

Mennonite Church USA

Time for an alignment: Pastors know that congregational leadership is a combination of knowing where to go, getting a critical mass of the congregation to commit to going there, and then allowing for other secondary goals to be followed as well, expressing a degree of diversity of call and commitments among the congregation. We might call this consensus building, or others might call it the guidance of the Spirit: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us."



It is much the same churchwide. I sometimes say that MC USA is just a large congregation. But instead of Sunday school classes we have conferences. Instead of committees we have agencies. The church board in your congregation is like the MC USA Executive Board. In many ways the Constituency Leaders Council is like a congregational board of elders or deacons.

The word "alignment" has recently come to prominence in my vocabulary. It asks the question, "Which way are we headed?" Picture a large arrow. Then put lots of small arrows into it. Make them go in many different directions. That is non-alignment. Now make them go in the direction of the big arrow. That is alignment.



There is an ad on TV that speaks of alignment. Sitting around a board table someone says "peanut butter." The executive at the head of the table seems perplexed. "What?" he says. The subordinate repeats, "Peanut butter—that's what we produce—peanut butter."

Many things distract us. We lose our focus. It can happen in the congregation, the conference or churchwide. We speak about churchwide ends of a missional church, finding leadership for congregations and finding our place globally by learning to be a nationally based church in the United States. These are heady goals indeed! These are the big arrows. But if the Executive Board, the agencies or the conferences and their congregations are small arrows heading in many other different directions within these big arrows, the direction of the big arrows isn't going to mean very much.

In July we gather in Atlanta to ask the question of whether we are aligned around the big arrows or not. How about adding a new word in your prayer vocabulary: "alignment" for the sake of what God is doing in the world. *Jim Schrag, Executive Director of the Executive Board, Mennonite Church USA*

There is a place for Junior High Youth at the table! No one should leave the Junior High Convention without having an amazing time of worship blended with a week full of fun, fellowship and recreation! Plans for the week include trips to the Martin Luther King Peace Center, Six Flags White Water Park of Atlanta, and the World of Coca-Cola (with discussion prior to the trip regarding consumerism and worldwide economies). Special activities include a concert by Ken Medema, a comedy performance by improv group *CPR* and an afternoon servant project. Linda Mininger-Huber will lead worship with assistance from Austin Birky and a band of enthusiastic musicians. Some of the speakers for the Junior High Convention will be June Alliman Yoder, Peter Eash-Scott, Carol Duerksen, Diane Zaerr Brenneman,

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

- Atlanta prayer calendar
- Herald Press 2003 catalog
- Parish Paper
- X-Plore posters
- Service opportunities info

Felipe Hinojosa, Merv Stoltzfus and Regina Shands Stoltzfus. Junior high participants will be fed spiritually through these fantastic speakers and dynamic worship times and can build relationships with Jesus Christ!

The Junior High Convention will be at the Atlanta Marriott Marquis, about a 15-minute walk from the Georgia World Congress Center in downtown Atlanta. Junior high youth may come as a youth group with sponsors or may register individually, if they are attending convention with their families. Activities are scheduled from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. for the junior high participants.

If your junior high youth have not yet registered, complete registration information and forms are still available. See www.atlanta2003.org or contact the Office of Convention Planning, 500 S. Main Street, P.O. Box 1245, Elkhart, IN 46515; 574-294-7523; email info@Atlanta2003.org.

Come visit A-Junction while at Atlanta 2003! Nearly 100 Mennonite groups, agencies and educational institutions, as well as other groups, will be available in A-Junction exhibit hall. Some of the special exhibits are:

- **Menno Grounds (coffee shop)**—Take a time-out, sit, enjoy some coffee and mingle in our coffee shop.
- **The Quilting Frame**—Sit down and join folks in an old-fashioned quilting bee!
- **Cyber Café**—Check your email or browse the Web, compliments of Mennonite Media Ministries, a branch of Mennonite Mission Network.
- **Art exhibit**—Check out what

some of our talented Mennonite brothers and sisters have created in the world of art.

• **Provident Bookstore**—The latest releases in Christian books, music, videos and other things will be on sale at Provident Bookstore. Daily specials will run throughout the convention, so be sure to stop in often!

• **Ten Thousand Villages**—Support workers in other countries as they create beautiful items, which will be on sale at Atlanta 2003! You may want to purchase an exclusive Atlanta 2003 Christmas ornament, straight from Bangladesh!

• **Carpenter's Circle**—Watch a talented carpenter create a table throughout the week, right in the middle of A-Junction! You may be asked to help sand or help out. Pull up a chair and watch the creation!

• **Bloodmobile**—Give a pint of blood and help the city of Atlanta out during one of their slowest times of the year in blood donation! Encourage eligible youth (17 years or older) to also consider giving blood during the convention. First-time givers are more than welcome! The blood drive will be July 6-7, 1-6 p.m.

Many, many other exciting displays and agencies will be on hand to inform, educate and inspire youth and adults alike!

Bring your pounds to Atlanta 2003: A special offering of food will be a part of the closing worship service on July 8. Participants are



encouraged to bring a pound of nonperishable food to donate as part of the joint worship service. The food will then be donated to local food banks and other service agencies in the city of Atlanta.

Pray for Atlanta: A prayer calendar for Atlanta 2003 is enclosed in this issue of *Equipping*. Included on the calendar are suggested prayer emphases as the church prepares for the upcoming conventions. We invite you and others in your congregation to pray with us as we prepare for Atlanta 2003.

New Atlanta 2003 announcements: Look for another Atlanta 2003 announcement sheet in this issue of *Equipping*. Please share these announcements from the pulpit and use them in your church newsletter and bulletin.

For more information about the upcoming Mennonite Church USA Assembly and Conventions to be held July 3-8 in Atlanta, contact the Office of Convention Planning, 500 S. Main St., P.O. Box 1245, Elkhart, IN 46515; 574-294-7523; email Adult@MennoniteUSA.org.

Atlanta 2003 questions?? For information about registration, volunteer opportunities, servant projects, special events, performances, seminars, delegate sessions, worship and Bible studies, A-Junction exhibit area, children's convention, pre-Assembly events or anything else related to Atlanta 2003, contact us at Office of Convention Planning, 500 S. Main St., P.O. Box 1245, Elkhart, IN 46515; 574-294-7523; info@Atlanta2003.org.



Equipping

A resource packet for equipping Mennonite Church pastors and leaders

May-June 2003

Worship, spirituality and stewardship

Interested in training worship leaders? For workshop designs and resources for training lay leaders to lead worship, call Marlene Kropf at the Office of Congregational Life, 574-294-7523. Also check the OCL page at www.MennoniteUSA.org for a variety of lay leadership training workshops offered by Office of Congregational Life staff.

First-mortgage loans available from MMA: Mortgage loan rates have never been lower, which means more money left for your congregation's ministry. MMA has been making money available for first-mortgage loans to Anabaptist congregations and institutions since 1980. As an agency of the church, we understand the needs of churches and church institutions.

A loan from MMA is more than just a source of funds. It is also a connection with:

- **The church community:** The program is part of the circle of giving, saving and lending within the church community. We use a portion of the deposits made by MMA Advantage Annuity clients to support the church loan program.

- **Available resources:** Up to 30 percent of annuity funds are available to help churches build new facilities or improve existing ones.

- **People who share your values:** MMA is an alternative to commercial lenders. We offer competitive rates and terms—and won't charge you

points or loan origination fees. Interested in learning more? Contact MMA at (800) 348-7468.

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Are you facing change in your congregation?
Or are you troubled by the prospect of change?

You are invited to attend

Transitioning: Leading Your Church Through Change

October 5-7, 2003, at Hesston College

The special guest speaker is Dan Southerland, author of the book *Transitioning: Leading Your Church Through Change*, and founder of Church Transitions Inc.

In addition, leaders of churches in the process of change will share stories of steps they have taken. Several school and church leaders will help participants discuss and integrate the insights. Music and worship will permeate and bring inspiration and joy to the conference.

For more information, call 620-327-8290 or email elaines@hesston.edu.

Hesston
College **Start Here, Go Everywhere**

Passionate about stewardship?

Join us! Are you a member of a stewardship committee? A pastor, church leader, or Christian educator? Do you have a passion for spreading the word about holistic stewardship?

If you answered yes to any of those questions, you ought to consider attending the Churchwide Stewardship Council meeting Sept. 12-13 in Chicago.

This year's speaker, Nelson Kraybill, president of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., will lead several interactive sessions focused on the theme, "Missional Stewardship:

Inspiration from the Early Church."

In addition, work will focus on:

- Stories of radical witness.
- Biblical foundations for holistic stewardship.
- The implications of our allegiance.
- Practical tools for change.

The annual meeting will be held at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel in Schiller Park (a Chicago suburb near O'Hare Airport). Cost is \$69 a person, plus a special room rate at the Sheraton of \$79 a night.

For registration brochures and additional information, contact Carol Miller at MMA at 1-800-348-7468, ext. 269.



Equipping

A resource packet for equipping Mennonite Church pastors and leaders

May-June 2003

Christian education, community and life together

Read a good book lately? Have you considered joining the Herald Press Ministers Book Club? If you haven't, now is the time to do so! We have changed to fit your busy lifestyle. The Ministers Book Club is a hassle-free, no obligation book club providing an easy way for you to keep up-to-date on new products coming from Faith & Life Resources and Herald Press, as well as books that are co-published with Pandora Press and Cascadia Publishing House. All you need to do to join and start taking advantage of being a member is call 1-800-245-7894. If you are already a member of the Ministers Book Club, thank you for your continued support.

SSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS! Hot off the press and in this issue of *Equipping* is the 2003 Herald Press catalog. In it you will find new books such as *A Way Was Opened: A Memoir* by Ruth Brunk Stoltzfus, *Revelation* by John A. Yeatts, *The Amish: Why They Enchant Us* by Donald B. Kraybill, and *Some Fruits of Solitude: Wise Sayings on the Conduct of Human Life* by William Penn, translated into today's English by Eric K. Taylor.

Also featured are upcoming books such as *How to Teach Peace to Children* by Anne Meyer Byler,

Elisabeth and the Windmill by Esther Bender, *Anabaptist Communities* and *The Upside-Down Kingdom: 25th Anniversary Edition* both by Donald B. Kaybill, *Beyond Mist Blue Mountains* by Carrie Bender and *Extreme Virtues: Living*

on the Prophetic Edge by David Fillingim. And don't forget to check out our backlist!

To order, for customer service, to request information or a second catalog, call toll-free 1-800-245-7894.

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Training opportunities for lay leaders: As part of our churchwide effort to "cultivate a culture of call," Office of Congregational Life staff are available to lead workshops training lay leaders for ministry in the congregation.

Ken Hawkey, Minister of Discipling, offers the following:

- Teaching to Connect
- Opening Doors: Nurturing Faith in the Home and Congregation

- Making Scripture Come Alive
- Creating a Child-Friendly Church

Linford King and Mary Etta King, Ministers of Community Life, offer the following:

- Equipping Elders and Deacons for Spiritual Leadership
- Tools for Discernment: Learning to Follow God in Decision Making
- Prayer Disciplines for Small Groups

Marlene Kropf, Director of the Office of Congregational Life and Minister of Worship, offers the following:

- Tending the Center: Revitalizing the Ministry of Church Boards and Committees
- The Art of Worship Planning
- Spiritual Friendship: A Practice for our Time

For more information, call the Office of Congregational Life, 574-294-7523 or check the OCL page at www.MennoniteUSA.org.



Hawkey



Kings



Kropf

Share the new! Plan now to promote Adult Bible Study with your adult Sunday school classes. A complimentary copy of the first issue of Adult Bible Study Teacher will be included with your fall Sunday school order form mailing in May. It includes the teacher helps previously found in *Builder* (Uniform Series Edition) in a larger, easy-to-use format. The new format, together with thought-provoking lessons by Regina Shands Stoltzfus and engaging teaching ideas by Ken Hawkey, provide a fresh new feel. Circulate the copy to all your adult teachers, and encourage them to try it this summer! **See it online: Download the first session, for June 1, 2003, at www.mph.org/abs.**

We want you! Peace education staff at Mennonite Central Committee are currently preparing a new multimedia peace resource for youth and youth pastors. Your input is invited. Contact Titus Peachey, tmp@mccus.org; or Conrad Moore, clm@mccus.org; or call 717-859-3889.

Special bulletin! Look for the Mennonite Bulletin Series brochure included with this packet. See the



order form on page 7 for multiple order options and order deadlines. You may order every-Sunday bulletin service on a standing-

order basis, or select only the special Advent or Lenten bulletins. Plan your needs and order today by calling 1-800-743-2484.

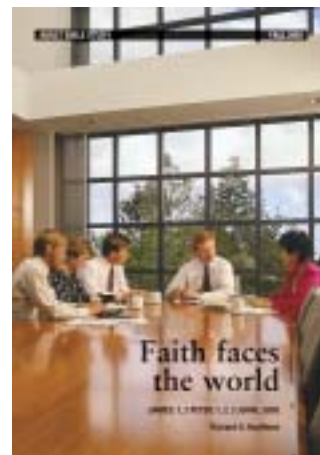
Adult Bible Study: Coming in 2003-2004

Fall:

Faith Faces the World

Richard A. Kauffman

This quarter examines seven books of the Bible—James; 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2, and 3 John; Jude. Each explores different aspects of the response believers may make when facing both the corporate and personal influences of secular society.



Winter:

A Child Is Given and Lessons for Life

James R. Engel

“A Child is Given” explores God’s gift of children using passages come from 1 Samuel, Matthew and Luke. “Lessons from Life” deals with the practical life applications found in Job, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon and Esther.

Spring:

Jesus Fulfills His Mission and Living Expectantly

Timothy J. Geddert

This quarter is based on the Passion narratives in the Gospels and on 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Revelation, and explores how believers apply the death of Jesus to life experience. These narratives provide clues about the meaning of life and death, power and weakness, love and hate.

Summer:

Hold Fast to the Faith and Guidelines for the Church’s Ministry

Susan E. Janzen

“Hold Fast to the Faith,” based on the book of Hebrews, explores how one builds and maintains a life of faith in the midst of a variety of challenges. “Guidelines for the Church’s Ministry” uses passages from Titus and Timothy to help congregations maintain a vibrant community life.

Mission, evangelism and peacemaking



When the Saints Go Marchin' is the theme for the peace gathering, July 1-3, at the Georgia Baptist Conference Center in Toccoa, Ga. It is approximately 70 miles from Atlanta and precedes the Mennonite Church USA Assembly, Atlanta 2003. For more information contact Leo Hartshorn at 717-399-8353 or email LeoH@MennoniteMission.net.

X-plore! Two posters featuring photos of young adults who have "X-plored" God's mission for their lives by serving through short-term mission programs are inserted into this month's *Equipping*. These posters, a preview of Mennonite Mission Network's theme for Atlanta 2003, promote the Service, Learning and Discipleship opportunities available through the many short-term mission programs offered by the Mission Network. These programs offer people from any age group the opportunity to be



involved with God's work across the street and around the world. To further "X-plore" numerous mission possibilities, visit <http://Service.MennoniteMission.net>.

Considering service? Mennonite Mission Network offers a varied array of *Service, Learning and Discipleship opportunities*. See the enclosed poster describing assignments for all ages that last from one month to two years. If you, as a church leader, affirm the gifts that you see in members of your congregation, they will seriously consider the call to participate in God's activity in the world around them.



New pages especially for children: When your children ask why Mennonites don't believe in going to war, give them the Anabaptist faith grounding they need to understand this, along with other things that make them "different." You and children (ages 8 and up) will enjoy exploring a new section on Third Way Café, "Menno Lite," which gives a nutshell version of Mennonite his-

tory in simple language intended for children. The text was adapted and updated from a booklet published earlier by Mennonite Press for children, "The Stream and All In It" by Fern Ruth. Lee Eshleman, of Ted & Lee fame, provided delightful, playful illustrations.

Check it out at www.thirdway.com/menno/lite/. Recommend it for your children, students, church school classes, youth groups or history/sociology projects the children may be working on at school.