



# New York Mennonite Conference

An area conference of Mennonite Church USA

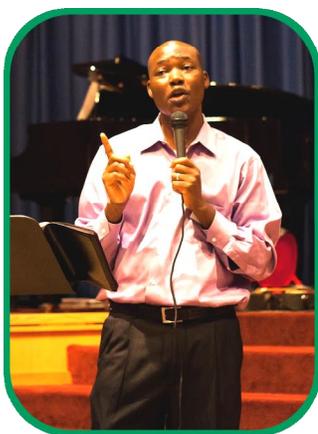
# LIFE

## In New York Mennonite Conference

### Celebration 2013

Anne Siegrist

Nelson Okanya, president of Eastern Mennonite Missions and former pastor at Capital Christian Fellowship, was the featured speaker at Celebration 2013.



Nelson Okanya

He spoke about “The Good News of Jesus Christ.” “Forty years ago the Good News was told to my parents. God created the world and it was good.” He compared that state-

ment to the violent news we hear today. “The goodness of creation began to go wrong and in the cool of the day God met with Adam and Eve.”

Okanya noted that in Africa the cool of the day is a great time of fellowship when people gather under trees to eat, drink and exchange news. God wanted to fellowship with Adam, but Adam had hidden himself because he had sinned.

“We serve a missionary God – a God who steps out,” said Okanya. “God called Adam. ‘Adam, where are you?’ There are many ways and places where God set forth His covenant. We do not keep God’s covenant, but God has always called us back. The prophets continued to call their people back. When you return, then God will be your God.”

“The Good News is for all people,” de-

clared Okanya. “When we pray ‘Your kingdom come’, we are Kingdom bringers. The Anabaptist story is the story of transformation. May the Lord bless you as you continue in this journey of transformation. Mission is not ‘from the west to the rest.’ It’s from anywhere to everywhere.”

He thanked us for our support of missions and challenged us to go, tell, and live the Good News. “We are agents of Good News,” Okanya said.

One hundred and sixty-two people attended the event. The schedule included activities for children ages 3-12 and for junior and senior high school youth.

A choir from the Chin Church in Buffalo sang beautiful multi-part music for us.



Chin Church Choir

A mission group has formed to provide spiritual input to Fort Drum persons and Ken Landis was commissioned for this work. The work will be done in partnership with Watertown Mennonite Church.

Ted and Julie Smoker spoke about going to Guatemala to aid in economic development there.

Missio Dei, which recognizes people within the conference who promote peace and reconciliation,

gave awards to Sharon Glaesemann and Janette Gallagher for their work in congregations in transition—Janette at Lowville and Corning, and Sharon at Corning. Both are elders at Corning Mennonite Fellowship.



Sharon Glaesemann & Janette Gallagher

Afternoon seminars included “Mission, An American Baptist missionary in Chinland”, a crosscultural experience told by Pastor Jehu Lian and Bawi Tha Lian.

Sheila Yoder (“Mission 2014: To Infinity and Beyond!”) told stories of Mennonite Mission Network as we reflected on our own congregation’s experiences with mission.

Chrissie Walls, editor of the new Anabaptist Sunday School curriculum for children, gave an inside look at the new curriculum which will be available during the fall of 2014.

*Celebration, continued on p.2*

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## Finger Lakes Bike Ride

Diane Doebler

Rosetta and Ken Landis, Marie Western, Scott Watkins, and Alton and Geneva Virkler from Lowville participated in MCC's Finger Lakes Bike Ride August 4-8. Cyclists came from Pennsylvania, Indiana, Virginia, Maryland, Oregon and Ontario. Their ride took them 300 miles over Finger Lakes roads, winding, climbing, and coasting past vineyards, wineries, orchards, lake views and waterfalls. With money from their sponsors \$70,000 will go to support MCC tree planting projects in Haiti.

While cyclists averaged 60 miles each day, the support crew, including Geneva Virkler, traveled by truck to the campgrounds. One trailer contained two refrigerators, one chest-freezer, and lots of food. Biking all day creates voracious appetites! All the tents, sleeping bags, luggage and folding chairs were also transported in the trailer. The other trailer was the "kitchen" with two gas stoves and a grill. Freshly made pies, bagels and sweet corn purchased along the way supplemented the food carried in the trailer. Two SAG (support and gear) vans accompanied the riders. Their job included meeting the bikers each day with snacks and lunches.

Beginning and ending at Keuka College, the group camped two nights each at Keuka Lake State Park, Bluff Point, and Robert Treman State Park in Ithaca. I visited their last night and enjoyed the evening meal and campfire. Huge pots were filled with ingredients to create a taco salad. At the campfire several bikers received the "water bottle" award. Ken was recognized for completing a "Century Ride" (100 miles) and Alton for being the oldest rider, age 81. The evening ended with singing in four part harmony. Songs included, "Guide my feet, Lord, while I pedal this bike ... for I'm pedaling this bike for MCC" and "606".

Tree planting projects in Haiti will profit from the bike ride. With the help of MAC, locally managed tree nurseries in the Artibonite Valley will produce more than 450,000 seedlings this year. Fruit and forestry trees provide Haitians with hope and opportunity for a better life. Each rider received a photo of Haitian Soufrana Elistin with this quote: "If it weren't for MCC and these trees, my garden wouldn't have any topsoil left, it would be desolate. These trees are our lives. They allow us to eat and make a living and send our kids to school."



Finger Lakes Bike Riders

*Celebration, continued from p. 1*

Nelson Okanya spoke on "Will Our Children Have Faith?", in which he noted that there is an alternative faith among American teenagers who believe God wants people to be good, nice and fair to each other.

Tables were set up in the basement for a mission fair, with Sheila Yoder representing Mennonite Mission Network; Steve Carpenter, MennoMedia; Steve Bustos, Everence; Gerald Shenk, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary; Les Horning, Eastern Mennonite University and Seminary; and Kenneth Sensenig, Mennonite Central Committee.

We collected items for the Mennonite Central Committee Relief kits at the MCC table during the mission fair.

During the delegate assembly delegates passed a budget for the coming fiscal year and encouraged congregations to try to give to conference on a quarterly basis, rather than once a year.

Sonya Kurtz was elected to continue as moderator and Kathy Shelly was named secretary of the coordinating council. Beth Steria is the new resource advocate for the coordinating council.

Delegates heard reports about use of the Outreach and Church Planting fund. Funds have been given for a Fort Drum Ministry coordinator position.

Funds will cover district minister oversight for currently designated church plants and emerging groups, such as the Buffalo Church plant ventures, the Oxford England outreach activities and a Beaver Falls house church.

Dreams and Visions...

## With All Kinds of Prayers

Gene Miller, Conference Minister

One of the more radical statements in our NYMC "Dreams and Visions 2010-2017" says that "the church exists especially for those who are not yet part of it".

Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. He spent much time with prostitutes, drunkards, and dubious Jews who served the Roman establishment. He interacted with the woman at the well and Zacchaeus. He told his followers to "Go and make disciples of all nations..."

In the face of torture and death, our Anabaptist forbears vigorously proclaimed the gospel spreading it far and wide. They believed that every Christian was called to speak the good news.

Perhaps the most rewarding thing we can do as Christians is to be the human instrument that God uses to bring someone into the Kingdom. What an incredible privilege to assist in this divine birthing process and then help disciple this new believer. Sometimes it may seem a bit messy; but it is filled with joy.

The Christian life is not about us. It's more about the enlargement of the Kingdom than about my comfort and traditions. Is God calling us to some changes in the way we function?

I believe that New York Mennonite Conference is making this shift to a more outward focus.

## Save the Date:

Leadership Seminar, January 31-February 2, Alden, NY