

In New York Mennonite Conference

Highlights from MCC East Coast Board Meeting

Sherry Mast

What energy for the Lord, and the needs of the urban area leadership of the urban Anabaptist churches and community program leaders shared with us. We have so much to learn from our brothers and sisters in the urban area!

I would like to share a couple of stories with you from the March 7-8, 2008 MCC East Coast Board Meeting in the inner-city of Philadelphia.

A young Sudanese man visited the MCC Resources Center in Ephrata. He saw a comforter like the one given to his family. Tears came to his eyes. He said, "You will not like what we did with it—we took the knots out so we could have two blankets."

Daryl Wallace, pastor at Second Mennonite Church in Philadelphia, brought a group from his congregation to work at the Resource Center on Martin Luther King's birthday. One of the jobs they were given was to shred school books and work books that are brought in for recycling as a way to raise money (\$45,500 was raised last year). The sad thing was that Daryl saw workbooks that looked brand new, like his son's school used. The inner-city school did not have the money for each student to have their own workbooks; they had photocopies. Daryl and his family live in a very poor part of Philadelphia. In fact, I was asking directions to Daryl's church from a young Hispanic man. He looked at me and said, "You want to go to the Bad Lands?"



East Coast Board members have been looking at our mission statement and exploring ways to be more open and welcoming to people of color. The energy and growth of the Mennonite church is happening in the urban setting. As a board we want to be where the growth is happening.

As a board, we are excited about stepping out of our comfort zone as the Lord is calling us to do, and reaching out to the urban community and many people of color from all over God's world as he calls us to do in Rev. 7:9.

On Friday, MCC EC board spent the day in Anti-Racism training; it was very informative and involved much soul searching. I asked Brother Daryl Wallace to help me see where I was racist, and help me be aware of how I use white privilege. Brother Daryl said he could not help me: it was my journey to walk. I needed to ask those questions, and do the necessary soul-searching.

I came away from the board meeting excited about what MCC is doing around the world and in the urban areas, but also came away with some pretty hard questions for me to wrestle with.

Do I speak out against the white-privilege culture that I live in?

Do I encourage and take part in the lives of people of color in the urban area, or do I prefer my comfort zone of churches that are all white? Would I feel comfortable inviting a person of color to a NYMC church?

Seek Justice Buy Fair Trade

Jennie Harland

"Learn to do right!" God says in his vision to Isaiah. "Seek justice, encourage the oppressed." Isaiah 1:17a What steps can we take to live this call today?

You might have noticed that Fair Trade products cost more than your regular grocery items. Fair Trade products do cost an average of 10 percent more than similar items. However, the extra 10 percent you pay changes the way consumer does business with producer. Here are some of the reasons you should buy fair trade:

- Farmers' profits are doubled and tripled
- Farmers are paid a living wage for their crops, which means they can afford to feed their family, send their children to school, and get health care
- Workers are treated fairly
- Costs to the growers are dramatically reduced by bypassing the middleman
- Ensures that farmers use sustainable farming techniques
- Helps farmers transition to certified organic farming

Fair trade products might cost more, but your next cup of coffee, chocolate, etc., will taste that much better.

For more information on Fair Trade, visit www.equalexchange.com, www.fairtrade-federation.org, www.transfairusa.org, www.maketradeair.com

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News from Conference Congregations

Editor: Kirk House

Lowville: Associate Pastor Search

Lowville Mennonite is currently searching for an associate pastor with gifts and calling for youth and young adults, administration, counseling, and problem solving. Lowville has 298 members and children seeking to serve their community and make Anabaptist/Mennonite faith relevant and authentic in the 21st century.

Lowville: Faithful Workers

Lowville's Faithful Workers Sewing Circle met twice in February, tying five twin quilts and one baby quilt, besides finishing

ten baby layettes. They also gathered 54 bath towels, 22 wash cloths, 16 single flat sheets, two pairs of pillow cases, and \$319 for AIDS kits. At their second meeting the Faithful Workers received a little girl's dress, three baby quilts, one crib quilt, a pair of used sneakers, eight pounds of used clothing, and 28 1/2 yards of fabric. They also began the work of cutting blocks for a "Comforter Blitz" that will help celebrate the 175th anniversary of Mennonites in Lewis County.

Yorks Corner: Miracle of Birth

Sharon Miller writes:

August 2nd 2007. The call came at 8:30 a.m. Dick and Felecia Burrous, who have ministered to many Mexican farm workers in the area and were hosting a young Mexican couple in their home, called to announce, "Maria is having contractions." Normal protocol wasn't in place—she wasn't under a doctor's care. An "at home" delivery was a very real possibility. The baby's position was assessed and found to be "head up". After much prayer and some coaching by the mothers gathered around the bed, the head came down after a few contractions. Thank you God.

God sovereignly oversaw the day... A person who spoke Spanish helped with the medical history questions at the hospital. Dick stayed in the delivery room behind a curtain to interpret during labor and delivery. The delivery doctor, who had recently adopted three Guatemalan children, held baby Wendy and spoke to her in Spanish immediately after delivery.

What a day! God was merciful and faithful through it all.



Sue Knight writes:

I woke that morning with no idea that I would be involved in such a miracle! Gene called to say that the little baby we had been expecting to join our church family was on its way and that Sharon needed my help to deliver it at home! Wow! I was awake now!

We had a few challenges to deal with. Maria and her husband are not citizens and had not expected the baby to be born yet. She also did not speak English. She preferred to have the baby at home because she and her husband had no way to pay the hospital expenses. When in our expertise and the collective wisdom of all of the mothers present, we decided the baby's birth was imminent, we called 911. We felt she would deliver as they arrived or in the ambulance on the way. Either way we felt she would be well cared for by people more experienced than we were. We were a little off with our timing, but Wendy was born, beautiful and healthy, a few hours later.

It was such a blessing to be a part of all that God orchestrated that day to welcome that precious baby into this world!

Clarence Center: Mission Project

The Clarence Center Primary Sunday School Mission Project has raised \$1001.14 to help Quito Mennonite Church in Ecuador buy materials and supplies for Sunday school, train teachers, and construct a new church building for worship.

New Breman: Mission Speakers

Two mission workers in Mongolia, Marlow and Vicky Ramsay, will be speaking on Aug. 17 at First Mennonite Church of New Breman. All are welcome.

New! Discounts for Church Librarians

Herald Press has expanded its Minister Book Club recently to include church librarians. It is now called the Ministers and Librarians Book Club.

Purpose of the club: Herald Press wants to be your source for Anabaptist/Mennonite books. The club offers periodic discounts on some resources.

How does it work? About once every six weeks, you will receive a letter with flyers describing several new books. If you want any or all of the books offered, simply return the enclosed postcard, call toll free, or email Herald Press. Your order will be processed and sent directly to you. You pay only for the books you select—no monthly or annual fee or minimum orders.

Examples of books and discounts from Feb. 2008:



Proclamation by Design: the Visual Arts in Worship

Price: \$32.99

Club Price: \$24.50

Send Forth Your Light,
Willard Swartley. Price:

\$18.99 Club Price: \$14.25

How do I become a member? Call 1-800-245-7894 to sign up.

Save the Dates:

Celebration '08 ☞ September 5-7, 2008
at Camp Casowasco

Mission Speakers ☞ Aug. 17, 2008
at First Mennonite Church of New Breman