



Central
District
Conference

A conference of
Mennonite Church USA

focus

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KNOWING CHRIST'S LOVE—ANSWERING GOD'S CALL

The power of women

by Mary Etta King

Mennonite women in southwest Florida have long enjoyed assembling themselves in retreats. They come together for weekends every spring and fall. They worship, play and work together regardless of ideology, theology or political affiliations. They do not talk about what is happening in the church or denomination. Language is a challenge as Spanish is the first language of some of the women, but translators are usually present who can help bridge the gap.

I encountered several of the women firsthand after having been approached by Sandra Güete and Lori Yoder when they asked if Covenant Mennonite Fellowship would host the 2019 fall half-day retreat. It came as a surprise and I was astounded to have been given the opportunity to be a part of this event. So one Saturday

morning, Fanny, Elena, Iris, Miriam and I met to plan the worship service. These Hispanic women came with great ideas of singing, hearing the scriptures read and listening to testimonies; that part of the morning fell into place quite easily. Our theme was "Uniting on the Bridge." Yesenia Casa from a church plant in Tampa reflected on her transformation and saw Jesus as the bridge.

The concept of uniting after years of separation was what made this day historic. Covenant had gone through a long dark night having been shunned for our open and welcoming stance for LGBTQ persons over the past years. We women bridged that gap by getting together for worship, fun and lunch. I now have a tender spot in my heart, especially for the women at Iglesia Anabautista Menonita



At the fall retreat of Mennonite women in southwest Florida in November, Elizabeth Perez and Yesenia Casa (left photo) and Lori Yoder and Sandra Guete (right photo) helped to lead the worship and presentations.

Sequidores de Cristo who worship in very close proximity to Covenant, barely a quarter of a mile away.

All of what happened at that day retreat was spoken or sung in Spanish and English with interpreters present to make it understandable. Otherwise, we smiled a lot to each other. For the craft, Michele, a woman from Covenant, came up with the idea to have quilt patches prepared ahead of time for coloring with special markers. One of her friends is an artist who prepared an image of a bridge spanning a river. These patches will be sown together and made into comforters for Mennonite Central Committee.



Greg Walton of Columbus (Ohio) Mennonite Church, designed the bridge emblem for the event.

Our joining of one another that day will have global effects of warmth and love when these comforters are in the hands of people around the world.

It seems like a miracle is unfolding like sunlight streaming through the windows as we Mennonites in Sarasota are beginning to work together on other projects that benefit Mennonite Disaster Service and Mennonite Central Committee.

God hears our cries and answers with Love and Hope.

Mary Etta King is copastor of Covenant Mennonite Fellowship, Sarasota, Fla. She also is a member-at-large on the CDC Board of Directors.



Mennonite Women in southwest Florida join together for weekend retreats every spring and fall. The fall retreat was hosted by Covenant Mennonite Fellowship in November.

2020 CDC gatherings

Regional gatherings

February 8, 2020: Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Indiana, 10 am-3 pm

February 15, 2020: Raleigh Mennonite Church, Raleigh, North Carolina, 3:30-5:30 pm with meal following

February 22, 2020: Madison Mennonite Church, Madison, Wisconsin, 10 am-3 pm

March 14, 2020: Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship, Cincinnati, Ohio, 10 am-3 pm

Annual Meeting

June 25-27, 2020: Oak Grove Mennonite Church, Smithville, Ohio

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Central District Conference
www.mcusacdc.org office@mcusacdc.org
800.662.2264