



Intersections

Franconia Mennonite Conference • November 2007

Equipping leaders to empower others to embrace God's mission

Opening God's Kingdom:

Two leaders share a vision for Franconia Mennonite Conference

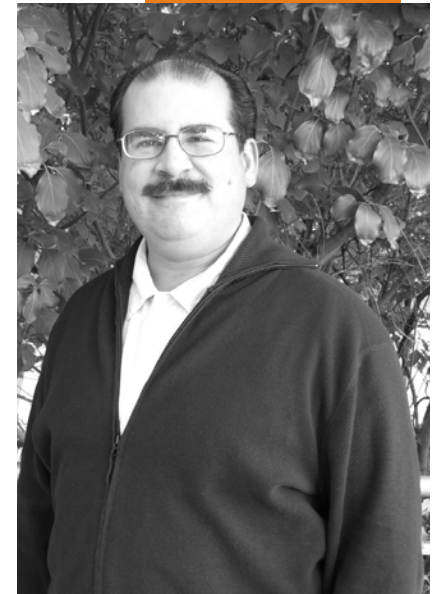
Forrest Moyer, *Blooming Glen*
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Redemptive renewal...a fully-engaged peoplehood... drawing on the best of the Anabaptist tradition...God's unfolding reign in our midst...opening up to the world... coming together...appreciating differences...a passionate call and gifting...offering ourselves like Jesus did...

These are words used by Franconia Mennonite Conference leaders, Noel Santiago and Blaine Detwiler, to describe a vision for the conference. The two men have recently been appointed to conference leadership roles, and they are united in a desire to see this community follow in the way of Jesus.

Noel Santiago is now serving as Franconia Conference's Executive Minister. He is responsible for overall leadership of conference staff and operations, oversight of conference ministry, and coordination of missional partnerships with ministries beyond the conference structure. Noel came to Franconia Conference ten years ago to serve as part of a Mission Leadership Team that worked to help the conference develop a missional orientation in its focus and activity.

Born in Puerto Rico and raised in Lancaster County, PA, Noel describes himself as a "Puerto Rican – Dutchman." Eating shoofly pie in Pennsylvania Dutch country and visiting relatives in Puerto Rico, he grew up "in between" two vibrant cultures, an experience that prepared him at an early age for reaching beyond borders of culture and language. After college, Noel spent time working in Costa Rica through Mennonite Board of Missions and gave leadership to study- and service semesters in Central America for college students from the United States and Canada. From He came to Franconia Mennonite Conference in 1996. Noel says that during his time of work with the conference, he has been blessed to



see its community opening itself up to the world and especially the global south and east. Noel and his wife Juanita and their four children are part of the Blooming Glen congregation and live in Souderton, PA.

Blaine Detwiler's story is different, but also about reaching beyond borders. Blaine was born in Franconia Township, PA, near to Franconia Mennonite Church, where his family attended. In the late 1950s, his parents sold their farm and moved to Susquehanna County, PA, as part of a small migration of farming families from this community who moved to that region and formed Lakeview Mennonite Church. Blaine spent his growing up years far from the geographic center of Franconia Conference and understands what it means to have a peripheral relationship with the conference community. After studying at Delaware Valley College in Doylestown, PA, he returned to his home community and worked as a dairy farmer for 18 years, until he sensed a call to study at seminary. In 1992, he sold his interest in the farm and went to school at Eastern

photos by Tim Moyer

Blaine Detwiler and Noel Santiago



On becoming an open community:

Offering light to the world

Noah Kolb

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Few of us can deny that Franconia Conference has been somewhat of a closed community, given our long history of more than 300 years, a dominantly German culture, a common rural farm mind set, and a commitment to a Biblical/Anabaptist faith that values a simple following of the Way of Jesus.

Having grown up within this community, it was difficult for me to interact with the culture around me. I did not trust the religious community beyond what was already familiar. In 1970 after college and seminary I was ordained as the pastor for the Pottstown (PA) Mennonite Church, an early mission congregation of Franconia Conference.

I was primarily equipped to maintain the faith community in which I was raised. Yet I had a sense that we needed to connect to the larger community and world, if we were going to share our faith with others. I had little clue how to do it and was keenly aware of the tension this produced within me.

When I read the articles in this issue of *Intersections* I was deeply aware that we are in a community that is being transformed. Blaine Detwiler, moderator elect, a trusted brother and pastor who grew up in the heart of conference, carries a vision that takes us far beyond the culture many of us were nurtured in.

“This vision calls us to embrace various origins, cultures, and languages, even here in the Northeast corridor,” Forrest Moyer writes regarding Detwiler’s vision. “It calls us...to reach beyond our own culture and language and to give ourselves to our neighbors in the way that Christ gave himself to the world”.

It shouldn’t surprise us that our recent appointed Executive Minister, Noel Santiago, who was born in Puerto Rico and nurtured in two cultures, sees our conference’s culture opening itself to a larger world. He is encouraged by the way this rich and deep faith community with its strengths and weaknesses has been able to show “God’s goodness” to those who come to it.

Both Noel and Blaine see a new vision of community, a vision that calls us beyond our present realities of culture, language, nationality, and

economic status. It is a vision of people from the east and west and north and south together at the great feast in the kingdom of God. Such a vision brings much hope and encouragement to me.

I take great delight in new pastoral installations: Tom Albright at Whitehall Church, a relatively new disciple from the community beyond our Mennonite boundaries to do community outreach through creative ministry and commissioning; and Firman Gingerich, a conservative Mennonite from a Midwest Anabaptist/Mennonite community, with rich gifts and experiences to lead the Blooming Glen congregation.

The vision becomes reality within new congregations like Peace Mennonite, ministering to people other churches have not reached and Nations Worship Center, bringing Indonesian and other nationalities together for worship, fellowship, and ministry around Christ.

This vision calls for new and creative ways of doing kingdom work even with traditional structures. Sterling Edward carries out a counter-cultural dream nurturing 60,000 children over the last 20 years at Spruce Lake “learning about God’s creation in God’s creation.” And David Kochsmeier, sees greater opportunities beyond Life With God’s weekly radio message and, with the board, develops additional ministries.

And finally the world is coming to us and needs to hear the Gospel of peace. Mary Jane Hershey tells us this wonderful story of forgiveness and peacemaking discovered by Kholeka Kholly, a South African teacher who came to visit in their home for a weekend.

The hungry world is coming to our door. Do we have any bread? Can we live into the vision that Noel and Blaine hold before us? Or will we protect what we have for fear it will be lost? Jesus reminds us by example and word that “it is in giving that we receive.”

We have light to offer the world. Let’s remove the basket that we’ve sometimes kept over it.



Noah Kolb

Opening, continued from page 1

Mennonite Seminary. Upon graduation, he was called back to ministry at his home congregation of Lakeview and has served there as pastor for over a decade. He and his wife Connie have two grown children and three grandchildren.

Blaine began a term of service as Assistant Moderator of Franconia Conference in 2006. He serves on the Conference Board, the Faith and Life Advisory Council, the Vision and Financial Plan Team, and as a representative of Franconia Conference to the Mennonite Church USA Constituency Leaders Council. He sees in Franconia Conference great potential for sharing Christ's love with the world, and he hopes to work for positive growth, as one would work to cultivate a crop or a tree—pruning a bit here, digging around the roots there, “doing what is needful to spur growth.”

Both Blaine and Noel hear the call of God to expand the Kingdom, to include more, to reach beyond what we know and are comfortable with. And with most of the Franconia Conference community situated in a diverse urban/suburban environment, close to urban centers like New York, Washington and Philadelphia and millions of people from all parts of the globe, and with Franconia Conference people living and traveling around the globe on a daily basis, the call to expand our vision becomes all the more compelling.

Franconia Mennonite Conference has a long and rich heritage of Christian faith and witness, but historically the conference has been a closed community that allowed for little diversity in culture, language, and ethnicity. Even in the 20th century, our congregations often remained oriented to a plain Pennsylvania German lifestyle and revolved around extended family relationships. This was a strong culture sometimes difficult for new disciples from varied backgrounds to find a home within and real acceptance.

Blaine Detwiler and outgoing moderator Merrill Moyer at a summer Conference Board meeting.



Nevertheless, Noel has been impressed with the longevity and resilience of the Franconia Conference community. “With its many up and down times, the people of Franconia have adjusted, readjusted, and refocused their efforts on that which they believed God was calling them to. I have seen and experienced this response...I have experienced Franconia opening herself up to the world...in ways that demonstrate the goodness of God in those who came before us.”

Blaine also celebrates the past and the way that Franconia Conference has maintained an Anabaptist witness over the years. He hopes that we can draw from our history the good of Anabaptist faith—for instance, emphasis on practical living of faith and an understanding that we are “Christians first and citizens second”—and leave behind any tendency to work for the status quo or maintain privileged positions.

Blaine speaks of the vision of Christ in Luke 13:29: “People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.” This vision calls us to embrace various origins, cultures, and languages, even here in the Northeast Corridor. It calls us as a conference to expand our vision, to reach beyond our own culture and language and to give ourselves to our neighbors in the way that Christ gave himself to the world.

Noel shares his vision for the conference community in simple form: “That in all we do we end up seeing three things: 1) new believers and, from these, new leaders, 2) freed disciples of Jesus who are passionately living out their call and using their gifts in all arenas of life, and 3) transformed society that has been impacted by the collective engaged alignment of all of God's people in this region being united in Jesus Christ!”

Surely this is vision for a healthy, growing Christian body, equipped to share good news in a diverse environment. May Franconia Conference, with all her strengths and weaknesses, find a part in this expanding community of God's Kingdom.

Forrest Moyer is the Project Archivist for the Mennonite Heritage Center. He is a graduate of Kutztown University and grew up attending Finland Mennonite Church.



Noel Santiago leads a session at a summer Conference Board meeting in Philadelphia

photo provided
by Tom Albright

Tom Albright
Pastor of
Community
Outreach

Whitehall (PA)
Mennonite Church

*Call &
Response:*

Intersections
features the
stories of newly
credentialed
Franconia
Conference
leaders as they
are available.

*The Albright family,
from left: Carolyn,
Tom, Elizabeth,
and Greg*

All are called to minister:

On a Sunday morning...

Tom Albright, *Whitehall*
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It is 9:00 a.m. on Sunday morning; I am eight years old and walking across the lawn from our house to our church's Sunday School. Mrs. Dech, my teacher, is playing the worn upright piano – *Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy In Jesus, but to trust and obey...* Later she will be using the flannelgraph and I'll try to pay attention, but the wall of windows in the folding doors makes me wonder what all the kids out there are doing. Mrs. Dech seems so old, but I believe she loves us despite the fact there are a lot of active boys in this class and we do not always pay attention.

It is 10:00 a.m. on a Sunday morning; I am 18 years old and fast asleep at Muhlenberg College. Campus Worship services do not begin until one o'clock in the afternoon, but I will not be going. Our religion professor has made me question much of what I learned of God, the Bible, and faith. He indicates to us that the Bible is a flawed book filled with mythical stories. I wonder...and not wanting to be a hypocrite, I choose to stay in bed until I can figure all of this out.

It is 11:00 a.m. on a Sunday morning; my wife and I are preparing for our baptisms. I am 34 years old. We have two small children and have been attending a Mennonite church, after searching for a place where our children will be able to learn and we'll be able to grow spiritually.

I accepted Christ as my Savior in college, following an intellectual search for truth and finding that truth in Jesus. We had been active in a large Presbyterian church but were looking

for something more personal. We would never have known the Mennonite church in Whitehall existed if a small postcard had not been delivered in the mail. My wife suggested we go, but I informed her you had to be born into that kind of church. Besides Mennonites dress strangely, and I was not even sure of their theology. My wife assured me that one of the ladies in the photo on the card attended a community Bible study and she seemed quite normal. I reluctantly agreed and now, a year later, here we are in a pool celebrating our baptisms.

“I realize that, if ministry is a river, I am standing in the middle of it and wondering how I got out this far.”

It is 12:00 p.m. on a Sunday morning; we are meeting in our home with a group of five people from our community. We call this meeting “Ripple Effects”. Lunch has been cleared and we are asking about their week. A young man shares that he went to church when he was small and realized in his teen years it was a place filled with hypocrites. A woman with two children shares her grief over her husband leaving her and asking for a divorce. I wonder, “God, what am I doing here, what are they doing here? Surely you have people who know how to answer, help, and care for these people better than I can.”

No answer except that still, small voice encouraging us to keep going. We listen to their stories, their pain and joy. “How should I point them to you? Maybe I should just tell them my story. All right, Lord, I'll tell them I had a Sunday school teacher named Mrs. Dech who taught a group of active children...”

I realize that, if ministry is a river, I am standing in the middle of it and wondering how I got out this far. I know I am called to ministry because I believe all followers of Jesus are called to minister. I see my life as preparation leading to this time, place, and calling. I know it is the Holy Spirit's leading, preparing, and protecting that has gotten me safe this far and I know he will continue to lead. And so through the grace and mercy of God I continue to reach out in his name as pastor of community outreach for Whitehall Mennonite church and its emerging ministry, Ripple Effects.



From Iowa to Pennsylvania:

Ministering along Interstate 80

photo provided
by Firman Gingerich

Firman Gingerich, *Blooming Glen*
firman@bgmc.net

In my late 20's our pastor at Kalona Mennonite Church, Howard Keim, invited me to participate in a leadership apprentice relationship with him. Over several years, I would meet with him periodically to talk about books on ministry and leadership that we were reading. During this time, he invited me to participate in a wide range of congregational leadership experiences, such as writing Bible study guides, leading small groups, and teaching the youth baptism class. After some time he asked me if I would consider preaching on a Sunday morning.

I do not think he realized at the time how much this invitation to preach and engage in leadership exploration was confirming my internal journey. These leadership apprentice experiences were helping me respond to an inner call to some form of ministry that I had experienced as a senior in high school in the late 1960s. I credit a circle of young, dynamic high school teachers at Iowa Mennonite High School for helping me stay engaged with the church in this turbulent time. This early sense of call was very private and I shared it with no one until much later.

After college I spent eight years as an elementary school teacher in Montana and Iowa. Gratefully, Susan, my wife supported me in testing my sense of call to ministry for about five years. After several years, Kalona Mennonite Church sent us off to Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary with a solid blessing and a great deal of financial support to study and prepare for pastoral ministry.

“The mutual synergy and common vision that I have experienced from working with collaborative teams has transformed me.”

In retrospect, I needed this sense of a public call to anchor me. I would not have had the courage to begin a journey of preparing for pastoral ministry without the support and blessing of our home church. I live with much awareness of how valuable a congregation is in influencing and shaping one's call to ministry.

Now, 26 years later, Susan, and I find ourselves in Franconia Mennonite Conference; me as a Pastor



at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church and Susan on the development staff at Christopher Dock Mennonite High School. In the last few months I have been asked often if Southeastern Pennsylvania was on my radar as a potential place to pastor. My first and easy answer is no. My pastoral ministry path has been along Interstate 80 in Iowa and Indiana; I guess I didn't understand that Interstate 80 extended into the Keystone state. I was comfortable with the Midwest.

I think it is how I am wired to do ministry. In my own discernment with Susan and personal friends, I had decided to seek a new pastoral assignment beginning in late summer of 2007. In my pastoral ministry journey, I have grown to value and am enriched by patterns of multiple staff ministry. I made a decision that I wanted to continue in ministry in a multiple staff setting. This was an important factor for consideration when I was invited to begin exploratory conversations with folks at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church. It is no secret that ministry in a multiple staff team takes hard work and discernment from all. However, the mutual synergy and common vision that I have experienced from working with collaborative teams has transformed me tremendously.

I am eager to pay attention to ways God will continue to lead me, our pastoral team, and the lay leadership of Blooming Glen Mennonite Church to respond to God's Spirit with hope and courage as we anchor our life together in Christ.

Firman Gingerich

**Firman
Gingerich**
Pastor

**Blooming Glen
(PA) Mennonite
Church**

*Call &
Response:*

Intersections
features the
stories of newly
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Franconia
Conference
leaders as they
are available.

Equipping congregations to embrace God's mission

Two congregational communities seek membership

Lora Steiner

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At this year's Assembly Gathered, to be held November 9-10 at Franconia Mennonite Church, we will share an assortment of facts, figures, and tidbits to help you get to know them a little better and w

Who: Peace Mennonite Church of East Greenville, (PA) pastored by David Benner.

Where: Peace Mennonite Church is located in the building that formerly housed Shalom Christian Fellowship at 104 Main Street in East Greenville, PA.

The building was built by an Evangelical Congregational Church in 1929 and includes many intricate stained glass windows.

What: Each service includes a time of lighting candles to remember regions of the world and ministries for which the church is praying. After the service ends, there is time for coffee and snacks, which allows for fellowship and further discussion on the sermon.

Peace Mennonite places a special emphasis on learning about and praying regularly for many countries around the globe, as well as those who live in the neighborhood. The congregation is working to send deworming medicine to a village in Southern Sudan; is a supporter of the MAMA project (whose founder, Priscilla Benner, is a leader in the church); and has also befriended a group of persons with disabilities who live across the street from the church building.

Challenges: Peace Mennonite is a small congregation which brings with it the same challenges of any small church, such as making sure that someone is always available to preach the sermon or help lead other parts of the service, if those who regularly do it are away.

What you should know about the church: Peace Mennonite Church is a rejuvenation of what was Shalom Mennonite Church. In 2005, after a number of families left the area, Shalom decided to close its doors for a time of rest and revisioning. The church reopened in March 2006 as Peace Mennonite Church. Sunday morning gatherings are intimate with around 20 persons gathered.

In their own words:

“A lot of what happens with church doesn't just happen on Sunday mornings.”



Above: Margaret Mower lights a candle during a Sunday morning service at Peace Mennonite Church.

Below from left: Duane Hershberger leads a discussion on encouraging your neighbors. Carson Hershberger plays guitar during fellowship time.



o with Franconia Conference

photos by Tim Moyer

ch, two congregations are requesting to formally join Franconia Conference. Below is a ran-
elcome them as part of the conference community.

Who: Nations Worship Center, pastored by Beny Krisbianto. Yunus Perkasa is the associate pastor.

Where: Nations Worship Center is located in the buidling that formerly housed Philadelphia Praise Center, at 1715 McKean Street in Philadelphia, PA. Nations Worship currently rents space in the South Philadelphia neighborhood and is hoping to purchase its own building soon.

What: A typical service includes time for giving testimony, sharing what God is doing in the lives of those who make up the congregation; attendees also read scripture aloud together. Nations Worship has a communal meal most Sundays and shares communion once a month.

The church offers assistance to the Indonesian community in Philadelphia from translation for hospital visits to navigating the immigration process.

Challenges: Like three-quarters of the estimated 10,000 Indonesians living in the city, many of the members do not speak English. Some are also first generation Christians.

What you should know about the church: The congregation is primarily Indonesian and worship gatherings are held primarily in Indonesian. Some Indonesians who've migrated to the United States have come for economic reasons, but many of them left Indonesia after the Jakarta riots of May 1998. The riots were directed at the Chinese minority in the country, many of whom are Christians. After that Indonesian Christians did not feel safe or had their businesses closed. Many came to the United States to start over. Some seek religious asylum status. The congregation includes about 70 persons on Sunday mornings and features table tennis tournaments in its worship space throughout the week.

In their own words:

“We are different but we can be used by God . . . We are one body.”



Above: Jimmy reads the announcements during a Sunday morning service at Nations Worship.

Below from left: Lora Steiner (foreground) interviews Yunus Perkasa, associate pastor, who recently arrived in South Philadelphia. Wanda Pesulima gives her testimony.



Doug Musselman (second from left) and students on the Mountain/Stream Geology Hike handle an insect found along the trail.

Learning about God's creation, in God's creation: Spruce Lake Outdoor School celebrates 20 years

Grace Nolt, *Open Door*
grace@sprucelake.org



Intersecting with CRMs

Spruce Lake Retreat

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.

sprucelake.org

photo provided
by Spruce Lake Retreat

Spruce Lake Outdoor School, an educational ministry of Spruce Lake Retreat, is celebrating its 20th year this fall, 2007. Since 1987, over 60,000 students have experienced Christ-centered, hands-on outdoor learning at Spruce Lake. The ministry has indeed become a counter-cultural enterprise, if one agrees with what Richard Louv observed in his recent book, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder*; "Our society is teaching young people to avoid direct experience in nature. That lesson is delivered in schools, families, even organizations devoted to the outdoors..."

Richard Louv had not yet written his book when Paul Beiler, Spruce Lake's founding director, dreamed of starting an outdoor school on the camp's Pocono Mountain property. But they would have agreed earnestly on this: "the extent that we separate our children from creation is the extent to which we separate them from the creator – from God."

With little time to develop the dream himself, Paul appointed Sterling Edwards to direct the new program in 1987. Under Sterling's passionate leadership those first 18 years, the ministry grew from 12 to over 100 schools participating each year. Students in grades 4-12 have arrived from 11 different states, some from as far away as Ohio, West Virginia, and Massachusetts.

"God just brought the right people at the right time to build this ministry," Sterling has said. Now, as then, Spruce Lake Outdoor School is all about integrating natural and spiritual truth – "learning ABOUT God's creation IN God's creation." Students are exposed to the "sensory magic" of being outdoors. Teachers try to cultivate the sense of wonder that is such a critical element for wide-eyed spiritual and practical awareness.

Ecologist and naturalist Doug Musselman has taught at Spruce Lake Outdoor School 12 years. He's on a team of eight instructors and just as many support staff who pitch in to help. Many children he teaches are in junior high, the same age Doug was when the seed of concern for the environment started growing in his own mind.

Doug went on to earn a B.S. in General Biology from Grace College and spent two years at AuSable Institute of Environmental Studies, where he earned his Naturalist Certificate and worked as an Environmental Education Intern.

"God led me to teaching in the big classroom of his creation!" Doug said, having discovered that the typical classroom setting was not for him. "I enjoy opening people's eyes to the wonders of our Father's world," Doug said, "and helping people understand our role in taking care of it."

**"God led me to
teaching in the
big classroom
of his creation!"**

His years of teaching at Spruce Lake Outdoor School have convinced Doug all the more that taking care of God's world and its resources is actually part of our Christian witness, "We are the ones to be taking care of his property, as his children."

Just last week Doug led a new group of students on a Spruce Mountain Hike. Afterward, Doug asked the class, "How can we respond to this?"

"Wow," burst one child! That is just what Doug had been hoping to hear. The memory of it stayed with Doug for days, sustaining lively hope that this child, and surely others the school has taught, will not be the last ones in the woods.

What's in a name?

Life With God moves beyond broadcasts

David Kochsmeier, *Steel City*
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What's in a name? Psychology indicates that names are powerful determinates to our behavior. I remember my seminary professor of Marriage and Family Therapy, David Augsburg, using a modified family tree to show the connection between a person and their behavior in one generation and how a namesake in another generation would often live out a similar behavior. I have witnessed this numerous times as I have walked with individuals. It is amazing how they are living the life script of another.

“Realizing we have more to offer the community of faith than just a weekly radio broadcast we have changed our name.”

The business world indicates that names are powerful determinates to success. Commonly known as “branding,” the concept couples name recognition with customer loyalty. When a company or product name is widely known for its quality, customers frequently use them. The more usage, the more profit. Makes sense and dollars!

So, what is in a name? This question was recently the focus of discussion at the Life With God

Radio Broadcast board meetings. Realizing, as an organization, we have more to offer the community of faith than just a weekly radio broadcast we have changed our name. Our new organization name will be “Life With God Ministries.”

While our primary focus will be on radio programming, we will develop other forms of media (print, internet, speaker services) to connect with people in ways to strengthen their life with God.

The following comments exemplify how *Life With God* has strengthened individual lives:

“Dear Rev. K., Last evening I was most blessed to bear your renewal message on WDAC.”

“Thanks for the good program...I need to hear the Word of God spoken over and over again.”

“Your gentle program this past week using 2 Corinthians 12:9 surely was a blessing to me...I can't say how I praised God for your well-chosen words.”

We believe the widening of our focus will enable Life With God Ministries to interact with more people, more of the time. Simply put, with radio, our 30-minute Sunday morning program reaches only a certain audience (the listeners of WNPV 1440 AM) at a specific time (7:30 a.m.). Our new focus will enlarge our audience and be available “on demand” fitting into the time frame of our listeners both new and old.

photos provided
by Life With God Ministries

**Intersecting
with CRMs**

**Life With God
Ministries**

**Proclaiming the
Good News of the
Gospel of Jesus
Christ.**

life-with-god.org

Life with God Ministries Pastor David Kochsmeier. Life With God Ministries Board Vice Chairman, Dave Brunk, leads hymn singing at a recent fundraising breakfast for Life With God Ministries.



Intersecting with CRMs

Menonite Historians of Eastern Pennsylvania

To collect,
preserve, and
interpret the
Anabaptist-
Mennonite
heritage in order
to educate,
inspire, and
witness to
the church
and broader
community.

mhep.org

Blessed are the peacemakers:

Finding forgiveness in an unexpected place

Mary Jane Lederach Hershey, *Salford*
mjhershey@aol.com

For the past three summers, Salford Mennonite Church has hosted a group of educators from South Africa. These teachers come to the University of Pennsylvania to study for a five-week term. In 2006, 24 South African scholars came to Salford homes for a weekend in July. My husband Hiram and I hosted Kholeka Kholly, a language teacher who taught English and two provincial languages, Afrikaans and isiXhosa, in Queenstown.

On Saturday afternoon as I was becoming acquainted with Kholly, I asked about her parents and family. She said she never knew her father, because he died when she was born. Her mother was murdered about seven years ago, by thieves who broke into her mother's home, robbed and killed her. Kholly expressed her regret that the hanging of criminals is no longer legal in South Africa, adding that she hated the murderers of her mother and would hang them herself, if she could. During this conversation I talked to Kholly about capital punishment in this country, about the work of Sister Helen Prejean who accompanies men on death row to their execution. I also talked about the victim-reconciliation program.

During 2006 the Mennonite Heritage Center mounted an exhibit entitled "Blessed are the Peacemakers." The exhibit included a wall of 15 panels called "Heroes of Peace and Justice" with pictures, information, and writings by worldwide justice and peace leaders. The peacemakers portrayed ranged from Anabaptist martyrs, to Mahatma Gandhi, to local peacemakers like Lois Gunden Clemens and Clayton Kratz.

Whenever we have international guests, we plan ahead what we will do in the evening. Although the Mennonite Heritage Center in Harleysville is rarely open on Saturday evening, I knew that on this particular Saturday, the Center would be open for a special film night. I planned to take our guest Kholly to the Center after dinner and a visit with our son and family.

That evening at the Center we viewed the "Heroes of Peace and Justice" exhibit. First, we talked about the Anabaptist martyrs and how they forgave their assassins before they died. She read the panels of the peacemakers she knew; Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, and Gandhi. I told her about Pastor Andre and Magda Trocomè, whose French town of Le Cham-



bon hid thousands of Jews after Pastor Andre asked his congregation to shelter "the people of the Bible." We read the story of how Michael Berg had forgiven the men in Iraq who beheaded his son Nick. Kholly read the Tom Fox panel and the prophetic words of Fox, "We forgive those who consider us their enemy." After she finished reading, she stood in silence for a few minutes, and then turned to me and said, "They all say the same thing – it's forgiveness."

When Kholly came to breakfast Sunday morning, her first words were "I am a changed woman. They won't know me when I return home. I have forgiven those who killed my mother."

I told her I was thankful that her heart had changed. However, I did not really believe, because I thought, "How could anyone, overnight, forgive such a heinous crime?"

Later that morning, during the discussion hour at Salford, she shared this change again. And later in the afternoon, she told various people who had gathered at our house, "I am a different person. I have forgiven."

As we left our house to meet the bus to return to Philadelphia, she asked if she could again visit the exhibit. She wanted to photograph the panels. We hurriedly did so, and had her at the bus only a few minutes late.

Her final words came via e-mail:

Thank you both for a very enjoyable weekend. All of your guests are singing your praises as well. After the readings, I can safely say I'm a new peaceful person. God moves in a mysterious way. God bless.

God does move mysteriously. These panels are now on exhibit in the lobby of the Salford Mennonite Church.

Mary Jane Lederach Hershey is currently Trustee Emeritus for MHEP.

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.communityhomeservices.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 Meetinghouse 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 Ministries, PO Box 64092, Souderton, PA 18964; TEL: 610-730-8008; David Kochsmeier, Radio Pastor; www.life-with-god.org. *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

photo provided by Phil Ruth

Opening doors during the holidays

We will have more opportunities to show hospitality. The holidays are coming and there will be requests for home stay visits. Share with guests this season of thankfulness and celebration. Change the world by providing a bed, a meal and open conversation.

For more information contact Betsy Moyer at moyerpb@comcast.net.

Visitors from South Africa listen and share from their country and culture.

Welcoming the stranger:

Opening our homes to international guests

Betsy Moyer, *Salford*
moyerpb@comcast.net

Requests came from University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University seeking invitations to their international student guests for a highly valued American home stay. All they asked was for one overnight visit, less than 24 hours with a host family. Folks in our community already had so many commitments. It was a challenge.

The opportunity to host international students is an honor given to us through a long and positive relationship Claude Good built with persons from these Philadelphia universities. During years of teaching English as a Second Language at "International House" in Philadelphia, Claude invited university students to spend a weekend or holiday out of the city in our community. The word got out that our Franconia Conference community was a welcoming and interesting place to see a beautiful view of America. Stories circulated of warm host families; of worship services where international visitors were welcomed, allowed to ask questions, and invited to share from their own countries. It was a perspective of America that was different from what they saw in Philadelphia. Students reported that these home stays were the highlight of their time in the US!

In July we welcomed a group of 24 South African middle school teachers who were studying curriculum development for five weeks at the University of Pennsylvania. These adults had been selected from all over South Africa in a very competitive process. The group was diverse in gender, South

African ethnicity (representing all four groups), and faith (including Muslims, Hindus, and Christians). They sang, talked, listened, and endeared themselves to us. One hostess said the weekend with her guests was "a mountaintop experience."

Several guests wrote thank you notes to their host families and some to the congregations they visited. One guest wrote, "I am (now) a Mennonite, even my kids are the grand-children of the Mennonites. I am not going to lose any contact with you, not at all. You are my family that God has created forever and ever, AMEN."

On August 11, we welcomed 19 Western European Young Leaders to a Peach Picnic in Souderton (PA) Park. This celebration with peaches and corn, Franconia Conference families, and international students has been an annual tradition. The group this year was energetic and eager to see who we, as Mennonites, really are. Having only been exposed to dorm life and cafeteria food at Drexel University, these young adults found our picnic of grilled chicken dogs, roasted corn on the cob, colorful salads, fresh peaches, chocolate brownies, and ice cream to be "the best meal they had yet" in the United States.

We were fascinated to hear them tell us where they came from, discovering that most of them now live in a different country from where their parents were born. Many of the students bravely sang their national anthems for us, even though they had no accompaniment and were outside in a public park. We tried to return the favor by singing a few traditional Mennonite favorites and a folk song or two for our guests.

God works in mysterious ways and extending hospitality to strangers can be a most powerful witness. "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing that, some have entertained angels without knowing it." ~ Hebrews 13:2



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Franconia Mennonite Conference
771 Route 113
Souderton, PA 18964