



New York Mennonite Conference

An area conference of Mennonite Church USA

LIFE

In New York Mennonite Conference

Images of the Mennonite Church

Sonya Stauffer Kurtz

(after Constituency Leadership Council in New Mexico, Oct. 2008)

New Mexico is dry

The local church thinks about the environment, immigration,
Los Alamos National Laboratories and how to cook
prickly pear fruit
(soak first to soften the spines, then juice)

Bleached bones are our visual

Ezekiel and the dry bones our text

They ask us to write poetry
over a photograph of a cow skull

Now that's the sort of business meeting I can understand!

Structure

and organization

and acronyms for boards I sort of know about...

Executive committee, Executive board, MCthis, MMthat.

Somebody's got to do this business.

Some old timers are tired and getting cynical
newcomers are occasionally baffled
in the middle is the best place to be,
understanding and not yet weary.

I think the discussions are cyclical over years.
slowly wheels turn and changes happen.

Changes HAVE happened.

There are more women.

There are more varieties of people, not just Swiss-Germans.
People actually care about gender balance, and including
racial/ethnic groups.

We are working at talking at round tables
and making sure all the speakers are heard.

This is a Mennonite Church

I can work with

It brings me

people who praise God in different languages
in cities I've never visited

as well as people who live across the field from my Nebraska
cousins

It looks at church structure

and encourages administrators to write poetry.

Like always, the church is a work in progress.

Register by January 26 for Best Rate

Leadership Seminar in New Bremen with renowned speaker John D. Roth is coming soon—February 6-8. You can still register for just \$20 (\$25 after Jan. 26), and can still request lodging in homes. Request a brochure from your pastor or organizers Sonya Stauffer Kurtz, Phil Martin or Gene Miller. Send registration forms to Sonya.

Please pray for this weekend to be a blessing to all who attend and to our conference and communities.



Keynote Speaker John D. Roth

Photo courtesy of Goshen College. Used with permission.

Hold Search Process in Prayer

Following discernment by Coordinating Council, Dale Beebe is placing an ad for a Conference Minister in Mennonite peri-

odicals. Please pray for us to sense God's leading as the search committee reviews applications from within and outside the conference.

Giving Behind Budget

Dale Beebe

NYMC Coordinating Council (CC) reviewed the Conference's first quarter financial results at their January 6, 2009 meeting. Income was down 38% from the amount approved by the Delegate Assembly for the 2008-9 budget, and was only half what it was in that period the previ-

ous year. CC will be contacting congregations to get their input on congregational giving. CC will continue to monitor the situation to see if there is a trend developing and if we need to make changes to the approved budget.

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LIFE in New York Mennonite Conference is published monthly.

Submissions Editor: Sue Klassen <sueklassen@gmail.com>

Congregational News Editor: Kirk House <nymclife@yahoo.com>

Design Editors: Sue & Sylvia Klassen <sylviaklassen@gmail.com>

Deadline for next issue: January 23, 2009

Nigeria Reflections

Lois Lyndaker

I joined the November 2008 MCC Serve and Learn Tour to Nigeria anticipating an epiphany experience.

Nigeria is an oil rich country with the potential to be a wealthy nation. However, widespread corruption has drained off millions of dollars. The nation's infrastructure appears to be crumbling. The city of Jos has no discernible traffic rules, and a constant cacophony of horn blowing. Roads were often rutted with deep potholes. Despite these circumstances, Mawo Abayo, a Christian leader, commented "There's much reason for discouragement with all the corruption, but God is above the schemes of man and that is where our hope lies."

Our team consisted of 12 people from varying religious backgrounds from both the U.S. and Canada. We visited several MCC affiliates. Almanah Rescue Mission serves widows, children and orphans and is supported by MCC's Global Family program. I had the tremendous honor of meeting Amina, a Muslim woman leading peacemaking groups. Amina tells her story in the MCC video "We Should Talk Peace." The entire team spent time with several women's groups working to provide an improved quality of life for underprivileged Nigerians with particular emphasis to women, through literacy, income generation, HIV/AIDS testing/support, and community development activities.

Members of our medical team were assigned to several local clinics and hospitals. My primary assignment was as a nurse to a doctor at Faith Alive Clinic. Faith Alive

2008 MCC Nigeria Learning Tour Group



Rural Market

provides free medical, spiritual, social, and economic care for its patients who are living with HIV/AIDS. Their motto proclaims, "Investing in and infecting lives for Jesus Christ our Saviour." Each day begins with devotions for the clients and staff.

The consistent graciousness, faith and hope of the people astounded me. We were invited to dinner in people's homes, and then given gifts to thank us for coming. "You are welcome" is more than a social comment; it is a sincere greeting.

In my journaling, I lamented several times that I had not experienced my epiphany. Obed Dashon, president of Gindiri College of Theology, commented that we have a choice – a choice to follow culture or Christ. That comment was made in the context of African culture and response to HIV/AIDS epidemic. But it took root in my thoughts as I prepared to return to the United States. I also have a choice – to follow my culture which too often emphasizes materialism, abuse of natural resources and a tendency to ignore social/justice inequalities. Or I can choose to follow Christ and His teaching to act

justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with my God.

Perhaps I had my epiphany experience after all.

To read the full article, visit <http://www.nymennonite.org/nigeria.shtml>

Congregational News

Edited by Kirk House

Lowville: Faithful Workers

The Faithful Workers Sewing Circle at Lowville Mennonite had a busy two months in October and November! During those months they collected or completed 50 school kits, 18 health kits, 8 relief kits, 5 sewing kits, 8 blankets, 14 layettes, 10 quilts, 1 pair knitted socks, 1 pair knitted mittens, 5 sets of used clothing, 2 tea towel-potholder sets, 2 Christmas bundles, 1 crocheted cap, 1 crocheted afghan, and \$895.

Yorks Corners: Prayer and Bible Study

Yorks Corners congregation began the New Year again with a Week of Prayer. A 6 AM prayer gathering (with coffee) each day was book-ended with a 7 PM corporate prayer time at the church on January 1 through 7.

Joanna Clark led worship on New Year's Day.

Yorks Corners people are also reading the New Testament together in 2009, following a schedule that will lead each of them to the same passage on the same day.

Alden: "The Truth Project"

From January 4 through March 29 Alden Mennonite will be pursuing *The Truth Project*, a DVD-based small group study from Focus on the Family. Designed to equip believers with a comprehensive world view, *The Truth Project* tries to introduce the claims of God and provide guidance for living those claims daily. Four small groups are planned, and Sunday messages will follow the themes of the study.

Clarence Center-Akron: Shoebox Kits

Folks at Clarence Center-Akron collected 31 shoebox kits for Operation Christmas Child.

Save the Dates:

Dale Meyers' Ordination ☿ Jan. 25, 2009, 6:30 pm, Alden

Leadership Seminar ☿ Feb. 6-8, 2009, New Breman

Delegate Assembly ☿ April 4, 2009, Seneca Falls