



In New York Mennonite Conference

Connie Finney Ordained at Sojourners

Sue Klassen



Connie Finney

Heavy snowfall and bitter cold did not stop people from filling Sojourners building for Connie's ordination on Sunday afternoon, February 20. Warmth was not a problem.

Sojourners now has a working furnace—but even if they hadn't, the 80—perhaps even 100 people—packed into the store-front building would have warmed the place. Sojourners members were joined by some of Connie's students from Houghton College and by NYMC leaders and members from across the state.

After an opening hymn and reading, we followed Sojourners' tradition of Open Singing from *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, with people sharing why they requested each hymn. Violins and guitars accompanied many hymns—Connie, as usual, played guitar, and Laurel Buckwalter accompanied a less familiar hymn on piano.

Conference Minister LeRoy Mast ordained Connie, and Don Siegrist led us in prayer and laying on of hands for Connie. Following the reading of 2 Timothy 1:3-7 and another hymn, we Passed the Peace as

Forming "The Train"



Photos by Claire Essley

a congregation. To help the children in our midst move worshipfully towards Sunday School, we formed a train with the children while singing "We are walking in the light of God." When we reconvened, LeRoy presented Connie with a ceramic sculpture of people connected around a flame representing the light of God.

Sonya led us in reflecting on Connie's ordination before inviting us to share our reflections in a guided discussion.

"This is a significant day of celebration, for Connie, for this congregation and for NY Mennonite Conference," Sonya began.

"Sojourners can rejoice today because they are calling a well-loved and talented woman to be their pastor, to tend the spiritual health of this congregation and of its individual members," Sonya continued.

"NYMC celebrates because Connie is the first female pastor to be ordained by the conference. We've licensed women before for particular ministries, but we've never gotten around to ordaining any. Connie herself was licensed for a particular congregational ministry a number of years ago while she lived in Buffalo and worked with

Westside Mennonite Fellowship. Ordination is more long term, a weightier event. Ordination recognizes a lifelong vocational calling to leadership ministry in the church, so it is a big deal. Ordination, as I said once to Connie, makes her the Church's woman for life. The broader church gets another lifetime servant. That's something to celebrate."

Sonya described Connie's call to a shepherding role as pastor of Sojourners, and affirmed the gifts of listening, discernment and maturity in the Christian faith she sees in Connie that equip her for this. Members of Sojourners and people from across the conference affirmed Connie's gifts as well, and expressed deep gratitude for her wise, caring presence in their lives.

Following an open prayer time, we sang #118, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," then enjoyed a bountiful fellowship meal together. We thank God for this joyous occasion.

Laying on of Hands



Singing together



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News from Conference Congregations

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Pleasant Valley: Volunteering in Ephrata

I had the opportunity to take my Pleasant Valley Youth Sunday School class to the Material Resource Center (MRC) in Ephrata, PA for a weekend at the beginning of December. Many of the kids had asked about doing trips and so forth, so as a service opportunity and chance to see what happens to the pennies and kits that we send to the MRC, we signed up for a Saturday morning volunteer shift.

It was my second trip to MRC and I was just as amazed and touched by the amount of goods they ship, and the amount of work they do, as I was during my first visit. I wanted the kids to experience how, even



Completed School Kits

by doing something small like making a school kit... or doing something slightly bigger like volunteering one Saturday... you can contribute to something great like the relief that MCC sends around the globe.

Here are what the kids from my class had to say about our trip.

-Elizabeth Weaver

During our trip to MCC Resource Center, we helped check school kits. We had to make sure there were the right number of notebooks, pencils, and colored pencils. We also took a tour of the warehouse and got to see other types of kits they made.

We had a very fun time and I really enjoyed checking the school kits.

-Becca Weaver

At the MCC resource center they make a lot of things to send to other countries-they make a lot of kits to help. What was odd to me was that they cannot send the stuff to another country if the country does not ask first. I hope we go again sometime.

-Zane Draper



Photos by Elizabeth Weaver

Checking School Kits

Volunteering at the MCC Resource Center was a neat experience. The job we did was to check and organize the school kit bags. Some of the cool things there were how they baled clothes to send to other countries and how a 93 year old man worked at the loom for 23 years and made over 1,400 corduroy and denim rugs in that time span. One of the things I don't understand was when the resource center had a large supply of kits, why they couldn't send them to other countries without their permission, especially if something bad had just happened in that country. If we ever get a chance, I would do this again.

-Kyle Weaver

What I liked about the MCC Resource center was it was neat to see all the different things they do there. I enjoyed packing the school kits and it felt good to know that by volunteering we were helping people who have nothing and spreading the Word of God also.

-Christina Weaver

Lowville: Open Hearts, Open Homes

Lowville Mennonite's theme for 2008 shows their commitment to continued healing within the church, and to continued strengthening of relationships. This year they ask to continually open themselves up and lay themselves out to allow God's work in their lives; simplify their lives so as to be able to be more responsive to God's leading; take the focus away from themselves, and onto others and their needs; ask God to purify their hearts so that they will experience more energy and passion in joyfully giving to others; and keep children and youth involved in this call.



Christina, Zane, Becca and Kyle

Bridging Divides: Uniting the Church for Peacemaking

The Anabaptist Peace Center of Washington, D.C. with the Church of the Brethren Witness/Washington Office is sponsoring its first conference, on April 11-12, 2008 at Capitol Hill United Methodist Church, Washington, D.C.

This conference for pastors, theologians, service workers, academics and laypersons will explore how the church can unite for mission despite political divides and also work to heal divisions in our communities. Speakers include Myron Augsburg; keynote and plenary sessions with Michelle Armster, MCC US; Chris Bowman, pastor of Oakton Church of the Brethren;

Steve Brown, of Calvary Community and Phil Jones, director of the Church of the Brethren Witness/Washington Office. Adam Tice, Hyattsville Mennonite Church, is worship leader. "How we talk when we disagree" is the pre-conference seminar led by Grant Rissler. Participants will join the annual Hymn Sing for Peace at 5:00 pm on April 12. To register and for more information, see www.apcfdc.mennonite.net or contact Keith Swartzendruber at 202-548-0010 or keith@apcfdc.mennonite.net.

Save the Dates:

Delegate Assembly ☞ April 5, 2008
in Seneca Falls, NY

Peace Conference ☞ April 11-12, 2008
in Washington DC