



**Allegheny Mennonite
Conference**

A conference of Mennonite Church USA



AMC NEWS

AUG—SEPT 2011

Donna Mast Chosen As Conference Minister

The installation service of Donna Mast as the new full-time Conference Minister was the culmination of the Allegheny Mennonite Conference Summer Session held at Laurelville on August 5-7, 2011. During the conference delegate session on Saturday, August 6, Donna was affirmed by a ballot vote and installed at the close of the worship time on Sunday morning.

Donna is a graduate of Goshen College and of Eastern Mennonite Seminary. She has been a pastor in the Scottdale area from 1997, was ordained in 1999, and helped with the merger of two congregations at



Photo: Carolyn Tice

Scottdale. She has functioned as an overseer in Allegheny Conference, served as editor of ACNews for eleven years, and

has been Interim Conference Minister since August 2009. Donna and her husband, Conrad Mast, are currently co-pastoring Scottdale Mennonite Church. John Bender, Moderator of Allegheny Mennonite Conference, stated in a letter from the Coordinating Council to the delegates, "We believe that Donna will handle the job of Conference Minister with great respect and commitment. We think that her gifts and skills will help unite our conference in the years ahead."

—*Evie Christner*
August 10, 2011

Pinto youth earns \$500 at Pittsburgh 2011

Teagan Powers, a member of the Pinto Mennonite Church youth group, attended Youth Convention in Pittsburgh for the first time this year. She and her parents (as sponsors) and another Pinto member, Brianna Flowers, experienced many of the great things offered by the convention. They reported worship services with fantastic music, drama, and inspiring speakers, a perspiration-inducing

service project, educational seminars, free T-shirts (about a dozen), and other giveaways from the exhibit hall.

They also participated in earning daily prizes from the Bethel College (KS) booth by filling out cards for the Mennonite history "scavenger hunt" devised by the college promoters. On Thursday and Friday, youth put the completed cards into a tumbler from which

four cards were drawn. Teagan's card was one of those four. Each of the four winners will receive \$500 to go the charity of their youth group's choice. The Pinto MYF has not yet decided the disposition of this prize, but anticipate a visit from the Bethel College staff to present the prize to them.

—*Evie Christner*
August 15, 2011

AMC annual meeting worship service focus on hope

“Investing in Hope” was the overall theme chosen for the Allegheny Mennonite Conference summer session at Laurelville on August 5-7. The large banner with the words of Mennonite Church USA’s “*Vision: Healing and Hope*” held a prominent place on the stage as participants were led in creative, inspiring, and well-planned worship services on Friday and Saturday evenings and Sunday morning.

The conference Youth Cabinet and Joy Cotchen, Conference Youth Minister, served as the worship leaders for each service. The themes of “Peace be with you!”, “I am sending you”, and “Receive the Holy Spirit” were taken from John 20:19-23. They were explored using excellent music, thought-provoking drama, and scripture reading in several formats, including Spanish and

sign language.

Keynote speaker, Ervin R. Stutzman, MCUSA Executive Director, gave a message at each service using the text from John 20 and phrases from the vision statement.

Ervin opened each message with “Shalom” and “May the peace of Jesus Christ be with you,” inviting congregational response and the passing of the peace to others. Saturday evening’s message included a list of twelve signs of a missional church, and all were asked to examine their own church in light of those missional implications.

At each service, offerings were brought forward individually while participants sang a lively tune from Zimbabwe “Hakuna Wakaita” (“There’s No One Like Jesus”). On Saturday evening, the offering included slips of paper on

which people were to write something other than money that they were giving to God. An opportunity to be anointed for service was also provided on Saturday evening.

Communion was celebrated together on Sunday, and there was the installation service for Donna Mast as Conference Minister. The Sunday morning service also included a presentation from the children and junior high youth at the conference.

All services closed with the reading together of the vision statement: “*God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God’s healing and hope flow through us to the world.*”

—Evie Christner
August 15, 2011

New Editor, New Communication

Leadership Council is excited to introduce to you Evie Christner, News and Information Editor for Allegheny Mennonite Conference! Evie comes to us with experience in editing newsletters and interest in web-based communications, but more importantly, she comes to us with a desire to serve the conference using the gifts God has blessed her with as well as great ideas about how to use our new web site to spread the news of what’s happening in our congregations and conference. If you have checked out the web site before today, you have already seen some of Evie’s excellent work.

Evie worked as a nurse in

Kansas before moving with her husband to Cumberland, Maryland, when Merle was called as pastor to Pinto Mennonite Church. Since that time, she has not been employed, but has pursued other interests. Her time is spent visiting grandchildren, quilting, and participating in many church activities including the publication of a monthly newsletter for Pinto.

You can continue to email your church news articles, notices of up-coming events, and other items for publication to Evie at sendamcnews@gmail.com. If you need to mail her something,

her address is Evie Christner, 15420 Shamrock Road S.W., Cumberland, MD 21502. And if you need to contact her by phone, she can be reached at 240-522-0324.

So keep those articles and news of events coming. There will no longer be a deadline for news. Evie will post articles as they come and she has time to get them ready for viewing. Also, keep checking out the new website. New articles may show up at any time! You might want to bookmark the website, <http://www.alleghenymennoniteconference.org> for frequent visits!

—Donna Mast
September 22, 2011

Delegates approve new constitution, organizational document

Eighty-eight delegates and nineteen visitors from twenty-one congregations of the conference were present for the 136th annual meeting of Allegheny Mennonite Conference was held at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center on August 5-7, 2011.

In the Saturday morning delegate session, John Bender, Moderator, reflected on the many changes that have taken place in the conference in the past few years. Referring to Luke 5:37-38, he expressed the possibility that God is preparing AMC for new things, new “wineskins”, to receive an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

As a culmination of the remodeling of the conference structure, which has been in process for two years, the Coordinating Council brought a motion to replace the entire document of the “Constitution of the Allegheny Mennonite Conference” with two documents, “Bylaws of the Allegheny Mennonite Conference”, and the “Allegheny Mennonite Conference Organization” to become effective August 7, 2011. This motion passed with a 2/3 majority vote and will be effective for a two year trial period. Several adjustments to elected conference positions due to the new organizational structure were also affirmed by the delegate body.

In the other major business item, the Coordinating Council affirmed a recommendation by the search committee to call Donna Mast as full-time Conference Minister. After a time of sharing of concerns and affirmations and a prayer, a ballot vote was taken. Donna, who has been serving as Interim Conference Minister since 2009, was affirmed by an 89% vote for this position.

Reports were presented by several conference commissions including Faith, Life, and Procedures; Leadership; Finance and Stewardship; and Mission and Service. Linford King, Denominational Minister for MCUSA, led in a time of reporting of several national church organizations. Represented were John Powell for Mennonite Mission Network, Steve

Bustos for Everence, Melodie Davis for MennoMedia, and Jim Rosenberger for Mennonite Education Agency. Each representative, as well as Linford, was asked to respond to two questions, “What does your agency do to resource Allegheny Mennonite Conference and its congregations?” and “What is one new thing happening in your agency that excites you?”

The session was concluded with “Cherishing What Has Been and Awaiting the New,” led by John Bender and Donna Mast, which recognized those serving Allegheny Conference in the past and present and the closure of Mennonite Publishing House. A candle-lighting and sharing of memories was followed by the reading of a litany for the past and future written by John and Donna.

Two Seminar sessions were offered on Saturday afternoon. Ervin Stutzman led in a dialogue for youth only followed by a seminar in which he discussed “A Turnaround Strategy for MCUSA”. Ser Darji and Sandeep Thomas of Pittsburgh shared some of the story and vision of the Bhutanese-Nepali church and their desire to relate to AMC. Other seminars were “Generations: take action to end AIDS” with Luke Schrock-Hurst, “What is the AMC Missional Plan?” with John Powell and Lawrence Brenneman, and “Afghanistan: Good vs. Evil vs. Sacrificial Service” with Theo Sittler and Luke Schrock-Hurst.

Many other opportunities for fellowship were available during the weekend. A hymn sing, snacks and ice cream, fellowship in the rocking chairs on the dining hall porch, walks in the rain, and relaxing in the woodland retreat that is Laurelville were enjoyed by those who were able to attend. Allegheny Mennonite Conference will next meet for the Fall Delegate Session at Meadow Mountain Mennonite Church on November 5, 2011.

—*Evie Christner*
August 15, 2011

Note: With the closing of the Mennonite Publishing House in Scottdale, PA, Allegheny Mennonite Conference has made the decision to discontinue the publication and distribution of AC News, their bi-monthly newsletter. All News Releases are now being put online at www.alleghenymennoniteconference.org. Since many in our congregations do not have access to the internet we have decided to compile these articles periodically in a format that can be printed for the convenience of our members. If you have questions or concerns contact Evie Christner, News and Information Editor, or the conference office.

Ser Darji Licensing Service

A joyful group of believers celebrated the licensing of Ser Darji, pastor of the Bhutanese-Nepali Christian Church of Pittsburgh on September 4, 2011.

The celebratory service, held at Crafton Presbyterian Church, was led in Nepali and English by two young women—Anita Gajmer, who translated from English to Nepali, and Leela Gajmer, who translated from Nepali to English.

Though English translation of the words was available, the singing was entirely in Nepali with the lively accompaniment of guitar, tabala, jhyali, and tambourine. The many children and young people of the congregation participated eagerly and joyfully. Especially meaningful was the congregational prayer time when many voices were lifted together in prayer, worshipful singing, and then prayer again. The language of the Spirit was understood by all despite our differences.

Donna Mast, Allegheny Conference Minister, used passages from Ephesians 3:20-4:13 in her message as Ser translated into Nepali. She spoke of God's riches in blessing us, adopting us, and granting us citizenship in His kingdom. She further emphasized the truth that we are all one body in Christ and are each given a gift. She asked the church to consider Ser's special gift as a pastor and their responsibility to do the work to which God has called them so that Ser is able to do his work. "Working together, we are the church, the body of Christ," she concluded.

During the next portion of the service, Donna represented Allegheny Mennonite Conference in receiving Ser as a member of Mennonite Church USA. The Bhutanese-Nepali Church is considered a church plant with intentions to move toward becoming a Mennonite Church within Allegheny Mennonite Conference in due time. Provisions have been made in these situations for someone in Ser's position to be granted membership through the conference. Donna presented the membership certificate while others present from the conference affirmed and welcomed Ser as a member.

Ser Darji, far left, translates the sermon for Donna Mast, far right. The two worship leaders are in the background.

Donna continued the service by stating, "In licensing Ser toward ordination, Allegheny Mennonite Conference (AMC) recognizes his work, respects him for it, and supports him in it." Ser confidently affirmed his faith and sense of call and was charged to "Preach the Word, offer the ordinances, and spread the Gospel in word and deed." Following a prayer of dedication, John Bender, moderator of AMC, presented Ser with the licensing certificate and Donna gave him a copy of the Mennonite Minister's Manual. Flowers and other gifts of affection were presented to him from his congregation.

Sandeep Thomas spoke a few words of affirmation, urging Ser to "be strong and courageous" and to remember that his work will be surrounded by prayer.

Ser expressed appreciation to those who had encouraged and supported him as this group has grown from three families to more than seventy people who worship together.

John Bender concluded the service with a prayer that this church will be a "light in the city of Pittsburgh."

A time of fellowship followed the service as visitors were invited to a home for a delicious Nepali meal.

— Evie Christner
September 14, 2011

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