

OHIO MENNONITE EVANGEL

News & Views of Ohio Conference

SEPT/OCT 2023



ohiomennoniteconference.org

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Interim pastoral staff appointed

The Ohio Conference Leadership Team is pleased to announce the appointment of an interim conference minister and a half-time interim regional pastor for the eastern portion of the Conference.

The Leadership Team has appointed Dan Miller to serve as full-time interim conference minister for 12 months, beginning Dec. 1, 2023.

Dan has enjoyed various roles over the years, at congregational and conference levels. Most recently he has served as intentional interim

pastor at Zion Mennonite Church in Archbold. He thinks of “transition” being the theme of his years in ministry, being between what has been and what is coming.

Dan is the son of a pastor/social worker father and an elementary school teacher mother, both of whom grew up in Wayne County, Ohio. He lives in Goshen, Indiana, and is married to Nadine Zook Miller. Dan is an introvert who enjoys connecting with people. He emphasizes listening as an important leadership practice.

Dan enjoys science fiction. As a follower of the resurrected



Dan Miller

Christ, Dan seeks (and does not always succeed) to live from a place of grace and challenge. In addition to the spiritual practices of prayer,

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Grants will support local ministries

The Ohio Conference Ministry Development Team (MDT) has awarded four grants totaling \$7,395 for local ministries. The MDT approved these grants at its meeting on Aug. 22, 2023. Grants will provide funds toward the following projects:

Millersburg Mennonite Church Refugee Resettlement Program — Several members of Millersburg Mennonite Church are making plans to support a family of Congolese refugees to come to Ohio to live. MDT grant funds will be used to help purchase computers and internet access for the refugees so that they can gain access



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VOL. LXXVII, NO. 5

SEPT/OCT 2023

Editor: Ann H. Leaman

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, 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.

RESOURCE CORNER

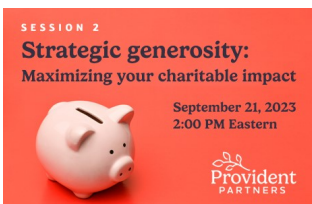
Webinar series focuses on giving

By Ann Leaman
Ohio Conference
Resource Advocate

This month I would like to highlight a resource about giving and a resource from Anabaptist Disabilities Network related to baptism.

PROVIDENT GIVING SESSIONS

This fall MennoMedia is



partnering with Everence to provide a free webinar series about generosity, "The Provident Giving Sessions." The first webinar, held in August, explored why people give.

The second webinar in the series will be held Sept. 21, focusing on the theme "Strategic Generosity: Maximizing your charitable impact."

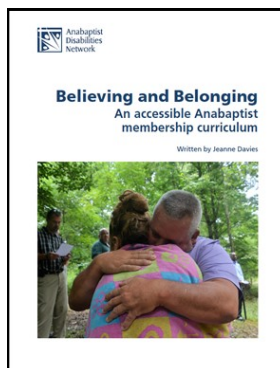
The final webinar in the

series, to be held on Oct. 19, will focus on the theme "Strategic generosity at year end."

All sessions begin at 2 p.m. ET. Recordings will be available for those whose schedules will not accommodate afternoon meetings. Register online at www.mennomedia.org/register-now.

BAPTISM RESOURCE

Anabaptist Disabilities Network (ADN) has published *Believing and Belonging: An Accessible Anabaptist Membership Curriculum* for youth and adults with intellectual disabilities. This curriculum fills the increasing need for curriculum written specifically for youth and adults with intellectual disabilities.



Congregations who seek to include people with disabilities in their faith communities can use this curriculum to welcome those with intellectual disabilities into full membership in the Body of Christ.

This curriculum has 36 lessons covering God's first people, the story of Jesus, the story of the Early Church, Anabaptist beliefs and practices, and a discussion of baptism and membership. Each story features a captivating illustration by Dona Park or real-life photos that assist in understanding. Lessons also involve a "do" portion, with action-items that provide a learning through doing approach.

Believing and Belonging is designed as a year-long preparation for a decision about baptism and church membership. Books are available from Brethren Press. To purchase, to go <https://bit.ly/BelievingandBelonging>. ■

Personnel of the Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA

Moderator: Ken Sims — simsken6@gmail.com
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Interim pastoral staff

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fasting and generosity, he supports the spiritual practice of celebration.

The Leadership Team also has appointed Larry Rohrer to serve as half-time interim regional pastor for the eastern portion of the Conference. He will serve in this role for 12 months, beginning Nov. 1, 2023.

A native of Ohio, Larry served in ministry for four decades. He was the pastor of Salem Mennonite Church in Elida, Midway Mennonite Church in Columbi-

ana, and Belmont Mennonite Church in Elkhart, Indiana. Following his retirement in 2019, he and his wife, Sharon, returned to Ohio, settling in her home community of Dover. They have two adult children and five grandchildren.

Over the years Larry has served Ohio Conference as a volunteer in various capacities, most recently as a member of the Credentialing Ministry Team.

Larry enjoys reading, gardening, biking, and music. ■



Larry Rohrer

Pastors meet for discussion and discernment

On Aug. 16 Ohio Conference hosted its annual all pastors gathering at the Upper Sandusky Community Library. There were 32 credentialed ministers in attendance, representing 24 of our congregations.

The day was facilitated by Ohio Conference's process consultant, Jeanne Zimmerly Jantzi of Design Group International. Jeanne's focus was on helping the pastors discern God's future vision for Ohio Conference and a strategic plan for the next three years to help carry out our primary mission of *Gathering, Equipping and Sending our congregations by the power of the Holy Spirit to live out God's Greatest Commandments and Jesus' Great Commission.*



Pastors from all around the Ohio Conference gathered for discussion in Upper Sandusky on Aug. 16.

It was a good day of fellowship and hearing from our pastors in preparation for further processing with all our delegates at the upcoming fall cluster meetings in September.

To view additional photos from the pastor gathering, please see the Ohio Conference website: <https://bit.ly/2023PastorMeeting>.

■

CONFERENCE MINISTER MUSINGS

Grateful

By Dick Barrett
Conference Minister

“Our primary task as Christians is not to save or change the world. Our primary task is to point people to Jesus, who welcomes all who acknowledge their own sinfulness, repent, and put their faith in him.”

As I look toward finishing my time of serving as conference minister, I am grateful to God for the opportunity to have worked with all the many great people of Ohio Conference — the leadership teams, the staff, the pastors and other credentialed leaders, delegates, and congregational members and attendees.

In the midst of challenging times — the COVID pandemic and the many polarizations that exist in our world, nation and churches today — I have witnessed much grace and a strong desire from almost all to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ. During these challenging times I have seen both women and men continue to respond to the call of God on their lives to become pastors and those who are in ministry to remain steadfast in their calling.

On a negative note, I have witnessed the closing of some churches and a decline in both attendance and active participation in many. I have seen those on the opposing sides of many different issues, especially regarding sexual ethics and marriage, continue to push their positions without consideration and respect for those on the other side. I have also witnessed the fallenness of humanity, both within and outside the church. At times I have been a part of that.

Perhaps the most disheartening aspect of my time serving as conference minister has been the focus on so many of the issues, agendas, and causes of our day at the expense of the primary gospel message — that God sent his Son Jesus Christ, to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost (1 Timothy 1:15).

Our primary task as Christians is not to save or change the world. Our primary task is to point people to Jesus, who welcomes all who acknowledge their own sinfulness, repent,



and put their faith in him. He is the one who transforms lives. I am most grateful to him who called and chose me to be one of his followers.

My prayer for Ohio Conference, as you look to the future, is that you focus on the primary gospel message in the midst of all the possible distractions, for the glory and honor of God the Father and Jesus the Son.

With deep appreciation and love,

Dick Barrett

Note: Dick Barrett will retire from his role as conference minister in mid-October. ■

2024 ACA theme and speaker announced

Sharon Mennonite Church in Plain City will host the 2024 Annual Conference Assembly (ACA) March 1-2, 2024. The theme of the 2024 ACA will be “Following Jesus Together with a Common Mission,” based on

Philippians 2:5-11. The gathering will include input from Meghan Larissa Good, who will be presenting on her soon-to-be published book *Divine Gravity: Sparking a Movement to Recover a Better Christian Story*. ■



Grants for local ministries

Continued from page 1

to English language learning resources and tutors.

Raw Tools Capacity Increase (Toledo Mennonite)

— Since 2016 Toledo Mennonite Church has been partnering with [RAW Tools](#). Toledo Mennonite Church's pastor, Joel Shenk, said, "We turn guns into garden tools with an old-fashioned forge and anvil, thus enacting the vision of Micah and Isaiah to beat swords into plowshares. The vision is to disarm hearts and forge peace with tools that build and cultivate life rather than destroy it."

Grant funds will go toward creating a fully functional permanent blacksmithing workshop. Currently RAW Tools Toledo's equipment is housed in a small trailer. While the current arrangement is helpful for taking the ministry to other locations, it is not optimal for allowing people regular time to work on the forge, since a significant amount of time is required to set up the forge and then tear it down after use.

Generator work for designated regional emergency/disaster community shelter (Salem, Waldron, Michigan)

Salem Mennonite Church in Waldron, Michigan, has been working with the Red Cross, and the congregation's building has been designated as a regional emergency/disaster community shelter.

Because the Salem congregation is located in a rural area, the potential for prolonged power outages is greater in this location, since electrical coverage repair work tends to prioritize areas that are more densely populated. Grant funds will go toward work needed for a generator to provide electrical power to the church building in the case of a power outage during an emergency.

Disarming Violence Event (Northwest Ohio)

— A group of churches in northwest Ohio plans to hold an event designed to promote conversation and awareness about gun

safety. The theme of this event will be "Disarming Violence: Starting a conversation about gun safety in our community." Goals for this event include helping the community think about gun violence and how to prevent accidental gun deaths, as well as healing from past violent events.

This event is being planned by members of Central Mennonite Church, Lockport Mennonite Church, Tedrow Mennonite Church and Zion Mennonite Church, along with Shalom Counseling & Mediation Center and representatives from Fulton County and Williams County.

Since 2012, the Ohio Conference Ministry Development Team has awarded Ministry Grants to Ohio Conference congregations and related groups for ministry projects.

Funding for these grants comes from funds accumulated in years in which the Conference completed the fiscal year with a surplus. ■

Women in Leadership Retreat planned for February

Ohio Conference is planning a Women in Leadership Retreat to be held Feb. 2-3, 2024. The retreat will be held at a new location in northwest Ohio, the Lial Renewal Center in Whitehouse.

The intent of this retreat is to encourage women in current church leadership as well as to tap and encourage all women with leadership gifts, not just women pastors.



The retreat theme will be "Finding Your Voice," with an emphasis on learning how to speak and lead in a way that is authentically oneself.

This overnight retreat will be led by Jewel Gingerich Longenecker, dean of lifelong learning and DMin program director at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana.

Retreat planners are encouraging each Ohio Conference congregation to send at least one woman to this retreat. More information and online registration will be available later this fall. ■

Putting the focus on social justice

By Nathanael Hofstetter Ressler

Note: This year Grace & Groundings, Ohio Conference's racial reconciliation resource team, invited Ohio Conference churches to set aside Sunday, June 18, as Social Justice Sunday. The Grace & Groundings team provided worship planning resources for Social Justice Sunday. Below, Nathanael Hofstetter Ressler, pastor of Maple Grove Mennonite Church in Hartville, reflects on his congregation's experience on Social Justice Sunday.

Our service followed one of the suggested themes: "Centered on Shalom, Working Out in Love." The focus statement for our worship planning was this: Center the holy quest for God's full-orbed peace and justice with the confession of love for self, for the other, and for our shared community.

Acknowledgement was made of Juneteenth and World Refugee Day with some context given for each.

The sermon honed in on [Osheta Moore](#)'s emphasis on belovedness as the starting point for any type of justice work that seeks to move toward God's Shalom. We have to see ourselves as beloved and proclaim the belovedness of others so that all of us might experience the Beloved Community.

The Sunday did feel a little crowded with it being on

Father's Day, and folks wanted to have it included in parts of the service. However, it did offer some differing angles in the conversation of belovedness throughout the service.

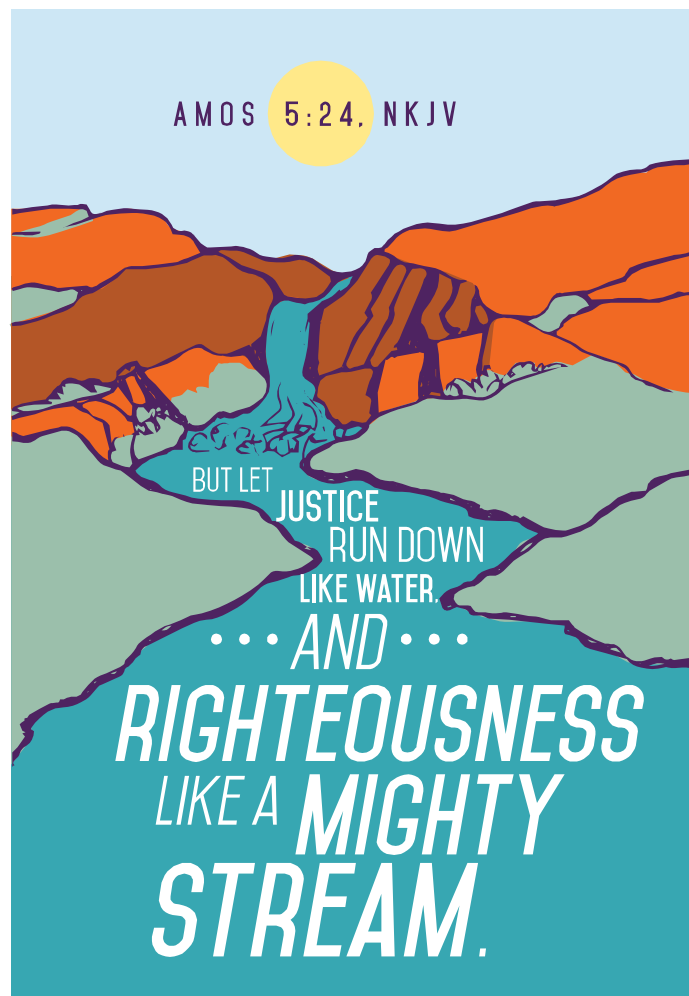
As a pastor I really appreciated the resources that were provided! They were a helpful balance between focused and broad; this made it easy to plan a worship service around them.

The congregation seemed to be very receptive to the message and appreciated the service as a whole. A number of persons shared that the starting place Osheta provided helped them

not feel as powerless or hopeless in facing the challenges of discrimination, injustice, and racism we navigate in our current context.

Note: While the Grace & Groundings team suggested June 18 as an appropriate time to celebrate Social Justice Sunday, the worship planning materials they created can be used on any Sunday. To see these materials, including information about Osheta Moore, the author and speaker referred to in this reflection, go to <https://bit.ly/2023SocialJusticeSundayResources>. ■

"A number of persons shared that the starting place Osheta provided helped them not feel as powerless or hopeless in facing the challenges of discrimination, injustice, and racism we navigate in our current context."



Goshen College grad creates sculpture for Mennonite Church USA offices

By Jolene VonGunten
Mennonite Education Agency

ELKHART, Ind. – At first look, Emma Zuercher’s sculpture invokes fire. That is precisely the theme she envisioned for “Forged Spirit,” an 11-foot sculpture she designed and created of recycled aluminum materials. The towering, colorful structure was a striking image in the late afternoon sunshine as it was installed at the [Mennonite Church USA](#) (MC USA) offices on Wednesday, Aug. 2, 2023.

The partnership between Zuercher and the MC USA offices was established through the [Maple Scholars Summer Research Program](#), an intensive eight-week program of [Goshen \(Ind.\) College](#), in which faculty submit research proposals, and students apply for projects that interest them. Faculty members are then paired with the students to mentor and supervise their work. The students live in community for the duration of the program and are encouraged to support each other in their projects. Goshen College provides stipends to the students and faculty and most of the funding for the projects.

Goshen College art professor John Mishler, also a 1972 graduate of the college, submitted a proposal to the program on behalf of the MC USA offices



for a sculpture to cover the base of a defunct light pole.

Zuercher was the perfect choice for the project, but not only because she is an aspiring artist-welder.

Three organizations occupy the building in partnership, and Zuercher has close ties to each of them: MC USA, [Mennonite Mission Network](#), and Mennon-

ite Education Agency (MEA). Growing up in Apple Creek, Ohio, her family attended [Sonnenberg Mennonite Church](#), an MC USA congregation. After high school, she participated in [Service Adventure](#), a program of Mennonite Mission Network, in which she taught art at a Goodwill Industries program in Colorado Springs

Emma Zuercher, a member of Sonnenberg Mennonite Church in Kidron, designed and created “Forged Spirit,” an 11-foot sculpture which was recently installed at the offices of Mennonite Church USA in Elkhart, Indiana. Also pictured at left is Goshen College art professor John Mishler, who mentored Zuercher as part of Goshen College’s summer Maple Scholars program.

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ABOUT PEOPLE

Pastoral notes

Regional Pastor Tony Doebrmann (right) anointed Valentine Iroha during Valentine's licensing ceremony on July 30 at Good Shepherd Mennonite Church in Archbold.



Valentine Iroha was licensed for Christian ministry at Good Shepherd Mennonite Church in Archbold on Sunday, July 30.

Regional Pastor Tony Doebrmann led the licensing ceremony, which included anointing for Valentine, as he had requested.

Credentialed leaders and the elders of the Good Shepherd congregation were invited to pray for him during the ceremony.

Following the worship service, the congregation hosted a meal, complete with a cake to celebrate the occasion. ■

Open Arms Hispanic Ministry

Open Arms board chair Dan King (left) leads a time of prayer during Pablo Delgado's commissioning service. Also pictured are (in front) Asher Delgado and Chanel Delgado, and (back row, left to right) Open Arms board members Galen Lehman, Ken Neuschwander, Gloria Miller and Denver Steiner.



Pablo Delgado was commissioned for his role as executive director of Open Arms Hispanic

Ministry on Sunday, Aug. 27, at Orrville Mennonite Church.

Dan King, chair of the Open Arms board, led the commissioning ceremony. The ceremony included a time of prayer with the board members of Open Arms laying hands on Pablo.

Pablo is originally from Costa Rica. He has a master's degree in pastoral ministry and a master's degree in business. He has 11 years of experience as a translator for medical and legal agencies, and prior to his appointment as director, he served as a community outreach worker for Open Arms. He and his wife, Chanel, are the parents of one-year-old Asher. ■

ABOUT PEOPLE Continued from page 8

Goshen College

Two students from Ohio Conference congregations earned degrees from Goshen College this spring.

The 165 members of the Goshen College Class of 2023 were honored at a commencement ceremony on April 30.

Birch Baer of Goshen, Indiana, earned a bachelor's degree in peace, justice and conflict studies. His home congregation is Zion Mennonite Church in Archbold.

Emma Zuercher of Apple Creek earned a bachelor's degree in sign language interpreting with a minor in art, summa cum laude. Her home congregation is Sonnenberg Mennonite Church in Kidron. ■

Gifts Discernment Ministry

Matt Weaver, pastor of Lockport Mennonite Church in Stryker, is now serving as chair of the Ohio Conference Gifts Discernment Ministry. He previously

served as a member of the Gifts Discernment Ministry.

Matt is taking on the role vacated by Jared Chase, who has resigned as pastor of Sharon

Mennonite Church in Plain City. As chair of the Gifts Discernment Ministry, he also is serving as a member of the Ohio Conference Leadership Team. ■

Sculpture

Continued from page 7

for eleven months. She then attended and graduated from Goshen College, a partner-school of MEA. With meaningful connections to each of the agencies in the building, the partnership with Zuercher seemed more than a coincidence.

"Emma is a great example of the interconnectedness between the three organizations and how to relate to each other," said Michael Danner, Executive Director of MEA and Associate Executive Director of Church Vitality for MC USA.

"Forged Spirit" was influenced by the Exodus stories of the burning bush and the pillar of fire, a concept that resonated

both with Zuercher and the three partner organizations that use the building. Zuercher liked the idea of giving recycled materials a second life, a rebirth forged from the fires of the welding process. The church organizations appreciated the symbolism of God's grace and presence with us and the rebirth we can find through Jesus Christ.

"The apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians that if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation," said Danner. "The sculpture invites us to think deeply about this transformation."

Professor Mishler gave Emma full credit for the design and creation of the piece. "I really

enjoyed working with Emma and seeing her take on this commission for the Mennonite offices," he said. "She created a large-scale sculpture that looks great in its location. It also captures the uplifting spirit of the church. And when she was welding the aluminum," he joked, "she only burned me once!"

"On behalf of MC USA and MEA, we are grateful for the opportunity to partner with Goshen College's Maple Scholar program, and in particular with Emma, in the creation of the sculpture that now graces the MC USA building grounds," Danner said. "We trust that employees, visitors, and passersby will be blessed." ■

Conference Calendar

SEPT

- 14 Leadership Team Meeting
- 19 Fall Delegate Cluster Meeting, Oak Grove Mennonite Church, West Liberty
- 21 Fall Delegate Cluster Meeting, Lee Heights Community Church, Cleveland
- 26 Fall Delegate Cluster Meeting, Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold
- 28 Fall Delegate Cluster Meeting, Wooster Mennonite Church

OCT

- 2 Fall Delegate Cluster Meeting, online
- 12 Leadership Team and Ministry Development Team Meeting , Upper Sandusky

NOV

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

JAN 2024

- 9 Winter Delegate Cluster Meeting, location TBA
- 11 Winter Delegate Cluster Meeting, location TBA
- 16 Winter Delegate Cluster Meeting, location TBA
- 18 Winter Delegate Cluster Meeting, location TBA
- 22 Winter Delegate Cluster Meeting, online

FEB

- 2-3 Women in Leadership Retreat, Lial Event Center, Whitehouse, Ohio

MAR

- 1-2 Annual Conference Assembly, Sharon Mennonite Church, Plain City

distributed by Mennonite Central Committee, both globally and to domestic disaster areas. To volunteer, call or text Trent Metcalf at 330-465-4191.

Expand your leadership skills through Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary's new Practical Leadership Training modules! September offerings include Guide Your Congregation through Polarization (webinar); Leadership Practices for Spiritual Vitality (online workshop); Liderazgo que edifica (online workshop in Spanish); and Practicing Resilience in Response to Trauma (in-person seminar). CEUs are available. The registration deadline for each module is one week prior to its start date. See the offerings for October and November as well at <https://www.ambs.edu/practical-leadership-training>.

CommonWord, a collaboration of Mennonite Church Canada and Canadian Mennonite University, has curated a collection of resources for World Communion Sunday, which is traditionally observed on the first Sunday in October. Go to <https://www.commonword.ca/Browse/2913> to see these resources. ■

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News & Views of Ohio Conference

For more Ohio Conference news, visit the Ohio Conference website:
ohiomennoniteconference.org

Back page briefings...

Mark your calendar:

MCC Canning for Relief will take place Oct. 13, 14 and 16 at the Gerber Building, located behind Central

Christian School in Kidron. The plan is to can 30,000 pounds of boneless cooked turkey over the three days. The canned meat will be