

**Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA
Credentialing Ministry Team
Zoom Meeting
Aug. 24, 2023**

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

1. **Welcome.** Doug welcomed us to the meeting.
2. **Devotional.** LaVerne shared that he has been thinking about church rules and thought of the Ten Commandments. As written, they seem to be negative and not directive in a positive way. But if we look at the New Testament, Christ said the greatest commandment is to love God with all of our heart, soul, and mind. Secondly, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. These are directive in a positive way. If we have a right relationship with God, we are able to love our neighbors as we should. Churches also have rules, often adapted to our convenience. He noted that as Christians, our ethics or our obedience shouldn't be limited to the situation we are in. He led in prayer.
3. **Minutes.** The minutes of the July 12, 2023, meeting were approved as presented. M/S/P
4. **Conference minister updates.** Dick reported the following:
 - Shawn Hilliard has resigned at Martins, effective in September.
 - Jared Chase is wrapping up his time at Sharon Mennonite on Sept. 3. Walter Campbell will take on many of the pastoral responsibilities for now.
 - Gary Stuckey begins as an associate pastor at Lockport on Sept. 9, 2023.
 - Doug and Miriam Zehr will be retiring from Oak Grove, Smithville, in May 2024. They have two search teams that are working. One search team is working to find an interim pastor and the second search team is working to find the next permanent pastor. Because they are a dual-conference congregation, they need to decide which area conference they will work with in their search process.
 - John David Thacker will begin serving at Zion Mennonite on Oct. 1, 2023, to join their collaborative ministry team.
5. **Leadership Team update.** Rachele reported that they are lining up two interim persons to serve as conference minister and regional pastor in the east. They spent time planning for ACA. Jared Chase is stepping down at Gifts Discernment Ministry chair, and Matt Weaver is moving into that role. Doug added that we should continue to remember the Leadership Team in our prayers.
6. **Code of Ethics/Common Commitments documents.** The regional pastors will work towards getting these documents signed at pastor peer groups. Dick noted that some of the denominational documents referenced may be changing. If so, we will revise our document and re-send.
7. **Healthy Boundaries Training.**
 - Judy previously sent a list of the pastors who have not had Healthy Boundaries 101 training. Doug will write a letter informing them of the Healthy Boundaries training requirement along with information about upcoming training opportunities, and Judy will send the letter electronically. The Akron Swahili Mennonite pastors will also need to have the training, but translation is something we need to check into. Rachele will check with other area conferences and Judy will check with Mennonite Church Canada to see if they offer translation services for these trainings.
 - Healthy Boundaries 201 is a refresher course with a specific emphasis. We plan to offer this training in early 2024, but we need to line up trainers (preferably a male and a female), and we need to find out what the denomination is recommending and using now that FaithTrust Institute disbanded. Dick will follow up with possible trainers and with Michael Danner from the denominational office.
8. **Credentialing Ministry Team Open positions.** Gifts Discernment is aware of the openings on this

team. Some names of persons were suggested as persons that might serve. Judy will send these names to the chairperson. It was noted that persons serving on this team do not have to be pastors. Persons with a human resources background or counseling or social work might also serve well on this team.

9. **Review status of Credentialed Pastors.**

- Hector Velez – recently interviewed and renewed his license for specialized ministry for two years. It isn't necessary for him to interview each time his license is up for renewal.
- John David Thacker - will be serving at Zion starting Oct. 1; Dick reported that Virginia Conference is preparing a letter to send to us regarding his credentials. We plan to have a Zoom meeting with him in September.
- Larry Rohrer – affirmed moving Larry from retired back to active status.
- Marvin Zuercher – would like to visit someone that is incarcerated. We will move his credential to retired status and prepare a ministerial ID card for him showing he is retired. Doug will check with other conferences in regards to their procedures with their retired pastors.

10. **Ministerial Misconduct Process.**

- Dee Custar and Dottie Hathaway had been serving as contact persons and reporters for misconduct cases. With Dee stepping away, Janice Hershberger has agreed to serve in this role.
- We looked at an outdated flyer which listed contact information for reporting pastoral misconduct in each of the four Great Lakes conferences. Dick will work with Ann to create a new flyer for Ohio Conference.

11. **Encouraging our Pastors.** There was discussion about ways that the Credentialing Ministry Team (CMT) can support and encourage our credentialed leaders. One suggestion was to put an announcement in *Delegate News*, on behalf of the Credentialing Ministry Team, to be aware of and support pastor appreciation month in October. It was suggested that regional pastors put out a reminder at pastor peer groups of the grants that CMT has available for further training. It was also suggested that pastor peer groups would be a good place to ask how CMT can support our pastors beyond the grant program. Are there retreats that could support our pastors in general? This discussion will be continued.

12. **Next meeting.** The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for Sept. 19, 2023, at 9 a.m. via Zoom.

Judy King, recorder