

January/February 2011

Fall Delegates Look at New Conference Structure

On the morning of November 6, 2010 nearly 100 delegates made their way to Masontown Mennonite Church for the Allegheny Mennonite Conference Fall Delegate Session. Those who arrived early enough were welcomed to the meeting with a light flurry of snow, but thankfully there was enough coffee and hot tea waiting for them to keep their minds clear from thoughts of salt trucks and snow shovels.

Ron Smith, Pastor at Masontown, welcomed the delegates and then opened with a devotion based on Matthew 5:13-16. He praised the delegates for being a shining light to their congregation and urged them to do the same for their friends, families and communities so that others “may see your good deeds and praise your Father in Heaven.” Following the devotion, the delegates joined in for a time of singing and worship.

The business part of the meeting was initiated by Enos Tice, who conducted the role call, had the minutes approved from the business meeting in August, and informed the delegates that the upcoming spring delegate session in March would be held at Maple Grove Mennonite Church.

Conference Moderator John Bender gave the delegates an overview of the day’s business, explaining that the main goal and focus of the day was to look at the new proposed structure for Conference and to give the delegates insight on the new vision and direction that has been touched on during recent years. He briefly discussed the current structure and format of our Conference for any new delegates present, and then went on to explain how the idea of the new proposal had materialized. John stated encouragingly, “We all have to keep an open mind, an open heart, and be willing to make the necessary changes that best fit the needs of Conference as a whole.”

Interim Conference Minister Donna Mast displayed a slideshow presentation for the delegates that better explained in detail what kinds of changes would be taking place with the new pro-

posal. She began by stating that the Conference would divide geographically into four regions, “each with a passion for serving God.” Each of the regions would have an appointed Regional Minister (in contrast to each church having their own individual overseer), which would help to cut the staffing needs conference-wide. Ideally, the delegates within their regions would meet at least once a year outside of (or perhaps, in place of) the normally scheduled delegate sessions to discuss happenings within their region and how each congregation is doing more to be missional within their communities. Each region would have autonomy to develop missions and structures, depending on the needs and passions of each one. The Conference will create a new Leadership Council that will combine most of what FLP, Leadership Commission, and Coordinating Council currently do. A new addition of one to two youth representatives would allow for the youth within Conference to better represent their ideas. A brief question and answer time followed Donna’s presentation which gave the delegates a bit more information before breaking off into twelve small discussion groups.



Pastor Ron Smith of the hosting church, Masontown Mennonite, welcomes delegates and opens the day with a devotion.

Below, delegates broke into 12 small discussion groups to share affirmations and questions each had concerning a new structure for Conference.



New Conference Structure (cont'd)



Breaking into small discussion groups allowed time for all to share and hear from all the others, as well.

Gloria Horst introduced University's new pastor, Marv Friesen (center). On far left is Pastor Joe Furry from Martinsburg.



The primary goal of the small group discussion was to allow every delegate to express what they liked, were concerned about, or what still needed further clarification with the new proposed structure. There were also specific questions asked of each group such as, "How does the new structure help each church with being more missional?" or, "How does the new structure help to nurture healthy congregations?" The groups were told that before the day's meeting came to a close, a representative from each group would have the opportunity to come forward and summarize what their group had discussed for the benefit of others there as well as the Coordinating Council.

After lunch, served by the women of Mason-town Mennonite Church, each committee gave a report of new or ongoing activity within their committee.

Miriam Ramer, speaking on behalf of the Nurture and Education Commission, shared that Christmas cards could be made available to those congregations who would want to partici-

participate in sending cards to those in prison this Christmas season. The cards would be going to the prisoners of the Somerset State Correctional Institute.

Finance and Stewardship Commission Chair, Ken Litwiller, presented the budget to the

delegates. One third of the way into the Conference fiscal year, expenses are ahead of schedule and congregational contributions to conference are about \$7,000 behind. He noted that timely congregational contributions to Conference could help with cash flow. Several congregations have committed themselves to give to conference at 10% of their congregational budgets. Pursuing this standard could assist us to accomplish our mission as a conference.

Wayne Yoder, Leadership Commission Chair, took time to introduce the new pastors within the Conference. The delegates were gracious in welcoming Bob Brown (Stahl), Joe Furry (Martinsburg), and Marv Friesen (University) to AMC. Each of them stated that they were looking forward to being actively involved with Conference. Wayne reminded the delegates of the Pastor's Retreat being held at Laurelville this February 11-13, and encouraged each congregation to have their pastors participate in the weekend. He also took time to share a personal story about his wife Roveen Yoder (Townsend) who had grown up in Masontown Mennonite.

During the last part of the day, a representative from each small discussion group had the opportunity to share the affirmations, concerns and questions their group had voiced about the new proposed structure for Conference. Most of the discussion groups had similar reactions. The addition of more youth involvement into the new structure received high praise among almost all of the groups. However, many felt they still needed more details about this plan in order to visualize just how it would be implemented. John Bender took an unofficial vote to see how most felt about the new proposed structure, and the resulting vote did not give a definite leaning one way or the other at this point. Quite a few expressed a tentative approval pending some changes to the current proposal. With the feedback received, Coordinating Council will consider further changes and more specific details of implementation in the coming months. It is the hope that at the spring meeting, a new finalized proposed structure will be available for the delegates, in hopes of a possible decision.

—Carl Opel, Masontown

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Imperfectly Perfect: Youth Leadership Retreat

The weekend of November 19-20 at Camp Mantowagon was one of the extremely looked-forward-to weekends for the youth of Allegheny conference: Leadership Retreat! This year the theme was “Imperfectly Perfect” and the speaker was Rose Bender, who shared messages with us Friday evening, twice on Saturday, and during our closing worship Sunday morning. Scripture references were from Matthew 5, specifically the section that deals with being perfect as God our heavenly Father is perfect. Rose stated that we all strive for perfection in body, mind, and spirit throughout our lifetime, following Jesus as our model of ultimate perfection. As individuals, we never achieve Godly perfection, and yet, in God’s grace and through Jesus, God actually sees us as “perfect.” Additionally, God views the larger church body as His perfect bride and each of us has a vital part in this body.

tions as what qualities a young adult may look for in a partner and how teens can choose who to date. Sarah led a workshop about letting the people around us see who we really are. Sarah noted that icebergs generally only show 10% of their mass above water, with the other 90% submerged. Sarah then queried participants: were they like icebergs, only showing the most acceptable 10% of their true selves? Further, how can they begin to let peers see the other 90%? Sarah also wisely pointed out that it is easy to pin labels on others, based on the 10% they show. Likely there is much more substance below the surface, so we should be cautious about assigning hasty and unfair labels.

During free time, the youth braved the cold and headed down to the ball field for an intense game of ultimate frisbee. For the rest of free time, everyone spent quality time playing games or chatting in the rec hall.



Nearly two dozen youth leaders from all over the conference, together with their sponsors, squeezed in a group photo time — in-between fun games, lots of socializing, and meaningful input from this year’s speaker, Rose Bender.

The first evening we gathered in the recreation hall and played some games to break the ice. In the morning devotions were led by Abby Cable and Kristen Kaltreider before our worship session.

Workshops were led by Sarah Sullenberger and Bob and Lauren Brown (pastor at Stahl). The Browns invited participants to write down any questions on the topic of dating relationships and then led an open discussion time, sharing wisdom and answers about such ques-

For an evening activity, everyone headed outside again to play “Glow-in-the-Dark Slaughter” which is a traditional daytime camp game that was given a little “creative license” in the inky darkness of night!

All in all, a great weekend was had by all who were there, as we got to know each other better. It brought everyone closer to each other and to God as we learned about becoming perfect in an imperfect world.

—Grace Weaver, Scottdale

Coming up soon!

SnoKamp!

**Laurelville Mennonite
Church Camp
January 28-30, 2010
Grades 9-12**

Allegheny Conference Slate — 2011

Leadership Commission

Marilyn Bender
Pittsburgh, PA

Congregation: Pittsburgh

At PMC, Marilyn is Worship Commission chair and Worship & Music leader. On the conference level, she has been a part of the Leadership Commission. She also enjoys working half time at Ten Thousand Villages Pittsburgh, as an assistant manager who is responsible for product display in the store and coordinating/staffing off-site sales. Singing, playing & listening to music bring her much joy. Enticing birds to eat out of her bird feeders and creating a favorable habitat for them in her backyard is an enjoyable hobby.



Leadership Commission

Carolyn Tice
Springs, PA

Congregation: Springs

Carolyn serves on the hospitality committee at Springs. She is a retired teacher. She and her husband, Enos, are parents of two children: Naomi (VSer in Boulder, CO) and Isaac (freshman at Hesston College). In her free time, Carolyn enjoys reading, desktop publishing, traveling, and spending time with her family.



Constituency Leaders Council

Anna Sauder
Oakland, Md.

Congregation: Gortner

Anna has served as a Sunday School teacher and children's Sunday School Superintendent. Currently, she is on the Nurture and Education Commission for the Conference. Anna is a substitute teacher for Southern Garrett County Schools. She is married to Steve and has three children and one granddaughter. In her spare time she enjoys reading.



Constituency Leaders Council

Karen Howard
Pittsburgh, PA

Congregation: Pittsburgh

Karen is Chair of the Education and Nurture Commission and Listening Committee at PMC. She is also on Servant Board there. Karen is a member of FLP. In the past, she has represented Allegheny Conference on the MCC East Coast Board. She most recently served as a member of the adult planning committee for MCUSA Convention 2011. Karen is a retired teacher and instructional leader. In May of 2010, she completed a Master of Arts in Curriculum and Instruction at Point Park University, where she is an adjunct instructor. Karen is the mother of Aimee (21) and grandmother of Narya (2). She will not resist a good book, water aerobics at the gym or an opportunity to experience ethnic cuisine.



Finance and Stewardship Commission

Wade Dorsey
La Vale, Md.

Congregation: Pinto

Wade served on two pastoral search committees at Pinto. He is currently chairman of the budget committee there and a delegate to Conference. He is acting forest manager of Savage River State Forest in Grantsville and has master's degree in forestry economics. Wade is married to Cathy Chapman and has two adult children. He enjoys reading, biblical studies, and is currently enrolled in the Preaching Institute through EMS.



Finance and Stewardship Commission

Noah Carr
Hollsopple, Pa.

Congregation: Kaufman

Noah is a member of the Servant Team at Kaufman. He graduated from the University of Pittsburgh-Johnstown in the spring of 2010 with a bachelor's degree in business, with concentrations in accounting and finance. Originally from Harrisonburg, VA, Noah is married to Stephanie (Hollsopple) with two sons, Justin (5) and Brandon (3).



Faith, Life, and Procedures Commission

Conrad Mast
Scottdale, Pa.



Congregation: Scottdale

Conrad has served as co-pastor of the Scottdale congregation for 13 years and currently is a member of FLP for Conference. He enjoys making music of all kinds: playing piano, other instruments, and singing in groups. Gardens, home remodeling and motorcycling are three other interests that draw a good deal of his time.

Missions and Service Commission

TJ Teneffoss
Greenwood, De.



Congregation: Grace

TJ currently serves as congregational leader for the newly spawned Grace Fellowship in Delaware. Married to Jolene, they have 5 children & many other "adoptees." TJ is a graduate of Rosedale Bible Institute & Harvest Bible Institute. He is also owner of Greenwood Pallet Co. He is experienced in church planting (Miami, FL) and interim pastoring (Ohio Conference). Hobbies include cooking BBQ, gardening, bringing people together & "mixing them up."

Nurture and Education Commission

Miriam Ramer
Pittsburgh, Pa.



Congregation: Pittsburgh

Miriam has been involved with the children's Sunday School program and the education commission of her church. She served as congregational chair, a member of the pastoral care team, and chair of the pastor search committee. Miriam teaches high school math in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. In the past, she offered foster care to infants whose parents were considering adoption. Miriam and husband Everett, have two daughters, Lydia and Sarah.

Faith, Life, & Procedures Commission
Cathy Spory
Boswell, Pa.



Congregation: First

Cathy is a member of the worship committee at First, a community Bible study leader, has been chair of Nurture and Education Commission, a member of Coordinating Council, and serves as Conference Resource Advocate. Currently, she works as a kindergarten teacher and volunteers as a tutor at a Johnstown after-school program. She loves traveling, reading, visiting her children, and playing with her granddaughters.

Missions and Service Commission

Herb Zook
Belleville, PA



Congregation: Maple Grove

Herb serves as Associate Pastor at Maple Grove. He also taught at Belleville Mennonite School for twenty-five years and continues working there part time as business manager. He also enjoys bike riding, serving pancake breakfasts, and growing red raspberries. Her is married to Marlene (Peachey) Zook and they have two grown daughters, Michelle Kline and Kim.

Nurture and Education Commission

Brent Siegrist
Accident, Md.



Congregation: Glade

Brent is currently the Lead Pastor at Glade Mennonite. He enjoys biking and hiking with his family and learning new languages. Before coming to Glade, he taught science to grades K-5 at Rosslyn Academy in Nairobi, Kenya.

Allegheny Conference Slate for Nominating Committee—2011

Nominating Committee
Jane Rittenhouse
Laurelville, Pa.

Congregation: Scottdale

Jane is currently an elder and worship leader at Scottdale. She also serves on the nominating committee for Conference. She enjoys spending time with her 2 college-age daughters, working at Laurelville as well as at a little specialty food store in Mt. Pleasant. Her personal interests include walking, biking, reading, cooking and sewing.



Nominating Committee
Phoebe Sharp
Pittsburgh, Pa.

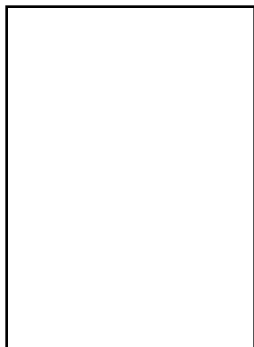
Congregation: Pittsburgh

Currently Phoebe is a member of the Pastoral Care Team and an AMC delegate. She is a small group member, a worship leader and choir participant. She has previously been a member of the Mission and Service Commission, and the Retreat Planning group. Phoebe works as the Member Services Coordinator at the Howard Levin Clubhouse in Pittsburgh, where adults who are living with mental illness find support and gain confidence as they increase their ability to function in the work world and participate in the larger community. In her spare time Phoebe enjoys conversing and corresponding with friends, listening to music, reading, and practicing photography. She likes finding new uses for discarded things and also seeks other ways to help care for our earth. As well, she is interested in improving her abilities in gardening and cooking.



TBA

At the time of this printing, two additional candidates for Nominating Committee are still to be determined. Additional information will be given to delegates as it becomes available.



Nominee Information:

Each year at their spring session, Allegheny Mennonite Conference delegates select and affirm persons to serve on the commissions and Nominating Committee of the conference.

The five commissions and their committees involve over sixty people from across the conference. These persons use their skills, talents, and vision to further God's work in the conference.

On this page and the previous two pages is information about those who have agreed to allow their names to stand on this year's slate.

The Allegheny Conference Slate, shown on pages 4 and 5 was respectfully submitted by Allegheny Conference Nominating Committee, comprised of Jane Rittenhouse, Myrah Sinko, Carol Benner-Chaffinch, Matthew Alwine, Roveen Yoder, and Dorothy Speigle.

The Allegheny Conference Slate for Nominating Committee was respectfully submitted by the Allegheny Mennonite Conference Faith, Life, and Procedures Commission, comprised of Enos Tice, Conrad Mast, and Karen Howard.

Nurture and Education: A Tradition of Change

It's the New Year! It's officially the year 2011. With a new year comes another resolution. This means that I will search my soul, reflect on the past year and resolve to change those things that were just not productive in my life. Those nasty, annoying things I do that keep me from growing into a healthy child of God...physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

We almost always make at least one New Year's resolution. We set a lofty goal for ourselves. And yet, if we are honest, we almost never keep it for a whole year, or month. Well, possibly not even for a week. So, why bother? I believe we bother to go through this ritual each year because deep inside we really do want to make improvements to our lives, especially if it helps us to grow closer to God...and even if it means making a change. And so, we continue this yearly tradition of change. Wait a minute...is this an oxymoron? *A tradition of change?* In our last article, we said that traditions—predictable, *unchanging* rituals—were good...healthy even. And now, we are saying that change is good, too? Confusing, isn't it? But not really, if you go back to the original premise: a resolution is made to change those things that are not productive...that stifle our growth in God. In that case, a 'tradition of change' might not be such a bad idea.



Food and Farming Weekend

If you love good eating, don't miss this!

Laurelville's bi-annual program (February 25-27) on Sustainable Food & Farming is a shared celebration between growers and eaters alike. Come enjoy engaging workshops and dialogue around sustainable food production and consumption.

This year, explore the connections between food, farming and faith with Brian Snyder, executive director of Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA), as you strive to cultivate wholeness—over all the land and within your heart. Find spiritual nourishment with music led by Bryan Moyer Suderman.

Register at www.laurelville.org or 800-839-1021

It seems God has sent me an illustration. You see, while working on this article, my computer crashed. No matter how much I typed, nothing would happen. How senseless to use a computer that was malfunctioning. So, for a while, I had to change my methods. I resorted to paper and pen until my computer was repaired. I thought a lot about that and wondered why we often continue to do things the same way when it's obviously not working. It's confusing, isn't it?

Let's apply this whole idea of resolutions to our ministry to children. Look back over this last year. Be honest. What proved to be productive? What brought children closer to God? Chances are that those are traditions you'll want to hold onto a little while longer. What things have you done that just don't seem to be working? Can you determine why? Is this something that can be tweaked, adjusted, or tossed out completely? The thought can be scary, but it may very much be necessary to further God's kingdom.

Our prayer for you from this commission is that you resolve to help the children and families grow closer to God...whether by continuing traditions or through a healthy change. We'd welcome your thoughts, suggestions, and questions. Email us at education@amc-mcusa.org

—*Nurture and Education Commission*

ACNews
1001 Arthur Ave.
Scottsdale, PA 15683
ph. (724) 887-0273
e-mail: sendamcnews@gmail.com

Allegheny Mennonite Conference Office
PO Box 12, Somerset, PA 15501
ph. (814) 443-2007 fax (814) 445-3418
e-mail: office@amc-mcusa.org
www.amc-mcusa.org

Conference Calendar ▼

January 7-9

Music and Worship Retreat at Laurelville

January 31

Deadline for March/April issue of *ACNews*

January 28-30

SnoKamp at Laurelville, grades 9-12

February 11-13

Allegheny Pastor's Retreat at Laurelville

February 25-27

Sustainable Food & Farming program at Laurelville

March 5

Spring Delegate meeting at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Belleville, PA

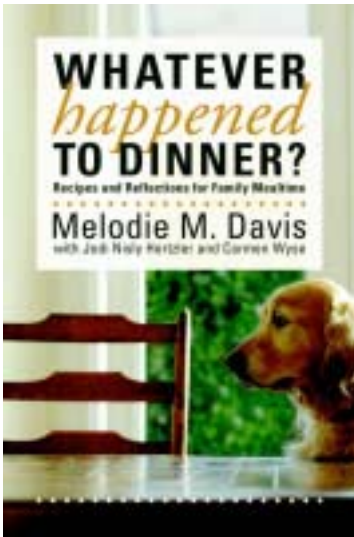
March 11-13

Junior High Retreat grades 6-8 at Laurelville

April 1

Deadline for May/June issue of *ACNews*

Book Review: Whatever Happened to Dinner?



Just released in October, 2010, this new book by author Melodie Davis invites families to the sacred rite of sharing meals together, and includes recipe ideas to make the preparation more fun.

For too many households in our society, dinner is only grabbed on the run—or it consists of a solitary carry-out meal. What is lost in that scenario? Whatever happened to families sitting down to dinner together? That's what author Melodie Davis investigates in her new book, *What Happened to Dinner? Recipes and Reflections for Family Mealtimes*.

"Research shows that only about 60 percent of youth and parents in the U.S. eat dinner together five or more times a week," says Davis, author of the new Herald Press book *Whatever Happened to Dinner? Recipes and Reflections for Family Mealtimes*.

She contrasts this to her own experience, growing up in the 1950s, when eating meals together every day was a normal part of life.

"I am of a generation when the family evening meal was a special time," she says. I still operate from the ideal that families should gather at the end of the day with some kind of meal on the table," she noted. "But that's not the situation today. Families are so busy, and have such hectic schedules, that having a meal together five or more times a week just doesn't happen very often. Between parents working longer hours, teens working after school, sports and evening meetings, even a wild stab at having an actual supper together may be a stretch."

And yet, says Davis, families should try—the benefits are many.

"Not only do people eat more nutritious, healthy and well-rounded meals, eating dinner together also creates a routine and regular way to connect between children and parents," she says, adding that "grown children frequently point to mealtime traditions as some of their best memories and bonding experiences—laughing and telling stories around the table."

But that's not all, she says. Studies show that children who eat with their families do better in school, are at lower risk for substance abuse, have fewer eating disorders, better overall health and eating habits, better relationships with their parents, and better reading and language skills.

But is it really possible for families to eat together in today's busy world? Davis thinks it is. "It's about being flexible and ratcheting down expectations," she observes. "Mealtime doesn't have to be a three or four course meal. It can be eating cereal for supper, or a peanut butter and jam sandwich. The goal is connection between parent and child."

For Davis, a syndicated columnist, author of eight other books on family issues, and producer/co-host of the weekly Third Way Media radio program, *Shaping Families*, it all boils down to strengthening families.

"I hope the book will help people re-examine the role that mealtime plays in the family, and remind us of how God gave us the good gift of food," says Davis. "I want to provide an honest appraisal of family meal customs of the past, while sending a clear invitation to re-examine our lifestyles today."

In addition to reflections on eating together, *Whatever Happened to Dinner* also covers topics such as "Eating on the Run—Taking Charge of 'Fast' Food," "Work: The Real Enemy of Families," and "So What If Dinner Isn't Picture-Perfect?" It also includes more than 90 family-friendly recipes tested by Harrisonburg food editors Jodi Nisly Hertzler and Carmen Wyse.

Whatever Happened to Dinner? Recipes and Reflections for Family Mealtimes is available for \$12.99 from Mennonite Publishing Network at www.mpn.net/dinner or by calling 1-800-245-7894.

—John Longhurst, MPN