



Equipping

A resource packet for equipping Mennonite Church pastors and leaders

October 2000

Mennonite Church USA

Coming of age: Reflections on the global Mennonite family

In July I participated in the Global Anabaptist Missions Consultation in Guatemala and met for the first time with the General Council of Mennonite World Conference, a gathering of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ leaders from all over the world. These leaders are the direct progeny of the vision of (primarily) North American leaders of a century and more ago.

These offspring of the mission movement are now adult churches in their own settings. I found myself reflecting on how the North American church should now relate to our adult progeny. A few ideas:

1. Adult children must be treated as adults. National churches must interact with each other and the world Mennonite community on their own and not through a third party. I was shocked to realize that in Guatemala City I knew almost none of my counterparts from our sister church bodies. This is a pattern we must break in the new Mennonite Church USA if we are to truly treat other national church bodies as adult partners.

2. Adult children must be allowed to make their own decisions. A Brazilian congregation has two people in foreign mission because of calls from the receiving countries. Neither of these placements is dependent upon funding or supervision from North American mission entities.

In Guatemala I became aware of many examples demonstrating that previously dependent missions are now carrying forward a vision for mission around the world. We must let go of our progeny if they are to achieve full adulthood.

Mennonite World Conference can help the Northern church find a new way of relating to churches in the South. MWC provides an expanding network of connections which will bring together leadership of the world-

wide Mennonite church with all leaders meeting as equals and peers.

In this worldwide communion all will bring gifts to the table—gifts that have been given to all of us through the vision of church leaders who have long since passed from the scene but whose work and ministry continue to bear fruit for today and eternity. Blessed be the name of the Lord! *George B. Stoltzfus, General Secretary*

Nashville 2001 posters enclosed:

In this packet you'll find two posters for the Mennonite Church USA adult assembly and junior high convention to be held July 2-7, 2001, in Nashville, Tenn. Thank you for posting them on your bulletin board; please also share the junior high poster and information with your junior high youth sponsor.

More posters are available by calling the Nashville 2001 communications office in Newton, Kan., at 316-283-5100; email <info@Nashville2001.org>.

Who is God calling to Nashville for the work of the church, for laughter and play with our brothers
continued next page



Here's some of what you'll find inside this issue:

- Evening Song and Prayer
- *Beyond the News* info
- Youth resources!
- Evangelism storytelling festival
- *Shine/Together*

and sisters in Christ and for the joy of ministering and being ministered to in this city?

We will gather in Nashville July 2-7 for a historic assembly in which our two Mennonite denominations—the General Conference Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Church—will be transformed into the new Mennonite Church USA. The eyes of the city and of other denominations will be upon us.

We know that hard work will be involved, but there will be great joy when two faith families with so many shared traditions are blended into one greater witness for the glory of God.

Birth-
ing this
“new thing” may mean there will be some labor pains—for example, dealing with the details of membership guidelines and the legalities of merging two entities—but we can be certain of God’s presence.

God has already been at work in Nashville, preparing the way for us and for our witness of unity, love and peace to this city; preparing us to be a blessing and to receive a blessing.

Please urge members of your congregation (all ages) to attend the assembly in Nashville. Some congregations are planning to budget money to help delegates and others attend this historic gathering.

More information about registration, lodging and ministry opportunities will be available in the coming weeks. Or call the Nashville 2001 communications office in Newton, Kan., at 316-283-5100.



Journeying in God’s grace

Beyond the large chart on the wall of my office, which outlines the “roadmap” of the process of Project Transformation, an intangible reality grows in its import for me. We are engaged in a journey that can be only described as a manifestation of the grace of God.

God’s grace will take us where God wants us to go. Not all will see the Promised Land; there will be casualties and unfaithfulness alike in the wilderness portion of this trek. The giants in the land of God’s choosing will look ominous to some who might otherwise have pronounced hopeful words about God’s leading and providence.

Our manna is plentiful. The signs of God’s presence surround us by day and by night. Our murmurings as security-conscious people—products of our culture more than we want to admit—cannot thwart God’s purpose for us.

Such is the kind of idealism of which we read, not only from ancient times or in scripture. It is being reenacted in us, in our time. This faith is reminiscent of a prayer meeting in a house, almost half a millennium ago, where one believer impulsively baptized another, and another movement of the Spirit was added to the rich and beautiful Christian mosaic.

Are these words too expansive, too audacious for humble Anabaptist-Mennonites to claim? Are we focusing on ourselves, rather than upon God’s activity among and through us? Let us pray that it is the latter truth that guides us. Let us hope first for a renewal of ourselves as pastors and leaders in congregations. Let the light of Christ guide the transformation of this generation of Mennonites, that we may become more Christlike in all we say and do, to the glory of God. *Jim Schrag, Transformation Project Director*



Need more copies of *Equipping*? If you or your congregation received only one copy but would like more on a regular basis, contact Doris Schmidt, P.O. Box 347, Newton, KS 67114-0347; 316-283-5100; email <equipping@gcmc.org>. *Equipping* will be distributed 10 times a year: January, February, March, April, May-June, July-August, September, October, November and December.

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Worship, spirituality and stewardship

Stewardship for Life now available in sets: Congregations have a new choice in using *Stewardship for Life* topic sheets for Sunday school or other group settings. You can now order the topic sheets grouped in three cohesive sets to better meet individuals' needs in a holistic fashion.

These topic sheets, produced by Mennonite Mutual Aid, are practical guides to help church members address real-life issues such as using their time, talent, health and money. Each one is an eight-page, interactive booklet designed to engage people in working through important issues and to make changes in their lives with the support of their church community.

Sets in the series include:

1. **An introduction:** Basic topic sheets on spirituality, nutrition, exercise, stress, personal finance and discerning gifts.

2. **Mid-life checkpoint:** A group of topic sheets around stewardship issues that affect people in their middle years.

3. **Family life:** Key topic sheets related to quality-of-life concerns for parents and their children.

A complete listing of all topic sheets in each set can be seen on MMA's web site, <www.mma-online.org> (look under education in the congregational section). From this site, one sample topic

sheet, "Creating a budget that speaks your values," can be downloaded free.

To order *Stewardship for Life* sets or individual topic sheets, contact MMA's Stewardship Education Center at 1-800-348-7468, ext. 269, or <stewardship@mma-online.org>. Each set costs \$6.95 and leader's guides for each set cost \$1.95 plus postage and handling.

A time to remember: Many General Conference Mennonite congregations have traditionally observed Eternity Sunday, where those who have died during the past year are named and remembered with thanksgiving. Many other Mennonite churches have no such custom. Historically, Christians have observed All Saints Day (Nov. 1) and All Souls Day (Nov. 2) as a time for remembrance and thanksgiving.

An order of service for an All Saints Evening Song and Prayer is included in this mailing. Such services can provide comfort to the grieving and also inspire worshipers to keep the faith and endure with hope as we await the fulfillment of Christ's reign.



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Christian education, community and life together

Look beyond the news: You'll find a rich library of video resources in the enclosed purple flier highlighting Mennonite Board of Missions' *Beyond the News* video series.

Produced by the Mennonite Media department, the series can fill a complete Sunday School quarter or more on current issues like parenting adolescents, facing death, immigration, racism, money, violence, sexual abuse and many more.

Each video comes with a complete study guide. Several videos have additional Internet materials available at Third Way Café (www.thirdway.com). The flier lists special prices when you purchase two or more in the series.

Circulate the flier to adult and young adult Sunday school class teachers, superintendents, small group leaders/ coordinators, librarians, Christian school and public school teachers at high schools and colleges.

Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective now available in Spanish: Herald Press has released *La Confesion de fe una perspectiva Menonita*, translated by Zuloma Prieto.

The volume contains the Summary Statement and Unison Readings, as well as commentary on the 24 articles. Available from

both Faith & Life Press and Herald Press (132 pages, \$4.99). Call 1-800-245-7894 to order.

Support for youth work available: *"Have you ever wondered how much of what you do in ministry is unnecessary? Have you ever asked yourself 'Why am I doing this?' Personally, I wish I had a little light in my head that would go off whenever I wasted time. We read in Colossians 4:5 that God desires every believer 'to make the most of the time.' So how do we know that our priorities in ministry are divine priorities?"* — *Bryce A. Lund*

This excerpt from a recent issue of *YouthGuide* is one example of the type of support and enrichment available in current Mennonite youth ministry resources. (Look for the entire article, titled "Shepherding: A Model for Ministry," included with this mailing.)

YouthGuide is a quarterly newsletter for all who work with youth. It includes teaching tips, ready-to-go youth group ideas, Bible studies, media reviews and reproducible handouts for parents and mentors, as well as articles of inter-

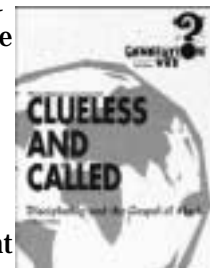
est to anyone who relates closely to youth. Each issue contains themes that coincide with two issues of *With*, the Mennonite youth magazine.

With: The Magazine for Radical Christian Youth features true teen stories, Bible studies, humor articles, cartoons and media reviews.

With seeks to empower youth to be radically committed to a relationship with Jesus Christ, to peace and justice, and to sharing God's good news in word and action. *With* celebrated its 30th year in 1998, and in 1999 won the Evangelical Press Association's Award of Excellence when it was judged Best Youth Periodical.

Beginning in January 2001, *With* will be published every two months in a new four-color format.

Generation Why, the Mennonite curriculum for high school youth, features 40 different Bible studies suitable for youth group, Sunday school or retreat settings. Each five- or six-session unit includes reproducible student pages and no separate student pieces are required. For



junior high youth, there are currently 16 different Fast Lane Bible Studies covering topics such as media, God, body image, competition, the Holy Spirit, healthy communication and money.

If you would like to request free sample copies of any of these resources for your youth ministry team, please call 1-800-743-2484.

Spanish translation of Good Ground Bible Studies now available: Faith & Life Press has released the first two Spanish translations of the Good Ground Bible study series, *El Poder del Cielo se Manifiesta: Estudios en el Evangelio de Marcos* and *Sus lamentos llegaron al cielo: Estudios en Exodo*. The Spanish versions are designed so that mixed-language groups can easily read the materials in their preferred languages and come together for common discussion. Each Good Ground study unit contains six sessions and includes leader's tips. The Spanish units are available for \$2.95 each and may be ordered by calling 1-800-743-2484.

The Dawn Will Break is a 40-page devotional guide that encourages family spirituality through Bible reading and prayers in this year's Advent season. This devotional guide provides daily Bible readings, related stories, songs for Advent, questions for reflection, guided prayer, Advent calendar and suggestions for family reading and activities. Available from both Faith & Life Press and Herald Press (\$5.99). Call 1-800-245-7894 to order. See the enclosed flyer for more information.

From your Mennonite publishers: See the enclosed flyer for information about the Minister's Manual, Confession of Faith, Congregations and Pastors, Congregational Discipling, iTeach Bible Reference Library, and iPreach Bible Reference Library as well as other resources from your Mennonite Publishers.

hear hear

You can subscribe to *The Mennonite* on audiocassette. Perfect for people with vision problems or for people who like to "listen as they go."

The Mennonite on audiocassette has been a good way for me to read as I drive 125 miles each weekend. Martha Graber is an excellent reader.

Rose M. Diller, Orrville, Ohio

For information, call Melanie Mueller at 1-800-790-2498.

the **Mennonite**



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Mission, evangelism and peacemaking

Evangelism storytelling festival: Hesston (Kan.) College will host the Evangelism Storytelling Festival Oct. 27-29, co-sponsored by Hesston College, the Commission on Home Ministries, Mennonite Board of Missions, and Western, South Central and Iowa-Nebraska conferences.

The purpose of this event is to tell the stories of what God is doing in healthy, growing churches; to stimulate vision for evangelism and church growth among churches; and to stimulate networking among growing Mennonite churches.

Teams from six growing Mennonite congregations will each share what they are doing, what it costs them and what results they are seeing.

Each pastor or church coordinator is invited to bring to this festival

a team of people who could return to the congregation with new enthusiasm and resources for evangelism and church growth. For more information, contact the Hesston College's Bible and Ministry Center, 316-327-8290.

Second Mile set for testing: The steering committee of *Second Mile*, a new congregational peace program due for release in summer 2002, is seeking diverse Mennonite congregations to test a draft of the curriculum from January-April 2001. For more information, please contact *Second Mile* coordinator Doug Krehbiel, General Conference Mennonite Church, P.O. Box 347, 722 Main St., Newton, KS 67114; 316-283-5100; <dougk@gcmc.org>.

Looking for six good people: Mennonite Central Committee is currently looking for six people to serve in leadership roles as country representatives for El Salvador, Bangladesh and Indonesia.

The key qualifications are ability to lead a diverse agency or company, to build team spirit and to network with government, church and community leaders. MCC Bangladesh needs a staff development director and an associate director. In Indonesia's easternmost province of West Papua, MCC needs a program director to teach part-time and work as an advocate for indigenous people at the sole public university in the province.

Please contact Charmayne Brubaker at <cdb@mcc.org>.