

Evangel

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Path to the Future Unveiled at Common Ground 2008

By Susan M. Palmer

Several staff and budgetary changes that will help the PNMC move toward embracing its new vision and structure took center stage at Common Ground 2008, PNMC's annual meeting June 27-29 at Canby Grove Conference Center in Canby, OR.

Interim Budget Passes

Delegates overwhelmingly passed the budget under which the conference will operate during its shift from management by the Board through Conference Ministers, to management by an Executive Conference Minister, under advisement of the Board, and assisted by several District Pastors and an administrative assistant.

Staff Changes

Under the newly organized Conference, PNMC would reduce its paid staff to a full-time Executive Conference Minister (ECM), assisted by a part-time administrative assistant. Pastoral and congregational care would be covered by a team of District Pastors, each assigned to a small group of ministers within their geographic region. The ECM, who is expected to be hired by February 2009, would also serve as Conference representative to MC USA and other nationwide and international Mennonite organizations, and manager of the conference office. *Continued on Page 4*



AMBS President Nelson Kraybill, keynote speaker for Common Ground 2008, compared the structural and visionary changes happening at MC USA and PNMC to those experienced in the early church. Even then, he commented, the process was "messy" but the result was nothing less than a world impacted for eternity. Photo by Don Bacher.



Beaming Bolivian children, victims of great flooding and landslides, hold the new shoes and school materials that were among items purchased with \$600 raised by children of Vernonia, OR, who survived a similar flood in December 2007.

Flood Damage Builds Bridge Of Care Between Children

Sometimes natural devastation has amazing and fruitful results. Such was the case when a class of third graders from Vernonia, Oregon, whose town was devastated by a flood in December 2007, heard and responded to the needs of others afflicted by floods and landslides in faraway El Torno, Bolivia.

The students' teacher, Judy Gingerich, learned of the disaster during a March 2008 church service at her home congregation, Zion Mennonite in Hubbard, OR. The disaster had left many families homeless and their belongings lost. Three children lost their lives in landslides, and bridges on the main highway to the city were washed out.

Judy took the news of this disaster in South America back *Continued on Page 5*



A WORD FROM OUR MODERATOR

“Rediscovering the Kingdom of God is a new reason to get out of bed on Monday. It’s a new vision of a good life and a better future that is not the individual pursuit of happiness, but one found in the paradoxical teachings of Jesus. Only in losing life in service of God and others will we ever find the good life of God.” - Tom Sine, People’s Summit

I recently returned from the joint Mennonite Church USA/Mennonite Church Canada People’s Summit for Faithful Living held in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The summit’s theme was “At the Crossroads: Promise and Peril” and focused on how we in wealthy and powerful North American countries might live faithfully in such a challenging context.

To some, this may sound a bit strange. Challenging context? In this country we are free to worship in whatever way we choose, free to share the good news with others, and even free to speak prophetic words to the government.

All this is true. However, we also live in a society where we are seduced by advertisements, images of the “good life” that are more focused on personal comfort and security than on God’s reign. We live in an economy that requires ever-increasing consumption of scarce resources. We live in a nation that values military power so much that it spends 1/3 to 1/2 of tax revenue on weapons and war.

As Mennonites in 21st century America, the challenge for many of us is not to be faithful amidst persecution and deprivation, but to be disciples of Jesus amidst power and privilege, to be “a wise and discerning people,” as Deuteronomy 4:6 puts it.

The People’s Summit faced the tough issues of militarism, consumerism, and environmental damage head on, through numerous learning tracks and inspiring keynote speakers, such as Tom Sine, quoted above. Although fewer than 100 Americans attended (including only two from PNMC), I was heartened and inspired by the binational fellowship, worship, and discernment that occurred. See <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/events/summit08/index.htm> for more information about the Summit, including the daily newsheet.

May we all help each other live faithfully in these perilous yet promise-filled times.

David Hoch-Welt

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NEW CONTACT INFORMATION!

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A STORY OF FAITH AND SURVIVAL

I have just returned from a two-month sabbatical. While conference leaders offered suggestions and I carefully laid out plans, I had not anticipated how satisfying and stimulating the experience would be. In order to shift from my usual ministry routine, my sabbatical began with a week of spiritual retreat in the Benedictine monastery at Mt. Angel in Oregon and a week with the Taize community in France. Both communities are known for hospitality and rich experiences in corporate worship, singing, and prayers.

Most of our time (my wife Janis joined me) was spent in Switzerland, living at the Bienenberg Mennonite Seminary, near Basel. I spent three or four days a week reading Anabaptist history from the seminary library and made weekend excursions to places of historic interest and Mennonite churches. My goal: to learn about the faith and experience that enabled Swiss Anabaptists to survive three centuries of relentless oppression (from the reformation in 1520's to the 1850's when the Swiss constitution granted religious freedom).

Seventy-two mandates by the Bernese government failed to eradicate them from the land. Swiss authorities executed around a hundred Anabaptist leaders in the first generation. From around 1620 to the 1720's they were expelled by the hundreds (one group of about 700) as destitute refugees across Swiss borders, their property confiscated.

Why couldn't the authorities completely eradicate them? Dr. Hanspeter Jecker, Bienenberg historian, has spent years combing through village archives in Bernese villages and has found some answers. Despite waves of imprisonments and expulsions, new converts kept joining the Anabaptists. Why? Archival evidence records new converts' responses: my child, or young wife, or husband was sick or died, and no one in the state church cared. It was my Anabaptist neighbors who reached out to me with compassion. We were told to fear and hate them, but we saw them as true Christians!

Why, also, were the Anabaptists so resistant to leave their homes and communities? Dr. Jecker says the archives reveal their often cited answer: "The earth is the Lord's," (therefore, government does not have the right to take it away because of one's religious beliefs) and 'the harvest is ripe.' How can we abandon our home and our neighbors at such a time?"

I ask, how can we say they were "the quiet in the land" as if these Anabaptists lost their evangelistic zeal and voice after the first generation of Anabaptist reformers? Centuries of their survival and persistent growth suggest otherwise.



Sheldon Buckshaker

Annual Meeting Report (From Page 1)

The administrative assistant, in addition to their current responsibilities, will take over the bookkeeping matters of conference which, currently, are handled by the Treasurer.

The shift will occur gradually over the next year, with both Victor Vargas and Sheldon Burkhalter completing their terms of service during that time. Victor will continue as conference minister through January 2009; Sheldon will continue through June 2009. "Since Duncan is gone (Duncan completed ten years of ministry with PNMC on June 30), Victor and Sheldon will both be serving more congregations during this time," explained Conference Moderator David Hockman-Wert. "In addition, Sheldon is being asked

to do some of the administrative, denominational connections work that Duncan had been doing. Because of the extra load on both of our conference ministers," Hockman-Wert requested that "congregations... realize that they may not see the conference ministers as frequently as they have been accustomed to seeing them in the past. We appreciate everyone's patience as we move forward with changing our staffing structure."

Sue Palmer, current administrative assistant, will also finish her term of service on August 21. Don Bacher will serve as interim administrative assistant for the conference until a new, permanent administrative assistant can be found. Sue will continue to serve as editor of the Evangel. (Please see the editorial box on the bottom of Page 2 for her new contact information.)

The multiple changes will enable the Conference to "be better stewards of the contributions we receive from member congregations," said Hockman-Wert, while also making sure that "pastors and congregations will still be supported.

Approximately 10 individuals will serve as District Pastors, each of them relating to between three and six congregations in their geographic area. Two District Pastors have already begun to serve: Wendell Amstutz is pastoring CIHAN congregations, and David Morrow is caring for the Seattle and Evergreen congregations."

While largely volunteer positions, each District Pastor will receive a stipend and reimbursement of expenses. "Because District Pastors will be geographically dispersed, the time and expense of travel should be reduced overall," Hockman-Wert said. It is anticipated that District Pastors will work about 10 hours per month.

Passion-Based Ministries Launched

The new budget also reflects the transition from a conference operated through appointed committees to one fostered through passion-based ministries, groups of individuals called to a common cause and creation of activities related to it. This change "reflects the organizational movement that was outlined in the Structure Vision Task Force's proposal," noted Hockman-Wert.

Two groups which previously operated as committees, namely peace and justice and outreach development, are in discussion as to how they can continue to operate as passion-based ministries.

Continued on Page 6



Sheldon Burkhalter, far right, welcomes The River Mennonite Church, Bend, OR as an official member congregation of the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference. Pastor Sam Adams (center) and Jeanette Wisseman (far left) represented the congregation at Annual Meeting.



Duncan Smith is thanked by Charlotte Hardt, PNMC's 2007-2008 Moderator, for his decade of service to the Conference. He wears a prayer shawl made by Joann Miller of Mountain View Mennonite Church, Kalispell, Montana, given to him as a thank you gift from the entire Conference.

Western Singers Tour Europe and Get New Appreciation for Their Faith

Getting to tour and minister in song in Europe is “big deal” enough. But when you combine it with an opportunity to visit the birthplace of your denomination and consider the price that was paid for its existence, it becomes of eternal value.

Such was the experience of Western Mennonite School's 13-member singing ensemble when they recently traveled to Switzerland, Germany and Holland. Led by WMS Music Director Russell Adrian and Debbie Sprunger, 2005-2006 IVEP volunteer from Switzerland to WMS, the tour opened students' eyes to the richness of their faith as they visited the birthplace of Menno Simons, the Roman Catholic church where he served as a priest, and the church where he taught the Anabaptist faith and practiced adult baptism, and Trachselwald Castle in Switzerland, where Anabaptists were imprisoned for their faith. "Stepping down into what was like a dungeon, I just could not imagine being put down there for my religious beliefs," commented ensemble member Brianne Mayo, a junior at Western. "I thanked God that those people did what they did. They were even tortured for speaking up, but they did, and now all of us can worship any way we choose."

"The (entire) experience was amazing," said Russell. "To have interaction with the Mennonite Church around the world helps your perspective of the church become bigger. The identity of the church isn't contained in what you know about the Mennonite Church growing up; it is so much bigger. It is cool that music is a way to overcome difference -- it is like a common language.

So, the ensemble learned, was the language of the Spirit of God. While ministering at Mennonite Church Jeangui in Tramelan, Switzerland, the group was prayed for in French by the congregation. "It was the most amazing experience," Brianne commented. "The whole congregation came forward and were laying hands on us and whispering prayers in a language we could not understand. We felt their prayers; we felt the presence of the Lord there with these people, even though we could not communicate in words. We were all moved to tears. It made us all realize that, no matter where you travel or how far from home you think you are, your faith can bring your hearts together through God's love."

Bridge of Care (From Page 1)

to her third graders, showing them pictures of the landslides and tent city in El Torno. "I wish you could have seen my students' faces when I told them about El Torno," Judy said. "They understood very clearly (the situation) and they immediately wanted to help." Right away, "two kids opened their desks and each took out a penny," Judy related. "Others found money in their backpacks. The open generosity of these kids was quite special."

That, however, was just the beginning. The children gathered their loose change for two months and, by the end of April, raised \$600. The children specifically wanted to send it to the children of El Torno who had lost their homes and belongings in the flood and landslides.

Each of Judy's students wrote a letter to the children of El Torno, telling of their own experiences with the flood in Vernonia and encouraging the Bolivian children. "I promise things will get better for you," said one.

In Bolivia, a group of women from a local church received the funds, along with pictures and letters from the Vernonia children, which they shared with their own little ones. They took a truck to the city's open market and bought tennis shoes, white t-shirts, socks, pencils and notebook paper for some 100 children. These were taken to the camps where the families are living until new houses are built for them. "One child that received shoes is disabled," the women reported. "He can't go to school, but can walk a little. He, along with the other children, was so happy. (They almost never have truly new shoes.)" "Some day, the women urged the children, maybe they can also help someone like they have received today."



WMS Singers at Trachselwald Castle where early Anabaptists were imprisoned for their faith.

Face painting and games were all part of the carnival that PNMC youth held for families at the Greenbriar Apartments, a low-income housing complex in Canby, during Annual Meeting.



Annual Meeting (From Page 4)

Those interested in starting a "Recognized Ministry" of PNMC should read the Passion-Based Ministries Conceptual Framework statement, said Hockman-Wert. The statement can be found in the 2008 Delegate Book (available at congregations) or on the PNMC website (www.pnmc.org). Questions can be directed to Hockman-Wert via phone (541-752-0444) or e-mail (dhwert@yahoo.com). Letters by regular mail (420 SE Richland Avenue, Corvallis, OR 97333) are also welcome.

New Bylaws Provisionally Approved

Delegates also provisionally approved new bylaws at Canby Grove. "We want to hear any comments or concerns people may have as they review these bylaws," said Hockman-Wert. (A copy can be found at the PNMC website and in the soon to be released 2008-2009 PNMC Handbook.) The plan is to ask for full approval of the bylaws at the 2009 annual meeting.

Duncan Smith, Others Honored

During the gathering, the Board also took time to

acknowledge and thank Lead Conference Minister Duncan Smith for his work with PNMC, its congregations and leaders. Duncan completed "an admirable 10 years of service and is moving on to new challenges," Hockman-Wert said. "We will miss him greatly, but wish him well in his new journey."

Departing members of the Board and committees, as well as PNMC Administrative Assistant Sue Palmer, who completes her office assistant role with the Conference on August 21, were also acknowledged and thanked for their service. "We greatly appreciate the service our conference ministers, committee members and Sue have contributed to Conference over the past many years," commented Hockman-Wert. "The love they have for this gathering of Mennonite congregations in the Pacific Northwest continually astounds me."

"Though much is changing with the PNMC right now, I hope that these changes occur mostly 'in the background'," Hockman-Wert concluded, "and that congregational activity continues unimpeded. Once the new structure is up and running I believe that God's healing and hope will flow through us more than ever."

The more than 250 participants at the conference also enjoyed invigorating messages from Nelson Kraybill, president of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, and other workshop speakers. Kraybill was the keynote speaker for this year's convocation.

Next year's conference will be held June 19-21, 2009, in Nampa, Idaho, followed by the 2010 annual meeting, June 25-27, 2010, in Anchorage, Alaska.

Pastors Sought for PNMC Congregations

Several congregations in the PNMC are looking for pastors.

Albany Mennonite, a fellowship of about 120 attenders, whose current pastor, Matt Friesen, concludes his term of service there on August 30, is seeking someone to assume his position. (Matt will be pursuing further education and involvement in peace and justice concerns following his work with Albany.)

Lebanon Mennonite, a congregation of about 150, needs an associate pastor to help with their youth and music programs.

Other congregations also seeking new pastors include Filer Mennonite in Idaho (approximately 50 attenders), River of Life in Sweet Home, OR (some 125 congregants), and Spring Valley Mennonite, Newport, WA (about 55 members).

For further information on these available positions, contact the local congregations or Sheldon Burkhalter, Conference Minister: 503-951-3278, sburkhalter@pnmc.org.

Relief Kits Needed for Iraq

Many Iraqis have had to flee the fighting in their communities. These displaced families have lost their homes and are in need of basic necessities. MCC is planning a shipment of relief kits to be sent to Iraqi families along with blankets, school kits and other badly-needed supplies.

Here is an opportunity for churches, schools, families and community groups to share with people in need "In the Name of Christ."

Relief kits, in box or bag, should contain (NEW items only) :

- 4 bars bath soap (4-5oz, in wrappers)
- 1 plastic bottle shampoo (13-24oz; place bottle in a resealable plastic bag)
- 10 cups powdered laundry detergent (double bag in 1 gallon resealable plastic bags)
- 1 squeeze-tube toothpaste (minimum 6oz; leave in box)
- 4 adult-size toothbrushes (leave in packaging)
- 4 new bath towels (medium weight, dark color)
- 1 hairbrush (remove packaging)
- 1 comb (8")
- 1 fingernail clipper
- 1 box adhesive bandages (minimum 40, assorted)
- 1 package sanitary pads (18-24 thin maxi or ultra thin)

Please include a \$10 donation per kit for packing and shipping costs. For info on drop-off sites, contact Bob Buxman : bbuxman@mcc.org, 503-502-5402.



Iraqi family with quilt from MCC.



During Bioblitz 2008, scientists identified over 200 species present at DCC.

Bioblitz 2008: Marathon of the Species

A bioblitz? What's a bioblitz? It's an event in which scientists and volunteers identify as many living organisms as possible in a specific area in a twenty-four hour time period.

Drift Creek Camp held its first ever bioblitz on May 23-24., 2008. The event drew an eager and talented group of seventeen scientists, educators and nature enthusiasts, who identified over 200 organisms including the endangered marbled murrelet and western toad.

DCC plans to use the information gathered and knowledge gained to develop materials for trail guides, as well as other ways of enhancing, enriching and expanding the opportunities for guests of DCC to appreciate, respect and care for nature.

"Chaplynn" Miller Retires

After eight years of faithful service, Lynn Miller has retired as a chaplain of Menonite Village, Albany, OR.

The Village celebrated his contributions and marked his retirement with a gathering on July 27. (Lynn officially retired on July 31.) Harley Brenneman, Chairman of the Board of Menonite Village; Ron Litwiller, President and CEO, retired pastor John Willems, and others all commented on Lynn's humble attitude as he served the Lord through many different ministries, both at the Village and elsewhere, over the past 40 years.

PNMC Conference Minister Sheldon Burkhalter offered a prayer of blessing on Pastor Lynn and his family in the presence of some 130 individuals who had convened to honor Lynn for his service. His immediate family, friends and those ministers in attendance also joined in the time of prayer.



Sheldon Burkhalter, other ministers, friends and family pray for Lynn Miller as he was honored for over 40 years' service to the Pacific Northwest on July 27. Miller retired July 31.

OR MCC Festival Slated for Oct., Donations, Volunteers Sought

Fundraising for Mennonite Central Committee is already well underway this year as part of the Oregon Mennonite Festival for World Relief's silver anniversary celebration. The 25th annual festival will take place Oct. 11 at the Linn County Fair & Expo Center in Albany. The Festival opens at 7:30 a.m.

Auction donations -- for children (especially boys) and adults -- are still needed for the event.. Items received to date include a "My Favorite Things" getaway package to Ashland and a centennial year (1851-1951) edition Singer Featherweight sewing machine. To donate, contact Auction Director Lynn Miller: 541-926-3493, lynnjanicemiller@aol.com.

Volunteers of all ages and abilities are also sought for festival set-up, sale activities, and clean-up. To volunteer or get more info, contact festival chair Ron Litwiller at 541-967-8890 or via e-mail at ron@mennonitevillage.org.



Bierrocks, tasty 'pockets' of beef, cabbage and onions, satisfied hungry visitors to the ID sale.

ID Raises over 47K for World Relief

More than \$47,000 was raised for world relief at the third annual Idaho Mennonite World Relief Festival on May 17, 2008 at Northwest Nazarene University in Nampa, Idaho.

New activities this year included a silent auction, a Penny Power interactive area and a quilter's corner. Other highlights included a live quilt auction, country store, plant booth, children's activities, antique tractors and trucks, and gently used bargains.

A GOOD READ - Looking for some food for thought this summer? Read "Electing Not To Vote", a collection of views edited by Ted Lewis. Already generating lots of dialogue on the PNMC Peace & Justice Google Group (<http://groups.google.com:80/group/PeaceAndJusticePNMC?hl=en>), it is available via Wipf & Stock Publishers or amazon.com.



Concert to Benefit MCC Festival for World Relief

A concert to benefit the 25th annual Oregon Mennonite Festival for World Relief will be held Saturday, September 13, from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church, 114 SW eighth St., Corvallis, OR.

The concert will feature the talents of Misty River, a band whose "lush, pitch-perfect harmonies; gentle, tasteful arrangements (and) fresh interpretation of songs," says Victory Review, offer a blessing of folk, bluegrass, country, Celtic and original music.

Tickets for the event are \$15 or \$25, if including a \$10 donation to the Festival and may be purchased by mail from Cathleen Hockman-Wert, 420 SE Richland Ave., Corvallis, OR 97333. For more info, contact Cathleen at 541-752-0444 or hockwert@99west.com.

Conference Calendar

August 3, 10, 17, 24, 2008 - Four Mennonite Media programs on addiction, hunger, forgiveness and aging air at 7:30 a.m. on the Hallmark Channel. Subjects listed in order of the air dates.

September 13, 2008 - Benefit Concert for OR Mennonite Festival for World Relief (see details above)

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

June 18-20, 2009 - Annual Meeting, Nampa, ID

June 25-27, 2010 - Annual Meeting, Anchorage, AK

Have an event to list in our coming events calendar? Send to Sue Palmer at palmer3689@comcast.net. Submission deadlines: Page 2.