

OHIO MENNONITE EVANGEL

News & Views of Ohio Conference

MAY/JUNE 2023



ohiomennoniteconference.org

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Ohio Conference Leadership Team outlines plans for the coming year

The Leadership Team of Ohio Conference met for its annual retreat on April 13 to fellowship with one another, pray, and to discern together God's leading of Ohio Conference over the next year.

Following the retreat, the Leadership Team has outlined plans for the coming year in a letter to pastors, congregations and delegates.

The Leadership Team plans to continue with the Conference's strategic planning process, focusing on the Conference mission: "To Gather, Equip and Send our congregations by the power of the Holy Spirit to live out God's Greatest Commandments and Jesus' Great Commission."

The letter and an updated Ohio Conference statement of identity can be found on



*Loving God, Loving Others,
Making Disciples of Jesus Christ*

the Ohio Conference website: <https://bit.ly/4-23LeadershipTeamLetter>. ■

Ministry Grants can help fund local projects

Ministry Grants are back! Aug. 4 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 mission projects and initiatives.

This year the MDT has \$7,395 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

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Editor: Ann H. Leaman

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Send subscription information and email address changes to the editor at ohioevangel@gmail.com.

Group effort benefits MCC



Volunteers knotted 220 comforters during the Ohio MCC Comforter Bash in Kidron on April 21-22. Pictured are (left to right) Elijah King, Isaac Obri, Allison Hochstetler, Chloe Obri, Mara Steiner and Harris Steiner.

Many people volunteered their time at the second Ohio MCC Comforter Bash, which was held in Kidron April 21 and 22.

Volunteers knotted 220 comforters during the two-day event, a substantial increase from the 129 com-

forters which were completed during the 2022 Ohio MCC Comforter Bash.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has a goal of donating 45,000 blankets by the end of 2023 to people around the world who are dealing with conflict and disaster.

If you are interested in making a comforter, see mcc.org/comforters to learn more.

To view more photos from this year's Ohio MCC Comforter Bash, see the MCC Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/MCCpeace>. ■

Summit Mennonite meeting in new location

Summit Mennonite Church, formerly located in Barberton, is now meeting nearby in Norton. The congregation is renting space at the Grace United Church of Christ of Loyal Oak, 3285

S. Cleveland Massillon Road, Norton.

Summit Mennonite's email address is summit2mennonite@gmail.com. The congregation's mailing address

is as follows: Summit Mennonite Church, PO Box 296, Wadsworth OH 44282. To contact Summit Mennonite by phone, call 234-802-3373. ■

Personnel of the Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA

Moderator: Ken Sims — simsken6@gmail.com

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Ministry Grants

Continued from page 1

impact your community, consider applying for a Ministry Grant.

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
- Racial reconciliation 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. 4, 2023**. 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>. ■

Pastor-Spouse Retreat set for Nov. 10-12

Ohio Conference will hold its 2023 Pastor-Spouse Retreat Nov. 10-12 at Deer Creek State Park Lodge and Conference Center in Mt. Sterling, Ohio, about 32 miles south of Columbus. The theme of this weekend event will be “Fill My Cup.”

This retreat has been designed to provide an affordable time away for pastors and their spouses. The retreat will offer a combination of organized activities and unstructured time.

During the weekend, participants will be encouraged to rest in the Lord, refresh through downtime, self-care and couple-care, and reconnect with their spouse and with other pastoral couples.

Cost for this retreat is \$250 per couple. The price includes a room for two nights, snacks, breakfast, lunch and dinner on Saturday, and breakfast on Sunday. Registration is due by



Sept. 1, 2023. For more information or to register, go to <https://bit.ly/2023Pastor-SpouseRetreat>. A retreat brochure with a schedule is available at <https://bit.ly/2023Pastor-SpouseBrochure>. ■

CONFERENCE MINISTER MUSINGS

A Vision Beyond Ourselves

By Dick Barrett
Conference Minister

As a conference of Anabaptist Mennonite churches across Ohio and the surrounding states we find ourselves at the beginning of our second year of discerning together God's vision for us as we look to the future. Over the past year our process consultant, Jeanne Zimmerly Jantzi, met with our credentialed leaders and congregational delegates to find out what they appreciate most about Ohio Conference and what they believe to be God's future vision for the conference.

All that information has been collated, and it is now the task of the Leadership Team, once again with the assistance of the Ministry Development Team, our credentialed leaders and congregational delegates, to distill all that information and discern God's vision.

What is God's future vision for us as Ohio Conference? Well, first and foremost, it is a vision which is beyond ourselves. It is a vision that can never be fully realized during our time here on earth. It is a vision which cannot be achieved without the

help of the Holy Spirit. It is a vision that needs to be lived into. Here are some of the themes that have emerged in the first year of our discernment process regarding God's vision for Ohio Conference:

- A place of shalom where love, restoration, healing and wholeness reigns.
- A peaceable kingdom where all come to know Jesus as Savior and Lord.
- A place where the love of God and love of others is manifest in the world.
- A place where there is unity in Christ amidst the diversity of the people.
- A place where God's grace and mercy are experienced and extended to all.

This year I am once again reading through Oswald Chambers' devotional, *My Utmost for His Highest*. Interestingly, today I find myself being confronted with the devotion titled "The Patience to Wait for the Vision."

Chambers writes, "Patience is not the same as indifference; patience conveys the idea of someone who is tremendously strong and able to withstand all assaults. Having the vision of God is the source of patience because it gives us true and proper inspiration. Moses endured, not because of his devotion to his principles of what was right, nor because he had a



vision of God. He endured seeing Him who is invisible (Hebrews 11:27). A person who has the vision of God is not devoted to a cause or to any particular issue, he or she is devoted to God Himself. You always know when the vision is of God because of the inspiration that comes with it. ... The proof that we have the vision is that we are reaching out for more than we have already grasped."

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened."— Matthew 7:7-8 (ESV)

My prayer is that we will be patient as we continue on together to ask, to seek, and to knock for God to reveal his future vision for us. "For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened." ■

"My prayer is that we will be patient as we continue on together to ask, to seek, and to knock for God to reveal his future vision for us."

Creation care resources abound

By Ann Leaman
Ohio Conference
Resource Advocate

This month I would like to highlight a number of resources related to the environment.

MCC

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has gathered a set of resources related to the environment and climate change, all available at <https://mcc.org/mcc-climate-change>.

The introduction to this collection says, “Our partners say changing weather affects almost every aspect of their lives. But why is the climate changing? And how is climate change impacting vulnerable people, farmers and the planet’s water supply?”

The resources include a selection of fact sheets which explore questions such as “How is climate change affecting farmers?” Also included are videos and MCC news stories that explore how the changing climate is affecting people around the world who are connected with MCC programs.

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

The environment is also a focus of the April issue of *Courier*, the publication of Mennonite World Conference. This issue

Courier Correo Courier



Caring for God’s Creation

includes several articles from around the world focusing on creation care, with Anabaptist authors from Zimbabwe, Canada, Colombia, France, and Indonesia. To download a copy of this issue, go to <https://bit.ly/April2023Courier>.

CONFERENCES

Two upcoming conferences also will focus on the environment. In July the Anabaptist Climate Collaborative, Mennon-

YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT CLIMATE SUMMIT

ite Church USA and Mennonite Creation Care Network are offering a one-day Youth and Young Adult Climate Summit. This event will take place July 7 at the Kansas City Convention Center in Kansas City, Missouri, immediately following Menno-

Con23. This gathering is intended for youth and their chaperones, as well as young adults up to age 25.

The keynote speaker for the Youth and Young Adult Climate Summit will be Talitha Amadea Aho, author of *In Deep Waters: Spiritual Care for Young People in a Climate Crisis*. To learn more or to register for this event,

see <https://bit.ly/2023ClimateSummit>.

On Sept. 28-30 Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana, will host the Rooted and Grounded Conference on Land and Christian Discipleship. Participants can attend in person or virtually.

The theme of this year’s Rooted and Grounded Conference will be “Pathways through Climate Doom: Resistance and Resilience.” The conference will examine theological, biblical and pastoral care responses to climate doom. How do people of faith combine active engagement and deeply rooted hope?

Keynote speakers will include Kaitlin Curtice; Leah Thomas, PhD; and Jackie Wyse-Rhodes, PhD. See ambs.edu/rooted-and-grounded for more information or to register. ■

GRACE & GROUNDINGS

'Aha' moments: Reflections on a lifetime

By Gregory Battle

"Now I understand why people choose to have biographers. This is painful to revisit." — All-Too-Black Greg

Many of the things that have formed my life experiences are the same things that have formed the lives of other men of my age. Then there's a whole other thing: I am visibly Black. I have 67+ years of learning what that means in the era, spaces, and places I have lived. It's a lot — too much, lots of the time, and yet there are some "aha" moments that stand out for me as it relates to who I am as a person and a man of color. To be more specific, my identity as a Black man.

Here is my history...

I remember waking up and no one was there. I was alone. My whole world was the one I was in. I never knew being alone. I went out the door into the world and headed down a road going on a well-traveled path I was familiar with. The lady across the street called me to her.

I was 3 years old. To this day, my mother says she never left me alone. She was in the backyard hanging clothes on the line to dry. This was my first introduction to different perspectives. I also had a first-time understanding of colorism or race, as commonly named. My dad was dark-skinned, my mother light-skinned. My mom had a light-skinned mother and dark-



skinned father. My dad's parents were opposite. In my family and community there was a range of skin colors when I saw people.

Race never entered my consciousness. Then in 1960 at age 5, I went to school.

Elementary school aha: I was 6 years old. By this time, I was very comfortable in life. God had surrounded me with a

Continued on page 7

Another 'aha' experience

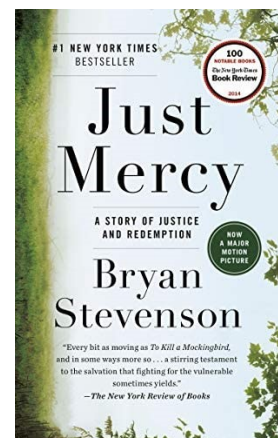
This moment of insight about how perceptions of race can shape experience comes from the book *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson. A group of people from around the Ohio Conference studied and discussed *Just Mercy* during January and February as part of the Ohio Conference Winter Read.

From pages 300-301 of *Just Mercy*:

Context: Bryan, an attorney, sitting at the defense table in a Midwestern courtroom by himself, dressed in suit and tie, is

mistaken by the judge for the defendant and ordered out to wait for his attorney.

"...But I was disheartened by the experience. Of course, innocent mistakes occur, but the accumulated insults and indignations caused by racial presumptions are destructive in ways that are hard to measure. Constantly being suspected, accused, watched, doubted, distrusted, presumed guilty, and even feared is a burden borne by people of color that can't



be understood or confronted without a deeper conversation about our history of racial injustice." ■

Celebrate Social Justice Sunday June 18

Grace & Groundings, Ohio Conference's racial reconciliation resource team, is inviting all Ohio Conference churches to set aside **Sunday, June 18, as Social Justice Sunday**, in recognition of Juneteenth the following day. (If June 18 does not work well for your congregation, please consider setting

SOCIAL JUSTICE

aside a different Sunday as Social Justice Sunday.)

The theme for this year's Sunday is race as it relates to freedom. The team has prepared

worship planning resources to help guide your planning. May these resources be helpful as you and your congregation learn, reflect and act in relation to racial reconciliation. Resources are available at <https://bit.ly/2023SocialJusticeSunday>.



'Aha' moments

Continued from page 6

loving family and with loving neighbors. Everyone seemed to like me.

Then came school.

My social experience was quite painful. Being teased, challenged, and confronted just didn't make sense. What did I do? Then someone called me Black. They may have been Black or White, I can't remember, yet I didn't think of myself as Black. Being a child, very literally, I was hurt. **Aha!**

Things like that happened throughout my young life. I never understood why the topic of civil rights was never brought up in our family talks. The focus was always on success in schooling, getting chores done, and getting outside to play with my friends.

High school aha: I attended a White, predominantly Jewish, private high school. You see, they needed Black boys to keep their federal funding. I then discovered how sheltered I had been. Going from mostly Black schools to being one of twelve

Blacks in a group of 250 students was traumatic.

In a Black literature class, I was asked about the Black opinion on a topic. I had no idea. At home I asked my dad what the Black opinion was. He asked me if I was Black.

"I am," I said proudly.

"What's your opinion?" he asked.

I told him.

"Well, that's a Black opinion." **Aha!**

From that moment until now, I know that no one person will ever represent the entire Black community. As with any other group of people, no one's opinion is the opinion of all.

But know this: People can be forced to be of one mind.

The pressure of oppression is a real and tangible thing — but you won't see it if you try to zoom in on it. You must step back, zoom out, use the wide angle, see the big picture.

Jesus gave us the same instructions. Don't focus on the letter of the law. See its spirit, the whole creation and intent of God. No one gets to choose their race, their family, their heart, or their purpose.

We are here to be the beloved community — be hands and feet of Jesus — for one another.

Aha!

Gregory Battle of Warrensville Heights in Cleveland is an elder at Lee Heights Community Church. He is a member of Grace & Groundings, Ohio Conference's resource team which is focusing on racial reconciliation. Other members of the team include Greg Bowman of Harrisonburg, Virginia, formerly of Midway Mennonite Church; Kevin Himes, pastor of Salem Mennonite Church in Kidron; Vikki Pruitte-Sorrells, pastor of Lee Heights Community Church in Cleveland; Doug Zehr, lead pastor of Oak Grove Mennonite Church in Smithville; and Alysia Short, Ohio Conference coordinator of volunteers and a member of Central Mennonite Church in Archbold. ■

"The pressure of oppression is a real and tangible thing — but you won't see it if you try to zoom in on it. You must step back, zoom out, use the wide angle, see the big picture."

ABOUT PEOPLE

Pastoral notes

Pictured left to right are Conference Minister Dick Barrett, Keith Lyndaker Schlabach, Rochelle Lyndaker Schlabach, and Sherah-Leigh Gerber. Keith and Rochelle were ordained for ministry March 19.



On March 19 Conference Minister Dick Barrett officiated the ordination of Rachelle Lyndaker Schlabach and Keith Lyndaker Schlabach at Millersburg Mennonite Church. Dick also brought the message, “Come, Follow Me!” based on John 21:1-19. Sherah-Leigh Gerber, who had served as both Keith and Rachelle’s regional pastor, as well as mentor for Rachelle during her licensing period, was also present for the service. The worship service was followed by a carry-in meal. ■

Nathanel Hofstetter Ressler was ordained for ministry March 26. Pictured left to right are Conference Minister Dick Barrett, Nathanel Hofstetter Ressler and Savannah Hofstetter Ressler.



Conference Minister Dick Barrett presided at the ordination of Pastor Nathanael Hofstetter Ressler at Maple Grove Mennonite Church on March 26. Zack Babb, a friend of Nathanael’s since childhood, and who is a minister with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, preached a sermon titled “Called to Life,” based on John 3:26-30. The worship service was followed by a time of fellowship with a carry-in meal. ■

Lucas Johnson was ordained for ministry May 7. Pictured left to right are Conference Minister Dick Barrett, Madison Johnson, Lucas Johnson, Amber Johnson, Robb Esh and Janet Esh.



On May 7 Conference Minister Dick Barrett officiated at Lucas Johnson’s ordination service at Valley View Mennonite Church in Spartansburg, Pennsylvania. Lucas was called from within the congregation and was mentored by Robb Esh while Robb was finishing his time serving as pastor. Lucas recently completed his time of licensing and was approved for ordination by Ohio Conference’s Credentialing Ministry Team. Several of Lucas’ family and friends were present. The service was followed by a fellowship meal. ■

ABOUT PEOPLE Continued from page 8

Jeff Hochstetler, lead pastor of Berlin Mennonite Church, will be one of two worship leaders at MennoCon23, the Mennonite Church USA Convention. Ana Alicia Hinojosa also will be serving as worship leader. MennoCon23 will take place July 3-6 in Kansas City, Missouri. The theme for this gathering is “Be Transformed.”

On Thursday, July 6, Jeff Hochstetler and Ana Alicia Hinojosa will lead a panel discussion, the Kaleidoscope of

Generations. Panelists will include representatives from several generations. The panel will discuss what the church looks like from the perspective of their respective generations, how transformation is influenced by one’s peers and what it looks like to be a church that moves forward together while being transformed by the Holy Spirit.

The panel will use Deuteronomy 34:1-9 and Acts 15:22-35 to exemplify how transformation



can take a long time to happen. They will discuss the idea that even though someone might have begun the process of transformation, they may not see the fruition of that transformation, because it may not occur until the next generation. ■

Sharon work camp to focus on local service

Sharon Mennonite Church in Plain City is hosting its annual work camp June 18-24. Work camp participants, middle school age and older, work at service projects in the local area.

People from other congregations, both adults and youth, are welcome to participate in



work camp. Youth work camp participants need to have finished at least sixth grade. Youth from other congregations are

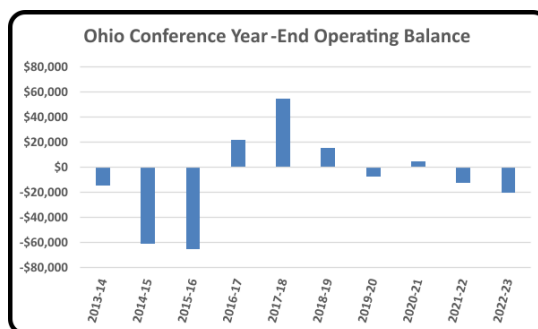
not required to bring along an adult as part of their participation

For more information, contact Jared Chase at jchase2882@gmail.com. To register, go to <https://forms.gle/RJAQAtw5T7Ly2oB57>. To listen to a podcast describing Sharon Mennonite’s work camp, go to <http://bit.ly/SharonWorkCamp>. ■

Ohio Conference ends 2022-2023 with deficit

Ohio Conference finished the 2022-23 fiscal year with a deficit of \$20,112. The fiscal year ended March 31, 2023.

The Conference ended February with a year-to-date operating balance of -\$18,211. Receipts for the month of March totaled \$19,678, including \$18,545 in giving from congregations. Expenses for the month totaled \$21,579, resulting in a deficit of \$1,901 for the month.



Over the past decade, the Conference has ended its fiscal year with a deficit six times. Please

see the accompanying graphic for details. ■

Conference Calendar

JUN

18 Social Justice Sunday

JUL

3-6 MennoCon23, Mennonite Church USA convention, Kansas City, Missouri

7-8 Mennonite Church USA delegate assembly, Kansas City, Missouri

7-8 Ohio Mennonite Relief Sale, Mount Hope Event Center

15-16 Ohio MCC Bike Ride, London, Ohio

NOV

10-12 Pastor-Spouse Retreat, Deer Creek State Park Lodge, Mt. Sterling, Ohio

Back page briefings...

Please note: Administrative Assistant Judy King's office hours for answering phone calls and responding to emails will be Monday through Thursday, effective immediately. You may contact her at ohmc@zoominternet.net or 330-857-5421.

In July a group of bike riders in Ohio will be raising funds for Mennonite Central Committee's (MCC) peace projects. Participants in the Ohio MCC Bike Ride will be riding 100 miles on the Ohio to Erie Trail July 15-16, using the London, Ohio, trailhead as a starting point on both

days. See <https://bit.ly/OhioMCCBikeRideInfo> for more details.

This year the Ohio Mennonite Relief Sale & Auction will have a new date and a new location. The 2023 sale will take place July 7 and 8 at the Mt. Hope Event Center, 8076 State Route 241, Millersburg. To learn more about this new venue, see the Mt. Hope Event Center website: <https://mthopeshows.com>.

The Ohio Mennonite Relief Sale & Auction is an annual benefit auction and festival event which raises funds for the work of Mennonite

Central Committee. Learn more at <https://ohiomccreliefsale.org>.

Journey: A Missional Leadership Development Program. Encourage someone you know who has gifts for ministry to check out this distance-friendly undergraduate-level program at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. Journey supports learners as they explore spiritual leadership in their local churches and communities and deepen their understanding of Anabaptist theology and ministry with a dedicated mentor. The Fall 2023 cohort begins Sept. 8; those who apply by July 11 can save \$100. See ambbs.edu/journey for more information.

The Mennonite Church USA (MC USA) Executive Board met in Los Angeles April 13-14, 2023. The board voted to forward three proposed organizational resolutions to the Delegate Assembly, including one that recommends shifting the Delegate Assembly to a three-year, or triennial, cycle. See a full report on the MC USA website: <https://bit.ly/4-23ExecutiveBoardMeeting>.



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News & Views of Ohio Conference

For more Ohio Conference news, visit the Ohio Conference website:
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