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The 2024 PNMC Annual Meeting in Review - Chris Nord, PNMC moderator

As I reflect on this year's PNMC Annual Meeting the first thing that comes to the surface is **gratitude**. I'm grateful to the Bend congregation for their generous hospitality. I'm grateful for the program and logistics planning teams for their diligent work. I'm grateful to the delegates for the seriousness—tempered as it was with joy and playfulness—that they brought to the table. And most of all, I'm grateful to our creator for so many gifts: the joy of being connected in Christ's body, the loveliness of voices raised together in song, the stunning beauty of the surrounding mountains and forests, the warmth of the sunshine moderated by the cool breezes.

One feature of this year's meeting that we have not had the opportunity for in recent years is a second delegate session. We decided that the best use of the Sunday morning session would be to host conversations at the tables. As I circulated through the room while the conversations were taking place my sense was that the delegates were deeply engaged in these conversations and had valuable perspectives to share. The feedback forms confirm my intuition; many of you listed the conversation tables as a highlight of the annual meeting. As I write this the board members who hosted the tables are compiling their notes. I look forward to reviewing these together at future board meetings as we discern the path forward together. Although that path may be difficult at times, I am grateful to be on it together with you, my beloved church family.

What Are Our Heart Songs? - Phil Rempel, Albany Mennonite Church

Attendees of the annual meeting had the privilege of joining together in song. Friday evening we gathered together with this invitation...

2024 Annual Meeting Heart Songs

- 612 When Pain or Sorrow / Hold On
- 810 Go, My Friends, in Grace
- 832 The Lord Lift You Up
- 444 I Sing with Exultation
- 170 Wonderful Grace of Jesus
- 617 When Peace Like a River
- 605 My Life Flows On
- 36 Let Us Build a House
- 802 Draw the Circle
- 645 Amazing Grace
- 401 Open the eyes of my heart
- 703 Rain Down
- 682 Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying
- 10 Here in This Place
- 1 Summoned By The God Who Made Us
- 549 Be Thou My Vision
- 412 My Soul Cries Out
- 131 Praise, I Will Praise You, Lord
- 52 Come and Fill Our Hearts
- 113 O Sing to the Lord
- 42 Could It Be That God Is Singing
- 102 Holy, Holy, Holy

*These are the songs we sang in no order, with some missed, and some added because we didn't get to them, or we sang them during our worship services. Some were also selected for reasons other than being heart songs. All songs are from **Voices Together**.*



If you could name one or two "heart songs/hymns" within your congregation, what would they be? These might be songs that have a long and formative history in the life of your congregation, or perhaps they are new songs you have learned that are speaking to where you are and where you are orienting your life together now.

During the process of compiling the new *Voices Together* song book it was decided to ask congregations what their heart song were. The committee described their thinking this way...

Early on, we recognized the limitations of the word "favorite" when describing songs. We adopted "heart song," an imperfect but helpful substitute. A heart song is one that connects us with our stories. Maybe we remember how it formed us as followers of Jesus. Or it's a song that has shown a particular significance in drawing a worshiping community together over time.

Many of the suggestions came in the weeks prior and others were spontaneous. Heart songs are often ones we have been singing for years, but heart songs are also new melodies that may have lyrics that touch us in new ways. It's good to experience these sounds and new thoughts and I for one am grateful to *Voices Together* for doing that. It was suggested that a list of the songs be put together. Unfortunately, no one was keeping track so this list is from those songs submitted before the sing and from my somewhat flawed memory. Before singing, the person/congregation that selected the song was asked to give an explanation as to why they chose their song. Listening to these stories added meaning and depth to the song that followed.

"There's nothing quite like being together!"

- Eric Massanari, PNMC Executive Conference Minister

*Community means that people come together around the table,
not just to feed their bodies, but to feed their minds and their relationships.*

- HENRI NOUWEN

*And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which you were
called in the one body. And be thankful.* - COLOSSIANS 3:15



If I may be so presumptive, I will add to Henri Nouwen's wise words: "...and to nourish their souls and their common life together." Because it is at this soul-level, at the very ground of our being, in that place where we are "interbeing" with God and with all, that we are nourished when we come together and practice presence as siblings in Christ.

It is no small feat for us to come together in full presence as Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference! We span the largest geographic range of any conference in our Mennonite Church USA denomination, and for many of us it is not easy to devote the time and resources needed for such a gathering. From June 20-23, more than 100 of us from across PNMC made that commitment and were welcomed in with warm, generous hospitality by the Bend Mennonite Church in Bend, OR. We met at the beautiful Seven Peaks School where Bend Mennonite pastor, **Sam Adams**, serves as the Head of School.

The time together began with an inspiring pre-conference Anabaptist theology symposium led by PNMC pastors **Craig Morton** (Meridian Mennonite), **Sam Adams** (Bend Mennonite), together with **Colin Saxton**, Stewardship Theologian and Director of Church Relations for Everence. Participants were challenged to reflect on what our commitment to an Anabaptist Christian theology means for our lives and churches today, and our discussion led meaningfully into the rest of the annual meeting time.

On Friday afternoon, PNMC pastors, chaplains and ministry leaders gathered for a half-day contemplative retreat that focused on the theme of "Releasement" (from the early Anabaptist notion of *Gelassenheit*), and we reflected on what we find ourselves needing to be "released from" and "released into" in our varied ministries. While the ministry retreat was going on, other annual meeting participants joined in a service project, supporting the work of Shepherd's House, a Bend ministry that serves the local unhoused community.

Friday evening brought a rousing hymn sing led by **Phil Rempel** (Albany Mennonite) and accompanied by a host of musicians led by pianist **Harold Nussbaum** (Portland Mennonite). Phil gathered us in-the-round so that we could better hear one another sing, and invited us to join in singing some of the "heart songs" of our PNMC churches. We learned much about one another as stories were shared to accompany each hymn.

Saturday was a full day and it began with a rich time of worship and a sermon by Sam Adams on Colossians 3:1-4. Sam challenged us to reflect on the theme of identity, acknowledging the varied ways we seek to claim and articulate identity in our contemporary world, and inviting us to consider what it means to claim an even deeper identity in Christ.

Following worship we joined in our first delegate session which began with our roll call of congregations. The roll call is consistently named as one of the highlights of annual meeting as we listen to representatives from each congregation share out of their life together. The roll call offers opportunities to recognize our common ground as well as some of our distinctives across the length and breadth of this conference. The delegate session continued with reports from conference leaders, a financial update and a vote on the slate of new leaders submitted by the PNMC Gift Discernment Team.

Saturday afternoon brought rich learning experiences in the form of four workshops on topics including safe sanctuary programs in our churches (led by **Nancy Kauffmann**, Interim Director of MCUSA Safe Church), how to depolarize our conversations across political and religious differences (led by **Rob Hanson** of Hyde Park), nurturing gratitude and generosity (led by **Colin Saxton** of Everence), and a vibrant panel conversation on some of the diverse ways we do church in PNMC (facilitated by **Gary Jewell**, District Pastor).

On Saturday evening, more than thirty people came back to Seven Peaks School to attend a forum on Mennonite Actions efforts towards cease-fire and peacebuilding in Gaza. **Weldon Nisly** (Seattle Mennonite), **Jennifer Delanty** (Seattle Mennonite), **Amy Epp** (Evergreen Mennonite) and **Esther Nelson** (Portland Mennonite) all shared out of their experiences and engagements with Mennonite Action efforts.

Sunday morning brought a unique and engaging opportunity for delegates and others to gather in a World Café-style table discussion format. PNMC Moderator, **Chris Nord**, posed a series of questions to the group that invited creative dialog on who we are and who we want to be as churches and as a conference. With each question we moved to a different table so that we could engage with a wider circle of people. This time was cited as one of the highlights of the annual meeting weekend by many participants.

Our 2024 Annual Meeting came to a close with a final worship service that included a meditation by **Nancy Kauffmann** on Colossians 3:12-17, a fun time with the children led by our weekend worship leaders, **Emily Toews** and myself, and coming to the table of communion together.

As one person put it succinctly: "There is nothing quite like being together!"

How true that is! It was a great gift to come together once again as the Body of Christ in this special way. Participants voiced very strong affirmation of this year's location and program, and made it clear that one of the most important reasons to continue gathering like this is to build and nurture community. When we practice presence with one another in this way we are reminded of the gift that is found in each one of our congregations, and also that in Christ's love we are made into something far more together than we are apart.

I hope that you have already heard stories from your congregational representatives who were able to attend. I also hope that many of you will be able to join us at a future gathering! We are still discerning our location for next year and will announce that as soon as a spot is secured.

Thanks be to God that we have been called into the one Body, and for the Peace of Christ that we carry in our hearts wherever we may be on this path of faith and life together!

Images from the Bend 2024 Annual Meeting:



Photo by Leonard Nolt



Photo by Leonard Nolt



Photo by Curt Weaver



Photo by Curt Weaver



Photo by Leonard Nolt



Photo by Curt Weaver

PNMC CONGREGATIONS, ORGANIZATIONS & MINISTRIES

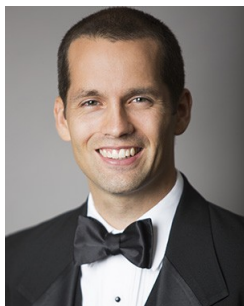
Mennonite Village



Founder's Day BBQ and Concert

Friday July 26, 5:30 pm – 8:00 pm,

Come and enjoy a free BBQ dinner and an amazing concert by the tribute band, Peter, Paul, and Mary Alive! Back by popular demand, Peter, Paul, and Mary Alive will transport you back in time with their award-winning performance of the classics of the 1960s.



Salem Mennonite Church

Salem Mennonite Church invites you on **Sunday, July 28** to a hymn-singing workshop followed by a worship service centered on hymns and music with special guest, **Dr. Russell Adrian** (Professor of Music, Hesston College). The 1-hour hymn-singing workshop (8:30am-9:30am) will introduce novice singers to concepts of four-part singing, while rehearsing parts to several hymns (including "Praise God from Whom," VT #70); novice and seasoned singers are encouraged to participate. SMC's service of worship that morning (10:00am) will be a thematic celebration of congregational singing and special music. Coffee will be served prior to the service from 9:30am-10:00am. All are invited to attend either portion of the event and help make a big, joyful noise! SMC is located at 1045 Candlewood Dr. NE in Keizer, Oregon. If you plan to attend the event you are encouraged to RSVP to Joseph Penner by email (pennerjp9@yahoo.com). Learn more [here](#).

MCC West Coast Bike Ride 2024

Seventy-five MCC supporters will embark on a 4-day fund-raising ride from **August 4-9**. The riders will be based in Albany, OR at the Mennonite Village and take loop rides each day from there through the scenic Willamette Valley. Contact [Bruce Kuhns](#) for questions.

Drift Creek Camp

With increased outdoor school usage, DCC is seeking 1-3 people to serve as year-round Caretakers. The on-site team maintains the grounds, facilities and equipment; they provide kitchen and guest support. Work time is flexible with the schedule's ebb and flow. This year-round service position requires a love for hospitality, creative problem-solving, the ability to work independently and as a team. It has been said that being a camp caretaker is "the hardest job you'll ever love!" Living at DCC comes with the opportunity to enjoy the wonder of God's creation right outside! Housing, utilities, some meals, and a monthly stipend provided. 2-year commitments are appreciated. Start/end dates are flexible. Contact info@driftcreek.org for details.

Mennonite Church USA and Other Organizations

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary



Deborah J. Coates of Albany, OR, graduated from AMBS, Elkhart, IN, on April 27, 2024, with a Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies. She completed most of her coursework from a distance. Coates previously earned a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Psychology from the University of Oregon in Eugene and an Associate of Arts from Hesston (KS) College. She is married to Donald L. Coates, and her home congregation is Portland Mennonite Church.

A recording of the Commencement Service is available at ambs.edu/graduation.

Take a seminary course this fall! The AMBS distance-friendly options include Anabaptist Approaches to Scripture; Introduction to Biblical Languages; Psalms; Reading Cultural Contexts; Spiritual Practices: Prayer and Scripture; Understanding Trauma in Ministry and Peacebuilding; and more. In-person courses are also available. Some courses may be audited. Nonadmitted students get 50% off their first three credit hours! Classes run Sept. 3 – Dec. 13; register by Aug. 26. More info [here](#).

Mennonite Church USA

Read the latest news in *PeaceMail* from MC USA [here](#). Don't miss the update from **Barbara West** and **Kathy Howell** of Corvallis Mennonite Fellowship. They are serving with SOOP in France. Read more [here](#).

Upcoming e-Bulletins:

Aug 5 (submissions due by 7/29)

Aug 19 (submissions due by 8/12)

Sept 2 (submissions due by 8/26)

Sept 16 (submissions due by 9/9)

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>