The Mennonite

www.TheMennonite.org

July 26, 2005

tongues set free

page 6

Charlotte 2005 convention issue

Charlotte 2005 convention issue

Many of our regular features—such as the Grace and Truth column that usually appears on this page—are missing from this issue. Also missing are the Readers Say section, Leadership and Mediaculture columns, and For the Record. That is because once every two years we create a special issue devoted almost entirely to our denomination's biennial convention.

Charlotte 2005 was the ninth gathering for Mennonite Church Canada, which has been meeting annually since its formation in 1997. But this year's convention, held in downtown Charlotte, N.C., was only the second such gathering for Mennonite Church USA.

When the two national bodies were formed, the assumption was that we would meet together in Canada this year. However, those plans changed for two reasons: Mennonite Church USA is still in formation and needed a U.S. location that would allow as many people as possible to attend, and the cost of meeting facilities was much higher in Canada, since July is part of that country's peak tourism season—and convention facilities in this country stand idle during the week of July 4.

A record 8,677 participants gathered for Charlotte 2005 July 4-9. About 10 percent of registrants were members of Mennonite Church Canada, including 207 delegates—just enough for a quorum in Mennonite Church Canada business sessions (see page 15).

Although the Youth Convention (page 18) was the largest of the four conventions (adult, youth, junior youth and children) many of those participants were young adult and adult sponsors. That fact altered perceptions for Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board on July 4 when a staff member noted that there were as many adults in the youth convention as in the adult convention.

As usual, this biennial gathering had many layers; no two participants would have the same experience. While daily worship services provided a central rhythm for the week, congregational and conference representatives to Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA delegate assemblies spent most of their time in separate sessions (pages 10-15).

Youth convention participants, however, had two worship sessions each day and then spent time in small groups reflecting on those experiences, or they flooded a large hall where recreation activities allowed for interaction among youth groups from both countries.

The exhibit hall included creative displays and lots of giveaways—especially from Mennonite colleges. Again this year—as at Atlanta 2003—the biggest prize was a Volkswagen given away by Hesston (Kan.) College (page 5).

But the central theme of the event, "Can't Keep Quiet," continually reminded all present of the purpose of such a gathering: to become even more outspoken about our faith. If this five-day event sets loose our tongues even a little, then it will have served to make us more missional as a church—in both Canada and the United States.

It is unclear whether there will be another binational convention that includes joint delegate assemblies meeting in the same venue as the youth convention. While Canadian and U.S. delegates met together (page 14) to talk about the relationship between the two-country churches, Mennonite Church USA will hold its next convention alone in 2007 in San Jose, Calif.—*Editors*

Charlotte 2005
By the numbers:

8,677 registrants
MC Canada: 802
MC USA: 7,875
5,238 youth/sponsors
2,669 adults
506 children
264 volunteers

ONLINE POLL RESULTS

Mennonite Church USA conventions should:

- Continue to meet every two years (54%)
- Meet every three years (23%)
- Meet every four years (16%)
- Not sure (7%)

Check out the new poll question at www.TheMennonite.org

TheMennonite

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Cover inset photos (from left) by Everett J. Thomas and Ryan Miller

Vol. 8, No. 14, July 26, 2005

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The Mennonite seeks to serve Mennonite Church USA by helping readers glorify God, grow in faith and become agents of healing and hope in the world. *The Mennonite* (ISSN 1522-7766) is normally published on the first and third Tuesdays of each month by the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Periodical postage paid at Scottdale, PA 15683-1999. Canada Post international publications mail sales agreement no. 40033185, GST no. R122192453. Subscription rates: $41.95 (U.S.) per year. Group rates available. Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of *The Mennonite*, the board for The Mennonite, Inc., or Mennonite Church USA.

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Send form 3579 to:
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1700 S. Main St.
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Mennonite Church USA

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IN BRIEF

Samuel Lopez elected to Executive Board

Mennonite Church USA delegates elected Samuel Lopez, New Holland, Pa., to the Executive Board, representing Iglesia Menonita Hispana. Lopez, moderator-elect of IMH, became moderator when Byron Pellecer resigned.

Rejected Mennonite reality shows

Each issue of *mPress* at Charlotte 2005 included a top 10 list. Saturday's focused on rejected suggestions for Mennonite reality shows:

10. *Faspa* Factor
9. Delegates Gone Wild: What will they pass next?
8. Fear Factor: Martyr Edition
7. Samaritan Idol: Watch as Mennos race to fix a fence
6. Iron Chef: Mennonite Potluck
5. The (Really) Simple Life
4. Pimp My Buggy
3. Trading Pastors
2. The Weakest Shenk
1. Menno Eye for the Military Guy.

—*mPress*

'We' are Mennonite Church USA

CHARLOTTE, N.C.—Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership passed out buttons in delegate sessions with the word "*We*" on them as a way of introducing a new campaign to build identity for the young denomination.

"Research reveals a clear relationship between members' sense of denominational identity and their support of and active involvement in ministries in their congregations, area conferences and church-wide agencies," said a statement. "Over the next several years, Mennonite Church USA is embarking on a journey … of building a strong, cohesive, unified identity among members and leaders. … We are Mennonite Church USA."

According to the statement, the new identity campaign was launched because members and leaders say they don't know what Mennonite Church USA stands for, are confused by complicated organizational structures and don't know what missional means.—*Everett J. Thomas*

Delegates debate bylaw changes

CHARLOTTE, N.C.—Delegates at Charlotte 2005 adopted bylaw changes. However, one of those changes encountered opposition.

The change in question concerned *The Mennonite*, specifically its relationship to the Executive Board (see May 17, page 32 for the proposed changes).

Doug Kaufman, pastor of Benton Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., came to the microphone and said, "If we think both leadership and the constituency is better served by an independent magazine, we should oppose these bylaws."

Paul Rohrer, Orrville, Ohio, on the other hand, urged support of the bylaws. He said *The Mennonite* should support official policy.

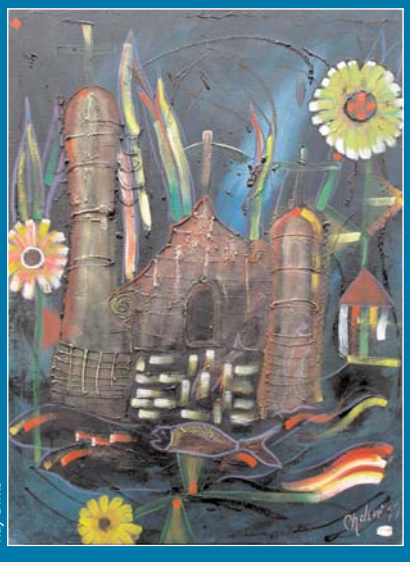
Malinda Berry, New York City, agreed with Kaufman. A corporate ethos is uncomfortable with an independent journal, she said.

Gerald Biesecker-Mast, a member of The Mennonite, Inc. board explained that the bylaws say *The Mennonite* should "support the church's mission but be able to critique the church and provide a prophetic voice."

After a ballot vote, the bylaw changes passed with an 83 percent majority.—*Gordon Houser*

Banned in the USA

U.S. Customs did not let curator Ray Dirks of the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery in Winnipeg bring three Cuban paintings to Charlotte 2005. They were part of the exhibit "In God's Image: A Global Anabaptist Family," featuring more than 100 works from 17 countries. At left is one of the offending paintings, a joyous image of the Havana Cathedral by Cheleni. Dirks says, "It seems ironic that the Bush administration, one that likes to tell people it is led by God more than any other, would squelch this opportunity to support Christians in a Communist land." —*MHC Gallery*



Ray Dirks

Laurie L. Oswald

Prayers and messages for Zimbabwe

During Wednesday's morning worship at Charlotte 2005, worshipers wrote prayers and messages to their faith family suffering in Zimbabwe (see July 5, page 6). Janeen Bertsche Johnson (left), a member of Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board, hands the written messages to Mennonite World Conference president Nancy Heisey, who will give them to Danisa Ndlovu, MWC vice president and bishop of the Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe, at MWC Executive Committee meetings next month.

Whose land is it anyway?

CHARLOTTE, N.C.—Europeans encountered the Catawba living in this region in 1566. A settler began Charlotte in 1755 with a house at an intersection of Catawba paths two blocks from the convention center where Mennonites met July 4-9.

In 1760 the Catawba ceded to the colonial government all their lands except for 225 square miles along the Catawba River about 20 miles south of Charlotte. Nevertheless, White colonists encroached on Catawba land.

In 1840 the tribe sold what remained of the reservation to the State of South Carolina, which agreed to obtain new territory for them in North Carolina, which refused to part with any land for that purpose. A reservation of about one square mile was set aside for them in South Carolina.

About 1,200 Catawba descendants live on or near the reservation near Rock Hill, S.C. Tribal membership is 2,600.—*Rich Meyer, CPT*

Galen Johns keeps convention streak alive

CHARLOTTE, N.C.—Galen Johns kept his convention streak alive. He has attended every Mennonite Church (MC) and Mennonite Church USA convention for the past 54 years, having begun his streak in Goshen in 1951. Charlotte is No. 27.

Johns attended each convention—whether it meant staying in a pop-up tent, a camper, a college dorm or a hotel. In Atlanta he slept in the camper he and his wife purchased years earlier. Since then he sold it and stayed this year at the Holiday Inn.

Remembering the church in 1951, he said, "We [Mennonites] had a mindset of 'we' and 'they' and we were separated from the world, being rural agricultural people. … With the second world war, things changed because young men saw the needs of our country and other countries. So our denomination was no longer a subcultural group, because we started relating more to society."

Johns said he sat in on the delegate sessions to try to see where the Mennonite Church is going. "I personally enjoy the decision-making process and seeing directions [delegates] take," he said.

Now at age 85, Johns said, the delegates may have to carry on without him. "I hadn't planned on attending the convention in San Jose."—*Zach Miller for* mPress

There's power in the blood

American Red Cross staffer Brenda McCain, right, draws blood donated by Allen Maddux of Marion, Kan., on July 6. Mennonites at Charlotte donated more than 300 pints of blood but fell short of the goal of 400.—*mPress*

Brian Schlabach

If the key fits …

Amanda Yoder, 17, a senior at Bethany Christian High School, Goshen, Ind., on Friday, July 8, started the 1973 Volkswagen convertible bug (above) that Hesston (Kan.) College offered as a grand prize. However, Yoder, chose the $3,000 cash prize instead. Yoder and the 39 other final contestants entered the number-matching game by finding another person who had the same number. Then 10 daily winners drawn July 5-8 advanced to the final round. Each received a key to try to start the car. Yoder says she has "pretty much" decided to attend Hesston College a year from now. She is a member of East Goshen Mennonite Church in Goshen.—*Hesston College*

MMA addresses questions about COMB

CHARLOTTE, N.C.—Charlotte 2005 participants had several opportunities to meet with representatives of Mennonite Church USA agencies and lodge their concerns. At MMA's session on July 5, the first questions were about COMB (Covenant Mutual Benefits Plan), the health-care plan owned by Mennonite Church USA for pastors in Mennonite congregations.

"The issue is whether COMB can maintain enough interest in [Mennonite Church USA congregations]," said MMA vice president Steve Garboden. "It looks like congregations that are employing people who are healthy need to resist the temptation to go on the market and find a cheaper plan and stay in COMB."

Garboden noted that the pricing for COMB policies is "comparable to other small employee groups," but those policies are generally more expensive than larger plans in the secular market. Garboden told the group that membership in all MMA's health plans is up slightly over five years. As of May, 263 congregations in Mennonite Church USA participate in the COMB plan for their pastors.—*Everett J. Thomas*

—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

IN BRIEF

Offerings total $58,000-plus

Worshipers at Charlotte 2005 gave more than $58,000 in three different offerings. One at the youth convention collected $30,800 for China Educational Exchange. One adult offering collected more than $17,000 toward work in China; another collected $11,800 toward church-planting in North Carolina.

Brenneman honored for MMA leadership

On July 5, Charlotte 2005 participants honored Howard L. Brenneman, who retires at the end of this month after 14 years as president of MMA, the stewardship agency of Mennonite Church USA. During his tenure he helped the organization refocus its mission on Christian stewardship, particularly emphasizing that stewardship is holistic and not related only to money. "Howard brought together the best of business and the best of church," said Carol Suter, chair of the MMA board of directors.—*mPress*

Tongues

Participants at the Charlotte 2005 adult worship sessions pray.

set free

Mennonites at Charlotte 2005 get loud, anointed with power.

by Gordon Houser

Long known as the quiet in the land, Mennonites at Charlotte 2005 sought to break out of that moniker by focusing on the theme "Can't Keep Quiet," taken from Acts 4:20. While the adult worship sessions at Charlotte had their quiet, reflective moments, they also had moments of lively singing, hand-clapping and even some dancing.

Speakers at these worship sessions, which included participants from both Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada, addressed themes drawn from stories in the book of Acts. At the opening worship on Monday evening, July 4, Lori Vincent told about her six-year struggle with a rare form of cancer and the healing she has experienced. She said she learned that healing comes in many forms and that death can be a healing.

Michele Hershberger, chair of the Bible department at Hesston (Kan.) College, followed with a sermon on "Walking and Leaping and Praising God." She asked why miracles happen sometimes when we pray and not at other times. "I don't have the answers," she said, but wondered, "Would I leap more if I experienced persecution?"

She told of hearing from Jesus that we are not Peter and John in the story of the healing of the lame man (Acts 3:1-10) but the beggar. "You are broken like the lame man on the side of the road," Jesus says to us. While this hurts our pride in helping others, Hershberger said, it is really good news, since the beggar didn't do anything to deserve a miracle.

God is going to bring us new life—even if we expect less, Hershberger said. "How can you walk and leap when you're so busy being responsible?" In the midst of seeming failure there is much hope, because the power is in Jesus' name, not ours.

Beggars know their need, Hershberger said, then quoted Henri Nouwen: "Nothing conflicts with the love of Christ like service to God."

How can you walk and leap when you're so busy being responsible?—Michele Hershberger

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The central issue facing Mennonites in North America [is] Christology. —J. Nelson Kraybill

The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is in you. —Peter Stucky

To sing your song will take courage and incredible risk. —Merv Stoltzfus

Faith is more than just believing; it is trusting.—Barbara Moses

Tuesday morning, July 5: J. Nelson Kraybill, president of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., called on Mennonites not only to make peace but to name the Peacemaker. His sermon followed a dramatic interpretation of Acts 4:13-21 by the comedy duo Ted and Lee, dressed in British robes and wigs to judge Peter and John for healing a man "by the power of Jesus."

Kraybill called Christology "the central issue facing Mennonites in North America." One pressure is to stop talking about Jesus because of sensitivity to other religions. The other pressure is to choose a civil religion that talks about Jesus but takes part in society's consumerism and militarism.

He told of a Dutch Mennonite who said, reflecting on the loss of members there, "We kept the deeds but lost the words."

At a Hispanic Mennonite church in Oregon Kraybill heard from an ordinary man how he shared his faith in Christ with others at a factory where he works. Kraybill may not share his faith like that man, he said, but "I like the way he does evangelism better than the way I don't."

He prayed for God to "give us words to say who we are."

Wednesday morning, July 6: Peter Stucky, a pastor and president of the Colombian Mennonite Church, focusing on Acts 4:1-12, said the kingdom of this world tries to overcome the kingdom of God, either by force or by seduction. However, "the kingdom of this world is finished."

He told stories of church members in Colombia facing kidnappings, torture, executions and death threats from groups legal and illegal. But these believers "carry on with the power of Jesus."

Some 70 church leaders have been killed in Colombia in the past year, Stucky said. Eight people in a community that declared itself "a peace community" were killed by the army, yet the U.S. government continues to substantiate Colombia's human rights record and give it military aid only less than what it gives Israel and Egypt.

Nevertheless, Jesus has overcome the world and given the church that authority. "The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is in you," Stucky said. The Colombian Mennonite Church has located its ministries among the poor and marginalized. They speak with guerrillas and army representatives in the name of Jesus.

Later in the service, Dan Nighswander of Mennonite Church Canada and Jim Schrag of Mennonite Church USA offered blessings to the Colombian Mennonite Church. Stucky responded in kind, saying that because of North American wealth and power "it is hard to remain faithful … maybe harder than it is for us in Colombia."

Wednesday evening, July 6: In a joint worship service of youth and adults, Merv Stoltzfus, conference minister for Atlantic Coast Conference, told of being hit by a drunk driver when he was 11 years old. Later, God called him against his inclinations to go to college. This led him to other important choices. God knows all our possibilities, he said.

He referred to the story of an East African tribe in which each person has his or her own song. "To sing your song will take courage and incredible risk," he said. Such risk is worth it, however. John 10:10 promises life in abundance.

Stoltzfus then invited listeners to come forward and choose to sing their song and follow God.

Thursday morning, July 7: Barbara Moses told the story of how God called her to be the principal of Philadelphia Mennonite High School (PMHS). Four years ago the school faced a financial crisis when they discovered asbestos in the building they had just purchased. Now in its seventh year, the school is doing well, thanks to help from the broader Mennonite church.

She spoke of moving from being a wimp to being a witness. "Faith is more than just believing; it is trusting," Moses said. She did not want to become PMHS's first principal, which meant earn-

Everett J. Thomas

Prayers: Charlotte 2005 worship leaders Paula Hochstedler Stoltzfus and Kenneth Thompson place confessions in a basket during Tuesday morning's adult worship session.

Laurie L. Oswald

Songs: Ken Medema (left) brought special music, and Paul Dueck (with his Paraguayan harp) and a group of musicians led music for adult worship sessions.

ing half the salary she was making as a public school administrator. But she stepped out on faith. Less than a month later her husband died. Then she read in Joshua 1:9, "Be strong and courageous." God moved her "from being a believer to a truster," she said.

We are not just to witness but to be witnesses, she said. "There's a whole world out there needing to hear good news."

An anointing service followed her sermon. People came to be anointed with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Friday morning, July 8: Worshipers heard from church planters in Raleigh and Hickory, N.C., then took an offering to help Mennonite churches in North Carolina.

Bishop Leslie III and Natalie Francisco, senior pastors of Calvary Community Church, Hampton, Va., focused their sermon on being of one heart and soul. "Unity emanates from the Spirit," said Natalie. Though each member of the body of Christ has a different function, all are equally important.

They described the core values of their congregation: being Christ centered, excellence propelled, seeker friendly, service oriented and family focused. But as believers, Natalie said, we are called "to make disciples of others in our community, nation and world, and we are empowered by the Holy Spirit."

We depend on God's grace, said Leslie. "When we reach our wit's end, we can be witnesses."

Following the sermon, people shared in a Communion service.

Saturday morning, July 9: Ray Aldred, director for the First Nations Alliance Churches of Canada, called on worshipers to continue to speak what we have seen and heard.

But what if our picture is too small? he said. "Jesus is bigger than our doctrinal statements."

Western Christianity no longer calls us to radical conversion, Aldred said. It has lost its ability to call for conversion from North American culture. His aboriginal people (he is a member of the Swan River Cree Nation) helped him hear the gospel story again.

Aboriginal people emphasize listening before speaking, something most of us don't like to do, he said. "We are tempted to think we have arrived." We have reduced the gospel to being better behaved and pious.

"Conservatism and liberalism have never saved anybody," Aldred said. Our version of Christianity has become the folk religion of the West. We have privatized faith and reduced the gospel to T-shirts and bumper stickers, he said.

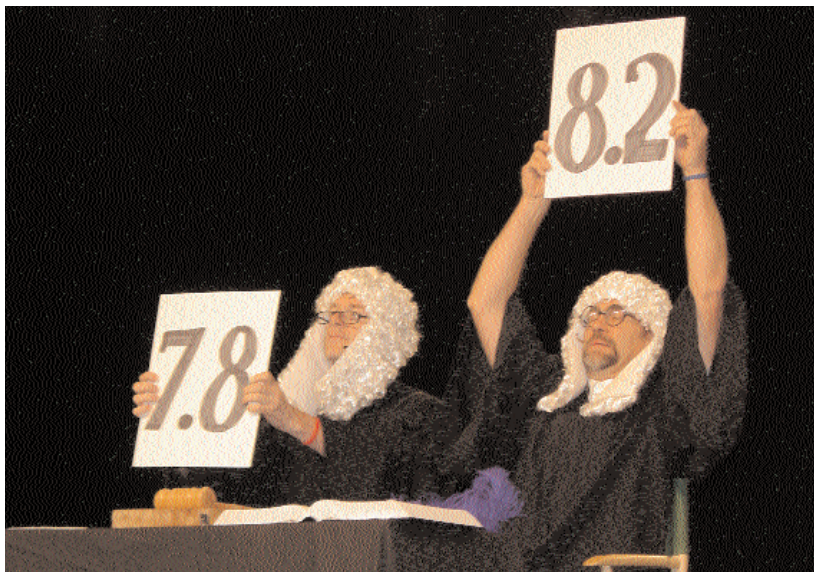
When we stay in our homogeneous unit, our picture of Jesus gets smaller, he said. We have a bent toward arrogance and think we're the first to get the Christianity thing right.

Institutions and nations never last forever, he said, but Jesus' story goes on. Let's speak what we have seen and heard.

Musician and songwriter Ken Medema followed the sermon with an improvised song summing up the messages of the worship sessions. He sang that if Mennonites stop being quiet they will be dangerous. His refrain ended, "Let everyone hear and see/the Mennonites have been set free." TM

Unity emanates from the Spirit.
—Natalie and Bishop Leslie Francisco

Jesus is bigger than our doctrinal statements.
—Ray Aldred



Everett J. Thomas

Bravo: Comedy duo Ted and Lee judge the lame man's leaping ability in a skit.

Everett J. Thomas

Mennonite Church USA leaders confer during discussion of the health-care access resolution on July 8. From left: moderator-elect nominee Sharon Waltner, Executive Board member Jim Harder, associate executive director Ron Byler, parliamentarian Sue Biesecker-Mast, moderator Duane Oswald and executive director Jim Schrag

by Everett J. Thomas

Mennonite Church USA delegate assembly

Table group process creates a 'culture of discernment' for major church issues.

Congregational and conference representatives to Mennonite Church USA's 2005 delegate assembly in Charlotte, N.C., embraced a new way of doing the work of the church that melded worship and work. The "table-group protocol" also allowed each of the 926 delegates to speak—at least to nine other people—on every issue before the assembly and assured that individuals or special-interest groups could not easily alter the plans established by the Executive Board (see page 32).

Speaking to government

Those plans focused on several national issues and how Mennonite Church USA should speak to those issues. But before sorting that out, the agenda called for debate about how we should address the U.S. government on any matter.

The issue was framed by two short presentations. J. Daryl Byler, director of Mennonite Central Committee's Washington Office, listed four reasons why Mennonite Church USA should "bother to witness to government." Those reasons included: because it is biblical, because it is part of our Anabaptist theology and practice, because our global brothers and sisters are asking us to do so and because the church has "prophetic imagination."

John D. Roth, history professor at Goshen (Ind.) College, framed his reservations as a "deep pastoral concern" that was not intended to be a rebuttal to Byler's call for speaking to government.

Roth noted that the 2004 presidential campaign "revealed a deep division within the Mennonite church that should be named, analyzed and openly addressed." Roth also proposed that "Mennonites in the U.S. should commit themselves to a five-year sabbatical from affiliations with any political party."

But not everyone was ready to accept the idea of such a sabbatical. One of the first to speak was Horace McMillon (see photo page 11).

"People have sacrificed too much to not be part of the political process," McMillon said.

Others were willing to consider such a hiatus

Everett J. Thomas

Representatives from congregations that participated in the testing phase of the health-care access statement were presented with a lamp during the Mennonite Church USA delegate assembly. From left: Karl Sommers, staff person for the health-care access commission, moderator Duane Oswald and June Thompsen

Delegates debate a proposal for "a five-year sabbatical from affiliation with any political party," list health care for Mennonite pastors as a top priority.

from political party involvement, but only with certain conditions.

"A sabbatical may be appropriate," Pauline Buller reported for her table group, "but it should not be a retreat."

Retreating from the political process was a concern of others as well. Jerry Kennell's table worried that "a sabbatical drags us back into too much cultural shyness."

Others wondered why the political process was being singled out.

"Maybe we should also take a five-year sabbatical from the consumer culture," Anita Amstutz said for her table. "We do believe we should speak to government, but we need a blueprint."

Some supported the notion that the church has become more concerned about national politics than is appropriate.

"We agree that political polarization has affected us as a church," Don Kouts said for his table. "We should be focusing not on red states but on the red-letter verses [in the Bible]."

Health-care access

The question of speaking to government was sparked in part by a two-year process set in motion by delegates to Atlanta 2003. Wanting to speak to the U.S. government about lack of health-care access for many citizens, an extensive study process was supposed to give this year's delegates a resolution they could adopt.

But during the past year, feedback from many congregations caused the health-care access commission to remove specific actions from the resolution placed before the delegates.

After discussions about the health-care access statement, each table group provided a written list of their priorities for Mennonite Church USA. According to Karl Sommers, who served as staff for the commission, three priorities emerged from the delegate feedback forms. Top priority called Mennonite Church USA members to be "better stewards of our own health." The second priority was for health-care access for pastors and church workers. Advocating for public policy changes was the third priority and, according to Sommers, had "strong interest" among delegates.

Delegates approved the health-care access statement by a 95 percent majority. To help congregations begin working at steps that grow out of their interaction with the newly adopted statement, the commission distributed a resource guide entitled "Healing Healthcare."

"By 2007 we expect to see organization plans and action statements [from congregations]," Sommers said.

Everett J. Thomas

Delegate Horace McMillon responds to a July 6 proposal that Mennonites take a five-year sabbatical from political party affiliations. McMillon said, "People have sacrificed too much to not be part of the political process."

War in Iraq

A second resolution took even more time: a statement on the war in Iraq (see page 13). The resolution took a different course from all others. It was proposed by the Executive Board the day Charlotte 2005 opened. The board decided to craft a statement and place it before delegates because in the weeks before Charlotte 2005 many individuals and groups were requesting that Mennonite Church USA make a statement about the war.

But when the statement arrived on the floor, there were so many suggestions for changes that the delegates voted to send the original statement—and all proposed amendments—to the resolutions committee for processing.

When the statement came back on Saturday morning (with some of the 34 proposed amendments reviewed by the committee), it was approved almost unanimously.

This resolution … is a call to our own Mennonite Church USA family to act on our convictions. —Jim Harder

"This resolution is primarily for us to use," said resolutions committee member Jim Harder. "It is a call to our own Mennonite Church USA family to act on our convictions. A secondary audience is the global church."

Antiracism

Explaining that white people need to be leading the church's efforts to dismantle racism, Executive Board members Jane Hoober Peifer and J. Daryl Byler led the delegate assembly in an hour-long exercise. To demonstrate the roots of racism,

Continued on page 12

Delegates approve a resolution on the war in Iraq, welcome Mountain States Mennonite Conference and consider joining Christian Churches Together.

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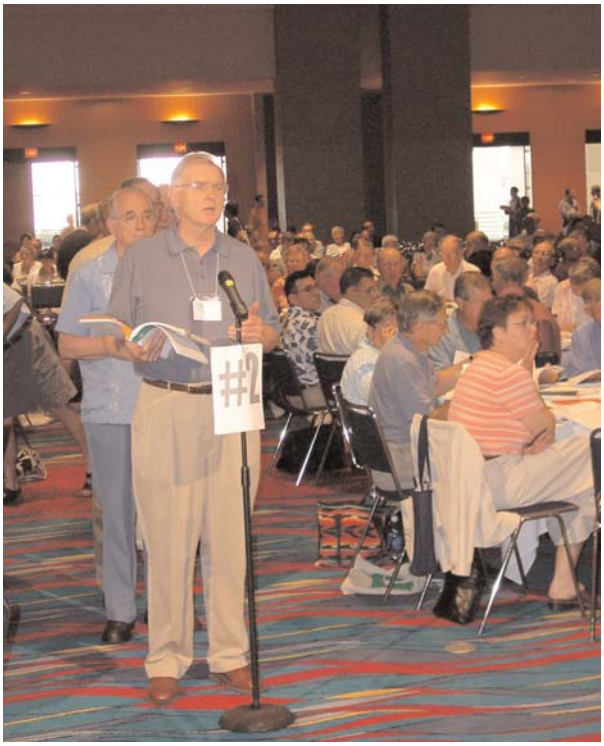
Everett J. Thomas



Delegate James Lapp reports his table group's counsel to the delegate assembly. Table group representatives often lined up at the microphones to provide their feedback before it was time to start.

Elaine Bryant, also an Executive Board member, recounted the story of a small Hispanic congregation in Illinois that asked its conference for help financing a building about 10 years ago. The conference did not respond.

"So the congregation moved ahead," Bryant said, "and it is now a large, thriving congregation of 1,000 … uninterested in Mennonite Church USA."

To engage the issues of racism in the church, table groups worked from a graphic that showed the roots of a racist church. Those roots included the power to enforce prejudice alongside white privilege. The graphic, adapted from original work by Mary Jo Osterman, also demonstrated that the antiracist church has its roots in the life-giving Old Testament words (such as Micah 6:8) and "New Testament words to live by" (such as Matthew 7:12).

Mountain States Mennonite Conference

One of few actions taken by the delegate assembly was to approve a new area conference that is in formation. After the necessary legal papers are filed this fall, Mountain States Mennonite Conference will be formed out of 16 congregations in Rocky Mountain Mennonite Conference, two Western District Conference congregations and four "dual-conference" congregations that currently belong to both conferences.

"We believe this proposal … is the best one for our situation," said Don Rheinheimer, staff person for the committee that formed the proposal and pastor of Mountain Community Mennonite Church in Palmer Lake, Colo.

Delegates spent time in table groups considering the proposal. When they went to the microphones to report, nearly all enthusiastically welcomed the new conference. One of the few questions related to the new conference's long-term viability. But Rheinheimer said the new conference will be larger than the current Rocky Mountain Mennonite Conference.

"We saw an increase in people and money resources [after the plan was approved by the affected conferences]," Rheinheimer said.

Although forming a new conference was "not for the faint of heart," the process provided opportunities to ask basic questions about what a conference should do, Rheinheimer said. One result is an innovation called "relational accountability" in faith and life forums. The forums will be patterned after the nondecision-making role of Mennonite Church USA's Constituency Leaders Council.

"To remain in good standing in the new area conference, each congregation will be expected to participate in these new forums," said the recommendation from Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board.

The idea of such relational accountability sparked interest among many delegates who asked for more information about how such forums might work in their own conferences.

Christian Churches Together

"Our former detractors want to talk with us and be in relationship with us," said Andre Gingerich Stoner, who helped introduce an Executive Board proposal to explore affiliation with the new ecumenical organization called Christian Churches Together (CCT). "Some have called it a rare, God-given moment," he said.

Cheryl Bridges Johns, a leader from the Pentecostal Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.) addressed the delegate assembly at the invitation of executive leadership. Johns explained that her denomination has lost the pacifist tradition it had in the early 1900s.

"The gifts that the Mennonite church offers are particularly needed at this time," Johns said. "We need you to help us discover who we are, who we have been."

Christian Churches Together, which has not yet formally organized, delineates five "families" among its invited constituencies: evangelical/pentecostal; historic Protestant; historic racial/ethnic; Orthodox; Roman Catholic.

"Do we as Anabaptists fall into any of the five 'families'?" asked Kevin Himes for his table group.

Youth, young adults speak up about what they want from Mennonite Church USA; "Culture of Call" display garners names of 179 potential new pastors.

Mennonite Church USA executive director Jim Schrag explained that CCT includes Mennonite Church USA among "evangelical/pentecostal."

Most table groups responded with enthusiasm to the idea of joining CCT, although some offered cautions. Resisting calls to join immediately, several table groups counseled a slower pace. Delegate Joyce Schutt's table group wanted to "move at a [slower] pace so those conferences or churches that were reluctant to join Mennonite Church USA" could support CCT membership.

No vote was taken on the proposal. However, each table group filed a written report with its feedback to the Executive Board.

Hearing from the next generations

Little Bear Busenitz, from Busby, Mont., and Miles Musselman, from Souderton, Pa., introduced Speak Up!—a new arrangement that allowed youth delegates to discuss the issues before the Mennonite Church USA delegate assembly.

"We need to live out the Sermon on the Mount," said Leah Yoder, Salem, Ore. "[That means] reaching out to the community, being tolerant and helping people think for themselves."

The delegate assembly also included many young adults, and they were given special notice at the end of the week.

Laura Steiner reported that more than 100 young adult delegates met on July 6 to discuss their experiences during the delegate assembly.

"We are excited about what the church is," Steiner said, "and excited about what it will become. Our … involvement in local churches is desperately important to us."

Everett J. Thomas

Matthias Luitzens and his mother, Rachelle, listen to Zenobia Sowell-Bianca. Almost all business conducted by the Mennonite Church USA delegate assembly was discussed in table groups first.

One way the delegates learned of young adult commitment to the church was through a special display in the convention center lobby where the names of those who might be called to pastoral ministry in a Mennonite congregation could be posted (see page 17).

Diane Zaerr Brenneman, executive leadership staff member in Mennonite Church USA's ministerial leadership office, presented the delegate assembly with 179 "Culture of Call" cards collected during the week.

Statement on the War in Iraq
Mennonite Church USA
Delegate Assembly
July 9, 2005

Preamble

In response to requests from area conferences, congregations and members for Mennonite Church USA to state our belief in God's call to peace and to invite peacemaking actions as individuals and congregations, The Executive Board offers the statement below. It follows a letter to President Bush, in September 2002, signed by 17,000 members that outlined alternatives to going to war in Iraq, and a similar letter from the Constituency Leaders Council in March 2003. In June 2004 the Executive Board sent a pastoral letter to our congregations during this time of global turmoil.

This is our faith:

We believe that peace is the will of God. God created the world in peace, and God's peace is most fully revealed in Jesus Christ, who is our peace and the peace of the world. Led by the Holy Spirit, we follow Christ in the way of peace, doing justice, bringing reconciliation, and practicing nonresistance, even in the face of violence and warfare. (Article 22, Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, 1995)

We believe that the church is God's holy nation, called to give full allegiance to Christ its head and to witness to every nation, government and society about God's saving love. (Article 23)

This is our hope:

The biblical vision is of a day when nations will no longer learn war (Isaiah 2:4, Hosea 2:18, Micah 4.3), a day when God will wipe away all tears and when death, mourning, crying and pain will be no more. (Revelation 21:4). It is this glorious vision and the example of Jesus Christ that moves us, even now, to live as peacemakers in our world.

This is how we, as God strengthens us, choose to express our love:

We will repent for ways we have contributed to this war; We will pray for peace, justice and reconciliation; We will renew our commitment to teach peace to every generation and to provide youth with meaningful alternatives to military service; We will support Mennonite Central Committee's work in Iraq, including relief, development, and peace projects; We will encourage those called from our congregations to serve on Christian Peacemaker Team delegations in Iraq; We will offer our support to local military personnel and their families as they deal with the trauma of this war; We will reach out in friendship to local Muslims; We will join our voices with many other people of faith who are calling for our national leaders to end the U.S. military presence in Iraq, recognizing that such visibility is fueling a growing insurgency movement and adding to the daily suffering of ordinary Iraqis.

In all this, we seek to be "that 'city on a hill' which demonstrates the way of Christ" and to faithfully call "the nations (and all persons and institutions) to move forward toward justice, peace, compassion for all people." (Article 23, Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, 1995.)

Everett J. Thomas

Adult convention worship leaders Kenneth Thompson (left) and Paula Hochstedler Stoltzfus (right) pray for Mennonite Church USA moderator Duane Oswald (left) and Mennonite Church Canada moderator Henry Krause (right). LaVerle Schrag, Hutchinson, Kan., created the three-part "tongues of flame" sculpture.

Joint session calls for new relationship

Delegates want continued shared assemblies for MC Canada and MC USA.

Though some fear Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada may be growing apart, delegates at the Charlotte 2005 assembly urged church leaders to build new relationships between the denominations and to continue to hold periodic joint assemblies.

Delegates from both denominations spoke during a joint afternoon session on July 6, asking that the two churches pursue academic and pastoral exchanges, sister church relationships and continued gatherings that would be held in both the United States and Canada. Some delegates also sought to heal the rift they perceive has widened between the denominations.

"We at Mennonite Church USA could confess our sin of domination," Mennonite Church USA delegate Rachel Friesen said. "Those in Mennonite Church Canada could confess their judgmentalism of American Christians."

Mennonite Church USA could confess our sin of domination. . . . Those in Mennonite Church Canada could confess their judgmentalism of American Christians. —Rachel Friesen

Other delegates believe the churches are more alike than their respective names and cultures imply.

"Because we share a common confession of faith, we really are one church," said Mennonite Church USA delegate Alice Suderman.

Still, delegates admitted there is continuing frustration that the denominations—in combining the former General Conference Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Church—seem to have fractured along national lines. "There's still a lot of mourning that there's a separation of the two," said Mennonite Church Canada delegate Lydia Harder.

Delegates filled out two questionnaires during the July 6 sessions, critiquing the relationship between the two denominations and also examining the continued effectiveness of the shared Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective and the Vision: Healing and Hope statement, both adopted in Wichita, Kan., in 1995.

Mennonite Church USA moderator Duane Oswald and Mennonite Church Canada moderator Henry Krause gave delegates overviews of their respective denominations and guided table discussions during the joint session. They also described the evolution of the churches' relationship.

"As we worked together on the implementation of various activities forming our partnership, we observed a significant difference between our two churches," said Oswald.

Krause spoke of tensions but also joys within the relationship.

"We've had the sense that we were always the little brother or little sister when we met together with our American family," Krause said. "So there was significant joy in becoming a truly Canadian church that can work on issues of mission and theology in an equal partnership with Mennonite Church USA. There was also a significant loss for various parts of the Canadian church which had close ties to U.S. sisters and brothers."

Also during the joint session, delegates sent messages and prayers of encouragement to the Anabaptist church in Zimbabwe, the site of political and social upheaval, as well as of a drought and economic collapse, that have left more than 250,000 people displaced in recent weeks (see page 4).

—Robert Rhodes for mPress *with contributions from Tim Miller Dyck.*

MC Canada delegates set new priorities

Faith and Life Committee will address issues of ethics, policy and practice.

Mennonite Church Canada delegates focused on the purpose and structure of their church during their delegate assembly in Charlotte. Canadian delegates unanimously approved the formation of a Faith and Life Committee, a new five-person group to address questions of theology, ethics, policy and practice in the church.

At the 2004 Mennonite Church Canada assembly in Winkler, Man., delegates expressed a specific desire for the national church to take a greater role in this area. This new group is the response.

The mandate of the group is to "attend to the interface" between the Confession of Faith and church identity, give leadership in "discerning God's will on issues of theology, ethics, polity and practice" and develop resources for study and guidance for the church.

Table groups were mostly supportive of the proposal, some strongly so. Within the sense that the group was needed were also some worries about how exactly it would address theological areas where there are disagreements.

"Our major concern is if we see the mandate of this committee as putting out theological fires and making theological pronouncements. We assume the goal would be to lead us in discernment," reported table spokesperson Barb Draper.

Identity and purpose: Delegates also provided guidance on how Mennonite Church Canada should structure its overall mission and ministries by establishing a new statement of identity and purpose. After some revisions, the statement was adopted nearly unanimously.

"It's not replacing the [Vision: Healing and Hope] statement," said Jeremy Bergen on behalf of the resolutions committee. "It's the next step in our understanding of what we do together as a national church."

Top priorities: Delegates also ranked general church priorities and were asked to distinguish what the national church should be doing different from what congregations or area churches were doing. The top priorities identified by delegates were, in order:

- Finding and forming church leaders who can lead "toward what God wants us to become" and who "have a vision to expand our sphere of influence;"
- Working so that "healing and hope in Canada and other countries will increase;"
- Working so "every member and congregation will have a heart that seeks to know and do what God is doing;"
- Least important for the national church was that "every member will be able to articulate our confession of faith and their personal faith."

Canada-U.S. relationships: Table groups and individuals repeated calls for strong connections between Canadian and U.S. churches, preferably including another joint assembly held in Canada. Alternate formats were also proposed.

"Maybe we can do a joint gathering for worship, workshops, drama and music every six years modeled after Mennonite World Conference and have a Mennonite North America Conference," suggested delegate Ray Friesen.

There were also repeated wishes for another joint assembly to be held in Canada or closer to the border. There are still hurts felt by some Canadian delegates that neither of the first two opportunities for joint assemblies were held in Canada—even though initial agreements between the two churches were that the next joint assembly after the 1999 would be north of the border.

"The biggest thing is to keep the conference more northerly. There are a lot of kids who would have come if it wasn't so far," one youth reported.

"We are open to meeting together in the future but only if there is a real reciprocal relationship. The next meeting should be in Canada," stated delegate Craig Frere for his table group. Finances, geographic accessibility and little overlap in agenda were all mentioned as barriers for joint assemblies.

The Canadian church paid a significant price for coming to Charlotte to meet. Besides financial costs for those that came, delegate attendance was the lowest it has been in years. The 207 congregational delegates present were just seven more than needed for quorum. But delegates expressed appreciation for this assembly.

"We really learned a lot from each other," one delegate reported. Skills in the U.S. church at multicultural integration and church planning among minority groups were two examples raised.

Area conference membership only: A few congregations have asked to be members of their area conference only, not the national church body. Current bylaws make church membership in Mennonite Church Canada automatic when a local church joins their area conference. The table groups that reported were generally supportive of more flexible models of membership.

"Within a family, we have different levels of participation. We don't all attend the family reunions. We sometimes distance ourselves periodically, but we still are part of the family," said delegate David Martin. No resolutions were proposed or passed on the issue. A five-year agreement with churches in British Columbia currently allows for area church conference membership only, but that agreement expires next year.—*Tim Miller Dyck of* Canadian Mennonite

We are open to meeting together [with Mennonite Church USA] in the future but only if there is a real reciprocal relationship. The next meeting should be in Canada.
—Craig Frere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More pictures from Charlotte 2005

1. **A combined adult-youth choir sings at the joint worship gathering on July 6.** Photo by Everett J. Thomas
2. **Andrea Weber Steckley plays violin as part of the worship band for the adult sessions.** Photo by Laurie L. Oswald
3. **Youth convention participant Ingrid Derstine paints Katie Stutzman's face during the festival for community children, one the servant projects.** Photo by Brian Schlabach
4. **Youth take five between sessions.** Photo by Brian Schlabach
5. **Conference-goers place names on a "Culture of Call" board as possible pastors-in-the-making.** Photo by Everett J. Thomas
6. **Kris and Matt Flinner of Martens Creek Mennonite Church in Millersburg, Ohio, lend support to their children, Abby (left) and Emrick.** Photo by Laurie L. Oswald

In the background, people gather on July 7 for a hymn sing. Photo by Laurie L. Oswald

Youth can't keep quiet

Worship, servant projects and delegate sessions keep youth active at Charlotte.

by Hannah Kehr

A common critique was that youth delegates were not given a chance to discuss substantive issues . . . with their adult counterparts.

The halls and meeting rooms at Charlotte 2005 were filled with more than 4,200 Mennonite youth and their sponsors walking, leaping and praising God. Of the 8,541 Mennonites at the convention July 4-9, the largest segment belonged to the youth convention, and the youth proved, in keeping with the convention theme, that they could not keep quiet. Whether through their vibrant worship, high-paced activity in the recreation hall or thoughtful discussion of ideas with the adult delegates, youth made their presence known.

The week's activities centered around worship. Youth groups and sponsors waited an hour before the gathering music began so they could find seats close to the stage-in-the-round of the worship hall. Participants met 10 times to worship through song, Scripture, drama and preaching, led in worship by Anne Campion, Stratford, Ont., and Adam Yoder, Spokane, Wash.

Music is always a highlight of youth worship. Tim Shue, Kidron, Ohio, and the worship band led a variety of songs, from hymns sung a capella to old folk songs to fast-paced and new praise and worship songs paired with a guitar and drums. The youth learned a new theme song written by Shue, "Can't Keep Quiet." Ken Medema wowed the crowd as he developed a unique song on the spot after each worship service.

Scripture readings for the week came from the book of Acts. The youth drama team, with some help from the comedy duo Ted and Lee, reenacted the story of Peter and John healing a crippled man and the ensuing consequences of their actions (Acts 3 and 4).

Each of the 10 speakers emphasized that each person is beloved by God, the message brought by Jesus Christ continues to be relevant and each person's gifts can be used to bear witness to the gospel.

On Monday night, Luke Hartman, who teaches education at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., used rap to tell the story of Peter and John healing the lame man. He also said: "This week, we all come with preconceived ideas. I think God will shatter all my expectations, and he wants to do the same for you." On Tuesday evening, Brenda Matthews, an actress, poet and social activist from Chicago, used poetry and enthusiasm to speak about risk-taking and boldness. She said, "In each of you is a miracle. In each of you is the power God has called you to."

On Wednesday morning, Willard Swartley and June Alliman Yoder, who teach at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., each shared about the healing power available only through the name of Jesus. Yoder said, "All healing is a gift from God." On Wednesday evening's joint worship, Merv Stoltzfus, conference minister for Atlantic Coast Conference and a longtime youth minister, spoke about choosing God: "Choosing the God that chose you first is a difficult thing to do." At the end of the service, he invited all to respond

Tim Shue (right) and the worship band lead youth in a variety of songs.

Everett J. Thomas

to God's call by making a commitment to Christ and coming forward for prayer.

On Thursday morning, Lana Miller, associate director of convention planning for Mennonite Church USA, took a break from her daily task of reading "the most exciting announcements you'll hear today" at youth worship and spoke about each participant's purpose. Miller said there is only one valid answer to the question Why are you here? That is "to be in relationship with God." She went on to describe the importance of listening and spending time with God. She said, "When you have experienced this life-giving relationship with Jesus, you can't stop telling about the things you have seen and heard."

Thursday evening, Janet Plenert, executive director of international ministries for Mennonite Church Canada Witness, spoke about being bold and encouraged youth to use their gifts now. She said, "When you are told that youth are the future, people are forgetting and ignoring your gifts now." Afterward, youth were asked to approach the stage if they felt called by God to speak a message to their peers. Dozens thronged to the stage to share ways God had been working in their lives throughout the week. Anne Yoder, Baltic, Ohio, said she learned that "everyone is a bowl. We each have the capability of being filled by God."

Friday morning, Mark Vincent, leader of Design for Ministry, continued the call for action and spoke about the need to develop a church that is not "mediocre" but "remarkable." Following his message, Vincent asked youth to stand where they were if they felt called to make a commitment to Christ. That evening, Gareth Brandt, who teaches biblical studies at Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford, B.C., encouraged youth to be "authentic and honest." He said: "Jesus called me out of my death. Jesus calls each of us out of death into healing and life. It starts with telling the truth about ourselves." Afterward, he invited youth to come forward to receive anointing with oil in order to "mark the experience of God present" in their lives.

On Saturday morning, Michele Hershberger, chair of the Bible department at Hesston (Kan.) College, sent participants home with a message of hope and an assurance that "you can't kill this movement [Christianity]." She used stories of people who have worked for Christ in all kinds of difficult situations, including the Anabaptists, Peter and John, the church in Ethiopia and others.

The call for youth to exemplify a visible faith and offer themselves and their gifts to God extended beyond the worship hall. Throughout the week, youth had opportunities to participate in activities that gave witness to the life of Jesus Christ. Many youth groups participated in servant projects with agencies throughout Charlotte. They performed jobs ranging from painting to yard work and home maintenance to helping with the convention registration process. Youth also donated $30,800 at worship Friday morning for China Educational Exchange. Youth also participated in various seminars and in a peace march (page 23).

Another way youth made their voices heard was through Speak Up! sessions. For the first time, youth delegates gathered to discuss their ideas and beliefs about God, the church and other issues. The format was similar to the adults' delegate sessions, complete with a moderator and round-table discussions. On Friday, around 100 youth delegates joined the adult delegate session to dialogue about the future of the Mennonite church. The Speak Up! sessions received praise from adults and youth alike. However, the program was not beyond reproach. A common critique was that youth delegates were not given a chance to discuss substantive issues regarding the business of the church with their adult counterparts. This is something that will hopefully be remedied at future conventions as the Speak Up! program comes into its own.

Charlotte 2005 gave youth much to talk about. However, as Gareth Brandt said in his message: "What is most important for you to realize in this mass gathering is that life is not primarily lived here. It is lived in families and churches and schools." And as youth convention participants returned to their homes, they did so with the knowledge that they can't keep quiet about what they learned.

Hannah Kehr is a student at Bluffton (Ohio) University and a member of Birkey Avenue Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

When you have experienced this life-giving relationship with Jesus, you can't stop telling about the things you have seen and heard.—Lana Miller

Brian Schlabach

Talk about the future: Chelsea Wyse, West Clinton Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio, and John Tamrat, Faith Mennonite Church, St. Paul, Minn., listen to their peers at a Speak Up! delegate session.

Energy for the church

Junior high youth at Charlotte learn what Mennonite means for themselves.

by Laurie L. Oswald

Soon after Maryn Munley found herself explaining to someone that "Mennonite" wasn't the name of a mustard company, the junior high convention at Charlotte 2005 rescued her.

With about 210 other junior high youth from congregations across Mennonite Church USA, she could let her hair down and simply be who she was—a Mennonite among dozens of others her age.

Maryn, who came with a group of junior high youth from North Suburban Mennonite Church in Mundelein, discovered that even in Charlotte she wasn't out of the woods just yet in terms of names. "Traveling through the city we saw a sign that said, 'Welcome Memmonites,'" she says.

"In coming here," Maryn says, "I also learned more about my own Mennonite identity, the fact that we are peacekeepers and try to live a lifestyle that's less materialistic than the average American."

This focus on forging personal, community and spiritual identity is what planners sought, says Susan Nisly, Newton, Kan., director of the junior high convention and director for Service Adventure for Mennonite Mission Network.

They had lots of opportunities to gain sharper identity through worship when Thirstborne, a worship band, and a drama team and speakers talked about forging an identity in Christ, even though Christians live in a world that promotes other identities and voices.

Participants also enjoyed recreation, small-group time and a Ken Medema concert. For their service project, they created school kits to send to Albania through Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions. They also ventured off-site for an afternoon of swimming at an aquatic center and an evening outing at the Paramount Carowinds Theme Park.

The openness and energy of this age group in worship and in play makes the planners' job a joy, Susan says. "I love the junior high youth, because they are still so open to learning and trying new things," she says.

She, with other junior high planners—many of them young adults, such as Marcus Schlegel, Philippi, W.V.—care a lot that young people find themselves in God and in the church. They're not that far ahead of those they lead. At 33, Susan was the oldest of planners and on-site volunteers. Other people helping with activities during the week ranged in age from 19 to 26. "This provides a lot of young adults the opportunity to try their hand at leadership," Susan says.

Marc, unit leader for a Service Adventure unit in Phillipi, said the theme "Can't Keep Quiet" is not hard for junior high youth. Their enthusiasm can often be noisy, but the energy is their giftedness that draws him to them.

Laurie L. Oswald

Energy: Junior high youth play a game at Charlotte.

Lynne Biagi and Kay Kempf, sponsors who brought the Mundelein group, echo Susan and Marc in their love and respect for this age. "They are so willing to be part of things," says Kay, who taught a junior high Sunday school class last year. "I was shocked when my class said they didn't want to just help to plan worship—they wanted to lead it, all by themselves. They did the music, the artwork, even the sermon.

"The effects of the world can begin to jade them by the time they are in high school, so this is an optimum time to reach them, when they are tender and feeling a lot of feelings about God and themselves for the first time."

The youth themselves may give the biggest testimony to the fact that having a junior high convention can earn more dividends in energy for the church than the church expends.

"I came here looking for answers about God—does he want me to be happy or does he want me to be working in service all the time?" says seventh-grader Deanna Sell, another member of the Mundelein group. "I still don't have all the answers. But a lot of the worship speakers and friendships helped me realize that God just wants me to be me, an average, normal person, who is both happy and working for him."

God just wants me to be me, an average, normal person, who is both happy and working for him.
—Deanna Sell, seventh grader

Laurie L. Oswald is news service director for Mennonite Church USA

The church's future

Charlotte 2005 convention brings children into God's larger family.

by Laurie L. Oswald

Those who think children came to Charlotte 2005 because their parents brought them are only partly right. That's because 210 children K-5 had their own convention, which included worship led by Gwen and Les Gustafson-Zook of Goshen, Ind., Bible stories to highlight the theme "Can't Keep Quiet," field trips, workshops and a servant project.

Planners strove to help children learn what it means to be part of Mennonite Church USA. And it's not only because their birth family belongs.

"We want kids to know that conventions aren't just for mom and dad, while they get shoved off into a corner somewhere," says Carol Grieser, Goshen, longtime volunteer coordinator for Mennonite children's conventions. "Children are the future of our church, and they need to feel they are special and important, too."

Rose Widmer, Goshen, a longtime volunteer curriculum developer for children at Mennonite conventions, says a sense of belonging to the larger family of God is especially important for children from smaller, more isolated congregations.

"We wanted to convey the idea that there is joy in following Jesus as one develops a relationship with God and with each other," she says.

Toward that end, each child joined one of about a dozen family groups. With their group, children participated in workshops, snacks, discussions and other activities. The family groups had such Bible names as Peter and John—two characters prominent in Acts 4, theme verses for Charlotte 2005—Susanna, Mary, Elizabeth, Zacchaeus and Matthew.

On Wednesday, each family group, after hearing the Bible story about the woman at the well, attended a workshop. In one family group, Levi Lehman of Chesapeake, Va., and Lauren Weirich of Topeka, Ind., attended Around the World, sponsored by Mennonite Mission Network. Phil and Christine Lindell Detweiler, who recently completed service in Benin, taught the children how women in that African culture carry water on their heads.

Children tried balancing a bowl on their head—minus the water but filled with a plastic ball—as they walked toward a tape marker down the hall. Levi and Lauren learned what it means to help others in the body of Christ with challenges. "I can't do this," Lauren cried, as Levi cheered her on under Phil's watchful eye. "Yes, you can," Phil encouraged, as Levi walked beside her.

Another workshop was by staff from Mennonite Central Committee's office in Washington on what it means to speak to government about justice issues. Others focused on signing for hearing-impaired people, collecting loose change to give to MCC water projects around the globe, playing cooperative games and making crafts, such as friendship bracelets. One afternoon a family group scoured the convention halls to ask adults, "What can't you keep quiet about?"

Besides worship and workshops, the children ventured out of the convention center to practice the theme. In their one servant project, they took bags of goodies to workers in hotels that housed convention-goers.

They also enjoyed field trips at such places as the Carolina Raptor Center, where they took a guided nature walk, and the Historic Latta Plantation, where they learned about life on a 19th-century cotton plantation. Later in the week they went to Discovery Place, a science center, where they simulated launching a space craft.

"Children have a lot to teach us about relationships, as they make friends so quickly," Rose says. "On the first day, I saw one little boy put his arm around another little boy he had just met, and away they walked, arm in arm, talking nonstop.

"It's that kind of thing you can't put into a curriculum and you can't teach. It's the kind of thing that just happens."

Laurie L. Oswald is news service director for Mennonite Church USA.

Children have a lot to teach us about relationships, as they make friends so quickly.
—Rose Widmer

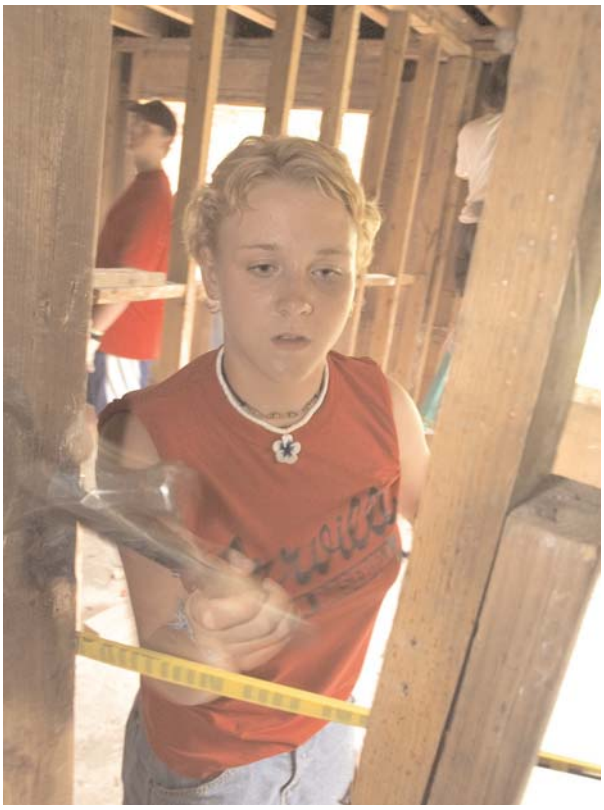
Laurie L. Oswald

Challenges: Levi Lehman balances a bowl on his head, emulating African women.

Volunteers 'changed by being there'

More than 3,800 youth, adults let actions speak through servant projects.

Ryan Miller



Brandi Amstutz of Smithville Mennonite Church, Orrville, Ohio, helps rehabilitate former military barracks at Jackson Park as part of the servant projects at Charlotte 2005. The barracks will be converted into housing as part of a local ministry.

Some 40 youth and adults, sweat-stained work gloves covering new blisters, gathered outside a corner lot in Charlotte's inner-city Belmont neighborhood. For two hours, they had whacked at trees and bushes and carried branches and debris from the lawn as servant project volunteers with the Mennonite convention in town and a neighborhood beautification process.

Now the volunteers had a new gift for the owners of this yard—a blessing with their work.

"Be thou my vision O Lord of my life," they sang to three generations on the home's front stoop.

More than 3,800 people kept their vision on serving God through serving others as part of the convention's servant projects July 4-8. Organized by Mennonite Mission Network, volunteers read to children and worked at nursing homes. They helped run community carnivals and sorted through charities' clothes and food donations. Through high humidity and 95-degree heat, save for a Thursday afternoon downpour, participants hauled and hefted, painted and prayed.

They did not bring answers or God's presence into the community. The presence already existed.

"God landed us in certain places to work with ministries that were already happening," said Arloa Bontrager, servant projects coordinator and director of the Service Opportunities for Older People (SOOP) and Youth Venture programs for the Mission Network.

God landed us in certain places to work with ministries that were already happening. —Arloa Bontrager

Volunteers learned about Charlotte agencies, ministries and communities while they worked. "We were changed by being there," Bontrager said.

Their actions changed others as well. While most volunteers at animal rescue group Hollow Creek Farm desire only to play with the animals, founder Nicole Salisbury watched more than 260 Mennonite volunteers build fences, wash machinery, paint and clean away manure. Their week of work would have taken staff six months to complete.

Salisbury is not religious. She thought most Christians would sit around in nice suits and do nothing but talk. This time, a few volunteers arrived wearing nice clothes after a last-minute site shift. They pulled weeds.

"They definitely practiced what they preached," Salisbury said. Instead of forced volunteerism, she witnessed true desire to serve.

"I've never seen so much enthusiasm. … For them, then, to come out and thank me for letting them help out, that was amazing. The impact from one week's worth of work will carry over for years."

Not every act of service involved physical labor. Roelf David Kuitse of Walnut Hill Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., helped coordinate volunteers at Jackson Park, where a local ministry rehabilitated military barracks into temporary housing for the homeless. Kuitse told the convention newspaper, *mPress*, that one group, unable to help raze a chimney, instead prayed for workers and ministers during the demolition.

Another group served by walking through the Belmont neighborhood with the Salvation Army. Coordinator Tony Janzen said their leader would point out popular spots for drug deals and prostitution. The group then stopped, circled and clasped hands while youth prayed blessings on that area.

While picking up refuse, the Warwick River Mennonite Church in Newport News, Va., asked neighbors if they had prayer requests. One woman invited them into her home. Her brother died, she said. They moved closer and prayed.

"When we left," said Beth Gibbs of Warwick River, "she said, 'Three angels came to visit me today.'"

Volunteers said Christ's call requires both prayer and physical actions. Dan Weaver of Sunnyside Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind., said, "Until you actually go out and do it, all you have is talk."

Each participant received a green wristband that glows in the dark. Organizers hope the bands will inspire servants to let their light shine before others, showing their good works and giving glory to God.—*Ryan Miller of Mennonite Mission Network*

Brian Schlabach

Peace marchers (at left and below), young and old, walk and carry signs at Charlotte 2005. Later they experienced the rainy remnants of Hurricane Cindy.

Stop the war. Who'll stop the rain?

Gulf War veteran says U.S. troops return from war 'broken and alone.'

Nearly 300 participants at Charlotte 2005 marched to a local military recruitment center and back July 7, despite a downpour. The marchers held a worship service and heard speakers, including two military veterans, call for following the Prince of Peace.

About 350 attended a rally preceding the walk. There, speakers talked about the cost of war.

"To be at war costs us our souls," said John Powell of Mennonite Mission Network.

Powell said our voice needs to reach beyond the reach of the military and address those affected by poverty and part of the burgeoning prison population.

Carol Rose, co-director of Christian Peacemaker Teams, said she returned a few weeks earlier from Iraq, where she heard from an Iraqi family whose father and husband was shot in the back of the head by U.S. Marines. She said that Psalm 46 says God "makes wars cease, breaks the bow, shatters the spear."

Roy Williams, incoming moderator of Mennonite Church USA, told participants "there are no quick solutions."

"This is not just a fun walk but the beginning of a long, serious walk," he said.

Two military veterans spoke at the service across the street from the recruitment center, 1.1 miles from the hotel where the rally was held.

Tim Coil, a veteran of the Gulf War, said he suffered from the effects of depleted uranium used in weapons. He has had cancer and suffers from post-traumatic stress. Most of his friends from that war are divorced. He said he despises the "Support our troops" stickers, which do nothing for troops once they come back from war, broken and alone.

Dick Davis, pastor of Peace Mennonite Church, Dallas and former military chaplain, led a prayer for soldiers and victims of war.

Titus Peachey of Mennonite Central Committee's Peace Office called on people to declare their allegiance to Jesus—their hearts, minds, bodies and dollars.

"It is fitting to ask God to transform us," he said. The marchers included people from seniors to youth to parents with young children. All joined in standing and singing for peace. And all got soaked.

—*Gordon Houser*

Brian Schlabach

‘Purpose-driven’ consultation attracts 40

Mission Network sponsors estimate 200 MC USA congregations used material.

Ryan Miller

Howard Wagler (left) of South Hutchinson (Kan.) Mennonite Church and Richard Yoder of Berkey Avenue Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., at the “40 Days ... Now What?” consultation before the Charlotte 2005 convention

Participants in a preconvention consultation—called “40 Days … Now What?”—likened the popular “purpose-driven” movement to a bungee jump: The process often sends congregations and individuals flying forward in their faith, but some end up springing back to where they began.

According to John Powell, director of missional church development for Mennonite Mission Network, which sponsored the July 4 consultation, more than 200 Mennonite congregations have followed some form of Rick Warren’s purpose-driven models. During the consultation, about 40 church leaders examined Warren’s concepts expressed in books such as *The Purpose-Driven Church* and *The Purpose-Driven Life*.

Most of the leaders had followed one or more of Warren’s programs. They lauded the ideas, which focus on changing thoughts and actions to allow people and congregations to find God’s will for their lives and reach out to others. Many said the program vitalized their churches, but they sought the next step.

The five principles in the purpose-driven movement—worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry and evangelism—can adapt to any congregation’s style, but pastors agreed that focusing on the principles was only the first step. To continue growing after working through 40 days of purpose, they said, churches must change structurally.

According to Palmer Becker, director of Hesston (Kan.) College’s pastoral ministries program, the movement’s influence emphasizes congregational ministry, instead of denominational or parachurch organizations, for church growth. By reshaping internally and using group ministry, Becker said, congregations can support both members and outreach.

“We need to see the congregation as a congregation of groups and not just individuals,” he said. Warren’s Saddleback Church, Becker said, boasts a higher attendance in small groups—a purpose-driven emphasis—than in Sunday worship.

Cathy and Howard Wagler, pastors at South Hutchinson (Kan.) Mennonite Church, said structures are tools to support vision and mission, not the other way around. Structures, they said, must help mission advance rather than miring decision-making in lengthy processes. Others advised that structures must be cast in gelatin, not cement, to allow flexibility as congregations evolve.

Some pastors offered words of caution. John Troyer of Locust Grove Mennonite Church, Burr Oak, Mich., said structures often function to prevent progress while preserving the status quo. While he acknowledged the purpose-driven values, Troyer believes seekers desire passionate, risk-taking faith that can be found within Anabaptism, rather than production-line operations found in some popular movements.

Gary Blosser, pastor of North Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio, agreed but said the purpose-driven philosophy, like any idea, is a tool that can complement Mennonite faith.

“We try to Anabaptize everything we use,” Blosser said. “Adapt, adapt to fit your church.”

The purpose-driven models, like any religious ideas, are tools to help others find the kingdom of God, not strict rules for living.

Howard Wagler said objections to parts of the system should not keep Christians from examining their purposes.

“Will you let 5 percent of a book keep you from learning 95 percent of it?” he said. “The Mennonite church has an awful lot to offer our culture today. *The Purpose-Driven Life* is one tool we can use along the way.”

Some also questioned the movement to segment outreach programs, reaching only specific demographics which mirror congregations’ existing makeup. Several speakers noted that Jesus reached a radically diverse population, and ministering only to niche seekers avoids the gospel call.

But Lee Miller of Howard-Miami Mennonite Church, Kokomo, Ind., said seeking purpose helped his congregation focus. Before they used the program, members assumed that people would come because the church existed. After the program, they reached into the community instead of letting others come to them.—*Ryan Miller of Mennonite Mission Network*

New hymnal supplement debuts July 4

Preconvention seminar lets participants 'Sing the Journey' with new songs.

The first thing that 140 travelers did July 4 after journeying to Charlotte 2005 was to celebrate *Sing the Journey*, a new companion to *Hymnal: A Worship Book*.

Preconvention seminar planners led participants through 31 songs and other worship resources from *Sing the Journey*, which has 118 songs and about 70 prayers and litanies. It was the official songbook of the adult assembly of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada, to be used along with selections from *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, created in 1992.

"A story in the April 5 *Christian Century* talks about how a group of sherpas [guides] in the Himalayas walked and climbed with a group of Western mountaineers for several days and nights," said Marlene Kropf, a member of the committee that compiled the new resource, and minister of worship for Mennonite Church USA.

"After a long period of almost continuous journeying they abruptly halted, put down the equipment and rested, not going to sleep but sitting alert, as if waiting for someone. When the Westerners asked, the sherpas explained simply, 'We have traveled a long way; we are waiting for our souls to catch up with our bodies.'

"Because convention-goers will have just arrived in Charlotte after a long journey, they may find it helpful to let their souls catch up with their bodies—in silence, in song and in prayers. After experiencing the deep engagement with people here today, it makes me wonder if we should start every convention out this way."

Singing through the new resource seemed to center spirits in both quiet and robust moments. During "Be Still," an African-American traditional song sung by early slaves, many closed their eyes and tapped their feet quietly. In "Over My Head," another African-American traditional, participants enjoyed a call and response format as well as free harmony and spontaneous movement.

The project had its scary moments, too, said Ken J. Nafziger, professor of music at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va. He helped whittle the final draft down from about 160 selections to 118.

"The process of making final selections for this supplement was really terrifying at times," Nafziger said. "We were making choices on behalf of people we don't know. And we couldn't really surmise what state the church would be in by the time we were ready to use this resource.

"Another terror is the fact that there is no chance for changing our choices now. I worried about whether there would be some flaw or mistake. I also worried about people's responses. … But I had to let all that go, knowing that when our part was finished and the supplement was printed, it wouldn't belong to us anymore. It now belongs to the people."

The supplement was published by Faith and Life Resources—*Laurie L. Oswald for* mPress

The process of making final selections for this supplement was really terrifying at times.
—Ken J. Nafziger

Laurie L. Oswald

Kathy Neufeld Dunn and Larry Diener join 140 other participants who sang through 31 songs in the new hymnal supplement *Sing the Journey* at its preconvention rollout.

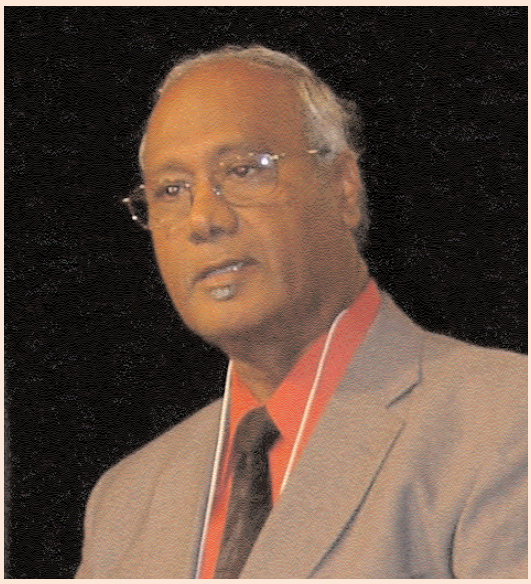
Seminars overflow with interest

Charlotte 2005 offered more than 130 seminars—for youth, young adults, adults—on topics such as culture, worship, mission, prayer, antiracism, journaling, masculinity, leadership, aging, suicide, native ministry, money and pornography. Many had overflowing attendance. Some—such as "Is Jesus the Only Way?"—had to move to a larger room.

The convention also offered four Bible studies: "Jesus' Peace Theology," "Come Gather 'Round," "Can't Keep Quiet (Acts 4:20)" and "Reading the Bible from a Missional Perspective." People also signed up to read through the Bible in 30-minute slots—but not during worship times. By Thursday afternoon, they had read the Old Testament (1,601 pages) and the New Testament (238 pages).—*gh*

FILM

Pearl Diver, a feature-length feature film by Sidney King, a 2000 graduate of Goshen (Ind.) College, was shown twice at Charlotte 2005 to packed rooms. Shot a year ago in Goshen, the film is a present-day drama about two sisters who grew up conservative Mennonite in northern Indiana. They come together 20 years after the murder of their mother. One sister is a writer in Chicago, the other a farmer's wife who has stayed in the church. King tells a compelling story, and the acting is solid. The camera work is uneven, and some clichés—more of writers than of Mennonites—hinder the narrative. Still, this is a promising first feature.—*Gordon Houser*



Everett J. Thomas

New moderator: Roy Williams, of Land O'Lakes, Fla., and pastor of the College Hill Mennonite Church in Tampa, began his two-year term as Mennonite Church USA moderator on July 9 at the conclusion of Charlotte 2005.

Mennonite Church USA Delegate Assembly Appointments July 9, 2005

Executive Board
- Moderator-elect: Sharon Waltner, Parker, S.D.
- Addie Banks, Bronx, N.Y.
- Edith Landis, Telford, Pa.
- Olivette McGhee, Atmore, Ala.
- Samuel Lopez, Lancaster, Pa.
- Sue E. Miller, Middlebury, Ind.
- Merrill Moyer, Souderton, Pa.
- Terry Shue, Dalton, Ohio

Mennonite Education Agency
- Terri J. Plank Brenneman, South Pasadena, Calif.
- Ed Diller, Cincinnati, Ohio
- Noel Santiago, Souderton, Pa.

Mennonite Mission Network
- Testatsion Dalellew, Lancaster, Pa.
- Roma J. Eicher, Albany, Ore.
- Heidi Regier Kreider, North Newton, Kan.
- Mattie Marie Mast, Dalton, Ohio

MMA Stewardship Agency
- Carol Duerksen, Hillsboro, Kan.
- La Vern Yutzy, Lititz, Pa.

Mennonite Publishing Network
- Curtis Berry, Chambersburg, Pa.

The Mennonite
- Susan Sommer, Tremont, Ill.

Leadership Discernment Committee
- Ivorie Lowe, Markham, Ill.
- Bill Zuercher, Hesston, Kan.

Nagelvoort introduced as MMA chief

Brings background as financial analyst, Wall Street investment banker

During a Mennonite Church USA delegate session on July 5 that focused on Mennonite Church USA agencies, MMA board chair Carol Suter introduced the stewardship agency's newly appointed president: Skip (Terry) Nagelvoort. Nagelvoort will begin leading the 60-year-old organization on Aug. 1 upon the retirement of Howard L. Brenneman (see page 5).

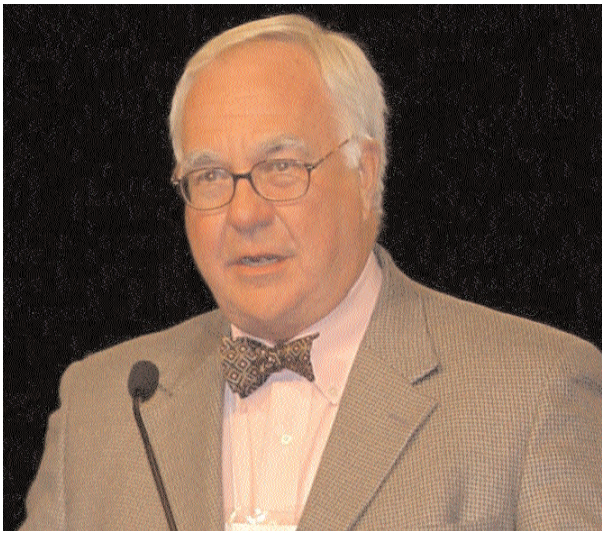
Although Nagelvoort does not have a Mennonite background, Jim Schrag, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, said, "His faith perspective is very compatible with Mennonite Church USA and our missional focus. Skip is clearly comfortable with church service and theology in ways that make him well suited for the leadership role at MMA. God has made Skip available for this calling."

"He brings experience to the position from Wall Street to Main Street," said Suter. "We believe he brings the best of business to the best of the church in a 21st-century global context."

Nagelvoort began his career at Connecticut General Life Insurance Co. as a financial analyst and has held senior executive positions with Wall Street investment banks. An entrepreneur for the past 20 years, he ran his own firm, Nagelvoort & Co., which initially specialized in investment banking.

Nagelvoort—who favors bow ties—and his wife, Mary, have belonged to Presbyterian and Reformed churches and plan to actively participate in an Anabaptist congregation after joining MMA.

"I feel very comfortable with the Mennonite/Anabaptist community because it has taken faith so seriously—personal standards and commitments are high," he said. "MMA exists because of that significant commitment to faith and community."



Everett J. Thomas

Favors bow ties: Skip Nagelvoort

Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board met Nagelvoort and confirmed him for the position during its preconvention session on July 4. Before bringing Skip and Mary into the room to meet the board, Suter passed out a news release and copies of Nagelvoort's resume. One of the first questions related to how long Nagelvoort expects to be on the job.

"We've talked about a five-year commitment," said Suter.

The Nagelvoorts currently live in Holland, Mich., and will be moving to Goshen, Ind., where MMA's offices are located.—*Jodi Beyeler for* mPress *with Everett J. Thomas*

His faith perspective is very compatible with Mennonite Church USA and our missional focus.—Jim Schrag

Glenwood Springs Mennonite Church invites all former and present members and friends to its ***50th-anniversary celebration***. Saturday Sept. 10, 2 to 4 p.m., 2306 Blake Ave. Glenwood Springs Colo. May this be a time of uniting our spirit with each other and with Jesus Christ, "Our Chief Cornerstone."

Contact 970-945-6795 or 970-945-5245. Email lctroyer@msn.com or glenwoodmenno@juno.com

Mennonite Central Committee is recruiting for the position of ***MCC liaison to the United Nations in New York***. This is a three-year, full-time, salaried position. The liaison's assignment is to foster a Christian pacifist vision in the conduct of international affairs at the UN, interpret MCC to the UN and advocate relevant policies on behalf of MCC.

Significant experience outside North America and Europe, or other highly industrialized areas of the world, is important. Training in international relations, law or theology is preferred. Self-motivation and skill in cross-cultural communication are required. Relating to UN diplomats, hosting MCC workers, overseeing the work of office interns, and maintaining regular contact with MCC offices defines the routine work of the MCC UN Liaison Office in New York. Candidates of a gender or ethnic group typically underrepresented in this type of MCC assignment are encouraged to apply.

Contact Prem Dick for a copy of the job description, and send him a letter of intent and a resumé by email to psd@mcc.org, or by fax at 717-859-2171 by Sept. 1, 2005. The position is scheduled to begin Dec. 1, 2005.

Full-time pastor in the beautiful Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Congregational profile available. MLI required. Contact Gerald Bradfield http://home.ntelos.net/~lynsidemenn; phone 540-942-4572 H.

Mennonite Central Committee is seeking applicants for the following service worker assignments. Contact your nearest MCC office or Goldie Kuhns, at 717- 859-1151 or gpk@mcc.org, for an application. Job descriptions are on MCC's Web site: www.mcc.org/serve.

Muslim/Christian exchange participants in a three-year assignment for a couple in Iran. Interest in studying Islam is essential; degree in religious studies, including Anabaptist theology and history, is preferred.

Accountant for a three-year assignment in Indonesia to provide service for MCC's country program and tsunami response. Training in accounting and three years of experience is required.

English/theology teachers for a three-year assignment at a university in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. A couple is preferred; a master's degree is required for visa purposes.

Pathways to Portage: A Century of People of Purpose in Portage County by Elmer S. Yoder will be available Homecoming Weekend, Nov. 5-6, 2005. Outlining the history of Aurora (Ohio) Mennonite Church from 1905-2005, the book contains 21 chapters, 422 pages and 125 photos. Prepublication sale price: $20, plus $4 postage. After Oct. 25, regular price: $25, plus $4 postage. Order from Don and Pauline Yoder, 9511 Lido Lane, Streetsboro, OH 44241. Make checks payable to Aurora Mennonite Church.

St. Catharines United Mennonite Church is in search of a ***senior pastor*** who will be part of a multiple staff. We are a 60-year-old multigenerational congregation located in the beautiful Niagara fruit belt in southern Ontario, Canada. We are seeking an experienced lead pastor with a "shepherd's heart" who is able to communicate and relate to all ages.

Interested people are encouraged to send inquiries or resumé to Chair, Pastoral Search Committee, P.O. Box 20299, St. Catharines, ON, L2M 7W7. Email scumc@bellnet.ca, phone 905- 935-8017

Landis Homes is seeking an ***RN campus supervisor***. Landis Homes is a continuing care retirement community surrounded by farmland in the center of Lancaster County, just southeast of Lititz, Pa. The ministry of Landis Homes is to serve aging adults and their families by honoring and enriching their lives in a community of Christ-like love. The RN campus supervisor is a full-time night position, 11:45 p.m.-8:15 a.m., with only occasional weekends. This individual provides campus oversight to all areas, including health care, assisted living and residential living. Experience in medical/surgical and/or gerontological nursing preferred. We offer good pay, excellent benefits, a supportive environment, plus assistance with moving expenses. For more information about Landis Homes, visit our Web site www.landishomes.org. Apply to Human Resources, Landis Homes, 1001 E. Oregon Road, Lititz, PA 17543, fax 717-581-3899, email aheinly@landishomes.org or call 717-581-3936.

Holy Rood Mennonite Church, in Edmonton Alberta Canada, is seeking a ***full-time senior pastor and possibly a half-time associate pastor***. Consideration will also be given to hiring a pastor couple where the spouse would serve as the associate pastor. Tentative starting date is Jan. 1, 2006. We are members of Mennonite Church Alberta and Mennonite Church Canada. Average attendance is 80-100 in a congregation diverse in cultures, ages and walks in life. See www.holyroodmennonite.ca for further information about the congregation. Interested applicants please contact our Alberta Conference Minister, Jim Shantz, at 780-485-2518, and Guenther Toews, chair of pastoral search committee at 780-458-9358.

Part-time conference minister for **New York Mennonite Conference** beginning October 2006. Conference profile available: http://nymennon.bfn.org/. MLI required. Contact Philip Martin amcpastor@highstream.net, 716-937-0412. Applications accepted through October 2005.

Hesston College is accepting applications for the position of ***food services director*** for its highly respected food service operations. This person provides overall strategic and operational planning and management of institutional food services including the dining hall, snackshop and catering operations. This is a full-time position during the school year and half-time during the summer months. The successful candidate will have experience at a management level in quantity food service operations and have demonstrated the ability to lead a team of highly dedicated employees. Familiarity with state food service codes, menu planning, recipe development and food purchasing is important, as is familiarity with Hesston College, Mennonite Church USA and its constituents. To apply, send résumé to Human Resources Office, Hesston College, PO Box 3000, Hesston, KS 67062 or email debbiej@hesston.edu. EOE.

West Swamp Mennonite Church, an established congregation in Quakertown, Pa., is seeking a ***pastor of youth ministry***. The person in this position will be responsible for planning and leading junior and senior high programs and working with others planning children and young adult activities. For further information contact West Swamp Mennonite Church, 2501 Allentown Road, Quakertown, PA 18951, 215-536-7468; wswamp@enter.net, Rod Rush committee chair and Warren Tyson conference minister.

Service opportunity: **International Guest House** has immediate openings for a ***couple or two single volunteers***. Have an enriching international experience sharing the peace of Christ in the nation's capital. VS allowance and health insurance. Contact IGH, 1441 Kennedy St., NW, Washington, DC 20011. Phone 202-726-5808; email igh-dc@juno.com.

Test your drinking water for under $20. Bacteria, lead, pesticides, nitrates and more. Results on the spot. Visit our Web site today **www.watercheck.biz** or call **888-222-0840**.

Chicago Mennonite Learning Center is looking for teachers. Chicago Mennonite Learning Center (CMLC) is a K-8 school serving an economically and racially diverse community. We are currently looking for ***full-time teachers of grade 1, 4 and kindergarten*** plus a development assistant. We are primarily interested in those willing to join either Mennonite Voluntary Service or Americorps. For more details please contact Ken Hawkley, Principal, 4647 W. 47th Str., Chicago, IL 60632; khawkley@chicagomennonite.org; 773-735-9304.

Advertising space in *The Mennonite* is available to congregations, conferences, businesses, and churchwide boards and agencies. Cost for one-time classified placement is $1.15 per word, minimum of $30. Display space is also available.

To place an ad in *The Mennonite*, call 800-790-2498 and ask for Kristene Miller, or email Advertising@TheMennonite.org.

Everett J. Thomas

A noisy, missional church

If the formation of our new denomination was the grafting of two mature plants, then Mennonite Church USA is sprouting as a transformed church and is like neither General Conference Mennonite Church (GC) or Mennonite Church (MC). Furthermore, this healthy young plant is beginning to bear fruit. The Charlotte 2005 convention offered a taste of five first fruits:

1. The main thing: With the theme "Can't Keep Quiet," the worship services framed our new church as evangelistic. Speaker after speaker called us to open our mouths and preach what we practice. Ken Medema, the sight-impaired songwriter whose gift is to listen to a session and then summarize it with an improvised song, ended the final adult worship service by noting that if Mennonites stop being quiet, we will be "dangerous" (see page 9). Perhaps more importantly, the focus on sharing our faith placed many of the issues that have fractured our unity in the past decade into their place. While there are still important matters about which we agree to disagree, those disagreements did not distract us from the main thing: to be a noisy, missional church.

2. New ways to talk between generations: For the second convention in a row, young adults were integrated into Mennonite Church USA's adult convention and delegate assembly. New to this gathering was a youth delegate assembly that allowed our youngest members to get involved in the matters before the church (see page 13).

3. A new relationship with Mennonite Church Canada: If a denomination is comprised of all believers who ascribe to the same confession of faith, then the Mennonite Church north of the Rio Grande River is still binational. In addition to sharing a confession of faith, we have the same Vision: Healing and Hope, hymnals (a new supplement was released at Charlotte 2005) and Christian education curriculum. We also share several institutions and ministries. But new ways of relating across the border are redefining the "one church with separate national structures" described by leaders in 1999. Worshiping together but doing business in separate delegate sessions allowed each national church to respond to issues confronting them within their contexts (see pages 14-15).

4. New discernment patterns: Decision-making by a delegate assembly has been transformed into a culture of discernment (see box). Based on the strong turnout for each session, this new way of doing business is energizing delegates.

5. New freedom in worship: Planners for youth and adult worship services allowed us to experience a variety of worship styles that flourish in our congregations. It was refreshing to see such broad diversity accepted by both youth and adults. Many of us embraced unfamiliar songs and strange religious language as a means to loosen our tongues.

After Atlanta 2003, I said Mennonite Church USA was going to be OK (July 22, 2003). Two years later we are more than OK. This church has been transformed by the renewing of God's Spirit. The first fruits of our faithfulness can encourage and embolden us. Now we need to get noisy.—*ejt*

The first fruits of our faithfulness should encourage and embolden us. Now we need to get noisy.

Note: additional copies of this special issue are available for $3 each. To order, call 800-790-2498.

Delegate assembly as focus group

How can a delegate body with 926 representatives make sure that folks who like to listen first and speak second are heard in the process? By doing their discernment in table groups.

Except for one item—approval of Mennonite Church USA bylaw changes—all major issues before Mennonite Church USA were discussed in table groups (page 10). When speakers went to the mikes, their words were almost always the report from their tables. This process moderated extreme views held by individuals while giving everyone a chance to be heard in depth. Clearly, delegates liked the comfort level this process provided; three times they voted down efforts to change the protocol. Delegates had little interest in letting even one table group—which tried—suspend the rules so the entire delegate body could debate a resolution en masse.

The counsel from nearly 1,000 delegates was recorded in writing to be reviewed by executive leadership. The delegate body became the ultimate focus group and has now provided the Executive Board with fresh insight about where Mennonite Church USA wants to go.—*ejt*