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2024 Conference Communications Council

Our 2024 PNMC Conference Communications Council, *That We May Be One: The Gift of Ecumenical Relationships*, was held on Zoom, Saturday, February 10. It was a rich time of learning and storytelling as we reflected on the importance of nurturing relationships with our siblings in Christ and with people of all faiths around the world. We celebrate the vital ways this is happening through our PNMC congregations and ministries for the building of a more just, compassionate and peaceful world. **PNMC Moderator, Chris Nord**, was inspired by our time and composed this inspiring prayer:

God of our comings and our goings,

We are grateful for the coming of this day and for all of the comings of this day. We are grateful that all of our comings invite us into a deeper realization of the length, breadth and depth of your steadfast love.

We are grateful that in all dimensions your love far exceeds the reach of our community.

We are grateful for the people of many faith traditions whose lives manifest your love.

As we prepare our hearts to go out from this gathering we also prepare our hands to reach out in common cause with our fellow children of God. For in this going, and in all of our goings, we seek to faithfully embody your love into our bruised and beautiful world.

In your holy name we pray, Amen

A CCC Reflection from Janet Szabo, Mountain View Mennonite Church, Kalispell, MT:

Our transitional pastor, **Miriam Mauritzen**, has described our congregation as being “the Jupiter of the PNMC solar system” because we are so distant from any other Mennonite congregations. (It occurred to me later that if we were Jupiter, then the Anchorage folks are probably Neptune.) Those of us who have been involved with the larger church as members of the PNMC board or as regular attendees of annual meetings are keenly aware that we need to nurture those long-distance connections. We also want to encourage others from our congregation to become involved in the life of the wider church.

A few weeks ago, I offered to host a gathering in my living room for anyone who wanted to attend the CCC meeting. Certainly, we could have attended the meeting individually from our own homes, but gathering in person helped cement our own bonds while strengthening relationships with our friends in other states. And those of us who have been involved in PNMC over the years were able to provide context and history to those who are newer to conference activities. Our group spanned an age range from early 30s to late 70s.

As we listened to others speak about what is happening in their communities and congregations, we were reminded that even though we may be separated geographically, we share many of the same experiences as we seek to be Christ’s hands and feet in the world. Those stories provided reassurance and—more importantly—inspiration. Our little rural church occupies a niche so different from that of churches in more urban areas, but the needs of our communities are very similar.



Photo from MVMC’s CCC gathering by Miriam Mauritzen.

Toward Liberation: Mennonites in Action! *A Reflection by Rebecca Allen*

I sat on the cool marble floor of the Cannon Building rotunda in the U.S. Capitol, surrounded by 134 other Mennonites and friends dressed in black, singing at the top of our lungs. We'd come through security in small groups, and pretended to be tourists keenly interested in the architecture of our nation's capital. Instead, we'd come to participate in civil disobedience to show our elected representatives that we, as Christians and Mennonites, **cannot stay silent** while our tax dollars pay for bombs to be dropped on Gaza. Along with many of you, I have spent months doing everything I can think of to bring about a permanent and immediate ceasefire in Gaza and Israel. My partner is Jewish, and we are raising our two children in Jewish and Mennonite faith communities. Our Jewish community began to mobilize immediately after October 7, as we learned that [a young Israeli man](#) who taught Hebrew in our congregation had been killed by Hamas in the kibbutz where he lived near the Gaza/Israel border. In this period of deep grief and fear, I saw my Jewish beloveds turn to their traditions and say, Never Again for Anyone. I saw how quickly [Jewish Voice for Peace](#) was able to mobilize because they've been organizing their people for decades.

I did my best to join in, as a Mennonite Christian horrified by the complicity of our government and Christian Zionists who support the siege and slaughter of Gazan people. I went to marches, delivered letters with my five-year-old to Senator Patty Murray, and called my representatives on my lunch break every day for weeks. A small group of us formed at Seattle Mennonite Church, united in our horror and determined to do SOMETHING together. We started a Signal thread and texted each other resources about Palestine and settler colonialism (including in our own European Mennonite history). I felt engaged, and yet still longed for a larger, coordinated, movement response from my faith tradition.

In mid-November, I got a text from a friend at church, and another from my best friend in Virginia. There was a Slack channel, a group of young Mennonites from the East Coast who were trying to start something called [Mennonite Action](#). Did I want to join? I was momentarily frozen by unhelpful perfectionism, unsure if I wanted to be an early adopter of something that might turn out to be messy or harmful. Then I said yes, because people are dying in Gaza and Israel, because anti-Semitism and anti-Arab hate are on the rise all around us, because I want to be able to look my children in the eye when they are grown and tell them that I tried.

With many of you, I started attending Mennonite Action's mass meetings. A group of us organized a prayer service outside of Senator Murray's office at the Federal Building in downtown Seattle. Participants came from the Kitsap Peninsula and Bellingham, and we know there were actions of solidarity that day in Portland and across our conference. Hundreds watched and shared Mennonite Action livestreams and social media posts, and helped raise our visibility. Hundreds more prayed from home.

Five thousand of us signed a petition calling for ceasefire and an end to occupation in Palestine. Hundreds started to make plans to travel to Washington DC for a Day of Action in mid-January, and attended online Peace Schools to get trained. Mennonite Action found a fiscal sponsor, and started receiving donations. Seattle Mennonite Church fundraised for my last-minute airfare to DC, and brought meals to my family while I was away.

I got to DC in time to participate in Mennonite Action's in-person Peace School, a day of training and worship. I introduced myself to students and elders, and a UCC minister joining from Southern New England. I saw my aunt and uncle, and met someone who biked across the country with my mom in the 1970s. During the training, we collectively asked more questions about which hymns we would sing and how than we did about getting arrested. And we were, maybe predictably, a mostly white group of Mennonites, and [those of us who felt like we belonged didn't always notice or turn toward people who didn't](#). It snowed all day, and into the night, and we went to bed unsure if the federal government would be open in the morning.

But it was. And so, two months to the day after I joined the Mennonite Action Slack channel, I sat in the rotunda, singing "Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying" louder and with more meaning and power than I'd ever sung in my life. I waited for a cop to tap my shoulder and place me under arrest, instead of detaining our elected representatives who refuse to do everything in their substantial power to stop genocide. [With hands in zip-ties](#), we continued singing for hours, even after arrest. We waited in a cold maintenance garage for a few hours while the cops ran background checks on us and charged us a \$50 fine.

Despite the devastating reasons for our civil disobedience action, I felt joyful and liberated to lift my voice with familiar songs as tools of collective power and resistance. I felt—and feel—connected to the other people who took action that day and every day with Mennonite Action: the people who prayed for us while we were under arrest, the people who stood in sub-freezing temperatures for hours outside the rotunda and cheered for us as we were led to paddy wagons for transport, the people from Salem and Portland and Seattle who have been delivering that hefty petition to our representatives back home. And, importantly, I also feel connected to people—especially the Palestinians and Jews around the world—who have been arrested before us, often at far greater personal risk.



Photo by Laura Schlabach

I believe in the power of those feelings: joy, liberation, connection. I am ready to keep acting in hope with this brand new grassroots group to make it possible for more of us to find belonging with Mennonite Action. Palestine and Israel's liberation is deeply bound to our own. *What brighter, safer future awaits us all?*

Rebecca Allen (she/her) lives with her family in South Seattle. She attends Seattle Mennonite Church and Kadima Reconstructionist Community.

Above: Folks from Evergreen Mennonite Church and Seattle Mennonite Church are gathered at Congressman Adam Smith's office, speaking with one of his staff about why we want Smith to call for a Ceasefire and why our faith calls us to be public about this. Photo location is Congressman Adam Smith's office in Renton, WA. If you would like to work towards peace, [Mennonite Action](#) has lots of resources for local advocacy, including a [Local Organizing Toolkit](#).

PNMC CONGREGATIONS, ORGANIZATIONS & MINISTRIES

Seattle Mennonite Church

Seattle Mennonite is seeking a full-time pastor of Faith Formation. The Congregation was established in 1968 and has been practicing urban ministry ever since. SMC's CIF is available [here](#). The congregational priorities are posted [here](#) and the job description [here](#).



Portland Mennonite Church

Take advantage of the opportunity to hear author and activist **Sarah Augustine** when she speaks at Portland Mennonite Church, Portland, OR, on **Sunday, February 25**. She will deliver the sermon at 9:30 and then participate in a forum discussion following at 11:00. Augustine is the co-founder and Executive Director of the Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery. In her latest book which she has co-authored with Sheri Hostetler, they persuasively make the case that climate change is only a symptom of a larger ecological crisis and that solutions can't come through the same systems that created those problems. Glean from her wisdom as she poses tough questions and calls for collective problem-solving.

Salem Mennonite Church

A comforter-tying event for Mennonite Central Committee's Great Winter Warm-Up was held at Salem Mennonite Church on January 28th. More than 20 people gathered in the church fellowship hall for lunch and then set to work tying comforters. Some in the group have been tying comforters for many years. For two children and six or seven of the adults it was a totally new experience! The activity was companionable and rewarding knowing that the comforters will be put to good use wherever they are needed.

Mountain View Mennonite Church will host their Great Winter Warm-Up Tying event on Saturday morning, February 24, beginning at 10:00 a.m.



Photo by Heidi Brubaker

The PNMC Gifts Discernment Team invites your suggestions for people to serve as PNMC Secretary, at-large PNMC board member and Gifts Discernment Team member. Candidates for these positions must hold membership in a PNMC congregation. Please fill [this survey](#) to pass your suggestions on to us.

MENNONITE CHURCH USA and OTHER MENNONITE ORGANIZATIONS

Mennonite Mission Network Mennonite Church USA

Mennonite Church USA has a broad collection of stories and opportunities through links on *PeaceMail* [here](#).

Mennonite Mission Network

Former Anchorage, AK Unit Leaders Heather and Jason Potsander describe their experience with Service Adventure as risking an unknown, bold leap in life that came with a safety net and a built-in community. "We were well taken care of," Heather says. "It was simple living, but it wasn't hard." [Read more](#) about how Service Adventure continues to shape the incredible life that Jason, Heather and their family live today.

Register [HERE](#) to meet via Zoom with Mission Network staff on **Wednesday, February 28, 5pm (PST)** to find out about all the enriching growth experiences awaiting volunteers ages 15-22. From international learning trips to domestic service terms, [Youth Venture](#) and [Service Adventure](#) have options for you.

Upcoming e-Bulletins:

Mar 4 (submissions due by 2/26)
Mar 18 (submissions due by 3/11)
Apr 1 (submissions due by 2/25)
Apr 15 (submissions due by 4/8)

If you would like to contribute, please send a brief announcement in Spanish & English with website links to brenda@pnmc.org. Our goal is to provide a valuable resource, not an In-Box jammer. If space is tight, we may omit announcements that are not as pertinent to PNMC. Announcements will run ONE time only, unless specified otherwise. *We welcome your feedback!*

For more PNMC updates: <http://pnmc.org> e-Bulletin Archives: <http://pnmc.org/Resources/eBulletin>