



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

Reporter

MARCH 2010

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



Elizabeth Nisly works in the Grace, Pandora, kitchen

11-year-old raises funds for Haiti

By Mary Pannabecker Steiner

Elizabeth Nisly a young member of Grace Mennonite, Pandora, Ohio, was so touched by reports she read and saw in the days following the Jan. 12 earthquake in Haiti that she knew she had to do something to help. But the 11-year-old Bluffton sixth grader wasn't in the position to travel to Haiti to volunteer.

So, while helping her dad wash the dishes, she asked if they could do something to raise money for the victims of the earthquake. The two narrowed their choices down to a dessert event or spaghetti dinner. The spaghetti dinner won, and Elizabeth began planning.

This young girl with a big heart remembered when her family set up a "winter lemonade stand" in front of Et Cetera Shop after the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia. They held a fundraiser by selling hot chocolate and cookies to passersby.

This time around, it was Elizabeth's turn to do the planning, with some help from her parents, Lamar and Deborah, her brother, Jonathan 14, and sister, Annelise 8. She chose to hold the dinner after the Jan. 31 service at, Grace Mennonite, Pandora. Based on other dinners held at the church, she estimated there would

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Megan Ramer keynote at WM 2010 retreats

Megan Ramer, pastor of Chicago Community Mennonite Church, is the keynote speaker at the 2010 Women in Conversation Retreats co-sponsored by Mennonite Women USA and Laurelville Mennonite Church Center.

She will speak on the theme, "Living a Life of Gratitude," at both Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, Mt. Pleasant, Pa., April 9-11 and at Cross Wind Conference Center in Hesston, Kan., April 30-May 2.



This year, for the first time, Spanish translation will be available at the Cross Wind retreat. One workshop, "Gratitude Expressed in Contentment," will be held in Spanish.

Maplewood prepares for 50th celebration

Maplewood, Ft. Wayne, Ind., will celebrate its 50th anniversary May 1-2, according to Barry Schmill, pastor.

The celebration theme is "Jubilee – A New Beginning as We Celebrate the Past but Embrace the Future."

Plans for the event are still underway. Len Wiebe has been invited to be the guest speaker.

From CDC Board of Directors

And so the CDC Friends program begins

“Central District Conference is like a family of adult siblings.” Perhaps you’ve heard that somewhere. I heard it again recently at a CDC Regional Meeting. The thinking behind the image is that CDC is made up of congregations mature enough to make their own decisions and interact with each other without a “parent” (conference leadership) telling them what to believe and how to act on their beliefs.

However, as an only child I don’t identify at a deep level with the idea of conference as a family of adult siblings, so I’ve chosen to think of CDC as a network of friends. Not casual friends like the ones I nod to when I pass them on the street, but the ones who carry my history in their hearts and trust me to hold theirs in mine.

We become friends of the heart when we take the time to share our stories, when we believe that our stories tell more about who we are in the core of our being than the way we look or our last names.

Perhaps like me you’re old enough to remember a time when the connections between congregations in CDC were strong, based on ethnic ties and shared involvement in conference activities. Today we are, thankfully, more diverse, but our busy lives make it more difficult to find time to get involved in the life of the conference. This challenges us, as conference leaders and members of CDC congregations, to find ways to connect and build relationships.

That’s why I’m so excited that eight congregations agreed to be part of the CDC Friends Pilot Program. Friends are volunteers who “are passionate about their congregations and believe in the power of stories to change lives, and who believe in relationships as a foundation for strengthening Christian witness and fellowship.” (–CDC Friends Manual).

On a Saturday in January, this new group of Friends came together at Eighth Street Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind. Perry Bush provided a CDC history lesson and June Alliman Yoder led a series of workshops on listening to and telling stories. The day culminated with each group of Friends sharing a symbol and story of their congregation.

And so the CDC Friends program begins. As in all budding friendships, there’s a sense of wondering where these relationships will take us as congregations and as a conference. There is a sense of hope that they will lead us into a deeper understanding of ourselves and each other and of the work Christ calls us to together.

Watch for a report on the Friends Pilot Program at the Annual Meeting in June, and, when a Friend approaches, have your stories ready.

– **By Jan Lugibihl**
member of CDC Board of Directors



Emmaus Road winter retreat at Friedenswald

Members of Emmaus Road Fellowship, Berne, Ind., held a winter weekend retreat at Camp Friedenswald. Several activities took place during the weekend. During a worship service communion was served. Jim Beitler and Martin Rediger serve communion in this photograph.

FROM PAGE ONE

11-year-old's dinner raises \$4,800 at Grace Mennonite

be 150 persons attending. She was close – they had about 130 persons in attendance.

Elizabeth planned a menu of meatless spaghetti, Caesar salad, breadsticks, lemonade and assorted desserts. Knowing that others might want to contribute food, Elizabeth invited the youth of the church to donate desserts. She was right – on the day of the dinner, the dessert table was laden with brownies, cupcakes, poke cake, cherry pie and cookies. Some of the high school and college students baked desserts, as well. There were, in fact, so many that they ended up auctioning off the leftover desserts.

What's a dinner without table decorations? Elizabeth and her Sunday school class cut out paper dolls and glued on clothing cut from scraps donated by quilters at the church. Some of the paper dolls were standing on the table, holding signs that read "Pray for Haiti." Above the donation basket hung a poem Elizabeth had written while waiting for her piano lesson to begin.

Although support from the church was evident well in advance, she decided to do some additional publicity, designing a poster and submitting a note to be included in other church's bulletins.

Deciding how much food to purchase was a bit trickier, but her parents helped her with that. They showed her how to interpret serving sizes on packages and as a result, were left with just one extra bag of spaghetti.

Her family helped her set up the tables and chairs on the Saturday before the event, and Cindy Luginbill and Diane Huber – both of whom are familiar with the church kitchen

– offered their assistance. Others volunteered to help serve, so they set up shifts for serving and clean-up. They saved money by using mostly china and glassware from the church, with minimal amounts of paper products. That, of course, meant lots of dishwashing.

In the end, Elizabeth's event raised over \$4,800. Her parents had paid for all of the ingredients, so that she was able to donate all of the funds to the Mennonite Central Committee's Haitian Relief Project.

Asked how she felt about the project, Elizabeth said, "It makes me feel really good to know that I helped. I'm glad to know that all the money I raised will go to a good cause."

She admits that it was a lot of fun and if there is another natural disaster, she'll likely organize another fundraiser, although "I don't know if I'd do the same thing."

Her parents were pleased that she took the initiative to do this. Her mother said, "It showed that this (the earthquake) was weighing heavily on her mind" in the days following the disaster.

"It was clear how much she was an encouragement, an inspiration. She had a lot of affirmation and encouragement of our church (members)," said Deborah.

Guest preachers at Cincinnati

Les and Gwen Gustafson-Zook, regional MCC Great Lakes representatives, presented the sermon at Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship on Feb. 21. The theme was "Jesus in Palestine."



Jane Thorley Roeschley chaplain at Meadows

Jane Thorley Roeschley of Graymont, Ill., has been hired to serve as the Chaplain at Meadows Mennonite Retirement Community on a part-time basis. She currently serves as associate pastor of worship and lay ministries at the Mennonite Church of Normal and will continue in that role along with her part-time responsibilities at Meadows.

Neufeld speaker at Mennonite Church of Normal winter youth rally

Chuck Neufeld was the speaker of a youth rally Feb. 28 at Mennonite Church of Normal, Normal, Ill. Several area Mennonite churches participated. In June, Normal MYFers will travel to Kentucky to work with SWAP.

Piecemaking and Community Life Night

The congregation of Columbus Mennonite, Columbus, Ohio, held a CMC Piecemakers and Community Life for MCC Night in February.

The event included knotting comforters to send to refugees overseas, and helping youth of the congregation work on school kit bags. In addition, a soup, bread, dessert supper was held to raise money to buy batting and fabric.

Several adult Christian education classes are offered to the congregation this spring. Those include Simply in Season, using the study guide based on themes of the Simply in Season cookbook. Nonviolence in History and Scripture is a class on peacemaking through nonviolent direct action.

Chronological Bible Study continues from the winter quarter. It focuses on biblical passages in the order of their historical unfolding. Hunger for Healing 12 Step Class is offered for persons on a spiritual journey of growth and healing. It uses J. Keith Miller's book and DVD series "A Hunger for Healing."

Milwaukee visits the farm on day-long retreat

On Feb. 14 families in the Milwaukee Mennonite congregation held a day-long retreat at a farm. Here's what some of the children and youth liked about the day:

Levi: ...feeding the sheep. I liked the feel of their tongues—it feels weird. **Simon:** ...all the games we played. The slap-the-person-with-the-fish-game, because right as you get to someone they say someone else's name and so you're running around. [Note: the "fish" was a stuffed animal]. **Soraya:** ...sledding! When Sam's dad made that ramp and you landed, "Ooof!" Also eating. I'd have to say I liked the breakfast burritos best. **Sam:** ...singing all the songs! And the Rock-Paper-Scissors contest. **Sarah:** ...singing and being with other people. **Lydia:** ...playing with the kids in the basement and sledding. **Norah:** ...sledding, and getting all snowed on! **Dejaquan:** ...I loved the group games and the sledding.



Speaker at Topeka Missions Sunday

Dean Heisey, Mennonite Mission Network, spoke at Topeka's Missions Sunday, Jan. 31. His sermon title "Is God Speaking?" used texts Exodus 14:15-16, 21-23 and Acts 9:10-19.



West Ohio meeting

Participants at the Feb. 13 West Ohio regional meeting discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the conference polity.

On March 13 was a regional meeting at Milwaukee Mennonite.

Boynton

March 7 was “Invite a friend to church Sunday.” The sermon centered on the sabbatical of Kurt and Janelle Litwiller. Later in the afternoon, members of the congregation made carrot cakes for the Illinois Mennonite Relief Sale.

Silverwood

Several Adult Christian education opportunities are available this spring at Silverwood, Goshen, Ind.

A men’s study class will use curriculum written by men for men, which centers on themes of wealth, power, friendship and family.

Teachings on Community explores the Old Testament books of Jonah and Ruth, and the teaching of Jesus and the early church.

Living the Good News Together focuses on the journey of Jesus to the cross and beyond. The study uses the same biblical texts used by children this spring.

North Danvers

North Danvers, Danvers, Ill., held a Scholastic Books sale in its Fellowship Hall in February. The sale included many Christian children books.

Paoli

The congregation of Paoli Mennonite Fellowship, Paoli, Ind., is raising \$3,000 for a service trip later this spring to Mashulaville, Miss. Service projects are available to members of all ages.

Hively Avenue congregation in Lenten retreat

“Coming Home” was the focus of a half-day Lenten prayer retreat offered to members of the Hively congregation on Feb. 27. The three-hour retreat related to Hively’s Lenten observance inviting its members to practice spiritual disciplines like fasting, giving alms with compassion, fasting from consumerism and becoming more involved in prayer and spiritual retreats.

In other news related to Hively Avenue, Walter Sawatsky was recognized by the Institute of Mennonite Studies at AMBS on Feb. 9. Recognition was for his publication of “Prophetic and Renewal Movements: The Prague Consultations.” He has spent many years on ecumenical work across Europe.

Since 1984 he has represented Mennonite World Conference in a series of Inter-church dialogues that began between churches of the “First” (13th-14th centuries) and “Second” (16th century) reformations that took place in Prague.

Assembly donates \$33,390 from 2% Fund

Members of the Assembly, Goshen, Ind., congregation donated \$33,390 in 2009 in its 2% Fund disbursements. The money collected went to a variety of local and global projects. The program enables members of the congregation to share their own wealth with others.

Salem uses funds for seed money

The Salem, Kidron, Ohio, congregation placed \$2,500 from its budget into a seed money fund for the congregation’s members to contribute to Haiti relief through MCC.

CPTer tells about Northern Iraq at Southside

Hilary Scarsella, a graduate student at AMBS, was a guest March 21 at Southside Fellowship, Goshen, Ind. She shared her work with Christian Peacemaker Teams in Northern Iraq. She hopes to return again this fall for further work with CPT.

Eighth Street opens church to homeless

For the week beginning March 28, Eighth Street, Goshen, Ind., will welcome guests into its church building who do not have a place to call home. According to the Eighth Street bulletin, “Each week that we offer hospitality through Goshen Interfaith Hospitality Network, 42 or more members of our congregation and St. John’s Catholic Church volunteer to bring food, serve as evening or overnight hosts, or pray for the ministry.”



Let it snow!

Snow! Yes, this winter there was snow and plenty of it during junior high and senior high weekend retreats at Camp Friedenswald. All that snow made the tubing course all the better. Here's a view of the outdoor action during a CDC junior high retreat.

CDC calendar

March

- 22 Ministry Resource Day - Illinois
- 24 Ministry Resource Day - Ohio
Columbus Mennonite
- 26 Ministry Resource Day - Indiana

April

- 14 Chicago Area Mennonites, 10 am
West Ohio pastor peer, 9:30 am
- 15 Journey board, 1 pm
- 16 Board of Directors at Camp Friedenswald,
9 am - 5:30 pm
Stewardship Committee, 6:30 - 9:30 pm
Ministerial Committee, 6:30 - 9:30 pm
- 17 Leadership Council, 7:30 am - 12:30 pm
Missional Church Committee,
1:30 - 4:30 pm

May

- 1-2 Maplewood Mennonite, Ft. Wayne,
50th anniversary celebration
- 4 Michiana pastor peer, 9-11:30 a.m.
- 13 Central Illinois pastor peer, 9 am
- 14-15 Mennonite Women Sister Care,
Kidron, Ohio
- 25 Pastor care workshop, AMBS,
Elkhart, Ind.
- 28 Mid-States Conference Meetings, At
AMBS, 4:30-9 pm

June 24-26

- Annual Meeting, Bluffton University,
Bluffton, Ohio

CDC youth news

First, Bluffton

Youth from the First, Bluffton, Ohio, catechism class visited Berlin, Ohio, in early March. Their visit was to the Amish and Mennonite Heritage Center, where they learned about Anabaptist history. Those attending were Jackson Bush, Hannah Chappell-Dick, Kristi Geiser, Lucas Harnish, David Moser, Logan Steingass and Helle Steingass.

Hively Avenue

Youth from Hively Avenue, Elkhart, Ind., held a jazz evening in February. Several youth attended a jazz club in South Bend to hear the Concord High School Jazz Band.

Eighth Street

The Eighth Street, Goshen, Ind., senior youth catered a meal with a Puerto Rican flavor in early March. It took place during the congregation's annual meeting and served as a fundraiser toward a Puerto Rico study/service trip at the end of June.

8 months, 2009-10 year-to-date report

Income	\$126,914
Expenses	\$123,748
YTD difference	\$3,166
Spending Plan	\$131,722
Difference from Spending Plan	-\$4,808

Thank you for your prayers and generous support of our mission together as Central District Conference.

— *Chris Habegger,*
treasurer

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