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That We May Be One: The Gift of Ecumenical Relationships

The PNMC Conference Communication Council is this **Saturday, February 10, 8:30am—12:30pm** (Pacific) on Zoom. We will focus our time on the theme of *ecumenism*, and the nurturing of relationships with Christians of other traditions and people of other faiths in our local communities and throughout the world. We hope you will participate! In addition to our PNMC Board, staff, district pastors, team chairpersons and representatives from PNMC related organizations, ***we ask for representation from each of our member congregations and church plants*** (at minimum: a pastor and an additional congregation member, or two congregation members if no pastor is available). Please note that any and all who wish to take part are welcome to attend! **Registration information is available [here](#).**

Happy 75th Birthday, Mennonite Disaster Service! *A Reflection by Karla Morton*

I was fortunate to participate in a Learning Tour sponsored by MDS January 22-25 in Southwestern Louisiana. While we had several learning outcomes for the tour group, I can say that I now have a deeper understanding of the scope and impact of Hurricanes Delta and Ida, as well as the snow/ice event and 18 inches of rain in Southwest Louisiana. These events began with Hurricane Laura in August 2020 and ended with tornadoes that touched down in Lake Charles in October 2021. Here we are three to four years after these disasters still seeing people who are struggling to find help in repairing their damaged homes.

On this Learning Tour were four representatives of Mennonite (MCUSA) conferences, FEMA representatives, a member of the Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies (as part of their disaster relief domain), a PhD candidate who also works in emergency management (focusing on underserved communities), a former member of FEMA who is now a consultant, as well as a documentary filmmaker, and members of MDS (executive director, project coordinator for SWLA, and communication manager).



In the US there are 17 current MDS projects, five of them are in SWLA (Southwest Louisiana). That is one reason that we were invited to the area so that we could visit several different sites and have the opportunity to better understand the work of MDS!

I returned feeling exhausted, exhilarated, and enlightened to the work of MDS here and in Canada. One fact that was quite informative is that “twenty years ago there were 3-4 \$1 billion disasters per year, on average every 80 days. Now, in the U.S., we are experiencing, on average, \$1 billion disasters every 18 days.” (Kevin King, MDS Executive Director). That’s a huge increase meaning that the work of emergency response organizations are busy and find a lot of repair/rebuilding work that needs to be done.

PHOTO ABOVE is courtesy of Paul Hunt of Mennonite Disaster Service.

MDS Reflection, *continued...*

Reflecting on this Learning Tour has been hard to do because I listened to people who have been traumatized by the storms and by contractors who say they will repair or rebuild homes, but often take someone's money and are never seen again. Here are my top three reflections.



Collaboration and Cooperation: Phil Helmuth, MDS SWLA Project Coordinator, is a “community weaver”. He has been instrumental in bringing together many different organizations to work together to rebuild homes. Churches, non-profit organizations, local governments, and those from outside of the area have joined together to rebuild homes. MDS has Four Pillars that must be present to work in an area: 1) There are available volunteers; 2) accommodations for the volunteers; 3) meaningful work to do; and 4) there is funding for materials. In all the places that MDS works, these are in place. What I witnessed in SWLA is an ongoing collaboration of God, God's people, and local governments working together in communities that have experienced im-

mense destruction. Jesse Huxman, MDS Communications Manager, spoke of “The Theology of the Hammer” which is putting aside our theological (and political) differences at the door in order to serve God and God's people. Two stories stand out about this collaboration. The first is the way two churches became so unified as they worked together, through the connection of MDS, that they became one congregation! The other story is of cabinets that are built by volunteers in Goessel, Kansas and sent to SWLA. They are stored by a competitor cabinet maker and delivered to MDS building sites by this company! THAT'S the kind of collaboration I love to see! It truly touched my heart.

*A note about volunteers... I have always thought that in order to help build homes with MDS one needs to be a contractor or have building experience. However, you will be trained to do work with MDS. We asked many of the volunteers who were working if they had ever done what they were doing at the time and were told “no, but I've been trained.” Please do not let your lack of experience stop you from becoming a MDS volunteer!

Hope: Not only is MDS rebuilding (or building) homes, but they are rebuilding hope! So many of the homeowners who we met have faced such devastation and trauma here in SWLA, especially with the onslaught of storms from August 2020 through October 2021. One man spoke of the helplessness he felt as a father, husband, and son who couldn't care for his family because they had no place to live. Many homeowners shared the sentiment that “This is HOME for us”, because often they were being asked “Why don't you move somewhere else instead of living here?”. Every homeowner wanted us to understand that home is so much more than a building, but having an affordable home that is well built meant so much to them. For the tribal members of Dulac and Pointe-Aux-Chien, we were told that this is their ancestors' land and the connection they have to it runs deeper than we may be able to understand. Through the ministry of MDS and partner organizations, these brothers and sisters in SWLA have had hope restored and strengthened!

Gold-Standard (or, Above and Beyond): The leader of the FEMA group, Aaron, told us that there's a hope to have National Building Codes so that homes built across the country would be built to the same standards in all communities. MDS, with the aid of Tim Reinhold from Clemson University, has used the building and engineering standards he developed. These standards are so much better than most local building codes and Aaron told us that MDS goes “above and beyond” these local building codes. In SWLA these standards used by MDS improve the likelihood that these homes being built will withstand sustained winds of hurricanes. Windows that are installed are bolted more fully into the frames of the home and have glass that can bear 150+ mph winds.

All-in-all, the opportunity to represent the PNMC on this Learning Tour with MDS was a wonderful opportunity. Seeing the work of MDS, experiencing the joy of the homeowners and the volunteers, witnessing the coming together of churches, non-profit organizations, and local governments through the “theology of the hammer” has been more than I could have imagined. I encourage us all to participate in the ministry of MDS, whether that's through volunteering, financially supporting them, and/or prayer for the ministry to continue!

In photo below: Home is on Grand Isle which is on the Gulf. It is on pilings that are 13 ft. high, but in the rebuild it will be raised another 5 ft.



PNMC CONGREGATIONS, ORGANIZATIONS & MINISTRIES

Camp CAMREC

Winter months can be long without much to look forward to after holiday celebrations. Here is an opportunity to connect intentionally with friends and enjoy an extended weekend together at a wilderness camp setting where you could work remotely if needed and/or hang out with peers. Drop in any time between **February 15-20**. Stay for as little or as long as it works for you! Suggested minimum donation of \$25 per day (\$20/lodging and \$5/food). Optional off-site activities such as equipment rental, park passes, and outings to local attractions will be paid separately. Scholarship funding is available if finances are a concern - for more information, look [here](#) or contact [Brisa Peacock](#).

Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society

You are invited to attend the PNMHS Annual Meeting and program on **Saturday, February 17, 2024**, at Zion Mennonite Church, 6124 S. Whiskey Hill Rd., Hubbard, OR 97032. A luncheon is at Noon followed by the annual business meeting. The meal cost is \$15 per person. RSVP for lunch to Jerry Barkman at jbarkman@canby.com or 503-871-6413 **by February 9**. **The free program begins at 1:30, no program RSVP is required.** Our speaker, Dr. Abraham Friesen Professor Emeritus of History at the University of California, Santa Barbara., will speak on, "Russian Mennonites and the Recovery of an Anabaptist Vision." In 1962 he received his M.A. degree from the University of Manitoba. In 1967, he received his Ph.D. in history from Stanford University. That year, he was appointed to teach at the University of California – Santa Barbara where he taught Renaissance and Reformation History until he retired in 2004. He has researched Mennonite/Anabaptist History and Theology and has published several books on Mennonite history and beliefs.

An offering to support the work of the Historical Society will be taken. Following the meeting, the Kropf Heritage Center will be open for tours. A Zoom link for those unable to attend the program portion starting at 1:30 is on our web page at pnmhs.org.

Zion Mennonite Church

Join ZMC as the congregation celebrates the ordination of **Pastor Steve Bomar** on **Sunday, February 18**. Zion's Sunday morning worship services begin at 10:15 both in person and on Zoom. (Visit the church website to catch the livestream [here](#).) ZMC's Sunday School begins at 9am. Masks are optional. PNMC Executive Conference Minister, Eric Massanari will officiate the ordination.

MCC Winter Warm Up: Zion Mennonite Church will be hosting a comforter tying day on **Saturday, February 24 from 10am-3pm**. All are welcome. Bring a sack lunch and come for part or all of the time.

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](#).

MENNONITE CHURCH USA and OTHER MENNONITE ORGANIZATIONS

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

Get a seminary education at a distance! Strengthen your leadership skills and deepen your faith — from wherever you are located — through the AMBS MA: Theology and Global Anabaptism (fully online); Master of Divinity Connect (with online and hybrid courses); or a Graduate Certificate program (fully or partially online). Scholarships are available. [Apply today!](#)

Mennonite Church USA

In celebration of **Black History Month** (February), Mennonite Church USA invites you to discover the people and events that have helped shape our denomination. Visit MC USA's African American Mennonite History Timeline here: mennoniteusa.org/african-american-mennonite-history-timeline/.

Peaceful Options for Training and Careers (POTC), an independent initiative formed by Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Central Committee, has begun training volunteer counselors to help young adults find non-military career, service and training opportunities. Learn more about this helpful opportunity here: <https://www.mennoniteusa.org/news/potc-mobilizes/>.

Read more from Mennonite Church USA through links on *PeaceMail* [here](#).

Upcoming e-Bulletins:

Feb 19 (submissions due by 2/12)

Mar 4 (submissions due by 2/26)

Mar 18 (submissions due by 3/11)

Apr 1 (submissions due by 2/25)

If you would like to contribute, please send a brief announcement in Spanish & English with website links to brenda@pnmcc.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://pnmcc.org> e-Bulletin Archives: <http://pnmcc.org/Resources/eBulletin>