



# New York Mennonite Conference

An area conference of Mennonite Church USA

# LIFE

## In New York Mennonite Conference

### NYMC Spring Delegate Assembly Report

Terry Zehr

On April 16<sup>th</sup>, congregational delegates from across our Conference met at the Auburn United Methodist Church for an engaging day of worshipful work with input from Terry Shue, Director of Leadership Development for MC-USA. As with the past couple of years, our morning agenda focused on reporting and decision making with deeper discernment and dialogue in the afternoon. Each congregational delegate received a packet of reports from the various entities of our Conference structure, to be available within congregations. Delegates function both as conduits of communication and congregational representatives when we have conversations.



Terry Shue, MC-USA

In our morning session, the delegates approved a new position for the Coordinating Council. The position is called "member at large" the sole responsibility of which is to sit on the Council. In order to reflect the changing face of our Conference, the Coordinating Council put forth names of persons from our racial/ethnic brothers and sisters. After good conversation, Bawi Lian has been approved to join the Council. Bawi is a member of Buffalo Chin Emmanuel church and has

*Assembly, continued on p.2*

### Christian. Muslim. Friend.

Gene Kraybill and Diane Doebler

After a three-month study of David Shenk's book *Christian. Muslim. Friend.* eleven members of Community Mennonite Fellowship visited the Islamic Center of the Finger Lakes. Dr. Zaman Marwat, (Imam of IAFL), greeted us before the service and answered our questions afterwards. We observed their prayer time and listened to Marwat's sermon on the importance of practicing one's faith in daily life.

*Friend, continued on p.2*

Debra Taylor, Gil Blaisdell, Gene Kraybill, Dan Gallagher Visit Zaman Marwat (center)



### Knowing about MCC's Work

Diane Doebler

"You don't *know* what you're doing, but *we* do!" Margaret Ahmed confidently told the Mennonite Central Committee East Coast board at our March meeting. Board members know the projects, vision, budget, program plans, and staff responsibilities. But as director of MCC's partner organization, Home Makers, in Jos, Nigeria, Margaret *knows*. Through the work of Home Makers she sees youth and women gaining skills to have better, safer lives. When people such as Margaret tell their stories, they help us to *know* what we are doing. More "*know*" came at the Annual Celebration of MCC EC held this year at Landis Homes Retirement Community in Lititz, PA. Hershey Leaman, a resident and former MCC staff member, gave us some "*know*" of God at work around the world in times past. Hyacinth Stevens, coordinator for our various New York City programs, helped us *know* about God's work at home. Her story told of a Garifuna woman helping others from the Garifuna region of Central America complete immigration papers. Ruth Keidel Clemens' and Rachele Lyndaker Schlabach's input gave "*know*" about MCC US's efforts to have Congress promote a peace that provides justice and equality for all Palestinians and Israelis.

I am pleased to be NYMC's representative to the MCC EC board. Each gathering is an exhilarating two days of overseeing MCC EC's groundwork and hearing from workers who *know* what we are doing.



Margaret Ahmed

Photo courtesy MCC

## May/June 2016

*Life in New York Mennonite Conference* is published bi-monthly.  
Editor: Duane Davis <editor.LIFE.NYMC@gmail.com>  
Issue No. 3, 2016      Deadline for next issue: June 23, 2016

## Congregational News

### Love Family Community Church

Our new Hispanic church in Utica, the Love Family Community Church, needs a used van for church transportation. Contact Miguel Monsanto, (717) 419-9582.

### "They Came"

Steve Virkler and Rosanna Moser

The Adirondack Mennonite Heritage Farm is a non-working farm on the Erie Canal Road with a dwelling, granary and barns dating from the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. During the farm's 25<sup>th</sup> Zwanzigstein ("Twenty Stones") Festival last July a garden was dedicated to Lewis County's Mennonite forefathers. Twenty stones, gathered from the farm property, each with family name plate attached, line the garden's interior.

#### AMHF Garden



Nathan Zehr, retired pastor of Pine Grove Mennonite Church, reflected a few moments at the garden dedication. He said the original Mennonite settlers came here not so much for freedom of religion, but for freedom of relationships.

"Religion alone can be practiced in a vacuum, almost anywhere, under almost all circumstances," Mr. Zehr said. "Relationships, however, involve all of life, public and private. They clearly understood their relationship with Jesus needed to be lived out daily in life."

"We come to remember their courage, their hard work, their resourcefulness," Mr. Zehr said. "But, above all, we come to remember and to embrace their living, day-to-day relationship with Jesus, the source of their courage and strength. And may this garden, so beautifully done, continue to remind us of that relationship and what that means to us today, as well as future generations."

The farm is open for visitors June through October, or visit: [www.mennoniteheritagefarm.com](http://www.mennoniteheritagefarm.com)

#### Working Session at Delegate Assembly



*Friend, continued from p.1*

A key goal was to gain a better understanding of the Muslim experience in this country, particularly in light of the heated discourse on immigration, terrorism and Muslims. We learned that some of their youth have been harassed at school and hostile messages were painted on their new mosque, now under construction. Marwat tells his members that such acts are not supported by most Americans. Very memorable was his statement that violence in the name of religion is "no religion at all."

"We were warmly welcomed, and feel we're now better able to challenge unfair stereotypes when we hear them," said Gene Kraybill who led the book study at CMF. "We sensed a strong commitment to loving one's neighbor."

As a thank-you gift, Marwat was presented with a peace lily and the book, *A Muslim and a Christian in Dialogue* by David Shenk and Muslim colleague, Badru Kateregga.

*Assembly, continued from p.1*

been highly engaged with NYMC over the last several years. We welcome him to the Coordinating Council!

In the afternoon, delegates received a report of the district meetings around the theme "Together in Mission". This report is available for use in congregations. We continue to emphasize the use of Biblical communal discernment as the way we can collaborate in deliberate missional engagement across New York. The Great Commission was named most often in the district meetings as a core scripture for our sense of call. Table conversations centered around questions designed to assist our growing awareness that we are called to be a missional community. Our time together was both hopeful and centering. Thank you to all the Delegates for your time, spirit and wisdom!

Dreams and Visions...

### Your Kingdom Come...to New York

Gene Miller, Conference Minister

Our Dreams and Visions statement invites us to pray and work toward the transformation of the empire state of New York into many growing, vital communities of faith where Jesus is Lord. The former is passing, the latter is eternal. We have the amazing privilege of advancing the Kingdom of God in our particular part of the earth—New York State.

We pray, "your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Our conference churches do not exist just to meet our needs. This shift to an external focus is major. Our congregations and conference become supporting structures to help bring the kingdom of God to earth.

When people experience healing, freedom, justice and reconciliation, we help bring the reign of Jesus Christ in every situation. The gospel is powerful. It sets us free from our bondages; it heals our diseases; it reconciles us to each other. The blind see, the lame walk, and good news is proclaimed to the poor.

In this process of engaging deeply with God's mission, we are transformed. We will function in new ways, we will look and act differently. From Buffalo to Albany and beyond we have the grand and high calling to bring the Kingdom of God to this earth.

## Save the Dates:

Minister's Retreat, August 15-17, Beaver Camp  
Celebration, September 17, Auburn