

**Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA
Credentialing Ministry Team
Upper Sandusky Library, Upper Sandusky, Ohio
May 17, 2023**

Present: Dick Barrett, Dee Custar, Doug King (chair), Larry Rohrer, Rachelle Lyndaker Schlabach, LaVerne Yousey, Judy King (recorder)

1. **Welcome and devotional time.** Doug welcomed everyone to the meeting. Dee led the devotional time, inviting us to think about gathering around a table and to think about who is there and who has a voice. She read Psalm 23, which speaks of a table with the presence of our enemies, whom we might think of as “others.” What does it mean to have “others” at the table? How do we truly invite people to come to the table? If Christ is our model, we need to be willing to do the hard work to find out how to open the door. She led in prayer.
2. **Minutes.** The minutes from the April 20, 2023, meeting were approved as presented.
3. **Conference Pastor Updates.** Dick reported that both he and Tony are working with congregations that are in some form of upheaval. The challenge is trying to get folks to stay at the table. Some congregations are comfortable staying with Ohio Conference, but want to leave Mennonite Church USA (MC USA). Some are discerning leaving both MC USA and Ohio Conference. A couple of congregations are discerning whether they should leave Ohio Conference and join Central District Conference (CDC), with whom they seem to be more aligned. Dick noted that there seems to be more movement from the denomination in working with us in regards to those congregations wishing to dis-associate from MC USA than before. The challenge for some of these congregations is that they are entering pastoral transitions and must decide who will resource them in a pastoral search process.
4. **Report from OMC Leadership Team.** Rachelle reported that the Leadership Team (LT) spent a lot of time in April looking at delegate feedback from Annual Conference Assembly and sent out a letter (which seems to have been well received) about intentions of the Conference moving forward. Rachel Ringenberg Miller joined the meeting for some dialogue. She stressed the importance of having all of our credentialed pastors go through the MLI process. She also reported on the specific things that currently happen when a congregation chooses to dis-associate from MC USA.

Dick reported that the intention for this year is to work on strategic planning, looking at visioning and structure. Our consultant, Jeanne Zimmerly Jantzi, will be leading a joint meeting of the Leadership Team and Ministry Development Team next month to work on a strategic plan. The results will be brought to our pastors at their gathering in August and then to the delegates at the fall cluster meetings. Both groups will have the opportunity to give input regarding the plan.

5. **Review 2022 Credentialing Ministry Team (CMT) Retreat document.** The document was read and reviewed, and the following revisions were made:
 - The private and public minutes will be sent separately so that the email with the private minutes can be deleted when they are no longer needed. A reminder to destroy interview documents will be given at the end of any meetings that include interviews. A copy of all interview materials will be filed securely in the pastor files at the Conference office.
 - Dick explained that a couple of years ago, all pastors were asked to sign a code of ethics form, but it only addressed sexual misconduct. After conversations with other conference ministers and dialogue with our own pastors, two documents were developed: 1) Code of Ethics for Credentialed Ministers of Ohio Conference and 2) Common Commitments of Credentialed Ministers in Ohio Conference. These new forms will be required to be signed by every pastor with the status of “Active,” “Active Without Charge” or “Retired.” The plan will be to distribute at the credentialed pastors’ meeting in August and follow up at pastor peer groups.
 - Ministerial Misconduct Investigations. Dick reported that Janice Hershberger has agreed to serve as a reporter, especially during the periods when Dottie Hathaway is out of the area. Dee is the

reporter in the west. She suggested a meeting with Dick for all the reporters. The process of misconduct investigations is being revised at the denominational level, so processes will be changing. Dick asked for name suggestions of persons that we might ask to serve as investigators.

- Credentialing Process. It was agreed that if an MLI has been completed within the last four years, an update will not be required prior to an ordination interview, but the ordination interview questions will be required. Requiring the personality assessment prior to the credentialing interview was affirmed. Dick will prepare an ordination checklist. The use of Appreciative Inquiry was also affirmed. It was suggested that Appreciative Inquiry forms (with an explanation) be sent to our congregations once a year so this tool is readily available.

6. Status of Credentialed Pastors.

- Dick reported that Agora Christian Fellowship has joined the Evana Network and that a letter will be coming letting us know that Agora is withdrawing from Ohio Conference.

Action. Upon receipt of the letter from Agora, the credentials for Rich and Becky Bartholomew will be withdrawn.

- Walt Morton has been serving as a transitional pastor for many years. He continues in this role and his status will be changed from "Active Without Charge" to "Active."
- Tom Michaels has served as a transitional pastor and as a chaplain the past number of years, but he is not a member of an Ohio Conference congregation. Dick will inform him that he may join a congregation that is a part of Ohio Conference. **If that doesn't happen, we agreed to withdraw Tom's credential.**
- Dick will be reaching out to several pastors regarding their credential status.
- Hector Velez has been licensed for specialized ministry, serving as a chaplain to motorcycle gangs. Because the license has expired, we will need a letter of request for continued licensing from his home congregation (Good Shepherd). We will invite him to meet with CMT, but it will not be required.

7. **Healthy Boundaries training.** Because we are requiring our pastors to receive Healthy Boundaries training every three years, we will be offering the training this fall. Dates will be set at the next meeting. Dick will contact Jon Bohley and Laurel Neufeld Weaver about leading the training.

8. **CMT Summer Retreat.** A retreat is on the schedule for Aug. 25-26, 2023 (Friday-Saturday) at Dee Custar's cottage on Lake Diane, Camden, Michigan.

9. **Next meeting.** The next meeting was scheduled for July 12, 2023, at 9:30 a.m. at Upper Sandusky Library.

Judy King, recorder