



**New York
Mennonite
Conference**

An area conference of
Mennonite Church USA

LIFE

In New York Mennonite Conference

Delegates Discern Prayerfully re Major Proposal

On April 5, NYMC Delegates gathered in Seneca Falls for their semi-annual meeting as usual. This Delegate Assembly, however, was far from usual. This time, delegates were discerning God’s will about a multi-year, major proposal.

The proposal is a strong call from conference leadership to support growth in emotionally healthy spirituality [healthy relationships with God, self and others], first as conference leaders, then as a conference of congregations for the purpose of creating and nurturing a community of churches committed to being missional. Year 1 focuses on “Equipping Conference Leadership,” years 2 and 3 on “Equipping Congregational Leadership” and years 4 and 5 (ongoing) on “Equipping and Supporting Congregations and Individuals.” Up to \$60,000 of Sharing Plan funds would be used for the process.

Sharon Miller and Donna Davies supported the discernment throughout the day with prayerful presence.

After presentation of the proposal, we divided into four groups to discuss affirmations and concerns regarding the overall direction, as well as questions we would like conference leadership to address. Groups recorded their input, and reported to the whole group. Dale Beebe then went around the room, asking each one of us what we are sensing over all.

Person after person expressed a sense that God is leading in this proposal, a sense of optimism and even excitement, along with acknowledgment that it will involve a lot of work and time. A strong level of trust in leadership was shown.

Several delegates expressed skepticism. Will the process actually help our congregations be more missional? Why hasn’t all this (growing in love of God, self, others) been happening in the district meetings already? Are we just adding one more meeting once a month for a whole day?

We will continue down the path outlined by the proposal. Coordinating Council will review and prayerfully address what they have heard and will communicate via e-mail (around June 5 and August 5) to the delegates how they are addressing what they have heard. Terry encouraged the delegates to continue to communicate with CC over the summer on what they are sensing, and then come to Celebration (Sept. 5-7) prepared to affirm the proposal they have prayerfully shaped. Prayer by congregations, delegates and individuals is of greatest importance. Please hold this process in prayer regularly.

From top left: Delegates met in small groups for discernment; Closing worship outside; Ken Landis led opening worship; new Treasurer Judy Shean presents the financial report



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News from Conference and Congregations

Editor: Kirk House

Pastors' Wives' Retreat

Anne Siegrist

The Fairfield Inn near Corning NY was the setting April 11 for the New York State Pastors' Wives' Retreat. Meeting overnight once a year has been the vision of Sherry



Mast, who sensed that pastors' wives need a time of safely sharing with other women who are in the same situation.

This year six women attended the retreat. Sherry provided a light supper which we ate together in one of the rooms. We visited, played a game, and then spent a comfortable night catching up on much-needed rest.

Sherry makes tentative plans for us each year, but lets the final decision up to us. This year we spent most of our time talking and on Saturday we walked to a nearby Chinese buffet for more fellowship before leaving for home. The retreat has become a valuable and much anticipated time of refreshment.

Alden: Mortgage Paid Off

Alden Mennonite Church celebrated the payoff of their church building mortgage on Sunday morning, March 30. The morning began with a half hour of fellowship over coffee, juice and fruit. This time of fellowship was followed by the morning worship service.

The service included a video slide show recounting church history and the building

of the current house of worship, a message from Conference Minister, Leroy Mast, and special music from a newly formed trio.

At the end of the worship service we moved outside to rededicate the building and to release balloons in celebration of God continuing to move us forward as a church. Everyone then enjoyed a roast beef dinner in the fellowship hall, with greetings brought from Walt Morton, pastor at Clarence Center Mennonite Church.

The building was built in 1994. Balloons were also released at the original building dedication.



Lowville: Goshen Graduate

A New York Mennonite Conference native is among the 230 students who received diplomas at Goshen College's 110th Annual Commencement April 27.

Nathaniel D. Herr, son of Larry and Barbara Herr of Lowville, received a bachelor's degree in molecular biology/biochemistry. He is a 2004 graduate of Lowville Academy and Central School and attends Lowville Mennonite Church.

Gather 'Round, and Listen Up!

Chrissie Walls, NYMC Christian Education Advocate

This has been an exciting year for Gather 'Round Sunday School! We walked with Moses and the people of Israel as they yearned for the Promised Land. We learned the Ten Commandments. We, like John the Baptist, prepared our hearts for the birth of Jesus. We wrestled with the tough sayings of Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount. We followed Paul and Barnabas as they traveled through the land sharing the good news of Jesus. Hopefully this has been a meaningful year for teachers and students in your Sunday school program.

This is also the time of year when some churches are preparing for Vacation Bible School. Mennonite Publishing Network has put out a new VBS curriculum entitled, "Listen Up! Messages from God." The stories of five Biblical prophets will show kids how God's messages still hold true for people today!

The materials are geared for children age 4 through grade 8. You can find a 5-day overview with Bible texts at www.mpn.net/vbs.

This summer, Rochester Area Mennonite Fellowship is going to have its first week of VBS. Because we are a small church with a small number of children, we are going to adapt the Gather 'Round summer materials for use in VBS. The theme for the summer materials is "The Things that Make for Peace," a vital message for our children to hear. We are excited about this new adventure and look forward to what God will do during that week.

Education for children is such an important part of the life of the church. We are privileged as a small de-

nomination to have a curriculum (Gather 'Round) that is written from a Mennonite perspective. If your church is not currently using these materials, I would encourage you to reconsider. The Gather 'Round materials are constantly being revised and improved in response to user feedback. This means that each year they get better! In a world filled with violence and war, I am glad to know that my own children are hearing the voice of peace in Sunday school. For more information, check out the Gather 'Round website: www.gather-round.org.

Save the Dates:

Ministers' Retreat ☞ Aug. 11-13, 2008

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

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