

Central District Conference Mennonite Women's Report



Because of the pandemic, CDC Mennonite Women did not have a gathering at conference in 2020, nor was there a Women's Retreat at Camp Friedenswald. However, many congregational women's groups were active throughout the year, adjusting to different kinds of activities because of the pandemic. Here are some reports from some of those groups. Our thanks to Jan Croyle of First Mennonite Wadsworth, Marlene Suter of Columbus Mennonite, Lori Nester of First Mennonite Bluffton, Jill Hilty of Grace Mennonite, Amy Kauffman of Assembly Mennonite, and Jeannette Bechtel of Eighth Street Mennonite for contributing to the contents of this report. I have used their own words as often as possible.

As Jan Croyle of First Mennonite Wadsworth says: **“Nothing is normal during this pandemic, but growth and renewal can still happen. We are Mennonite women finding our way.”**

Columbus Mennonite: As COVID restrictions hit, *Piecemakers* began sewing tops, knotting and binding comforters at home. They retrieved fabric from the church and started delivering projects to people around the city. A table just inside the church held sewing projects, comforters to bind, and bins of knotting thread for people to take. Last year at this time, they had completed 117 comforters. This year, even though working from home, they have completed 218.

First Mennonite Wadsworth: The Wadsworth women's group is hosting zoom meetings titled *Mennonite Women's Coffee and Conversations*. They have read and discussed one of the MW blogs, “Affirm: The Lowly Boast,” by Cyneatha Millsaps. Articles from the *Anabaptist World*, such as “Running on Empty, yet with something to give” by Meghan Larissa Good and “Be like rain (but not a thunderstorm)” by Jenny Gehman have been discussed, and the group is now adding music and lyrics that tie in with the articles.

First Mennonite Bluffton: FMC Mennonite Women's meetings are open to all women. They have been using the MW devotional guide. Before COVID restrictions, they met in small groups due to winter weather. In February, the group helped support Cyneatha Millsaps' visit to Bluffton University and utilized her as a speaker with the topic ‘How Do We Care for Young White Males?’ Before activities shut down in March, the group hosted speakers from *Crime Victim Services* to talk about their program, ‘Day One’, which focuses on violence prevention and providing direct services to survivors of sexual violence and human trafficking. During COVID, FMC women have made materials available for comforter sewing at home: fabric to be cut and kits of squares to be sewn. Those with space may knot and finish comforters. Work continues on school and health kit bags.

Grace Mennonite, Pandora: The year 2020 started out much the same as other years for *Threads of Grace*, with twelve comforters knotted and sent to MCC to be counted for the Great Winter Warm-up as a part of MCC's 100th Anniversary Celebration. In addition, 125 school kits and 125 hygiene kits were made. Care packages were put together for college students. When COVID hit, the women made masks for the staff at Mennonite Memorial Home, as well as family members and friends. Later, they made washable gowns for the Mennonite Memorial Home staff. Comforter kits were put on a table in the fellowship hall to be picked up and taken home to knot. Twenty-two comforters were knotted during the pandemic and sent to MCC. Four baby comforters were presented to members of Grace.

Assembly Mennonite, Goshen: *Lunch Bunch* at Assembly Mennonite Church has continued to meet by Zoom during COVID. They have learned more about the work of 'The Window' in feeding the homeless in their community, about resilience, and about each other. They have enjoyed meaningful conversations together and staying connected safely.

Eighth Street Mennonite, Goshen: On January 18, 2020, the *Eighth Street Women* hosted the 'Great Winter Warm-up', completing 35 comforters in one day with the help of 53 people. When COVID rules demanded a cessation of all further in-person activities, events such as the Women's Celebration, comforter working days, and the June and Christmas celebrations had to be canceled. The group continued to fill school and hygiene bags and to sew and knot comforters at home. At least 113 school and hygiene bags were completed for MCC.

Central District Conference Women received generous donations and contributed to AMBS Scholarships for International Women and Camp Friedenswald. My thanks to Jeannette Bechtel of Eighth Street Mennonite for her help in this process.

Greta Holt for Janeen Bertsche Johnson and Central District Conference Mennonite Women