



Central
District
Conference

A conference of
Mennonite Church USA

focus

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

DECEMBER 2012

Here are six observances

CDC congregations celebrate Advent

Central District Conference congregations observed Advent in meaningful ways this season. Here are how six CDC congregations celebrated the season.

***A*ssembly**

Visuals for the season were designed and installed by Mennonite Youth Fellowship members. The fourth and fifth grade Sunday school classes brought in the Advent lights each week during worship.

The Longest Night Service was Dec. 21 in the worship space. The AssemblyLine newsletter describes it this way: "Longing for Lights...through lighting of candles, silence, readings and song, we will pause to acknowledge the darkness in our lives and welcome the lights."

This year the congregation created an Advent Spiral, which was a big success. A dozen adults and almost 30 children walked the spiral.

Also during Advent the congregation attempted to create extra space in worship to experience *kairos* time. As part of that effort, the congregation took a four-week sabbatical from oral announcements.

The Assembly Christmas tradition of a shared breakfast continues on Dec. 30.

***L*ima**

Each year during Advent the congregation selects a project to contribute to as a way of giving back to God "who lives so much in Jesus." This season the congregation's project supports Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), specifically of Jonathan Brenneman in Hebron, Palestine.

During Advent worship, Carolyn Huffman shared information about Brenneman's work and the larger ministry of CPT. Then during the Dec. 23 worship service Brenneman shared his Christian Peacemaker Teams experiences with the congregation.

Faith

The congregation's Advent journey focused on watching as God showed up in the lives of ordinary people. For example, on Dec. 16, the journey continued with Elizabeth, who received a visit from her cousin, Mary.

On Dec. 23 the congregation had a Christmas Tea with finger food. On Dec. 30 stone soup will be prepared with members bringing ingredients.

And, while preparing to welcome the infant Jesus, the congregation is collecting items for Mennonite Central Committee's Infant Care Kits. The kits go to mothers who use the items to help their infants get a good start in places such as North Korea, El Salvador and Serbia.

A caroling party in the neighborhood of the congregation's meeting place took place on Dec. 19.

A longest night service was Dec. 20. The congregation newsletter described the event this way: "We all experience areas of darkness in our lives; death of loved ones, loss of unfulfilled dreams, regrets and illness. We also carry the darkness of the world in this season of Advent when we wait for the light of the Christ child's birth. During this hour together we will offer prayers and light candles to illumine the darkness and remind ourselves that darkness does not have the final word in our lives or in the world."

Cincinnati

The Cincinnati church bulletin of Dec. 16 asked members: "When have you been thirsty? Thirsty for water, acknowledgement, justice, mercy? We invite you to contemplate your physical and spiritual thirsts by spending a few minutes taking a slow drink of water at the water station set up in the corner of sanctuary. As we remember the scarcity of drinkable water in many parts of the world, consider the dollar value of your drink. This station and the children's story time offering will be part of special offerings we will be taking up throughout Advent for Mennonite Central Committee's water projects. The children of the congregation will collect coins and bills each Sunday after the children's story. The water station will be open each Sunday for individual approach."

First, Champaign-Urbana

The congregation cosponsored a lecture "The Prophet Muhammad and the Model of Shariah Pluralism," by Professor Jonathan A.C. Brown of Georgetown University. The lecture explored how the Muslim faith deals with people of other faiths.

A mitten tree in the church is a collection point for new or gently used hats, gloves and scarves. Donated items go to the TIMES Center. The church library has revived an old tradition of a Christmas wish list for members who wish to contribute a book to the library.

Oak Grove

Members of the congregation presented portions of Handel's "Messiah," on Dec. 16. It included a choir of 125 singers with 34 from Oak Grove, and an orchestra of 15 musicians. A Longest Night service was Dec. 21, followed by Christmas Eve service of a one-hour service of carols, readings and reflection to prepare for the celebration of the Incarnation. On Dec. 25 was a congregational carry-in dinner.