



**New York  
Mennonite  
Conference**

An area conference of  
Mennonite Church USA

# LIFE

## In New York Mennonite Conference

### 2014 Leadership Seminar

*Sarah Blaisdell and Julie Bastuk*

Beryl Jantzi spoke on "God, Mammon and the American Dream" at Alden Mennonite Church on the weekend of January 31st, February 1st and 2nd.

Beryl Jantzi is *Everence's* Stewardship Education Director. *Everence* is a financial services organization of Mennonite Church USA, and is based on the idea that it is possible to incorporate faith and values with money decisions.



**Beryl Jantzi**

One of the key points of the weekend was that issues of money are spiritual issues so it should not be taboo to talk about money in the church. Money weaves itself through our lives and we need a total transformation of how we view it. Mammon was a pagan god of wealth and prosperity. Jesus told us to choose whom we will serve—God or Mammon. This is still an issue today, as there is rivalry in our culture regarding which god we will choose to serve.

We discussed the concept of a narrative budget, which is a method of fleshing out a traditional line item budget. By developing colorful descriptions to assign to expenses and budget allocations, churches help convey a sense of ownership of each area to church members. For example, no longer is the budget item simply called "Facilities," rather it is described as the resources used to create a welcoming place of worship and community.

Beryl also encouraged more dialogue within church leadership about tithes and funds that were coming into the church. He suggested that perhaps leadership be allowed to have knowledge of who primary givers are and how much each family gives regularly. This isn't simply to help create a budget, but to monitor how families within the congregation are doing. So, for

*Seminar, continued on p.2*

### Leadership Seminar at Alden



### Relief from Celebration

*Kenneth Sensenig, MCC East Coast*

I was glad to fellowship with the New York Conference folks in Syracuse this past October 5. It's a real blessing to see those who have been around for quite awhile mingling with those recently arrived from Burma. It is the church's duty and privilege to dismantle the divides that separate people from people. MCC's ministries work at this ideal every day "in the name of Christ."

On behalf of MCC, let me say a great big "thank you" to many individuals and congregations that donated materials for MCC's relief kits. I had my car and trunk stuffed about as full as possible to make the trip back to Pennsylvania. Volunteers at MCC's warehouse in Ephrata, PA, packed these materials into new five gallon buckets and produced about 50 kits. This is a very generous contribution! Thank you very much.

Let me also say "thank you" from those who will ultimately benefit from the generosity. It will not surprise you to note that Jordan, Lebanon and Syria were major recipients of relief kits in the last fiscal year. Please continue praying for those displaced by civil unrest in Syria.

May God bless you for caring about others.

## January/February/March 2014

*Life in New York Mennonite Conference* is published monthly/bi-monthly.  
Editor: Duane Davis <editor.LIFE.NYMC@gmail.com>  
Issue No. 1, 2014      Deadline for next issue: May 6, 2014

## Congregational News

### News from Yorks Corners

A new outreach at Yorks Corners Mennonite Church, a Christian Twelve Step program called Celebrate Recovery, is ministering to those with hurts, habits or hang-ups.

### News from Clarence Center-Akron

Rachel Snyder, a Bluffton University senior from Clarence Center-Akron Mennonite Church, has been named to the Bluffton dean's list for the fall 2013 semester.

### News from Corning

The Transition Team at Community Mennonite in Corning identified Andrew Langbehn as a pastoral candidate. Andrew and his wife, Kristen, visited Corning in mid-December. One week later the congregation voted overwhelmingly to call Andrew as its pastor. He has recently finished an associate pastoral position at Woodland Hills Church in Minneapolis, MN.

### News from Pleasant Valley

The Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church chose to discontinue meeting this past August.

## Syracuse Chin Baptist Church

*Terry Zehr*

In early November I met with two leaders from the Syracuse Chin Baptist Church in order to help them secure worship space. They are now renting a room from the First English Lutheran Church of Syracuse on a weekly basis. This group speaks Falam, which is a different language than Emmanuel Chin in Buffalo which speaks Hakha.

Shown below are pictures from their first Sunday worship gathering in their new space, which took place November 10. Lal Ram Lawm is in the back right corner of the photo [on right]. He gives leadership to the group.

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example, if someone who has given faithfully for years suddenly drops off the radar or gives significantly less, it could indicate financial troubles or some other stressor where the church family could reach out to help. Quite a bit of dialogue took place here regarding the relative anonymity that occurs within Mennonite church giving, and how pastors in general know little about who gives what. In some cases, even the treasurer doesn't know who gives how much, but those numbers are left to the stewards who gather up the offering.

Beryl told of how African-American churches are traditionally very transparent about giving, even listing families with their tithe amounts in the bulletin every week. They found that this seemed to be a healthy practice among the churches, without the jealousy or hierarchical condescension that one might expect.

We were encouraged to continue thinking about giving, and the speaker referenced "globalrichlist.com" so that we could determine where we fit among the wealthiest of the world in comparison to the masses.

Beryl spoke on Matthew 6 at the worship service on Sunday morning. Matthew 6 contains three particular teachings on money: acts of charity (alms); treasures on earth vs. treasures in Heaven; and we cannot serve both God and Mammon.

The final session of the 2014 NYMC Leadership Seminar concluded with a shared meal courtesy of the Alden congregation. Their hospitality and generosity were greatly appreciated by all who attended. The Seminar was planned by the NYMC Leadership Commission.

Dreams and Visions...

## Beyond Ourselves

*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.



Chin Baptist Congregation



Photo courtesy Terry Zehr

## Save the Dates:

Delegate Assembly, April 5, Seneca Falls  
NYMC Women, May 30-31, Rochester (RAMF)  
Celebration 2014, October 18, Auburn