

Ohio Conference Identity Updated April 24, 2023



Ohio Conference Mission

We are committed to living into our new mission statement of *Gathering, Equipping and Sending our congregations by the power of the Holy Spirit to live out God's Greatest Commandments* (loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and loving others as ourselves) *and Jesus' Great Commission* (going out and making disciples of Jesus Christ).

We are committed to doing life together as sisters and brothers in Jesus Christ for the glory and honor of his name.

We fully support the 1995 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (Ohio Conference Constitution and 2015 Resolution).

We are committed to continuing our current initiatives of anti-racism training and intercultural development, empowering women in leadership, and educating and equipping our pastors and congregational leaders in missional theology and action.

We are committed to continuing the two-year strategic planning process, which includes discerning God's vision for us today and into the future based on our new mission statement. This process will include suggestions for structural change to better live into the vision.

Affiliation and Autonomy

We are committed to continuing to claim the autonomy of Ohio Conference.

While Ohio Conference is a member conference of Mennonite Church USA (MC USA), Ohio Conference determines its own policies, credentialing guidelines, budget, structure, staff, and congregational membership.

Ohio Conference exercises its authority and autonomy within MC USA according to the [MC USA Bylaws](#):

- *"Each area conference shall establish provisions and procedures for the credentialing of ministers."* Ohio Conference uses Ohio Conference credentialing guidelines.
- *"Each congregation shall, insofar as it is possible, call ministers that are certified or registered by a member area conference of MC USA under the provisions and procedures defined by its own area conference as a credentialing body of MC USA."* Ohio Conference holds the credentials for all ministers in Ohio Conference.
- While we recognize that Ohio Conference's credentialed ministers, delegates, and congregational members are in different places on the interpretation of Scripture regarding sexual ethics and how to include LGBTQIA+ persons in the life of their congregations, we continue to hold our credentialed ministers accountable to the resolution passed by our delegate body in 2015 that our credentialed ministers will not perform a same-gender ceremony/marriage or be in a same-sex relationship themselves.

Ohio Conference continues to follow its 2017 Constitution revision allowing individual congregations to opt out of direct membership with MC USA. Ohio Conference congregations that opt out of MC USA do not participate in MC USA decision-making or include individuals who represent MC USA on boards. The general giving to Ohio Conference from non-MC USA congregations is not considered by Ohio Conference in the percentage that is given to MC USA. The ministers of congregations that opt out of MC USA continue to remain credentialed with Ohio Conference. Congregations that want to remain a part of Ohio Conference but not directly affiliate with MC USA may remain just a member congregation of Ohio Conference or also explore other networking options if they so desire.

Access to Other Mennonite Agencies and Resources

Ohio Conference and its congregations are members of Mennonite World Conference through MC USA.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) are non-MC USA agencies, and any Mennonite and/or Anabaptist entity can relate with them.

Ohio Conference congregations continue to have access to the Corinthian Plan health insurance for its members and employees through Everence. Everence and Mennonite Health Services (MHS), currently agencies of MC USA, will become partner agencies of MC USA, similar to MCC and MDS, if proposed MC USA Bylaw changes are affirmed by MC USA delegates at the July 2023 Delegate Assembly. Any congregation or individual can directly support Mennonite Mission Network (MMN) and/or Mennonite Education Agency (MEA), which are agencies of MC USA.