

September/October 2010

135th Allegheny Mennonite Conference Annual Meeting Compelled by Christ's Love

Over 100 Allegheny delegates and visitors gathered at Laurelville for the 2010 annual conference; a time of worship, fellowship and listening. The theme this year was "Compelled by Christ's Love" and each of the three worship times focused on a particular question related to the weekend theme. Several conference attendees were invited to reflect and share their thoughts on the question for that session.

On Friday evening, the gathered delegates pondered the question, "When have you been compelled by Christ's love to do something foolish?" Linford King, Mennonite Church USA (MCUSA) and John Powell from Mennonite Mission Network each spoke from personal experiences. Keynote speaker Nelson Kraybill, pastor of Prairie St. Mennonite Church in Elkhart, Ind., brought the message entitled "This Foolish Gospel," based on 1 Cor 1:18-2:5, where Paul expresses the fact that Christ crucified truly is the wisdom of God though it seems foolish in the eyes of the world. Nelson noted that our denomination is good at extending compassion to those in need, whether in the United States, Haiti, Pakistan or Afghanistan. Yet, articulating the message of Christ crucified has been neglected by Mennonites. He expressed hope that we would recover this emphasis on the foolish gospel of Christ crucified, allowing the witness of Christ to shine even brighter.

Saturday evening's worship service had the attendees interact with the question "How have you been compelled by Christ's love to build community?" This question was responded to by Chris Cooke, Director of Pittsburgh's Pulse House, who described their efforts to build community by bringing young people from different parts of the country to live together in an eight-bedroom house in the Pittsburgh's Highland Park neighborhood. While there, they volunteer for a year in various Pittsburgh non-profits. Tracy Baton

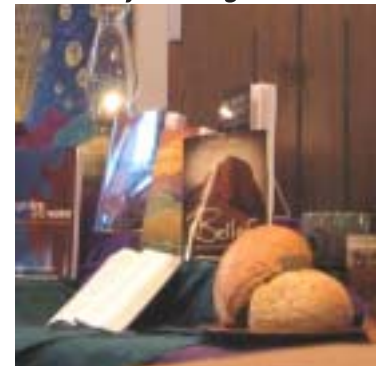
recalled the story of the relocation of Pittsburgh Mennonite Church (PMC). With God's grace, PMC found a facility that was much bigger than their existing church, which miraculously matched the resources they received from the old church sale. Nelson Kraybill's second message, "Be Careful How You Build," was based on 1 Cor 3:1-17. Referring to the tragic school house shooting in the Amish community in Lancaster, Nelson shared the story of visitors who came to see the lone survivor of the shootings and were surprised to see the mother of the killer in that Amish home taking care of the wounded child. That Amish community quickly extended forgiveness with little reservation to the shooter. Yet when it comes to dealing with conflict within the community of faith (whether Amish or Mennonite), divisions are not so easy to overcome and reconciliation is much harder to achieve.

The final worship service of the weekend began with Donna Mast, the Interim Conference Minister, and Grant Rissler from Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) sharing the news about the tragic loss of life of an aid worker in Afghanistan, Glen D. Lapp, of Lancaster, PA. Grant recalled the energy and adventurous spirit of Glen and mourned the loss for him personally as will all those from his Lancaster community. As the gathering turned to worship, the group reflected on the question, "How does the love of God compel you to see in new ways?" John Denlinger, Executive Director of Laurelville Mennonite Church Center (LMCC) responded



Above: Keynote speaker Nelson Kraybill engages the gathered delegates on Friday evening.

Below: Communion table on Sunday morning.



Compelled by Christ's Love, cont'd



Above: John Bender receives a symbolic pitcher and basin from outgoing moderator David Garber as a sign of his willingness to accept the service of Conference Moderator for the coming term.

by describing LMCC as a facility that plays a silent but important role in facilitating peacemaking, discipleship and witnessing to the gospel. In the last year in particular, they have intentionally reached out to the local area in hopes of elevating their local profile and witness. Elaine Moyer, representing the Mennonite Education Agency, talked about taking risks to live missionally and boldly as they open a Mennonite school in Albania, a region with a large Muslim population.

Nelson brought a final message titled "Everything Has Become New!" based on 2 Cor 5:11-21. Nelson noted that when the Bible says anyone in Christ is a new creation, this refers not just to individual transformation but also the fact that the whole world is seen in a new light. He also noted that when we pray for transformation and say we will follow Christ wherever he calls us, we have to ask ourselves if we are really

ready to follow through, in spite of the cost. The life of Glen Lapp reminds us that full transformation and discipleship can demand a great price.

The worship sessions led by Conrad Mast and the team from Scottdale was energizing, reviving everyone's spirit and reminding us that worship in the presence of God is really our primary goal.

At the conclusion of the service, David Garber formally transferred the responsibility of Moderator to John Bender, noting that he had been prepared for this position by a lifetime of experiences: his time in seminary, his experience as church planter in North Carolina and his able leadership of Pittsburgh Mennonite Church. John accepted a basin and pitcher from David as a symbol of servant leadership. Earlier in the worship service, John and his wife Marilyn performed a beautiful and touching interpretive dance to the hymn "Will You Let Me Be Your Servant," pointing to the creative and Christ-like leadership all in conference leadership hope to demonstrate.

—Sandeep Thomas, Pittsburgh

AMC Delegate Meeting

In his annual address, Moderator David Garber reminded delegates that Christ's love both compels us onward and embraces all of us. He recognized and thanked the many volunteers who have served Conference on various commissions and committees. Each leader makes a significant commitment of time and energy to the work of the Lord and we should honor them as set forth in the example of Hebrews 11.

David also noted the exceptional dedication of the Conference staff in Joy Cotchen, Lawrence Brenneman, Kathy Holsopple, and Donna Mast. He noted that he leaves the office of Moderator in good hands, with John Bender as moderator and Lorne Peachey as moderator-elect.

David challenged us to catch the wave of the Holy Spirit's work in Allegheny Conference. What is the Spirit saying to us about loving each other in matters of dispute? Can we learn better to respect each other, even when we disagree? Can we express ourselves gently, remembering our own temptations and struggles? Can we develop more patience to listen to each other

thoughtfully? If we each claim to be reconciled to God, then it should follow that we are being reconciled to each other.

Conference Youth Minister Joy Cotchen noted that our youth have a longing to be loved and to belong. Parents and elders can play a positive role for them by being authentic and by understanding that our children are central to our community of believers. Joy also noted her enthusiasm for her work with AMC youth. People outside of the church sometimes view her as "crazy" for spending six weeks of summer hanging out with youth, but she loves her ministry! Of the 150 children attending summer camps this year, 106 were from Allegheny Mennonite Conference. Joy also reported about her work on the planning committee for the Pittsburgh 2011 Convention, as well as her work with the Youth Ministry Leadership Team of MC-USA where she helps direct the denominational youth ministry.

Interim Conference Minister Donna Mast expressed gratitude for the many of these youth who

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September/October 2010 Volume 67 Number 5

Allegheny Conference News (ISSN 0746-7362) is published six times a year. Periodical postage paid at Scottdale, PA 15683 and at additional mailing offices. Postal Service Registration #0013-800; **Postmaster:** Send change of address 3579 to *Allegheny Conference News*, 1001 Arthur Ave., Scottdale, PA 15683.

Known office of publication: Jane Eanes, editor, *Allegheny Conference News*, 1001 Arthur Ave., Scottdale, PA 15683, phone (724) 887-0273; e-mail: sendamcnews@gmail.com. Printed in USA.

AMC Delegate Meeting, cont'd

have gone on to be leaders across our denomination. Having a conference-wide youth cabinet likely is unique to our Conference. She pointed out that National Assembly is coming to Pittsburgh next summer. Three years from now, Phoenix is the planned site. and fear looms for our Hispanic brothers & sisters. Prayers are being sought as there are good and compelling reasons to both go and *not* go. Later, Grant Rissler (MCC) was invited to share with us in a seminar about immigration issues.

Donna announced that the first preaching institute for pastors will be held Sept. 14, 2010 from 6-10 p.m. in the Somerset Conference office. The next meeting time & place will be determined by those who attend.

Donna shared a Conference "remodeling" (reorganization) update: Faith, Life, and Procedures (FLP) has further developed the ideas which the Remodeling Committee initiated, and has since submitted them to Coordinating Council. Delegates at the fall meeting will receive a written copy of the new design proposal for Conference structuring and will either vote on it next spring or summer of 2011. If it is passed, we will be asked to "try it on" for two years and then re-evaluate.

Donna also explained Appreciative Inquiry, a tool adopted by the remodeling committee which creates conversations within congregations and Conference. It reflects Phil 4:8-9, to gratefully recall and focus on those things which are good and praiseworthy in our congregations and Conference. Coordinating Council suggested that delegates discuss three questions related to this process over brunch: "What do you value most about being a part of AMC?; Describe one way you would like to benefit from our association with AMC.; Describe one way you would like to contribute toward the health of AMC." Delegates were asked to respond individually and place their written comments in the box provided. Later in the meeting, church representatives also responded to the question, "What is your congregation's highest hope for AMC?"

Enos Tice reported that FLP has begun to explore if there are ways we can reconcile our relationship with Hyattsville. One part of this was to meet with representatives from Hyattsville to listen to them. FLP also will be listening to other pastors to hear their ideas or concerns about this. Prayer was requested for FLP and Hyattsville as we consider possible ways to reconcile our relationship while demonstrating mutual respect for each other.

Mennonite Publishing Network was the featured church agency this year and Russ Eanes reported on the challenges and opportunities for the publishing industry in the wider society. MPN serves a

very important role in "tracking God," that is, to recount the story of God's past actions, assess the Spirit's present work, and then, with the Holy Spirit's help, take creative steps into the future. Russ introduced three new books: *The Naked Anabaptist*, *Saving the Seasons*, and *Through Fire and Water*. 17 MPN books are now available on Kindle and all future books will be accessible in multiple reading formats. MPN expects to continue being the definitive source of Anabaptist resources in the years to come.

On behalf of Finance and Stewardship Commission, Dave Mishler noted that AMC finances were cause for both optimism and concern. The trajectory of financial giving was down in spite of all congregations doing their best. To adjust to this new reality, paid staff time has been trimmed and staff persons have been finding creative ways to work within the budget. In spite of decreasing funds, Dave stated that due to the closing of Pleasant View congregation in Bedford County and sale of its building to another church group, the Conference unexpectedly inherited a sizable sum, since its name was on the deed to receive the property should Pleasant View cease to exist or hold services. It will be Conference's responsibility to decide on the best way to disburse these funds, noting, of course, the impetus to always be compelled by Christ's love."

Below is a new hymn that was composed by Adam Tice and inspired by the proceedings of this meeting, written during the closing worship on Sunday morning. It can be sung to the tune of either HWB 70 (*Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise*) or HWB 567 (*How Firm a Foundation*):

If we are the children of Adam and Eve
Then all human trouble is ours to receive.
Though we are God's children, we still will
have strife—

But also the joy of a new kind of life.

If we are the siblings of Abel and Cain,
We grapple with systems of struggle and strain.
But Jesus our brother shows us a new way,
A path where God's heaven meets earth here today.

If we are the daughters and sons of the earth,
To dust we return, for from dust is our birth.
Our loving Creator calls us from our death
To rise in a new world, reborn by God's breath.

by Adam M. L. Tice, August 8, 2010
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—Sandeep Thomas, Pittsburgh.



Above: Interim Conference Minister Donna Mast shared about National Assembly, Conference "remodeling," and the Appreciative Inquiry process.



Above: Conference Youth Minister Joy Cotchen conveys her dedication and joy in her work with Conference youth.

Annual Meeting attendance:

Congregations: 26 of 29
Delegates: 86
Non-delegates: 13, from 7 cong.
Children: 16
Youth: 19
Agency representatives: 8

(These number represent only those who signed in)

2010-2011 Youth Cabinet Convenes

Climbing the Mountain

*Life isn't guaranteed
To have a road that's easy
And it's not gonna get any better
Even with a little time*

*It gets harder growing up
Dealing with big problems and
tougher stuff
But with God on our side
I know we'll be just fine
Just keep on...*

*Climbing that mountain
Reaching for wholeness
Making a difference
Receiving grace in fullness
Step by step and
Foothold by foothold
God's amazing love
Never grows old
Climb that mountain*

*Maybe you're halfway
And you feel you can't go another day
You just should remember
God is on your team.*

*Keep your eyes on the height above
Fill your heart with God's love
Just keep on reaching
For the next handhold.*

*I know it gets tough sometimes
But just grab onto your rope
And hold tight to your line.
Don't work too fast,
Just take your time
And make the climb last.*

*—Original summer theme song,
written for Laurelville 2010 campers
by Alyssa Cable, Kaufman*



Incoming and outgoing youth cabinet members posed for a moment during their annual retreat of "passing the torch," as seasoned youth leaders welcome new ones to the group. Pictured above, l to r:

Row 1: Isaac Tice, Springs; Sarah Yoder, Maple Grove; Leah Speigle, Blough; Jason Yoder, Maple Grove; (Sarah and Jason Yoder are outgoing adult sponsors.);

Row 2: Joy Cotchen, Conference Youth Minister; Alyssa Cable, Kaufman;

Row 3: Grace Weaver, Scottdale; Tyler Schrock, Grace; Brody Thomas, Springs;

The Old/New Cabinet Retreat was held at Laurelville on August 8-9, 2010, following the annual AMC gathering. This is a time for saying good-bye to the seniors from the past year's cabinet and welcome the new members to the cabinet for 2010-2011. There is lots of time for getting to know each other and dream about what the year might hold. Also, they have devotions and take time to acknowledge the gifts of all the cabinet members. As well, ministry teams are assigned and the outgoing chairperson hands over the reigns to the new chairperson.

The group will work on planning and leading the retreats for the conference high school age youth. The next event they will be planning is the Youth Leadership Retreat at Camp Mantowagon on November 19-21. At the upcoming cabinet meeting in September, the group will decide on a theme and inspirational speaker for that retreat weekend.

The 2010-11 cabinet is as follows:
Cabinet Chairperson: Alyssa Cable, Kaufman
Grace Weaver, Scottdale
Brody Thomas, Springs
John Tennefoss and Tyler Schrock, Grace
Alex Spangler, Maple Grove
Kristen Kaltreider, Stahl
Abigail Cable, Kaufman

Adult Representatives are engaged couple Tom Tennefoss and Naomi Blosser from Grace Mennonite Church, and Joy Cotchen, AMC Youth Minister.

—Joy Cotchen, Youth Minister

National Assembly will take place in Pittsburgh, 2011. *Bridges to the Cross* is the theme for the July 4-9, 2011 event, based on II Corinthians 5:15-20. Interested attendees please note that registration opens on Jan. 25. <http://www.mennoniteusa.org/Home/Convention/Pittsburgh2011>

Laurelville 2010 Summer Camps... in Review



Worship and singing



Games

S'mores—and camping—on Sunset Hill



Prayer



Good food - and new ways of eating it, too!



Music



Ropes course

And yes, ...the waterfall



High school rafting, of course



If, by chance, you did not have the opportunity to attend one of Laurelville's camps this past summer, look here to see what you missed—and what you might find yourself doing next time! This year, over 150 campers from 1st through 12th grades came to Laurelville during various weeks to learn more about God, while also having fun building new friendships, playing games, and having lots of outdoor adventures. They would say it was the highlight of their summer! Make it yours, too.

Martinsburg Welcomes New Pastor



From Virginia, newly installed Martinsburg Pastor Joe Furry, stands with his wife, Linda.

Joseph Furry was installed as pastor of Martinsburg Mennonite Church on Sunday August 15, 2010. Carl Geisinger, regional minister, gave the message and Donna Mast performed the official formalities and transfer of membership. A fellowship meal was held after the service. This was indeed a very special day in the life of our congregation, as we have certainly felt God's leading and presence so strongly during our search and

as we came to call Joe into ministry here.

A native of Bridgewater, Virginia, Joe and his wife Linda moved to Martinsburg from Harrisonburg, Virginia on July 1st to begin his ministry. Joe graduated with a Master of Divinity Degree from Eastern Mennonite Seminary on May 1st, 2010, where he had studied for the previous four years. He remarks that his entry into pastoral ministry represented a "mid-life career change" and that this transition came out of a sense of obedience and response to God's calling.

Before entering seminary, Joe majored in music education at James Madison University with a percussion emphasis and had previously worked in the retail industry as well as in book manufacturing and software sales to medical offices. Most recently, Joe served as youth pastor at Weavers Mennonite Church for almost four years and was ordained April 18th, 2010 in the Virginia Conference. Joe states that from the start of his seminary education, he knew he wanted to enter into congregational ministry and that he continued to receive ongoing confirmation and affirmation to this career choice. While serving as lead pastor for several months at Weavers during a period of transition, this calling became even stronger.

When asked about moving to Martinsburg, Joe stated it feels very similar to where he has come from in terms of the topography and agricultural industries. He remarked that after interviewing, when he and Linda arrived here for their candidacy weekend that they felt "an almost eerie sense of belonging" and that they felt so assured that this was the place they were supposed to be. Here in Martinsburg the congregation has already felt energized by Joe and Linda's presence and all that they bring to our community. We are also eager to get to know their family. Joe and Linda have been married for 30 years, and are parents of Tina (husband Jason Suter and son, Henry), Adam (wife Jackie and children Owen and Alaina) and Helen.

—Andrea Kanode, Martinsburg

A Successful 2010 Tri-State Relief Sale



Relief Sale Treasurer Dale Miller (right), enjoys a horse-drawn surrey ride. Also along for the ride are his wife, Janet, (far right) as well as his son, Kevin (left) and family.

The TriState Relief Sale, held on July 16th & 17th at the Garrett County Fairgrounds in McHenry, MD, provided an opportunity to share with others and to greet old acquaintances. Church members of the Allegheny Conference, area Conservative and Amish church members, as well as volunteers from other area denominations all worked together to make this event a success. Many people sewed, hammered, painted, baked, sang, and shared from their abundance.

There was something to appeal to every interest, from bidding at the Silent Auction to browsing through books, riding a horse-drawn carriage and enjoying the old cars on display. Children had a great time at an auction of their own, riding the hay wagon and participating in fun activities, where they learned about the needs of others at the same time.

This year's Relief Sale raised over \$78,000. MCC treasurer, Dale Miller, was happy to report that this exceeds what Allegheny Conference donated to Mennonite Central Committee in 2009. Of that total, \$20,700 was raised through Penny Power, so small change faithfully given really does add up!

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

Plan now how you can help on July 15 & 16, 2011 at the TriState Relief Sale. Please mark this date on your church and personal calendars and keep those pennies rolling in to help others.

—Harriet Berg, Springs

College Students: Ways They are Serving Others

Leah Rittenhouse:

This past year I decided to do the Disaster Management Program at Hesston College. As part of this program I spent the first two months of my summer working with Mennonite Disaster Service in New Iberia, Louisiana. For me, the experience was very meaningful. There was lots of time for reflection as well as digging into some deeper issues concerning poverty. We also spent some time in Mississippi after a tornado, in New Orleans, and a day on the bayou learning about and experiencing the oil spill for ourselves. The one thing that stands out the most when thinking back on my experience are the many relationships that were formed with long-term MDS staff, my fellow interns, some very special homeowners, and a few crazy little kids. It was exciting to witness the ways in which God is working through MDS and a privilege to be a part of it.



Annika Miller:

This summer I had the privilege of working at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center through Goshen College's Camping Inquiry Program. The program lasts for eleven weeks. Six of those weeks I spent with the summer camps and the remaining weeks were spent working in the office and around the grounds on various projects.



In both settings I enjoyed learning and experiencing how each job fits into the overall workings of Laurelville and summer camps, in addition to building relationships with the staff. I appreciated the freedom to explore different roles and projects this summer. Angela Dietzel, who was my supervisor, graciously supported and encouraged me as I pursued various interests, such as photography, the craft shop, and discovering the history behind the building names.

The summer has been more than just understanding the flow of camps; it has also been a time for me to grow in my faith and discover what being Mennonite means to me. I have appreciated finding God in the noise of summer camps and the campers, as well as seeing God in the quiet of an afternoon when few guests are on grounds.

Naomi Tice:

I graduated from Goshen College this past May with a degree in Youth Ministry and Music in Worship. After a summer at home (Springs, PA), I have now moved to Boulder, Colorado to do a year of service with Mennonite Voluntary Service (MVS). I am working with a program called "Out & About," which is run by an organization called Imagine!, which works with persons with developmental disabilities. Out and About focuses on helping persons with disabilities get out and involved in their communities, while at the same time helping them to form valuable life skills, a technique which is called "Therapeutic Recreation." There are several different programs Out & About participants can choose to be involved in, whether for one morning, afternoon, or day a week, after school, or special weekend activities. Some of the main activities each week include swimming, crafts, and bowling; there are two to four participants per instructor, so we are able to give generous assistance to each one.



Sharing our MVS house with me are Sam Goering (Hyattsville, MD), Aaron Voth (Hesston, Kansas), and Jasmine Brubaker (Lancaster, PA). All four of us are participating at Boulder Mennonite Church and will have opportunities to be involved there in various ways. I will be assisting with worship music and children's education.

For more information on Imagine!, visit www.imaginecolorado.org. To learn more about my experiences with MVS, visit my blog at www.naomisadventures.wordpress.com.

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Conference Calendar ▼

September 10-12

Camporee at Pine Springs Camp, Jennerstown
Ages 8-12

October 1

AC News deadline for
Nov./Dec. issue

October 23

Tri-State Fall Workday
Kaufman Mennonite Church
9am - 3:30pm

November 6

Fall Delegate Session
Masontown MC

November 11

Pastor's Meeting
Bedford, PA

November 19-21

Youth Leadership Retreat
Camp Mantowagon

December 3

AC News deadline for
Jan./Feb. issue

Nurture and Education: Blessed are the peacemakers... ...Does this mean Sunday school teachers, too?



If you were thinking that a prerequisite for children attending Sunday school is a well polished halo, well, think again. Children will vary in age, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual development. These differences will most likely abound within the confines of your classroom.

And, let's face it, that is by God's design. Just as God rejoices in the repentant sinner, He is also rejoicing over the diversity of His children. Let's not forget to rejoice, too. However, in an effort to get others to see things "my way," such variance can lead to conflict. Our well planned lesson may get sidetracked over two little hands both reaching for the same crayon at the same time. So *now* what? There was a lot of time, money and effort that went into that lesson, and now it is all ruined over a fight! After all, there are two blue crayons—do they have to cry over this?

While this can be extremely frustrating, this is the prime opportunity to teach conflict resolution. A perfect teachable moment has just dropped into your classroom. This may be the only place where these children will see a Christian way to resolve conflict. Sadly, they may never observe conflict resolution on a TV show, through a video game, or even in their homes. But right here in your Sunday School classroom is the prime opportunity for you to teach them first-hand how Jesus would resolve an argument.

First of all, *encourage empathy* by asking questions about the people and events in the Bible. For example: "How do you suppose he/she felt about what happened? What makes you think that? How would you feel if that happened to you? What would you do or say?" Practicing on Bible characters may feel less threatening, while helping them to relate to these characters, as well. In time, the children will learn to apply these biblical lessons to real life situations.

Establish group norms of behavior. Set the standard: be loving, patient and cooperative with the students and with other leaders. Games and language should always be nonviolent in nature. Teach children to picture Jesus standing in the room. Would the things I say or do make Jesus smile or would it make him sad?

Learn to articulate feelings. If there is a conflict, allow everyone in the group to state the problem. Whoever is holding the pen (or stuffed animal, or any designated object) gets to speak for an allotted amount of time. It sometimes helps to have the other person restate what they heard (or thought they heard!) Each member of the group can offer suggestions to resolve the conflict. Some ideas may be funny and some may be impractical. But, as the the ideas are narrowed down to a reasonable resolution, the group can rejoice and celebrate being peacemakers.

Remember to *pray*. Pray for each other, thanking God for the way that He made us each different...and each very special to Him.

These are just a few suggestions to get you begin to establish a peaceable classroom environment. We welcome your suggestions and questions. Contact us at education@amc-mcusa.org.

—Marsha Carr, Carpenter Park