



Equipping

A resource packet for equipping Mennonite Church pastors and leaders

February 2003

Mennonite Church USA

February 1 is our first birthday—one year since MC USA became a legal and organizational reality.

I like to say that congregations act their age. A 13-year-old congregation often acts like a pubescent teen, acne and all; a 25-year-old congregation often performs with the energy of a young adult; a 50-year-old congregation experiences a mid-life crisis.



It may be helpful, then, to compare us to a 1-year-old baby who can crawl but not yet walk. I mean no pejorative evaluation here. It is just a reality of our developmental stage. We have lots to learn and lots of potential before us. Fortunately, at our stage we learn very quickly, absorbing almost everything that is new around us. The future is bright

for this fresh new body of Christ if the right care, nurture and incentives for it are presented early, preventing future distortions or dysfunctions that tend to be lifelong in their effect.

We may not truly answer the call to be missional until perhaps the awakening years of our teens or early adulthood. But we must begin to live in that way immediately; our stage of crawling is essential to walking later and to running and leaping after that.

Babies are born with a legacy. Our new church is both burdened and blessed with memories of the past, even as we seek to embrace the future. The new is not necessarily always better than the old. It is just that the old has gone, and the new represents our current opportunity and our potential. Just as one cannot literally return to the past, we are always in preparation for what lies ahead, even though we cannot see it.

Our potential lies in what we have said is most important right now: (1) As infants we will crawl our way toward walking and running as a missional church. (2) We will take a long-term view of our need to develop leaders and pastors for congregations. Pastors are grown, not created overnight. (3) We will find our new place in the worldwide Anabaptist fellowship, slowly but surely. Already we are beginning to observe the impact of this new church upon others. Perhaps more on that in a later article.

Observe the baby's first birthday by celebrating its skill at crawling. Be assured that in those humble beginnings lies a body of faithfulness that is already running the race of which the apostle spoke!

Jim Schrag, Executive Director of the Executive Board

Atlanta 2003, to be held at the Georgia World Congress Center, will feature programs and activities for all ages including adults, young adults, youth, junior high and children. The convention begins Thursday, July 3, at 7:00 p.m. with opening worship and continues through noon Tuesday, July 8.

It's time to register for Atlanta 2003!

Churches should have received bulk mailings of registration forms in early January. Registration is also available on-line at www.atlanta2003.org. On-line registration is encouraged and available for ALL conventiongoers! Additional paper forms are available upon request from the Office of Convention Planning, 500 S. Main St.,



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

- Missio Dei: "Understanding Islam"
- MC USA org chart
- Historical Committee conference info

P.O. Box 1245, Elkhart, IN 46515, info@atlanta2003.org, or 574-294-7523. Register early (before April 28) to take advantage of the early registration discount and to ensure your first choice of lodging options.

Brochures and posters designed to encourage attendance at the conventions are still available. For copies, call 574-294-7523 or e-mail info@atlanta2003.org.

Volunteers needed at Atlanta

2003: From helping with ushering to changing diapers, volunteer ministry opportunities are abundant at Atlanta 2003. Your gifts of service at the conventions will free others to network, tend the church in business sessions and worship. Please complete the Volunteer Ministry Opportunity section on the registration form and check the areas of service that interest you and the days you will be available. You'll receive a schedule and more details prior to the convention, and training and support by volunteer orientation leaders on site.

Refunds on registration fees will be offered to volunteers who give at least 40 hours and half-fee refunds will go to those who give at least 25 hours.

The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective (James 5:16 NRSV). With these words, you are invited to be part of an intentional prayer team for the gathering of Mennonite Church USA in Atlanta, July 3-8. An on-site prayer

team is already in place, so this invitation is especially for those who will not be able to attend, but still wish to be part of this vital prayer ministry.

You are invited to sign up for half-hour blocks of time, from 7 a.m. until 11 p.m. for those six days in July. You can respond as an individual or as a group.

If you are interested, for further details contact Les Horning, 3401 Brook Rd., Richmond, VA 23227; leshorning@aol.com.

New at www.MennoniteUSA.org

- **Office of Congregational Life:** On the home page menu, click on "Executive Board Ministry Offices," then go to "Congregational Life."
- **Confession of Faith:** Now accessible from the home page.
- **Churchwide calendar:** See updates for 2003, 2004 and 2005!
- **Lenten Prayer Retreat:** Look under "New Items" on the home page and also at "Congregational Life" under "Executive Board Ministry Offices."
- **Children's Peace Bear:** See the listing under "New Items" and click to find out more about the latest peace resource.
- **Current news:** The latest news and features from Mennonite Church USA News Service, accessible from the home page.

A bear for peace: A small beanbag polar bear with a T-shirt proclaiming "Peace BEGINS with ME!" is the most recent product from Mennonite Church USA to promote peace.

The bear is part of a children's peace package that also includes a large coloring poster, peacemaker certificate and parent guide sheets.

The bears and supporting materials are excellent resources for Sunday school classes, vacation Bible school and outreach projects.



The package is available for \$10.50 plus shipping and can be ordered at the MRN Ministry Resources

Web site at www.mrn.org.

This peace project is a collaborative effort of Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board Office of Communications and Peace Advocate office plus MRN Ministry Resources and supports the ministry of MC USA's Peace and Justice Support Network.

For more information, contact the Executive Board Office of Communications, toll-free 1-866-866-2872 or Communications@MennoniteUSA.org

Revised O-chart: Your updated organizational chart for Mennonite Church USA churchwide agencies is enclosed as an insert in this issue. Feel free to make copies.

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Pastors and leaders

Worship ... Witness ... Easter ...

Farming: Continuing education events at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary over the next two months feature a variety of resources and issues for you and your congregation. Note especially:

- **Easter-Pentecost Planner:** See **What Love Can Do and Dare**, March 13, with Marlene Kropf

- **Unmasking the Powers of the Global Food System: The Church as Good News**, March 14-15, with Raymond R. Epp
- **Christian Witness in a Multifaith Environment: Inspiration From the Early Church**, March 21-22, with Nelson Kraybill, Alan Kreider and Eleanor Kreider
- **The Art of Worship: Worship as**

Evangelism, April 25-27 at Amigo Centre, with Sally Morgenthaler

For more information, see the AMBS Web site, www.ambs.edu, select Special Emphases, then Church Leadership Center, then Continuing Education. Or contact Jewel Gingerich Longenecker, AMBS associate dean for leadership education, jglongenecker@ambs.edu.

Worship, spirituality and stewardship

Love stories for Lent and

Easter: Not often does the church have occasion to look at the whole sweep of the salvation story in a very brief span of time, but this spring during the six weeks of Lent we are offered just such a rich opportunity. The Scripture texts for Lent invite us to tell the biblical story as a love story—God's passionate love pursuing us and inviting us to love in return. See the January 2003 issue of *Builder* for worship resources for Lent, "Pursuit of Love," created by a team from southern Ontario (edited by Mennonite Church Canada staff).

In the February 2003 issue of *Builder* are worship resources for

the Easter season, "See What Love Can Do and Dare." Written by a team from northern Indiana, these resources expand the Lenten theme by inviting us to join God's work of love in transforming and renewing the world. A gospel drama each week highlights the presence of the risen Christ in our midst and encourages us to look for Christ who goes before us into our daily lives.

Two useful new resources at Third Way Café

- **Mennonites at Worship:** A new Photo Gallery at Third Way Café features photos and quotes from Mennonite churches in Reading, Pa.;

Newton, Kan.; Harrisonburg, Va.; Pasadena, Calif.; Goshen and South Bend, Ind.; and Sanford, N.C. Many newcomers and inquirers at Third Way Café wonder, "What are worship services like in a Mennonite church?" Some wonder whether worship services are closed or for members only. The Photo Gallery can help answer that question, and inspire visitors (we hope) to take the next step: visit a Mennonite church. Maybe yours! See <http://www.thirdway.com/gallery/>.

- **New verses for 2003—A Sip of Scripture:** Sign up for the daily Scripture verse, "A Sip of Scripture" from Third Way Café. This year

offers an intriguing journey through the complete Bible, looking at selected passages illuminating God's shalom, peace and justice. The Scriptures come from Dorothy Jean Weaver's *Bread for the Enemy: A Peace and Justice Lectionary*, published last year by the Mennonite Church Peace and Justice Committee. Sip of Scripture provides "Mennonite-Anabaptist-related Scripture passages" on a daily basis, either by checking Third Way Café or signing up for the free e-mail to your inbox. Sign up now at <http://www.thirdway.com/scripture/> and encourage your whole congregation to do so, or put a button on your church's home page (contact webmaster@mennomedialia.org for instructions.)

Electronic account access from MMA

Mennonite Retirement Trust accounts now available on-line

If you are a member of Mennonite Retirement Trust, the retirement plan for Mennonite congregations and church-owned or controlled agencies, you are part of an elite group: the first MMA customers to be able to view account access on-line.

MRT participants are now able to view account information through the secure **My MMA** section of the site.

Registration details can be found in the **Financial Services** section of MMA-online (www.mma-online.org), under Mennonite Retirement Trust. It is our intention to offer on-line account access to other MMA customers in the future; at this time, however, we can only register MRT



participants.

Here are some features of online account access:

- **View a summary of your account.** All financial information is updated monthly.
- **Get an account statement,** similar to your quarterly paper version.
- **View account transactions,** including how those transactions were allocated among various investment options.
- **Investment performance.** Stay current on MRT funds performance.
- **Frequently asked questions.**
- **Download forms.** Follow instructions to download investment change and withdrawal forms, which you can then print, complete and mail to MMA.

We are excited about this new service. If you are an MRT participant, sign up at MMA-online today.



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Christian education, community and life together

New education and leadership publications coming:

In May 2003 the monthly magazine *Builder* will be transformed into two new quarterly publications. This change responds to the vision of the new Mennonite Church in the US and Canada, while also continuing *Builder's* goal as "an educational magazine for congregational leaders." The two new publications will be:

- **Adult Bible Study Teacher**—an edition of Adult Bible Study that includes the teacher helps that have appeared in *Builder*. The first issue will be Summer 2003 and will complete the 2002-2003 year for *Builder Uniform Series* subscribers. *Adult Bible Study* and *Adult Bible Study Teacher* will both be edited by James E. Horsch.
- **Leader: Equipping the Missional Congregation**—a magazine for pastors, elders/deacons, worship leaders, council chairs and those leading educational and mission ministries of local congregations. Like *Builder*, it will contain seasonal worship resources. It will also carry stories, interviews and many other practical helps—all focused on building strong Anabaptist communities of healing and hope in the world.

Development for *Leader* has been a joint effort of Mennonite Publishing House working with education, mission and ministerial leadership representatives of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA. Senior editor Richard A. Kauffman will oversee the development and production of the new magazine, and managing editor Byron Rempel-Burkholder will implement publication on an issue-by-issue basis.

The first issue of *Leader: Equipping the Missional Congregation* will be Fall 2003, and preview copies will be made available by July 1. Please watch future *Equipping* packets for more information.

VBS 2003 builds on strong Bible teaching tradition: *God's Nomads: Stars & Promises* continues the active Bible learning churches have come to count on from The Bible Then & Now Series. Here's what Mennonite church members have said about past units:

"This is a fresh approach and very refreshing. I like utilizing so many people with different gifts."—*VBS leader from Asheville, N.C.*

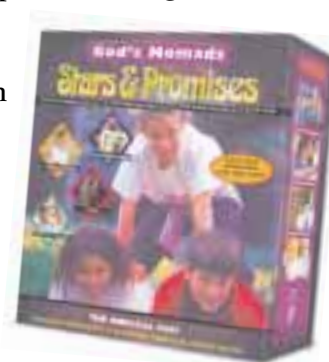
"Our Junior High class got into some advanced Bible study. Please keep providing material of this quali-

ty for VBS. We ended our week excited about our experience."—*VBS leader from Reedley, Calif.*

Plan now to promote this fun, easy-to-teach VBS program in your congregation. Order your complete kit for early preview, and get a head start on

recruiting helpers from junior high through older adults. Then look forward to a lively time of renewal

and recommitment to God's promises for all ages! To order, call 1-800-743-2484. Find introductory information, helpful teaching ideas and extra resources to enrich your program at www.mph.org/vbs.





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Mission, evangelism and peacemaking

Christian Peacemaker Teams announces upcoming delegations to Colombia and the Middle East:

Colombia: Feb. 15-27, May 17-29, July 19-31, Sept. 27-Oct. 9. Participants will meet with human rights workers and church leaders in Bogotá and travel to the countryside where the lives of displaced people are threatened by paramilitaries and other armed groups.

Middle East: Feb. 24-March 8, April 1-13, May 27-June 8, July 29-Aug. 10, Sept. 16-28, Nov. 20-Dec. 2. Teams will meet with representatives of Israeli and Palestinian peace and justice groups, then join CPT Hebron in their work of violence deterrence, documentation and challenging structural violence through nonviolent public witness.

CPT seeks participants who are interested in human rights work, committed to nonviolence and willing to participate in team worship and reflection. Delegates should have plans to share about the trip upon return. Cost of \$1,800 covers round-trip airfare, two meals a day, simple accommodations and in-country transportation.

Contact Christian Peacemaker Teams, P.O. Box 6508, Chicago, IL 60680; 773-277-0253; e-mail cpt3@igc.org. Applications available at CPT's Web site: www.cpt.org.

Uncommonly inspiring:

a Common Place, Mennonite Central Committee's free magazine, brings you inspiring stories and photos from the world's hidden corners, informed analysis and suggestions for how you can get involved. The current issue (January) features teens in Philadelphia who are becoming role models in their communities. The next issue (April) features people in Afghanistan who are rebuilding their lives after decades of war.

Subscribe today: on-line at www.mcc.org/acp; toll-free 1-888-563-4676; acp@mcc.org. Bulk subscriptions are available for churches.

Public policy and God's creation:

Mennonite Central Committee's Washington Office will offer its annual spring seminar, "The Earth Is the Lord's: Public Policy That Honors Creation," April 6-8. The seminar will explore Anabaptist perspectives on environmental policy and includes worship, plenary sessions and workshops. Early registration of \$60 before March 7 includes all materials and two meals. Lodging costs are extra. Scholarship money is available for those with limited income. Contact MCC U.S. Washington Office by phone at 202-544-6564 or e-mail mccwash@mcc.org.

Will there be a draft?

(Pastors, please consider putting this announcement in your bulletins)

Are you between the ages of 16-25 and a conscientious objector to war? Or are you a medical professional younger than age 45? When the United States threatens or begins military action, many wonder if there will be a return to a military draft. Since the end of the war in Vietnam, the U.S. has conducted military operations in many countries without a military draft, and it's unlikely that even a war on terrorism will result in a draft, unless the conflict extends to several countries.

Nevertheless, be prepared by keeping your Christian Peacemaker Registration information up to date (both men and women). If you haven't placed your materials on file at your church office, please do so in the next few weeks. If you have questions about this process, see <http://peace.mennolink.org/youth.html> or talk to your pastor. Pray for Peace, Act for Peace!

Call to prayer and fasting: Your congregation received an Oct. 15, 2002, letter from Mennonite Church USA Executive Director Jim Schrag. The letter, distributed through your area conference by e-mail, invited congregations to pray and fast to

hear God's call to serve as Christ's peacemakers. Jim urged us to "Gather to listen to what God is calling us to do as a Mennonite Church in the United States. We need to hear God's voice, as congregations and as a new denomination, even as the tensions between the United States and Iraq seem inevitably headed toward war. As a people of faith and hope, we believe deeply in the power of prayer."

While the original call was for prayer and fasting on Peace Sunday (November 10), your congregation can use this method of discernment to hear God's call to active peacemaking any time. On the Peace and Justice Support Network Web site, <http://peace.MennoLink.org>, you'll find worship resources, information about how to lead your congregation through prayer and fasting toward discernment, and a Peace Pledge with action ideas, along with Jim Schrag's letter of invitation.

Prayer and fasting can help your congregation discern God's call to actions for peace in your community and within our nation and world. The times cry out for us to join together as Mennonite Church USA congregations, conferences and agencies to hear God's word for us.

Share your experiences: For your networking benefit, the Peace and Justice Support Network Web site now has three bulletin boards to aid in sharing peace and justice ideas and projects between congregations, groups and individuals. Please take a few minutes to contribute your experiences with congregational education projects, community outreach times, advocacy work, resources, etc.

Thousands of people, mostly other than Mennonite, read the site each month. Likely your ideas will help dozens of others! <http://peace.mennolink.org/bulletinboards.html>

What issues and challenges face mission work today? What direction is mission headed in the future? **Missio Dei**, a new series published by Mennonite Mission Network, invites reflection and dialogue about God's mission in today's world through ministry case studies, personal stories of following God's call and presenting biblical and theological foundations of the mission task. **Missio Dei** presents perspectives to reflect the passion and commitment of the mission network: to declare in word and demonstrate in life the whole gospel of Jesus Christ, "*across the street, all through the marketplaces, and around the world.*"

Inserted in this *Equipping*, "Understanding Islam: A Christian reflection on the faith of our Muslim neighbors," by Calvin E. Shenk, is the first issue in the **Missio Dei** series. With 40 years of experience cultivating relationships with Muslims in Africa and the Middle East with his wife Marie, Calvin shares his insights to help us gain a clearer understanding of Islam, today's second-largest religion.

Conference mission leaders meeting: Conference mission leaders will meet April 26-29 in Pasadena, Calif. "Our Missional Journey: Following the Path of Jesus" provides the theme for the meeting. Jim Schrag and Stanley Green will be the plenary speakers. Lodging and meals will be at William Carey International

University. Registration forms are available in February.

For more information contact Becky Tyson at Mennonite Mission Network: toll free 1-866-866-2872 or BeckyT@MennoniteMission.net.

Evangelism and Church Planting Sunday—April 27:

Worship resources designed to assist your planning for worship on Evangelism and Church Planting Sunday are included as an insert in this *Equipping*. The suggested theme is "Peace be with you," John 20:19; the Scriptures follow the lectionary. Check out the insert for suggestions for the call to worship, invocation, hymns and other music options, children's story, thoughts for the sermon and additional resources. If you are unable to use these ideas on April 27, please consider choosing another date to emphasize evangelism and church planting.

New peace and justice

resources: View two new resources, "Pray for Peace, Act for Peace" T-shirts and bumper stickers, and other resources at the Peace and Justice Support Network Web site, <http://peace.mennolink.org>.

If you know exactly what you want to order, contact their shipping source: Mennonite Media, 1251 Virginia Ave., Harrisonburg VA 22802; LoisH@mennoMedia.org; 1-800-999-3534; fax 540-434-5556 (attn. Lois H.).

For help in selecting peace and justice resources contact: Resources, Mennonite Mission Network, P.O. Box 347, Newton KS 67114-0347; resources@MennoniteMission.net; 1-866-866-2872, ext. 277; fax 316-283-0454 (attn. Roberta).