

OHIO MENNONITE EVANGEL

News & Views of Ohio Conference

MARCH/APRIL 2024



ohiomennoniteconference.org

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Delegates approve name change, strategic plan

Delegates to the 2024 Annual Conference Assembly (ACA) approved a name change for the Conference, a three-year strategic plan, and an updated Ohio Conference Constitution. ACA took place March 1-2 at Sharon Mennonite Church in Plain City.

In addition to business, ACA included several plenary sessions with featured speaker Meghan Larissa Good, author of *Divine Gravity* and *The Bible Unwrapped*. She spoke to delegates about a broader Christian movement toward a

Jesus-centered Christianity and noted that we are living in a time of tremendous opportunities and challenges.

NAME CHANGE

Delegates approved a motion to officially change the Conference's name from Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA to Ohio Mennonite Conference. There were 107 yes votes and 2 no votes, resulting in 98.2 percent approval. This name change reflects that not all congregations in the Conference claim derived membership in Mennonite Church USA, and it also differentiates the Conference from Ohio Conference of the Adventist



ACA featured speaker Meghan Larissa Good talks to delegates as they prepare to participate in communion.

Church. The short name for Ohio Mennonite Conference is Ohio Conference.

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Ohio Mennonite Conference is...

By Jeanne Zimmerly Jantzi
Process Consultant

Metaphors engage us in new ways with imagery for exploration. In the last session of the 2024 Ohio Mennonite Conference meetings, I invited delegates and other at-

tendees to unleash their creativity to brainstorm metaphors to describe Ohio Mennonite Conference (OMC) as they currently see it. This article contains a sampling of the many imaginative metaphors coming from the gathering.

One person saw Jesus as the mother hen who sits on a diverse collection of eggs. The Conference is the nest where we (the diverse eggs) are united under Jesus' love.

Another person imagined OMC as maple syrup. The

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EDITORIAL

The Lord bless you and keep you

As is mentioned in the report of Annual Conference Assembly, I am concluding my time as editor for the Ohio Conference at the end of March.

I began my work as Conference editor in the fall of 1998. My life looks a lot different now than it did then. At that time I was the mother of three young children, the youngest only 9 months old.

The job has changed a lot over 25 years, moving from print communication to electronic newsletters, a website, social media, and podcasts.

While many things have changed over 25 years, one thing has not: I have been truly blessed with wonderful coworkers. It has been a joy to work with people who are committed to seeking God's will together.

I look forward to good things for Ohio Conference in the years ahead, and would like to close my time with the Conference with this blessing from Numbers 6:24-26: "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace."

— ahl

RESOURCE CORNER

Check out these Lenten resources

By Ann Leaman
Ohio Conference
Resource Advocate

This month I would like to highlight some Lenten worship and devotional resources.

The Soil and The Seed Project has released a new collection of free resources for Lent, Easter and Pentecost. Included are a new

album of music, "Little Liturgies," art, and lyrics/chord/lead sheets. To download these resources, go to <https://www.thesoilandtheseedproject.org/vol-9>.

CommonWord, a collaboration of Mennonite Church Canada and Canadian Mennonite University, also has online collections of worship and devotional

resources for Lent, Good Friday and Easter. Check the CommonWord collections:

- Lent — <https://www.commonword.ca/Browse/2643>
- Good Friday — <https://www.commonword.ca/Browse/2693>
- Easter — <https://www.commonword.ca/Browse/2644> ■

Personnel of the Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA

Moderator: Ken Sims — simsken6@gmail.com
Assistant Moderator: Paula Snyder Belousek — pastor@salemmennonite.com
Credentialing Representative to Leadership Team: Rachele Lyndaker Schlabach — rachele@millersburgmennonite.org
Gifts Discernment Ministry Chair: Matt Weaver — matt.lockport@gmail.com
Stewardship Ministry Chair: Andrew Blount — blountandrew@hotmail.com
Credentialing Ministry Chair: Doug King — doug@tedrowmennonite.org
Interim Conference Minister: Dan Miller — ohioconferenceminister@gmail.com
Regional Pastor: Tony Doebrmann — ocrpwest@gmail.com
Interim Regional Pastor: Larry Rohrer — ohiorpeast@gmail.com
Administrative Secretary: Judy King — ohmc@zoominternet.net
Finance Coordinator: Stan Helmuth — cboh1@zoominternet.net
Conference Editor: Ann Leaman — ohioevangel@gmail.com
Coordinator of Volunteers: Alys Short — alysashort@gmail.com

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Metaphors for OMC

Continued from page 1

sap of the Spirit flows without our effort. It's our own choice to tap into it. Even after the sap is collected, there's still a lot of work to make syrup.

People at five different tables described metaphors of windows, light, and wind. Someone saw the Conference as a



stained-glass mosaic window that the light of Christ can shine through. Another person imagined an open window in which the light of God comes in and healing and hope blow out by the Holy Spirit. Another saw a prism or crystal, reminding us that when the Conference allows the Light to shine *through* it, lots of colors burst forth.

OMC is like Legos. When we are together, we can build. When we step on one, it hurts.

Another person reminded us of the metaphor of the spur used in Hebrews 10:24-25: "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together..."

OMC can be seen as a ball of dough. Many ingredients come together as the yeast works through it all. From the dough, a loaf of bread can be formed. Fittingly, two different people imagined soup. One saw the Conference as Stone Soup. A community is hungry, a person comes and says, "I'll make Stone Soup," brings a big pot, everyone brings the little bit they have, and everyone is fed.

Six people described water metaphors. One described OMC at a watershed moment. The congregations are the streams and tributaries winding their way to the river (the Conference). Each congregation (tributary) contributes a small part to the whole. The river can be turbulent at times with obstacles, but keeps on flowing with fast moving places, slow areas, and even stagnant areas. The congregations are the boats on the river.

The group brainstormed a rich variety of metaphors. The Conference is a flower bulb. Out of

a time of darkness, comes beauty in the presence of light. After planting, God makes it grow. Or — Ohio Mennonite Conference brings to mind the process of developing old style photographic film. We aren't sure how things will turn out. Or — OMC is like the Ohio Turnpike. It doesn't go everywhere, but it speeds things along. It costs something, too. Or — OMC is a bridge, spanning a divide.

And finally, my personal favorite: Ohio Mennonite Conference is like blob tag. Jesus is the initial "it," and as Jesus reaches people, they join the blob/mass. We only move with Jesus, and we only bring more people into the blob as we remain with Jesus, reaching and stretching to bring into the blob/mass those who are not yet with us. ■

"The group brainstormed a rich variety of metaphors.

The Conference is a flower bulb. Out of a time of darkness, comes beauty in the presence of light. After planting, God makes it grow."

Process Consultant Jeanne Zimmerly Jantzi (standing) helped to guide Ohio Conference through a two-year review process, which culminated with a three-year strategic plan and a revised Conference constitution.





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ACA photos: At left, Moderator Ken Sims addresses delegates during a work session. At right, Interim Conference Minister Dan Miller presents Coordinator of Volunteers Alysa Short with an oil lamp in recognition of her completion of the Journey program at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) as AMBS Dean of Lifelong Learning Jewel Gingerich Longenecker looks on. Photos by Bryan Leaman. For more ACA photos, please see : <https://bit.ly/ACAPhotos>.



STRATEGIC PLAN

As a culmination of a two-year review process facilitated by Process Consultant Jeanne Zimmerly Jantzi, delegates approved a three-year strategic plan for the Conference. The strategic plan for 2024-2027 focuses on support for congregations, support for pastors, and support for congregations' action witness in their communities. The plan also describes changes in structure and staffing for the Conference. In addition to staff, the Conference's work will be accomplished by several groups: Leadership Council, Credentialing Committee, Stewardship Committee, Gifts Discernment Committee, and Program Committee. Please see [the plan](#) for details. Delegates approved a motion to adopt the plan with 105 yes votes and two no votes.

UPDATED CONSTITUTION

Delegates also approved adopting an updated Ohio Conference Constitution which reflects the change in the Conference's name and changes in the Conference's structure. For

details, please see the [summary of changes to the Ohio Conference Constitution](#). The vote to approve the Constitution was 119 yes, and 1 no.

SPENDING PLAN

Delegates unanimously approved the spending plan for 2024-25. The 2024-25 plan calls for spending a total of \$379,175 during the fiscal year, a reduction from the 2023-24 spending plan, which has projected a spending total of \$397,513.

In a letter to delegates prior to winter delegate cluster meetings, the Stewardship Ministry, which develops the spending plan, explained the need to reduce costs due to the shortfall in giving over the past several years. They said, "As we propose staffing cuts, we want to remind ourselves that we have considered these cuts in the recent past and at that time chose to financially support a

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ACA by the numbers

- Number of adult participants — 166
- Number of children — 3
- Number of delegates — 127
- Congregations represented — 34
- Displays from church agencies — 14
- Offering amount — \$2,685
- Delegate work sessions — 3
- Plenary sessions with featured speaker Meghan Larissa Good — 3
- Engagement and action session with Process Consultant Jeanne Zimmerly Jantzi — 1
- Worship sessions — 3

level of staffing that is probably higher than most other Mennonite conferences and other organizations our size. As much as we love and value our staff, we do not think we can continue to sustain our current level of staffing.” For details on staffing plans, please see the [strategic plan](#).

BLESSING FOR DEPARTING STAFF

Assistant Moderator Paula Snyder Belousek led delegates in a prayer of blessing for departing staff members, and many delegates also shared written words of blessing for departing staff. Regional Pastor Tony Doebrmann and Conference Editor Ann Leaman will conclude their work with the Conference at the end of the fiscal year on March 31. Administrative Assistant Judy King and Coordinator of Volunteers Alysa Short both anticipate concluding their work with the Conference by the end of the calendar year, although they have not announced specific dates.

In other business, delegates:

- Participated in two worship services with sermons by featured speaker Meghan Larissa Good;
- Acknowledged the departure of two congregations from the Ohio Conference, Midway Mennonite Church in Columbiana and West Clinton Mennonite Church in Wauseon;
- Celebrated the upcoming graduation of Alysa Short, coordinator of volunteers,



Delegates at ACA spent time in table groups discussing business and brainstorming ideas. Photo by Bryan Leaman. For more ACA photos, please see : <https://bit.ly/ACAPhotos>.

from the Journey program at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary;

- Were introduced to pastors new to Ohio Conference;
- Affirmed the personnel slate presented by the Gifts Discernment Ministry (see pages 9-11 for more information about these individuals);
- Heard a missional story about the Resettlement Support Team in Northwest Ohio (see pages 7-8);
- Heard a report from Interim Conference Minister

Dan Miller;

- Heard a missional story from David Hargrave, pastor of Salem Mennonite Church in Wooster, about his congregation's multicultural worship and the congregation's witness in the community;
- Heard a report about Mennonite Church USA from Rachel Ringenberg Miller, denominational minister for ministerial leadership;
- Heard a report about Mennonite Mission Network

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ACA Documents and Resources

- [Updated Ohio Mennonite Conference Constitution](#)
- [Explanation of changes to the Constitution](#)
- [2024-27 OMC Strategic Plan](#)
- [2024-25 OMC Spending Plan](#)
- [Letter to delegates from Stewardship Ministry](#)
- [Link to podcasts featuring Meghan Larissa Good](#)

CONFERENCE MINISTER MUSINGS

Working and worshipping together

By Dan Miller
Interim Conference Minister

Heading into Annual Conference Assembly, I was both excited and nervous. Excited, because I find such gatherings to be fun. At the end of the day, I can be so energized that it's hard to go to sleep! Nervous, because I am still learning about Ohio Conference. This might be hard to believe, but after three months sometimes it still feels new and strange!

I noticed pretty quickly that delegates came ready to engage. That first worshipful work session progressed so quickly we got done early. Things didn't always go so fast, but Moderator Ken Sims and Assistant Moderator Paula Snyder Belousek kept sessions efficient. I give a lot of credit for that to the strategic planning process. I think delegates were ready to accomplish their business!

All who gathered to hear Meghan Good were also ready to listen and engage. Meghan presented three teaching sessions on a Jesus-centered Christianity, and preached in two worship services. Her historical analysis of this time when so much seems to not be working was incisive. Her focus on Jesus was refreshing and challenging. Her advocacy for listening to God was a balm to my soul. Meghan is a good speaker and storyteller; looking around the room as she spoke, it was hard to find a distracted or bored face. I hope delegates have already shared with you their highlights from March 1-2. Listen to them, look over this issue of the *Ohio Mennonite Evangel*, and consider how things we heard could nourish your congregation.

My thoughts now turn to how we cultivate these Jesus-centered characteristics as we implement the strategic plan adopted by delegates. As your congregations pursue your visions and callings, I hope chang-



es in Conference staffing and structure feel like a timely adjustment. I believe the hope of the delegates as they imagined the future was for a conference that lives into its vision of a "thriving conference of congregations united around Jesus as the Center of who we are and all we do." To that end, Ohio Mennonite Conference's mission is 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."

Amen. May it be so! ■

"My thoughts now turn to how we cultivate these Jesus-centered characteristics as we implement the strategic plan adopted by delegates."

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- from Eric Frey Martin, interim director of constituent engagement;
- Heard about Grace & Groundings, the Ohio Conference racial reconciliation resource team, from Doug

- Zehr, a member of the resource team;
- Adopted a resolution of thanks to outgoing Moderator Ken Sims;
- Participated in an Engage-

- ment and Action brainstorming session led by Process Consultant Jeanne Zimmerly Jantzi (see page 1 for related article);
- Observed communion. ■

Northwest Ohio churches work together, supporting refugees from Ukraine

By Bill Holdsworth

The Resettlement Support Team (RST) is a joint group of Central and Zion Mennonite churches in northwest Ohio. Our team formed in mid-2022 in response to seeing hundreds of thousands of people displaced all over the world by war and violence and a desire to offer our time and community resources to help immigrants settle in a safe and welcoming place.

In the first year, the committee spent time reaching out to immigrant resettlement and advocacy organizations to discern how and who we could assist. We learned a lot about the

legal definitions, rules, and restrictions associated with statuses such as “refugee,” “asylum seeker,” and “humanitarian parolee.” We had some concerns at first about our rural location: Would it offer enough job and learning opportunities? Would it be too far away from other immigrant communities so that new immigrants might feel isolated? Would it be a hard place to adapt to for someone coming from a city? We were encouraged by Charity Stowell, the Newcomer Coordinator with Mennonite Central Committee, to not let those concerns stand in our way. We could present what we had to offer and rely on God through the process. For some immi-



grants, our area might match exactly what they wanted and needed.

During that time, the United States had launched the *Uniting for Ukraine* program to assist Ukrainians fleeing war to come to the U.S. for up to two years on “parole” status. This program allowed sponsoring families or communities to work independently of the agencies specifically authorized to resettle those with a “refugee” status and gave immigrants some government benefits and the ability to work soon after arrival. Working with an organization that helped match immigrants with sponsors, we applied to the *Uniting for Ukraine* program and quickly received approval to sponsor a family of three and a family of four. This community model of sponsorship, first launched for Afghans and Ukrainians, was so successful that the government has now launched [Welcome Corps](#), a program that uses this model

“We had some concerns at first about our rural location....We were encouraged by Charity Stowell, the Newcomer Coordinator with Mennonite Central Committee, to not let those concerns stand in our way.”

ACA delegates adopt resolution of thanks

Resolved, that the delegates of Ohio Mennonite Conference, while meeting in Plain City, Ohio, on March 1-2, 2024, do hereby thank Ken Sims for his service to Ohio Mennonite Conference as moderator the past two years, expressing appreciation for:

- the warmth and welcome he brought to every setting, connecting with a broad range of individuals about a broad range of interests.
- the deep Christian faith with which Ken has led through some challenging circumstances.
- his integrity and thoroughness; when Ken says he will do something, you can trust it will get done.
- being a servant leader among us who is committed to the vitality of Conference.

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Resettlement Support Team

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“If anyone is interested in learning more or would like to sponsor immigrants in a similar way, our team would be happy to answer questions and share what we’ve learned along the way!”

to resettle refugees who have a path to permanent citizenship.

As we were preparing for the arrival of our sponsored families, we asked our churches and communities to partner with us. The response was enthusiastic and overwhelmingly supportive. We received monetary and material donations of all kinds — everything that we asked for — including two cars! In a short time, we also had lists of volunteers that we could text for different types of needs, including transportation, household items, clothing, food items, legal help, medical help, etc.

Both of our families arrived just over a year ago. The first few weeks were overwhelming! In addition to settling into their new temporary spaces — a house and an apartment which two families had generously offered at no charge — the families began the long process of getting established. Registering for school, filling out government documents and applications, going to the Social Security office, getting required immunizations, figuring out cell phone plans, finding employment, learning how to drive, getting insurance, navigating communication across language differences, finding stores, opening a bank account and debit card, figuring out the unique and often perplexing aspects of American taxes and health insurance, finding doctors, dentists, etc., etc.

There was a lot of learning in the first weeks and months, and our team asked our sponsored families for grace more than once as we made mistakes along the way. It wasn’t always smooth — we found that our

greatest need during that time was transportation and help with appointments. We found a natural hesitancy among volunteers to become involved in one-on-one settings due to the language barrier, but we also saw that with some experience with the Google Translate app, this hesitancy often disappeared. With so much to do, the involvement of the team, church community, and greater community was incredibly important — both as a way to share the work and offer opportunities for relationships to form. The families were very grateful for the community’s support.

A year out, there aren’t as many day-to-day needs, but we continue to be involved, helping as friends when asked or needed. There have been some struggles — negative news from back home, trips to the ER, job difficulties, and misunderstandings. But we have also been able

to celebrate joys with them — sharing food, fellowship, and milestones such as the birth of a new baby, the successful completion of a job training program, and transitions to independent apartments, which many hands helped to make a home. We continue to see new perspectives, learn about cultural differences, and understand things in new ways.

If anyone is interested in learning more or would like to sponsor immigrants in a similar way, our team would be happy to answer questions and share what we’ve learned along the way! We have continued to be surprised and humbled by the gifts and resources offered every time we simply ask. You can send me an email message at billh2006@gmail.com.

This story was shared with delegates during Ohio Conference’s Annual Conference Assembly at Sharon Mennonite Church in Plain City. ■



Volunteers accept Conference positions

Members of Ohio Conference congregations who volunteer their time play a vital role in Conference life. Without the help of numerous volunteers, many of the programs and functions of the Ohio Conference could not take place.

Much of the work of Ohio Conference is done by the Leadership Council, the Credentialing Committee, the Stewardship Committee, the Gifts Discernment Committee, and the Program Committee. Delegates at Annual Conference Assembly affirmed the following individuals for service:

Moderator

Name: Paula Snyder Belousek

Home congregation: Salem Mennonite Church (Elida)



Occupation: Pastor

Previous service: Assistant moderator/chair of Ministry Development Team for five years, Constituency Leaders Council representative, mentor for several pastors in ordination process, planning committee for numerous retreats

Family information: Married to Darrin. Mom to Liam and Yago, our exchange student from Spain.

Goals: To assist the Conference through this season of transition

Hobbies/special interests:

Learning about new cultures and people, ethnic cooking/foods, exploring the Johnny Appleseed Park System with my family, reading cozy mysteries, singing loudly in the shower

Gifts Discernment Committee Chair

Name: Glenn W. Nofziger II



Home congregation:

Grew up in Northwest Ohio and home congregation was Lockport Mennonite Church.

Occupation: Pastor at Sonnenberg Mennonite Church in Kidron since 2022

Previous service: Graduated from Eastern Mennonite University in 2002. After college farmed for seven years and became a delegate for Ohio Conference. Served on Ohio Conference Gifts Discernment Committee two years (2007-2009) and Ministry Development Team two years (2009-2011). Earned MDiv from Eastern Mennonite Seminary in 2015, served seven years at Martins Creek Mennonite Church in Holmes County as associate pastor until 2022.

Family information: Married to Erin (Kauffman) Nofziger since 2004. Erin grew up at Orrville Mennonite. We have three children, Mattea - 15 (10th grade), Luke - 13 (7th grade), and Karis - 8 (2nd grade), and

they all attend Central Christian. Other family includes three brothers, Galen (of Lockport), Wendell (of Vidanet, Costa Rica), and Kevin (of Lancaster), and parents, Nancy Nofziger and the late Cloyce Nofziger.

Goals: I feel passionate about and called to gifts discernment. I hope to encourage everyone to faithfully discern where and how God is calling each one of us to serve and use our gifts.

Hobbies/special interests: I love being immersed in great stories! Some favorites beyond Narnia and Middle Earth — *Enders Game* and *Dune*, the *Wingfeather Saga* series (family favorite), Marvel Cinematic Universe, musicals (*Les Mis*, *Phantom*, *Wicked*), *The Chosen* and many more. Please ask me about them and share your favorites with me! Loving great stories and paying attention to details and overarching themes helps us get into, learn, and share God's grand story portrayed throughout the Bible. I love participating and interacting with others as we each are characters playing our parts living out this grand narrative God is writing through each of us!

Credentialing Committee

Name: Rebecca Kauffman

Home congregation: Bethel Mennonite Church, West Liberty



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Volunteers

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Occupation: Pastor

Previous service: In Ohio Conference, I have served on the Resolutions Committee and the Leadership Development Resource Team.

Goals: As a member of the Credentialing Team, we are seeking to make our credential-related documents and resources available in each of the languages represented in Ohio Conference.

Hobbies/special interests: I enjoy hiking, biking, and kayaking with my husband. I also enjoy singing.

Credentialing Committee

Name: Danae King

Home congregation:
Orrville
Mennonite
Church



Occupation: Donor and Church Engagement Associate, MCC Great Lakes

Family information: Married to Charles Bontrager

Hobbies/special interests: Reading, cooking, gardening

Program Committee

Name: Rosalind Young

Home congregation: Lee Heights Community Church (Cleveland)



Occupation: Program Director, MCC Great Lakes

Previous service: Serving currently as Interim Pastor at First Mennonite Church (Canton)

Family information: Married to Rev. Derrick Young, DMin, for 30 years; three adult children, and seven grandchildren

Goals: To work collaboratively and diligently with the team to support congregations in their endeavors to be healthy and whole emotionally and spiritually, walking alongside them as they engage in spiritual practices, activities and events as they engage in deepening their relationships with God individually and collectively.

Hobbies/special interests: Bowling, traveling

Stewardship Committee

Name: Steve Schmid

Home congregation: Wooster Mennonite Church



Occupation: Retired business executive

Previous service: At Wooster Mennonite I served as its financial person for many years along with other commitments. Have served on Ohio Conference's Ministry Development Team and Stewardship Ministry Team.

Family information: Cathy is my wife. We have three married children and five grandkids.

Goals: To actively contribute on the Stewardship team

Hobbies/special interests: Woodworking, volunteering at People to People Ministries in Wooster, connecting with junior high students through OHuddle, mentoring entrepreneurs through SCORE, provide budgeting input to individuals through Love INC

Stewardship Committee

Name: Bruce Breckbill

Home congregation: Salem Mennonite Church (Kidron)



Occupation: Managing Director of Everence – Northeast Ohio

Previous service: Member of Ohio Conference Stewardship Ministry Team

Family information: Married over 30 years, three grown children, live in Kidron, Ohio

Goals: To help people understand better the services that Ohio Conference provides so that they are more excited about giving to and supporting Ohio Conference.

Hobbies/special interests: Gardening, reading, making hot sauce

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Volunteers

Continued from page 10

Gifts Discernment Committee

Name: Ken Neuenschwander

Home congregation: Sonnenberg Mennonite Church (Kidron)



Occupation: Retired from management at Kidron Electric

Previous service: Served on several nonprofit boards and

committees over the years. Currently I'm serving on Canton Lighthouse and Open Arms boards, and I chair the Outreach and Service ministry at Sonnenberg.

Family information: Married to Connie; three adult children — one son and two daughters; four grandchildren — two girls and two boys ages 7-14; and one deceased daughter.

Goals: To better understand the roles and qualification needed in the positions to be filled

and then to find willing, qualified individuals to serve.

Hobbies/special interests:

My children always have projects for me in their homes. I also seem to find projects related to the nonprofits I'm connected to, including my church. I enjoy small woodworking projects, specially making things for the grandchildren. "Helping" to make pinewood derby racers seems to be in my job description. I enjoy doing Sudoku, and Connie and I love to compete doing the Jumble every day. ■

GRACE & GROUNDINGS

Podcast series focuses on shalom

Grace & Groundings, Ohio Conference's resource team focused on racial awareness and reconciliation, is sponsoring a series of monthly podcasts about social righteousness and shalom.

The series began in January, with plans to publish one episode each month through May.

Each episode focuses on a different topic designed to draw listeners into deeper conversa-

tions about issues of social righteousness and shalom. Two podcast episodes in this series have been published so far:

In "[Building Brides and Seeking Shalom](#)," Doug Zehr introduces the series and discusses five misconceptions about racism.

In "[Building a New Life in Ohio](#)," host Kevin Himes talks with two guests, Alex Murza and Terry Shue. Alex and his family are building a new life in

Ohio after leaving Ukraine, and Terry and many others in the local community have played a part in the Murza family's resettlement in Kidron.

Upcoming topics in this series will include food deserts, how to deal with race, and homelessness. All episodes will be shared as part of the Ohio Conference Cast podcast: <https://bit.ly/OhioConferenceCast>. ■

Twenty-five attend Women in Leadership Retreat

Twenty-five women attended the Ohio Conference Women in Leadership Retreat Feb. 2-3 at the Lial Renewal Center in Whitehouse, Ohio. Speaker Jewel Gingerich Longenecker, dean of lifelong learning at Ana-

baptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, led group sessions focusing on the theme "Finding Your Voice." The retreat format also included time for worship, spiritual practices, quiet time and free time for participants. To

see photos from the retreat, visit the Ohio Conference website: <https://bit.ly/2024WomenInLeadershipPhotos>. ■

Conference Calendar

MAR

8-9 MCC Comforter Bash, Fairlawn Mennonite Church, Apple Creek

APR

30 Healthy Boundaries 201, Wooster Mennonite Church

JUN

23 Social Justice Sunday, Conference-wide

JUL

12-13 Ohio Mennonite Relief Sale, Mt. Hope Event Center

MAR 2025

7-8 Annual Conference Assembly, Berlin Mennonite Church

by March 20 to save \$50. See ambbs.edu/online-short-courses for details.

Peaceful Options for Training and Careers (POTC), an independent initiative formed by Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), has begun training volunteer counselors to help young adults find non-military career, service and training opportunities. To learn more, see the Mennonite Church USA website: <https://www.mennoniteusa.org/news/potc-mobilizes>.

Mennonite Church USA's Climate Justice Ministry will begin receiving applications for the Pam De Young Net Zero Energy Fund grant starting April 1. The Pam De Young Net Zero Energy Fund provides funds to assist MC USA congregations interested in forms of renewable energy. The term, "net zero energy," describes buildings or communities that generate enough energy to meet their own needs. See <https://climatejustice.mennoniteusa.org/green-energy-grants> for details. ■

Back page briefings...

The Mennonite Education Agency (MEA) Job Board is updated each week. Check <https://bit.ly/MEAJobBoard> to see job openings at MEA-affiliated schools, colleges and seminaries.

Camp Luz is seeking a leader who is passionate about seeing people growing in their faith in Jesus Christ to serve as program director. Use your skills and experience to make a difference in the lives of hundreds of children, young adults, and families. This position is available immediately. See

<https://www.campluz.com/employment-opportunities.html> for a full job description.

Online Short Course: Transforming Congregational Conflict and Communication: April 10 – May 21. Join Betty Pries, PhD, CMed, to explore the possibilities and pitfalls of courageously engaging differences within congregational life in this six-week online short course from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. No grades, no papers! CEUs are available. Register

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