



2024 Report to Central District Conference

STRONG ROOTS. BRIGHTER FUTURE.

Dr. Katherine Fell, University of Findlay president, and **Dr. Jane Wood**, Bluffton University president, signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) declaring the intention to pursue a merger of Bluffton University operations with University of Findlay. Findlay and Bluffton will become one higher education community on two campuses. The decision was made by votes of each institution's Board of Trustees. Pending all regulatory approvals, the merger is anticipated to be completed by Fall 2025. Bluffton intends to remain affiliated with Mennonite Church USA while the University of Findlay intends to remain affiliated with the Churches of God, General Conference. Additional information can be found at www.findlayblufftonfuture.com.

TEACHING PEACE TO CHILDREN

The Lion and Lamb Peace Arts Center's graduate assistant/co-director, **Tareq Abuhallima**, and students began presenting "Teaching Peace to Children," a series of sessions on issues such as conflict resolution and cultural understanding during 2023-24. A native of Gaza, Palestine, Abuhallima is connected with MennoPin (Mennonite Palestinian Israel Network), and shared "Experiences in the Gaza Strip" during a January Forum. **Dr. Paul Neufeld Weaver**, professor of education and director of global education, serves as the center's director.

SPIRITUAL LIFE WEEK

During the 2023-24 spiritual life weeks on campus, **David Glick '07**, spoke during the fall on the theme "Be Rooted" using John 15:5 while **Lindsay Horn '19** engaged students in the spring with the theme "Even when we are not... God is" and Mark 5:25-34.

124TH COMMENCEMENT

Glen Guyton, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, was chosen to be the Commencement speaker during the May 4 ceremony in Sommer Center. Guyton's speech, titled, "I Succeeded," focused on celebrating your wins. "The future will take care of itself. Today is a day to celebrate how far we have come."

KEENEY PEACE LECTURE

Sarah Augustine shared the annual Keeney Peace Lecture on March 26. She invited the campus community to consider indigenous wisdom for faithful ecological solutions beyond the economic and cultural systems responsible for the current climate crisis. Augustine and 1984 Bluffton alumnus Sheri Hostetler wrote, "So We and Our Children May Live: Following Jesus in Confronting the Climate Crisis," and co-founded the Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery.

Thank you!

Bluffton University currently enrolls four students from Central District Conference Churches: **Theodore Andreas** and **Kaleigh Coffman**, First Mennonite Church of Bluffton; **Blake Clum** and **Madelyn Renner**, Grace Mennonite Church; and **Rilynn Kaufmann**, Assembly Mennonite Church.

Church Matching Scholarship support is \$4,000 for 2023-24.

The Bluffton trustees from Central District Conference are **Annette Heslep '89**, First Mennonite Church of Bluffton; **Heather Reichenbach '99**, secretary, Eighth Street Mennonite Church; **Jane Roeschley '77**, Mennonite Church of Normal; **Tim Stried '98**, Columbus Mennonite Church.

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Gerald Mast

*Church relations coordinator
and professor of communication*
mastg@bluffton.edu