



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

# Reporter

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

**MAY 2010**

June 24-26 at Bluffton University

## “Following Christ and Growing Together” 54th annual meeting theme



“Following Christ and Growing Together” is the theme of the 54<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of Central District Conference. The meeting is June 24-26 on the campus of Bluffton University, Bluffton, Ohio.

This year’s event includes business sessions and worship that focus on the conference theme. Several other meeting features, which have become annual meeting traditions, include congregational stories and workshops.

### **Workshops**

Workshop themes include capital punishment, Congo Cloth Connection, creative imagination process (focusing on the current economic crisis and its effect on congregations), reviewing biblical texts for children, and sharing out of our differences,

led by several congregations, facilitated by CDC Board of Directors.

A plenary session, led by Carolyn Schrock-Shenk, will focus on tools, guidelines and hope for CDC members to talk authentically about differences while maintaining respect and relationship across the conference.

A monologue focusing on Joseph Stuckey, a pioneer Mennonite leader in what is now the Central District Conference, will also be given during the annual meeting. Mick Sommers (Silverwood) will present the monologue.

Conference delegates will also take action on a proposed spending plan of \$199,256 for 2010-2011. Karl Shelly, CDC board president, will provide a state of the conference address.

Delegates will act on a recommendation to accept Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship, Berne, Ind., into CDC.

Delegates will also take action on proposed membership criteria for congregations applying for membership to Central District. The criteria were processed with congregations in five regional

meetings during the past year.

### **Giving back to the community**

Delegates have an opportunity to give back to the annual meeting’s host community. This year’s local recipient is Brazo en Brazo (Arm in Arm). The not-for-profit organization was created by a coalition of Mennonite churches in the Lima, Bluffton and Pandora area.

It is the group’s mission to assist in support services to Hispanic families and persons in the Lima area through friendship evangelism.

Brazo en Brazo began in the fall of 2004. CDC congregations involved in the program include Grace, Pandora, First, Bluffton, Lima Mennonite, in addition to two Ohio conference congregations.

Donations to Brazo en Brazo may be made during the registration process or at a display table during the annual meeting.

**See page 4**

From CDC Board of Directors

## Googling...a great way to find each other

The Gospel passage for the morning was Mark 4:35-40, *Jesus calms the storm*. I was giving the children's story. I told the children that I had a story about a woman named Jane Addams...a woman who, because of her great faith, was able to stay calm during a frightful experience (Lehn, Cornelia. *Peace Be With You*. Faith and Life Press. 1981).

I told them that I wanted to learn more about Jane Addams before I told the story so I looked her up on Google. "Does anyone here know what Google is?" I asked. Hands from every child, kindergarten through fifth grade, and one four-year-old went up! This brought a chuckle from the congregation.

Getting beyond my surprise, I showed the children the picture of Jane Addams I had printed from the web site I had found through my Google search and went on with my story. (After worship I sought out the four-year-old to quiz him about what it means to use Google. Even though he didn't spell or read yet, he understood the concept of learning more about something by searching the internet using "Google.")

Thanks to the Internet, the church family – congregations, area conferences and Mennonite Church USA – have another way of staying in touch with and learning about each other.

Try this: Google the name of your congregation; don't use acronyms – this will take a bit of relearning for Mennonites, but it will save a lot of frustration using the Internet if you spell it out.

For example, my congregation is Grace Mennonite in Pandora, Ohio. There are numerous congregations by the name of Grace in Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada so it helps to add city and state. (There are also many congregations by the name of First, Zion and Salem) The result of Googling my congregation's name is a map of where we are located and a link to our home page.

From Grace's home page you can see photos of our church life, find the pastor's name and contact information, our worship bulletins and newsletters and links to our extended family, i.e. Mennonite Church USA, Central District Conference, Mennonite Camp Friedenswald, Mennonite Central Committee – so many options for staying in touch and learning about.

When you are away from home on a Sunday, on a business trip or a pleasure trip, use the Internet to search for a Mennonite Church in the area of your visit and worship with that congregation.

An easy way to find a church is by "Googling" Mennonite Church USA. Remember to spell it out, don't use MCUSA, you will find Missionary Church USA.) On the Mennonite Church USA home page, click on the "area conference" link (on the left side of the page) and then on "list congregations" (in the body of the page).

When you've found a church and attend worship, you will meet new brothers and sisters and perhaps, even receive an invitation for lunch. Note to congregations: find out how your guests learned about you. Are they new to the community and looking for a new congregation or are they visitors from a sister congregation?

Learning about sister congregations via the Internet is very interesting, but you just can't beat face-to-face visits. By now you probably know about the regional meetings conducted by the Central District Conference Board of Directors. One of the goals of these meetings was to help congregations in a region get to know each other and Central District better. The Board feels the meetings were successful. The events had all the qualities of a family reunion – meeting new family members, catching up with those you haven't seen for a while and fellowshiping – eating and laughing together.

There will soon be another opportunity for a family reunion, the annual gathering of Central District Conference, June 24-26, at Bluffton University in Bluffton, Ohio. The theme is "Following Christ and Growing Together." There will be events for the whole family – infants through adults. Learn more about what will happen and how to register at the CDC web site: [www.centraldistrict.mennonite.net](http://www.centraldistrict.mennonite.net). Consider joining the reunion.

In closing, think about adding Central District Conference to your "Favorites" on the Internet. Check CDC's web site regularly for new ways that will make it even easier to learn about and stay connected to sister congregations of Central District Conference. Stay tuned...

*Note: If you aren't familiar with some of the terms used in this article – Internet, Google, home page, link – ask an elementary-age child in your congregation. That child will be able to help you.*

**By Joyce Schumacher**  
**CDC Board president-elect**

# Central District Conference

## 54th annual business session schedule

### Thursday, June 24

**10 am** Golf scramble

**4 pm** Registration begins at Marbeck Center

**5 pm** Pastor appreciation dinner, First Mennonite Bluffton

#### **7:45 pm WORSHIP I**

Speaker: Louise Wideman

Christ the Center: Growing in Unity (Colossians 1:15-20)  
(Yoder Hall)

Fellowship and snacks following service

### Friday, June 25

#### **8:30 am Business Session I**

(Marbeck Center)

Welcome and call to Order to the 54th Annual Meeting

Welcome from Western Ohio Region congregations

Introduction of Parliamentarian, Resolutions Committee  
and Listening Committee

Roll Call

Summarize/Approval of 2009 Annual Meeting Minutes

#### **ACTION: 2009 Annual Meeting Minutes**

Review of Agenda and actions needed

Meet Joseph Stuckey

State of the Conference Address

**9:20 am** Getting acquainted around tables

Dwelling in the Word

**10 - 10:30 am** Break/Snacks

**10:30 am** Congregational Story

#### **ACTION: Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship**

Presentation of Gifts Discernment Committee  
and slate of nominees

#### **ACTION: Slate**

Commissioning Service: Incoming and continuing  
committee members

Treasurer's Report/ 2010-2011 Spending Plan

**11:05 am** Presentation of proposed Membership Criteria

Introduction of Resolution

Ministerial Committee Highlights/Journey Report

Missional Church Committee Highlights

Introduction of guests

Announcements

**11:45 am** Lunch at Marbeck Center

#### **1 pm Business Session II**

(Marbeck Center)

Congregational Story

Announcement of Emmaus Road vote

Friends Program Report

MCC Great Lakes Report

Bluffton University Report

Camp Friedenswald Highlights

**1:45 pm** Plenary Session:

Growing together in Christ amidst differences

**3:15 pm** Transition to workshops/drink break

**3:45 pm** Workshops (Centennial Hall)

**5:15 pm** Transition to dinner

**5:30 pm** Dinner

Mennonite Women Dinner at Marbeck Center

Mennonite Men Dinner at Marbeck Center in Kreider Room

Dinner is available at Marbeck Center for all those not  
participating in either of the dinners; or you may eat at one  
of the area restaurants.

**7 pm** Transition to Yoder Hall

#### **7:30 pm WORSHIP II**

Speaker: Ervin Stutzman

Christ the Connector: Growing as Covenant People  
(Ephesians 4:1-6)

(Yoder Hall)

Offering

**9 pm** Interaction with Ervin Stutzman

(Yoder Hall)

Late night activities

### Saturday, June 26

#### **8:30 am Business Session III**

(Marbeck Center)

Congregational Story

Word from MC USA: Joint Agency Report

Mennonite Publishing Network featured agency

**9:15 am ACTION: 2010-2011 Spending Plan**

#### **ACTION: Membership Criteria**

**9:45 am** Congregational Transitions: Pleasant Oaks

Open mic

**10:15 am ACTION: Gratitude Resolution**

Listening Committee Report

Close of business sessions

**10:30 am** Transition to worship/drink break

#### **11 am WORSHIP III**

Speaker: Rachel Miller Jacobs

Christ the Sender: Growing in Mission  
(2 Corinthians 5:16-21)

(Yoder Hall)

Communion

**12:30 pm** Going home (No lunch served on campus)

Continued from page 1

# Following Christ and Growing Together



**Preaching at CDC's annual meeting are, from left, Louise Wideman, Ervin Stutzman and Rachel Miller Jacobs**

### Three worship sessions

Louise Wideman, associate pastor of First Mennonite Church, Bluffton, will preach during the Thursday evening session. Her sermon topic "Christ the Center: Growing in Unity," is based on Colossians 1:15-20. Wideman also serves on CDC Ministerial Committee.

Ervin Stutzman, executive director for Mennonite Church USA, will preach during a Friday evening worship using the theme "Christ the Connector: Growing as Covenant People." His text is Ephesians 4:1-6.

Rachel Miller Jacobs, of Faith Mennonite Church, will preach on Saturday morning. Her theme "Christ the Sender: Growing in Mission," uses 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 as a text. She is a spiritual director and the worship resources coordinator for "Leader" magazine.

### Pastor appreciation dinner

A pastor appreciation dinner will take place at 5 p.m., Thursday, June 24, at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton. CDC Board of Directors and Ministerial Committee provide the dinner for pastors and spouses. "Five P's in a Pod," a men's singing group from Bluffton and Pandora, will provide the entertainment. RSVPs are required by June 10.

### Youth programs

Several activities are planned

for youth of all ages. Childcare will be available for infants through age 3 during the pastor appreciation dinner, delegate and worship sessions.

Childcare is also available for children ages 4 and 5 during the pastor appreciation dinner and all delegate sessions.

Activities for youth from ages 4 to grade 12 will begin on Friday morning.

### Honor gifts

Delegates will have the opportunity of giving a gift in recognition of a friend or family member during the annual meeting. Gifts will support the ministry of CDC. Gift suggestions may be made as a memorial or as a tribute to someone living. Designee names will be visible on an honor board at the annual meeting.

### Golf scramble

A golf scramble fundraiser will be held at 10 a.m., Thursday, June 24, at Bluffton Golf Club, 8575 N. Dixie Highway, Bluffton.

The scramble offers several opportunities to raise funds for CDC. These include player fees and hole sponsors.

Reservation forms are on CDC web site. For more information, contact Jeff Boehr: boehr@bluffton.edu.

### Registration information

Persons interested in attending the annual meeting may visit CDC's web site at [www.centraldistrict.com](http://www.centraldistrict.com) for registration forms.

The registration fee for adults who register by June 10 is \$55. The fee after June 10 is \$65. Walk-ins at the conference will pay \$65.

Housing in local homes is available on a first-come basis. Delegates may request lodging on CDC's web site. Host families are

not expected to provide breakfast. For persons who prefer, a list of motels in the Bluffton area is also on the web site.

Bluffton University is offering lodging and meals on campus. Lodging for infants and children through age 7 housed in the same room with parents is free. Information is on the web site.

## CDC annual meeting slate of nominees for 2010-11

### Board of Directors

- James Rissler, Member-at-large, Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship
- Louise Reeser, Secretary, Mennonite Church of Normal

### Ministerial Committee

- Rachel Siemens, First Mennonite Wadsworth
- Karen Weldy, Southside Fellowship

### Missional Church Committee

- Carole Ricketts Corey, MSU Mennonite Fellowship
- Aimee Weishaupt, Silverwood Mennonite Church
- Jenny Zickafoose, Lima Mennonite Church

### Camp Friedenswald Board

- Willard Fenton-Miller, Florence Church of the Brethren-Mennonite
- Darren Miller, Silverwood Mennonite Church
- Amy Thut, Assembly Mennonite Church

### Annual Meeting Program Planning Committee

- Ellen Miller, Shalom Mennonite Congregation

# Workshops at Bluffton

Centennial Hall, 3:45 - 5:15 p.m., Friday, June 25

## Capital Punishment

Presenter: Steve Yoder  
Pastor of First Mennonite Church Bluffton  
(First, Bluffton)

This workshop examines issues raised by capital punishment. Can Christians make a compelling case for opposing the ultimate punishment? First Mennonite, Bluffton, has taken a stand opposing the death penalty and is seeking other churches in Ohio to join in their stand.

Since 1999, there have been 35 executions in Ohio. In 2009, there were five and there are at least 10 planned for 2010. This workshop looks at ways churches in CDC in Ohio may join together for stronger response to this rise. While this workshop looks specifically at Ohio, we welcome participation by people from any of the states represented by CDC.

## Congo Cloth Connection

Presenters: Suzanne Lind,  
MCC Congo Representative (Florence)  
and Christine Nofsinger, coordinator of  
Congo Cloth Connection (Florence)

The Congo Cloth Connection is an initiative of the Michiana Friends of Congo, and is one manifestation of the church-to-church relationship between Congolese Mennonite churches and Mennonite Church USA.

Suzanne Lind will talk about the variety of ways Congolese and U.S. Mennonites can work together to demonstrate solidarity with the women, men and children of the Congo.

Christine Nofsinger will discuss and demonstrate how churches can use African wax prints to promote awareness of Congo and the Congo churches, and to spark creative ideas about how we can connect with Congolese people.

## Creative Imagination

Presenter: Jeff Newcomer Miller,  
Admissions Counselor  
Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary  
(Assembly)

Jeff Newcomer Miller leads a conversation focusing on the current economic crisis and its effect on congregations. What impact do shrinking budgets have on the work of God here on earth? Imagine the possibilities in a

congregation or a conference when there are no budget constraints. Can God work through a church with few finances? This workshop explores a process that encourages the use of creativity and imagination to explore possibilities.

## Reviewing Biblical Text for Children

Presenter: Kathy Meyer Reimer,  
Professor of Education, Goshen College  
(Assembly)

This workshop examines and reviews biblical text for children – in the form of children's Bibles and in how biblical text is used in Sunday school curriculum. It reflects on how Bibles for children and Sunday School curriculum convey what we theologically believe.

The workshop examines material available in trade book publishing and also in religious curriculum publishing as we consider what we are teaching children about faith on a daily and weekly basis.

## Sharing Out of Our Differences

Presenters: Members from several  
CDC congregations facilitated by  
a member of the Board of Directors

As disciples of Christ, swimming in the Mennonite Anabaptist stream, we have much that binds us together. Yet some differences have threatened to pull us apart or kept us silent when we gather together.

This workshop seeks a new way – a way of respectful listening and interaction in the midst of differences. A handful of congregations who have been working on issues around homosexuality – and who are taking very different approaches – will share of their work and the ways they have been led by the Spirit in their setting.

## Need more information?

All necessary forms for the 2010 annual meeting at Bluffton University may be downloaded at:

[www.centraldistrict.mennonite.net](http://www.centraldistrict.mennonite.net)

or, you may call:

1-800-662-2264, or 574-534-1485 (Credit card payments may be made over the telephone.)

If registering by mail, send with printed registration form to:

Central District Conference  
1015 Division St.  
Goshen, IN 46526

## Emmaus Road Fellowship

Kevin Goertzen, Mennonite Mission Network Ministry Support Team coach, was guest speaker at the April 11 evening worship of Emmaus Road Fellowship, Berne, Ind.

## Paoli Mennonite Fellowship

The congregation's Peace, Justice and Service Committee created an art and literature contest for local high school students. The goal is for students to present a piece, either written, spoken or in another art form, on nonviolent conflict resolution.

## Salem, Kidron

This spring the church Junior High Youth collected footwear, including shoes, boots, sandals and slippers. The footwear was sent to families in Honduras. This Central American project was started by Salem's Dave and Jill Moser.

The project also provided footwear to Mountain Vision Ministries. It is a ministry to Appalachia's needy children and their families in south-eastern Ohio, West Virginia and Kentucky.

## Columbus Mennonite

Virgil and Kathy Troyer presented a Haiti update in April. The Troyers are MCC disaster coordinators in Haiti and are parents of Mark and Katie Troyer of the Columbus congregation.

## Grace, Pandora

Vyron Schmidt of Mennonite Foundation, spoke at Grace on April 18. He told about assets that can be donated. He also explained options available to support charitable ministries. He is the brother of Dennis Schmidt, Grace pastor.

## Cincinnati Fellowship

Members of the congregation's book club discussed "The Soloist," by Steve Lopez during a Sunday afternoon gathering in early May.

## Faith, Goshen

The women's Bible study/breakfast group held a six-session series in the study guild that accompanies "Simply in Season" cookbook.

## Oak Grove, Smithville

Five quilts were knotted and an additional quilt, which children of the congregation made with their hand prints, was also knotted in March for Mennonite Central Committee.

## First, Sugarcreek

Members of the congregation knotted several comforters in March. A rivel soup supper concluded the event. The quilt project was sponsored by the Mennonite Women in Mission of the church. Comforters were shipped to Haiti.

## First, Bluffton

The congregation's Health and Wellness Committee held a bike fair in April. The event included display of different bikes, explanation of what to wear and where to ride, bike safety, bike repair and maintenance and tips on buying a bike. The event concluded with a blessing of the bikes and bikers.

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

Income	\$163,575
Expenses	\$155,212
YTD difference	\$8,363
Spending Plan	\$165,861
Difference from Spending Plan	-\$2,286

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

— *Chris Habegger,*  
*treasurer*

### CENTRAL DISTRICT REPORTER

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### Central District Office:

Lois Johns Kaufmann, conference minister

Emma Hartman, administrator

1015 Division St., Goshen, IN 46528

Phone: 574-534-1485

Fax: 574-534-8654

E-mail: office@mcusacdc.org

www.centraldistrict.mennonite.net