



AMC NEWS

DECEMBER 2011-JANUARY 2012



MERLE CHRISTNER ORDAINED AT PINTO

Sunday, November 27, during a celebratory morning worship service, the Pinto Mennonite Church congregation and Allegheeny Mennonite Conference affirmed the calling of Merle Christner to the ministry by participating in his ordination.

David Greiser, pastor of North Baltimore Mennonite Church, preached a sermon entitled “Jars of Clay” using 2 Corinthians 4:5-17 as his text. As a former director of the Hesston College Pastoral Ministry Program, of which Merle is a graduate, David was able to both personalize his message for Merle and provide encouragement and challenge to the congregation. He emphasized that all ministers and, indeed, all Christians, have the resurrection power of God residing within them to provide them with the ability to do that to which God has called them.

Donna Mast, Allegheeny Conference Minister, led the portion of the service dedicated to the ordination ceremony. She explained the purpose of ordination as practiced by Mennonite Church USA and then conducted the examination question and answer portion with Pastor Merle and the congregation confirming his call to serve as pastor, priest, and teacher. She concluded with this charge. “In all that you do, you are to nourish Christ’s people from the riches of his grace, and strengthen them to glorify God in this life and in the life to come”.

Pinto leadership persons and credentialed pastors were invited forward for the laying on of hands and prayer of consecration. Members of the congregation were also invited to participate symbolically by extending their hands. In addition to the consecration of prayer, Donna anointed Merle with oil as a sign of his call to ministry. She used an orange-scented oil explaining that whenever Merle smelled that particular aroma, it would remind him of this anointing.

During the service, special music was provided by Dennis, Carla, and Ryan Brown who sang, “Closer to

You”. Merle received an unexpected gift from his three fellow classmates in the Pastoral Ministries program in the form of a video clip affirming his gifts and providing some humorous memories.

A fellowship meal was served following the service allowing the congregation to meet several guests present for the day. Merle’s parents, his brother and wife, and all of Merle and Evie’s children and grandchildren were able to be present for this high point in Merle’s life and ministry. In addition to Donna Mast, Sam Yoder was also present to represent the conference as a former Regional Minister for Pinto. This was, indeed, an important day in the life of this congregation and conference.



Donna Mast, Allegheeny Conference Minister, anoints Merle Christner during his ordination service.

SPRING MEETING RESCHEDULED

The Leadership Council (formerly called Coordinating Council) is rescheduling The Spring Faith and Life Gathering (formerly called Spring Delegate Meeting) which was scheduled for March 3rd. It will be rescheduled for March 31st at Crossroads Community Church, Johnstown, Pa.

The reason for this change is that the Leadership Council is having a work retreat weekend the last weekend in February and there will not be ample time following that weekend to get information out ahead of time to our conference delegates. A delegate mailing will go out the first of March with information pertaining to the meeting on the 31st.

CONFERENCE MINISTER AND FAMILY VOLUNTEER AT INTERNATIONAL GUEST HOUSE

“International Guest House is Allegheny’s best kept secret.”

These were the words Andy Stoner, Host of IGH, said to me when he phoned me about his volunteer work with IGH. He and his wife, Anita, Hostess, have been volunteer staff at IGH since July of 2011. They are having a wonderful experience and Andy doesn’t understand why people aren’t standing in line to volunteer as long-term staff persons.

I had never visited IGH, so when our daughter suggested that our family do some volunteering over the Christmas season, Andy’s words came quickly to my mind. I needed to see the place. When I suggested IGH to the rest of the family, they quickly agreed.

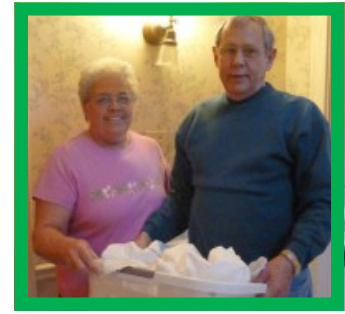
We drove to D.C. on Monday, December 26, and easily found the beautiful three-story home on a quiet, residential street, four and a half miles from the White House. After being greeted graciously and shown to our rooms, we were given a quick tour and orientation. Our task was to prepare breakfast for the other guests, help with morning cleaning chores, and prepare the rooms for the next guests after the previous guests departed. When our work was done for the day, we were free to be tourists.

City bus lines are within easy walking distance of IGH. We rode the buses, toured museums, and enjoyed evening meals in Thai and Ghanaian restaurants.



Conrad Mast assists with kitchen cleanup

We enjoyed our time at IGH very much. Breakfast is served family style and begins with a time of meditation and prayer, usually offered by one of the staff. We were blessed to be serving a family whose origins were Haitian, but whose family experience extended from Haiti to France, Ethiopia, Canada and the U.S.A. We had opportunity to learn to know them, not only during breakfast, but also during evening tea time, served in the front room at 9:00 p.m.



Andy and Anita Stoner, IGH Host Couple

Presently, there are five volunteer staff serving at IGH. Andy and Anita Stoner came to IGH from Ohio. Serving along with Andy and Anita are Dirk Miller from Iowa and Wayne and Sheryl Lehman from Pennsylvania. The Lehmans’ year-long commitment is nearly over and the search is underway for their replacements.

All five volunteers extend the gift of hospitality in beautiful ways to everyone who comes through the doors. All five also spoke with great passion about the ministry of IGH. It is clear that they enjoy and believe in what they are doing as they cook, clean, welcome guests, run errands and work to maintain the homey atmosphere of this bed and breakfast ministry, owned by Allegheny Mennonite Conference.

Our stay ended on Thursday. We enjoyed our three days of volunteering, seeing the operation of IGH up close, as well as the taking the opportunity to see a little of what D.C. has to offer. International Guest House is as wonderful as Andy told me it was, but, I hope not the secret that he believes it to be.

If you would like to learn more about IGH you could visit their website at http://mysite.verizon.net/igh_dc/ or better yet, visit IGH in person!

Donna Mast



Breakfast shared with guests offers opportunity for multicultural interaction

OPPORTUNITY FOR MEDIATION SKILLS TRAINING

The *Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders* will take place March 19-23, 2012 at Grace Episcopal Church in Wilmington, DE.

Our *Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders* is designed to equip judicatory leaders, pastors, and other leaders with the skills necessary to deal effectively with interpersonal, congregational, and other forms of group conflict. This institute also includes a component on congregational mediation and consultation, placed within the context of family systems theory.

All details regarding fees, times, etc. can be found on-line at www.LMPeaceCenter.org or may be obtained by mail from the following address: Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, 101 W. 22nd Street, Suite 206, Lombard, IL 60148. (Phone: 630-627-0507). Attendees receive a certificate – noting 32 contact hours – which can be submitted for continuing education credit.

*Janet Hunt, LMPC
Assistant Director*

SPRING FAITH AND LIFE GATHERING

**Saturday, March 31
Crossroads
Community Church
Johnstown, PA**

JR. HIGH “WOODWORKERS” SERVE OTHERS

On Monday, Nov. 28, eight members of Scottdale Mennonite Church loaded and delivered a truck load of wood to assist one of our congregational members in heating his home. Levi Miller had cleared some trees and these were available for the Jr. High class to collect and deliver to another church family.



Since it was the first day of hunting season, area schools were off. Pastor Conrad Mast suggested that they might want to spend a little of their free time doing this service project.

In addition to Levi and Conrad, the work crew, also consisted of parents Doug and Kim Coffman along with their boys Aaron and Braden, and other Jr. High students Lucas Kaufman, and Braden Fox.

Conrad Mast

EMMA STAHL-WERT SERVING IN VS

Emma Stahl-Wert of Pittsburgh, Pa., began a one-year term of Mennonite Voluntary Service August 2011 in Tucson, Ariz., as garden coordinator with Primavera Foundation.

A 2011 graduate of Eastern Mennonite University (Harrisonburg, Va.), Stahl-Wert is the daughter of Milonica and John Stahl-Wert and is a member of Pittsburgh Mennonite Church, a part of Allegheny Mennonite Conference.

Rooted in the Spirit of Jesus, MVS invites adults, age 20 and older, to join together in Christian ministry for one- or two-year terms in various locations in the United States. MVS gives young adults the opportunity to live out their faith and discern God's call

for them by assisting congregations in service ministry to their communities.

More information about MVS is available online: <http://www.mennonitemission.net/Serve/MVS>.

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## CARTOONING FOR PEACE

Merrill Miller, formerly of Scottdale and now living in Virginia, has a series of cartoon strips on the Mennonite Church USA website page for Peace and Justice. You can follow this link <http://peace.mennolink.org/cgi-bin/m.pl?r=18> to view his work on behalf of peace.

Merrill and his wife, Cindy, moved to Harrisonburg this past summer, to continue working with MennoMedia.

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](http://www.alleghenymennoniteconference.org). Since many in our congregations do not have access to the internet we have decided to compile these articles periodically and print them for the convenience of our members. If you have questions or concerns contact your pastor or the office of Allegheny Mennonite Conference.



## “BEST EVER” CAMPOREE REPORTED BY PARTICIPANTS



Camporee was awesome! We had great food, especially the french toast. We could stay up till 11pm. I had fun learning about diversity and the Trinity. We had fun walking everywhere in the rain. The best part was fire building in the rain. Overall, we had the best Camporee ever!

*Daniel Hostetter*



This year the focus of our sessions was hand-and-hand. In one session it was hand-and-hand with God and another session was hand-and-hand with each other. We learned that God loves us through our diversity. Although it was a very rainy weekend, we did lots of fun activities! Some groups went on a hike. We did a few crafts. We also played a life size where's Waldo game.



Another activity we did that we do every year was fire building. We had lots of fun during that and thankfully the rain held up for a little bit so we could do it. The meals were great and we drank a lot of hot chocolate. Camporee was so much fun this year!

*Jamie M. Waters*

**Camporee** is a fall retreat sponsored by Allegheny Mennonite Conference for children ages eight to twelve held at Pine Springs Camp near Jennerstown, PA. It is time for learning more about Jesus and includes lots of outdoor activities and crafts. The highlight of the weekend is the firebuilding contest in which teams compete to boil their can of soapy water over a fire they have built.

*Joy Cotchen, Conference Youth Minister*

## POET LAUNCHES NEW CD

Cheryl Denise of Philippi Mennonite Church has just released a CD of her poetry entitled *Leaving Eden*. This CD contains poems from her two books, *I Saw God Dancing* (2005) and *What's in the Blood* (to be released Feb. 2012) by Cascadia Publishing House, Telford, PA.

The CD contains original guitar and mandolin music from former Service Adventure participant and musician, Ben Regier. Part of the song *Wonderful Grace of Jesus* is sung a capella by Cheryl's home congregation in Elmira, Ontario, Canada, to conclude her poem *Toil and Grace*.

These plainspoken, sometimes humorous, poems journey from church to barnyard, they explore Mennonite martyrs, WV mine disasters, the tragedy at Nickel Mines, legs and lovers, and Eve's version of the fall.

You can purchase the CD at [www.cdbaby.com/cd/CherylDenise](http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/CherylDenise) or order directly from Cheryl at [cheryldenise@yahoo.com](mailto:cheryldenise@yahoo.com). The CD sells for \$13 plus shipping.



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