# Columbus Mennonite's Jubilee fund helps pay off some of members' "burdensome debt"

After being inspired by the article "Forgive us our Debts," a piece about the burden of student debt in the U.S., in the April issue of *Sojourners* magazine, Pastor Joel Miller challenged the congregation at Columbus Mennonite Church in Ohio to a unique project.

"If we pray together, 'forgive us our debts, as we forgive our



debtors,' might there be a small creative way to start to become the answer to our own prayer? We are practicing resurrection this Easter season. Debt is a complex, messy, and sometimes overwhelming problem, but one of the aspects of practicing resurrection is that none of those things gets the final word," Miller said near the end of his sermon on April 26.

Miller asked each individual in the congregation to write on

a piece of paper the word "debt," "sl debt" signifying student loan debt, or "Jubilee," depending on if that person was experiencing burdensome debt or not. Those writing "Jubilee" were invited to then donate towards a Jubilee fund within the next three weeks that would then be divided amongst however many congregants wrote down "debt" or "sl debt." Miller had also secured a match of $2,250 from Everence, the stewardship agency of Mennonite Church USA, to go towards non-student loan debt.

"This is not money for an outside project," Miller said in his sermon. "Every dollar that you give will be going directly to debt relief for someone here, someone you worship with, someone you know."

Miller had specifically invited the congregation to raise $10,000 to address this hampering debt, but after three weeks, the congregation had met and surpassed that goal.

"In the end, we raised $25,285 and distributed checks of $903.03 to 28 people in the congregation," Miller said. "This all happened in less than a month."

This was a one time project, Miller said, "but I hope it inspires other ways for us to Practice Resurrection in tangible ways."

*"A number of people who received checks had moving stories about how much this meant to them and relieved a pressing need."*

*—Joel Miller*

"I usually feel uncomfortable asking people for money," Miller said, "but I was surprised how much fun and right it felt to ask people to give to this project - and I was equally surprised with the outpouring of generosity. A number of people who received checks had moving stories about how much this meant to them and relieved a pressing need. One young woman shared a testimony in church about how she and her husband had been deeply in debt five years ago and how they had committed to being debt free. She noted how fulfilling an experience it was to be able to now give to the Jubilee project."

To read or hear Miller's full sermon wherein he introduced the concept of this Jubilee fund, visit joelssermons.wordpress.com.

## Dare to Dream Scholarship funds undocumented Bluffton students

Out of concern about the many young people who graduated high school with outstanding academic records, but who are unable to pursue higher education because of undocumented status and therefore ineligible for any federal or state grants, loans, or aid, several Bluffton University alumni, faculty, staff, and friends began a Dare to Dream scholarship in 2010.

"We feel compelled by the Biblical invitation to welcome the stranger in our midst," reads Dare to Dream's fliers.

The scholarship funded one Bluffton student who graduated this past spring and has just begun funding two students who just began at Bluffton this fall.

Paul Neufeld Weaver, a Dare to Dream committee member and an associate professor of education, Spanish and cultural studies, said that the committee would like to reach more students, but needs to continue raising donations to make that happen, since the scholarship is solely funded by donations.

"There has been strong support for Dare to Dream and we have been able to support one student for four years. That student recently graduated and two new scholarship recipients will begin studies at Bluffton this coming fall. We hope to grow the program to be able to offer the scholarship on an ongoing basis but in order to do so we need more donations and pledges for coming years, since we don't want to offer a scholarship to a first year student unless we are confident that we can follow through for all four years."

Donations can be sent to Bluffton University, 1 University Drive, Bluffton, OH 45817, with "Dare to Dream" in the memo line.

## Video contest invites young people to express views on money

A video contest about young peoples' views on money will begin taking entries on Oct. 1, with cash prizes at stake and the opportunity to share their creative work.

The Everence Money Talks video contest is open to anyone 15 to 25 who can compete for the top award of $2,000, split between the winner and a selected charity. Awards will also be given to second- and third-place finishers and their selected charities.

The theme asks young people to express in a short video their views or ideas on the potential or pitfalls of money. The public will get to vote online for their favorites among the finalists.

The last day to enter is Nov. 15. Full details are at www.everence.com/moneytalks.

Everence helps individuals, organizations and congregations integrate finances with faith through a national team of advisors and representatives. Everence offers banking, insurance and financial services with community benefits and stewardship education. To learn more, visit www.everence.com or call (800) 348-7468.

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## Fall Events at Camp Friedenswald

**Sept. 25-27: Women's Retreat** with speaker Laura Brenneman

**Oct. 16-18: Men's Retreat** with speaker Alan Kreider and music leader Hal Hess

**Oct. 16-18: Fall Scrapbook Retreat**

**Nov. 6-8: Fall Art Retreat Drawing Workshop** with John Blosser

Visit **www.friedenswald.org**
for more details and to register!

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