

**Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA
Credentialing Ministry Team
Zoom meeting
Jan. 25, 2024**

Present: Tony Doehrmann, Dan Hooley, Rebecca Kauffman, Doug King (chair), Dan Miller, Larry Rohrer, Rachelle Lyndaker Schlabach, LaVerne Yousey, Judy King (recorder)

1. **Welcome and devotional.** Doug welcomed us to the meeting, and Rebecca shared her observations from preaching through Mark, and how Jesus reaches out to people and meets them where they are and provides both comfort and an opportunity for transformation. She shared some examples of how to love and support without feeling like we have to fix everything. She led in prayer.
2. **Minutes.** The minutes of the Nov. 28, 2023, meeting were approved as presented. M/S/P
3. **Interim Conference Minister report.** Dan Miller reported that:
 - The last two weeks have been focused on cluster meetings, which meant a lot of time spent on the road. He enjoyed meeting folks at the cluster meetings and learning more about the spirit of Ohio Conference. He also preached at Sharon Mennonite last Sunday.
 - Strategic planning work is going well. There was a good response from the delegates.
 - Because our sessions at ACA will feature Meghan Good, Leadership Team suggested extending an invitation to some of the other Anabaptist groups to join us for the sessions with Meghan. Invitations were sent to LMC, Evana and Rosedale.
 - He will be attending the Journey learning weekend at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) this weekend. He is a convinced Journey supporter.
4. **Leadership Team update.** Rachelle reported that the Leadership Team has been focusing on revisions of the strategic plan and constitution, based on delegate input. She also reported that Mennonite Church USA (MC USA) is allowing non-MC USA congregations access to the Ministerial Leadership Information (MLI) system, which is different from what we were told before. It has been suggested that we may need to create our own system if pastors aren't filling out the MLI.
5. **Healthy Boundaries (HB) training.** Jon Bohley from SpringHaven Counseling in Mt. Eaton, and Nancy Kauffmann, who works with the Safe Church program with MC USA, have agreed to be our trainers. They met and put together a tentative outline for the training, which was discussed and approved. The training will take place on April 30, 2024. Locations were suggested and a tech person will be contacted. We will plan to provide lunch.
6. **Regional pastor east report.** Larry reported that:
 - Midway is in the process of transitioning out of Ohio Conference. They are in conversation with LMC. An official letter will be coming by Feb. 29, 2024.
 - Ernie Hershberger began serving Jan. 1, 2024, as an interim pastor for a period of six months at Martins Mennonite. Their search process is just getting started.
 - Tony and Larry have been working together with the pastoral search committee at First Mennonite, Canton. Rosalind Young is serving as an interim pastor through the end of April. They have indicated a desire to remain in good standing with Ohio Conference. Larry will continue to stay in contact with both Rosalind and the search committee.
 - He has been in conversation with an individual who must decide if they want to keep their credentials with Ohio Conference since their congregation is no longer a part of Ohio Conference.
 - Currently, when a congregation leaves Ohio Conference, anyone in that congregation with credentials held by Ohio Conference would have them immediately withdrawn, unless they seek an associate membership in an Ohio Conference congregation. It was suggested that a policy be written, explaining that when a congregation leaves Ohio Conference, the credentialed persons (other than the pastor), in that congregation would have one year to decide what they want to do with their credential. During this time, they would need to be in conversation with a representative of the Credentialing Ministry Team. Dan Miller and Doug will work on the wording for the final

policy. The one-year period will begin upon receipt of the official notice of the congregation's withdrawal from Ohio Conference.

- At the last Credentialing Ministry Team meeting, it was agreed that if an individual had not taken Healthy Boundaries 101 training by the end of November, their ministry credential would be suspended. **In light of the fact that Russ Richardson has not taken any Healthy Boundaries training, action was taken to suspend his ordination credentials until such time as he completes Healthy Boundaries 101 training.** A letter of notification will be sent via certified mail, return receipt requested.

7. **Regional pastor west report.** Tony reported that:

- Central Mennonite has called a person who is not credentialed anywhere to serve as their interim pastor. Tony was encouraged to keep in touch with the lay leaders of the congregation to continue their connection with Ohio Conference and to stay in touch with the interim pastor as well. Their former pastor, David Elkins, is serving with Peace Mennonite Fellowship for a period of three months.
- Tony asked what it means to be an associate member of a congregation. There is a person with an associate membership at Oak Grove, West Liberty, who pastors a nondenominational congregation, but has had no contact with Oak Grove for many years. Who defines this membership status: the congregation or the Conference? This individual has signed the code of ethics and common commitments forms, which talk about actively participating in a pastor peer group or working on a regular relationship with the regional pastor or conference minister. This should be communicated to the individual.

8. **Review status of credentialed pastors.**

- Sherah-Leigh Gerber has requested that her credentials be transferred to Central District Conference (CDC), and we agreed to release her credential. Dan Miller will be in communication with Doug Luginbill (CDC conference minister) and Sherah-Leigh.
- The credential transfer for Haroldo Nunes from Ohio Conference to Mosaic Conference was affirmed.
- There was a question about the status of an individual credentialed by Ohio Conference but working for an organization that is a part of a different Anabaptist group. There will be no change in status at the present time.

9. **Other.** The pastoral sexual misconduct flyer that was sent out last fall references MC USA two times. At the request of a non-MC USA affiliated congregation, we will create a second document for them that removes naming MC USA in the document.

10. **Next meeting.** The next meeting was scheduled for March 14, 2024, at 1:30 p.m. via Zoom.

Judy King, recorder