

September /October 2009

## Formed - and Transformed - by God's Hands AMC Worship Gathering at Laurelville



The potters wheel, the pots in various stages of completeness, and the potter shaping the clay, sometimes swiftly, at other times slowly and

deliberately, aptly illustrated the worship theme "Formed by God's Hands" at Laurelville Retreat Center, August 7-9, 2009.

On Friday evening Jim Rosenberger, from the University Congregation and Chairperson of Mennonite Education Agency Board, encouraged us to be molded to Christ's likeness. As Peter responded to Cornelius, so we share as communities of grace. Through Mennonite education (MEA was the highlighted agency during these conference sessions) the church passes down what is held most dearly: compassion for the world, priorities of faith, and values such as integrity, and trust. This all-encompassing belief is evidenced through the mission statements of many Mennonite educational institutions which emphasize servant leadership. Jim encouraged the constituency to think of Mennonite schools not merely as safe "hot houses," but as places to challenge growth.

Kurt Horst led the Saturday evening worship time. "As a people of God, we posture ourselves so we can be shaped, willingly

allowing ourselves to be vulnerable to the Potter's hand." Extended periods of silence throughout the service allowed time for reflecting, lamenting, confessing, honoring the pain in our lives as Keith Hershberger cast and created beautiful pieces of pottery in the silent semi-darkness of the meetinghouse.

Bob Yoder, Goshen College campus pastor, reminded us that evening that deep intimacy with God and being transformed by the Spirit results in periods of lament. One half of the Psalms can be considered psalms of lament, prayers that grant permission to grieve and question when we have known the deepest sorrows and harshest realities of life.

As Bob brought the Sunday morning message, he asked us to imagine a world without printed words. We usually assume that we are transformed *by* God's Word but when we are transformed *for* God's Word it means that we as a people of God are being depended upon by God to get the word out. This raises the bar. Will people see the essence and character of God when they see the people of Allegheny Conference? Bob left us with six challenges – that we be:



**Above: Bob Yoder, Goshen College campus pastor, shared poignant messages during Saturday evening and Sunday morning worship times.**



**Top left: Kurt Horst, outgoing Conference Minister, shares the gift of an oil lamp with Conference Interim Minister, Donna Mast, symbolizing the fire of the Spirit surrounding her in this new task. Donna's husband, Conrad, is standing with her.**



**Top right (l to r): Olivia Tennefoss, Maisha Baton-Stawson, and Mireya Lopez sing with other children for the adults during Sunday morning worship.**

1) listening people, 2) humble people, since we have more to learn 3) discerning people, not just between good and bad, but between good and *good*, 4) encouraging people, who cheer each other on, 5) malleable people, allowing God to shape us, and 6) “quake-able” people who can be “wowed” and amazed by God.

Following Bob’s message, small groups shared communion with each other. We were then joined by the children and junior high youth who shared music and highlights from their weekend. The youth also sang a song and invited the congregation to join. It was exciting to note that there were almost as many children in the nursery this weekend as there were youth in attendance.

At the close of the service, Kurt and Elaine Horst were presented a gift of appreciation and a prayer of blessing was offered by moderator, David Garber, as former Allegheny Conference moderators and the conference office staff laid hands on them.

Also invited to come forward were Donna and Conrad Mast. Donna has been selected and affirmed to serve as interim conference minister. Alan Kauffman invited conference pastors to join the office staff in laying on hands as he offered a prayer of blessing and dedication for Donna in this new task.

After moments of quiet reflection, David Garber led in prayer and noted that Leadership was listening. To conclude the congregation sang together “God Be With You ‘Til We Meet Again.”

— Carolyn Tice, Springs

**Right: Seventeen youth sang a beautiful arrangement of “Waterfall” during the Sunday worship.**



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# Inspiring Delegate Session

Allegheny Mennonite Conference delegates gathered at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center to conduct their annual summer business session on Saturday, August 8, 2009. Alan Kauffman facilitated the typical roll call with assistance from our own “jazzy” statistician, Jim Rosenberger. A total of 18 non-delegates and 8 agency guests in addition to the 78 delegates responded to the call.

The minutes from the March delegate meeting were approved and three announcements were made. First, the November 7 delegate session will be hosted by Philippi. Next, Grace Fellowship in Delaware will be eligible for membership in Allegheny Conference as of September. Thirdly, Hyattsville Mennonite Church has begun the process of inquiry regarding possibly transferring their membership to Atlantic Coast Conference.

Following the announcements, delegates voted to affirm the persons appointed by Coordinating Council to fill vacancies. These included: Karen Howard - Faith, Life and Procedures; Marsha Carr - Nurture & Ed; Ken Litwiller - Finance & Stewardship; David Mishler - Chair of Finance; and Jane Rittenhouse - Nominating Committee (all 100%). Also, Donna Mast was affirmed (92%) to serve as half-time Interim Conference Minister.

The youth are an active part of our church. Joy Cotchen reported that summer camp attendance was up by 10 over last year, despite the downturn in the economy and this being a convention year. There were 44 first-time campers. Our conference was truly supportive of summer camp as there were only three non-Allegheny Conference persons on the staff this year. John Denlinger,

Laurelville’s new Executive Director, has challenged AMC churches to have mentors available for children and youth in their home congregations to offer support after seeds have been planted at church camp and conventions. Seven members of the Conference Youth Cabinet shared what they treasure about the Mennonite Church. Comments included the strong sense of community, adult support and involvement, meeting other new youth, opportunities and experiences had by being involved in camps, conventions, and leadership retreats, opportunities to help plan activities, close friendships formed, and encouragement to grow in personal faith. Joy concluded her reporting time by thanking Kurt for his eleven years of mentoring and support.

Kurt Horst, Conference Minister, reported on the Corinthian Plan (health care) which could be funded with just ten dollars per member per year. So far, 19 congregations have filled out the request for information and seven congregations have committed. All congregations are encouraged to take this step. Kurt stated he will personally contact each church that has not yet completed this form. Eighty percent of the congregations are needed to join if this program is to work. After October, some churches may not qualify due to pre-existing conditions of their staff persons; hence the urgency to get in from the beginning.

Agency representatives were introduced: Linford King - MCUSA - denominational minister; Steve Bustos - Mennonite Mutual Aid; Merrill Miller - Mennonite Publishing Network; John Powell - Mennonite Mission Network; and Carlos Romero - Mennonite Education Agency. A six-minute DVD gave an overview of MCUSA and its agencies.



**Dave Mishler “sobs” with great heaves as he and Lorne Peachey led a light-hearted roast for Kurt Horst on Saturday evening.**



**TJ Tenefoss, Missions & Service, announces the receipt of a \$500 grant given to a new Scottdale cafe, “The Table” by the International Guest House.**



Carlos Romero, pictured left, highlighted the importance and influence of Mennonite education, citing examples from the Pastors for Peace in Cuba, down through preschool programs. “Mennonite education is a place where lives are changed!” The Board oversees 38 elementary & high

schools (including a new one in Pasadena, CA) five colleges and two seminaries. Historically, local congregations supported our schools with a check to be used by the colleges in whatever way was needed; this form of support has dropped significantly in the last two decades. However, church colleges have increased their matching grants. Nonetheless, how to pay for college education is a frequent concern. Carlos stressed that we shouldn’t allow the sticker price of Mennonite education to say, “I can’t afford that.” It is a common misunderstanding that public schools cost less than church colleges. Further, over 90% of students receive financial aid. Mennonite education is an investment—one that strengthens the individual, the society, and the world.

Missional Leader, Lawrence Brenneman submitted a written report, presented, in his absence, by Donna Mast. He hopes to visit all AMC churches this coming year to share and discuss the individual findings from the earlier meetings when Kurt and Joy visited. As well, Lawrence is available to preach upon request.

Leadership Commission Chair, Steve Sauder continued the theme of making a difference in another’s life by sharing a short memorial video. Featured were three strong spiritual leaders from AMC whom God has called home in the last year: Doc Dawson, Elam Glick, and Paul Bender. Then he spoke of changes in pastoral leadership. At Tressler, Matt Deputy has been licensed and Clint Yoder (ordained in Conservative Conference) has been appointed Interim Pastor. At Springs, Casey Rorher’s ordination is scheduled for August 23 Upcoming events for pastoral nurture include the monthly Pastor Peer, Pastors’ retreat in October, and November Bedford



**Annika Miller, Youth Cabinet Chairperson for the past year, shares during the delegate session about what the Mennonite Church means to her.**

Pastors’ Meeting.

Finance & Stewardship rep., David Mishler, noted that last year’s budget was exceeded by \$7,000 in response to a special plea letter. This prompted the singing of the Doxology (in good 4-part harmony) in recognition of God’s goodness! After our First Fruits forwarding of \$17,000 to MCUSA Executive Board, we still had a \$10,000 surplus. For this coming year, the expectations have been reduced. Some congregations may have given “early” to help us end in the positive and this may impact current contributions. It was noted that more communication to explain where the money goes in Conference and beyond would be helpful to local congregations.

TJ Tennefoss, Missions & Service Commission, highlighted the International Guest House’s missional work. This year, IGH celebrated its 40th year of service. People from all over the world comment that IGH easily feels like it is their home away from home. IGH has continued its \$500 grant to local congregations who have a hospitality idea. Scottsdale received a grant for “The Table,” a local coffee house featuring a child-friendly play area in the back. *The Table* is a low-key business serving foods with international flavor. It’s a place to freely, safely share with one another outside of the church walls. IGH is a mission that “pays” our Conference!

Nurture & Education Commission members include: Shirley Brandes, Chair (Springs), Marsha Carr, (Carpenter Park), and Miriam Ramer, (Pittsburgh).

Cathy Spory, AMC liaison to MCUSA agencies, was our representative to Convention in Ohio. She led us in an interactive exercise about the story of Zacchaeus to get us thinking globally, as was encouraged at convention. Statistically speaking, 201 AMC persons attended Columbus. Three resolutions were passed: health care, opposition to human trafficking, and human sexuality. She is available to answer questions regarding what resources are available for individuals or congregations.

Donna Mast led in a closing prayer for the commissions before delegates dispersed to attend various seminars.

—Roveen Yoder, Pinto

# PMC - The BIG Move

The reality is Pittsburgh Mennonite Church has been on the move for several weeks. Packing began soon after we made the purchase agreement. Little by little, many members helped to fill our Murray Avenue location with boxes. At our new location on South Braddock Avenue, we began to envision what the new Pittsburgh Mennonite Church could become. In both facilities, weeks of elbow grease and hard work has culminated in a smooth transition from old to new.

Several work days and individuals working on their own prepared us for the final move on August 1. Members, friends and a contingency from Scottdale Mennonite unpacked boxes, cleaned, and did various jobs around the new church. Packing and hauling

has been overwhelming at times, but in the end, we feel excitement about our move and blessed by the gift God has given us. The consensus is that the Spirit is moving here at PMC and we are anxious to see where it is leading.

I can not help but get a bit sentimental about leaving our old building. It has served us well. As I packed up the last boxes from my office, memories flooded my mind. Then to my surprise Miriam and Everett Ramer came to pack up other areas of the church. Everett was the first person to welcome me warmly on my first visit to PMC years ago. I found it so fitting that he was also there when I said my final farewell to Murray Avenue. Our future is bright. We are blessed.

—Ken Zeleny, Pittsburgh



(l to r): Gail Butti, Yahtyng Shue and Brian Brubaker help prepare the sanctuary.



A contractor's helper assists Brian Brubaker and others as they paint the bell tower in the new church building.

# UMC Farewells Miller Family

Members and friends of University Mennonite Church gathered together on August 1<sup>st</sup> for a potluck meal and a time of sharing to say farewell to Pastor David and Mary Miller and their children: Emily, Elizabeth (Troyer-Miller), Suzanne, and Peter. After 12 years as pastor at UMC, David Miller is starting a position as Associate Professor of Missional Leadership Development at AMBS. The crowd, which overflowed from the fellowship hall into adjacent Sunday school rooms, was surrounded by various displays honoring or associated with the Miller family: a slide show of photos of the Millers, a patchwork quilt and a scrapbook on display that contained sections made by congregational members, and tables decorated with mementos associated with the Miller family.

After dinner, Master of Ceremonies Tom Charles blended humor and solemnity as he opened up the floor for a time of sharing. Mike

Bratt on guitar and Tom Chamness on fiddle entertained the crowd with a hilarious rendition of "Mamas, Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to be Pastors." Gratitude was expressed for David's spiritual leadership and peace ministry, Mary's work educating children, and the opportunity to know the Miller children as they grew up. There was laughter, tears, and much depth of feeling as several dozen people shared anecdotes ranging from the humorous to the poignant.

Congregational Chair Gloria Horst Rosenberger presented David and Mary with books, a gift certificate for landscaping service, and the scrapbook prepared by the congregation. David and Mary read a list of things that had changed from 1997 to the present, demonstrating the significance of 12 years passing. David expressed his gratitude for the openness and trust of the congregation. The event concluded with everyone holding hands and singing "Blest be the tie that binds."

—Karen Rath, University



Pastor David Miller shares a communion meal for the University congregation as part of the farewell service for the Millers on August 2. Mary Miller stands on the left next to UMC elder Laura Litwiller.

# 2009 Tri-State Relief Sale

Opportunity to Share in Our Time of Plenty

**Right: Dale Miller of Scottdale Mennonite, provides entertainment on the accordion during the volunteers' lunch.**



**Far Right: Betty Hartzler, (left) MCC Relief Sale Coordinator is seated next to Rebecca Dyck, Ontario, daughter of Peter Dyck (right). Peter was honored for his life of service through MCC during the auction at the TriState sale. He donated a handmade Jump-a-Peg game which raised \$245.**



*“If a brother or sister lacks food and one of you says, “go in peace,” and yet do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? Faith, if it has no works, is dead.”*  
*James 2:15-17*

Even though the current economic times are affecting many in their own personal lives, they realized the needs of others could not be forgotten. Volunteers' year-long work culminated in the weekend event that was enjoyed by many as they shared from their love for others.

**T**he TriState Relief Sale, held on July 17 & 18<sup>th</sup> at the Garrett County Fairgrounds in McHenry, MD, was a time of celebration as people from many denominations gathered to make a difference in lives around the world. They discovered the answer to the question, “How can helping others be this much fun?” as they explored the auto cruise-in, rode on surrey and hayrides, enjoyed homemade delicacies and took care of their shopping as they socialized.

New this year was a Mennonite Central Committee Volunteers Reunion held on Saturday morning. Ken Sensenig of MCC Ephrata, PA led the short program with Peter Dyck, long time MCC supporter in attendance.

Truck loads of kits and comforters, donated by various churches, were loaded and transported to the MCC Material Resource warehouse in Ephrata where they will be shipped where most urgently needed.

**Right: Jess Maust, Springs (L) and Ken Sensenig (R), MCC Ephrata, PA. Ken related stories of MCC's involvement around the world.**



The TriState Relief Sale Board would like to extend their thanks to all of the volunteers, donors and attendees who made this event such a success and who have made possible a better life for many by providing shelter, help in producing enough food and encouragement to the discouraged.

—Harriet Berg, Springs

# Kaufman Celebrates Centennial

Celebrating the Past ♦ Serving in the Present ♦ Building for the Future



**Former Kaufman Pastor, Don Sharp**

**B**irthdays celebrate life and growth and at Kaufman Church we gathered June 20-21, 2009 to commemorate the 100 years of life God has blessed our church with. People came bringing memories and sharing stories of their connection to the congregation.

On Saturday evening we gathered for a picnic meal followed by a service celebrating our past. The meeting began with a power point presentation of ministries, buildings and leaders over the years. Music highlights were from Sounds of Grace trio and a solo by Mark Cable. Former pastor Don Sharp spoke using examples from Moses' life and his faithful walk as described in Hebrews 11:23-28. The worship concluded with a candle lighting service and recognition of persons who have been or are part of a cloud of witnesses to the Kaufman church family.

Our Sunday morning theme emphasized that we are serving in the present. The children's Sunday school department and an octet shared music selections. At each service we sang the song "God of our Life" from *Hymnal: A Worship Book*. Former member, Luke Gascho, used scripture from Hebrews 11:32-39 and effectively tied past heroes of the faith to our present service today. The congregation then shared communion.

Our celebration concluded with an afternoon service where we focused on building for the future. Olivia Hunsberger and the Mark Cable family offered music selections. Speaker Luke Gascho used the example of Abraham's waiting and faithfulness as told in Hebrews 11:8-15, to challenge us to look, wait, and work for the future. Assistant Pastor Keith Yoder led a children's time, filling a time capsule to be opened in fifty years. A dedication litany and prayer for our new sanctuary followed and Pastor Don Hamsher reminded us that Kaufman Church has a legacy of God living within the faithful of the past, and of His promise to continue to be with us in the present, and the future.

—*Marcia Yoder, Kaufman*



**Saturday evening picnic under the tent**

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## Conference Calendar ▼

### September 11-13

Camporee at Pine Springs Camp

### October 6

Deadline for Nov/Dec issue of *ACNews*

### October 9-11

Pastor Spouse Retreat at Laurelville

### November 7

Fall Delegate Meeting in Philippi, WV

### November 20-22

Youth Leadership Retreat at Camp Mantowagon

### December 3

Deadline for Jan/Feb issue of *ACNews*

## Paul Bender, A Life of Service



**Paul E. Bender**  
1925-2009

**Belleville** - Paul E. Bender, 83, went to be with the Lord at 6:25 p.m. on Wednesday, May 13, 2009 at Valley View Haven. He was born July 9, 1925 in Kalona, Iowa, the son of the late Lewis and Barbara (Miller) Bender.

Paul served in Civilian Public Service Camp for 3 years in Terry, Montana during World War II. Following this, he attended Eastern Mennonite College and Penn State University, and became ordained as a minister in 1949. That same year on December 10, he was united in marriage with Leona M. (Miller) Bender.

He was a school teacher in Salisbury, PA for five years and during this time, he operated a watch repair shop in Grantsville, Md. They moved to Belleville and took the position of principal at Belleville Mennonite School from 1963-1968. Following this position, he became pastor at Allensville Mennonite Church for 22 years. He simultaneously owned and operated a watch and clock repair business as well as a tax preparation service in Belleville since 1963.

Most recently, Paul was a member of Barrville Mennonite Church, where he served as an elder and a Sunday school

teacher, and occasionally filled the pulpit as well.

Paul was a member of Allegheny Mennonite Conference since 1948, serving on a number of committees, and was a 19-year member of the Mennonite Historical Society, 14 of which he served as president.

Paul enjoyed spending time with his family, grandchildren (14), great-grandchildren (6), as well as numerous friends. In addition to his beloved wife, Leona, his daughters are Lois A. Arnold of Bronx, NY and Miriam D. Ferguson and husband, John, of Mechanicsville, VA. His four sons include John P. Bender and wife, Mildred, of Greensboro, NC, L. Roy Bender and wife, Connie of Lancaster, PA, Titus W. Bender and friend, Amy, of Belleville, and Loren E. Bender and wife, Judy, of New Holland. Astronomy, biking, and genealogy were additional interests that absorbed Paul's time.

Many gathered to celebrate and remember Paul's life at the funeral service, held on May 18 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church. Pastors Carl Geissinger and Tim Peachey officiated and internment followed at Allensville Mennonite Cemetery.