



Central District Conference
A conference of
Mennonite Church USA

Reporter

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

SEPTEMBER 2010

Culture of Service event at Normal

Mennonite Church of Normal, Ill., will hold a regional "Culture of Service event Oct. 15-17. An inter-congregational planning committee of persons representing various churches in central Illinois will coordinate the event.

Kathleen Kern, of Christian Peacemaker Teams, will be the keynote speaker. Representatives from service and mission agencies will be invited to fill pulpits and lead Sunday school classes in area Mennonite churches.



St. John outdoor baptism

Amanda Stratton is baptized in a special service held by St. John Mennonite Church, Pandora, Ohio, in Pandora's Spring Lake on Aug. 1. With her on the left is Peter Diller and on the right is her father, Dave Stratton, leadership and discipleship pastor. Several St. John youth were baptized during the service. (Photo by Dr. Mark Yoder)

For Oak Grove pastor summer means missions in Kenya



Doug Zehr with Bishop Daniel Munyoki, the principal of the Christian Bible Institute (CBI).

Oak Grove, Smithville, Ohio, pastor Doug Zehr participated in a teaching mission in Kenya in August. Since 2000 he has made almost annual trips there at the invitation of the leadership of the Christian Church International (CCI), an African indigenous church. While in Kenya, he participates in its Christian Bible Institute (CBI), a leadership training school.

Zehr said that since CCI does not have a traditional year-around program, it offers short courses in April, August and December.

"Their growth has been explosive and one of their challenges is keeping up with trained leadership. The majority of the students I have worked with have been first-generation Christians," he said.

"They are passionate followers of Jesus and eager to learn. While they call me teacher, I find that I am a student of these church leaders, pastors, elders and church planters," he said.

From CDC Board of Directors

CDC dialogue on differences leads to pulpit exchange

(This summer's CDC Assembly in Bluffton focused on the denominational resolution "growing together as communities even in conflict." We sought to be honest about the disagreements that exist in conference without getting stuck in acrimonious debate. Near the end of the Assembly, Robert Martz, pastor at Topeka Mennonite, invited Karl Shelly, pastor at Assembly Mennonite to participate in a pulpit exchange. Since they represent congregations with some different theological outlooks, this was one way to build bridges and consider new perspectives. The following is an excerpt from Karl's sermon at Topeka Mennonite Church).

My preaching here today is the result of several exchanges your pastor and I have had over the last year. As a result, Robert Martz and I have become something of an odd couple in Central District Conference. We've developed a friendship despite the fact that one of us is a self-proclaimed conservative and the other is – at least by some measurements – fairly liberal.

But Robert and I also have many things in common. Both of us spent significant parts of our sojourn outside the Mennonite Church; both of us tend to speak our mind (which, by the way, is consistent with many of the original Anabaptists who were known as "trouble-makers who can't keep quiet"); and we both seek to be faithful disciples of Jesus. In fact, over the past year I have come to know and respect Robert as a sincere Christian, seeking to live out biblical values.

It is this odd combination of similarities and differences between the two of us that formed the basis for our interactions. We are two brothers in Christ, with some very different perspectives, seeking to explore whether our similarities are stronger than our differences; whether liberals and conservatives can coexist in the same conference and denomination.

In exploring this, we are tapping into a problem that has infected society as a whole. Our country is deeply divided. The extremes on both ends hardly know how to talk to each other; there seems to be no middle ground; and there exists a huge breakdown of trust, respect, and willingness to work together on any of society's terrible problems. The even bigger tragedy is that the church is blindly imitating the world. We too have drawn our lines, standing only with those who think like us, and ever so easily judging those on the other side as lost, ignorant, unworthy, and unfaithful.

When Robert and I spoke together to the delegates of CDC, we asked the question: Is there hope for us? Is there hope for the church? If there is, it will come with remembering the many things

we have in common, and not just focusing on our differences. And perhaps even more foundational, hope is dependent on our ability to listen to each other – that skill which sounds so simple but is actually so very difficult for us. We tend to stop listening rather quickly when we disagree and start debating. We forget the counsel of James, in his New Testament letter: "Let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger" (1:19). Or as someone once prayed, "Dear Lord, Keep your arm around my shoulder, and your hand over my mouth."

Robert asked me to speak today on what it means to be Mennonite. As I was praying and preparing for today, I began to see the genius of Robert's question. It is a question that invites us to examine the core of what we think is important. And when people share that, authentic opportunities open up to really listen – if we are bold enough to do so – to what is on the heart of another person; allowing us to explore what we might see differently, and also discover our many commonalities.

For me, the answer to what it means to be Mennonite is ... *[this part is deleted for space reasons; contact Karl if you want to know what he said. But more importantly, consider what you would say, and have a dialogue – not a debate – with someone who might see things differently].*

I will end by pointing out what I did not include in my answer. I said nothing about shoofly pie, nothing about singing in 4-part harmony, I made no reference to living in Goshen or Harrisonburg or even the United States, and I said nothing about one's last name being Miller, Yoder, or Stoltzfus. Those are irrelevant to our faith even though they are important parts of some people's culture.

I also said nothing about taking a particular stance on controversial social issues. We will come to different conclusions on many of today's current issues. While I think they are important and worthy of much discussion, I don't think they are core to being Mennonite.

Mennonite faith, I would argue, is built on the points I made above. That, I hope, is a basis for a unity that can withstand – and even be strengthened by – a mix of red people and blue people, liberal people and conservative people, tall and loud people [like Robert] and medium-height and shy people [like me].

By Karl Shelly
Assembly Mennonite, Goshen, Ind.
Central District Conference president



Peter Martin and Jenna Liechty Martin

Tonya Ramer Wenger celebrates final Sunday at Madison

Tonya Ramer Wenger celebrated her last Sunday as pastor of Madison Mennonite, Madison, Wisc., on July 25. Ramer was given a Story People vase and a scrapbook of her years at MMC, where she served for more than 10 years.

She is now pastor at First Mennonite in Hutchison, Kansas. Earl Zimmerman is the interim pastor at Madison.

In other Madison news, for more than eight years, MMC has been involved in Community Action Coalition Gleaners, a food recovery program that prevents food waste. CACG rescues bakery items, produce and some prepared foods, and delivers it to distribution sites.

Several times each year MMC members have a work day at Mary House, a guesthouse modeled after the Dorothy Day "Houses of Hospitality," which serves people who need a place to stay for a weekend while visiting a relative/friend at the nearby Oxford Federal Penitentiary.

Dennis Schmidt camp resource

Grace, Pandora, Ohio, pastor, Dennis Schmidt served as camp pastor at Camp Friedenswald during the July 5-10 Junior Camp for youth in grades 5 and 6.

Eighth Street, Emmaus Road supporting MMN workers

Jenna Liechty Martin and Peter Martin, most recently of Richmond, Ind., have been appointed as International Service Workers with Mennonite Mission Network in Northern Ireland for two years beginning Sept. 1.

While in Northern Ireland, they will work with the Edgehill Theological College Reconciliation and Integration Partnership Project. The goal is to help facilitate and guide Christian churches and church leaders in their vocation of reconciliation and integration through education and training, practice and research.

They will also work with EMBRACE NI, which provides resources and support for immigrant and migrant communities in Northern Ireland.

Jenna is a member of Eighth Street, Goshen, Ind. Peter is a member of First, Berne, Ind.

The Eighth Street congregation's September giving box supports the couple. The congregation has agreed to give them \$12,000 over two years, and the giving box is one way to contribute. In addition, Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship, Berne, Ind., is supporting the couple.



Matthew Gene Tschetter



Robin Walton



Samantha Lioi

Four from CDC graduate from AMBS

Four members of Central District Conference congregations were among graduates at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., on May 22. The four are Samantha Lioi, Assembly, Goshen, Ind.; Carmen Horst, Assembly, Goshen, Ind.; Matthew Gene Tschetter, Hively Avenue, Elkhart, Ind.; and Robin Walton, Columbus Mennonite, Columbus, Ohio.

Lioi graduated with a Master of Divinity degree with a concentration in theological studies. For the summer Lioi served on the pastoral team of Assembly Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Horst (*photo not available*) graduated with a Master of Arts in Christian Formation degree.

Tschetter graduated with a Master of Arts: Peace Studies degree.

Walton graduated with a Master of Arts in Christian Formation degree.



Cameron and Chase Miller inspect the cylinder

New entity for Middlebury churches

Balloons and flowers set the stage for a worship service of celebration on Aug. 8, in the sanctuary of the Mennonite church on East Lawrence Street in Middlebury, Ind.

Adding to the elements were the emblems of The Lord's Supper, dozens of clear plastic cups holding an array of colored sand, and an empty clear glass cylinder at the front of the sanctuary.

This worship celebration was happening because the legal work of dissolving two former entities, Pleasant Oaks Mennonite Church and First Mennonite Church of Middlebury, and the formation of a new entity, a new Mennonite congregation in Middlebury, had been completed on July 29.

As worshippers entered the sanctuary, three of the youth, Katrina Pieri, Grant Miller, and Bryce Rheinheimer, gave each person a small piece of colored paper. Children, youth and adults were all instructed to write their names on the papers, and they were col-

lected with the morning offering. Grant and Bryce inserted the small papers, each with a name, into the "history capsule" in the center of the clear glass cylinder.

Then a ritual of unity was enacted by pouring of sand, symbolic of pouring one's life into the mix that is now a new congregation.

The ritual began as Linford Martin, the church pastor, invited Rachel Nafziger Hartzler, the last pastor of the former Pleasant Oaks, to join him in pouring the first cups of sand into the cylinder.

Lay leaders from both congregations followed, and then long lines were formed as the entire congregation was invited to pour sand into the clear cylinder.

Pleasant Oaks brought to the newly formed congregation a church building on six acres of very accessible property, a thriving preschool, and a rich history in addition to 27 members.

Silver-Woodstock performance

Silver-Woodstock, a performance of "today's most-loved and upbeat worship songs" was presented Sept. 4 at Silverwood, Goshen, Ind. Performing were Noah Gilliom, Brandon Buller and friends. The fundraiser helped to raise money for updated music equipment in the sanctuary.

First, Sugarcreek inter-generational summer activities

Inter-generational Sunday school activities at First, Sugarcreek, Ohio, included a visit to Walnut Hills retirement home to visit members of the congregation who live there.

Light-hearted service at Shalom Mennonite

Shalom Mennonite, Harrisonburg, Va., celebrated Humor Sunday on Aug. 8. During the sermon time members of the congregation were invited to tell humorous stories or a short story or joke. The open mic session took place to celebrate the gift of humor and to "laugh together." The invitation went to adults and youth. Members were encouraged to wear "silly clothes or hats and bring funny props" to the service. One qualification was made about jokes concerning groups: none were allowed unless the groups in the jokes were Mennonites.

Chicago Community hosts EMU students

Members of Chicago Community Mennonite, Chicago, Ill., hosted some Eastern Mennonite University students in August.

The students stopped by Chicago on their transcontinental bike tour. Students shared why they choose to ride across the United States.

On their cross-country trip, these conversations led to how bicycles can be a tool for peace building around the world and in people's own backyards.

Sexuality focus of September discussions at Cincinnati

During September, Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship, Cincinnati, Ohio, dedicated its education and worship hours to the theme of sexuality.

Sunday school will focus on same-sex orientation, led by the Dialogue and Discernment team. Worship will address all as sexual beings under the theme, “Body and Soul: Healthy Sexuality and the people of God.”

In preparation for fall activities, all CMF volunteers who work with children were encouraged to attend a Safe Sanctuaries training on Aug. 29.

This training is mandated by CMF’s newly-adopted Safe Sanctuaries Policy and included discussion of child abuse prevention in the church setting.

Following the training, volunteers were asked to sign a “Memo of Understanding” to signify their commitment to following Safe Sanctuaries guidelines.

This summer three books were topics of discussion for the congregation’s book club. July’s book was “Crazy for the Storm” by Norman Ollestad. August’s book was “Life on the Color Line” by Gregory Williams. On Sept. 26, the club will discuss Leif Enger’s “Peace Like a River.”

Columbus members serving breakfast

Each Sunday in October members of Columbus Mennonite, Columbus, Ohio, will serve breakfast at the Clintonville-Beechwood Resource Center.

Thinking on the Confession of Faith

MYF members and a young adult class of Faith Mennonite, Goshen, Ind., completed a baptism inquiry series this summer. Participants did some brainstorming on what they believed should be included in the Mennonite Confession of Faith.

Some of their views follow:

- Unconditional love for everyone and everything
- Community both with like believers as well as engaging the larger world
- Peacemaking
- Scripture taking action in life: Jesus’ life as an example
- The Holy Spirit is at work in our lives
- Inclusion of all persons

Labor Day service centers on faith and work

How does faith and worship affect the places we spend our weekdays? That question served as the Labor Day weekend worship theme at Paoli Mennonite, Paoli, Ind. Congregation members were invited to share a story or comment regarding the question during the Labor Day Sunday worship. Members of the congregation were encouraged to wear or bring symbols that represent their life during the week.

This summer the congregation focused on a series of “Stories of God’s People,” both in the Old Testament and today. Throughout the summer, members became intentional about planning worship services that would keep children interested in the worship experience.

On Aug. 1, the faith focus was “We act on behalf of the vulnerable ones.” Over the weekend the congregation families hosted families who have adopted children from the Congo. Suzanne Lind, who is the MCC country representative for the Congo, shared her personal faith story about caring for vulnerable children. The Bible story for the morning was the story of the Hebrew midwives, found in Exodus 1:15-22, in which two women go against the dictates of the government in order to save newborn children.

Grace series on “Building Community in Christ”

“Building a Community in Christ” is the subject of the fall worship series at Grace Mennonite, Pandora, Ohio. The series will use Paul’s letter to the Ephesians as the guide. The Wednesday evening Bible study will focus on the upcoming Sunday’s Ephesians passage, as well as responding to the previous Sunday’s sermon.

In other church activities, a mini-service opportunity on Aug. 12 featured members of all ages knotting baby comforters, which are given to new babies at Grace.

The youth held a fund-raising dinner Sept. 12, followed by the annual church business meeting. Some members attended the Brazo en Brazo “Fiesta Familiar” at Lima Mennonite later in the day.

Laura Voth, CEO of Mennonite Home Communities of Ohio, and Doug Luginbill, director of resource development and church relations at MHCO, spoke during the worship service on Sept. 19.

“Healing of Release” Southside September worship theme

The September worship theme at Southside Fellowship, Elkhart, Ind., is “The Healing of Release.” The series follows the Gospel of Luke. Members were invited to study Luke together at the home of Carol Nickel on Sept. 9. The intention is to provide an overview of Luke in preparation for the worship themes.

Salem prepares for 125th anniversary

Salem Mennonite, Kidron, Ohio, is planning for its 125th anniversary. The date for the celebration will be announced soon. The August project for Salem’s Women in Mission was hand soap. During July \$420 was donated to the church school kit project and more than 60 school bags were completed.

Spiritual formation at Assembly

Sally Weaver Glick, Assembly, Goshen, Ind., is assisting a number of groups with a focus on spiritual formation and/or writing during this school year.

CDC financial facts two months 2010-11 report

Income	\$16,503
Expenses	\$26,997
YTD difference	-\$10,494
Spending Plan	\$30,709
Difference from Spending Plan	-\$14,206

We appreciate your prayers and generous support during these challenging times.

-Chris Habegger, CDC Treasurer

First, Bluffton youth volunteer in Mississippi and Honduras

Senior high youth from First, Bluffton, Ohio, had two summer service project opportunities. One was in Mississippi and the other was in Honduras.

Participating in the Mississippi trip were Jackson Bush, David Moser, David Hooley, Matthew Suderman, Justin Neufeld Weaver, Lucas Harnish, Halle Steingass, Carissa Luginbill, Cassidy Bush and Ashton Cluts. Advisors were Perry Bush and Paul Neufeld Weaver.

Participating in the Honduras trip were David Hooley, David Moser, Matthew Suderman, Aaron Shelly, Jonatan Moser, Lucas Harnish, Justin Neufeld Weaver, Chris Moser, Jackson Bush, Lisa Shelly, Hannah Shelly, Hannah Chappell-Dick, Jenny Steinmetz, Amber Shelly, Ashton Cluts, Carissa Luginbill and Kelly McCarthy. Advisors were Chris Moser, Carmen Moser and Art Shelly.

Central District Conference calendar

October

1-2 At Camp Friedenswald

- 1 Board of Directors, 9 am - 5:30 pm
Stewardship Committee, 6:30 - 9:30 pm
Ministerial Committee, 6:30 - 9:30 pm
- 2 Leadership Council, 7:30 am - 12:30 pm
Missional Church Committee, 1:30 - 4:30 pm
- 7 Journey Board, 1 pm
- 10 Conference Minister at
Trenton Mennonite Church
- 15 Pastoral Care Workshop
at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary
- 20 Chicago Area Ministries
Pastor Peer Meeting, 10 am
- 24 Sara Wenger Shenk inauguration
at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary

CENTRAL DISTRICT REPORTER

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