



**Central
District
Conference**

A conference of
Mennonite Church USA

Reporter

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

JANUARY 2012

Regional meetings theme

God's story...our stories

Centered on the theme "God's story...our stories" six CDC regional gatherings invite persons to worship, talk, sing and play together as that theme is explored.

"The leadership of CDC is excited to announce the dates of the 2012 gatherings," said Lois Kaufmann, CDC conference minister. "The gatherings are for anyone and everyone in CDC congregations from pastors, lay leaders, teachers, young adults and mature adults."

Child care will be provided as needed at the gatherings. The schedule follows:

- **Jan. 14** - West Ohio, Grace, Pandora
- **Feb. 11** - Central Illinois, Carlock
- **Feb. 18** - East Ohio, First, Wadsworth
- **March 3** - Michiana, Topeka
- **March 10** - Chicago/Wisconsin, Evanston



Ted and Company at Bluffton

Ted and Company (Ted Schwartz, Harrisonburg, Va.) will present "I'd Like To Buy an Enemy," in the First, Bluffton, sanctuary on Monday, Feb. 6. His presentation is sponsored by First, Grace, Lima, Salem Mennonite of Elida (Ohio Conference) and Bluffton University.

Schwartz says the new show is designed "to provide a thought-provoking laugh at ourselves and engages us to think about the place of the U.S. in the world, to confront the fear that is such a large part of our culture, and to consider how we can work for peace and justice in this country and in the world."

Down hill all the way

Ezra Amstutz, Elizabeth Woodworth, Sarah Rush, all from Eighth Street, take to the slopes of Camp Friedenswald during a recent high school winter retreat.



A weekend for the arts

Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship's 11th biennial gathering of artists and those interested in the arts is Feb. 3-5, according to Hal Hess, chair of the event. The weekend includes lectures, seminars and workshops, an art gallery, performances, meals, fellowship, congregational singing and worship. This year's Mennonite Arts Weekend takes place at Pleasant Ridge Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati. For complete details visit: www.mennoniteartsweekend.org.



God's Story...our stories

Claiming our Identity

Some years ago when I was home-schooling our four children, Anabaptist history was part of our curriculum. During my college years I had been fascinated by stories from a class on Protestant Christianity. Later when my husband and I lived in a place with no Mennonite churches, my interest in Mennonite history and thought was re-awakened.



Lois Kaufmann

As I read the stories of our 16th century Anabaptist forebears, I wanted my children to hear and appreciate them too. So Jan. 21 became a holiday for us, as we celebrated the first adult baptisms in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1525. Even though we were pretty much the only ones celebrating, we made a big deal of the day.

As we near Jan. 21 each year something stirs deep within me as I remember our spiritual ancestors. Their courage boggles my mind, and their knowledge of scripture and examples of discipleship excite my imagination. Because I want to be more like them, my identity is linked to theirs.

But a strong sense of identity can separate us from others. It can create a them-us division. During the season of Epiphany we celebrate how in Jesus, God is made known to the whole world. All humanity is created in God's image and carries the divine DNA. We began as one family, with one identity. And God's vision for redemption is a universal one,

when all of creation is reconciled to God through Jesus Christ (Col. 1:20).

There is a kind of tension between these identities. Tension is also present in our identities as a conference and as part of the larger church. Those who have attended Central District's annual meetings, made connections with other congregations, or served on conference committees develop a sense of identity in CDC's way of being together as a conference. Yet we also bear a Mennonite identity, which links us to the national church, MC USA, as well as to the global church.

The inherent tension between a smaller identity and God's much larger perspective is healthy. I hope our congregations embrace their identity with all God's people, while appreciating the gifts that are especially ours to nourish and share. I pray that Central District can faithfully nurture those who choose to be part of us, even as we claim our place in the larger Mennonite church, sharing our gifts with others.

As we near Jan. 21 each year something stirs deep within me as I remember our spiritual ancestors.

With your prayers, participation and support, together we can live out our identity as a Christ-like community of hospitality engaged in making God's reign of healing and hope visible in our world.

**Lois Johns Kaufmann,
Conference Minister**

John Roth weekend speaker at First, Urbana

John D. Roth of the Goshen College faculty was the featured speaker in a weekend seminar Jan. 7-8 at First, Urbana. In a Saturday afternoon presentation he discussed "Do Denominations Matter?" On Sunday he led a Sunday school discussion "Remembering Our Baptisms." During the worship service his sermon topic was "Why Discipleship Is Good News."

Roth directs the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism, is active with Mennonite World Conference and edits *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*. He recently participated in ecumenical conversations between Mennonite World Conference and Lutheran World Federation.



Mennonite Mission Network volunteers

11 from CDC in MVS assignments

Eleven members of Central District Mennonite Conference congregations have begun service terms with Mennonite Voluntary Service through Mennonite Mission Network. Each term started in August.

Rachel Friesen of Filley, Neb., began a one-year term in Kansas City, Kan., as a New Roots for Refugees community garden developer with Catholic Charities. A 2011 graduate of Goshen College, Friesen is the daughter of Rita and Merlin Friesen and is a member of Paoli Mennonite Fellowship.

Asha Holsopple of Goshen, Ind., began a two-year term in Alamosa, Colo., as a victim advocate with Tu Casa Inc. A 2011 graduate of Grinnell (Iowa) College, Holsopple is the daughter of Mary and Elroy Holsopple and is a member of Assembly, Goshen.

Kelsey Landes of Harrisonburg, Va., began a one-year term in Seattle, Wash., as a middle school, college and career planning coordinator with Treehouse. A 2011 graduate of Eastern Mennonite University, Landes is the daughter of Lisa and David Landes and is a member of Shalom Mennonite, Harrisonburg.

Mark Massey of Columbus, Ohio, began a one-year term in Rochester, N.Y., as a sentencing mitigation specialist with Monroe County Public Defender's Office. A 2010 graduate of Goshen College, Massey is the son of Ruth and Ajay Massey and attends Columbus Mennonite.

Hannah Shelly of Bluffton, Ohio, began a one-year term in Rochester, N.Y., as Media Arts assistant with Visual Studies Workshop. A 2011 graduate of Eastern Mennonite University, Shelly is the daughter of Lisa and Art Shelly and is a member of First, Bluffton.

Elizabeth Speigle of Telford, Pa., began a one-year term in San Antonio, Texas, as case aide with Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of San Antonio, Inc. A 2011 graduate of Goshen College, Speigle is

the daughter of Joanne and Wayne Speigle and is a member of Assembly, Goshen.

Paul Versluis of Ann Arbor, Mich., began a one-year term in Boulder, Colo., as program staff with Boulder Shelter for the Homeless. A 2011 graduate of Goshen College, Versluis is the son of Joy and Paul Versluis and is a member of Shalom Community Church, Ann Arbor.

Katherine Walker of Ephrata, Pa., began a one-year term in New York as World Vision intern with World Vision International. A 2011 graduate of Goshen College, Walker is the daughter of Cheryl and Steve Walker and is a member of First, Bluffton.

Chelsea Weaver of Pinellas Park, Fla., began a one-year term in Washington, D.C., as ESL/Computer adult education instructor with Mary's Center Even Start. A 2011 graduate of University of Florida (Gainesville), Weaver is the daughter of Rosemarie Stauffer and Thomas Weaver, and is a member of Shalom Mennonite, Harrisonburg.

Jessica Wright of Bluffton, Ohio, began a one-year term of Mennonite Voluntary Service in Seattle, Wash., as home delivery and volunteer coordinator with University District Food Bank. A 2007 graduate of Bluffton University, Wright is the daughter of Dianne and James Wright and attends First, Bluffton.

Blake Zickafoose of Lima, Ohio, began a one-year term in Chicago as church coordinator with Chicago Community Mennonite Church. A 2011 graduate of Bluffton University, Zickafoose is the daughter of Jennifer and Jonathan Zickafoose and is a member of Lima Mennonite.

MVS invites adults, age 20 and older, to join together in Christian ministry for one- or two-year terms in various locations in the United States. MVS gives young adults the opportunity to live out their faith and discern God's call for them by assisting congregations in service ministry to their communities.



First regional gathering of 2012

Members of the Grace congregation act out Ezra 3:7, the story of rebuilding the Temple during the first CDC regional gathering of 2012.

Over 45 persons attended the gathering held at Grace. Members from First (Bluffton), Lima, Cincinnati, Shalom (Ann Arbor) and the host congregation participated in addition to several persons in CDC leadership roles.

Paoli raises \$8,833 for Foods Resources Bank

The Paoli congregation raised \$8,833 for Foods Resource Bank (FRB) through its Penny Power summer giving program and from the Mullet Farm in Montana.

FRB supports local community-based projects around the world that help reduce hunger.

During the week of Jan. 15-20 members of the congregation are involved in a Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) project. They are in Joplin, Mo., rebuilding homes destroyed by tornadoes in May.

Grace holiday event supports three groups

Grace held a holiday bake/garage and book sale combined with a pancake sausage breakfast in November at the church.

Putnam County Habitat for Humanity, the Pandora community branch library and the church MYF benefited from the events. The activities generated over \$3,400.

Topeka fundraiser assists carpet fund

Topeka's Stewardship Commission hosted a potato bar fundraiser following the Jan. 8 worship and business meeting. The Commission is raising \$2,000 for new carpet in the fellowship hall.

Carlock youth plan Missouri mission trip

Youth at Carlock have had a busy fall. They served a meal at the Bloomington Salvation Army, volunteered as shoppers for the Danvers Food Pantry and plan a mission trip. Details are not finalized for the mission trip, however the trip may be to Missouri. There they will assist in home repair caused by flooding.

Members of the Carlock congregation named The Jesus House in Bloomington as its World Bank Collection recipient for the first half of 2012. Mennonite Women of the congregation and Carling Corner are teaming up to collect items of the month. The January item is coffee for Home Sweet Home Ministries.

Faith series offers winter-spring retreat

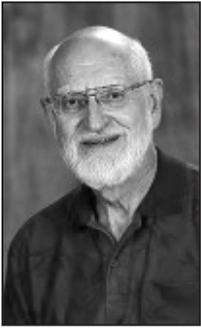
Faith, Goshen, offers its members a Sunday morning retreat series titled "Discerning The Purposes Of Your Life."

The series takes place the second Sunday afternoon of each month from February to May.

Resources include "Let Your Life Speak," by Parker Palmer, "Healing the Purpose of Your Life," by Dennis, Sheila and Matthew Linn, and "The Path: Creating Your Own Mission Statement for Work and for Life," by Laurie Beth Jones.

Oak Grove's winter Bible Institute featured Hesston faculty member

Marion Bontrager of Hesston College, Kansas, faculty, was the featured speaker of Oak Grove's winter Bible Institute Jan. 7-9.



Marion Bontrager

The three-day theme "The Missional Story of Salvation History" began with the account of creation in Genesis and continuing through Revelation. Bontrager led participants through the *heilsge-schichte* or salvation story as found in the Bible.

Grounding participants in the knowledge of the biblical story, Bontrager's sessions covered "From Creation To Tribal Confederacy" "Monarchy To Exile And Return," "Jesus In Historical Context," "Christ - Pentecost To New Creation And Early Church," and finally "How Anabaptists Interpret

The Bible In Comparison To Other Church Traditions."

Assembly Junior High goal to create 1,000 paper cranes

At last report Junior High youth at Assembly were near reaching their goal of creating 1,000 paper cranes. They decided to fold the cranes in honor of Heidi Siemens-Rhodes, their pastor, who has been diagnosed with terminal cancer. The idea to fold the peace cranes came during a Sunday school discussion. All Junior High youth folded at least one crane; many folded dozens. Others in the congregation donated their folded cranes to the project.

The Junior High youth hung a mobile with the cranes and also adorned the Siemens-Rhodes Christmas tree with paper cranes.

Richard Bucher retires in February

Richard Bucher, pastor of North Danvers, will retire from the ministry this winter. He has served the North Danvers congregation for 17 years. The congregation will recognize Richard and his wife, Carol, on Jan. 22. His final Sunday will be Feb. 26. The Buchers plan to move to Bluffton, Ohio, following completion of the pastorate.

CDC couple in Service Adventure

Lauren (of Bristol, Ind.) and Mark Eash Hershberger (of Pittsburg, Texas), began a one-year term service term in August as unit leaders with the Service Adventure program. The Eash Hershbergers are living in community with other young adults in a unit house in Albany, Ore. They are both 2010 graduates of Goshen College and attend Silverwood.

In this program of Mennonite Mission Network, young adults, ages 17-20, live in a household community with a leader for 10 months in cities and towns across the U.S. Service Venture participants have served in medical clinics, tutored children, worked with seniors, repaired housing and helped meet additional needs in the United States.

Eighth Street supports Emergency Assistance Fund

Eighth Street members contributed \$2,600 to the Goshen Ministerial Association's Emergency Assistance Fund this year.

Requests for assistance come from households in the Goshen community due to job scarcity and declining unemployment assistance.

Boynton MW collect health kit items for MCC

Boynton Mennonite Women collected items for Mennonite Central Committee health kits during December. In addition, during December the congregation collected care package items to send to college students who are members.

First, Sugarcreek, class has evening carol sing

Member of First, Sugarcreek's, Sermon Discussion Class sponsored an informal Christmas carol sing in the church sanctuary on the evening of Dec. 18. The congregation's Mitten Tree was a gathering point for hats, mittens, gloves and scarves donated to its area Job and Family Services Share-A-Christmas program.

Toy Drive, food collecting among Salem holiday projects

A Christmas Toy Drive and restocking of People to People's food pantry were among projects of Salem members in December.

Norman Kraus preaches at Shalom Feb. 12

Norman Kraus will preach at Shalom, Harrisonburg, Va., on Feb. 12. During the second hour he will lead a congregational discussion on his recently released book "On Being Human: Sexual Orientation and the Image of God."

Advent retreat at Wadsworth

Members of First, Wadsworth, participated in an Advent Morning Apart Retreat on Dec. 10 at the church.

Carolyn Heggen, Rhoda Keener Sister Care presenters



Rhoda Keener - Carolyn Heggen

CDC calendar

February

7 - Board of Directors

conference call, 7 pm

29 - Missional Church Committee

conference call, 7 pm

March

19 - Indiana Ministry Resource Day

21 - Illinois Ministry Resource Day

23 - Ohio Ministry Resource Day

April

At Camp Friedenswald

20 - Board of Directors,

8:30 am-5:30 pm

20 - Ministerial Committee, 6:30 pm

20 - Stewardship Committee, 6:30 pm

21 - Leadership Council,

7:30 am-12:30 pm

21 - Missional Church Committee,

1:30-4:30 pm

May

4-5 - Mennonite Women USA Sister Care, College Mennonite Church, Goshen

June

21-23 - Annual meeting, Mennonite Church of Normal; hosted by the Central Illinois region congregations

Carolyn Heggen and Rhoda Keener lead the May 4-5 Sister Care "Equipping Women for Caring Ministry" seminar co-sponsored by Central District Conference and Indiana-Mennonite Conference. Held at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, sessions are Friday, May 4, from 7-9 p.m., and Saturday, May 5, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Keener has served as executive director of Mennonite Women USA since 2001. She now shares that role with Ruth Lapp Guengerich. Keener is co-editor of "She Has Done a Good Thing: Mennonite Women Leaders Tell their Stories."

Heggen, a psychotherapist specializing in trauma recovery, is author of "Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and Churches."

Sister Care explore issues that include:

- Claiming my identity as God's beloved
- Caring for self and others
- Compassionate listening
- Transforming loss and grief

For additional information visit www.centraldistrict.mennonite.net

Atlanta Fellowship has joint worship on Jan. 22

Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship held a joint worship service with the Open Door fellowship, hosted by AMF on Jan. 22. James Rissler, pastor, will turn from his sabbatical at the end of the month.

Silverwood sermons based on "other people's mail"

Ron Guengerich, pastor of Silverwood, will be "reading other people's mail," from now until the beginning of Lent. The mail is from Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth. The sermons and worship will focus on how Paul addressed the problems in Corinth and how Christians today benefit as we "read this mail," according to Guengerich.

CDC Financial Facts:

Six months, 2011-12 report

Income	\$97,403
Expenses	\$98,647
YTD difference	-\$1,244
Spending Plan	\$99,214
Difference from Spending Plan	-\$1,811

Thank you for your prayers and generous support as the calendar year ended and we reached the midpoint of our spending plan year. Together we fulfill our conference missional activities.

-Chris Habegger, CDC Treasurer

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