



Allegheny Mennonite Conference

A conference of Mennonite Church USA



AMC NEWS

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2014

Spring Gathering Focus is Love, Reconciliation Discernment

Conrad Mast, Pastor of Scottdale Mennonite Church welcomed 102 delegates and 14 visitors from 24 congregations of Allegheny Mennonite Conference to the Spring Gathering on Saturday morning, March 1, 2014.

The day began with worship led by Angie Savanick of Scottdale who was assisted by various readers and musicians. The overall emphasis of the day was “Love” and worship times were interspersed with business sessions several times during the day because “Worship needs to infuse all that we do”, according to Moderator J. Lorne Peachey.

Most of the morning session was filled with the “business” of the conference concerning budget, elections and affirmation of appointments, and roll call. Within that business focus, delegates were informed of the state of the current budget and approved the 2014-2015 budget as well as affirming the appointment of Tim Mock as treasurer to fill the unexpired term of Ken Litwiller.

Marv Friesen was affirmed as the next Moderator-elect, T.J. Teneffoss was elected as the Eastern regional representative to the Leadership Council, and Julie Swartzendruber from the Western region was elected to the Nominating Committee. The delegate body also affirmed the recommendation of the Leadership Council to renew the contract of Joy Cotchen, Conference Minister of Children and Youth for another three years at half-time.



Delegates were given several opportunities for discussion and fellowship.



Input from those present was requested in two areas. One was in the determination of the number of “active participants” in each congregation to assist the Leadership Council as they grapple with models for funding the conference activities.

The other item for small group discussion focused on the on-going structure review and asked for comments on what is good, what has not worked well, and any changes that should be made. *(Continued on page 2)*



Worship was an integral part of each session during the day.



Spring Gathering (Continued from page 1)

In addition to these discussions, information was given regarding a new proposal for sister congregation relationships, up-coming Tri-State Sale events, and planning for our 2014 Celebration at Laurelville and the 2015 World Conference.

Some of the other agenda for the day was set aside so that the majority of the time remaining could be used to concentrate on the Reconciliation Discernment Committee and issues involved with their work with the conference and Hyattsville Mennonite Church.

Prior to the lunch break, the background and history of the issue was reviewed and it was noted that our conference is not alone in these discussions. Donna Mast, Conference Minister, has been chosen to be part of a task force for "framing and facilitating the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) discussion regarding Mountain States Conference's Leadership Council decision to license Theda Good, so that the CLC can give counsel and a recommendation to the Executive Board" of Mennonite Church USA.

All were encouraged to think and talk about the following question during the lunch break before returning to discuss it in small groups. The question was:

"Do you continue to support having a Reconciliation Discernment Committee to work on the relationship of AMC and HMC.

If yes, do you feel we need a time limit on considering reconciliation? If so, what would it be?

If no, how do you propose we proceed as a conference?

Following lunch and prior to breaking up into groups of 6-8 persons, three members of the Reconciliation Discernment Committee shared from their experience and varied perspectives.

Feedback from the groups indicated overwhelming "yes" answers to continue the work of the committee but with widely varying answers to the question of a time limit. It seemed that a time limit is seen as needed but it is not certain as to who sets it or how long it might be. Affirmation for today's communication from the committee and a need for continued communication from them was expressed.

"Reconciliation" seems to be perceived differently by different people. A definition given by J. Lorne was "Both parties feel our values have been recognized and heard".

There was time given for an open mic response from delegates and others in the group. Appreciation was given for the respectful way in which this discussion is being handled, but some feel much greater urgency for a clear response from leadership.

J. Lorne Peachey, Moderator, closed this period of time by asking for prayers, continuation of dialogue, and trust. The day concluded with a final worship session.



A delicious lunch was served by youth from Scottdale.

Listening with Compassion at the International Guest House

From our arrival at the International Guest House in DC, and throughout our volunteer assignment there, we participated in 1441 Kennedy Street's unique ministry of hospitality.

The bed and breakfast includes, among other things: affordable rates, personal welcoming, sightseeing guidance, rest in a quiet neighborhood, evening tea with international visitors, extraordinary muffins and coffee every morning.

The guest book at IGH is filled with visitors' comments of praise and appreciation. We have observed visitors enjoying their identities recognized, their stories heard and their life interests shared. However, few mention the active listening that the volunteers at IGH engage in.

Recently, a travel weary tourist from South Africa arrived at IGH just minutes after the news announced the death of Nelson Mandela. Upon hearing about the demise of his "freedom fighter and hero", the guest wept, and we were able to console him.

An upcoming IGH reservation has a note penciled in at the request of the caller. It says simply, "Coming to bury my father at Arlington and will be alone. Request someone to pray with me."

As short-term volunteers, we have found work at IGH to be intensive, yet so rewarding. The long term host couple here has far greater responsibilities and we look in awe at their commitment. We see a Christian witness in this Allegheny Mennonite Conference ministry of hospitality.

Larry and Maxine Miller
(Macon, Mississippi,
SOOP volunteers at IGH.)

PULSE Offers Summer Experience Weekends for Youth

Youth leaders of Allegheny Conference: Are you interested in an urban service and learning experience for your group? Consider what PULSE (Pittsburgh Urban Leadership Service Experience) has to offer.

PULSE cultivates a community of young servant leaders to transform Pittsburgh. The PULSE Summer Experience is an urban service and leadership trip designed to develop young people (high school age and older). They are weekend trips (2-3 nights) in Pittsburgh during the month of August. We partner with local churches and other organizations to create an experience where individuals come face to face with the people, realities and promise of the city.

Cost \$100/weekend, \$150 long weekend. Available during the month of August. Will include all lodging, meals, all scheduling and the services of PULSE staff.

Interested? Contact Chris Cooke at 412-361-0124 or pulsepittsburgh@gmail.com. More information about the PULSE experience, the current participants, and events in which they are involved can be found at <http://pulsepittsburgh.org>



Johnstown Christian School and World's Attic Serve Together

Each morning before the Johnstown Christian School elementary students head for their classrooms they sign and say together, "Today I want to think like Jesus, love like Jesus and act like Jesus."

World's Attic is assisting in the fulfillment of that mantra as one afternoon each month the students are divided into six groups to follow Jesus' example of servant hood. One group makes a snack to be shared the following month with residents at a retirement facility where a second group plays games, makes a craft and shares that snack with the residents. Another group visits a second retirement facility and presents a short worship concert. While a fourth group plays and interacts with the PK4 students a fifth group makes cards for prisoners and for hospital patients. A final group meets with scissors in hand and several bags of World's Attic cotton T-shirts.

The students are prepared to cut those shirts into rags; understanding that the money received for those rags will then be used to provide clothing and other necessities distributed by Mennonite Central Committee.



Approaching the idea of elementary students cutting rags with large scissors; unlike the safety scissors more regularly used by five to ten year old children, the teachers decided that the less than sharp scissors, howbeit it large ones, would be sufficiently safe. Service day one began. Students worked in pairs with one student holding the shirt and the other student "sawing" the material. They were wonderfully pleasant, cooperative, and diligent, and the large bag of shirts was more quickly depleted than anticipated.

However, as the afternoon of service came to an end, one fourth grade girl respectfully offered a suggestion, "Mrs. Spory, my grandpa sharpens scissors at his business. Would you like me to take these scissors to him so the group next month can cut the material instead of "sawing" it?" The next month students carefully slid the newly sharpened scissors through dozens of shirts.

Another student brought a bag full of T-shirts the following week. "My mom and I went through my drawer and I would like to cut these into rags so the money can be sent to kids who need food, and clothes, and stuff."

Thanks to Sheri Speigle who has shared our excitement, delivered bags of t-shirts, encouraged our efforts, and distributed the rags. We look forward to continuing this cooperative service endeavor as we teach children that whatever we do for one of the least of these, we do for Christ.

Cathy Spory, teacher

Conference Members Plan Lenten Worship Resources

Six members of AMC were a significant part of planning the worship resources for Lent-Easter 2013 as published in *Leader*, a quarterly magazine for pastors and lay leaders in Anabaptist congregations. These resources are based on the common lectionary texts for this year and are used by many churches as they look toward and prepare for the Easter season.

Those chosen to serve on this planning group were suggested by pastors and others in the conference and then requested to participate by Rachel Miller Jacobs who serves as facilitator and editor for worship materials. They first met at Pittsburgh Mennonite Church for two days in April 2013 to become acquainted, worship together, select the theme, and receive their assignments.

Derek Yoder commented, "I was energized by the way that our group, who began mostly as strangers, was able to quickly focus together on the planning process. And I was impressed (and thankful!) for the diversity of gifts."

Derek was assigned to the music selections (with suggestions from someone from Maple Grove for Praise and Worship songs), Alan the sermon starters, Tim and Kayla worked on the dramas, LeAnne (and others from Hyattsville) created the visuals, Kayla worked on the Focus Statements, and LeAnne and Norma worked on other prayers, calls to worship and additional resources some of which are online.

After working at their individual tasks, the group again met in Pittsburgh in July to check everyone's progress. As the overall coordinator, Roveen Yoder facilitated this meeting then it was her responsibility to write the introduction, compile all materials, proofread, and submit them to Rachel by the beginning of August. She says, "I have a new appreciation for the work that goes into the resources but think what I appreciated the most were the discussions we had around our times of worship when we focused on the Lenten scriptures."

These resources may be found at www.leaderonline.org. Anyone who has purchased a copy of *Leader* will find the passcode within which is required for downloading the WORD documents from the website. The supplemental materials are available to everyone on the website.



Lenten worship planners from Allegheny conference and eastern Ohio. left to right-front row: Kayla Berkey (Pittsburgh Mennonite), Roveen Yoder (Pinto Mennonite), Derek Yoder (Scottsdale Mennonite), Alan Kauffman (Maple Grove Mennonite); second row: Norma Duerksen (Ohio), Tim Zuercher (Ohio), LeAnne Zook (Hyattsville Mennonite), and Rachel Miller Jacobs. (photo credit-Rachel Miller Jacobs)



AMBS Hosts Preview Days

Elkhart, Ind. (AMBS) – Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary will host Seminary Preview Days this spring for people wishing to explore study on March 14 and April 25.

Each provides opportunities to meet faculty and students and to sit in on classes and community gatherings or a chapel service. Admissions staff are available to answer questions about study programs, financial aid and the admission process.

People interested in attending should register at www.ambs.edu/admissions/visit-ambs.cfm. AMBS also welcomes visitors at any time if these dates are not convenient. Contact the admissions department to schedule a visit: admissions@ambs.edu or 800.964.2627.

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All Allegheny Mennonite Conference news releases are now being posted online at www.alleghenymennoniteconference.org. Since many in our congregations do not have access to the internet, these articles will periodically be compiled in a printable format. If you have questions or concerns please contact the conference office or news editor.