



**Allegheny Mennonite
Conference**

A conference of Mennonite Church USA



AMC NEWS

SEPTEMBER -DECEMBER 2015

“SALT AND LIGHT” - FALL FAITH AND LIFE GATHERING



Cathy Spory, Moderator,
addresses the conference.

On Saturday, November 7, eighty-five delegates and guests from Allegheny Conference gathered at Stahl Mennonite Church in Johnstown for the annual Fall Faith and Life Gathering. After a time of light refreshments, the time of meeting began with a time of worship focusing on the theme of “Salt and Light,” based on Matthew 5:13-16. Pastor Bob Brown from Stahl

Mennonite World Conference, both held in July. Phoebe Sharp, AMC Constituency Leadership Council representative, reported that three conferences are considering withdrawing from MC USA in processes that would occur over the next two years.

Joy Cotchen, Conference Youth Minister, expressed gratitude that AMC still chooses to invest in its youth in a time when conference youth minister positions are disappearing. Summer camp was at 191 this year, with 100 of the campers being from AMC churches. Naomi Tice reported that thanks to the generous giving of conference members, six AMC young adults were able to attend the Global Youth Summit; funds received covered approximately half the cost of registration.

Pastor Bob Brown announced that he and several others with AMC connections are working together to complete a printed book with different viewpoints, including Scripture references, regarding MC USA’s recent resolutions on the church and LGBTQ involvement. The book, which will feature 13 chapters all written by different authors, is hoped to be available by January or February 2016.

Goodbyes and thank-yous were said at the meeting, as sending blessings were given to
(Continued on next page)

remarked in his meditation that “We are the light that helps us see Jesus; we are the salt on the French fries; we are helping the flavor of Jesus to come through; we are the body of Jesus, but we are not the Christ.”

The theme of “Salt and Light” was continued in the afternoon session when presentations were given by Ser Darji, pastor of the Bhutanese-Nepali Church of Pittsburgh, Leah and Krista Rittenhouse, Johnstown Service Adventure leaders, and several members of a recent MAMA Project mission trip. Each presentation gave a brief glimpse of how members of our conference are being salt and light for the world.

Worship transitioned to the business meeting with a lighting of candles representing each of the 11 congregations who have left AMC since March: Red Run, Blough, Canan Station, Carpenter Park, Glade, Gortner, Oak Grove, Pinto, Tressler, Barrville and Cornerstone. Conference moderator Cathy Spory noted that “We are a broken and fragmented people,” and there is a gap in our conference that we are living with now that we aren’t going to try to fill in right away. Candles representing each of the remaining congregations in AMC were lit later in the service.

Several people from various congregations gave a presentation of readings representing different points of views of characters in Biblical stories, as well as different perspectives of persons and congregations in regards to the talking points of the day. Donna Mast, AMC Conference Minister, gave a report on the MC USA convention and

(continued from Page 1)

Conrad and Donna Mast, who are completing their terms of service. Both have been involved with conference for 18 ½ years; Conrad is the pastor of Scottsdale Mennonite Church, and Donna served as co-pastor of Scottsdale for 12 ½ years before accepting the conference minister position 6 years ago.



A ceramic bowl was presented to Donna as a remembrance from AMC upon the completion of her term

An interim conference minister search committee has been appointed, and members include: Cathy Spory, Phoebe Sharp, Lorne Peachy, Eric Haglund, and Marv Friesen. The position is being posted as half-time, for a term of 12 – 18 months. Leadership Council is recommending that no major decisions be made within the conference while the interim conference minister is in place. There may be a gap of time between the end of Donna's term and when an interim conference minister is found, but Kathy Holsopple will continue to serve in the conference office.

In her farewell remarks, Donna commented, "I pray God's richest blessing on all of you— God does have a future for us." Nancy Kauffman, denominational minister for MC USA, brought blessings and assurance of continued prayer for AMC, saying that she is "trusting God will be faithful and allow the Holy Spirit to move amongst us."

-Naomi Tice

KAUFMAN MENNONITE CELEBRATES ORDINATION OF TWO PASTORS

The morning of August 9, 2015 was a time of worship and celebration at Kaufman Mennonite Church. Pastors Keith Yoder and Wes Yoder, both of the Pastoral Leadership Team at KMC fulfilled their call to ordination.

In his meditation, Pastor Dan Hunsberger, using the passage from 1 Peter 2:1-12, emphasized that as a body of believers we are all called and sent to be living stones, with Jesus as our corner stone. Like stones, we are an imperfect people, we carry scars, we are diverse, but we are each called by God: to confession, to discipleship, to obedience, to community and to the mission of Jesus Christ.

Pastor Dan also spoke of Pastor Keith's and Wes' personal journeys that have prepared each of them for this day. He spoke of Pastor Keith's work as an accountant and as a faithful Pastor for these past years. He shared about Pastor Wes' work in the business world, as an interim pastor and as chaplain of Laurel View Village. Their life experiences as living stones have brought them each to this sacred space today as humble servants. As a community we have chosen to recognize and thank them for sharing their gifts with us.

Donna Mast, Allegheny Mennonite Conference Minister, led the ordination segment of the service. In her opening comments Donna said ordination marks both pastors as set apart in the service of Pastoral Ministry, not because they are God's favorites, but because each was chosen and each have said "yes" to playing a particular role in God's mission. While not having ordained two pastors during one service before Donna thought it was significant for each to declare their promises as ordained people individually. They were each anointed with oil as a sign of God's presence and protection. Donna also asked for our commitment in our role as the church, to which we answered, "by the grace of God, we will."

Today's service has been an acknowledgement and an affirmation as to what God has been doing in the lives of Pastors Keith, Wes and the people of KMC. May we, a gathering of priesthood of believers, lift each other up and encourage one another as we move forward.

-Submitted by Kaufman Mennonite Church



RANDALL SCHLABACH ORDAINED AT THOMAS MENNONITE CHURCH

In the spring of 2015 the Leadership Committee and the members of Thomas Mennonite Church made a decision to request that Allegheny Mennonite Conference consider the ordination of Pastor Randall Schlabach.

Randall graduated from Hesston College in pastoral ministries in 2008. He currently lives in Davidsville, Pa., with his wife Kirsten and children Anya, Emma, and Jeremiah.

For several years the Thomas Mennonite Church was seeking leadership with various ministers filling the pulpit. During that time, Randall preached two Sundays a month. Randall has shared his story regarding the journey to accept God's call to ministry, sometimes questioning why he felt the desire to stay in the Johnstown area after his leading of Service Adventure was completed. In February of 2013, Randall accepted the call from the congregation to become our full time pastor. His commitment to the Anabaptist faith, his sincerity, his vision in missions and growth are only a few of the assets of his leadership. He was licensed to the ministry in February 2011.

The service of ordination was celebrated on September 27, 2015. Donna Mast, conference minister, led in this ceremony. Pastor Randall was ordained with his wife Kirsten standing with him in this decision.

The congregation also made commitments to support Randall and family in their leadership and service. Ronald Spory, Randall's mentor, brought the message using scripture from Proverbs 12:15 and 19:20.

Family and friends also attended this service. In continuation of celebration, a fellowship meal followed.

-Submitted by Thomas Mennonite Church



Donna Mast, Allegheny Conference Minister,
Officiates at the Ordination Service



Family and Friends
surround Pastor
Randall in support of
his ordination.

Dove's Nest offers new Speakers Bureau

Dedicated to "empowering and equipping faith communities to keep children safe," [Dove's Nest](#) offers training and resources on a variety of topics related to child and youth protection. In January 2015, Dove's Nest created a [national Speaker's Bureau](#) of highly qualified members who are available to train across North America, including some in this area.

Presentations can be uniquely tailored to your faith community to meet your training and assistance needs as you work to keep kids safe. Here are some examples of training events we offer:

- PA law requirements
- raising awareness about the importance of a safety policy
- developing a child and youth protection policy
- guidelines for safely incorporating abuse offenders into faith communities
- implementation information for the [Circle of Grace](#) child protection curriculum.

Speaking events may range from a 1–8 hour community training, a 20-minute sermon, or a 10-minute outreach spotlight during worship. Dove's Nest also offers presentations for Sunday school classes, children's sermons, and other church presentations such as training to camp counselors, camp staff, and others who work with children and youth.

Visit the Dove's Nest [website](#) to learn about current events or to request a training event for your faith community. Also visit the bio page for the Speaker's Bureau members in your area to see a list of their qualifications and training.

ALLEGHENY PASTORS EXPERIENCE THE GIFT OF BEING TOGETHER



Each year, Allegheny Conference invites credentialed persons and spouses to spend a weekend at Laurelville to connect with each other and renew and refresh their spirits. This year, 16 persons were able to take part in some or all of this retreat on a beautiful weekend, October 9-11. Karen Swanson, a first time attendee of the retreat, appreciated the time spent in a beautiful place with good conversation with colleagues.

Laughter, tears, and sharing of both the significant and the superficial parts of their lives were facilitated by Donna Mast, Conference Minister, as she led in ice-breaker activities as well as worship. The theme centered on Jeremiah 17:7-8 with worship highlighting portions of the Beatitudes from *Take Our Moments and Our Days, An Anabaptist Prayer Book*. Singing, led by Conrad Mast, an exercise in becoming a character in a Biblical story, and a service of Communion enhanced the worship experience. Donna commented that she is grateful for the dedication of the pastors and spouses and for this opportunity to resource each other. "It is a gift to be together," she said.

As in previous years, one of the most meaningful parts of the weekend occurred when pastors and spouses shared the story of their faith journey and call to ministry. "To hear stories of call is life-giving to me. They energize me," said Alan Kauffman, pastor of Maple Grove Mennonite Church. This year, stories were shared by Eric Haglund (Springs Mennonite Church), Matt and Elizabeth Pritchard (Shalom), and Dave and Karen Swanson (Pittsburgh Mennonite Church).

Ample opportunity for small group conversations, individual reflection, and enjoyment of the surrounding beauty in nature was also available. "I am encouraged and feel hopeful that we can minister well together," commented Dave Swanson.



Connecting with each other at Pastor's Retreat are (l. to r.), Lisa Sayres, Dave Swanson, Karen Swanson, Elizabeth Pritchard, and Matt Pritchard.

Allegheny Mennonite Conference Contact Information: PO Box 12 Somerset, PA 15501 Phone: 814-443-2007
Fax: 814-445-3418 Office Email: office@alleghenymennoniteconference.org
Conference Minister—Donna Mast--Email: donnam@alleghenymennoniteconference.org
Youth Minister—Joy Cotchen—Email: joyc@alleghenymennoniteconference.org
News and Information Editor--Evie Christner--Email: eviec@alleghenymennoniteconference.org

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.