

Evangel

Winter 2009

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Churches Help PDX Homeless Avert Disaster During December Snow, Ice, Freezing Temps

By Steve Kimes

Homeless people usually struggle when it comes to inclement weather. For the most part, they learn to cope, shielding themselves against the elements with tarps and sleeping bags. When the fairly temperate Portland winter turned to layers of snow and ice, with drops in temperature to 15 degrees, In December, disaster seemed imminent for some 2,000 of them who make Portland and its surrounding communities home.

Amazingly, only one homeless person during the December 2008 storms died, according to the Portland Tribune. For many homeless who survived, it was churches that they had to thank for their rescue. One of the many churches assisting the needy was Anawim Christian Community. Right at the beginning of the bad weather, “warming stations” were opening up in churches. One of the largest churches in the metro area, Portland Foursquare, opened up their doors during the coldest nights to more than 200 homeless folks a night. Anawim also opened up a warming shelter in Gresham, on the east side of Portland, before any other warming centers were open for non-families on that side of town. Harold, a homeless teen in Gresham, reported, “If it weren’t for the church opening, I would have died

that night!”

When many churches were closing down services, Anawim remained open. On the Sunday before Christmas, Victory Chapel, a local congregation, traveled through the icy snow to Anawim to serve a Christmas meal of turkey, potatoes and gravy. They provided warm socks and eight-hour hand warmers to the forty people who came.

There were near disasters as well. Jerry, one of the homeless in Anawim, was checked into Providence Hospital for a spine surgery. A few days after his surgery, he was sent to a recovery center in a building providing housing for those on the street. However, he wasn't offered help when he asked for someone to close the windows with the snow coming onto his bed. In his post-operative delirium, he took a number of pain pills and walked out the door. He was found by the police two-and-a-half miles away, trying to dig a shelter out of a snow bank with his walker. The police brought him to Emanuel Hospital, where he is being cared for.

Another member of Anawim, Paul, was trying to get to a warming center, when he had a seizure due to a sudden stop of his usual amount of alcohol, and fell headlong into a snow bank. His friend, Rich, was there and called 911. Paul spent some time in a rehabilitation center and now he is healthy and ready to get on with his life.

The homeless were protected through this crisis because God led his Spirit to stir up the people of Jesus to have compassion. It wasn't easy for these believers to take extra time amidst the difficulty the weather presented everyone, but with God's power and the compassion of Christ, lives were saved and a disaster was averted.

New Passion-Based Ministry Teams Launched; Committee Participants Sought

Do you have a passion for outreach? Would you like to get involved in helping new congregations walk the path to full membership in the PNMC? If either of these sparks a fire in you, then one of the two latest Passion-Based Ministry Teams may be the right ministry for you!

In October, the PNMC board voted to approve of a new permanent team, the New Congregations Team. This committee's goal is to welcome new congregations to the PNMC and to help them through the process of becoming members.

In connection with this team, the Board also approved of an Outreach Ministry, which will encourage the conference to be more missional and to support those who are active in outreach, as well as encouraging new church plants.

Forming these teams are Jeryl Hollinger, Steve Kimes, Karla Morton and Craig Morton, with Sheldon Berkhalter advising. If anyone would like to participate in either of these committees, please contact Steve Kimes at 503-888-4453 or email him at stevekimes@aol.com.



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A Word from Our Moderator

“Our workers are no less productive than when this crisis began. Our minds are no less inventive... Our capacity remains undiminished. But our time of standing pat, of protecting narrow interests and putting off unpleasant decisions — that time has surely passed.” - President Obama, Jan. 20, 2009

These are interesting times in which to be the Church, full of promise and peril, hope and fear, anticipation and recession. When I heard President Obama’s inaugural address last month, I was struck by the section quoted above. It not only challenges the perpetuation of crisis thinking, but it seems nearly as relevant to our situation within PNMC as it does to the country as a whole.



PNMC’s budget has been out of balance for a number of years. Last year, PNMC spent \$65,000 more than it received. PNMC assets have gone from \$400,000 in September 2006 to \$215,000 in December 2008. This situation could not continue indefinitely, so at the 2008 annual meeting in Canby Grove, the Board presented (and delegates approved) a budget and staffing structure that put us on the path to a balanced budget.

These changes are not easy. Our total staffing levels are being reduced, and a new position of District Pastor is being introduced to help support congregational pastors and be the primary link between PNMC and its member congregations.

We are not alone. Many area conferences of Mennonite Church USA are experiencing similar financial challenges and structural changes. But even with the stark challenges we face, one hopeful sign is that PNMC congregational giving has remained steady over the past three years.

Another notable change to the system is the addition of “passion-based ministries.” These ministries are officially recognized and supported parts of PNMC, but will be bound by less bureaucracy than standing committees were in the past. The flip side is that financial support for these ministries is “extra-budgetary” or, in other words, from outside the budget.

A small amount of funds are budgeted for passion-based ministries as a whole, but this is meant to take care of little things -- conference calls, postage, etc. -- not to fund major projects. So when requests for funds come from passion-based ministries, please share the need with your congregation and consider giving beyond your congregation’s regular contribution to PNMC. If you want to give to a specific passion-based ministry, please indicate who the funds should go to. Presently, the active passion-based ministries are Outreach Development Ministry and NW Mexico Liaison Ministry (formerly the Mexico Transition Committee).

Housekeeping items:

Treasure Valley 2009: Please pray for the Annual Meeting committees (Program Planning and Local Arrangements) as they prepare for our gathering in Nampa, Idaho, in June.

Bylaws: At last year’s annual meeting, new Bylaws were approved provisionally for this year. Few comments have been received since then. We plan to vote on full approval at the 2009 Annual Meeting, so if you have any questions or comments about the Bylaws, please submit them to me or to another Board member.

Gift Discernment Team (GDT): PNMC needs good people to serve on the Board and various teams. Please prayerfully consider the GDT’s call when it comes.

District Pastors: The Board is starting to identify District Pastors and match them with congregations.

Executive Conference Minister: The search process has been slower than we had hoped, but it is progressing well. We hope to fill this new position within the next few months. Pray for God to be with us in these important discernment processes.

— *David Hockman-Wert*



New and Old for Renewal of the Church

by Sheldon Burkhalter

In the middle of Matthew's Gospel, the author clusters a series of seven parables Jesus told to portray the kingdom of God. Like a sower, weeds among wheat, a mustard seed, yeast, hidden treasure, a fine pearl, and a net cast into the sea, the reign of God accomplishes surprising things. Then in conclusion Jesus says, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old." The church is renewed in this combination of new and old as the Spirit guides the church in rehearsing the biblical story with eyes open to God's fresh in breaking.

Sheldon Burkhalter chats with AMBS student Frank Kandel during his sabbatical visit to the seminary.

Northwest Mennonite Conference. Sabbaticals have the purpose of rest and renewal. Thank you for this significant gift.

The image of new and old best describes my experience this past year as I received the great gift of a sabbatical from the Pacific

So my three and a half months of sabbatical included three main parts: first, two weeks of spiritual retreat (a week in a local Benedictine monastery and a week in the Taizé community in France). Then five weeks of research and sightseeing studying Anabaptist history in Switzerland in which I made a most surprising discovery. Instead of the Swiss Anabaptist communities sinking into a survival mode after the first generation of enthusiastic reformers died off (many by execution), the 17th century saw significant growth in numbers. It was a time of relentless oppression with imprisonments, confiscation of property, expulsions, and becoming refugees. But their neighbors experienced their compassion and saw their example as true followers of Christ. Many chose to join them in exile. See the story in the summer issue of *Evangel*.

The final part of my sabbatical was six weeks this fall spent at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary. Here I wanted to take a close look at the church in the West today. I read a number of books written on the theme of church renewal. One important theme of contemporary renewal—both in the emerging church movement as well as revitalization of traditional congregations—is the discovery of 16th century Anabaptism. In this era when many church leaders recognize the demise of church-state Christendom in Europe and America, Christians are looking to those who sought to recover New Testament Christianity five centuries ago in forming a church not dependent on the sword of the state to secure its survival.

Reading about contemporary church renewal, I realized that in the PNMC we have a significant number of "new Anabaptist" pastors who grew up in other church traditions but sought out the Mennonite Church for ministry. I identified 15 of our active Anglo pastors as new Anabaptists and invited them to tell me their stories. On short notice, eleven of these pastors responded with their stories of coming to faith in Christ, discovering Anabaptism, and what this means for their ministry. I am deeply grateful to these pastors for their contribution to my study. The most common themes in their commitment are the example of Jesus for Christian action, practical Christian faith, peacemaking, and emphasis on Christian community and service—precisely the themes that draw many other church leaders in the West to 16th century Anabaptism.

With these stories of our new Anabaptist pastors and the commitments of our traditional congregations, I went on to envision a revitalized Mennonite church, new and old together. And what a great experience it was to read and write about these things on the AMBS campus where I witnessed young students and mature faculty engaged in reflection and practices of Christian faith and vision. But this is a whole additional story!



10,000 Villages’ New Contract Causes Difficulty for Some Stores

By Susan McCarthy Palmer

Are we losing the vision here? That’s the question some local Ten Thousand Villages stores are asking ever since the corporate office sent out its new contract for all its member stores to sign. The new contract, drawn up in an attempt to have all stores under the same contract (before this, there were some 30 different ones with different purchasing requirements in existence) requires all stores carrying the Ten Thousand Villages name to draw 80 percent of their profits from company product.

The increase in requirements has caused some stores to wonder if folks at the corporate Ten Thousand Villages office have forgotten the reason for their existence: to help those in disadvantaged nations earn fair wages for their work, not to simply turn a profit. Doug Dirks, spokesperson for the national office, insists, however, that it’s because the company wants to keep helping these workers and paying them fair wages that chose to raise purchasing requirements for those stores which carry the company name. “When we agree to carry a client’s goods, we first need to ascertain which artisans are most deserving of our support.” That, in itself, is an increasingly expensive process, Dirks said, one which Ten Thousand Villages believes the stores that bear the Ten Thousand Villages name should help them shoulder financially.

While none of the stores the Evangel spoke with (at least some of which are staffed by PNMC congregational members) begrudges the company’s desire to streamline their contractual agreements, the new contract’s purchasing requirements put a hefty burden on some stores. In some cases, stores must now increase their purchasing of Ten Thousand Villages product more than 10 percent to achieve the profit percentage required by the parent company. At a time when the economy is already struggling, local owners can’t help but be at least a little disgruntled with corporate decision makers, they say.

Some stores, such as those in Salem and Lebanon, are electing not to sign the new contracts, explaining that the increase in purchasing/sales is too great for them as small businesses to absorb. They’ll still carry crafts from artisans represented by Ten Thousand Villages, they say, but the requirement to buy more than 80% of their product (necessary, both corporate officials and store owners agree, if they want to insure 80% of their profit comes from that company’s goods) has made it impossible for them to afford carrying the Ten Thousand Villages name and remain viable as businesses.

Other stores, such as the Portland Ten Thousand Villages, have agreed to sign, even though they, too, find the new purchasing requirements difficult to bear. The Portland store recently lost its lease at the location it’s held for many years through a change in their landlord’s plans for the space, owner said, so losing the Ten Thousand Villages name, as well as changing their location, at this time was not a good thing. The store’s new location as of March 2009 will be 938 NW Everett Their current location is 914 NW Everett.

Dirks says he knows the purchasing requirement change is a burden for some stores, especially those such as Portland Ten Thousand Villages whose older contracts allowed them to purchase significantly less, so long as 70 percent of their product (not their profits) was purchased from Ten Thousand Villages. The company is therefore committed to talking with individual stores about their particular needs, difficulties and disputes regarding the changed requirements. They have also given each company a year from date of signature to come into compliance with the new profit percentage required to maintain the Ten Thousand Villages store name.



Nature Center, Long-Range Planning Featured at DCC Annual Meeting

Everything from long-range planning and development of the Nature Center to program ideas, goals for sustainability and options for recruiting much needed volunteers were covered at Drift Creek Camp's annual meeting,

Participants in the DCC annual meeting, held October 31-November 2, 2008 at the camp, discussed issues before them in small groups.

held October 31-November 2 at the camp. More than 120 people gathered for the meeting, during which PNMC Board member Pedro Olvera of Comunidad Cristiana de Vida Nueva in Woodburn and Myron Sherk were confirmed as new Board members and the budget was approved.

Guest speaker, Luke Gascho, Director of Goshen College's Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center, shared slides and discussed his research on stewardship from a Biblical perspective. His presentation was based on his new book, *Creation Care, Keepers of the Earth*, which is available in the DCC camp store and online for \$12 per copy.

Proceeds from the camp's annual benefit auction, also held during the meeting, reached \$9,000.00 and were used to finance the remaining costs of replacing the aging cedar shakes on the Activity Center with long-lasting metal.



Northwest Mexico Church Building and Repair Projects Planned; CIHAN Seeks Funding

Rebuilding a Mennonite church and purchasing a lot for a new church build are two major projects currently being undertaken by the Concilio de Iglesias Hispanas Anabautistas del Noroeste (CIHAN). Rebuilding of the church in Coahuilbampo, Sinaloa, (is estimated at over \$40,000 said Simon Rendon, who recently completed a ministry trip to Northwest Mexico. \$1200 has already

Above in red: the state of Sinaloa, where CIHAN's new projects will take place.

been raised to purchase the lot in El Refugio. \$400 is still needed to purchase the lot. Churches or individuals interested in contributing funds to either of these projects should send them to Don Bacher at the PNMC office: 3405 Kizer Avenue NE, Albany, OR 97322. Checks should be made payable to PNMC, earmarked "NW Mexico work projects". A specific project may also be earmarked if so desired.

Request for prayer is also made for Agustin Suarez, Jr. of Congregation Los Suarez in Sinaloa. Agustin recently received an artificial arm and his mother, Natalia, passed away in January.

“Why Not Me?”

PDX Woman Follows God to Colombia

By Susan McCarthy Palmer

When Linda Rush joined a team of fellow members at Portland Mennonite Church to work with their sister church in Anolaima, Colombia, she had no idea how far that commitment would take her. Several visits back and forth, surely; but live there? Serve there? Full time? Nevertheless, her care for the people and their needs grew until she finally said to herself, “Why not me?” Short-term missionary service was certainly not new to her. She’d already spent some time in Honduras working with MCC affiliate organization MAMA Project, speaking on behalf of poor and struggling women and children, as well as Mexico, where she’d been part of several MCC building projects. Besides that, she was single; free to go where she wished, where God wished.

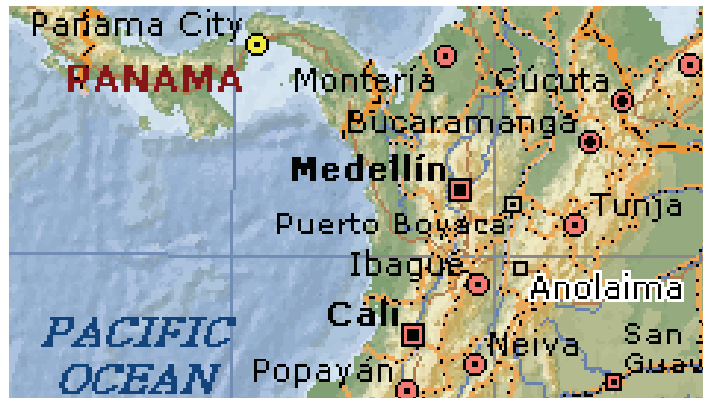
So, in early Fall 2007, Linda began raising funds for a one-year term with Mennonite Central Committee, teaching English in the public schools, at the church and in the community. After a month’s training at MCC headquarters in Akron, PA, Linda moved to the town known locally as “The Fruit Capital of Colombia” to begin her work.

Teaching was fulfilling for Linda. Not only could she see the practical help she was bringing as an English-speaking person to the community, but bridges were being built between community officials, the schools, and the church in Anolaima. Not only were English classes offered, but seminars on socially significant issues such as sexually transmitted diseases were also requested by community leadership.

There were some other challenges about living in the town located 1.5 hours from Bogota: not only was she learning to speak another language; she was also adjusting to cultural differences and “being the only gringa in a town of 5000 people.” The people of Anolaima were far more interactive and social than those she’d known in the United States, Linda quickly discovered. “People just dropped in all the time,” she said, “whereas in the United States they’d always call first.” Thankfully, she’d read a book that helped her adjust: *Foreign to Familiar: Hot and Cold Climate Cultures* by Sarah Lanier. People from hotter climates tended to be more social and less concerned with privacy, Lanier wrote. While cold climate cultures tended to be more focused on individuality, hotter climates gravitated toward groups. “Instead of borrowing a video,” Linda offered, “people in Anolaima are more likely to suggest, ‘Let’s do a video night!’”

The differences, the work and the people grew on Linda, as did her concern for peace and justice issues in Colombia. Through her connection with Justapaz, a peace and justice organization affiliated with MCC, she learned well the concerns and needs of the people she served. During a recent visit back to Portland Mennonite, she spoke with passion about the possible dangers that might lurk for local people if the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) were passed. The agreement would make it possible for the U.S. to sell its goods at lower rates in Colombia, raising exponentially that needy families, unable to compete with U.S. prices in selling local goods and services, would fall back toward growing cocaine.

With all these concerns growing inside her, Linda knew just one year of service would not be enough. In January, she returned to Colombia to continue her work in Anolaima for another year. As to the future, Linda remains “open ended”, allowing God to lead wherever He would have her to go.



Anolaima, Colombia, where Portland Mennonite Church’s sister congregation is located, not far from infamous Medellín.



MDS
REGION IV

MDS Region IV Completes Shower/Laundry Unit For Wildfire-Ravaged California Community

By Bill and Esther McCoy

Mennonite Disaster Service Region IV has just completed transforming a 50'x8' gooseneck trailer into a shower and laundry unit complete with showers, commodes, sinks, washer, dryer and instant hot water units.

Several months of labor and transportation of the unit over several states, including Arizona and South Dakota as well as California, were expended by a hardy crew of volunteers, including Warde Hershberger of Oregon, to complete the project. Warde flew to San Diego where he picked up the truck that would tow the trailer to its final destination: Dulura, CA, near San

Diego.

The Region IV kitchen trailer that was built in 2005-06 has been used in the Gulf area the past couple years was also towed out for use at the California site. Forrest and Charlotte Hardt were among those who helped transport vehicles out for use in the wildfire-ravaged region.

Dulzura is southeast of San Diego where fires had destroyed homes last year. This MDS project will be building new homes, and cleaning away brush that may be a fire hazard to these new homes. In order to get permits for building, all brush must be cleared at least 100 feet around the new home.



Transforming a Trailer: Many hands make light work.

CONFERENCE CALENDAR

Feb. 24, 2009	Western Mennonite School College Prep Parent Night
March 22-25, 2009	DCC Camp Art & Drama Camp, Grades 5-8
April 17-19, 2009	Oregon Mennonite Women's Retreat @ DCC (All PNMC Are Women Welcome)
April 24-26, 2009	Young Adult Retreat @ Drift Creek Camp
May 2, 2009	Western Mennonite School Benefit Auction
May 11-13, 2009	Mennonite Assn. of Retired Persons Retreat: Experiencing Celtic Christian Spirituality" @ DCC. \$99 per person. Special Speaker: Marlene Kropf
May 22-23, 2009	DCC Work Weekend
June 19-21, 2008	PNMC Annual Meeting, Nampa, ID
June 19-21, 2009	DCC Parent and Me Camp
June 21-26, 2009	DCC High School Camp
June 28-July 3, 2009	DCC Grades 6, 7, & 8 Camp
July 5-10, 2009	DCC Grades 5 & 6 Camp
July 12-17, 2009	DCC Grades 3 & 4 Camp