



Intersections

Franconia Mennonite Conference • July/August 2007

Equipping leaders to empower others to embrace God's mission

Colombian peacebuilding initiative feels effects of break-in: Following Christ's call from Bally to Bogota

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At 3 a.m. on June 14, 2007 several assailants broke through a skylight and into the Bogota Mennonite Church office of Justapaz: the Christian Center for Justice, Peace, and Nonviolent Action. Upon entering, they disabled the security and surveillance system and proceeded to steal two of Justapaz's thirteen computers. The computers stolen were the two containing the most sensitive information – including documented cases of political violence and churches active in courageous social justice work. They also held information on Justapaz staff, including Janna Hunter Bowman (Documentation and Advocacy Coordinator of Justapaz) and individuals connected with their documentation project entitled, "A Prophetic Call: Colombian Protestant Churches Document Their Suffering and Their Hope." Later that day, after making phone calls to colleagues in both the United States and Colombia in order to coordinate emergency response between Bogota and Washington, D.C.,

"As we amplify voices of the victims, we are targeted."

a troubled yet remarkably calm Janna Hunter-Bowman sat down with me to talk about her work and her life in Colombia.

Janna immediately explained that this robbery was just one in a series of politically motivated break-ins of human rights organizations that will not likely be fully investigated. It is not in the best interest of Colombia's government to do so. With tears in her eyes, Janna noted the increased danger that people connected to Justapaz now face, as well as the reaffirmation of Justapaz's conviction to follow Christ's example of non-vio-

lence, calling for repentance, and seeking a just peace through contributing to conflict transformation in Colombia.

Justapaz is a 17-year-old peace ministry of the Mennonite Church of Colombia that "contributes to a culture of respect for human dignity and peacebuilding" in Colombia. Justapaz has eight full-time staff who work with a wide range of conflict transformation initiatives at local, regional, national, and international levels. These initiatives include conscientious objection, conflict mediation, peace training and education, the development of a network of peace churches, and a documentation project and national and international advocacy.

Janna describes herself as a daughter of Bally (PA) and an Anabaptist Mennonite by both tradition and choice. When she first learned of the struggles in Colombia, she had been struggling with a sense of sadness around the church's shortcomings in following Christ's call to right relationships and peace. In 2000, the Mennonite Church of Colombia wrote a letter to Mennonite Church USA asking to join them in prayer and action to stop a bill proposed in Congress that they predicted would further complicate the already troubled situation in Colombia. Janna read this letter and felt a desire to learn more about Colombia and the Colombian Mennonite Church because she saw in them a "radical obedience to Christ."

The bill, titled "Plan Colombia," was passed later that year. While the bill was officially intended to help Colombia put an end to the narcotics



**Christian Families
victimized by robbery**

*photo provided
by Janna Hunter Bowman*



Questions versus answers:

Don't be afraid to ask

Noel Santiago, Executive Minister
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I love questions.

I confess to being a bit “odd” this way. Shouldn't I love answers more? One time I waited 11 years for the answer to a question I

had! When it came it wasn't so much that I found the answer, rather, it found me; like when in a little league baseball game the ball happens to “hit” the bat of the hitter.

Questions can evoke more questions, stimulate insight and revelation, cause deeper thinking and reflection. Questions can also evoke anger and hostility, generate anxiety and surface insecurities. Questions can cover or communicate what's really on our minds.

“So what does Franconia Mennonite Conference do anyway?” Conference leaders hear this question frequently, especially at budget time. Many persons may question why their congregations are sending money to the conference, because they don't know what the conference does. Still, they send it. And so first let me say, “Gracias!” For others, there's an experience of the value and meaning of the conference's work with fewer questions about connection. Again, I say, “Gracias!” Let's consider some factors of familiarity.

Conrad Kanagy, in the recent Mennonite Church Membership Profile, found that most congregational members (the persons people in the “pew”) are more familiar with their congregation than any other entity within Mennonite Church USA. This is understandable and good news. About 35% of members are familiar with the denomination – that is, the larger church “out there” and especially the Mission Network.

Many persons also relate to Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) on a regular basis. It is a commonly held belief that MCC is a part of the Mennonite Church. It is, and it isn't. It is, in that many Anabaptist groups participate with and in MCC, including Mennonite Church USA. It isn't, in that it is not an official agency of Mennonite Church USA like organizations such as Mennonite Education Agency, Mennonite Publishing

Network, Mennonite Mutual Aid, and Mennonite Mission Network.

Lastly, only 12% of members understand and relate to area conferences and/or districts, the so-called “middle judicatory” of the denomination. That's what we are at Franconia Mennonite Conference. But Franconia Conference is much more than a middle judicatory. Together, we are the stories you are reading in this *Intersections*. Together we are a network of 41 congregations and growing; 23 Conference Related Ministries (CRM), as Gay Brunt Miller writes about; 10 (and growing) Partners in Mission from Montgomery County, PA to places further away like Mexico, Haiti, and Indonesia.

We are together those who walk alongside congregations when searching for a pastor, credentialing leaders, or providing interim ministers to help guide congregations through difficult but necessary transitions. Together we are seeking to follow the mission statement the conference's delegates have affirmed: “Equipping Leaders to Empower Others to Embrace God's Mission.”

“Still for many, this leaves the question, But what does the conference actually *do*?”

Still, for many, this leaves the question: “But what does the conference actually *do*?” Well, ask your pastor. Ask the person sitting next to you in church. Ask the person leading one of the CRM's featured in this issue of *Intersections*. Ask a Conference Board member, Conference staff, or Conference committee member. Ask the editor, the guest editor of this issue is Sheldon Good, of *Intersections* by responding to one of the articles.

Take the lead and a first small step to find out the response to your questions about Franconia Mennonite Conference. As always, with questions, expect to receive a response that may lead to and perhaps will illicit another question, insight, thought, or possibility.

Editors Note: For more information about Conrad Kanagy's research check out Herald Press's Road Signs for the Journey, which Partner in Mission Pastor Leonard Dow of Oxford Circle Mennonite Church in Philadelphia says “offers a guide that prayerfully positions us, both individually and congregationally, for the harvest that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ promises!”

market and stop the internal war, it gave over 80% of the total \$3.3 billion proposed in aid to military forces. As a result, the conflict between guerrilla entities and the government, its army, and paramilitaries, has been heightened. As civilians are caught in the middle of the conflict and victimized by all sides, churches are among those targeted. As churches help those around them, they are often perceived as challenging those in power. For example, if a church is giving aid to a victim, they may be seen as challenging the perpetrator. "As we amplify voices of the victims, we are targeted," explains Janna, referring to the attack on the Justapaz office.

In 2001 Janna left the United States to go to Colombia. She humorously recalled that she really did not understand anything about Colombia or even speak the language very well, but felt an "undeniable sense of needing to be there." Her first tasks in Columbia included starting a sister church program and working on international education, including sending action alerts and creating delegations. Janna returned to the United States in 2004.

Approximately 80% of the political violence in Colombia occurs in rural areas. There are many small churches scattered throughout these areas. When infractions began to occur, many of these churches sought aid from their national denominational offices, but many of these offices chose to do nothing. In an act of resiliency, they sought help elsewhere and began talking with the Mennonite Church of Colombia. In 2003, Justapaz partnered with the peace branch of the Evangelical Council of Colombia Churches – the Commission for Restoration Life and Peace – to report on the violence related to armed conflict as it affects churches. They joined together again in 2006 to further document the violence and update their report through a joint program, and it was at this time that Janna returned to Columbia. She described her work with the Colombian people as a "powerful and energizing experience [that] keeps taking me back."

The joint Justapaz and Evangelical Council of Churches documentation project is largely run by 30-35 volunteers across five regions in Colombia. Each region has a volunteer coordinator and a team of trained volunteers who document their own communities. These volunteers are pastors, teachers, housewives, lawyers, banana vendors, and other everyday people who risk their safety to record the human rights infractions in their country. Justapaz's documentation volunteer training program includes a look at the biblical models for recording life stories, the scripture's

perspective on the value of human life, and Christian responses to the suffering of God's children in times of war. The program also addresses issues of fear, what it takes to do proper documentation, and what permissions are necessary in order to record and then tell someone's story.

Janna explained that the program she coordinates not only documents and denounces violence, but also announces hope through reporting on social restoration and peacebuilding initiatives carried out by local churches amidst the violence. "It is incredibly humbling and a sacred privilege to be able to accompany these faithful servants as they live out sacrificial obedience joyfully, even when it means risking their own lives," she said.

Janna loves the people of Colombia and feels a deep kinship with them. She values the friendships she has developed with people she profoundly respects and highlighted her appreciation for the opportunities she has every day to learn from the "prophets, saints, and everyday heroes that war creates."

As we wrapped up our interview, Janna talked about her hopes for support from the congregations of Franconia Conference. She suggested that a simple way to support our Colombian brothers and sisters would be to read, "A Prophetic Call: Colombian Protestant Churches Document Their Suffering and Their Hope (available at mcc.org)," and pray for the victims, perpetrators, and peacemakers. "I invite churches to listen to their stories and consider the Colombian faithfulness as a part of their own, intertwined through faith and policies." Janna also extended an invitation for people to visit her and her husband Jess, who is a Regional Director for Witness for Peace, in Colombia.

Janna returned for a third time to Colombia on June 15, 2007 after a two week break she had taken in order to take a course at Eastern Mennonite University's Summer Peace-building Institute and visit with family in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Janna plans to finish her term in Colombia through Mennonite Central Committee in 2009. Upon her return, Janna hopes to attend seminary and focus on peace studies.

photo provided
by Janna Hunter Bowman



Join Colombian Mennonite Churches in International Peacebuilding

–Send a letter to U.S. and Colombian government officials, expressing concern for the Justapaz break-in and information robbery

–Celebrate "Bread and Peace," ecumenical activities recognizing the relationship between poverty and peacebuilding

–Join the upcoming Witness for Peace delegation in September

More information at justapaz.org.

Mennonite and Emergent

The Minneapolis congregation, Missio Dei (missio-dei.org) connects broadly through the Emergent Village networks while rooting itself in Mennonite connectivity through Central Plains Mennonite Conference. It's a tangled web of hopeful relationships intent on living what Pastor Mark van Steenwyck suggests is the Jesus Manifesto. Van Steenwyck is currently recognized as a church planter with the Baptist General Conference and a campus pastor at the University of Minnesota through Intervarsity.

An entourage on the move:

Pull over, and let's ask some questions

Sheldon Good, *Salford*
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I love traveling. I love the questions that emerge while traveling. Coming off of a three month cross-cultural in Cambodia, I am used to being on the move. Remembering back to my work with Franconia Conference last summer, the times I was able to travel provided me with my fondest, most poignant memories. I acknowledge it: I am part of the dynamic of "Generation Y."

On the first Friday morning of June, Steve Kriss and Jessica Walter picked up a tan rental minivan across from the Conference Center in Souderton. For the next 34 hours, they would drive me and three other young adults – Felicia Moore, Krista Ehst, and Ale Lopez – on Interstates 80 and 94 on our way to Minneapolis. From the moment we began piling our luggage – and the six of us – in the minivan, until we arrived back on Thursday evening, we were haunted with questions.

It didn't take long. As we cruised the Northeast Extension, the cell phones came out. "We're driving to Minneapolis. Yes, we're driving," "We're going to hang out with a church that's Mennoniting," "No, I don't know where we're sleeping," "Yes, there are six of us in a minivan," "I'm not really sure when we'll be back," "Actually, I just met half of these people." We all struggled to answer questions about "what are you doing?"

After layovers at Quaker Steak & Lube, Cici's Pizzeria, the Goshen Co-op Market, The Electric Brew, and a cheese shop in Wisconsin, we arrived in the twin cities at 7:00 pm, Saturday evening. Our group probably overwhelmed Mark and Amy Van Steenwyck when we stormed unabashedly giddy, having traveled for two straight days.

Mark is the leader of Missio Dei (Latin for "God's mission") – a church plant of that is joining Mennonite Church USA and has connected with Franconia Conference through Emergent

Village connections.. The Saturday night of our arrival marked the second gathering of Mark's "Christarchy" fellowship.

As the six of us Pennsylvanians and eight Minnesotans lounged on couches in the Van Steenwyck's living room, we continued our theme of questions at Mark's "Christarchy" gathering, which is a discussion that strives to mesh Christianity and anarchism. Mark asked the group, "What are the abandoned places and who are the abandoned people in your neighborhood?" and "what's keeping you from ministering to them?"

An area college student expressed her struggle between a call to minister to the homeless and her mother's nervousness for her safety; a 30-something man, wearing clothes he designed himself told of his struggles as a youth pastor in an affluent community; Steve admitted he doesn't know how to reach out to his diverse community in Philadelphia's Mount Airy neighborhood; meanwhile, a woman from Peru held a side conversation with Ale in Spanish.

The discussion lasted two hours and culminated in a barrage of snacks; among them was our gift of a Mrs. Benner's funny cake from Landis' Supermarket in Telford, PA.

Missio Dei worships publicly on Sunday evenings in the basement of a coffee shop on the West Bank of Minneapolis.. We attended the first gathering of these 18 diverse persons – a third of which included our group – in their new space where the walls still hold posters from the days when it was a movie rental outlet.

The worship of this eclectic group of people is informal. There is singing. There are questions. People walk around. We were clearly worshipping together, as the role of "worship leader" was shared around the circle. Afterwards, a guy told Steve about how he'd given up on church but now finds hope within this setting, within Ana-



baptist values. One woman even mentioned that she felt safe in this space even though her family had experienced abuse within the church.

On Tuesday morning we said farewell to our newfound friends and set off through the corn fields of Iowa. The Beatles, Linkin Park and Jay-Z, salsa music, and the Red Hot Chili Peppers, marked our venture through the high plains as we ended up in Des Moines. Our primary task here was to visit Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) student and Ministry Inquiry Program (MIP) participant John Tyson from the Souderton congregation who is interning at Christ Community Church, which recently joined Central Plains Mennonite Conference.

Before visiting, John had warned me, “These guys are different,” referring to the church’s three pastors. It didn’t take long to live up to this statement, as we had the privilege of meeting up with John and pastors Kent McDougal and Mike Gulker at their favorite coffee shop, which doubles as a bar. As U2 tunes blasted and nearby college students acted like stereotypical college students, the discussion around our table started rolling, questions were asked, and if you didn’t bring your “A Game,” you were left struggling to keep up. The conversation was intense.

Steve, John, and I stayed up until about 3:00 am that night discussing the summer’s challenges. “I think I have already read about 3,000 pages since being here [two weeks],” he said.

John isn’t only participating in the Ministry Inquiry Program to learn how to read more effectively. He is partially, maybe mostly, learning how to lead a congregation more effectively. “I’m learning what it means and how important it is to have a liturgy, how to be a worship leader without a lectern.”

John’s learning to intelligently discuss academic theology with Mike, his supervisor, who graduated from Duke University. He says, “Mike told me to ask him, ‘what the heck are you guys talking

about?’ whenever I want.” John, I feel like I don’t ask that question enough, especially at church.

After we made sure to visit a coffee shop the next morning – we had done that in every city so far – we headed east on Interstate 80 for Goshen, IN to visit Jordan Good, a member of the Bally congregation, and like John, a sophomore at EMU and MIP participant at Walnut Hill Mennonite Church.

The only time our theme of questions didn’t blatantly arise during trip was when we met with Jordan and his supervising pastor, Jane Buller, in the couch-clad youth room at Walnut Hill. Our conversation varied from women in leadership to issues with roadside church signs. “No one from the community is going to come if they don’t know when our worship service is,” she said.

I quickly chimed in about how Salford (my home congregation) recently had to take their sign down on Route 113; Jordan recalled that Bally bought our sign from Salford but hasn’t installed it; Ale mentioned how Philadelphia Praise Center just got a new sign but had gone without one for months; and Steve, Felicia, Krista, and Jessica all agreed that their home congregations had sign issues. Eight people, eight churches, eight sign problems. It was an issue worth noting.

As we left north Goshen in search of Das Dutchman Essenhaus (an Amish-style restaurant), I unearthed the metaphor – back to our theme of questions – this poses for the Mennonite Church: What holds us back from telling people who we are and what we’re about? What prevents us from descriptively identifying ourselves in what seems to be such a simple, trivial matter? Maybe there is some centripetal force that is keeping something in, something that longs to be released.

Remembering the beginning of our trip when none of us could describe who we were or what we were doing, maybe we should have put a sign on our van: An entourage on the move. Pull over, and let’s ask some questions.

Why bother with road trips?

Krista Ehst:

“I was surprised when we started talking about the early church after having driven for two days in a minivan, wondering how driving cross-country with our iPods, laptops, and gas stops related to the spread of the early church throughout the Roman empire. The early church was not a massive body in one place, but consisted of diverse groups of people spread far and wide. This did not mean that individual churches existed independently or were completely isolated from one another. The Silk Road system, which we titled the “e-mail of the Roman empire” enabled people to visit and made it possible for writings such as Paul’s epistles to move between groups.”

Excerpted from Krista’s blog entry at franconiaconference.org



Reflections from the Silicon Valley:

Walking boldly into our future

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have to work so hard to find you.” This phrase has stuck with me over the last few weeks. I hear it replayed in my head virtually every day. Why was it that Shane had to look so hard to find us? Shane grew up in a Christian home in North America.

Yet by the time he was an adult, his only encounter with Anabaptism was from sitting in his mother-in-law’s Amish decorated living room. Shane’s story was just one of a few I heard through speakers and conversations of how North American Christians are looking hard to find people like us. They wish a Christian group existed that believed in the centrality of Jesus, in the power of community, and in the possibility of peace. But they simply don’t know we exist. The way of life that we have been striving to practice throughout the last 500 years simply remains a hidden treasure that much of the Christian church would love to find.



Marlene Frankenfield, Franconia Conference Youth Pastor, presented a report from the Youth Assembly to delegates

Franconia Conference by the numbers

Adults: 108

Volunteers: 4

Youth: 314

Junior high: 11

Children: 7

Preschool: 3

Infants: 1

TOTAL: 448

This information was compiled by Mennonite Church USA

I’m a young(er) adult. And Like many of my peers, I often bemoan how our tradition often seems more interested in studying the past than dreaming of the future. However, a week spent in San Jose, CA as a delegate has helped to re-frame a few past perceptions.

I believe the Adult Delegate Assembly was a time of soul formation for the new denomination. Remember, we are only six years old! As we discussed resolutions pertaining to health care, creation care, and ecumenism, it was evident that the soul of this new denomination continues to take shape. The decisions made at these sessions will determine how future generations understand themselves as a church, and will inform how we dream about our future.

Besides delegate sessions, I was encouraged by speakers in both the adult and youth worship services. Shane Hipps, a first generation Mennonite from Arizona, was one of these speakers. On Thursday morning, Shane shared pieces of his life journey that have led him to Anabaptism. Towards the end of his inspiring talk, Shane offered this lament: “I wish I didn’t

San Jose was a place to find encouragement and form conviction. I’m encouraged that our denominational leaders are teaching us to honor and learn from valuable parts of our past; but also, they make it clear that we are called to boldly walk into a future that might look very different from our past. And I’m convicted to sing a favorite song of my childhood: “Hide it under a bushel, No! I want to let it shine.” Many North American Christians are in search of a faith practiced from our perspective. And they should not have to look so hard to find it.

Anna Groff and Felicia Moore (New Beginnings) participate in young adult conversations in San Jose.



Sitting at a table with the ideal church

Gwen Groff, *Bethany*
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I was looking forward to San Jose for several reasons, some more noble than others. Coming from rural Vermont, I wanted to watch a big city fireworks display on July 4th, sing hymns in a gathering with more than two tenors, and take in some great workshops.

I then realized that our table was my ideal church.

The part I was most surprised to enjoy, though, were the delegate sessions. One day, the youth joined around our tables, and we learned from the young man who joined our group about his ideal church, which includes a chocolate bar. I then realized that our table was my ideal church.

We had racial and age diversity, and we represented the most amazing assortment of church models: one led by a white male lead pastor; one with a co-pastor team, a man and woman, both married, but not to each other; one with a woman lead pastor; one with no paid leadership; one with no members; along with a retirement community. The member-less church was made up entirely of homeless or mentally ill people, and their pastor said that given the issues their congregation deals with, they could not possibly

draw membership lines between who's in and who's out.

Our group sometimes felt like we were often rubber-stamping decisions that had already been made before we came to San Jose. We were usually presented one side of an issue, which allowed most items to pass without much dissent. While this creates a sense of unity in this new denomination, it seems to make delegates' work less vital. One of the delegates in our group noted, "Surely these topics were hotly debated in the Constituency Leadership Council before being presented here. Why aren't we allowed to hear any of those dissenting voices?"

An exception to this pattern, however, was when we discussed, but didn't vote on, a statement that calls for an, "end [to] the practice of disciplining or expelling congregations." Perhaps because no vote was expected opposing sides were presented, as two conference ministers offered differing perspectives. As a signer of the statement, I thought I had looked at it from very angle. But the statements of the ministers, the reflections of my table group, and the widely varied thoughts offered in the open mic discussion, enlarged my perspective.

I suspect I was not the only one at San Jose sitting with the ideal church. I wonder if others wished we had a little more work to do together.



San Jose Convention by the numbers

Adults: 1,905

Volunteers and speakers: 231

Youth and sponsors: 3,811

Junior high: 179

Children: 104

Preschool: 24

Infants: 43

TOTAL: 6,297

This information was taken from an article by Everett J. Thomas in the 2007-07-04 issue of The Mennonite.

Dan Leonard,
West Philadelphia
Mennonite Fellowship



photo by David Landis

Leave it behind, so we can live the call

Daniel Landes, *Doylestown*
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The Mennonite church is dying.

Or should I say, my Mennonite church is dying. I don't mean my specific congregation but the Mennonite church that I have known all my life. The same church in which I was raised as a child, baptized, and welcomed into as a member, is facing certain extinction, and yet that gives me hope for the future of Mennonites in this country.

I didn't come to this conclusion in a week, but my trip as a delegate to San Jose for the Mennonite Church USA Convention opened my eyes to this reality. When Mennonites from all over the country gathered for a week of business, worship, and seminars, the signs of extinction were clear.

The church that I believe will die is a Mennonite church that refuses to let go of 300 years of tradition. This church was in clear view in San Jose, but at the same time I witnessed another church in San Jose that has given me hope for the future.

Both churches were evident when the 2006 Mennonite Member Profile was presented in a delegate session. Seventy percent of Mennonites in the United States are over the age of 45. This is in contrast with a survey in 1972 when only 46% of us were over the age of 45. The end result of this trend is a church that literally dies out, but I don't think that is the future.

Another part of this profile was a look at a sample of Racial/Ethnic congregations. The results from these congregations present anything but a dying church, either physically or spiritually. During the past five years, around a quarter of new members who have joined the church have fit into the Racial/Ethnic category. These churches and their members are more likely to be evangelically minded and less tied down to their local communities.

This became clear when I had the opportunity near the end of my week in San Jose to meet with some young adults from Franconia Mennonite Conference. This included some members of the Philadelphia Praise Center, a multi-racial congregation and

Franconia Conference's newest member congregation. In conversation with these young adults I saw hope for the future of the Mennonite church. Here were Mennonites who were truly focused on the reign of God with none of the apathy that seems to weigh many of our congregations down.

I also found this passion for a Mennonite church that looks different in other ways at the Convention. In worship we sang songs in many languages and in many styles. Speakers challenged us to combine the strengths of our Mennonite heritage

How can this aging church I know...survive?

– such as our peace witness – with a desire to live and share the love of Jesus.

I ultimately left San Jose wondering: how can this aging church I know, tied down from centuries of being separated from society and maintaining uniformity in theology and practice, survive?

I went to the convention as a delegate and enjoyed participating in the sessions, but what I will remember from my time in San Jose was meeting the members from Philadelphia Praise Center. The church will not become extinct if we can learn from churches such as Philadelphia Praise Center. The problem is that we must leave behind much of what it means to be a Mennonite if we want to follow their example. Are we ready to let the church mired in tradition die and embrace a Mennonite church that will live the call?

Aldo Siahaan (Philadelphia Praise Center) and Dan Landes at the adult closing worship.



photo by David Landis

Young adult Delegate to Assembly (YoDA)

YoDA is an initiative that began in 2003 to orient first-time young adult delegates. In Charlotte there were about 30 YODAs. This number increased to 45 in San Jose.

Goshen College pioneered this initiative for San Jose, setting aside money to send 10 young adults: three current students, four 2007 graduates, and three recent alums.

This information was adapted from an article by Kelli Yoder, titled, "Young adults hope to bridge age gap."

Conference Related Organizations receive name change:

Recognizing ministries as more than organizations

Gay Brunt Miller

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One word can make a difference! In a former role, I vividly remember the day I misread my boss's handwriting and typed "now" instead of "not" in a letter to the FDA. It almost cost me my job and my company significant credibility.

For the past six years we have referred to Franconia Mennonite Conference's relationship with 23 entities beyond congregations as "Conference Related Organizations" (CROs). This term has become a well-accepted and understood in Franconia Conference circles. These "entities" with whom we have a formal relationship include four schools, three camps, four groups that serve senior citizens, two historical organizations, three



organizations that provide services to clients and families with mental or developmental challenges, a radio ministry, a prison ministry, and five groups that are local branches of broader church initiatives (MCC, MEDA, or MDS). (See page 15 for a complete listing of these organizations.)

As I relate to these organizations and their leaders, one common theme consistently emerges. For these organizations and their leaders, what they do and how they do what they do is important. Their work and calling is more than to be a business or a social service agency. These organizations truly see their work as ministry.

And over the past five years we've been sharing their stories. Intersections has featured many stories of how these organizations have touched lives in the name of Christ. Over the years articles with titles such as "A Moment of Grace," "Help for the Least of These," "Counting Blessings," "Faith Walk Leads to Holy Moment in CD Pond," "Entertaining Angels," "Repentance and

Renewal in Zurich and Beyond," "Anatomy of a Calling," "Walking the Talk," "Neighbor Helping Neighbor," "Vigil for Peacemakers," and "The Gospel is Our Daily Mission," belie the stuff of ministry, not just business.

This is something to celebrate! This is ministry with credibility. These ministries may be imperfect and made up of fallible people, yet God is using them and those of you who are part of them to do ministry in this region and beyond.

Christ's admonition in Matthew 25:35-36 calls for many groups, both literally and figuratively: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." This is the very essence of what God has called us, as followers, to do!

The transition of language, from "Conference Related Organizations" to "Conference Related Ministries," is one small way that Franconia Conference can recognize and continue to build the integrity of these relationships into relationships that transcend administrative paperwork and into living and vital partnerships of joining hands and hearts to do the work which Christ is calling us all to in this region and in this world.

God is doing good things through these wonderful ministries, and I believe that God wants to do even greater things, as all of us who make up Franconia Conference — congregations, Conference Related Ministries, and Partners in Mission — continue to seek how God wants to use us... together... to God's glory, in this region, and in the broader reign of God.



Photos from Bethany Birches Camp, Plymouth, VT. Kristina Landis of the Franconia congregation is visible in the photo on the bottom right. All photos by Tim Moyer of the Blooming Glen congregation.



Intersecting with CRMs

Isaiah 43:18-19
"Forget the former things: do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up: do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland."

From the dock to the checkout:

32 years of caring, sharing and volunteering

Sara J. Kolb, *Plains*
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photo provided
by Sara J. Kolb

Volunteers at Care
and Share Shoppes

Intersecting
with CRMs

Care and Share
Shoppes, Inc.

To improve the quality of life for people suffering from poverty, oppression, and natural disaster by creating a market for reusable items and expanding the market for creations by third world crafts persons. We do this because of our faith in Jesus Christ and our belief that God's love is for all people.



Care & Share Shoppes, Inc. began its mission here in the Souderton Center on November 3, 1975. This was a vision that came to fruition by Wayne Clemens, Norman and Janet Vincent, Bob Kratz, Harold and Mrytle Mininger, and the late Walton Hackman. By April 10, 1976, the first \$10,000 check was given to Russell Musselman, Franconia Mennonite Conference treasurer, who handed it to John Hostetler, Mennonite Central Committee Material Aid Director.

When Care & Share began in 1975, 40 Mennonite and Brethren in Christ congregations provided the volunteers and a monthly donation to help cover the rent. These were ways that the churches were directly involved. As customers entered the store, they were reminded by the signage— that this mission was being done “In the Name of Christ,” the MCC motto.

Today the operations continue with the same values and integrity even though there have been several changes of location for the business over the past 32 years. We have moved from where the Franconia Conference offices are presently, to four individual stores at the other end of the shopping center. Generous donations come in daily, which keep the clothing, furniture and variety stores well stocked. Each donation prolongs the usefulness of quality used items. A purchase from an MCC thrift shop improves people's lives by supporting the work of MCC and saving the earth's resources – recycling and reusing. Ten Thousand Villages stocks new items each month from 32 developing countries. The sale of these items assists families with housing, food and education for their children. We are very blessed as needs are met in our community and around the world.

We presently have 28 paid employees. However, our operation is only successful because of our 774 volunteers. Ten of the original volunteers are still volunteering with us today. One of those persons is Nancy Mininger. Nancy began volunteering because of an invitation from her mother-in-law, Mrytle Mininger, to sort clothing. She volunteered in a variety of ways, including working with Ruth Houpt to set up displays in the Clothing Shoppe. Presently, Nancy volunteers about 20 hours a week. Nancy's busy sorting and pricing seasonal items, toys and other items donated to the variety store. She helps on the dock when needed, volunteering at least one weekend a month. Nancy is a member of the Frederick Mennonite Church, where she has volunteered a lot of her time by playing the piano, teaching Sunday School, and lending nursery care. She organizes the volunteers from Frederick Mennonite Church who occasionally volunteer on a Friday evening, and in recent years Nancy's husband, Ray, has volunteered his construction abilities. Ray also presently serves as Chair of the Board of Directors. Their six grandchildren have all volunteered here at different times. The mission begun by Harold and Mrytle Mininger helped to start, has continued on for several generations!

From 1976 to present, we have contributed over \$8,000,000 to MCC. It is because of our mission and the support of our community that this has been possible. Our Board of Directors and General Manager oversee the work of the three thrift stores and Ten Thousand Villages. Each shop has an advisory team. This team provides support for the manager, makes suggestions about the operation of the shoppe, and gives the shoppe team advice about new or on-going projects in the shoppe. In Montgomery Newspapers' recent Reader's Choice awards we were voted the 2007 #1 Thrift Store Winner.

Ray and Nancy Mininger



photo provided by Ray Mininger

Mennonite Disaster Service volunteers:

The body at work

Dottie Reed, *Souderton*
dlreed472@comcast.net

My husband and I are retired from full-time occupations and are now busy with volunteer church and community activities. Shouldn't we be relaxing more, traveling more? We are getting older and some things are harder for us, but we still have skills and expertise that could be used.

John 13:14 says, "So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash each other's feet." Jesus often instructed his followers to serve others and Jesus served by putting others first. And so it was that my husband Keith and I decided that we could serve the Lord by using our skills with Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) for the month of January.

After the holiday break, long-term volunteers began arriving at New Iberia, Louisiana. These "long-termers" were from Colorado, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, British Columbia, Manitoba, and Alberta. What a diverse group! Our commonality was that we were there to serve the Lord.

Keith's first challenge was to build a center beam, 2 x 12 x 46 feet long. With others pitching in, the beam was quickly built, but Keith began to fear that human power alone would not be able to lift it. A set of short-term volunteers arrived that Sunday night, fifteen of whom were from Franconia Conference congregations. All 30 pairs of hands hoisted the beam into place. "Oh me, of little faith!" The beam was lifted and placed in the correct position within 10 minutes.

After the beam was up, everything began to fit. When we needed framers, we got framers; when we needed roofers, roofers arrived; and when we needed dry-wallers, they came or volunteers who were willing to learn.

When Keith first met Miss Janora Arceneaux, the beneficiary of the house, her first question to him was, "Do you really think you can finish my house in seven weeks?" "With God's help and willing hands, we will," replied Keith. She continued to have doubts.

Miss Janora's 14 year-old son, Jacob, would come home from school and ask what he could do to help. Each week he wanted to meet the new volunteers and get to know them.

I was asked to serve as a cook with three others. At first I was disappointed that I would not be

able to be out among the survivors, but there were many opportunities to interact with the homeowners and hear their stories.

When we left home, we were only planning to be away one month. But with Keith's expertise in plumbing, electrical, and carpentry skills, he was asked to stay for another month, to which we agreed. Since I had obligations at home, I could only stay for one more week.

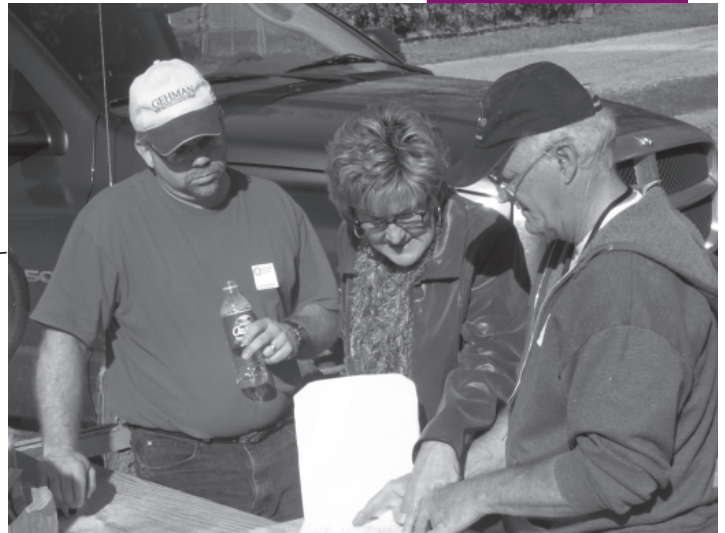
On Friday, February 23rd, four dedications were held: one for a brand new house, two for renovated houses, and another for a church. Each homeowner was presented with a wall hanging (quilted by MDS Sister-Link friends from Colorado and Pennsylvania), a Bible, and a copy of, "The Hammer Rings Hope," along with hugs and tears of joy from the volunteers.

We heard one thing over and over again: "You're here. You said you would come on Monday, and here you are." Often landowners are promised work by a local firm or another group, but no one shows up. We were asked many questions: "Why do so many people give a week of their vacation time to come help me? They don't even know me." "Why would they leave their families to come here?"

"MDS can only build houses. It is up to the owner to make it a home," said Rudy Janzen, a long-term volunteer from Alberta, at the dedication for Miss Janora's new house in Delcambre, LA. The seven foot block foundation was laid in December. With the help of volunteers, including many from Franconia Conference, the house was completed in seven weeks.

What brings you to volunteer your time and energy? No matter if you remove debris, muck out basements, tarp a roof, drywall and muddle for the first time, or cook for the volunteers, the followers and the body of Christ are active, alive, and witnessing.

photo provided
by Dottie Reed



Janora Arceneaux and Keith Reed

Intersecting with CRMs

Mennonite Disaster Service

*Helping God's
healing and hope
flow to those whose
lives were affected
by disaster.*

1 Corinthians 12:12

*"For just as the
body is one
and has many
members, and all
the members of
the body, though
many, are one
body, so it is with
Christ."*

Embracing God's mission:

A call of courage and confidence, not comfort

Jenifer Eriksen Morales

jeriksenmorales@franconiaconference.org

I was eight years old, but remember the moment clearly. The table at the front of the sanctuary was set, and the Alpha congregation was silently praying. I tried to pray, but was overwhelmed by the stirring within and around me compelling me to go forward. I followed the movement of the Spirit and left my chair. Although my parents said I could not take communion and had to wait until I was older and baptized, my need to follow the pull of Love was strong. I walked over to my pastor, knelt down next to him and whispered, "Uncle Henry, I love Jesus and Jesus loves me. I know I'm young and not baptized, but I want to follow Jesus and I need to be a part of Christ and this church. Please, can I take communion?"

Pastor Swartley swept me up in a giant hug. He interrupted the congregation's prayer, told them what I said and asked those who agreed I could participate to stand. The entire congregation stood. Many had tears in their eyes. I don't remember the taste of the bread or the grape juice. But I recall being included at the table and the embraces from the body of Christ following the service inviting me to know and follow Jesus.

"I was looking at a church in the midst of a moment of divergence. History, tradition, polity, faith, and past, present, and future experiences collided."

In hindsight, I realize as I awaited the congregation's response, I was looking at a church in the midst of a moment of divergence. History, tradition, polity, faith, and past, present, and future experiences collided with my question. This was a significant moment in my spiritual journey and for the congregation who later decided to regularly include children at the Lord's Table by serving crackers and grapes.

Because I was blessed to be raised in a home dedicated to the Christian faith, and a Mennonite church, my journey in life and faith are interrelated. While I can name situations where a deeper understanding of God, community and self emerged, I have no "testimony" but rather



numerous stories of God at work in, around, through, and in spite of me as the Holy Spirit continues to call. I was pushed to transcend various comfort zones in my choice to attend Eastern Mennonite University. A semester in Central America opened my eyes to issues such as poverty, racism, international relations and literacy. Living and worshiping with a Catholic family helped me see spirituality through the eyes of others and challenged my Mennonite understandings.

In the middle of my tenure at EMU God called me to short term mission work in Bethlehem, the West Bank. This proved arduous, as I experienced turmoil from the political situation, cultural differences, and difficult team dynamics. Though I learned much and gained a deep love and appreciation for the historical and worldwide church, I returned to EMU doubting myself, my faith and my God. Friends and the campus pastor supported me through this painful experience. In the end, my relationship with God, and my Anabaptist identity deepened. Remarkably, during this tumultuous time God continued to work. I discovered an interest in working with people from different countries, and my friends encouraged me to pursue pastoral ministry. A seminary course, "Growing Churches," awakened a passion for church growth and redevelopment. Though I was certain of my calling into ministry, I struggled with my role as a woman due to the tradition in which I was raised.

Instead, I began coordinating an adult and family literacy program. I entered this job ill-equipped and hesitant. Through God's wisdom, guidance, and grace, much determination, a passion for the people and community I served, and a supervisor

Executive Minister, Noel Santiago offered these words about Eriksen Morales:

"Jenifer is both a fulfillment and a beginning; she is a fulfillment in the sense of the vision Conference Minister Donella Clemens moved us toward by calling us to bring on staff another female Conference Minister," Santiago said. "She is a beginning in the sense of her now being available, along with all the other staff, as a tremendous gift."

who taught and mentored me to lead confidently, I developed the skills necessary to provide leadership for the program through a time of transition which led to rapid and sustaining growth.

In the meantime, my home congregation at Alpha was going through a difficult period and the congregation gave me space to lead. They allowed me to bring ideas that enabled the small church to subsist in a new and meaningful way with ample opportunities to hone my preaching and teaching skills. Their trust was both humbling and empowering. Though the church didn't traditionally support women in ministry they came to understand and respect my call. The same people to embrace me as a called child also helped me embrace and test my calling as a woman leader. Their support gave my husband and me the courage to move our family to Indiana so I could follow God's call to study at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (Elkhart, IN).

While at AMBS my faith became more grounded in scripture and theology. I was able to discern and claim my passion and gifts for teaching, working interculturally, and leadership. I found this most visible in the area of growth and

development. I realized a need in the church for support during times of transition and felt specifically called to work in this area as an interim pastor and a resource person. I am committed to helping church leaders develop practices that enable congregations to cope in the midst of change. Through opportunities to study, worship and serve with congregations in transition and turn-around, I have seen God at work reconciling, transforming and equipping congregations.

The many stories I hear of God at work in Franconia Conference congregations as they participate in Jesus' mission are exciting. I sense a dedication to following God's call to the continual process of learning and growth along with the vision, passion, grace, and courage required to do so. I am attracted to the rich history, the ever-increasing diversity, and the commitment to "equip leaders to empower others to embrace God's mission." I suspect at times history, tradition, polity, faith, and past, present and future ideas and experiences collide. But I am certain God is at work creating and recreating, restoring and renewing. For this reason I look forward to ministering with and in the congregations of Franconia Conference.

A four year process ends with an "amen"

Felicia Moore, *New Beginnings*
fmoore@franconiaconference.org

Pastor Jon Moore wrestled with the idea of becoming an ordained pastor. He started attending Bristol Mennonite Church (which became New Beginnings Community Church soon afterward) in May of 1986, through a relationship with Raymond Jackson, the congregation's pastor at the time. Moore gave his first sermon in August that year and was later appointed as a chairperson to the administration council in December.

After some time at New Beginnings, Moore began to feel God calling him to participate in ministerial leadership trainings. In 1999, Pastor Moore returned to help the congregation, becoming interim pastor. He was interested in ministry, but the idea of ordination seemed far-off.

After years of discerning, people from near and far came to celebrate and witness Pastor Jon Moore's ordination on May 20, 2007. The special day started with an unusual morning worship at New Beginnings congregation, filled with a time of testimonies and "hallelujahs." Everyone was invited to a special fellowship meal before the afternoon service.

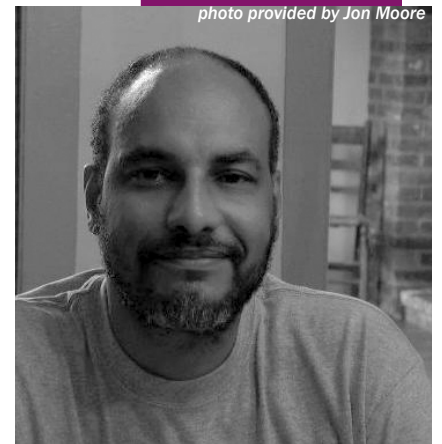
In the afternoon, the sanctuary was crowded. The whole congregation was part of the service in some shape or form. Many chose to celebrate by presenting a praise dance or simply sharing a word of encouragement. Conference Minister, Ertell Whigham, who has known Pastor Moore for years, officiated. He stated, "When you're licensed, you do ministry. When you're ordained you are ministry. The ministry is you." Many present nodded and agreed with an "amen." At the end of the service, Pastor Ertell asked the church council to surround Pastor Moore so that everyone could extend their arms in prayer. Gifts were presented to Pastor Moore and he was dressed in a white robe and given a new Bible. It was the first time in Franconia Conference that an African American was ordained by another black American pastor.

Pastor Moore believes that ordination means his life is now about ministry and shows a long-term commitment to the leadership at New Beginnings. He wants to be realistic with people but to show something different about God's love. He says, "My hope is to touch lives, one at a time."

"But I am certain God is at work creating and recreating, restoring and renewing. For this reason I look forward to ministering with and in the congregations of Franconia Conference."

-Jenifer Eriksen Morales

photo provided by Jon Moore



An event on strategic peacebuilding:

“It is time for creative new thinking.”

Mary Lou Cummings, *Perkasie cumminghome@comcast.net*

According to the teachings of Eastern Mennonite University professor, Dr. Lisa Schirch, peacebuilding is a verb full of adventure, drama, and creativity. Learning how to build peace has not only taken her to Iraq, but also to West Point and Carlisle Military Academies as well as Joint Forces Command – not the usual pacifist’s approach.

In her experiences in Iraq with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), Schirch found that community development projects – digging wells, sharing water, starting small businesses – were natural peacebuilding events. “Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish people came together as they worked out how to build the well and how to share the water,” she said. “And the development projects created jobs for young men in villages where the unemployment rates have soared to 50-70 percent. Imagine what American cities would be like if the unemployment rates were that high.”

As she was preparing to leave, Iraqis came to her and said, “It was wonderful that you came here to teach us about peacebuilding with MCC, but what are you doing about U.S. foreign policy at home?” According to Schirch, she’s heard that countless times before while working in various places around the world, and most recently while she was in Indonesia this past May.

Her response to this question is to spend about two days each week in Washington, D.C., meeting with many different groups and individuals, members of Congress, and military personnel. Her ability to listen with genuine respect often gains her access to real conversations. For

The gathering included involved both church and community persons.

example, Schirch says she hears two sets of questions that usually begin the conversation on peacebuilding. The first is, “Why do other countries hate us? What will keep us safe?” The second is,

Community groups cooperate to sponsor forum on peace

Dr. Lisa Schirch, an associate professor at EMU’s Center for Justice and Peacebuilding, Harrisonburg, VA, visited the Philadelphia area on May 20 to speak about “Strategies for Peace in Iraq and the World.”

The visit was sponsored by the Eastern District/Franconia Mennonite Conference Peace & Justice Committee, Upper Bucks Coalition for Peace Action, Pennridge Ministerial Association, and the Perkasie congregation.

For more information on EMU’s Center for Justice and Peacebuilding, visit emu.edu/cjp



photo provided by Mary Lou Cummings

About 70 persons attended Schirch’s forum at Rockhill Community’s Activity Center, Sellersville, PA..

“How can we protect the American way of life? How can we keep our cheap oil and protect our economic dominance?”

“Well, war has not produced the hoped-for safety; in fact it has been drastically counter-productive. So, what would work better? To protect the American way of life for the next 40 years, the U.S. will have to reserve for itself half of the planet’s resources. That may not be viable! It is time for creative new thinking.”

In her presentation, Schirch described a national security strategy as a three-part framework: development, diplomacy, and defense. All three are important. However, while the U.S. spends \$1 billion per week on the Iraq War, it only spends half of one percent of the national budget on international development assistance, and much of that serves only to bolster U.S. interests. Schirch directs a project called The 3D Initiative at Eastern Mennonite University’s (Harrisonburg, VA) Center for Justice and Peacebuilding, a project that aims to advocate for more balanced spending and effort in development and diplomacy.

“The failures in Iraq have many people in the military beginning to lose their faith in firepower and interested in thinking about a different way of building security. The military academies are introducing courses on conflict resolution.”

One reason for much of her travel abroad is that universities in many countries ask for help to initiate peacebuilding and conflict resolution courses in their curriculums. This is new and positive, as it has become clear – on an international scale – that war does not produce much. Except hatred.

For more information, see 3Dsecurity.org or *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, by Schirch.



photo provided by Mary Lou Cummings

DIRECTORY OF CONFERENCE RELATED MINISTRIES

*Bethany Birches Camp, 2610 Lynds Hill Road, Plymouth, VT 05056; TEL: 802-672-5220; www.vtchildrenscamp.com. *Inviting youth to growth, joy, hope, healing, and excitement in everyday life, through Jesus Christ.*

Camp Men-O-Lan, 1415 Doerr Road, Quakertown, PA 18951; TEL: 215-679-5144; www.menolan.org. *As a Christian camp, our mission is to use the unique qualities of an outdoor setting for developing Christian commitment, character, leadership, and service, and to provide a place for retreat, worship, study, fellowship, recreation, and personal development for individuals, families, and groups.*

Care & Share Thrift Shoppes, Inc., 783 Route 113, Souderton, PA 18964; TEL: 215-723-0315; FAX: 215-723-5907; careshareshoppes@verizon.net. *To improve the quality of life for people suffering from poverty, oppression, and natural disaster by creating a market for reusable items and expanding the market for creations by third world crafts persons. We do this because of our faith in Jesus Christ and our belief that God's love is for all people.*

*Christopher Dock Mennonite High School, 1000 Forty Foot Road, Lansdale, PA 19446; TEL: 215-362-2675; FAX: 215-362-2943; www.dockhs.org. *In partnership with the family and the church, developing the God-given abilities of students in preparation for responsible stewardship of life as members of God's people in a global society.*

*Community Home Services, Souderton Center, 781 Route 113, Souderton, PA 18964; TEL: 215-723-1906; FAX: 215-723-1590; www.community-homeservices.org. *A ministry of support and services to enable the elderly to remain in their own homes.*

Crossroads Gift and Thrift, 206 DeKalb Street, Norristown, PA 19401; TEL: 610-275-3772; crossroadgift-thrift@juno.com.

*Delaware Valley MEDA, PO Box 64653, Souderton, PA 18964; TEL: 215-721-3030; FAX: 215-723-1211; delvalmeda@yahoo.com. *Brings faith and values issues to the marketplace and professions.*

*Dock Woods Community, 275 Dock Drive, Lansdale, PA 19446; TEL: 215-368-4438; FAX: 215-362-2682; www.dockwoods.com; *A living dedication to the enhancement of life for older adults and families rooted in the Mennonite heritage of Christian values.*

*Germantown Mennonite Historic Trust, 6133 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19144; TEL: 215-843-0943; FAX: 215-843-6263; www.meetinghouse.info. *Preserving and sharing the 1770 Mennonite Meeting-house and the stories related to America's first Mennonite settlement and the "Gateway of North American Mennonites" through its four witnesses of history, service, education, and evangelism.*

*Indian Creek Foundation, 420 Cowpath Road, Souderton, PA 18964; TEL: 267-203-1500; FAX: 267-203-1510; www.indcreek.org. *Improving community through services for persons with developmental disabilities.*

*Liberty Ministries, PO Box 87, Schwenksville, PA 19473; TEL: 610-287-5481; FAX: 610-287-5286; www.libertyministries.us. *Offering the message of Grace, Hope & Regeneration to those in prison and recently released.*

*Life With God Broadcasts, PO Box 64092, Souderton, PA 18964; TEL: 610-730-8008; David Kochsmeier, Radio Pastor. *Proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Mennonite Central Committee Material Resource Center Harleysville, 461C Indian Creek Road, Harleysville, PA 19438. TEL: 215:513:9561. *The MCC Material Resource Center of Harleysville serves as a liaison between the MCC Material Resource Center of Ephrata and peace churches of Eastern Pennsylvania. Through this outreach, we share God's love, hope, and joy in the name of Jesus Christ.*

*Mennonite Disaster Service, PO Box 65794, Souderton, PA 18964. www.mds.mennonite.net. *Helping God's healing and hope flow to those whose lives were affected by disaster.*

*Mennonite Historians of Eastern Pennsylvania (Mennonite Heritage Center), PO Box 82, Harleysville, PA 19438; TEL: 215-256-3020; FAX: 215-256-3023; www.mhep.org; *To collect, preserve, and interpret the Anabaptist-Mennonite heritage in order to educate, inspire, and witness to the church and broader community.*

*Peaceful Living, 850 Old Skippack Road, PO Box 130, Lederach, PA 19450; TEL: 610-287-1200; FAX: 610-287-7121; www.peacefulliving.org. *Creating belonging for persons with developmental disabilities within a faith community.*

*Penn Foundation, Inc., 807 Lawn Avenue, Sellersville, PA 18960; TEL: 215-257-6551; FAX: 215-257-9347; www.pennfoundation.org. *Provides continuum of behavioral health care services for all ages. Penn Foundation's Dayspring Counseling Center offers individuals, couples, and families counseling services from a Christian perspective.*

*Penn View Christian School, 420 Godshall Road, Souderton, PA 18964; TEL: 215-723-1196; FAX: 215-723-0148; www.pennview.org. *Penn View Christian School offers academically excellent education from a biblical perspective. The faculty and staff, in partnership with families and churches, seek to nurture the God-given potential of each student in a Christ-centered community.*

*Philadelphia Mennonite High School, 860 North 24th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19130; TEL: 215-769-5363; FAX: 215-769-4063; www.pmhsonline.org. *PMHS exists to provide a Christ-centered, quality education in a multicultural, urban context that equips students to become servant-leaders and peacemakers.*

*Quakertown Christian School, 50 East Paletown Road, Quakertown, PA 18951; TEL: 215-536-6970; FAX: 215-536-2115; www.quakertownchristian.org. *QCS, a Mennonite school, is in partnership with home and church in the process of developing physical, spiritual and social life skills for each child using Biblical values and a challenging academic environment to instill a sense of Christian community and service.*

*Rockhill Mennonite Community, 3250 State Road, Sellersville, PA 18960; TEL: 215-257-2751; FAX: 215-257-7390; www.rockhillmennonite.org. *Providing a wide range of services to meet specific needs and encompass the whole person.*

*Spruce Lake Retreat, RR 1, Box 605, Canadensis, PA 18325-9749; TEL: 800-822-7505; FAX: 570-595-0328; www.sprucelake.org. *To enable and encourage "Christ-centered discoveries in an outdoor setting" by providing opportunities for Christian nurture, meditation, fellowship and recreation in an informal, natural setting for children, youth, adults and families.*

*Souderton Mennonite Homes, 207 West Summit Street, Souderton, PA 18964; TEL: 215-723-9881; FAX: 215-723-9876; www.soudertonhomes.org. *Promotes dignity of life and wellness supported by knowledgeable, caring staff and surrounded by a comfortable, well-maintained environment.*

*denotes charter member

Christian Peacemaker Team participates in Israel-Palestine delegation:

A truthful journey that's just beginning

Erin Odgers, *Plains*
eodgers1982@yahoo.com

village to share his story in hope that we, as US Americans and Canadians, would tell their story once we returned to North America. He encouraged us to tell his story by saying, "When you come here I believe we are like friends, and you can tell our story like friends."

This story is a snapshot into the lives of the Palestinians my teammates and I met while on this 12-day delegation to Israel and Palestine. I have found the Palestinian people to have a great sense of hospitality, resiliency, a commitment to nonviolence, and a hope in a future void of a military occupation. As I sat listening to Hafez, I felt a great sense of responsibility. He was inviting our group into his village to share a meal together and the story of the people of At-Tuwani who have faced threats to their homes, their livelihoods, their families and their land. Just like

"When you come here, we are like friends, and you can tell our story like friends."

Hafez, each Palestinian we met asked that we tell their stories when we return home. Each one possessed a hope that these stories will spread and will change the conscience of U.S. and Canadian people in order to bring about change.

Having been entrusted with these intimate stories, I find that my journey has not ended, even after I have stepped off the plane. Instead, it has just begun. My task is to tell the stories of my new friends in Palestine to my friends here in the U.S. Through these stories, I have a hope, just as I learned from the Palestinians: that the world will see their suffering and call for an end to the injustices they face.

In the remote West bank village of At-Tuwani, our May 2007 Christian Peacemaker Team delegation sat listening to village leader, Hafez, tell stories of the harassment the village faces from the nearby Israeli settlers, and the lack of police investigation and prosecution of these crimes.

He went on to tell us of the time settlers killed

many of their sheep by placing poisonous, barley-covered pellets under the shrubs where the sheep graze. He explained to us, that in the midst of this violence, he has had to make the decision as to whether to retaliate with violent attacks or to resist with non-violent actions. With much contemplation, he came to the conclusion that non-violence is the only solution for the village, explaining to us that, "if we fought back, it would cause more violence."

In response to this violence, Hafez told our group that since 2000, his village has invited both Israeli and international peace groups to come visit the village in order to educate the global community about challenges they face. Christian Peacemaker Teams and Operation Dove – both nonviolent action groups – currently have teams of people living in the village as international observers monitoring children who walk near the settlements to go to school. Hafez said, "I'd like to tell the truth to the world. I know we need time, but with Israeli and international help I have hope." He welcomed our group into his

Erin Odgers and a
Palestinian farmer, outside
of Hebron, West Bank



photo provided by Erin Odgers

Upcoming CPTers:

Mike Derstine, pastor at Plains congregation, will travel with Christian Peacemaker Teams on a similar trip in August. His group will meet with Israeli and Palestinian peace groups in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Monica Haas of the Alpha (NJ) congregation will travel with CPT to Colombia in September.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Franconia Mennonite Conference
771 Route 113
Souderton, PA 18964