

Evangel

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Hurricane Norbert, Heavy Rains Slam NW Mexico

By Susan M. Palmer

Heavy rains, followed by Hurricane Norbert, delivered a one-two punch to communities in Northwest Mexico in September and October, said Curt Dorsing, PNMC work coordinator for the NW Mexico work team.

An endeavor by local Mexican officials to curtail potential damages of rainfall the week of September 30, resulted in localized crop losses and flooding of homes in five to six towns east of Ahome, Sinaloa, reported Simon Rendon, who is currently visiting Mennonite churches in the region. The officials had released huge amounts of water into irrigation canals and dry river beds, which only worsened the effects of the storm. Fortunately, God's hand was on believers and churches in the region, and damage to them and their material possessions was minimal.

Following in its wake, Hurricane Norbert slammed into the Huataabampo and Navajoa regions, 60 miles to the north of Sinaloa, in early October. At least one Mennonite church is located in the region, said Rendon, where flash flooding and landslides took 25 lives, with many more still missing. He had not heard at press time whether or not individuals or families connected to the congregation were

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A girl struggles against winds during Hurricane Norbert in Puerto San Carlos, Mexico, (approximately 70 miles north of Navajoa) Saturday, Oct. 11, 2008. Hurricane Norbert slammed into Mexico's southern Baja California peninsula with torrential rains and screaming winds, forcing scores of people to flee flooded homes.

CIHAN Celebrates Tenth Anniversary

The Council of Hispanic Anabaptist Churches of the Northwest (CIHAN) marked its 10th anniversary on April 18, 2008. The Council was founded in 1998 and charged with fulfilling eight major purposes:

- Serve as a link between PNMC and the Hispanic Anabaptist churches.
- Provide the support and tools necessary to carry out the Great Commission.
- Promote the spirit of community among the congregations.
- Encourage companionship at the level of pastors, pastor's families, and church leaders.
- Watch and protect congregations from doctrinal currents and movements not in line with sound doctrine and from individuals who act against the unity and health of our churches.
- Stimulate the growth of brothers and sisters in the faith who, responding to God's call, offer their lives to serve the church and the community.

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A Word from Our Moderator

Greetings from Glorieta, New Mexico, where Linda Dibble and I are attending the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) meeting of Mennonite Church USA. If you are unfamiliar with CLC, this group consists of representatives from all 21 area conferences, constituency groups, and denominational and agency staff. Because of the wonderful spirit of these gatherings and the relationship-building that occurs, I always leave these meetings feeling energized and having learned a great deal.

One of the major topics at this meeting is discerning the role of conferences in the larger Mennonite Church USA organizational structure. We are spending a number of sessions considering the following questions:

1. What is the essential role of conferences?
2. How are area conferences autonomous?
3. How are area conferences in relationship:
 - a. To each other
 - b. To Executive Leadership (denominational staff)
 - c. To the agencies (for example, Mennonite Mission Network, MMA, etc.)
4. In the future, what might new models look like?

I wonder how all of you would answer these questions? We would probably generate a great variety of responses and ideas. Some of you might wonder why we even spend energy on such a discussion.

Here's why I think it matters. "Conference," as I see it, is not some powerful, entrenched institution "out there" that does things for congregations (as if congregations and conference are essentially separate). Our conference is a network of nearly 40 Mennonite congregations in the Pacific Northwest region of the U.S. who have decided to relate to one another in an organized way. The work we accomplish depends on staff members, yes, but it also depends on the committed, active involvement of many dedicated volunteers serving on teams, ministries, committees, and the Board. And it certainly depends on the financial and time contributions of member congregations. So, in a very real sense, we congregations of the PNMC are all helping each other; we are all making "conference" a reality.

Thinking of "conference" as the network of PNW Mennonite congregations, then, we could even include in "conference" all of the events and entities that Mennonites have helped to start in our region: the wonderful Mennonite Central Committee relief sales you'll read about elsewhere in this publication, the church camps, Western Mennonite School, Mennonite Village, and many other efforts that were started and continue thanks to the time, effort and love of many members of PNMC congregations.

In this context, then, what is the essential role of "conference"? To me, it is to ensure as best we can that all of us interconnected congregations are healthy and functional: loving God, following Jesus, and living out Kingdom values in our particular place. It is to provide a place to gather and share our collective wisdom (including that of the larger body of Mennonites in the U.S.) so that we help each other be healthy and minister to others, letting God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.



***PNMC Moderator
David Hockman-Wert***

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Maintaining One's Peace In Troubled Times



At the beginning of every season, there are usually remarkable changes, in the weather to be sure, sometimes in the time of day, other times the holidays. This autumn, however, the United States and the entire world are feeling a “fall” of astronomic proportions in a portion of our lives where we often put our trust: our money.

The shocking news of the world’s tumbling finances are affecting all of us in one way or another. People are talking about depression, comparing the current crisis to the one America faced in 1929 and endured through the 1930s. Many, especially those in or nearing retirement, are worried as they see the money they’ve invested for their old age vanishing before their eyes.

This is a test for us on several levels: humanly of our ingenuity and endurance in difficult times, and spiritually concerning in what or whom we trust.

As new creations of Christ, being born again from an incorruptible seed by the Word of God, who lives forever by the Holy Spirit, we know from the Scriptures that such changes were bound to come. Consider the following words from Haggai 2: 6-8 (NIV):

“This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD Almighty. 'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the LORD Almighty.”

Such circumstances call upon us to assess, renew, undergird and expand our faith and trust in the One who is sovereign and who is ultimately in control.

In the Gospels, Jesus says that such concerns, coupled with earthquakes, famines and the like, should not be a surprise for us because they are written about in the Bible. Nor should we worry (Matthew 6:25-34 NIV). Instead, we should read the Scriptures over and over again, come closer to our God and repent from our sins and errors. Because of our human condition, temptations are always present, of course. The answer to that, Jesus said, is “watch and pray” that we might not fail.

In the financial system of God, things are done by faith, not sight. (2 Corinthians 5:7 NIV) Therefore, we have to see these financial problems with different eyes, those that place their trust in the Lord and put their confidence in Him, not in the shifting sands of finances or anything else. Only the nourishment that comes from His mouth, the very Word of God, provides the authority and guidance to strengthen and improve our faith.

In our conference, we are experiencing changes, as well, and while the new structure is integrated, there will be more changes still. We should adjust ourselves to them with a united spirit, knowing that it is the result of our spiritual growth and desire to grow closer to Him and His purposes for us.

I encourage all of you to spend more time praying and seeking the presence of the Lord. The wisdom that we have will grow since higher wisdom comes from the Almighty. Therefore, in this way, we should make the adjustments to increase the service to one another in our congregations when creating strong unity to face the current challenges with faith and courage.

Time is running out and it will end soon (“Surely I come quickly.” [Revelations 22:20, NIV]) Therefore, I am calling people to be united and to show love to one another. Brothers and sisters do not allow this love to turn cold, so when the Prince of Peace comes, He will find us in faith and peace. No doubt, we will hear His voice saying: “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” (Matthew 25:21 NIV)

— *Victor Vargas, Conference Minister*

PNMC Seeks Executive Conference Minister

Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference is seeking a self-motivated, visionary and missional-minded Executive Conference Minister who will help us live into a newly defined mission: promoting personal spiritual development, nurturing healthy congregations, making strong connections, and calling each other to fulfill God's purpose.

The successful candidate for this new, full-time position will lead our constituency in a campaign to fund the mission; guide us in living out the mission; have excellent relational skills; have demonstrated leadership ability to articulate vision and mission with enthusiasm and passion; be committed to Mennonite Church USA and the Anabaptist expression of life as described in the 1995 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*; be ordained, able to be ordained, or have pastoral or chaplaincy experience. Women and racial/ethnic people are encouraged to apply, bilingual proficiency is preferred (Spanish/English). Remuneration will be consistent with denominational salary guidelines.

Applicants should submit letter of interest and completed Ministerial Leadership Information form (available through the Mennonite Church USA website) to PNMC Search Committee, c/o David Hockman-Wert, 420 SE Richland Avenue, Corvallis, OR 97333, or dhwert@yahoo.com. Applications will be reviewed beginning November 1.

Hurricane Norbert (Continued from Page 1)

or not individuals or families connected to the congregation were lost in the disaster.

During his pastoral visit, Rendon, who pastors two Mennonite churches in McMinnville, "is assessing how and when we can help," said Dorsing. Apart from any disaster rebuilding that might be required, he said, some \$40-45,000 is needed for replacement of a church building in Coibampo. Another \$1,800 is needed to cover the cost of a building site for a future church in La Refugio Thirteen to fifteen newly new baptized believers and others currently gather for services in the community. Individuals and congregations may send donations for the PNMC's work in NW Mexico to Don Bacher, 3405 Kizer Avenue NE, Albany, OR 97322. Please earmark all donations for "Mexico Building Projects".

CIHAN Anniversary (Continued from Page 1)

- Encourage the teaching of the Scriptures and the practice of the *Confession of Faith in an Anabaptist Perspective*.
- Strengthen the integral development of the family according to the interests of the different age groups in it.

Though CIHAN represented five Hispanic congregations at its outset in 1998, only one was a PNMC member. Today, four of the five congregations hold that distinction. Over the past 10 years, the Council has also:

- Established working agreements with PNMC for credentials and MCC for immigration concerns
- Worked together with conference ministers on the resolution of congregational conflicts and matters of pastoral discipline
- Provided support to local congregations in times of transition
- Offered theological education through Escuela Biblica de Formacion Ministerial
- Coordinated quarterly interchurch fellowship events
- Held monthly pastoral meetings
- Organized family camps
- Developed special events for ladies, men and youth through their respective committees
- Offered immigration workshops, consultations and training with MCC support through our Commission on Immigration Matters
- Held annual CIHAN assemblies

The Council looks forward to many more years of fruitful ministry.

Little House Looms Large at 25th Oregon MCC Festival

By Kathleen Hockman-Wert

A little house of wood and galvanized metal sheeting took center stage at the Oct. 11 Oregon Mennonite Festival for World Relief in Albany. The 25th annual Mennonite Central Committee benefit featured a special project to provide houses for cyclone victims in Bangladesh, and the auction began with a traveling quilt of house-themed blocks.

"We hoped to raise funds to build 25 houses -- one for each year of the festival," said chairperson Ron Litwiller. "We were delighted to receive donations for 31 and a half houses."

The house on display was roughly two-thirds the size of the houses MCC is constructing in Bangladesh. Each measures 9 x 15 feet and costs just \$320.

"It's an eye-opener," said Larry Passmore, the festival facilities director who led efforts to create the model. "These days, our financial situation is not as good as it could be, but when you see that building it's hard to think that other people in the world don't need our help."

The day's proceeds came to approximately \$90,000, about the same as income in 2006. Additional funds were raised at pre-sale events including two dinners, a bike tour, and a concert. In 25 years the festival has raised more than \$1.6 million for MCC.

One of this year's new features was a Mexican taco booth headed by Orfilia, Samuel, and Dana Moran of Ministerios Restauracion Church in Portland. Favorite features making a return appearance included the children's hay bale maze and scavenger hunt, apple dumplings and whoopie pies, and an extra large "Marta's Haus" booth of sewing supplies.

The next Oregon Mennonite Festival for World Relief is scheduled for Oct. 10, 2009.

Drift Creek Welcomes New Staff

By Brenda Kauffman, DCC Co-Director

Four new people recently joined the staff at Drift Creek Camp. Sharing the role of caretakers and hosts are Seth and Brie Ediger of Portland, Oregon. Seth grew up attending Drift Creek and the two are enjoying their new space in Sitka. Occupying the traditional caretakers' cabin and assisting with facility and hosting duties, as well as the Nature Center, are Jesse and Laura Sigmans, of Blooming Glen, Pennsylvania.

The Nature Center continues to grow and develop with new activities, equipment and vision. The lodge has received a facelift with fresh paint, new seating, and user-friendly snack and coffee carts, and work will soon be complete replacing the play shed roof with durable metal.

Together with Food Service Director Glen Oesch and Program Director Mervin Kropf, the entire staff has worked diligently to provide program opportunities for the coming year. Included are a New Year's retreat for youth, a music retreat, young adult retreat, quilters gathering, an art and drama camp for 6th through 8th graders, and DCC's annual work weekend. Details on the *Evangel* Calendar, page 8.



Orfilia and Samuel Moran (pictured), along with their daughter, Dana, led a new Mexican taco booth staffed by youth from a number of Hispanic PNMC congregations.



New Staff at Drift Creek Camp and Nature Center. Left to right: Brie and Seth Ediger, who share the caretaking role with Brenda and tony Kauffman, and Jesse and Laura Sigmans, who will assist with facilities and hosting duties at the Camp, along with the Nature Center.

Quilts, Pies, and a Passion for Service Mark 2008 WA Auction

By Leslie Hawthorne Klinger

I first glimpsed the Ritzville Mennonite Country Auction site from a distance, a tiny island in a vast sea of rolling wheat fields. Overhead, dark clouds spilled into a bright blue Washington sky, casting long shadows on the surrounding hills. Despite the sale's remote location and foreboding weather, cars streamed toward Menno Mennonite Church.

When my hosts and I drove up to the church, we were assisted by third-generation local Alvin Dyck, who warmly greeted us and guided us to a parking space marked in the field. I discovered that he has been parking cars for the auction since he saw a need for it at the very first Mennonite Country Auction 31 years ago. With experienced volunteers like Alvin, the Mennonite Country Auction is a well-oiled machine.

Three Mennonite churches—Menno Mennonite, Warden Mennonite, and Seattle Mennonite—coordinated the event, with 100 percent of the proceeds, some \$90,000 this year, benefitting the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). The blend of rural and urban congregations made for a diverse group of volunteers. Bill Dyck, a former fire jumper and longtime woodworker, told me about two finely crafted cedar chests he'd donated for the auction. I spent a moment around a steaming cauldron with Glen Burkholder, a farmer and former MCC Bolivia worker who dedicates hours each year to cooking up gallons of apple butter. I bought pottery from Wendy Shelly, a nutritionist and former MCCer in Nicaragua who teams with her husband, Rob, to provide health care to the underserved in a nearby community. Every one of them exhibited a passion for helping others and the work of MCC.

I also appreciated opportunities to talk with several of the approximately 1,200 people who attended the auction. I asked them why they'd come. Two women from Spokane said there wasn't a better



Going Once, Going Twice. Auctioneer stirs up the audience, seeking the highest bidder on one of many quilts sold to benefit Mennonite Central Committee at Washington's annual Country Auction in October.



Boys eye Penny Power jar.

place to buy good quilts. A local mom accompanied by her parents and small children said she wanted to see what the excitement was all about, and the local meat and cheeses for sale looked delicious. Other people, including several young Hutterite women, were curious about their Mennonite neighbors and planned to attend an afternoon session titled "Who are the Mennonites?"

I left the Mennonite Country Auction deeply satisfied about my broader community of faith. What a privilege to join the Washington Mennonite community to celebrate God's provision, appreciate God's gift of human productivity and creativity, and raise money to help those who hunger and thirst.

It was a strong reminder that we can make a difference when we offer our gifts together in service to others—especially when we inspire joy in the process.

Hearing Ear is Key to Dialogue with Muslims, EMU Prof Says

By Susan M. Palmer

A real desire to learn and understand those different from ourselves is the key to effective dialogue with Muslims, Gerald Shenk, Professor of Church and Society at Eastern Mennonite University, told attenders of “Getting Real with Our ‘Enemies’,” a two-day workshop offered October 24-25 at Portland Mennonite Church.

This doesn’t mean getting “soft-headed or mushy minded” where our own Christian convictions stand, nor blurring the distinctions between our religions, he explained. Rather, we should aim at “bringing out” such differences and coming to an understanding of why each faith group believes as it does. We may not change each other, Shenk noted, but we will be able to reduce the fears that keep us apart and continue the damage between us fostered by such fears.

Building meaningful dialogue, not only with Muslims but anyone who does not share our views, begins with an honest interest in the individual, Shenk explained. “We need to have a passion for hearing the other” and realize that “it’s not one size fits all” with these dialogues. He suggested asking a Muslim person about their family and their religion, candidly exploring issues with a desire to learn the truth. Comparisons between what it is like to live as a Muslim in their homeland versus here in the United States can also help. “After 9/11, one Muslim woman from Harrisonburg, VA, drove five to ten miles outside town to shop in a small Mennonite country store because she felt safe there,” he shared.

Reasons that dialogue is essential, Shenk told the group include working for mutual respect and deep listening, bridging the “clash of cultures”, and taking our distinctions seriously.

In addition to his teaching duties at EMU, Shenk has studied in California, Chicago and Eastern Europe, with a focus on religion and conflict in society. Since moving to Virginia in 1989, he has frequently returned to the Balkans for peace and theological education efforts. His research includes generosity, social transformation, Christian peacemaking and the dramas of religious pluralism. A recent journey to Iran brought him into contact with top theological and political leaders there including President Ahmadinejad. Contrary to what the U.S. press has often asserted, the Iranian president has far less power in his nation than what we are led to believe. “It’s still a theocracy,” Shenk noted.

Denominational Minister to PNMC Transitioning to WDC

By Marathana Prothro

Gilberto Flores, director of Denominational Ministry and Missional Church for Executive Leadership at MC USA will be leaving his post at the national office in February 2009 to pick up ministry with the Western District Conference as associate conference minister for Texas, MC USA and the WDC announced recently. Flores, who also served as Denominational Minister to the PNMC while at national headquarters, said his choice to enter conference ministry was independent of his decision to resign as director of Denominational Ministry and Missional Church. The opportunity to work with WDC was presented days after his official resignation from Executive Leadership.

“Gilberto will help us enter the next phase of church development and growth in Western District Conference and specifically in the Texas area,” said Dorothy Nickel Friesen, conference minister for WDC. “Gilberto has incredible skills, and his missional perspective will push us to become the church we should be.”

As associate conference minister for Texas, Flores will work alongside Nickel Friesen to provide services to pastors and congregations in the Mid-Texas Region and give overall leadership and direction to the church planting programs and nurturing of new congregations, all on behalf of the conference.



EMU Professor Gerald Shenk, third from left, with Iranian leaders in 2007.

Animosity and Fear Still Prevalent in N. Ireland, Students from Lebanon, OR, Discover

By Susan M. Palmer

In Northern Ireland, the “troubles” may officially be “over”, but the scars left on a divided people are not.

That’s what students Cassie Shenk and Aaron Roberts, whose families attend Lebanon Mennonite, discovered when they visited Northern Ireland with Tory and Crystal Doerksen this summer. Tory, who taught at George Fox University and led Lebanon’s Service Adventure chapter, and Crystal now make their home in Denver.

“At first the kids thought we would judge them,” Cassie commented of the young teens the four worked with at a YMCA in Lurban, about 20 miles southwest of Belfast. “A lot of that had to do with the Catholic/Protestant thing over there. They all judge each other because they don’t like each other.”

The club served as a headquarters of sorts for Tory, Crystal, Cassie and Aaron, from which they also travelled to other community and struck up friendships with other young people in Northern Ireland. Unlike those in the United States, YMCAs in Northern Ireland are more comparable to a boys or girls club than an LA Fitness. They also operate more closely to the original YMCAs, with greater emphasis placed on their faith-based roots.

Cassie, Aaron and the Doerksens were committed to “just being in their presence and learn about their their situation,” to befriend them, and, as the kids, mostly 13 and 14 years old, saw this, they began to trust them and to share with the four Americans about their personal struggles. “Smoking is a big thing there and there are a lot of drug problems,” Cassie said. “Kids get into it through older friends or siblings they hang out with,” she explained.

The visit served to cement in the four, who travelled under the auspices of Mennonite Missions Network, the great importance of reconciliation in situations such as this. “It made us all the more committed to working with other groups in our own countries, such as Native Americans,” Tory noted, who seemed to have similar issues with the rest of America.



YMCA in Lurban, Northern Ireland, which served as hub of operations for Lebanon College students during their visit there this summer

CONFERENCE CALENDAR

Nov. 11, 2008	WMS Middle School Visitors Day.
Nov. 13 2008	WMS High School Visitors Day.
Nov. 14, 2008	Mennonite College Fair at WMS
Nov. 15-16, 2008	Western Singers weekend tour: Saturday, 9:30 a.m. The Abbey in Mt. Angel; Saturday, 7 p.m. The River Mennonite, Bend; Sunday, 10:15 a.m., Lebanon Mennonite; Sunday, 2:30 p.m. Mennonite Village (Quail Run Dining Room); Sunday, 6 p.m. Sweet Home Mennonite
Dec. 16, 7 p.m.	WMS Middle School Christmas Concert
Dec. 18, 7 p.m	WMS - January 1, 2009: New Year's Youth Retreat at DCC
Dec.30- Jan. 1, 2009:	New Year's Youth Retreat at DCC
January 9-11, 2009:	Music Retreat at DCC. Russell Adrian from WMS directing
Feb. 4, 2009	WMS Middle School Visitors Day.
Feb. 7, 2009	WMS A cappella Benefit Concert. Matinee and evening concerts.
Feb. 24, 2009	WMS College Prep Parent Night.
Dec.30- Jan. 1, 2009	New Year's Youth Retreat at DCC
June 18-20, 2008	Annual Meeting, Nampa, ID