

Allegheny Conference Delegates Meet

Allegheny Conference delegates met on March 1 at University Mennonite Church, State College, Pennsylvania, to conduct business and discuss the future of the conference.

Following a morning worship service, moderator Carl Geissinger opened the business meeting. Agenda items included electing officers and passing the new budget. Conference minister Kurt Horst, whose three-year term will end this summer, announced that after serving one more year he will resign from the position to pursue new directions.



Horst and conference youth minister, Joy Cotchen, reported on their recently completed "listening tour," during which they visited twenty-nine churches over a period of three months to learn about churches' activities, concerns, and hopes. During the listening tour, church representatives answered questions such as "How are we?," "What are we doing?," "What are our concerns?," and "What changes do we expect?"

Responses revealed a variety of hopes and concerns. Following are a few examples: Most conference churches are active in local service ministries as well as global connections; some are concerned about an aging population and a lack of children and youth; many want to grow through increased evangelism efforts; some are exploring new options for music and worship; and some hope for better cooperation among congregations.

One option for conference participants was a library workshop, led by librarians Leah Witzig (University Mennonite Church), Chad Brubaker (Pittsburgh Mennonite Church), and Steve Houck (Penn State University Libraries). Aimed toward giving librarians new ideas for promoting books and increasing circulation, the workshop included discussions about small church libraries, inexpensive Web-based catalogs, and fundraising. Peggy Thompson, Maple Grove Mennonite Church librarian, was one of the nine workshop participants. "We were very impressed with what we learned," she said. "We took lots of food for thought with us."

—Krista Weidner, University



Above: David Miller, pastor of University Mennonite Church, lights a peace lamp at the beginning of the worship service. The peace lamp remained lit throughout the day, reminding delegates to pray for peace for the people of Iraq.

Left, above: Moderator Carl Geissinger, pastor of Barrville Mennonite Church.

Left, below: Kurt Horst, Allegheny Conference Minister.

Voting Results

Nominating Committee: Myrah Sinko, Martinsburg; Mary Hertzler, Scottdale

Moderator Elect: John Bender, Pittsburgh

Leadership Commission member: Wayne Yoder, Pinto

Finance and Stewardship Commission member: Lester Yoder, Maple Grove

Missions and Service Commission chair: Ron Spory, New Life

Faith, Life, and Procedures Commission member: Conrad Mast, Scottdale

Nurture and Education Commission: Cathy Spory, First (affirmed for a 1-year transitional period)

TriState Relief Sale July 18-19, 2008



Come, join in the fun at the TriState Relief Sale while you make your dollars work for the benefit of others.

Schedule of Events **Free Parking & Admission**

Friday Evening July 18, 2008

4:30 Food Booths Open
 Market Place
 Preview Quilts & Auction Items
 Musical Performances throughout the evening

5:30-8:30 Silent Auction

Saturday July 19, 2008

7:30 Gates open with Pancake & Sausage Breakfast

8:30 Market Place Opens

9:00 Classic Car Cruise-In
 Children's Activities Begin

10:00-3:30 Auction: Quilts, Art, Furniture, Vacations

11:00-12:00 Children's Auction

11:30 Chicken Barbecue

The 10th Annual TriState Relief Sale will be held July 18-19, 2008 at the Garrett County Fairgrounds, McHenry, Md.

Now is the time to be thinking about starting seedlings for the plant sale, beginning in earnest on that craft project or talking with your group about how you would like to participate. Reminder: quilts need to be submitted by May 30.

With the cyclones, floods and needs of many refugees, we need to be planning on making TriState's 10th event bigger and better than ever. What good food or activity would add to the festivities? We will be having the cruise-in on July 19 and carriage rides on both Friday and Saturday.

And don't forget about Penny Power! Striving to have enough food for all will be the focus of this year's Penny Power fundraiser. For Penny Power questions, please contact Evonne Spory (814) 629-6766 or emspory@yahoo.com.

Check back frequently on www.tristatesale.org to preview items to be presented at this year's event. For questions, contact (814) 445-6945 or (727) 864-2037.

—*Harriet Berg, Springs*

Bike/Hike To Help Others Through Mennonite Central Committee Sunday June 8, 2008 - 2:00 p.m.

Bike or Walk portions of the Allegheny Highlands Trail near Meyersdale, Pa. Visit the Meyersdale Train Station, walk or ride over the Salisbury Viaduct, 1908 ft. lg., 101 ft. high steel trestle; or through the 3,300 ft. long lighted Big Savage Mt. tunnel. Go to <http://www.atatrail.org/index.cfm> for a map and more information on the trail.

Bike/walk as long or short as you wish. A \$15.00 entrance fee is requested or you may obtain sponsors. The more we raise the more we can help those in need to help themselves. Detailed information and sponsorship forms will be available on www.tristatesale.org

Contact (814) 445-6945 for more information. —*Harriet Berg, Springs*

May/June 2008 Volume 65 Number 3

Allegheny Conference News (ISSN 0746-7362) is published six times a year. Periodical postage paid at Scottsdale, PA 15683 and at additional mailing offices. Postal Service Registration #0013-800; **Postmaster:** Send change of address 3579 to *Allegheny Conference News*, 531 Scottsdale Ave., Scottsdale, PA 15683-1243.

Known office of publication: Donna Mast, editor, *Allegheny Conference News*, 531 Scottsdale Ave., Scottsdale, PA 15683-1243; home phone: (724) 887-5563; e-mail: sendamcnews@gmail.com. Printed in USA.

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First Mennonite On the Move

Johnstown First Mennonite Congregation moved. Oh, not to another building, but they moved, nonetheless.....to the Lower Level. Some may describe it as a basement; however, the congregation decided to embrace the situation in positive terms even though it was perpetuated by necessity.

First Mennonite, with an average attendance of 35-40 realized that the heating expenses for their building could not be met during the cold winter months. Deciding that this heating crisis could trigger discouragement or initiate change, an animated discussion ensued. The worship service could be moved from the sanctuary to the “lower level” which would allow the sanctuary-heating zone to be lowered significantly. Instead of using chairs, perhaps tables could be utilized to respond to one of the congregational vision requests for more question and discussion teaching time. It was suggested that the Purpose Driven Life study would lend itself to this format and that the Sunday school teaching and worship time preaching would be blended during these winter months in this round table setting. Having moved from a morning service to a 5:00 p.m. service several years ago to accommodate the community’s schedule and to allow for music assistance from other congregations the sug-

gested lower level move brought willing nods and cooperative smiles from the First Mennonite family.

Several coats of paint, the skills of a seamstress, and the donation of a piano helped to create a worship space that was both cozy and consecrated. Using luminaries, not only on the worship table, but on each round table during the advent season emphasized the visual elements and the rustic cross with its’ slightly upturned horizontal “arms” was truly an artistic gift during the Lenten season. Continuation of a fellowship time following each service encouraged deeper friendships.

Ascension Sunday seemed an appropriate time to return or “move up” to the sanctuary. A survey; however, indicated the congregation may choose to use the lower level again at a later date. It was a reminder that the wind of the Spirit can transform any physical space or situation.

—Cathy Spory, First



Worship (top) and fellowship (above) take place in First’s lower level.

Pittsburgh Mennonite Joins Peace March



A peace march was held in Pittsburgh, Pa., on March 29 to mark the fifth year of war with Iraq. Members of Pittsburgh Mennonite Church were among the marchers. Below, Paola Scommegna and Miriam Ramer of Pittsburgh Mennonite were stopped for comment by a television news crew.

Left: After the actual march, there was an interfaith memorial service in Schenley Park, where John Bender was one of the clergy who spoke.

Radio reports indicated an estimated 500 people participated in the march. —Phoebe Sharp, Pittsburgh.

ALLEGHENY MENNONITE CONFERENCE 132nd ANNUAL MEETING
Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, August 1-3, 2008
Theme: *Freely Receive ~ Freely Give*

Friday, August 1

- 3:00-6:00 Check-in and Registration
 (in front of the small dining hall)
 5:00 Light meal served
 (**not** included in meal packages)

ORDER OF WORSHIP

Freely Receive ~ Freely Give

- 7:00 Welcome, Address, & Announcements
 Worship/Singing/Offering
 Message: James Miller, MMA
 Closing

- 9:00 Snack



James Miller serves as the Church Relations Manager for the Central PA region of Mennonite Mutual Aid. He and his wife Debra live in Maytown, Pennsylvania, and attend Blossom Hill Mennonite Church. They have two adult children. In his work with MMA, James represents MMA to the church community, and has opportunity to preach and teach on the subject of Faithful Stewardship.

Saturday, August 2

- 7:15-8:15 OPEN cash continental breakfast
Conference Session
 8:30 Spiritual time
 Moderator's Address: Carl Geissinger
 Executive Board Report: Linford King
 10:00 Brunch
 11:15 Reporting
 Mennonite Mutual Aid
 Conference Minister: Kurt Horst
 Conference Minister of Children and Youth:
 Joy Cotchen
 Finance and Stewardship Commission:
 Brenda Benner
 12:45 Conference Reporting Sessions end

Saturday, August 2, cont.

- 1:00-1:55 Seminars
 1. "Why I Am An Anabaptist" led by Conference Minister, Kurt Horst
 2. Stewardship of Health: New Resources for churches and individuals from MMA. Samples of materials will be available to review – plenty of time for questions/discussion led by James Miller, MMA.
 3. Peace and Justice — Rachel Spory, a young adult from First Mennonite, Johnstown will be sharing about her experiences in Iran.
 4. Mission and Service Commission
 2:05-3:00 Seminars
 1. Sexual abuse prevention committee
 2. Finance and Stewardship Commission "Doing and Funding Congregational Ministry with Shrinking Resources."
 3. Faith, Life and Procedures Commission
 4. MMA

- 3:00 Free time: recreation, fellowship, & relaxation
 5:00 Dinner

ORDER OF WORSHIP

Freely Receive ~ Freely Give

- 7:00 Announcements
 Worship/Singing/Offering
 Message: Donna Mast, Co-pastor, Scottdale
 Closing
 9:00 Ice Cream Social provided by
 Mennonite Financial Federal Credit Union
 9:15 Erin Clymer and Keith Hershberger

Sunday, August 3

- 8:00 Breakfast
 (included in meal packaging)

ORDER OF WORSHIP

Freely Receive ~ Freely Give

- 9:00 Prelude
 Worship/Singing/Offering
 Message: Kurt Horst, Conference Minister
 10:15 Break (Children join adults during break)
 10:30 All gather for Closing Worship
 11:30 Benediction
 12:00 Lunch and Goodbyes

ALLEGHENY MENNONITE CONFERENCE: REGISTRATION FORM
133rd ANNUAL MEETING—August 1-3, 2008

NAME: _____ **CONGREGATION/AGENCY:** _____
ADDRESS: _____ **PHONE:** _____
(NO phone reservations. Please note: the conference office will close at 2:00 p.m. Wed., July 30, until after this event.)

List everyone's name (for NAMETAG purposes) and the ages of children (for better planning of children's activities)

Name of those attending	Children's ages	Name of those attending	Children's ages
1.		4.	
2.		5.	
3.		6.	

YOUTH REGISTRATION (completed grade 9-grade 12) (staying in the Lodge, remember to bring your own linens)

Name(s): _____ Phone: _____
 Total Cost \$80.00 (which includes meals, lodging, and conference fee) **Total youth** \$ _____

CONFERENCE FEE

Whether registering for all or any part of conference: the fee is \$5.00 per person and \$2.50 per child ages 3-11.

Number of adults _____ x \$5.00 = _____
 Number of children (ages 3-11) _____ x \$2.50 = _____

Total Conference Fee \$ _____

LODGING (The rooms/sites are charged with one/two persons per room per night: for each additional adult it will be \$10 per person per night. For children up to age 11, lodging is free.)

Rates per night are: Solarhouse/Guesthouse \$96 Cottage room \$72 (Linens are not provided for the cottages)
 Camp Site with hookups (water/electric/sewer) \$22 Camping site without hookups \$15

Indicate lodging preference _____
 Check which night/nights you need lodging: Friday _____ Saturday _____

Lodging requests will be on a first come, first serve basis.
of nights _____ **X rate** _____ = **Total Lodging** \$ _____

MEALS must be PRE-REGISTERED for by JULY 15 (Children 2 and under are free)

Meal Packages (Saturday brunch through Sunday noon- **does NOT** include Friday evening)

# of people	cost	total
3-11 year _____ x \$15.75		_____
12-yrs-adult _____ x \$31.50		_____

Total Cost of Packages \$ _____

Individual meals

MEALS:	3-11 YRS.	12-ADULTS
Friday dinner	_____	_____
Sat. Brunch	_____	_____
Sat. Dinner	_____	_____
Sun. Breakfast	_____	_____
Sun. Lunch	_____	_____

(not included in pkg.)

MAIL TO:
 Allegheny Mennonite Conference
 PO Box 12
 Somerset, PA 15501

Individual meals are: \$9.00 per adult and \$4.50 per child per meal with the exception of Sunday Breakfast which is \$6.50 per adult/\$3.25 per child.

All meals must be paid upon registration or upon check-in.
ALL MEALS NEED TO BE REGISTERED BY JULY 15 with no refunds

TOTALS	Conference Fee	Youth	Lodging/ Camp Site	Meals	Grand Total	Deposit (please pay at least 1/4 of total)	Balance Due

REGISTRATIONS MUST BE POSTMARKED BY JULY 15. Any registrations postmarked after July 15 will be charged a \$15 (per person) or \$30 (per family) late fee with no meals available!

Spring Bible Study

The Minister's Spring Seminar on April 7-10, 2008 at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center was led by Gilberto Flores. Flores is director of denominational ministry and missional church for Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership. He

leads a team of denominational ministers that relates to conferences and conference ministers.

Sharing from his many years of pastoral experience in Central America Gilberto led twenty pastors and church leaders from Allegheny Mennonite Conference through the book of Acts from a missional perspective. He helped us see that the only purpose for the church in the world is to carry out God's mission. Being missional is not a new program of the church, but an attitude and way of thinking. Everything we do has to serve God's mission in the world.

Gilberto defined a missional leader as one who can "imagine a new future." As we reflected on the book of Acts we were encouraged to imagine what God's church in the world might look like today. He also suggested that we identify two to three people from our churches and spend the next three years training them for leadership. Like Barnabas, who took Paul along with him, we are to pour ourselves into others so that the church is constantly developing new visionary leaders to carry on God's mission in the world. A missional church will always be equipping and preparing people for ministry in the community.

Another part of being a missional leader is paying attention to our "turning points." Peter's "turning point" came in his encounter with Cornelius in Acts 10. In that encounter Peter was changed to see that God shows no partiality towards people and that the Gentiles also have access to God. We were encouraged to identify our turning points in ministry. Gilberto said that following Jesus is a continual journey of renunciation and surrender. As we sang "Digo, si Senor"—"I will say yes, my Lord"—we were invited to surrender ourselves to God as we let go of control and invited God to fill us with the Holy Spirit. Missional leaders, Gilberto said, "are those who learn from their turning points and instead of becoming defensive we learn to share our stories of how God is at work in our lives and in the church."

Throughout the seminar Gilberto reminded us that Anabaptists were never the "quiet in the land." Today, Mennonites are good at being and doing, but we are too quiet about our faith. Our quietness means that the world will never un-

derstand us unless we learn to articulate the hope we have in the risen Jesus. He acknowledged that being more open about our faith may lead to conflict but he encouraged us to not be afraid of conflict. He reminded us numerous times that as Mennonites we are not being peaceful when we act in passive aggressive ways. He challenged us to be more open about our faith and to learn to be more honest and direct with each other in dealing with our differences as we carry out God's mission. He said, "we can't be a missional church if we are afraid of conflict."

A significant shift for us in the church is to see the community we are in as our host. Gilberto helped us see from the book of Acts that the church is always a guest in the community. To be the guest means that we need to learn to depend on the community we are in and to be open to learn and receive from them. But he also made it clear that we won't be able to engage our community in context if we don't know our identity as a Mennonite people. Flores reminded us that every church draws its identity from some tradition. There is no generic Christianity. He said "just as there is no ice cream without a flavor there is no church without a historical tradition and identity." He called on Mennonites to embrace our identity without it being tied to ethnicity. He reminded us that Anabaptist theology is a lived faith and therefore there are no ethnic Mennonites. As we embrace our Anabaptist identity in the midst of our host communities he said "we will see God transform us, our churches, and our communities."

In our last session Gilberto pointed out that the book of Acts never ends. The book stops but church history is not yet done. In the book of Acts we see the church spread from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and then on to the ends of earth. Gilberto said, "God is still at work in the world setting things right and restoring it to its intended wholeness and beauty." The challenge for each one of us is whether or not we will join God in God's mission to the world. God is doing a new thing—let's get on board with God and see the new things God is doing!

—John Bender, Pittsburgh



Gilberto Flores (photo at right) easily captured the attention of attendees at this year's Minister's Spring Seminar. Pictured above are, L. to R., Don Hamsher, Keith Yoder, Casey Rohrer, Sam Yoder and Maryann Yoder.

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The article at the right was written by Michael Shull, son of Jeff Shull, pastor of Martinsburg Mennonite Church. Michael wrote it for presentation to his High School Communications class, March 17, 2008. He graciously agreed to submit it to Allegheny Conference News for publication.



Michael Shull

Proposition: it is far better to live than it is to die. Surely most people agree with this statement. However, I now propose that it is better to be killed, than to kill. Pacifism, simply put, is the trust in peace over aggression; commonly referred to as “self-defense.” I submit to you that pacifism is the only logical solution.

No one has the right to take the life of another, not even in self-defense. In Exodus chapter 20 of the Bible, it does not say, “Don’t kill unless you are threatened,” or “don’t kill unless there is no other way.” The Bible just says, “You shall not kill.” In the book of Genesis, Cain kills his brother Abel. Because of this, God places a curse on Cain. Based on the previous excerpts from the Holy word of God, I now also claim that pacifism is part of the Christian faith and more importantly that one can-

That said, I realize that there are those who do not believe in the teachings of Jesus Christ, or the Trinity. Among these people are atheists, or agnostics. These men instead propose that when threatened, humanity impulsively kills to protect itself. I cannot accept that this is possible. The human organism is a magnificent creation and is far superior to any lower form of life.

The cells in the human body boast a higher sophistication than any of our technologies to date. The cell is much more than a glob of jelly, as thought in the time of Charles Darwin, but is characterized as a nano-factory by today’s scientists. It is not rational to suppose that this happened through chance, but instead through intelligent design. One does not come across a factory-made soda can and try to explain away how it was formed by chance. The formation of the universe is no different. The only sentient, conscious form of life on Earth is certainly sophisticated enough to find an alternative to war. To expect a human to behave below its capabilities is illogical. Therefore I claim that humanity is inherently above the primitive fear-threat reaction.

Furthermore I propose that pacifism is not applicable only to isolated, personal threats against an

individual, but also to political, militant action as well. Think: killing someone on a desert battlefield is no different than plunging a dagger into an innocent person’s chest in cold blood. Military personnel may function differently, but they achieve the same result: death. Granted, some individuals have made the statement that fighting for one’s country by killing fellow combatants and innocent civilians as well in the interest of “national security” is morally and ethically sound. How can this be? Does the place and reason why you kill someone make a difference? I think not!

If people stopped killing each other for the sake of their respective nations or causes alone, think of the lives that could be saved, and the destruction avoided. For example, on the sixth of August 1945, the B-29 bomber Enola Gay dropped a 13-kiloton bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima and killed 130,000 people in all, with massive structural damage to the city itself. That was one bomb, out of one war, 63 years ago using the technology of that time. The destruction was awesome; the devastation unimaginable, as those who gazed directly into the atomic flash permanently lost their sight. These statistics have been confirmed and released by the article: “The Prompt and Delayed Effects of War,” *Scientific American*, July 1979 issue.

Keep in mind that these were industrial workers, not soldiers, and lost in the name of America. I suggest we heed all the warnings we have been given, such as those from Jesus Christ: to love our neighbors as ourselves because “The Lord will settle international disputes. All the nations will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. All wars will stop, and military training will come to an end.” (Isaiah 2:4)

To conclude, I maintain that if we are to truly love our neighbors as ourselves, whether they are black or white, male or female, or of another nationality, it is necessary to love them even if they do want to kill you. It is what God, and any civilized person, would do. Pacifism is the only logical option. —*Michael Shull, Martinsburg*