

Evangel

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AFRICAN QUAKE IMPACTS LOCAL CONGREGATION; PROVIDING AID IS OREGON CHURCH PLANT'S DESIRE

By Susan McCarthy Palmer

For many people around the world, the news that a 6.0 earthquake rocked the city of Bukavu on the eastern border of the Democratic Republic of Congo in early February was a sad footnote on the nightly news. For members of International Bethel City Church (IBCC), a PNMC church plant in Portland, it is more personal, affecting family members and friends.

Knowing the problems intimately but being so far away has been a frustration, said Congo-born Lucie Muange who, along with her husband, Simon, pastors the fledgling congregation, comprised largely of people newly immigrated to the U.S. from Congo and other African nations. Despite this, the church has collected clothing and other material supplies and is working with MCC and on its own to get the care package to their loved ones.

The natural disaster, which claimed the lives, at last report, of at least 39 people and injured more than 200 on February 3, 2008, has left the city in rubbles and some individuals homeless. It has also intensified International Bethel's drive to establish a permanent outreach to Congo.

Begun over three years ago as a home bible study the multi-

(Continued on Page 4)



Rubble from Bukavu 6.0 earthquake

'BUILDING ON OUR STRENGTH' IS THEME OF MDS MEETING IN OR

by Tim Manickam

Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) volunteers and staff from the United States and Canada met at the Slavic Evangelical Church in Fairview in early February for the Annual All-Unit Meeting. This was the first such gathering in Oregon with nearly 300 attendees from 27 states, Canada and Puerto Rico. There was even a contingent who drove cross-country in a bus for the weekend!

The conference theme, 'Building on our Strength', was based on text from 1 Peter 4:11. The meetings were a combination of business, inspiration and worship. Executive Director Kevin King noted that MDS was of 'sound mind and health in 2007' and issued several challenges for members to strive towards in 2008. He said the organization is in the middle of a capital campaign to raise \$2.8 million for a new office and warehouse.

Jeff Blackburn, pastor of Greensburg Mennonite Church in Kansas shared his experience of living through a tornado which hit his small town in May 2007. The task of rebuilding is ongoing. "How do you find your way around town," he asked, "where all the signs and landmarks have been destroyed? How do you make sense of landmarks on the back of dump trucks heading for the dump?" Greensburg continues to be a major project for MDS.

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A WORD FROM OUR MODERATOR

I am excited about the plans for "Common Ground 2008," the PNMC's annual meeting which will be held at Canby Grove Conference Center in Oregon June 27th & 28th. We had planned to be in Idaho this year, but because of a mix-up on the dates, it just didn't work out. (But, we'll be there next year!) We are calling it Common Ground because instead of having specific host churches, everyone is pitching in to make it work. We are using the text from 2 Corinthians 4:7 "But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us" as our meeting theme: *Fragile Pots and Ordinary Lives: Testifying to God's Grace*.

Probably the most special thing about Canby Grove is that we will all be housed together in cabins or the upstairs rooms. It is a great facility that will make for easy fellowship. (They even have a coffee bar!) With 74 acres, there is space for lots of outdoor activities: soccer field, softball field, volleyball, swimming pool, horseshoes and shuffleboard. As we promised, the delegate business sessions will be much shorter to allow for more music, a hymn sing, plus story-telling and sharing about what God is doing among us.

This should be a very exciting time for families. Pacific Covenant has been working with the children in the Locust Grove neighborhood and has invited the children of families attending conference to join them in some of their activities. Three of the Oregon Youth Pastors are organizing youth activities that range from participation in worship to late night swimming.

Nelson Kraybill of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) is going to be the featured speaker for the conference worship services at Canby Grove. We have been invited to worship with Zion Mennonite Church on the Sunday morning following the annual meeting. This will be followed by a potluck meal hosted by Zion.

This is the year we will make the transition to the new structure approved by the delegates over the past two years. We will have a set of provisional by-laws to approve, a draft of guidelines for Passion Based Ministries, a balanced budget as well as affirmation of the new Board.

As always with change, parts of it have been easier than others. And some of it has been very painful. The charge from the delegates to have a balanced budget means that there will be changes in the way we do things. I like the counsel that we have received that urges us to look at the changes as new opportunities that God is offering us.

This is my last column as Moderator and I would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone and especially PNMC Mennonite Women for the prayer support that you have given to me. And as always, I urge you to be in prayer for the upcoming meetings, for those who are doing the planning and for the delegates you will be sending from your congregation!



Charlotte L. Hardt

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MY FINAL (EVANGEL) WORD

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers.” Acts 2: 42

There is a core of scripture texts which have become central for me in teaching and preaching during my years in the PNMC. These texts usually have a special focus on the teachings of Jesus or on how the Good News of Christ is lived out among us as congregations and shared “across the street and around the world.”

Among the Gospel texts are Jesus’ mission statement Luke 4, the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), the Greatest Commandment (Mark 12: 28-34), and Jesus’ commissioning of the disciples (Matthew 28: 16-20). Other NT texts I used regularly were Romans 12 and Philippians 2 which speak to being transformed persons/disciples in Jesus.



Back in 1998 when I first started with the PNMC Dave Stutzman often shared from Psalm 127: 1-2 “Unless the Lord builds the house those who build it labor in vain...it is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest...for the Lord gives sleep to his beloved.”

A good reminder I did not always heed. These few passages give you a snapshot of how I went about some of my sharing when I met with you.

Acts 2: 38-42 is a passage I used early in my (PNMC) ministry. These verses speak of some simple practices for us as followers of Christ. I pray these can continue to be a part of your life together in congregations and in the PNMC.

1) Apostles Teaching – study, reflect and pray on the scriptures. We are transformed by this type of study and learning. The Acts 2 context is not individuals doing this study alone, but individuals studying within faith community. Find ways to do this together with others.

2) Fellowship – The newly gathered community of Acts 2 was not just a bunch of individuals off in their homes. They were in fellowship together, rejoicing and bearing each others burdens. Do so earnestly.

3) Breaking of Bread – In this context breaking bread was a part of communion, and thus refers to this gathered and growing community worshiping together. They did this as a gathered group gaining sustenance and strength as they recognized their real sustenance and strength comes from God.

4) Prayers – We can be led to prayer by inspiration and we can have a regular discipline of prayer which leads us to God. Prayer is about placing ourselves in a place to listen as much as to ask.

Saying “goodbye” to a community of over 3,000 is an interesting thing to do. For my colleagues, those I have worked with on PNMC boards and committees etc., and especially for pastors and congregational participants, thank you. Thank you for what you have taught me and for sharing of your lives, yours hopes and dreams in God. May the Lord bless you and keep you!

James Smith

CONGO STORY (CONT.)

cultural congregation was to people throughout Africa.

Formed just two years ago, the multi-cultural congregation was first planted in the hearts of the Muanges decades earlier, when they were still a young, impoverished couple eking out a living in Congo. Back then, the couple sensed that God was calling them "far, far away", but to where they could only imagine. At that time, they hadn't even traveled outside their own country.

Then Simon became connected with a chapter of Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship in Congo, through whom he was enabled to emigrate to the United States. The family, which now included several children, followed a few years later.



Youth: The cornerstone at IBCC

Already a thriving community of some 25 adults and nearly as many children, IBCC is fast becoming a congregation affecting individuals not only in the Portland area but throughout the world via teaching provided on their website. The Muanges speak of the many e-mails they receive from individuals who have been encouraged by the ministry received over the Internet from the Muanges and their congregation. It is a fulfillment, the Muanges insist, of God's call upon them not only to minister beyond their borders in one foreign land but throughout the entire world.

The Muanges are also encouraged to see the various ways the Mennonite community is helping their homeland. MCC recently gave \$10,000 in emergency material assistance to help shelter and care for 100 women and children affected by the earthquake. The funds will also be used to provide trauma recovery and train both women and children how to decrease their vulnerability in a land torn as much by war as by Mother Nature.



Pastor Simon Muange

The Muanges also applaud the recent dialogue among Mennonite denominations in Congo, and the emphasis placed on building community in a land where congregations, like here in the PNMC, are spread far apart geographically from one another. One key toward greater community, the Muanges believe, is the increased mobility of its pastors. They see MC USA's recent drive to provide motorbikes for Congolese ministers as a step in the right direction. (For more information on how you can contribute to the efforts of MC USA or MCC in their efforts to aid Congo, please see their individual websites.)

Locally, IBCC focuses a great deal on ministry to youth. The congregation sees its youth as "the cornerstone" of their ministry, "the foundation upon which the entire church is built." Young people are involved in every aspect of Sunday worship, from the choir and the band to public translation of the Word of God (the services are offered simultaneously in French and English) and even preaching. Future plans include the launching of an annual youth camp, Vacation Bible School, and visitation ministry to the elderly and infirm of the congregation.

Prayer also plays a pivotal role in the congregational life at IBCC. Once a month, an all-night prayer vigil is held, and weekly as well as daily prayer is actively encouraged. Weekly meetings for couples, parents, and youth are also held.

To learn more, see their website: www.internationalbethelcitychurch.org.



Sister Lucie Muange

PNMC TRANSITION TEAM REPORT

I HAVE A DREAM

Forty-five years ago, Martin Luther King's famous "I have a dream" speech took place at the nation's capitol. To quote from his speech, "I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." Mr. King's speech, quoting liberally from the Book of Isaiah, was a vision that people of color – blacks, Hispanics, Asians – would be not be seen as people of color, but as God's children who have been given gifts, talents, and capabilities.

The Mennonite Church USA and PNMC is making strides to live out Mr. King's vision and also Apostle Paul's vision that there is neither Jew, Greek, or Hebrew, male or female, slave or free as we are moving into valuable relationships with Racial/Ethnic people across our nation.

The Personnel Committee (PC), a subcommittee to the Transition Team, has been tasked with developing job descriptions for the staffing positions of conference and moving toward the Structure Vision Task Force's (SVTF) dream of a new structure for PNMC. The PC team has met nearly twice a month for several months in order to work through various scenarios that would impact the budget positively as we try to be faithful stewards of the income from congregational support. Discussions have been lively, thoughtful with an emphasis on justice and mercy for all involved.

The PC is continuing to develop a job outline and a comprehensive job description for the Executive Conference Minister [this is a new term since the SVTF document presented Albany/Corvallis 2007) position – as a note, the job description calls for a person of bilingual/bicultural capabilities. A search/hiring ad hoc committee is expected to be formed by the Operations Team for the purpose of conducting the search for candidates and the subsequent hiring of a ECM.

I have a dream that PNMC will become an example of how racial ethnic groups can work together in harmony, using each person's God-given gifts to further His kingdom. In this dream, as persons of color and both genders take leadership roles in our conference, we become a strong, healthy, vibrant conference that allows us to live within our means – and so that we have surplus resources that allow for development and support to a greater extent the missional opportunities in our region.

MDS MEETING (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Music played an important role during the weekend with performances in English, Russian and Spanish. The Slavic Evangelical Church choir sang during the Friday evening special program. The Western Singers from Western Mennonite School missed a portion of their school-day to be a part of the event. Marv & Betty Friesen served as music leaders throughout the weekend leading singing, playing piano and providing an inspirational thread of worship and praise.

Larry Hauder, former Conference Minister for PNWC, wrapped it all up with a closing challenge Saturday. MDS has developed from a grass-roots movement to one with a more formal organizational structure. He cautioned the group to remember their identity as being 'driven by the pew and not the pulpit.' He also commended the staff and volunteers for their commitment to service—the 'Theology of Service'—and challenged the organization to keep it vital.



***Linda Dibble
PNMC Personnel Committee***

SIMPLE LIVING NOT SO SIMPLE ALASKA TEAM DISCOVERS

When a Service Adventure team of five young adults in Alaska decided to embark on a year of simple living in intentional community, they took a step that would change their lives dramatically and forever.

They didn't take the easy way out, either. No choosing "namby-pamby" cutting corners kind of "simple living tasks" for these hardy youth. Instead, using a bucket, affectionately called "BOS" (for Bucket of Simplicity), the group, led by Craig Miller of Prince of Peace Mennonite Church (PPMC) in Anchorage, filled out pieces of paper, each with a suggestion for a way to live simply. Each week, the team would reach into the bucket, draw out one of the suggestions and live it out for the next seven days.

One week, no one in the unit was allowed to use the computer. Another week, to practice saving energy, the unit washed all of their clothes in cold water and hung them on the line to dry. "I'm used to just going out and throwing my stuff in the washer, turning it to warm, and then using the dryer," said Matt Thomas, a participant from Walnut Hill Mennonite Fellowship, Goshen, Indiana. "(Living out the suggestions from) the bucket makes me rethink the things I usually do."

Perhaps the most extreme "assignment" the group pulled required the group to eat dinner outside every evening and enjoy the outdoor surroundings. "We think that the person must have been thinking about a picnic in the summer," Miller said, "but we pulled it out November, so it wasn't nearly as cool." (Editor's note: Then again, Mr. Miller, maybe it depends on how you're using the term "cool". The average temperature for Anchorage in November is 27 degrees!)

Through the BOS, members of the unit have redefined their definition of simple living. "It's forcing us to consider new possibilities," said Miller. "When we began, we had these ideas about what simplicity meant and, as we go on, we're seeing that maybe simplicity is broader than we thought."

The idea for the bucket of simplicity evolved from unit to unit and was suggested to Miller by Heather and Jason Potsander, members of the Alaska unit's support committee at PPMC.



Winter "picnic" tests stamina of Service Adventure team in Anchorage, Alaska.

MPN SEEKS INPUT ON SPANISH SPEAKING MATERIALS, CNC MEMBER SAYS

Information is sought by Mennonite Publishing Network from Spanish speaking congregations, as to what Spanish language resources are desired that are not currently available from Mennonite sources, reports PNMC Nurture Committee member Charlotte Derksen, (Derksen recently attended MPN's Resource Advocates meeting in Baltimore.) Having Spanish speaking pastors, teachers, or leaders develop materials which they would be interested in sharing with other congregations, and which could be facilitated by MPN, MMN, or MMA for wider distribution, seemed the right way to go. Spanish pastors and congregants are asked to contact Charlotte with any ideas they may have (cderksen@stanford.edu).

MPN BUSCA APORTES SOBRE MATERIALES DE HABLA HISPANA, DICE MIEMBRO DEL COMITÉ DE NUTRICIÓN DE LA PNMC

Mennonite Publishing Network desea información de congregaciones de habla hispana con respecto a qué recursos en el idioma español se desean, que no están disponibles actualmente de fuentes Menonitas, informa Charlotte Derksen, miembro del Comité de Nutrición de la PNMC. Derksen asistió recientemente a una reunión de Interesores para Recursos en Baltimore. Parecía que el camino correcto a proseguir sería que pastores, maestros, o líderes de habla hispana desarrollen materiales, que estarían interesados en compartir con otras congregaciones, que podrían ser facilitado por MPN, MMN, o MMA para una distribución más amplia. Se pide que pastores hispanos y miembros de congregaciones se pongan en contacto con Charlotte con cualquier idea que tengan al respecto (cderksen@stanford.edu).

SISTER CHURCHES MARK FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

By Rod Stafford

In early March, Portland Mennonite Church and Ministerios Restauracion sent a delegation of five people to visit their sister-church in Anolaima, Colombia, and mark the fifth anniversary of their journey together.

For five days the delegation shared meals in the homes of congregational members and made visits to small businesses and fincas (farms) owned by people of the church. Linda Rush of Portland Mennonite Church (PMC) is serving for one year in Anolaima under the auspices of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). At the request of the congregation she is teaching English, both at the church and in several of the local schools. The delegation took her a full suitcase of Oregon goodies and had an opportunity to watch her at work in the classroom. Pastor Samuel Moran of Restauracion Ministerios preached at a worship service on Friday night. On Sunday morning Pastor Rod Stafford of PMC preached at the service celebrating the five-year anniversary of the partnership. A big meal was shared after the service and gifts were exchanged.

Prior to visiting Anolaima, the delegation was in Bogota for four days to learn more about the history and current realities of Colombia. JustaPaz, a ministry of the Colombian Mennonite Church, organized the program which included presentations, a visit to a center working with displaced people, and a tour of a fair-trade business that produces dried fruit. At the end of the visit, the delegation met with a political officer at the US Embassy to share observations and discuss policies.

According to JustaPaz, which organizes the sister church relationships, three other Colombian congregations are waiting for North American partners. As a way of widening your vision and deepening your faith, consider joining with our brothers and sisters in Colombia as *Hermanos en Cristos*.

IMPACT OF DIFFERING FAITH PERSPECTIVES IS THEME OF FIRST FAITH & PRACTICE WORKSHOP

The impact of different perspectives on faith upon church and family life was the focus of the PNMC's Faith and Practice Team's first workshop, held March 28 at Sunset View Resort and Conference Center, Ocean Park, WA.

About 16 people participated in "Discerning Discipleship: Dealing with Faith, Certainty, and Differences", which included the use of silent "visual parables" acted out by the Faith & Practice Team. Using an eclectic set of props (from Christmas tree ornaments to heavy chains), each parable was designed to illustrate how people deal with a variety of perspectives regarding faith and how our differences affect church and family life. Participants then discussed content, questioned assumptions, and created their own parables in response to what they had learned.

The team hopes the workshops will be ongoing.



Maurice and Joyce Briggs

CAMREC'S NEW CAMP MANAGERS

Maurice and Joyce Briggs were recently appointed the new managers of Camp CAMREC, Leavenworth, Washington.

The Briggs, who will officially join the staff in June, currently serve with Mission Aviation Fellowship in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The couple's experience with MAF uniquely qualifies them for their new position at CAMREC. Maurice is in charge of MAF's Vanga base maintenance, repairing MAF houses, plus maintaining the MAF vehicle, tractor, and other equipment, as well as assisting with airplane maintenance. Joyce helps with set-up and overseeing the base guest house and its visitors.

Prior to serving with MAF, the Briggs, who have connections with Warden Mennonite Church and family in Eastern Washington, served with African Inter-Mennonite Mission in Zaire.



HYMN SINGING HIGHLIGHTS OYER VISIT

Mary Oyer, Professor Emerita of Music at Goshen College and a major contributor to the last two Mennonite hymnals, visited Western Mennonite School and the Oregon Mennonite Historical and Genealogical Society during a recent early spring visit to the Pacific Northwest.

At WMS, Mary visited choral classes as well as leading a student-wide hymn sing. "Praise God from Whom," hymn 606, rang out in four-part harmony to start off the morning's chapel. Mary shared the story behind the tradition of the song and how it ended up in the Mennonite Church "soundpool." From there she led the students in singing the traditional Methodist and Lutheran hymns and ended by teaching the students Asian and African hymns.

At OMHGS, Mary discussed the history of hymns in Mennonite churches and got members and visitors up and singing some of their favorite songs of worship.

A cellist, church musician, hymnody scholar, hymnal editor, and enlivener of congregational song, Mary has served more than 40 years as a professor at Goshen College. She studied African musical traditions in 22 countries on a series of Fulbright grants, and has been a visiting professor at both Kenyatta University in Kenya, and at Tainan Theological Seminary in Taiwan.

WMS DEDICATES NEW ACADEMIC CENTER

Western Mennonite School held an open house and dedication ceremony for its new Academic Center on May 18. The 8,000 square-foot Academic Center contains a new library (double the size of the previous library), a computer lab, student work rooms, and guidance and tutoring offices. This energy-efficient building is the last project of the Vision for Excellence campaign that has raised over \$5 million.

'OWNING YOUR OWN STORY' IS YOUNG ADULT RETREAT THEME

The impact and importance of God's story as reflected in our individual lives was the focus of the 2008 Young Adult Retreat, held February 29-March 2 at Drift Creek Camp on the Oregon coast.

Reflection times led by Peter Epp of Portland, OR, helped the approximately 30 young adults, both single and married, recognize their stories, life experiences and backgrounds as sometimes difficult to understand and something we don't always want to own, but which is as a source of connection to our past and our future and worthy of celebration.



Common Ground 2008
The Annual Meeting of the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference

Canby Grove Conference Center
Canby, Oregon

June 27-29, 2008

To Register: Contact Your Church Office

*Fragile Pots and Ordinary Lives:
Testifying to God's Grace*

*"But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us."
2 Corinthians 4:7*

Conference Calendar

June 5, 2008 - WMS Eighth Grade Graduation, 7 p.m., school gym

June 14, 2008 - WMS High School Graduation, 2:30 p.m., school gym

June 27-29, 2008 - PNMC Annual Meeting, Canby Grove Conference Center, Canby, Oregon

September 20, 2008 - Annual Hesston/Western Golf Tournament, Trysting Tree Golf Club, Corvallis, OR

October 4, 2008 - Mennonite Country Auction, Menno Mennonite Church grounds, Ritzville, WA

October 11, 2008 - Oregon Mennonite Festival for World Relief, Albany, OR

Have an event to list in our coming events calendar? Send info to Sue Palmer at office@pnmc.org. Submission deadlines on Page 2.