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Editor:

Jennifer Steiner
jsteiner@mcc.org

Celebrating MCC in the Great Lakes region

Faithful supporters of MCC came together, as they do each year, for the annual "Celebrate MCC" gathering for our Great Lakes region. Representatives from congregations across the region assembled at Central Mennonite Church in Archbold, Ohio, on February 27-28.

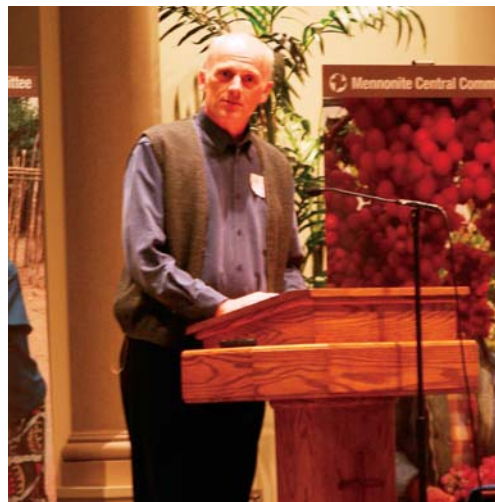
Under the theme "Caring in the name of Christ," around 150 people participated in the two-day event. Dan Wiens, MCC Water and Food Production Coordinator, served as the keynote speaker, sharing stories from his work and travels with MCC.

During the opening worship service on Friday evening, Stanley Kropf led a time of dedicating the health kits that many attendees brought to the service. Wiens then spoke to the group about the "myth of scarcity" based on Genesis 1.

The group reconvened on Saturday morning for reports and stories from staff and Board members.

For many attendees, the highlights of the meetings were the workshops during two sessions on Saturday morning and afternoon. Six different workshops were offered: Coming Home: Sudan, Keeping Alive a Peace Theology, Sharing with MCC, Congregational Representatives, Alumni Gathering and MCC in Iran: Bridging the Rift.

Following the second workshop session, there was more information and sharing from Board and staff members, as well as a prayer for current MCCers serving around the world.



Dan Wiens, MCC Water and Food Production Coordinator, spoke during the Friday and Saturday evening worship services at Central Mennonite.

During the closing worship service on Saturday evening, Wiens spoke on the topic "on earth as it is in heaven" based on Matthew 6:9-13, and invited attendees to share their personal stories and connections with MCC.

The gathering offered a fruitful time of learning and worshipping together, as well as re-connecting with old friends and making new ones. ☺

Mark your calendars now to attend next year's Great Lakes annual gathering on February 26-27, 2010 (location to be determined).

Truly a project of hope

Local community and congregation members from one area of northwest Ohio are taking the call of "welcoming the newcomer" to heart.

In 2004, the elders at Zion Mennonite Church in Archbold, Ohio, decided to make peace and justice a priority in their congregation, so they focused a Sunday School quarter on these issues. Out of that, a group of individuals within the congregation felt a passionate urge that they needed to "do something" with these issues.

It started with an envisioning meeting in May 2005, where 20 people met together to discuss how their community could get involved in peace and justice work in their local area. Out of that, a group was formed, including some congregation members, along with people from the community. The group has blossomed to include innovative projects and programs relating to immigration and aiding local immigrants in their community.

Cathi Baer, coordinator of the Peace and Justice

Project and a member of Zion, quickly points to Sister Karen Bernhardt and Sister Ellen Lamberjack as the backbones behind their congregation's work with immigration. "The knowledge behind any of our work with immigration sits with these two women," said Baer.

How did two Catholic women get connected with the mostly Mennonite Peace and Justice Project in Archbold? Sister Bernhardt was looking for retired teachers to help teach English to immigrants in Fayette, a small town near Arch-

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Are you on Facebook?

Check out the Mennonite Central Committee Great Lakes page for photos, events and more!

Advent “conspiracy” raises funds in Ohio

During this past advent season, the congregation at Hartville Mennonite Church in Ohio took part in a “conspiracy” – conspiring against the materialistic ideas of Christmas that our society perpetuates.

In an effort to take the focus off of gift-giving, the congregation was encouraged to donate money to MCC’s relief work in Myanmar/Burma, where a recent cyclone caused widespread destruction. Kelsey Beachy, a sophomore at Malone University in Canton, heard about an “advent conspiracy” project while at college and approached the pastors of her home congregation with the idea for a similar fundraising project.

“Because the economy isn’t the greatest, we decided it would be a good idea to not ask people to give more money during the season, but to sacrifice a Christmas gift and give to those who actually need something this Christmas,” Beachy said.

Beachy, a business and photography student, had the goal of raising enough money during the four-week program to feed 50 families – it costs \$35 to feed a family of six for one month.

After the first couple of weeks, donations were slowly trickling in, and Beachy was feeling apprehensive about meeting the goal. “I gave my worries over to the Lord,” said Beachy, “and sure enough, on the very last Sunday we had a time for offerings for the project to be brought up to the altar as a sacrifice. People just kept coming and coming. It was completely humbling and a blessing to witness.”

With overwhelming support from the congregation, over \$4,700 was raised for ongoing relief and development work in Myanmar/

Burma, meaning 134 families will be fed for a month.

“I wish I could describe how amazing it was to see my church family come together like that and sacrifice that money for those who need it more,” said Beachy. “This project put Christ back into the center of our advent season.” ☺

For more MCC projects and giving opportunities around the world, visit mcc.org/givingprojects



U Kala plows a neighbor’s rice field using a power tiller supplied by IDE-Myanmar, an MCC partner organization in Myanmar/Burma. Hartville Mennonite Church raised over \$4,700 to help families affected by the cyclone in that area.

Photo by Tim Shenk

Help us collect newborn kits!

Supplies of newborn kits are running low due to recent requests from partners. Visit mcc.org/kits

Through a constituent-initiated project with MCC, the congregation of First Mennonite Church in Indianapolis is supporting an orphanage in Tanzania. This orphanage is an MCC Global Family site, providing shelter, food and education for children orphaned by AIDS.

Marie Harnish, who spent three years in Tanzania as a child, and her husband, Ned Geiser, had been planning a trip to Tanzania with their family. Rather than just taking a vacation, their family wanted to make meaningful connections. They decided to sponsor St. Joseph’s Health and Orphan Center in Arusha, Tanzania.

Through their congregation’s summer Bible School, they highlighted the orphanage, and children from First Mennonite wrote letters and sent photographs to the AIDS orphans in the Global Family program.

A few months ago, the congregation held “Taste of Tanzania,” an event that raised over \$2,000 to support the orphanage. Along with a wonderful meal catered by Lali Hess, participants heard a report from Harnish and Geiser about their visit to that very orphanage. They showed photographs and videos from their visit, where the children in the orphanage were receiving the pictures and letters from the First Mennonite children.

Photos by Marie Harnish



Connecting and serving in Honduras

Virgil and Kathy Troyer, from Orville Mennonite Church in Orrville, Ohio, are currently serving with MCC in Honduras. Prior to this service assignment, Virgil served as co-chair of the MCC Great Lakes Board of Directors.

We began an MCC assignment as Regional Disaster Management Coordinators in August 2008. We are based in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, with responsibilities for disaster related work in countries where MCC has a presence in Mesoamerica and the Caribbean. It has been quite the journey leaving our home in Ohio, eight weeks of language study (a challenge for older folks like us), and settling into a new community as we begin our work.

Much of our early work was to familiarize ourselves with the disaster management role and the past disaster response experiences of MCC and their partners in the region. We traveled to Nicaragua, Guatemala and Haiti, including some grueling trips to remote areas that had been affected by hurricanes in the past three years. We heard amazing stories and saw evidence of wonderful partnerships developed in response to devastating events.

Currently Virgil is working to develop connections with the MCC representatives, staff and MCC's partners to work on disaster mitigation and preparedness. This will include training workshops to build disaster related capacity, particularly with partners. And of course, we remain ready to spring into action to coordinate a response should a disaster occur in the region.

Kathy also has a half-time assignment with Stewardship of Christian Ministries (SCM) in Nueva Suyapa, a marginalized community in the mountains at the edge of Tegucigalpa. She is relating to Mujeres Valientes, a support group for women who have suffered domestic violence. Women from the group are forming a baking cooperative. This has been a wonderful way to integrate into the community and develop several meaningful personal relationships. She will also be working on an experimental gardening and composting project to raise vegetables for day care centers supported by SCM with the goal that the techniques will be adopted in the future by members of the community in the small garden areas around their homes.

We recently moved into a home in Nueva Suyapa. Although this



Virgil (far left) and Kathy (far right) Troyer are currently serving with MCC as Regional Disaster Management Coordinators for Mesoamerica and the Caribbean. Although based in Honduras, they recently traveled with Antony Sanchez (middle back), MCC Guatemala Representative, to visit with community leaders in Panabaj, a Guatemalan village recovering from the effects of Hurricane Stan.

Photo courtesy of Virgil and Kathy Troyer

poverty stricken community has serious issues of crime, drug abuse and gang activity, we live in a relatively safe close-knit neighborhood. We are developing close relationships with our next door neighbors, who are constantly checking on us and watching out for our welfare. It has been wonderful to live so close to Kathy's work and to be greeted by folks as we walk about in the community.

It is a privilege for us to serve here with MCC in this way. We thank all of you in the Great Lakes region for your support and solicit your prayers as we continue in our assignment. 🌱

- Virgil and Kathy Troyer

Follow the Troyers throughout their MCC service assignment on their blog at troytegu.blogspot.com



MCC Bike Michiana

September 18-20, 2009

Join other bicycle enthusiasts of all skill levels for an enjoyable experience of pedaling the beautiful lake and farmland region of southern Michigan and northern Indiana. All proceeds will benefit MCC's Generations at Risk (HIV/AIDS) programs.

For more information, visit mcc.org/greatlakes/events or contact Claude Schrock at ceschrock@mchsi.com or (260) 627-6342.



**Mennonite
Central
Committee**
Great Lakes

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Service Opportunities with MCC

Water Engineer: Sand Dams & Dry Land
Agriculture - Mozambique

Peace and Urban Development Worker - Bolivia

Community Development Advisor - Cambodia

Canner Operator - based in Pennsylvania

Contact Mary Ann Weber
574-534-4133 or mweber@mcc.org

mcc.org/serve

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bold. Someone gave her the name of LuAnn Kanagy, a woman from Zion who had just retired from teaching. "I just called her up – a complete cold call," said Sister Bernhardt. The next thing she knew, Kanagy had jumped head-first into the English language classes.

So when Sister Bernhardt needed a new office location to work from, LuAnn brought up the idea with the pastors at her home congregation – Zion Mennonite.

Soon after that, Sister Lamberjack established Proyecto Esperanza (Project Hope) using the office at Zion Mennonite. Project Hope began offering counseling on their legal rights and other services for immigrants.

The programs at Zion Mennonite have grown to include meals, classes, food and clothing distribution, summer outreach to camps and tax clinics. Project Hope, with volunteers from Zion and the Archbold community, also offers citizenship classes for local immigrants. People from Mexico, Bolivia, Guatemala, Brazil, Argentina, Panama and South Korea have been helped in their process to become new citizens, and all who have taken their final tests have been successful.

In November, Zion held its second annual New Citizen Celebration, where community members and immigrants fellowshiped and celebrated together.

All the programs take a back seat to the relationships that are continuing to form between members of the community and local immigrants. A number of the women in the peace and justice group

expressed how close they have become to their immigrant friends – taking their children to the park and the zoo, cooking together and celebrating birthdays. One couple from the community even shared their home with a woman from Guatemala and her two children for a year.

"These immigrants are making a difference in our lives. That's what's happening," said Baer. "We are giving them physical aid, but they're making a difference in our lives."

According to the peace and justice group, the congregation has been generally supportive of the group's efforts. "The church isn't what we do within our walls," said Pastor Jessica Schrock-Ringenberg, "it's about what we do outside our walls."

The next step for this congregation is looking at becoming a "sanctuary church," meaning they would offer protection and hospitality to immigrant families facing the injustices of the immigration system. "We have great hope that something is going to happen in this area with sanctuary churches," said Sister Lamberjack.

The members of the Peace and Justice Project reiterate this clear desire to join together with other churches and community

members in their local area and across the country, and to encourage other congregations and individuals to find ways to get involved in your community. ♻️

**For more information about what you can do, visit
mcc.org/us/immigration**



Members of the Peace and Justice Project at Zion Mennonite and local immigrants fellowship together during the second annual New Citizen Celebration held at the church in Archbold, Ohio.

Photo by Cathi Baer

Many immigration resources are available to borrow from the Great Lakes library, including the "Civics and Citizenship Toolkit: A Collection of Educational Resources for Immigrants."

Browse online at mcc.org/catalog, or contact the Great Lakes office at (574) 534-4133 or jsteiner@mcc.org

