



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

Reporter

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

JANUARY 2014

Florence workshop: “Sitting in peace”

“Sitting in Peace,” was the theme of a Dec. 15 all day workshop at Florence Church of the Brethren Mennonite. Wendy Anderson Halperin, author and illustrator, led the event, where participants transformed chairs and tables they brought into original art: peace chairs and tables.

The day included worship and hands-on design and painting.

Participants, from youth to seniors, were “drawn into peace” by choosing quotes and images that inspire peacemaking, according to Nina Lanctot, pastor.



Member of Florence congregation creating a peace chair

“Transformed through text and table” theme of three CDC regional winter gatherings

Three Central District Conference regional gatherings take place this winter. “Transformed Through Text and Table” is the theme of each gathering.

Host congregations and dates are: Hively Avenue, Feb. 8; Columbus Mennonite, Feb. 15; and Chicago Community, March 1.

The format of each gathering includes making connections, Bible study, host congregational presentation, learning to know Covenant Mennonite Fellowship, CDC historical vignette, CDC finances discussion, lunch, input activity and a summary of the gathering and evaluation.

Plan a *Central District Conference Sunday* in your congregation

Partnering in the Gospel

By Lisa Weaver and Carrie Mast
Members of CDC board of directors

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, thankful for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.
— *Philippians 1:3-5*

Central District Conference reaches into 10 states and includes over 40 congregations. Our churches vary in size, location and style of worship. Yet we all practice discipleship to Christ, seeking to bring the light of peace into our homes, our neighborhoods and the world. Our congregations are ‘partners in



Lisa Weaver



Carrie Mast

the gospel’ with each other, supporting and encouraging one another as we walk this faith journey together.

In these first two months of 2014, you are encouraged to explore your congregation’s Central District Conference connections through a worship service and/or Christian Educa-

tion hour. To this end, CDC staff and board members are suggesting that congregations designate one Sunday in January or February as “CDC Sunday.” Pastors and worship leaders are receiving resources designed to invite participation on whatever level is suitable within individual congregational schedules and plans.

Resources include scripture and song suggestions, stories for reflection and sharing, ideas for children’s time, the lighting of a peace lamp, responsive readings and a sermon focus. Included is a link to a CDC slide show featuring photos from congregations. Additional materials available include a DVD on CDC history and polity, by Janeen Bertsche Johnson, and a script for singing the *Heilsgeschichte* – a way of telling the salvation story from the Bible through narrative and hymn singing.

One possibility for a CDC Sunday is to invite a CDC Board member, committee member, staff

member, or retired CDC pastor to lead a discussion during Christian Education hour or share a reflection during worship. If your congregation would like to invite a speaker, please contact Lois Johns Kaufmann, CDC Conference minister, or Emma Hartman, CDC Administrator, to make arrangements.

A final note: The idea for planning a CDC Sunday is suggested with the recognition that 14 CDC congregations have dual-conference affiliation and two also have affiliation with the Church of the Brethren.

We encourage worship and Christian Education planners to name that reality, express appreciation for both their conferences, and consider having a Sunday focused on the rich heritage of the other conference as well. Or, rather than simply a “CDC Sunday,” dual-conferences congregations could consider a “Conference Sunday,” which highlights information about both conferences. The plans for a CDC Sunday have been shared with, and affirmed by, conference ministers from Indiana-Michigan, Ohio and Illinois conferences.

As a closing, we will leave you with a prayer that might be an opening for a CDC Sunday with your congregation:

Leader: We are the body of Christ! Baptized in one Spirit, we are members of one body.

All: *Many and varied in gender, color, age, class, and ability, we are members of Christ’s beautiful body.*

Leader: None of us can say to another, “I have no need of you.”

All: *For only together can we find wholeness.*

Leader: None of us can say to another, “I will not care for you.”

All: *For we are connected like muscle and bone. If one suffers, we all suffer. If one rejoices, we all rejoice!*

Leader: Thanks be to God who, in Christ, has made us one.

All: *Let us worship God!*

You are invited to plan a CDC Sunday within your congregation.

Who: All CDC congregations
What: Worship and/or Christian Education, focusing on CDC
When: In January or February
Why: To explore, create, or renew connections within CDC
How: With resources and suggestions provided by CDC staff and board members

Has strong ties to Central District Conference

Jenna Liechty Martin named Camp Friedenswald's executive director

Camp Friedenswald's Board of Directors have named Jenna Liechty Martin as the new executive director of the camp beginning in January.

Selected from a strong pool of candidates, Liechty Martin was chosen for her solid organizational, interpersonal and leadership skills.

The board was impressed with Liechty Martin's confidence, energy and enthusiasm, which will prove invaluable as she connects with camp constituents and supporting congregations.

Liechty Martin comes to Camp Friedenswald from Mennonite Mission Network, where she has most recently worked in development. Prior to her current work, she served through Mission Network for three years in Belfast, Northern Ireland, along with her husband, Peter Martin. Liechty Martin also has experience in management and admissions as well as strong Friedenswald ties.

Originally from Goshen, Ind., Liechty Martin graduated from Bluffton

University with a degree in business administration and a minor in peace and conflict studies.

"Camp Friedenswald has been a special place to me throughout my life; from summers spent at camp as a youth, to serving on summer staff, Friedenswald has served as an important place of retreat and renewal in my life," says Liechty Martin.

"I am both excited and humbled by the opportunity to serve the church, specifically Central District Conference, in providing leadership and vision to Friedenswald in the years to come."



Jenna Liechty Martin

CDC Sunday part of Atlanta retreat

Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship's annual retreat is Feb. 28-March 2 at John Tanner Park in Atlanta.

The retreat is described as "lots of unstructured time for fun and fellowship." In addition, members will take some time to talk about Central District Conference. The discussion will focus on its history of welcoming congregations that were less welcome in other places.

Those attending the retreat will also use some of the "CDC Sunday" resources offered by the conference.

Grace members plan SWAP service trip

Members of Grace, Pandora, have scheduled a service trip to Harlan, Ky., with Mennonite Central Committee's Serving with Appalachian People (SWAP) program.

The trip take place July 14-19. The congregation may send as many as 20 youth and adults.

First, Bluffton's, Christmas project assists MDS

In December, Mission, Peace and Service Commission of First, Bluffton, offered a CD of Christmas music of Lucia Unrau and Peter Terry, members of the congregation.

The CD "12 Songs of Christmas" was available for \$10 each with 100 percent of sales going to Mennonite Disaster Service.

Tied to the MDS fundraiser, in early January, First members Dwight and Trella Kauffman, began a three-month term of service with MDS in Bastrop, Texas.

Active winter for Columbus MYF

Members of Columbus MYF have had an active winter. Members held a game night in November. Later in the month members participated in a themed mystery party where youth and sponsors ate turkey and tried to figure out who stole the imaginary one. Participants were assigned a character in advance and they played them convincingly.



CDC congregations

Assembly

Kindergarteners through fifth graders at Assembly held a candle dipping party on its Jan. 8 activity night.

First, Sugarcreek

During the holidays members of First, Sugarcreek, posted a mitten tree in the foyer.

The tree served as a donation point for hats, scarves, gloves and mittens given to a local Job and Family Services agency for distribution.

Silverwood

The congregation's Outreach Commission plans a Mennonite Disaster Service trip to the northeast U.S. area impacted by super storm Sandy. The trip is set for March 9-15.

Covenant

Jan. 10 was the first game night of the year for the congregation. Members continue to provide food donations to Bethesda House Ministry.

Missional Church Committee extends Reign of God grants deadline to April 10

Central District Conference's Missional Church Committee is extending the deadline for 2013-14 Reign of God grants. The new deadline for applying is now April 10.

By asking the question: "Where is the Spirit bubbling up in your midst?" Missional Church Committee hopes that the grants encourage and resource CDC congregations to follow God's spirit and be missional people in God's world.

A Reign of God grant will match (1 for 1) money raised at the grassroots level to give the extra financial boost necessary for a new, cooperative missional initiative between two or more congregations.

Grants will range from \$500 to \$2,500. For more information and to apply, go to http://centraldistrict.mennonite.net/Resources/Reign_of_God_Grant.

Hively launches intergenerational dining

Hively's Witness and Caring Commission introduced "Intergenerational Dining!" in January.

In this program, youth between ages of 5 and 13 choose an adult buddy to go through the food line and eat with them at church potlucks.

Youth may not choose their own parents nor share a buddy with other youth. Youth may choose a different buddy each month or adopt an eating buddy for several months in a row.

The committee members hope this will be a positive experience for youth and adults in the congregation. It will also provide an opportunity for children and adults to get to know each other better.

2014 Mennonite Arts Weekend Feb. 7-9 in Cincy



The 2014 Mennonite Arts Weekend, sponsored by Cincinnati Mennonite, takes place Feb. 7-9 at Pleasant Ridge Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati.

This year's weekend includes a Friday, Feb. 7, evening opening session from 6-9 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 8, all day and a Sunday, Feb. 9, morning worship service.

Featured artists are Jean Janzen, poet; Eric Kaufmann, ceramic artist; Randall Stoltzfus, painter, Marilyn Houser Hamm, song leader/pianist; Angie Clemens, music education/song leader; Jim Clemens, composer, accompanist; Kristina Glick, jewelry artist/metalsmith; Judy Clemens, writer/novelist; The Steel Wheels, American roots folk music; Karen Thiessen, textile artist; Sarah Boyts Yoder, mixed-media painter; and Ted & Tim Swartz & Tina (Swartz) Burkholder, playwright/actor, painter, writer.

For complete details on the weekend visit: www.mennoniteartsweekend.org

Chicago members focus on "busyness of life" this winter

During January a group of members from Chicago Community Mennonite has formed to explore various ways of finding a quiet place that many long for in the "busyness of life."

In a series of seven sessions, the group will explore different prayer forms including lectio divina, chanting, praying with icons and walking meditation.

In other congregational news, Megan Ramer, pastor, notes in a church newsletter that extra copies of "Remembrances" booklet are available from the congregation's 35th anniversary All Souls Day worship. The booklets include remembrances from the five members of the congregation who have died.

In late December members of the congregation held a Longest Night Service. The contemplative service of worship marked the coming of winter and focused on some of the loss and grief associated with the Christmas season.

Oak Grove's Advent sculpture invites congregational participation

Oak Grove's Advent sculpture created from old farm equipment by Mahlon Schmucker carried an interesting theme this year.

The sculpture was described this way in an Oak Grove Sunday bulletin:

"Life on earth can be hard and many people are searching for meaning. The first 24 people in the sculpture representing the days leading up to Christmas, are rusty and their candleholders are a heavy burden.

"The different colors of candles signify that the people have different troubles as they look for answers.

"The last six people, who have seen the King, no longer carry a heavy burden. Their candle holders are communion cups, ready to share the Good News with the rest of the world."

The bulletin description asks members of the congregation to see if they can identify the individual parts and what their significance to the story might be.

In other Oak Grove news, the church Endowment Board recommended three grants in December:

- \$2,000 to Friends of Shirati, Tanzania, to help pay for their hospital accountant's education.
- 2,000 to Aimee Stein to assist her in attending the Disaster Management Program, affiliated with Mennonite Disaster Service, held at Hesston College, Kansas.
- \$2,000 to Pastor Doug Zehr to assist him in costs to teach in Kenya at the International Impact College.



Marlys Weaver-Stoesz CDC interim editor

Marlys Weaver-Stoesz of Goshen, Ind., is the interim editor for the Central District Conference.

She grew up near Goshen and graduated from Bethany Christian High School in 2006. She graduated from Goshen College in 2010 with a bachelor's degree in journalism before working for three-and-a-half years at The Elkhart Truth, a daily newspaper, where she covered local crime, education and community feature stories.

She is currently doing marketing, public relations, writing and editing work for a variety of organizations, mostly focused on education and agriculture.

She and her husband, Phil, originally from Winnipeg, Manitoba, live in Goshen, and attend Assembly Mennonite where they are also the junior youth group sponsors.

Marlys Weaver-Stoesz

Six month CDC giving report

In the month of December, giving from congregations was strong and by the end of the month, stood at about \$4,750 above our goal.

Giving by individuals, families and businesses was also good and so total revenue through the first six months of our fiscal year is about \$4,400 ahead of the annual plan.

Expenses through these first six months of the year ran about \$6,700 under the plan, so the net is strongly positive \$11,238!

Thanks be to God and to all those who support the work of the Central District Conference. Let's make these next six months strong as well so we can rejoice at our annual meeting in Madison, Wisconsin, in June and have the wonderful task of deciding what to do with the surplus!

Roger Nafziger, CDC Treasurer

CDC calendar

February

- 2 Brian Bolton installation/licensing, Shalom Mennonite
- 8 Regional gathering Hively Avenue
- 10 Board of Directors Conference Call
- 11 Michiana Pastor Peer
- 11 Missional Church Committee Conference Call
- 12 West Ohio Pastor Peer, Lima
- 13 Central Illinois Pastor Peer
- 15 Regional Gathering, Columbus Mennonite
- 21-23 Journey weekend learning event
- 23 Commissioning of Jenna Liechty Martin

March

- 1 Regional Gathering, Chicago Community Mennonite
- 10 CDC Central Ministry Resource Day, Camp Friedenswald
- 12 CDC East Ministry Resource Day, Columbus
- 14 CDC West Ministry Resource Day, Camp Menno Haven

June

- 26-28 Annual meeting, Madison Mennonite

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