

JULY 2014

CDC welcomes Covenant Mennonite, affirms calls for diversity, unity

Central District Conference delegates approved three measures in an effort to continue expanding God's mission during the annual meeting.

The conference **welcomed Covenant Mennonite Fellowship into the CDC family** with a 99 percent vote. As a welcoming gift, Connie Johnson-Evers of Milwaukee Mennonite announced that Covenant would receive Matthew Bailey's three paintings reflecting on "Transformation through Text and Table" used during worship sessions.

Saturday morning, the delegates unanimously passed a resolution for **"A Call to Greater Inter-Racial and Cross-Cultural Engagement"** and a resolution on "Unity in a Time of Disagreement."

Much discussion precluded the second resolution, mostly focused on the use of the term "punitive" in terms of the sort of accountability CDC encourages the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board to not have in favor of a relational accountability with Mountain States Mennonite Conference. The resolution states that the CDC commits itself to "remaining in relationship with our sisters and brothers in Mountain States Conference, as we will with other area conferences,

regardless of the outcome of their conversation with MC USA Executive Board."

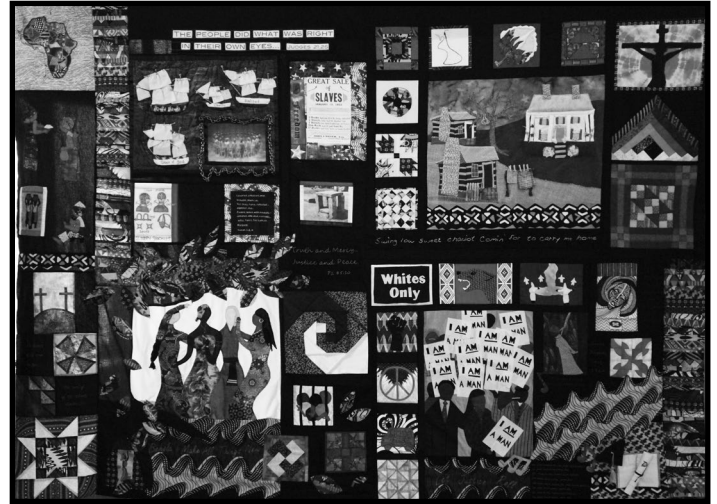
The "Call to Greater Inter-Racial and Cross-Cultural

Engagement" "invites all member congregations to take intentional steps to connect with and develop relationships with a church of predominantly different cultural and/or racial composition" through planning joint worship services, cooperating in other joint activities, planning a pulpit exchange and other joint activities. While little discussion occurred before the unanimous vote, Joel Miller, pastor at Columbus Mennonite, noted during the open mic session near the end of the annual meeting that this resolution "may very well be more challenging" for CDC churches than the other resolution.



Community Mennonite of Markham, Hively Avenue unveil Spirit Quilt

Cyneatha Millsaps, lead pastor of Community Mennonite of Markham, Ill., and Terri Geiser from Hively Avenue Mennonite and member of CDC missional church committee, unveiled the elaborate pieced quilt top they produced through their "Spirit Quilts: Mennonite Women Quilting Bee," sponsored by a Reign of God grant through CDC's missional church committee.



A group of mostly women from the two churches, but also from some other congregations, worked to plan and piece the quilt. The quilt has panels showing families in Africa, the U.S. slave trade, the civil rights movement and a look at the current era and the churches' dreams for the future.



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June 11-13, 2015
AMBS, Elkhart, Ind.

The design utilizes not only piecing and applique skills and beautiful fabrics to tell its story, but also includes a variety of three dimensional elements, including actual chains and jewelry on images of people.

Annual meeting worship: Riches, mercy and transformation

Worship reflects on transforming ourselves, others, our church

The three worship sessions throughout the weekend of the annual meeting explored the biennial theme of “Transformed through Text and Table.”

THURSDAY EVENING - MATT MORIN

Matt Morin of Milwaukee Mennonite led worship Thursday evening looking at how we are “transformed through the people with whom we read the text, transformed through the people with whom we share the table.”



Morin reflected on the story of “the rich, young ruler” and what kind of relationship he would be able to have with Jesus.

“Is something like a genuine relationship, a true friendship between these two men, even possible?” Morin asked. “Or won’t the rich man basically enter into relationship with Jesus in the same way that he relates to everyone else? That is, as the boss? As the respected one? In control?”

Morin also posed what Jesus telling the rich, young ruler to “sell all you have, give the money to the poor, then come and follow me” means for us today. “I speak to you today as an over-educated, over-privileged, white man in 21st century United States,” Morin noted. “I am someone who is addicted to control; addicted to having things done the way I say.”

“The power disparity is inscribed into the color of my skin. And in terms of entering the Kingdom of God, no change in mind, or heart, or attitude is enough. I need to change my habits—and I need help from my brothers and sisters to do so,” he said. “I need help from all of my brothers and sisters! Not just some, but all! And that’s precisely why Jesus seeks to overcome the power difference that are created by wealth and perceived goodness. Because as long as those remain, we will remain cut off from fellowship with certain people—people who look like Jesus.”

FRIDAY EVENING - RON ADAMS

Ron Adams, pastor at Madison Mennonite, focused his sermon on the transformation that comes from meeting with Jesus, both seen in the story of Zacchaeus and in others that saw Zacchaeus conversing, meeting and eating with Jesus.

“But, if we are not careful, we can convince ourselves that we know best what should happen when Jesus comes to

town, and who should be invited to offer Jesus hospitality, and who should be welcome to sit and eat at Jesus’ table,” Adams said. “...But is that who we are? Is that who we want to be? I don’t think so. I think we are better than that. I know we want to be better than that. And so when we see Jesus talking to someone, anyone, we ought to give thanks.”

Adams admitted that maybe it’s “a little bit of pastoral wishful thinking,” but that maybe the story ended with Zacchaeus welcoming in the awkward onlookers, offering them food and announcing that, heeding Jesus’ words, he’ll give to the poor and return four times what he stole from people. “All those sheepish, faithful, grumbling people” then joined Jesus and Zacchaeus to eat and “they were all transformed.”

“And that, dear sisters and brothers, is what you might call a happy ending,” Adams said. “Everybody was transformed that day when Jesus came to Jericho.”

SATURDAY MORNING - HELEN WELLS O’BRIEN and LISA PIERCE

Helen Wells O’Brien and Lisa Pierce from St. Paul Mennonite used the story of how Jesus was transformed by a Gentile woman, referred to as the Syrophenician woman and about mercy during their sermon Saturday morning.

Pierce gave a summary of the text.

“Jesus, tired and just wanting to be alone, looks for a place to crash where no one could find him,” she said. “Instead he is found, and not just by anyone, but by a woman whose love for her daughter is fierce, whose belief in the abundance of God’s healing love is potent, whose yearning for justice finds fearless expression. She asks for healing for her daughter, and

Continued on page 4



Board, committee nominees approved

The 2014 slate of nominees passed unanimously during the annual meeting. Taking seats are:

Board of Directors

- Carol Lehman, member-at-large (Cincinnati)

Ministerial Committee

- Margaret Sawatsky (Hively Avenue)
- Ardean Friesen (Eighth Street)

Missional Church Committee

- Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eighth Street)
- Gerald Mast (First Mennonite Bluffton)

Camp Friedenswald

- Kevin Nickel (First Mennonite Bluffton)
- Jan Althaus (First Mennonite Wadsworth)
- Mary Habegger Fox (Emmaus Road)



Above: Children's time during worship

Below: Jane Roeschley of the ministerial committee shakes hands with those new newly credentialed and licensed pastors/chaplains present Saturday morning of the annual meeting.



"Worship," continued from page 3

when Jesus demeans and dismisses her, she confronts him. He would have sent her away! He would have denied her daughter healing! But she confronts his diminishment of her and her daughter. And he sees her. He recognizes the power of her words, of her truth. Jesus is transformed. The Prophet-Mother goes home to a healed daughter. Jesus goes forth to feed the multitudes an abundant meal—a meal where no one must rely on crumbs, for they are what is leftover when everyone has had their fill.”

O'Brien shared how she had experienced “the abundant mercy of the Central District Conference” during the annual

meeting.

She recognized how churches used to be seen as “the final places of sanctuary and mercy. The image of throwing oneself on the altar of a church is an ancient plea action for mercy. But most churches (and other spiritual sanctuaries) are locked now—literally locked—in our society, except when members are worshipping. In our society, where the doors of spiritual privilege and power are locked against those who have nothing, hospitals have become places of 24-hour sanctuary and refuge. They have become our houses of mercy.”

In closing, Pierce called on the group to “stand in the fearful places, like the Syro-phoenician woman who had nothing left to lose, and confront the narrowness of mercy.”

“And so may we open ourselves to transformation, **4** like Jesus,” O'Brien said, “and embrace the prophetic

Annual meeting workshops explore community, art, new curriculum, church environmentalism, pastoral/church relationships

Attendees had the the option of going to one of five workshops during the Friday of the annual meeting. The five workshops were:

- **Spiritual and Practical Tools for Growing Communities of Faith and Peace**, presented by Andre Gingerich Stoner, MC USA Director of Holistic Witness and Interchurch Relations, and John Powell, Shalom Community Church, Missional Church Committee
- **Introducing Shine: Living in God’s Light**, presented by Lois Kaufmann-Hunsberger, CDC Resource Advocate, Maplewood Mennonite Church
- **Faith in Place**, presented by Brian Sauder, Executive Director of Faith in Place, First Mennonite Urbana
- **Swords to Plowshares: The Making of John P. Klassen’s MCC Medallion**, presented by Louise Matthews, Director of Lion & Lamb Peace Arts Center, Bluffton University, First Mennonite Bluffton, and Lisa Weaver, author, Swords to Plowshares, Madison Mennonite Church
- **Strengthening the Relationship Between the Pastor and the Congregation**, presented by Nancy Kauffmann, Denominational Minister of Mennonite Church USA



Photos clockwise from top right:

Brian Sauder, executive director of Faith in Place and pastor at First Mennonite Church of Urbana, speaks on churches and environmentalism; Lois Johns Kaufmann, CDC conference minister, and Nancy Kauffmann, MC USA denominational minister, speak in their workshop about strengthening the relationship between pastors and the congregation; Andre Gingerich Stoner, MC USA director of holistic witness and interchurch relations, demonstrates how to have a comfortable, impromptu conversation that touches on a person’s spiritual journey; Lois Kaufmann-Hunsberger, CDC resource advocate, introduces the new MC USA children’s Sunday school curriculum “Shine”; Lisa Weaver, author of the book “Swords to Plowshares: The Making of John P. Klassen’s Mennonite Central Committee Medallion,” speaks to attendees at her workshop by the same name; and John Powell of Shalom Community Church and member of the missional church committee speaks during the workshop that followed-up his and Andre Gingerich Stoner’s plenary session on the same topic.



Top left: Table groups discuss scripture during "Dwelling in the Word."

Left: Men eat and converse during the Mennonite Men's meal.

Top right: Ruth Lapp Guengerich and Nina Lanctot display a raffle quilt to raise money to help send a woman from Africa to the next Mennonite World Conference.



Right: Jep Hostetler entertains with his magic tricks during the Friday night game time during the annual meeting.

Below: The children at the CDC Annual Meeting pose for a photo prior to heading to the Madison Childrens Museum.



Below: David and Ingrid Moser, from Southside Fellowship in Elkhart, bike with their sons, Levi, 8, and Peter, 7. Levi and Peter raised \$1,250 for the bike, run, walk-a-thon.



CENTRAL DISTRICT REPORTER

Volume 58, Number 4, July 2014

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The Reporter is published six times a year. It is the official organ of communication among the churches of Central District Conference of the Mennonite Church USA. It is distributed free to CDC congregations through the CDC spending plan.

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