



## New York Mennonite Conference

An area conference of Mennonite Church USA

# LIFE

## In New York Mennonite Conference

### Leadership Seminar Changes Location

*Sonya Stauffer Kurtz*

The annual Leadership Seminar (formerly held at Delta Lake) will take place in a new setting this year. Inspired by the idea of a “moveable feast” the leadership seminar will travel from region to region for the next several years, so attendees can experience the richness of church life in different settings in our conference. People who don’t normally attend may find an opportunity to do so when the seminar is their region. Lay leaders—anyone who provides leadership in their congregation—as well as pastors, are encouraged to attend.

Our first “moveable feast” will be hosted February 1–3 by **Clarence Center Akron Church**, with assistance from Harris Hill and Alden Churches.

“I will build my church (Matthew 16:18): Equipping and inspiring congregations for growth” is the theme of this year’s seminar. Do you know what percentage of Mennonite Churches membership are new believers? How do Mennonites’ marriage and divorce rates compare with the rest of the US population? Are our young people more or less engaged with the church than previous generations? Where do Mennonites go to find news about the world? Come find the answers to these questions, and more, and learn what the answers might mean for our conference and congregations.



*Clarence Center-Akron Mennonite Church*

Drawing from Conrad Kanagy’s 2006 survey of Mennonite Church USA, and from our own experiences, input will be “homegrown” this year, with conference people leading keynote sessions on outreach, relationships with non-Christians, communication with people who are different than us, and interpreting Kanagy’s findings in light of our local realities. Breakout sessions will look at leadership for the future of NYMC, creating safe ministry for children in our churches, and further conversation around Kanagy’s book, “Road Signs for the Journey”.

Along with stimulating sessions, Leadership Seminar will also feature a folk/bluegrass concert Saturday evening, and Sunday morning worship at Clarence Center Akron, just as they normally experience it, with Walt Morton bringing the message.

Registration will be only \$20. More details will follow in the brochure this month, and in next month’s newsletter. Mark your calendars now for February 1–3.

### Christmas Gift Ideas

*Sherry Mast, NYMC Rep to East Coast MCC*

What kind of Christmas gift giver are you? Do you add more stuff to the lives of people that already have so much? Or do you think globally?

MCC has a Christmas Giving Catalog! You don’t have to worry about shopping, long lines, getting the right item, color or size. You don’t have to worry about keeping the sales slip in case it needs to be returned. Share the Christmas joy with those you love by sending a Christmas gift to help provide food, water, shelter and education to people around the world.

Go to [www.mcc.org](http://www.mcc.org) and on the home page you will see Christmas Giving 2007. Click on it and have fun shopping. If you do not use a computer, check out your Sept./Oct. Common Place for the 2007 Christmas Giving Catalog or call MCC @ 717-859-3889 or 1-888-563-4676 and state you want to donate to the Christmas Giving. For each gift, designate how many gift cards you would like to be sent to you; you can pass these on to your loved ones to tell about the project that you donated to in their honor.

If you have questions about MCC or need help in making contact, please call Sherry Mast, 607-569-3283 or e-mail at [ismast2@frontiernet.net](mailto:ismast2@frontiernet.net).

As God sent His gift for us, Jesus, let us give to others.

## December 2007

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## News from Conference Congregations

Editor: Kirk House

### Lowville Mennonite Church: Faithful Workers Sewing Circle

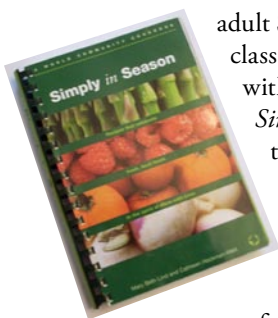
Faithful Workers Sewing Circle gathers each month to sew and to tie quilts. In October they sent 30 school kits, 16 health kits, 59 bath towels, and \$170 to MCC. They also collected eight bay layettes, one queen quilt, four 60 by 80 quilts, and a baby quilt -- besides honoring Anna Wagler on her 99th birthday!

### Lowville Mennonite Church: Connecting Food with Faith

Bernadine Schwartzentruber

About 15 people in an adult Sunday School class are grappling with issues raised by *Simply in Season*, the new MCC cookbook.

The group, which includes farmers, former farmers, gardeners, and others, aims to “connect food and faith, with an emphasis on the value of eating local, seasonal food.” They’ve been discussing sustainable farming, community-supported agriculture, fair trade, concentrated animal feeding operations, and other controversial topics. Each week one member brings a dish from the cookbook, and the whole class will do the same for a December fellowship meal.



### Rochester Area Mennonite Fellowship: Children’s Sunday School

Sue Klassen

RAMF children have been coming to Sunday School with a new excitement this fall, thanks to Chrissie Walls’ creative leadership. First, they search the entire church for a hidden phrase that captures the theme of the day. Written on a piece of newsprint, it may be hidden on the ceiling, in a corner, or under a shelf. Then, they gather for a lively opening session. We’ve been using *Gather ’Round* materials to study the Old Testament stories from Moses to Gideon, under the theme “Becoming a People of God.” Chrissie, assisted by Roger Kurtz, leads the children in learning the 10 Commandments in song and sign language, and she brings fun games and challenges each week.

One week, Chrissie brought tastes of the Promised Land—pomegranates, grapes, and figs. Another week, many of us watched *The Ten Commandments* at the theatre after church, and compared it to the Biblical narrative in animated conversations. Chrissie even put on a Seder feast for the children, complete with costumes.

Chrissie’s background in early childhood education shows. I’m thankful for her investment in our Sunday School. I’m also thankful she’s serving as Education Advocate on NYMC’s Congregational Resourcing Commission. If you’re feeling dry and want some ideas to spark your imagination, give Chrissie a call at 585-271-1667.

*RAMF Sunday School Seder meal: Roger Kurtz (above right) and Chrissie Walls (right) serve the guests bitter herbs, eggs, horseradish, and charoset while studying the Israelites’ Passover and Exodus*



## CLC in Colorado Springs

Terry Zehr

Terry Zehr (conference moderator) and LeRoy Mast (conference minister) attended Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) of Mennonite Church USA on October 15–17th in beautiful Colorado Springs. Our days were filled with the important work of our denomination, mule deer grazing on the lawns, and majestic mountains as a backdrop. A full report will go to the delegates later.

## Save the Dates:

Leadership Seminar ☞ February 1-3, 2008  
at Clarence Center-Akron Mennonite Church

Delegate Assembly ☞ April 5, 2008  
in Auburn, NY

### Photos Wanted!

Please send photos of people and events in your congregation, along with a few words about them. Send to Kirk House at [nymclife@yahoo.com](mailto:nymclife@yahoo.com).

