



**Central  
District  
Conference**  
A conference of  
Mennonite Church USA

# Reporter

**KNOWING  
CHRIST'S LOVE  
– ANSWERING  
GOD'S CALL**

**SEPTEMBER 2012**



**Oak Grove congregation works on the Habitat house**

## Silverwood celebrates 100 years of Mennonite missions in the Congo

Silverwood celebrated 100 years of Mennonite missions in the Congo on Sept. 16. (See photo on page 3.)

The celebration included a worship service with guests, Pastor Benjamin Mubango, president of the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Congo, and Pastor Siaka Traore, president of Mennonite Church of Burkina Faso.

The day-long event included a program of reflections from former African Inter-Mennonite Mission (AIMM) missionaries. A video of the centennial celebration in the Congo was also shown.

A special offering took place to support scholarships for theological education in Africa as well as for African missionaries serving in other African countries.

During a noon potluck a large Congolese painting was auctioned with proceeds to AIMM.

This summer five Silverwood members were among a group of 30 from North America and Europe to visit the Congo to participate in centennial celebrations there. Silverwood is one of eight Mennonite churches in the U.S. and Canada hosting a centennial event in September.

## Oak Grove helps build a Habitat home

Oak Grove's congregation will help dedicate a Habitat for Humanity home in Wayne County, Ohio, on Oct. 7.

The church played a major role in its construction this summer.

Nearly 80 Oak Grove members of the congregation worked on the house.

Doug Zehr, Oak Grove pastor, said that the Mission Ignition team played a significant community partnership role in the project.

"Charged with stimulating the mission imagination of the congregation with the goal of involving as many people from the church as possible, Oak

**See page 3**

By Lois Kaufmann, CDC Conference Minister

# Reflections on my sabbatical

The first segment of my sabbatical lies behind me like a shadow. Now that I am back in the office, it is good to look over my shoulder and notice and reflect on it – a treasure I will draw on again and again.

For a previous sabbatical I knew it was important to ‘get out of Dodge’ immediately. So I spent the first week of July volunteering at Camp Friedenswald. There is nothing like 100-degree weather, lively middle-schoolers and chocolate chip cookie recipes that call for 36 cups of flour to help one forget one’s other work. I baked goodies, helped cut out *autumn olive* bushes – an invasive species of bushes growing near the fen, cleaned light fixtures and A/C units, and through it all I gained a deeper appreciate for the ministry of the camp and its staff. Fond memories!



Another highlight was having a full week with my four children, their spouses, and our six grandchildren at our home. My family near does my heart all kinds of good. Thanks be to God for my family and for the extra time to spend with them!

Because of a generous gift from the pastors of CDC, my costs were covered for a week at The Hermitage Community, a Mennonite retreat center near Three Rivers, Michigan. I love that place! I sensed God’s presence walking the 11-circuit labyrinth, during a misty morning walk, and even when I was lost in the woods for

a while. I was able to read through my whole prayer journal – both encouraging and sobering! One gift that I treasure from the retreat community’s morning prayers is their blessing for each participant at the end of each service, “Lois you are a bearer of God’s infinite Light.”



The final weeks of my summer sabbatical were totally unscripted. I left the Hermitage early and cancelled my week of mediation skills training so I could be with my father during his final week of life. I am grateful that I had the freedom to share in his care, to be present when he was alert, and to bear witness to his final breaths. Life and death are such mysteries. As I reflect on his life and ministry, the words of Psalm 16.6 come to me – The boundary lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage.

I have returned to my ministry with CDC renewed and grateful for the decision of its leadership years ago to follow the MC USA guidelines in offering three months of sabbatical every fourth year. Because your pastor’s spiritual vitality is crucial to the life of your congregation, I hope all our congregations can bless and strengthen their pastors by offering time away for spiritual refreshment.

**- Lois Kaufmann  
CDC Conference Minister**



## Silverwood celebration

James Bertsche, Silverwood member and former missionary to the Congo through AIMM, talks during Silverwood's mission celebration. On the podium are Erwin Rempel and Garry Janzen. (See story on page 1.)

## Faith offers Sunday morning retreat series

Kay Bontrager-Singer, Faith pastor, will offer a Sunday Morning Retreat Series for members of the congregation.

The group will meet on Sept. 30, Oct. 28, Nov. 25, Jan. 27, Feb. 24, March 31 and April 28 at the Faith House.

The retreat series is titled "Praying with Body and Soul: A Way to Intimacy with God."

"We will reflect on how we use our body in prayer as well as how we nurture the connection between the spiritual and secular aspects of our being," said Bontrager-Singer.

## Eighth Street prepares for centennial

Eighth Street members are planning the congregation's centennial celebration next year. Plans call for a summer picnic with a homecoming reunion the weekend of Aug. 9-11, 2013. The event will include music, drama, comedy and a variety of events representing the life and history of the congregation.

## Jep Hostetler "Scholar in Residence"

Jep and Joyce Hostetler are living in Collegeville, Minn., from Sept. 1 to Dec. 20. Jep is a "Scholar in Residence" at the Collegeville Institute at St. John's Abby/University. While there he will be involved in research on spirituality and humor.

## Mission partners visit Wadsworth

Mission partners Mark and Mary Hurst, serving in Australia, led a weekend workshop and Sunday school on Sept. 15-16 at First, Wadsworth.

From page 1

## Oak Grove

Grove became the lead partner in the project," he said.

The congregation committed roughly \$60,000 toward completing the house, according to Larry Hughes, Habitat's construction manager. Those funds went toward materials, labor, electricians and HVAC work.

The house, measuring 44-foot by 26-foot, with an attached one-car garage has three bedrooms and a basement.

According to a story in The Daily Record, (Wooster), "The goal was to draw us together as a congregation and as a community," said Welma Mast, one of the church committee members, which partnered with Habitat for the project.

## Sugarcreek's water bottle project collecting coins

During July, members of the First, Sugarcreek, congregation collected loose change for Menonite Central Committee water projects.

A water bottle was placed in the rear of the sanctuary for donations. Members were also encouraged to take home a water bottle to remind them to save their loose change.

Money collected was taken to the MCC Relief Sale, Kidron, in August.

On Aug. 12, Gerald Mast, a member of the Bluffton University faculty, presented the morning sermon. It was based on his recent book "Go to Church, Change the World."

The congregation created a "Sharing With Each Other" resource list this summer. It includes a list of skills and items that members can share with one another.

# Bluffton pastor authors children's book

Steve Yoder, pastor of First, Bluffton, recently published a book titled "Look For Something Good."

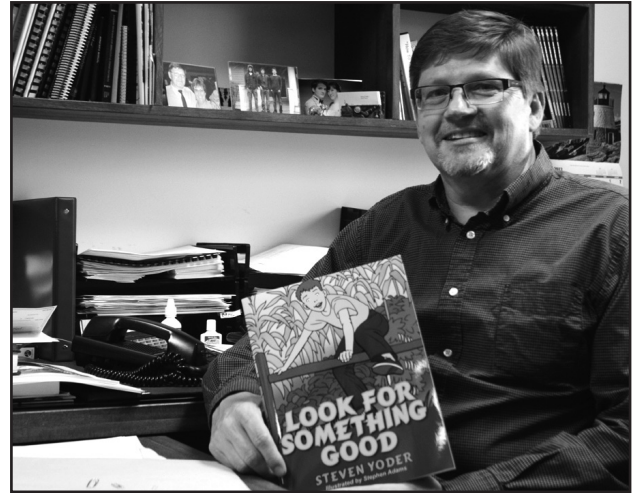
Yoder says the book is a story with a lesson, adding, "It's a parable, which deals with a tough set of circumstances involving a young boy." Yoder, says that the book is written for youth, particularly at the fourth grade level.

"'Look for Something Good' comes out of some of my own experiences on the farm working with my parents and siblings in the garden and barn," said Yoder.

"I also wrote the story out of my experiences as a teacher and pastor. When something disappointing happens, the first reactions are often to blame someone, or to ask why it happened. I believe that going down both of those roads leads eventually to a dead end."

He continued: "Instead, I like to challenge people to ask the how and what questions. 'How can I make something good come out of this bad situation?' and, 'What are the good things that are happening even in the midst of this difficult time?'"

In the story the main character, Riley, learns this lesson from his father. The story



**Steve Yoder**

shows that relationships are important in helping children work through difficult times.

Yoder said that the book could be used as a discussion topic between youth and adults.

The book is available online at Amazon.com, Authorhouse.com or Barnesandnoble.com. The retail price is \$17.99. The book is also available in e-book format for \$3.99.

The book is published by AuthorHouse, Bloomington, Ind. ISBN: 9781468588514.



**Salem's historical exhibit**

## Salem's Junior Missionary Girls historical exhibit

Five decades of special photos are on display this month at Salem. The collection represents highlights of almost 50 years of Salem's Junior Missionary Girls program, reports Maxine Hershberger, one of Salem's archivists.

In other Salem congregation activities, the Senior Youth Fellowship had a Kidron Machinery Sale food stand in August. The proceeds will go toward SYF projects.

# MCC October alumni event at Cincinnati

Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship will host a Mennonite Central Committee alumni and friends potluck on Saturday, Nov. 10, at the church.

Persons interested in attending may RSVP to Les Gustafson-Zook, Constituent Relations Coordinator for MCC Great Lakes, at [lmg@mcc.org](mailto:lmg@mcc.org).

The guest speaker is Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz, Coordinator of MCC's Restorative Justice program. She will bring her 28 years of experience and stories of work with victims, offenders and schools to advocate for justice in the justice system.

As Director of the MCC's Office on Crime and Justice, Stutzman Amstutz provides consulting and training for agencies and communities seeking to implement programs

of restorative justice, which specifically include a Victim Offender Mediation/Conferencing component.

She has also conducted skill-based training for volunteers as well as organizational trainings across the country.

Stutzman Amstutz has also served as the keynote speaker for a number of organizational gatherings and conferences and is a co-author of "The Little Book of Restorative Discipline for Schools," released by Good Books.



**Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz**

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## Lima holds election day communion

David Elkins, pastor of Lima Mennonite with Paula Snyder Belousek, pastor of Salem Mennonite will conduct an "election day communion" service at Lima Mennonite on Nov. 6 at 7 p.m.

"This growing movement is an invitation for Christians, regardless of their political affiliation, to be reminded of the unity they share as believers in Jesus," said Elkins.

"It further calls us to remember that our first and ultimate allegiance is not to a political platform, party, or even a country but to Jesus and his kingdom," he said.

## Champaign-Urbana fall opportunities

Several special-interest adult education and fellowship opportunities are available now through Nov. 25, at First, Champaign-Urbana.

Those include "Celtic Ways: Historical Controversy and Contemporary Resonance; "A Living Faith," centered on Hebrews 10-13; "Coffee and Conversation," a discussion of current events and how those relate to faith; and "Knit and Nurture," providing opportunities to knit for MCC and other charitable causes and offering nursery care for the Sunday school hour.

## Topeka goes on a hayride

Members of the Topeka congregation held a hayride on Sept. 16. As an alternative to the hayride, table games were played in the church dining hall. A light supper was provided and a worship and praise service concluded the afternoon's event.

## Hively worships with sister church

Members of Hively Avenue and its sister congregation Church Without Walls (Indiana-Michigan Conference) also of Elkhart, worshiped together on Aug. 12 and held a picnic following the service.

# Heidi Siemens-Rhodes 1974-2012

Heidi Siemens-Rhodes, 38, Goshen, Ind., pastor of Assembly, died June 24, after living nine months with metastatic melanoma.

She was born June 24, 1974, and on Aug. 3, 1996, married Mitch Siemens-Rhodes.

She graduated from Goshen College in 1996. She taught English in Japan from 1997 to 2000, and from 2000 to 2002 she lived in Iowa where she taught a semester at Iowa Mennonite School and taught English as a second language to adults in Iowa City.

She graduated from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, with a Master's of Divinity in 2005. She was a writer for the Gather 'Round Sunday school curriculum. From 2008 until her death, she served as pastor at Assembly where she was ordained in 2011.

Immediate survivors are her husband, Mitch, and three children, Theodore Kazuo, Adam Hae

and Ira Khalil.

Among memorial contribution options are Mennonite Central Committee, and a fund at Assembly for her children's education.

Lois Kauffmann, CDC Conference Minister, said, "As we grieve the loss of this fine pastor, we give thanks for her life and ministry and offer our prayers for her husband, young sons and mother as they step into the future without their beloved wife, mother and daughter."



**Heidi  
Siemens-Rhodes**

## CDC Calendar

### October

#### 5th-6th - At Camp Friedenswald

- Board of Directors, 9 am-5:30 pm
- Ministerial Committee, 6:30-9:30 pm
- Stewardship Committee, 6:30-9:30 pm
- Leadership Council, 7:45 am-12:30 pm
- Missional Church Committee, 1:30-4:30 pm

## CDC Financial Facts: 2 months, 2012-13 report

In the first two months of our fiscal year, the total amount of income we hoped for was \$31,709, but we only received \$27,088, for a difference of -\$4,620. The good news is that expenses ran a little less than anticipated, - \$27,218 against the budgeted amount of \$29,975, for a difference of \$2,756 or only \$129 more than what we actually received in the two-month period.

As I've worked with Chris Habegger and the Stewardship Commission in recent years I've gained tremendous respect for the work of CDC and the wonderfully gifted staff. I've been a member of Eighth Street Mennonite Church for the past 32 years and feel privileged to serve as CDC treasurer. I covet your prayers and support for me and the work of CDC.  
*-Roger A. Nafziger, CDC Treasurer*

## Paoli fall focus on minor prophets

The Paoli congregation launches a fall series titled "A Journey through the Minor Prophets."

Rebecca Kauffman and Matt Pflederer, pastors, say that during the series, "We will let these lesser-known voices of scripture speak for themselves, while listening and discerning what they have to say to us today."

Also this fall, adults will begin a study of the book "Worship and Mission After Christendom," by Alan and Eleanor Kreider.

### CENTRAL DISTRICT REPORTER

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