Journey Toward Racial Justice*. ARC is an acronym for the three aspects of personal spiritual development he believes are needed to dismantle the sin of racism. **Awareness** is the head knowledge of racist tactics, "to deceive, denigrate, and dehumanize" others, historically and in the present, in our culture and in our lives." **Relationships** with persons who live with the consequences of racism can transform a majority person's heart. "It is through knowing others that those we previously viewed as 'problems' become people," Tisby writes. With understanding of how racism works and interaction with those impacted by it, a person is able to make **commitments** to action to "dismantle racist structures, laws, and policies. It is this work of our hands that gives witness to our Lord, leads to greater awareness, and new relationships, as well as further acts of faithfulness."

2) The working out of commitments to racial equity within organizations has various levels

of change, which involve White self-awareness, emotional resilience, and changing dynamics. Latina pastor Sandra Maria Van Opstal sketches a continuum of actions that majority people often experience in their growing understanding racial reconciliation that honors people of color in a Godly way.

~ "Representation" comes through inviting participation and leadership of numbers of Black people in at least the percentage they are present in an organization, group or congregation. They are physically present even as traditional norms comfortable to White people still prevail.

~ "Collaboration" means Black people are increasingly shaping major and minor parts of group life. Whites used to feeling comfortable are believing in the process, but admit they are not as comfortable as they used to be.

~ "Mutuality" is the stage where White people experience joy and a new freedom when their Black colleagues are fully engaged in shaping and leading. It's when White people involved can honestly say, "I need you, we need you, being you," to their Black sisters and brothers.

At the point of discomfort in the collaboration phase, whether White people cling to comfort or lean into Spirit-breathed racial justice is a key step.

My prayer: Lord, shape me into a soul doing what it takes to be

*"I realized I would be on a life-long journey to becoming anti-racist, to unlearn nearly half a century of being unselfconsciously White."*

Continued on page 7

CONFERENCE MINISTER MUSINGS

# Radical Love and Radical Discipleship

By Dick Barrett  
Conference Minister

**2023 marks 25 years since I joined the Mennonite Church. It has certainly been an interesting journey, first as a congregational member, then an associate pastor, lead pastor, and now as a conference minister. As I found myself on a one-month sabbatical during December, it caused me to reflect on why I joined the Mennonite Church and what keeps me here today.**

First and foremost, I am one of the fortunate few who when attending a Mennonite church for the first time had no preconceived thoughts or ideas of who the Mennonites are. It just happened that Clarence Center/Akron Mennonite Church was one of the many churches in the local Western New York community when my wife and I were searching for a church to attend and raise our family. What attracted me to the church was its emphasis on Scripture, discipleship, community, and their love and acceptance of who I was at that time in my life: a previously divorced Catholic police officer. As I was preparing for my adult baptism at age 39, I remember asking my pastor, “How is the congregation going to be with my previous divorce and having

been Catholic?” He replied, “Some might struggle more with you being a police officer.” At the time I was not far enough along in my discipleship journey to think about how following Jesus might affect my vocation as a police officer.

While the congregation’s love and acceptance of me where I was currently at in my Christian journey was what first attracted me to the Mennonite Church, I needed to find out what they believed as Mennonite Christians. I read as much about Mennonite and Anabaptist history and theology as I could find. I even purchased and read most of the more than 1,000-page *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*. While I found most of that reading helpful, what caused me to want to become a member was the 1995 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. I found its 24 articles with commentary to align with what I had been reading in Scripture the previous five years of my life. I was surprised at my original interview for licensing to be a pastor in the Mennonite Church when I was asked, “What articles of the *Confession of Faith* might you struggle or disagree with?” Since I found the *Confession* to be so grounded in Scripture, I didn’t think it was my right to choose. I still don’t.

Over the past 25 years it seems like many in the church have tried to put their own ideas and



thoughts on what it means to be Mennonite and/or Anabaptist, some with biblical foundation and some without —so much so that it is hard to even come up with a definition of what it means to be Mennonite and/or Anabaptist today. Many churches are taking the word “Mennonite” out of their church name. For some this change is because of perceived misconceptions in their community about what they believe, and for others it is that they don’t want to be linked with other Mennonite groups. As someone who came from the outside and joined the Mennonite Church, this trend concerns me. Instead of taking the name “Mennonite” out of our churches to eliminate any misconceptions, maybe we should be clearing up the misconceptions by being faithful to our past and who we claim to be today.

Along with the 1995 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, when I think about what it means to be a Mennonite or an Anabaptist Christian I think of

Continued on page 7

“What attracted me to the church was its emphasis on Scripture, discipleship, community, and their love and acceptance of who I was at that time in my life: a previously divorced Catholic police officer.”

# Musings

Continued from page 6

“radical love” and “radical discipleship.” When I use the word “radical” I mean “going back to the root of, the origin of something, foundation” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). I also use the word “radical” in the sense of being different than what one usually experiences. What attracted me to the Mennonite Church 25 years ago was that it seemed to represent something radical, something different than what I was experiencing in the outside world, where many claimed to be “Christian” but didn’t seem to be living the type of life Jesus taught or lived, including myself. I became keenly aware of the sin that was residing in me, how I was living my life, my need for repentance and transformation, and my need to turn my life over to Jesus as both Savior and Lord.

In a culture that is so divided on just about every topic that is presented to us, it is hard to hold what seem to be polarities together. But that is what God demands of his people. It is what Jesus demonstrated and taught during his life here on earth. It is not a coincidence that the great Shema found in the Old Testament — “Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart

and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) — is preceded by the Ten Commandments. Obeying the Ten Commandments was a part of the Israelites loving the LORD their God.

Jesus was just reiterating the Shema when he responded to the question, “What is the most important commandment?” Jesus replied, “The most important one is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no greater commandment than these” (Mark 12:29-31). In his *Sermon on the Mount* he says, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, nor the least stroke of a pen, will disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished” (Matthew 5:17-18). And in his last words recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, he said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to

me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:18-20a). For those who are in Christ, we are called to obey God’s commands, to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love one another.

“Radical love” and “radical discipleship” are two sides of the same coin; they go hand in hand with following Jesus. The original Anabaptists and Mennonites seemed to be good at being able to hold the two together, perhaps because many were the persecuted in the culture in which they lived. For those of us today who have been raised in the American culture (even as Mennonite Christians) where we face little or no persecution, we seem to pick and choose who and how we want to love and what life and teachings of Jesus we want to follow.

As we follow Jesus together into the future seeking God’s direction for us as a conference of Anabaptist/Mennonite churches, may we heed his call to both “radical love” and “radical discipleship.” ■

**“‘Radical love’ and ‘radical discipleship’ are two sides of the same coin; they go hand in hand with following Jesus.”**

# Anti-racist journey

Continued from page 5

engaged in mutual engagement with people of color, to the glory of God and the hope of a relevant church.

Greg Bowman is a member of Grace & Groundings, the Ohio Conference anti-racism resource

team. Greg currently lives in Harrisonburg, Virginia, and is formerly of the Midway Mennonite Church in Columbiana, Ohio.

**The Grace & Groundings team would like to invite readers to submit their re-**

**sponse or own answers to the question, “When did you begin to grapple with being White?”**

Please send your response to

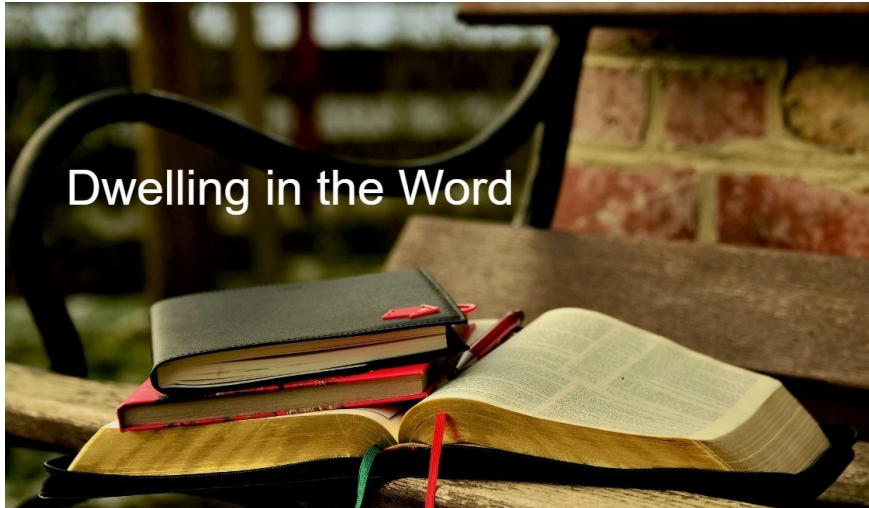
[graceandgroundings@gmail.com](mailto:graceandgroundings@gmail.com).



*Participants from across the Conference reflect on Scripture reading initiative*

## Dwelling in the Word together

Zion Mennonite Church used texts from Ohio Conference's Dwelling in the Word Scripture reading initiative for a fall sermon series. Thanks goes to Zion Mennonite for sharing this illustration, which was used in conjunction with the series.



“Faithful Disciples Imitate Christ,” and “Faithful Disciples Disciple Others.”

As part of the sermon series, Sue Short invited several people to give a two-minute Dwelling in the Word testimony prior to the sermon, reflecting on what they had

experienced or learned while Dwelling in the Word.

Members at Zion engaged with the Dwelling in the Word Scripture passages in other settings as well. A Zoom Bible study that meets on Tuesdays used the suggested texts, and the congregation's youth studied the texts in their Sunday school classes.

Sue Short noted that she encouraged people at Zion who got behind in their reading not to give up on the whole project, but instead to start again with the current Scripture readings and not worry about “making up” skipped readings. “The important thing is to be in the habit of regularly engaging with Scripture, and if you only get through part of this reading plan, that's OK,” she said. “You've done more than you would have done otherwise. It's just developing a regular habit.” She also encouraged people

Continued on page 9

**When Sue Short, collaborative minister at Zion Mennonite Church in Archbold, heard about Ohio Conference's Dwelling in the Word Scripture reading initiative, she was excited about the plan. “That's something that's important to me — encouraging folks to read Scripture, and however that can happen, I'm on board for that. Sign me up,” she said.**

Conference Minister Dick Barrett announced the Dwelling in the Word initiative last summer, noting that especially during this time of discernment about the future direction of the Ohio Conference, it seems important to focus on spiritual disciplines as we seek God's will together.

For the Dwelling in the Word initiative, Dick Barrett invited everyone in the Ohio Conference to read through the entire

New Testament by the end of 2022, noting that in order to read through the New Testament in a little less than six months would require reading only two chapters per day. A suggested reading schedule was provided.

At Zion Mennonite Church, congregation members were encouraged to read the scriptures on their own, but in addition, the church used the Dwelling in the Word scriptures as the basis of a fall series of worship services.

Sermons in the fall worship service series were designed to introduce the passages that congregation members would be reading in the upcoming week. In order to give continuity to the sermon series, the sermons focused on answering the question, “What does this passage have to say about being a faithful disciple?” Some of the themes for the series were “Faithful Disciples are Rooted and Grounded in Love,”

**“The important thing is to be in the habit of regularly engaging with Scripture.”**  
– Sue Short



# Dwelling in the Word

Continued from page 8

who don't enjoy reading to try listening to the Scriptures, whether on an app, online, on CDs, or even on cassette tapes for those who still use them.

## AN INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE

While Zion Mennonite Church leadership encouraged a group effort for Dwelling in the Word, some other people from around the Conference had a more individual experience.

Eldina Nussbaum, a member of Crown Hill Mennonite Church, didn't read the Scriptures with a group. However, she felt connection with others from around the Conference as she reflected that others were reading the same Scripture passages as she was. When links to the daily texts were posted on the Conference Facebook page, she began reading from that source (which used the New International Version of the Bible). "I thought, well other people are reading these very same words, and that seemed very meaningful to me, that I was doing it with others." Eldina noted that participating in this spiritual discipline helped give clarity on things that Ohio Conference delegates will be discussing in upcoming meetings.

## A WAY TO ENGAGE COMMUNITY

Another individual who appreciated the chance to engage Scripture with others in the Ohio Conference was Glenn Nofziger, who began his work as pastor of Sonnenberg Mennonite Church in Kidron on Sept. 1. The Dwelling in the

## Dwelling in the Word

### Ohio Conference New Testament Reading Schedule

July 18-Dec. 23, 2022

Week of	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 - July 17	Luke 1-2	Luke 3-4	Luke 5-6	Luke 7-8	Luke 9-10	Luke 11-12
2 - July 24	Luke 13-14	Luke 15-16	Luke 17-18	Luke 19-20	Luke 21-22	Luke 23-24
3 - July 31	Acts 1-2	Acts 3-4	Acts 5-6	Acts 7-8	Acts 9-10	Acts 11-12
4 - Aug. 7	Acts 13-14	Acts 15-16	Acts 17-18	Acts 19-20	Acts 21-22	Acts 23-24
5 - Aug. 14	Acts 25-26	Acts 27-28	Matt. 1-2	Matt. 3-4	Matt. 5-6	Matt. 7-8
6 - Aug. 21	Matt. 9-10	Matt. 11-12	Matt. 13-14	Matt. 15-16	Matt. 17-18	Matt. 19-20
7 - Aug. 28	Matt. 21-22	Matt. 23-24	Matt. 25-26	Matt. 27-28	Rom. 1-2	Rom. 3-4
8 - Sept. 4	Rom. 5-6	Rom. 7-8	Rom. 9-10	Rom. 11-12	Rom. 13-14	Rom. 15-16
9 - Sept. 11	1 Cor. 1-2	1 Cor. 3-4	1 Cor. 5-6	1 Cor. 7-8	1 Cor. 9-10	1 Cor. 11-12
10 - Sept. 18	1 Cor. 13-14	1 Cor. 15-16	2 Cor. 1-2	2 Cor. 3-4	2 Cor. 5-6	2 Cor. 7-8
11 - Sept. 25	2 Cor. 9-10	2 Cor. 11-12	2 Cor. 13	Gal. 1-2	Gal. 3-4	Gal. 5-6
12 - Oct. 2	Eph. 1-2	Eph. 3-4	Eph. 5-6	Phil. 1-2	Phil. 3-4	Col. 1-2
13 - Oct. 9	Col. 3-4	1 Thess. 1-2	1 Thess. 3-4	1 Thess. 5	2 Thess. 1-2	2 Thess. 3
14 - Oct. 16	Mark 1-2	Mark 3-4	Mark 5-6	Mark 7-8	Mark 9-10	Mark 11-12
15 - Oct. 23	Mark 13-14	Mark 15-16	1 Tim. 1-2	1 Tim. 3-4	1 Tim. 5-6	2 Tim. 1-2
16 - Oct. 30	2 Tim. 3-4	Titus 1-2	Titus 3	Philemon	Heb. 1-2	Heb. 3-4
17 - Nov. 6	Heb. 5-6	Heb. 7-8	Heb. 9-10	Heb. 11-12	Heb. 13	James 1-2
18 - Nov. 13	James 3-4	James 5	1 Peter 1-2	1 Peter 3-4	1 Peter 5	2 Peter 1-3
19 - Nov. 20	John 1-2	John 3-4	John 5-6	John 7-8	John 9-10	John 11-12
20 - Nov. 27	John 13-14	John 15-16	John 17-18	John 19-20	John 21	
21 - Dec. 4	1 John 1-2	1 John 3-4	1 John 5	2 John	3 John	Jude
22 - Dec. 11	Rev. 1-2	Rev. 3-4	Rev. 5-6	Rev. 7-8	Rev. 9-10	Rev. 11-12
23 - Dec. 18	Rev. 13-14	Rev. 15-16	Rev. 17-18	Rev. 19-20	Rev. 21-22	
<b>Merry Christmas!</b>						

Word initiative began while he was in an in-between period, during the three months between the end of his work at Martins Creek Mennonite Church and the start of his time at Sonnenberg. Participating in Dwelling in the Word was one way for him to plug into the Ohio Conference in that in-between time. "I appreciate the invitation for us all to do something together," he said. "It felt unifying to me."

Once Glenn began his work at Sonnenberg, he started participating in the area pastor-peer group, which also often focused on the Scriptures from Dwelling in the Word.

Glenn noted that he is currently in the process of reading through the entire Bible for the 10<sup>th</sup> time. "Reading through the Bible has been an important practice for me. It's been grounding, and it's how I hear God speaking to me, more than anything."

## READING TOGETHER AT HOME

In another part of the state, northwest Ohio, Dean and Jeanette Beck of Central Mennonite Church made a practice of reading the Dwelling the Word scriptures out loud to each other. They used a Bible app on their phones, and they took turns reading aloud the Scripture to each other. Dean and Jeanette noted that as they read, they often would discuss the passage as ideas came up, and when they had questions about a particular passage, they would sometimes consult Bible commentaries for background. The Becks said that sometimes the discussions of the day's Scripture would lead into discussions of other related topics.

Dean and Jeanette said that they appreciated having the Scripture reading schedule set out in advance so that they did not have to wonder what they

The Dwelling in the Word reading schedule generally assigned two chapters of Scripture each day. Sundays were kept free and could be used to catch up on any missed readings.

*"Reading through the Bible has been an important practice for me. It's been grounding, and it's how I hear God speaking to me, more than anything."*

– Glenn

Nofziger

Continued on page 10

# Dwelling in the Word

Continued from page 9

should read next. They also appreciated that the schedule mixed the order of the books of the New Testament, so that they were not reading all the Gospels right in a row. Jeanette noted that she marked off each reading as they completed it, and she liked to see their progress. “It was really a good thing to sit down together and do that, two chapters a day. It wasn’t a long time, but it was very worthwhile,” she said.

*Book.* Although the group that gathered online was small, she appreciated the chance to share together with others from around the Conference.

“There’s something about praying out loud together and reading scripture together that is more meaningful to me than just reading chapter after chapter by myself.”

As for Dwelling in the Word, Miriam expressed appreciation

for the interactions she experienced in this Scripture-focused effort. “This is what church should be,” she said. We should be reading scripture together and talking about it. And we didn’t agree on everything, but just having these conversations around Scripture and getting insights from other people — I just found that to be what church should be.” ■

*“This is what church should be. We should be reading scripture together and talking about it.”*

– Miriam Zehr

## ASKING QUESTIONS WITH A GROUP

Back in Wayne County, Miriam Zehr, associate pastor at Oak Grove Mennonite Church in Smithville, also found Dwelling in the Word to be a very good experience. “At first, I just was doing it personally, for me,” she said. However, during the fall Sunday school quarter, she led a Sunday school class based on the Scripture passages in the Dwelling in the Word schedule. About 12 people from Oak Grove participated in the class. Each week, after Miriam gave a brief introduction to the passage, class members discussed a variety of questions, such as “What in this passage spoke to you? What verse stood out as one of your favorites and why? What questions do you have about this scripture?”

Miriam also expressed appreciation for Ohio Conference’s online prayer times which were held on Wednesdays at noon during the fall. Those prayer times were based on the resource *Take Our Moments and Our Days: An Anabaptist Prayer*

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## ABOUT PEOPLE

### Pastoral notes

On Sunday, Nov. 20, 2022, Hardaye Ramjit was ordained as a pastor at Lee Heights Community Church in Cleveland. Hardaye joins the pastoral team with Lead Pastor Vikki Pruitte-Sorrells, and they look to add others from the congregation to join the team in the near future.

Along with the members and attenders of Lee Heights Church, there were many of Hardaye's family and friends present for the service, as well as representatives from the community and Ohio Conference. One of those present was



recently retired Regional Pastor Ralph Reinford, who assisted Hardaye in the licensing toward ordination process. Conference

Minister Dick Barrett preached a sermon from Galatians 2:20 titled "Crucified with Christ," and officiated the ordination ceremony. ■

Hardaye Ramjit (left) was ordained for Christian ministry on Sunday, Nov. 20, at Lee Heights Community Church in Cleveland. Conference Minister Dick Barrett (right) led the ordination ceremony.

### Mennonite Church USA

(Newton, Kansas) – It is with great sadness that Mennonite Church USA (MC USA) announces the passing of James ("Jim") Frederick Schrag, 78, pastor, leader and first executive director of the denomination, on Saturday, Jan. 7, 2023, in North Newton, Kansas.

Schrag was a life-long member of the Mennonite church. His devotion to God and the church was abundantly clear and resulted in 36 years of formal ministry.

"Jim served God faithfully through his call to ministry at every level of the church," said Glen Guyton, MC USA executive director. "I am thankful for the opportunities I had to work with Jim. He was a pioneer and a prophetic leader who sacrificed so much to draw people to Jesus and each other, em-

bodying the vision of Mennonite Church USA."

Schrag was instrumental in the formation of MC USA, serving as the project leader of the transformation team that brought together the Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonite Church to create the largest Mennonite denomination in the United States. He served as executive director of MC USA from mid-2001, through the official merger in Feb. 2002, and until his retirement in 2009.

Schrag was ordained in [Western District Conference](#) and began his formal ministry career at [Tabor Mennonite Church, in Newton, Kansas](#), in 1973. He served as pastor of Tabor Mennonite for 12 years. He, then, moved to Smithville, Ohio, where he pastored [Oak Grove](#)



[Mennonite Church](#) for 11 years, from 1985 to 1996.

Schrag was called to serve as the general secretary of the General Conference Mennonite Church in 1996, a position he held for three years before leading the denominational transformation team.

For a complete obituary, please see the Mennonite Church USA website: <https://bit.ly/JamesSchragObituary>. ■

## Conference Calendar

### JAN

- 17 Winter Cluster Meeting, Maple Grove Mennonite, Hartville
- 17 Ohio Conference Winter Read, online
- 19 Winter Cluster Meeting, Toledo Mennonite
- 24 Ohio Conference Winter Read, online
- 24 Winter Cluster Meeting, Sharon Mennonite, Plain City
- 26 Winter Cluster Meeting, Orrville Mennonite
- 30 Winter Cluster Meeting, online
- 31 Ohio Conference Winter Read, online

### FEB

- 3-5 Mennonite Arts Weekend, Pleasant Ridge Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati
- 3-5 Youth Retreat, Camp Luz, Kidron
- 7 Ohio Conference Winter Read, online
- 14 Ohio Conference Winter Read, online
- 17-19 Jr. High Retreat, Camp Luz, Kidron
- 21 Ohio Conference Winter Read, online
- 28 Ohio Conference Winter Read, online

### MAR

- 3-4 Annual Conference Assembly, Central Christian School, Kidron

### APR

- 15 Missional Workshop, St. Francis Spirituality Center, Tiffin

to express your views in essay format on critical issues facing U.S. society. Submissions are due Feb. 24, 2023, and may be in English or Spanish. The grand prize is \$1,000! Find out more about the high school essay contest: <https://bit.ly/2023MCCEssayContest>.

**Mennonite Mission Network (MMN) now has prayer slides available**, in PowerPoint and PDF formats, to aid your congregation in praying for Mennonite Mission Network's international mission workers. You can find these resources on the "Prayer Resources" page of the MMN website: <https://bit.ly/MMNPrayer>. Scroll past the *Prayer Vine* and Presentation Slides to view the Mission Worker Slides.

**Everence is continuing its college scholarship program** for the 2023-24 school year and will be accepting applications through **Feb. 28, 2023**. The program awards scholarships of \$1,000, \$2,000 and \$3,000. To be eligible the student or the student's parent must own or be using an Everence product. For more details or to apply, visit [everence.com/college-scholarships](https://everence.com/college-scholarships). ■

## OHIO MENNONITE EVANGEL

*News & Views of Ohio Conference*

For more Ohio Conference news, visit the Ohio Conference website: [ohiomennoniteconference.org](http://ohiomennoniteconference.org)

## Back page briefings...

**The annual MCC U.S. National Peace & Justice Ministries** essay contest highlights the perspectives of youth on significant

public policy issues. Are you a youth who attends a Mennonite high school or an Anabaptist church? This contest is your opportunity