



## New York Mennonite Conference

An area conference of Mennonite Church USA

# LIFE

## Celebration 2012

*Sarah Blaisdell*

Having no idea how the annual fall gathering of the New York Mennonite Conference churches came to be called "Celebration," I have come to the conclusion that this name was chosen because this gathering really is a time to celebrate the life of our conference and the work that God is doing in our individual churches. Every year, we also look forward to this time of celebrating the friendships that have developed with folks that we see only once or twice a year, people we wish we could see more often, but cannot because we are spread around this large state.

On Friday evening, we celebrated the work that the Transition Team of Lowville Mennonite Church and Jeff Mayer, congregational facilitator, did to bring about healing in their church. The *Missio Dei* award was given to the whole team and to Jeff to honor their commitment to work together and to seek the will of God in their church and in their relationships to one another. [See *Missio Dei* Award, this issue - ed.]

Throughout the weekend we heard from our speaker, Terry Shue, who stated that God has called and equipped and brought His people into the Church because He has a purpose in the world. God has called us

to be a part of that and He's given us the opportunity to infiltrate our world and our culture with the grace and mercy and love of our Lord Jesus. Nothing in the world is going to answer the questions of the human condition other than the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His message on Friday evening focused on understanding how Jesus was sent into the world by the Father (incarnationally, at great

*Celebration, continued on p.2*

### Terry Shue Speaks at Celebration



## In New York Mennonite Conference Missio Dei Award

*Terry Zehr*

The *Missio Dei* Award is given to a person who exemplifies a commitment to the Mission of God in their ministry in New York Mennonite Conference. In their life and ministry the recipient will demonstrate:

- \* A passion for God's mission while deeply engaged in the mission field
- \* Commitment to the ministry of reconciliation and peace
- \* Vision to see where God is at work and become a part of it
- \* Listening to and obeying the Spirit of God

Lowville Mennonite experienced a very complicated and difficult period recently with the resignation of its primary leadership. The church council appointed a diverse group of persons, the Transition Team, widely representative of the congregation, to work through a variety of issues. Marcus Smucker was congregational consultant. Jeff Mayer, congregational facilitator and ex officio member of the Team, was key in leading difficult congregational meetings. The Team provided an example to the congregation of self-sacrifice, dedication and humility. God's Spirit was clearly in their midst as they worked in the context of deep divide, pain, anger, and fracturing. Three years later, the congregation is now thriving and exploring new ways of being united. It is to this Transition Team that the 2012 *Missio Dei* Award is presented.

## Fall Delegate Assembly

*Sonya Stauffer Kurtz*

Business at the fall Delegate Assembly was conducted around the themes of why are we here, where are we going, how will we get there and who will go with us. Conference Minister, Gene Miller, reminded us of our ongoing job of discernment as we ask, "God, what are you saying? What might you want us to do?"

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## Congregational News

*Edited by Kirk House*

### News from Corning

For ten weeks this summer, over a dozen women gathered weekly for Bible study, including one who was invited at the first neighborhood BBQ picnic held late in June. [See July issue of LIFE - ed.] Some women met in the afternoon, while others attended an evening session later the same day. The series focused on the Old Testament book of Esther with input from a Beth Moore video series which was borrowed from a nearby Wesleyan Church. Elder Sharon Glaesemann led the studies.

### *Delegate Assembly, continued from p.1*

We celebrated use of Leadership Education funds, hearing from this year's recipients: Dale Meyer (Lombard Peace Institute), Janette Gallagher (AMBS Turn Around Strategies for Churches class), and Terry Zehr (Interim Pastor training). Dale invites any interested person to join an on-line discussion/reading group on Bowen Theory/Family Systems.

Email: [pastordale77@gmail.com](mailto:pastordale77@gmail.com).

Delegates passed the proposed annual budget after hearing stories from different individuals and churches reflecting on the impact of conference and its staff. Despite a slightly smaller budget for 2012 - 2013, a deficit budget was passed. We encourage congregations to maintain a regular payment schedule, and to let the treasurer know if your congregation anticipates a change in its level of giving to the conference.

At the recommendation of Coordinating Council, delegates approved a five year term for Gene Miller. Sandy Craft was approved for another four year term as lay representative to the Leadership Commission. In other business, delegates welcomed Diane Doebler as our new MCC East Coast Representative.

### *Celebration, continued from p.1*

risk, with authority, and with a purpose) because Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." On Saturday evening, Terry shared a message on Christian formation, stating that God has a desire and a passion to develop us into what He created us to be, which is to be like Him. God works within us and transforms us individually through discipleship and our connection with our faith community. Sunday morning Terry shared a message on leadership development, citing the way that Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, recommended that Moses give responsibility to others, and allow them to do their jobs in ways that built them up and strengthened them. Terry reminded us that God gives gifts to the whole church, not just the people up front, and we need to train up leaders even though we don't know how God will use them. All of Terry's messages can be found on the conference website at

<http://www.nymennonite.org/celebration>

At the general sessions, we also had the opportunity to celebrate what God is doing in and through Mennonite agencies as representatives from two agencies shared at each session. Information tables were set up and representatives were present from MC-USA, MennoMedia, Eastern Mennonite Missions, Mennonite Mission Network, Mennonite Central Committee, and Eastern Mennonite University.

Four workshops were offered on Saturday afternoon during two time periods. A two-part workshop on immigration issues was offered to cover the topic at the national level and at the state level. A number of women gathered for a follow up to the Sister Care seminar which was offered last March. A new initiative of the Mennonite Conference, "The 12 Scriptures Project" was presented and those gathered had the opportunity to see how the project might work in their own congregations or small groups.

We are a blessed people and God has given us much to celebrate. I encourage everyone to keep the celebration going throughout the year by listening again (or for the first time) to the messages Terry shared with us; checking in on the work that God is doing in and through our conference-affiliated agencies; and keeping in touch with those friends whom you will not see again until next year, but for whom God has given you a special affection.

Dreams and Visions...

## Our Mission: To Make Disciples

*Gene Miller, Conference Minister*

Jesus gave his followers a mission to complete. We are fully empowered agents of the Kingdom of God who help others become followers of Jesus. This calls for our best.

We do not see ourselves as mere church members or attenders. As those redeemed by the blood of Jesus, the very life and power of the risen Jesus is in every Christian.

God will do amazing things when we all as ordinary Christians pick up the mantle of servanthood. It happens as we take upon ourselves the responsibility to see that those we encounter on a day-to-day basis are blessed, and we take seriously our own role as ambassadors of reconciliation in the kingdom of God.

We don't reduce discipleship to teaching. Discipleship is about awakening, empowering, and releasing people to live in the Kingdom! Jesus' method of making disciples was focused more on relationship and action, and less on information and knowledge. Jesus taught discipleship along the way. Discipleship was a natural outgrowth of hanging out together.

The Kingdom – the Gospel – is about intentionally walking alongside one another so that we can encourage and inspire one another to put God's peace on display to the world. Jesus said, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me."

## Save the Dates:

Leadership Seminar, February 1-3, Lowville Mennonite Church