

Evangel

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Lebanon 2005 Offers Opportunity for Dialogue, Reflection and Growth

By Susan McCarthy Palmer, Editor

"Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you." II Corinthians 13:11

A fervent call to live authentically for Christ, coupled with the opportunity to examine all that God was doing in the conference and dialogue together about its future were the hallmarks of Lebanon 2005, the PNMC annual meeting, held this past June 17-19, 2005, in Oregon.

More than 250 Mennonites (350-400 during evening meetings) from across the Pacific Northwest, as well as representatives from the MC USA Executive Board, Mennonite Mission Network, Mennonite Mutual Aid, Mennonite Voluntary Service, the West Coast Mennonite Central Committee Board, Bethel and Hesston Colleges, and Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, gathered for the event, hosted this year by Lebanon Mennonite Church.

Setting the tone for the annual gathering, keynote speaker Michele Hershberger, biblical studies instructor at Hesston College, exhorted attendees to seek to follow the biblical Jesus in all things, no matter what the cost. Noting that, often, we are tempted to follow a "cultural Jesus," that is, she said, One who is fashioned after our own image, and thus in tandem with what is often easier for us, Michele urged listeners to, instead, strive to follow the Jesus who loves the Word of God; who seeks to bring wholeness, healing and restoration to relationships with God, with others and with our inner selves; who seeks to speak and take a stand against injustice, individually, nationally, and internationally; and who pursues God's plan to bring this wholeness and restoration to the world through peaceful, non-violent means.

Round Table Discussions

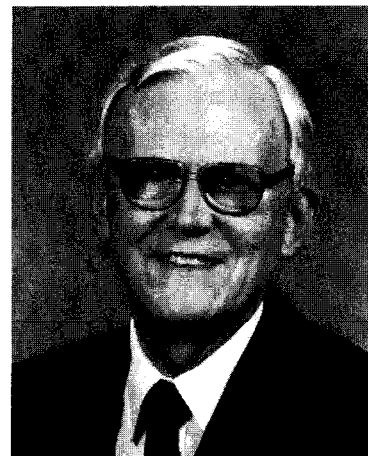
Issues concerning our growth as a conference, as well as that of justice, reconciliation, and following the biblical

Continued on Page 4



Simon and Socorro Rendon, right, greet fellow participants at Lebanon 2005.

A Word from Our Moderator



Lebanon 2005 is history and what a special blessing! Not only for myself but a number of persons have commented how much they appreciated our gathering. Comments ranged from how well the delegate sessions went to how helpful the seminars were to how much they enjoyed the worship sessions and Michele Hershberger's much appreciated sermons and how she presented the Gospel. And yes, the fellowship times, visiting with friends, making new ones, and discovering how interesting fellow Mennonites really can be! In talking with several youth and children their responses were also very positive.

Registrations totaled 290 with approximately 350 – 400 persons attending the evening worship services. Twenty youth were registered as well as 21 children. I thank each person that served in one way or another for Lebanon 2005! Plan now to attend Mt. View 2006 in Kalispell, MT, June 23 – 25, 2006!

Now we begin the new conference year with enthusiasm and new inspiration! The past year had its moments of disappointment and pain but PNMC is much larger and its ministry much greater than those times of pain. While we do not know what this year will bring, we do know God is on His throne and will guide us if we remain faithful in following Him. Being faithful to Him is one of my personal continuing goals.

PNMC exists to serve you. As Moderator, I welcome any comments of how we might do that better.

Receive the blessing:

May the love of our Lord Jesus Christ draw you to Himself,
May the power of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you in His service,
May the joy of our Lord Jesus Christ fill your soul.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Willems".

John Willems, Moderator

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The word "Evangel" is written in a large, bold, stylized font with a thick underline. The letters are slightly slanted and have a hand-drawn appearance.

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Youth Hear God, Serve Others During Lebanon '05

By Susan McCarthy Palmer

Youth were not just a subject of seminars at Lebanon 2005; they were a purposefully planned part of every aspect of planning and preparation for the entire event. Keynote speaker Michelle Hershberger, a former youth pastor of a PNMC congregation currently teaching youth ministry and Bible at Hesston College, was intentionally chosen by Lebanon 2005's planning committee because of her strong affinity for youth. Youth were included in every main session where Michelle spoke and worship tunes were selected that would resonate strongly with teenagers.

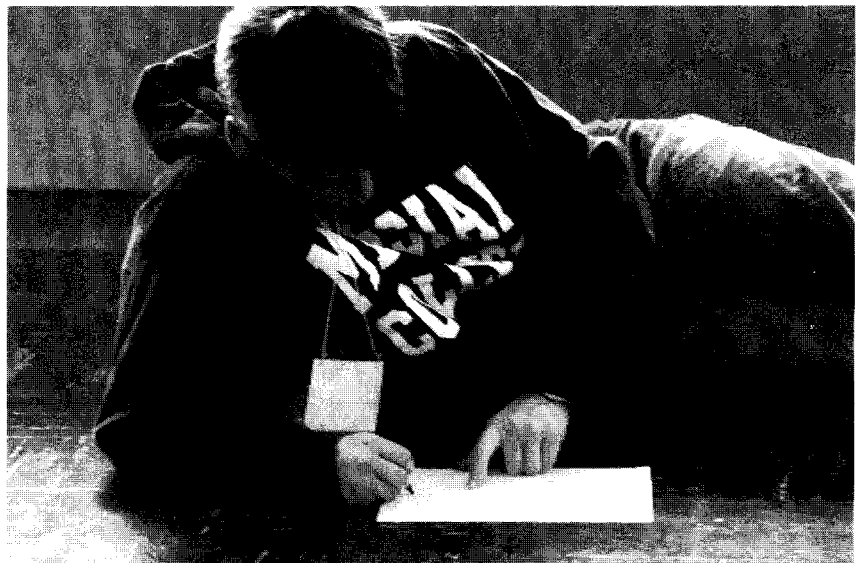
In addition, with the strong support and involvement of adult leaders, a special program just for the youth was also staged at New Hope Church, near Lebanon Mennonite.

The weekend began Friday afternoon, with a service opportunity at Mennonite Village. Here youth visited with residents at the Village, listening to their cares and concerns, playing games and helping them with various tasks as needed.

Saturday featured a prayer walk up Iron Mountain, an old volcano just outside of Lebanon.

Adopting the pattern of a spiritual labyrinth, a maze sometimes used to assist persons in meditation, Adam Yoder, leader of youth activities for Lebanon 2005, planned out a labyrinth style hike, full of switchbacks, up the mountain. Before the hike, each youth was given a journal, and a list of ten questions for meditation, including "What gives you energy?", "Who is/are your role model(s)", "How do you relate to God most readily?", "What are your gifts?" and "How do you feel called by God to serve?" About a half dozen planned rest stops worked into the hike allowed for moments of rest and contemplation, as well as for recording in their journals what God was telling them.

At the end of the journey, each youth wrote a letter to themselves, recording the things God had said, and sealed them in a self-addressed, stamped envelopes. Yoder recently mailed these back to the teens, timed to coincide with the beginning of the new school year. "I hope the letters will be a reminder to them," Yoder said, "of what God to them and who He is calling them to be."



Teen takes time to record what God has told him during Lebanon 2005

Jesus were also talked about in round table discussions held throughout the weekend.

Focusing on both the present and future of the PNMC in general, the conference took time to introduce the Structure and Vision Task Force, a group of individuals representing congregations throughout the PNMC who had gathered to examine both the current and future role of the Conference.

Using the round table discussion format, the SVTF learned that much growth was happening in a variety of ways at PNMC congregations, including youth ministry outreach, small group study, monetary giving, working with Hispanic people, ministering to nearby grade schools, and congregational growth to the point of needing a physical expansion at one local church.

Congregations said they looked to the PNMC principally to provide resources to help them in ministry, including the search for and development of pastors, youth ministry, worship ministers and other church leaders; to assist them in a deeper understanding of peace and its related issues, to supply a PNMC Youth coordinator, to support and expand the work of PNMC's conference teacher, to offer regional workshops for multiple churches, especially beyond Portland; to increase Conference-wide communication efforts and to deepen their understanding of peace.

Conference participants also took time in round table format to discuss the covenant between the PNMC and NW Mexico churches, the first phase of which is coming to a close. Attendees overwhelmingly supported the continuation of the relationship between the PNMC and NW Mexico congregations, encouraging more PNMC congregational involvement based on the needs and desires of the NW Mexico churches, as well as more information on activities with NW Mexico congregations via the Evangel and other methods. A Conference-wide youth trip to NW Mexico was also suggested.

A third round table discussion focused on the PNMC Pastoral Leadership Committee's recent decision to suspend Seattle Mennonite Pastor Weldon Nisly's credentials because he had chosen to officiate a public ceremony in Seattle which blessed one same-sex couple's relationship.

In a short presentation which led off the discussion time, Pastoral Leadership Committee Chairperson Pat Hershberger said the decision to suspend Pastor Nisly's credentials came after about a year's time of face-to-face dialogue, as well as written communications, between the PLC and Pastor Nisly, in which it was determined that the pastor's views on responding to same-sex relationships were at variance with those held by the PNMC and MC USA. While that remained true, the PLC felt it was best to suspend his credentials, while yet remaining in dialogue with Pastor Nisly, in hopes that some reconciliation between him and the PNMC might yet be attained. Noting that "we recognize the pastoral call as coming from the congregation," Pat said that Seattle Mennonite "continues to confirm Weldon" as their pastor and he continues to serve the congregation in that capacity.

Speaking from his heart on the entire matter, PNMC Conference Minister Team Leader Duncan Smith, who also serves as Weldon's conference minister, told the group, "This has been the most painful period of my life because I deeply care about the church and how we relate to one another. There is pain. We must know, however, that it is okay to have strong feelings, to express them, and to have strong disagreements. The Scriptures teach us to lean into and trust God in our midst, to "bear with one another." We are called to self reflection, a life worthy of God, a holy life; to bear with one another in love. We are held together by

Environmentalism Given Annual Peace Award

Joe Blowers, a member of Portland Mennonite Church, received the 2005 Gard Hanks Peace and Justice Award at Lebanon 2005 this past June.

Recommended by his pastor, Rod Stafford, because of his activity and commitment to a lifestyle of peace and justice, Joe teaches science at West Sylvan Middle School in Portland. Author of the Mennonite Weekly environmental issues column, "What on Earth?" and a developer of several Portland-area conservation projects, Joe's special commitment to the environment extends even to the way he and his family eat and the type of transportation they use (the family foregoes the use of cars, opting instead for bicycles).



God, called to patience, called to work our problems out together.”

With such thoughts guiding them, round tables of approximately eight people each gathered together to discuss their personal questions, concerns and hopes, which were then expressed to the entire group, as well as to the PLC and the Board.

Elections, Budgets and By-Laws

The meeting also included the approval of a slight revision of the PNMC document, "Justice Making", to provide a more rounded picture of how to work through sexual misconduct situations; the election of new board and committee members, and the approval of the 2005-2006 PNMC budget.

New PNMC Board members replacing those who had completed their terms include Mary Stutzman of Filer Mennonite and Jack Knox of Salem Mennonite, who will serve as members-at-large; and Jon Yoder of Pacific Covenant Mennonite, who becomes Congregational Nurture Committee Chair.

Newly elected PNMC committee members include Lois Hooley, Filer Mennonite, who will serve on Nominating Committee, and Angela Nissly, Pacific Covenant Mennonite, who will work with the Peace and Justice Committee.

Re-elected to new terms in previously held positions were Diane Isaak, Evergreen Heights Mennonite, PNMC Secretary; Don Bacher, Albany Mennonite, PNMC Treasurer; Leonard Nolt, Hyde Park Mennonite, Nominating Committee Chair; Steve Kimes, Anawim Christian Community, Outreach Development Committee (ODC) member; and Brent Kauffman, Lebanon Mennonite, Pastoral Leadership Committee member.

Vonnie Oyer of Zion Mennonite was elected as a new member of the Western Mennonite School board, while Cheeri Barnhart, Western Mennonite Church, and Byron Shenk, First Mennonite-McMinnville, were re-elected to new terms of service.

The new budget adds line items for the Peace Pavilion and other peace education efforts, the SVTF, and an Ethiopian outreach program sponsored by the ODC; funding increases for work in NW Mexico and for conference minister travel; and the restoration of line items for youth ministry stipend and expenses, and mission and service grants.

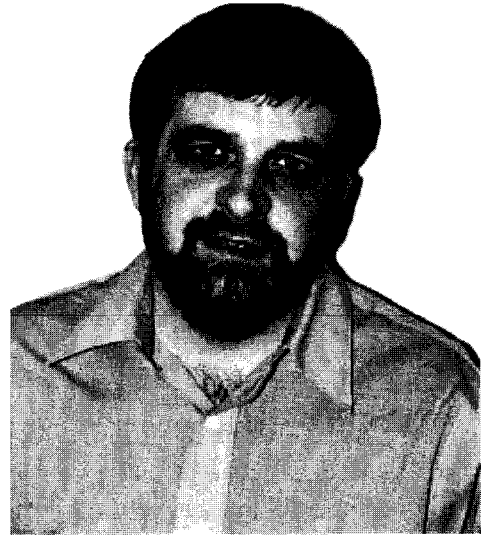
Next Year in Kalispell!

Next year's conference will be held June 23-25, 2005, at Northridge Lutheran Church, Kalispell, Montana. Mountain View Mennonite will be the sponsor. Mark your calendars now for what promises to be a truly "mountaintop" experience in God!

Table Groups Improve Discussions, Fellowship at Lebanon 2005

By Duncan Smith

A lot was packed into this year's annual meeting, Lebanon 2005. Much of it focused on discussion relating to several "hot" topics in the PNMC. For those of you who were not there, let me name several: there was discussion of the future of the PNMC's relationship with the Mennonite Conference in northwest Mexico; the introduction of the Structure and Vision Task Force, which is working with future structure and vision, and brought questions for feedback; interactive conversation between delegates and leadership about how the church will minister with gays and lesbians; and the usual budget discussions.



For the first time, a new format was used in all of the above discussions, except budget: table groups. Delegates (and others) gathered in groups of 8 to 10 around a table. Each group was given input and questions to respond to for each topic. Each table had to come to agreement on what to report back to the larger group from their table.

Using table groups for discussion, discernment, and decision-making has been a part of MC USA process for several years. This sort of process helps people to hear from and discuss with others, and forces the group to come to discernment what is truly important to share with the broader group. At Lebanon 2005, the table groups allowed a very intense agenda to be handled in a way that enabled people to experience being more a part of the process than if there were only reports. Some individuals were also allowed to speak for themselves during these sessions. The technique was not perfect, but it provided better interaction than that had when those leading the discussion sat at a head table, while delegates and others sat in pews.

While Lebanon 2005 did not resolve all of the questions or issues facing the PNMC or even PNMC congregations it did, from my perspective it helped to lay a foundation for further, deeper, and more concrete discussions and discernment, with Christ as our cornerstone.

What's more, it might be helpful for us to think of ourselves in congregation as individuals seated around a table discussing our concerns as we work earnestly at some issues in the future. The new Mountain States Conference has developed a system of working at issues in a proactive sort of way. Congregations gather for what essentially boils down to bible study, looking at topics of "faith and practice". Congregations are required to send participants to these events if they want to be a part of decision-making in their conference structure.

During Lebanon 2005, I heard, loud and clear, a cry for "stronger" conference leadership, defined differently by each person who said it. This is important. It is also important for us to remember, no matter how separate or distant we feel from other congregations or the "conference" that each one of us ARE the conference, no matter where we live!

Locals Visit, Reflect on Nagasaki Tragedy

by **Matt Friesen**

*Here again, this month, this day,
Memories soar beyond the drifting clouds.
And in a flashing instant
They disperse, voicelessly, hopelessly.
O teacher! O souls of the children!*
-"The Souls of the Children,"
translated by **Hachiro Shimauchi**



With this song, our peace delegation from Albany, Oregon, gathered with many hundreds of others in the Peace Park in Nagasaki, Japan, on August 9, 2005, to mark the 60th anniversary of the absolute destruction of Nagasaki at 11:02 a.m. on August 9, 1945.

While children sang and officials spoke of the need for the elimination of nuclear weapons and inspired world leadership in the cause of peace, the names of more than 1,000 victims of the bombing who have died in the past year were retired into the sacred vaults and books of memory.

Speaking at the gathering, Fumie Sakamoto, an atomic bomb survivor, reminded us of the unimaginable scene on this day 60 years ago when she was in 8th grade. Though she lived more than a mile from the explosion, she was blown 30 feet out of the kitchen of her home and landed in her garden, unconscious. "A little while later, my surroundings faded back into view and as far as I could see everything had been reduced to rubble. I ran towards the woods close by, as fast as my legs would carry me. I no longer remember how I managed to make it there. Others who had survived the bombing were also fleeing into the woods. People, clothes ripped and torn, nearly naked, with gaping chest wounds, whose hearts were exposed and could be seen still twitching, people burned so badly one could not tell front from back—the woods was full of such people. And then before I knew it, I fainted."

"Nuclear weapons must never be used for any reason whatsoever," avowed Nagasaki mayor Ichio Itoh during his annual Peace Declaration. "This we know from painful experience. For 60 years we have repeated our plea: 'No more Hiroshima! No more Nagasaki!'"

Our group's time in Nagasaki also included a visit to the Atomic Bombing Museum, where a significant collection of objects which survived the bombing were on view. These included a broken and deformed elementary school wall clock, its hands frozen at 11:02 a.m., the moment the bomb exploded on Aug. 9, 1945; bones of a hand melted into a glass bottle; rosary beads fused into a glob of metal and glass; scorched lunchboxes with carbonized rice inside, and photos that burst one's imagination.

In the face of such suffering, which claimed the lives of 150,000 mostly innocent civilians through incineration, walls of wind and debris, and radiation, it shamed us to think that our government continues down the immoral path of creating new generations of nuclear weapons. We have yet to learn that nuclear weapons make us not more but less secure. The world is aching for a creative, strong and visionary nation to lead us into an era where nuclear weapons are outlawed and eliminated. May Nagasaki be the last place where a nuclear weapon is ever detonated.

Sailings Acts: Traveling in the Wake of Paul

By Susan McCarthy Palmer

Have you ever yearned to travel in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul on the trail of his missionary journeys? Lin and Janet Stutzman would understand. In fact, they have lived your dream and, from November 18-20, they will be in the Pacific Northwest, giving multi-media presentations on their 16-month sabbatical traversing the lands where Paul brought the Gospel aboard their own boat, "Sailing Acts".



The Stutzmans, who grew up in Oregon and have since served with Eastern Mennonite Missions in Germany and on the faculty of Eastern Mennonite University, spent from May 2004 to August 2005 following in the wake of the noted apostle and will offer a variety of seminars, based on what they learned, throughout Oregon.

Author of the forthcoming book, *Kingdom, Power and Glory: What Christians in Globalization Can Learn from Paul in the Roman Empire*, Lin has been Associate Professor of Culture and Missions at EMU since 1993. The author of many essays on faith, missions and culture, Lin is also co-editor of several other books, including *Meeting Muslims: A Calling for Presence in the Way of Christ*, *Practicing Truth: Confident Witness in Our Pluralistic World*, and *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness*.

The Stutzmans' first stop on their journey through Oregon will be Western Mennonite School. There, on Friday, November 18, Lin and Janet will speak in assembly and classes on "Paul the Explorer: Lessons Learned from Sailing the Mediterranean."

"What Christian Leaders in Globalization Can Learn from Paul in the Roman Empire" will be the subject of a morning seminar aimed at pastors and Sunday school teachers, but open to all, on Saturday, November 19, from 9 a.m. to noon at Zion Mennonite Church, Hubbard, OR.

That evening, the Stutzmans will present "Sailing Acts: Following Paul's Incredible Journeys of Change" at 7 p.m. at Portland Mennonite Church.

Sunday morning, Nov. 20, the Stutzmans will speak at Salem Mennonite, both in their Sunday school hour, beginning at 9:30 a.m., and during the regular worship service, which starts at 10:45 a.m. Their sermon topic will be "Paul's Travel Tips for Christian Travelers through Global Empires."

Sunday evening at 7 p.m., the Stutzmans will repeat their presentation of "Sailing Acts: Following Paul's Incredible Journeys of Change" at Albany Mennonite.

For further information on these events, contact the hosting churches.