



P A N O R A M A

Celebrating with the people and congregations of Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference

SPRING 2008



Delegates at the February assembly attacked with gusto the job of critiquing a recommended reconfiguration of PSMC's organizational plan. Here they enjoy a lighter moment as conference minister Jeff Wright makes a point.

A work in progress: Conference tries a new structure on for size

Clusters of pastors who gather to share their challenges and support and encourage each other in following God's call. District elders who provide resources and encouragement, and help when a church is experiencing conflict, seeking a new pastor or exploring its vision for mission. Resources for new kinds of Christian communities that aren't quite sure they're ready to be churches yet. A single conference minister charged with pulling it all together across a region stretching from San Francisco to Tucson. And a conference that works to bring various cultures, traditions and local callings together in a shared sense of mission across the Pacific Southwest.

That's the vision behind an 18-month experiment

Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference embarked on in February, when delegates approved a new tentative structure for the 13-year-old body.

The decision was the culmination of a long process that began for delegates at the previous winter assembly in Reseda, Calif., and took long hours of listening and deliberation by an organizational task force and the board.

The structure replaces the three regionally-based, part-time conference ministers, which represented the face and helping hands of PSMC in the local churches, with a single conference minister supported by a team of district elders. It's a system not unlike the "overseers" or "bishops" familiar to some other Mennonite conferences.

Fast growth in congregations in Southern California compared with other regions, limited financial resources and challenges presented by distance and increasing diversity are among the factors that have led to growing dissatisfaction with the old model and a sense of distance between congregations, their sister churches and the conference.

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PANORAMA

is a publication of Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference, which unites and serves congregations across Arizona, California and Nevada.

Please help us share what's going on in your congregation and community! Contributions of news, faith stories and photos are heartily encouraged.

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Scenes from a PSMC assembly

Ever wonder if anything interesting goes on at those twice-yearly church meetings that bring together representatives from California, Arizona and Nevada to talk about (shudder) church business?

Most Mennonites in the Pacific Southwest never attend one, at least until it's their congregation's turn to host. Those who do are often pleasantly surprised by how stimulating, worshipful and even fun these events can be. Here's a "newbie's" perspective on the February assembly held in Los Angeles, reprinted from *Shalom Champion*.

Rebekka and I arrived Friday night at Family Mennonite Church in South Los Angeles curious and eager to participate in our first PSMC Assembly. We were "newbies" to the people and the life of the conference. We had been invited by our pastor to be delegates representing JKI Maranatha and to attend the weekend proceedings and festivities.

We didn't know what to expect, but we were keen to be take part in what proved to be an incredible weekend. The assembly kicked off Friday night with worship and teaching at Family Mennonite Church. We heard a powerful message about Jesus' question in John 21: "Do you love me?"

The speaker spoke plainly about the uniqueness of PSMC. "It is the place to be. The Anabaptist world is watching." He was talking, of course, about the exciting dynamic of multiculturalism that is embodied in the congregational life of the conference.

The Saturday morning teaching picked up on the same theme. We were invited to celebrate who we are as the body of Christ and to build multicultural relationships. In the afternoon session, we were challenged to be the people of God as a missional strategy.

Of course there was the conference business to attend to, which was a bit overwhelming to us "newbies" at times. For the most part, we understood what was going on, but any semblance of confusion, on our part, was addressed in small group or big group discussions.



We were impressed by the active participation of the delegates and the collective attentiveness at hearing concerns and issues of the gathered body.

Besides the seriousness of the input and the conference business, we need to point out our wonderful and gracious hosts, Family Mennonite Church and Royal Dominion Family Chapel, of this year's assembly. With large measures of warm hospitality and delicious meals, the participants were well taken care of.

Furthermore, the highlight for us was the Concert of the Nations, which was a powerful experience to see how art, music and worship can bring us together as a body in Christ. We were impressed how God is gathering us together in Los Angeles to be sent and to participate in God's mission.

After the Winter Assembly we didn't feel like "newbies" anymore and are excited to be part of such a dynamic conference. Since moving here in 2006, both of us have become more intentionally and deeply involved in the life of the church and mission in LA. We look forward to the next Assembly.

—Rebekka and David Stutzman



Left, an answer to an immigrant's prayer as a family, reunited after long years of separation from their dad in America, harmonize together. Top, folks respond in the aisles as L.A. Faith's band invites them to dance along to a West African rhythm. Above, Family Mennonite cooks take a breather after serving a hearty lunch of Belizean specialties.

The way forward

New structure aims for better support and communication

From page 1

As was repeated often during the Winter Assembly, the concept is still a work in progress. Parts of it have already been tried on a smaller scale – including the district elders model (in Southern California) and the coaching triads (in Arizona) – but the structure remains subject to tweaking as the conference’s 45 member congregations see how it unfolds.

The recommendations made for lively discussion and debate at the assembly. Delegates gathered in small discussion groups to consider the challenges and opportunities they saw in the new model and how well it might address the conference’s three main priorities, which moderator Tyler Zabriskie outlined as:

- **Developing leaders** and equipping them for ministry – that is, training pastors and lay people.
- **Building good relationships** among congregations, within the conference and the large denomination.
- **Partnering with congregations** on developing and implementing missional strategies, so we can move out to answer God’s call to serve.

While generally positive about the model and ready to try it, delegates identified several challenges. Many expressed concerns about whether a largely volunteer group of elders and a part-time conference minister would be able to maintain the “energy and consistency to get the job done,” as one put it. (Financial issues are the main reason for keeping the paid position half-time at this point, delegates were told, but that’s subject to change as resources grow.)

Delegates saw challenges as well as great opportunities in the cross-cultural work that eldering and coaching would entail. They saw possibilities for improved communication and local support and fellowship. Some also identified a need to work more at developing and training lay leaders, noting that much of the current effort was focussed on helping pastors be more effective. An important part of the process, they cautioned, was setting good benchmarks to see whether the structure is working or needs more changes.

In the end, delegates approved moving ahead.

But there’s one big piece still under discussion at the board level: PSMC’s relationship with Shalom Ministries, the inter-Anabaptist parent organization of the Center for Anabaptist Leadership. Shalom has acted as PSMC’s mission agency since 2000, and currently holds six contracts with the conference, including for office and administrative functions.

How Shalom fits into the restructuring plan is a complex issue that needs careful study, Zabriskie said, in large part because of Jeff Wright’s longtime overlapping role as executive director and part-time conference minister for Southern California, which complicates the process of writing a new job description and conducting a search for the PSMC-wide conference minister. The contract for his counterpart in Northern California was already vacant, and that of Arizona, long filled by First Mennonite Phoenix pastor Al Whaley, expired at the end of 2007.

“We originally thought we’d have a map for how this would happen by this meeting,” said Zabriskie. “We’re not ready to do that yet, because Shalom Ministries is very much a part of the conference, and before we could create a job description, we had to sort out what the relationship was with Shalom. ... We want to do justice to its strengths and test the weaknesses of the relationship, to look at how we’d want to continue the relationship or separate from it.”

Because the new fiscal year begins with the Summer Assembly, the board chose to go with an 18-month window for experimenting with the eldering and coaching parts of the new structure, with Wright serving as conference minister in an interim role. A final plan should be ready for a decision by June 2009.

Elements of the plan

1 A part-time (at least for now) **conference minister**, whose role is primarily one of equipping, mentoring and pastoring a network of lay leaders.

2 A network of **district elders** who provide “oversight ministry” to three or four congregations, grouped geographically or, when helpful, by shared culture or history. Elders, who will probably meet as a group for training and coordination several times a year, will assist churches going through transitions, provide pastoral care for ministers, help nurture and credential new leaders, build relationships among congregations, and improve communication between the congregation and the conference. One is assigned to work creatively with “alternative ecclesial communities” – study groups, house churches and the like interested in connecting with Anabaptists but not necessarily conventional church plants.

3 “**Coaching triads**” consisting of pastors in a particular area who meet regularly to provide self-coaching – not advice or training, but empowering support, an understanding ear, and encouragement to help each other fulfil whatever God is asking him or her to do. A coaching consultant will help these groups figure out how to do this most effectively.



Lively discussion of the proposal took place in small groups in the cozy setting of Royal Dominion Family Chapel.

In the meantime, some key roles have been filled. Tom Leard Longenecker will continue in the position of Lead Elder he has held for some time in Southern California, but now with responsibility for coordinating district elders across the conference.

Jeannette Buller Slater of Trinity Mennonite Church in Glendale, Ariz., has been named Coaching Network Facilitator. Nathan Slater, her husband, will serve as elder to alternative communities. District elders are to be identified through a local church nominating process, with the Pastoral Leadership Committee and lead elder making final assignments. Elders will be given a small monthly stipend and travel expenses, at a total cost of about \$37,000 per year. It’s expected that, in addition to about eight serving in SoCal, one will be named in the Central Valley, one in northern California and two in Arizona.

From page 3



**Conference moderator
Tyler Zabriskie**



**Coaching consultant
Jeannette Slater**

What is Shalom Ministries?

The still undecided piece of the restructuring puzzle, says moderator Tyler Zabriskie, is PSMC's relationship with Shalom Ministries, a separate but interwoven 501(c)(3) organization to which PSMC appoints board members and with which it has six contracts, including for administrative support and office space as well as the School for Urban Mission (SUM). Probably best known to PSMC churches as the Center for Anabaptist Leadership, Shalom was created in 1987 at the invitation of the former Pacific District Conference and Southwest Mennonite Conference, to address the challenge of coordinating an explosion of missional efforts in the area as Indonesian, Latino and Chinese churches came into the mix.

After the 1992 Los Angeles riots, an infusion of funds from the wider church allowed Shalom to do more programming. That continued after the conferences merged in 1994, and in 2000, PSMC delegates voted to make Shalom the conference's official mission agency, though it continues to work with other Anabaptist churches. Jeff Wright serves in a "con-joined" position of executive director and area conference minister.

Shalom contracts cover part of the time of SUM director Valentina Satvedi and administrator Joel Shenk, who helps connect with area VS units and developing youth service ministries such as the "urban plunge" that is bringing Bluffton University students through an intense Los Angeles experience this spring. Administratively, Shalom does things like help keep track of the 160 ministerial credentials held within PSMC. Through Amahoro International, George and Mukarabe Makinto encourage vibrant worship, advocate on immigration issues and promote the grassroots partnerships some congregations are developing overseas. The CAL peace center, led by Bert Newton, develops and promotes peacemaking activities.

What are Coaching Triads?

A missionary kid who grew up in Congo and went on to a master's degree in cross-cultural studies and leadership, Jeannette Buller Slater has a heart for pastors and church planters, whom she's been coaching since 1995. In her new role as coaching consultant for PSMC, Slater is interested in helping local groups of three pastors or so become self-support groups that encourage and challenge one another to follow God's leading for them, rather than falling into a competitive mode.

"What we're attempting to do with the triads is provide a place where pastors can be real with at least two other pastors. Where they can be real with not only their struggles, but their challenges and what they'd like to see happen." Sometimes, she says, pastors fail to follow the vision God is giving them because they're afraid to fail.

Coaching, she emphasizes, is not counselling – trying to deal with problems from the past – or giving advice or supervising or even mentoring, because God may be calling one member to somewhere the others have never been. "What we want to focus on is: What is the challenge God has placed before you, and how can we support and encourage each other to reach that goal?"

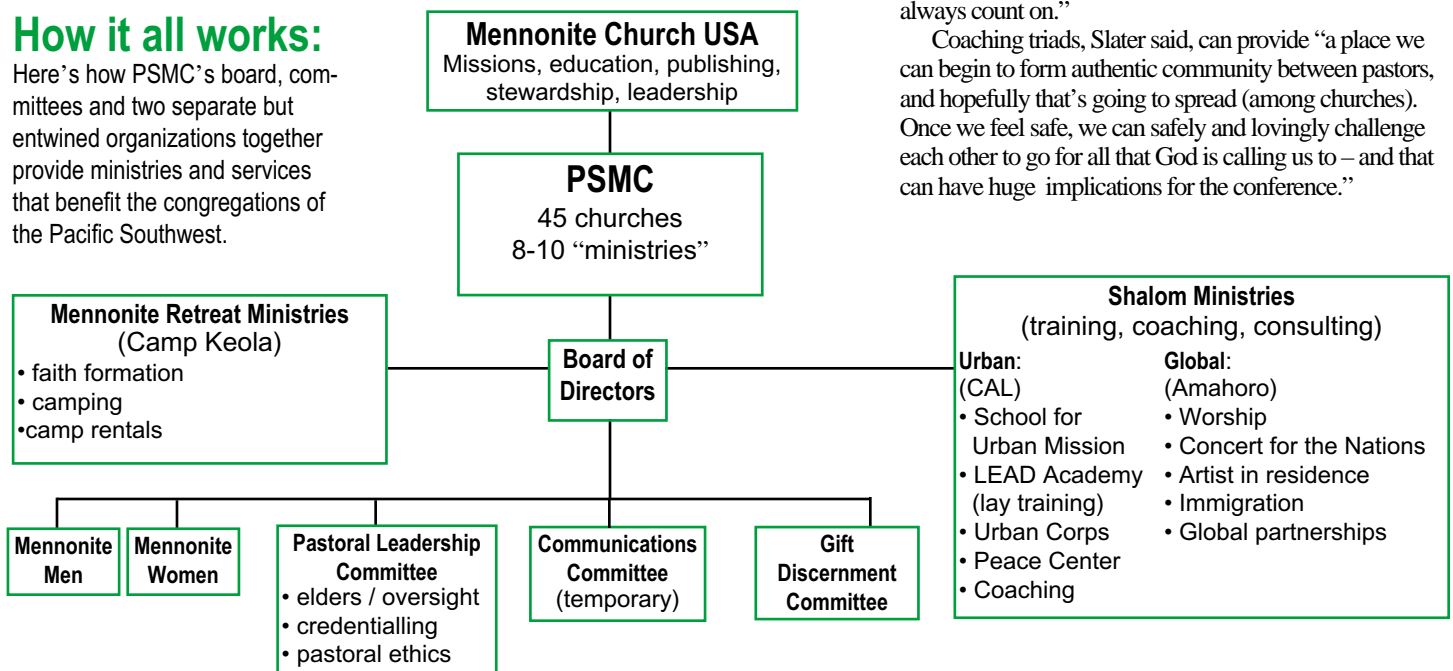
Slater compares Christian coaching to midwifery: "The key ... is to believe that God is already speaking to this person, and as a coach we're coming alongside to help them hear what God is saying by asking good questions." Her role will be to offer interested pastors some orientation to coaching skills, which they can also apply in developing congregational leadership. Participation is strictly voluntary, but after a six-month test of the idea in Arizona, the pastors needed no convincing to continue.

Sunnyslope pastor Steve Good says his triad provides "a place outside the congregation, in an Anabaptist setting, where they can encourage me to keep going, they can comfort me when life doesn't seem to make sense and they can give me a kick in the pants to keep going. For me, that's what coaching has been. It's been a very helpful, safe process; it's given me two people I can always count on."

Coaching triads, Slater said, can provide "a place we can begin to form authentic community between pastors, and hopefully that's going to spread (among churches). Once we feel safe, we can safely and lovingly challenge each other to go for all that God is calling us to – and that can have huge implications for the conference."

How it all works:

Here's how PSMC's board, committees and two separate but entwined organizations together provide ministries and services that benefit the congregations of the Pacific Southwest.



Concert for the Nations



What a night of celebration! This year's Concert for the Nations, topping off the Winter Assembly, featured many worshipful performances of song, instrumental music and dance (African and liturgical), in a variety of traditions, from contemporary (Andrea and Friends, top, and ICCF Colton) to a knockout flute duet of "Amazing Grace" (Makinto and son, below).



As the Spirit moves: God's at work in the Pacific Southwest



Valentina Satvedi, director of the School for Urban Mission, congratulates the first graduates of a joint educational program with Hesston College in a ceremony held during the February assembly of Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference, which is already benefiting immensely from the gifts of Grace Eluwa, George Makinto and Jason Evans.

The February assembly marked a milestone for PSMC and particularly for three people who are the first Southern California graduates of an accredited extension program offered by Hesston College in Kansas through the School for Urban Mission, based

in Pasadena. Grace Eluwa and George Makinto of Los Angeles Faith Chapel, and Jason Evans, co-founder of an alternative Christian community in San Diego, all earned a certificate in urban mission. They were introduced to delegates and congratulated by Valentina Satvedi, who is director of urban theological formation for the Centre for Anabaptist Leadership.

Eluwa, who was recently ordained by PSMC, is a preacher and counselor who was lauded as a great giver of hospitality and a courageous woman who has remained faithful through many difficult life experiences.

Evans, who was raised in an evangelical setting and has come to embrace the Anabaptist vision, has been working for years planting small urban faith communities, and has a strong interest in promoting sustainable living and restorative justice. His San Diego group is doing unique work in their neighbourhood, among other things engaging with its large Somali Muslim community.

Makinto, whose passion for worship and gifts in music and preaching have already made him familiar to Mennonites across the country (he helped direct worship during the San Jose assembly), spoke for all three in thanking Hesston and the School for Urban Mission, saying the courses were "extremely valuable" in equipping urban ministers. Secondly, he said, "the networking is very important. Meeting people like Jason or Grace, or others who haven't graduated but are close, it really bonds us as the body of Christ and brings us closer to this network that we need to face the challenges we have as min-

isters." Makinto recalled standing on the same church stage three years ago, when he had no clue what Mennonites were about. L.A. Faith Chapel Pastor Chuwang Pam "dragged us here and said, 'I want you to meet some friends of ours.' Little did we know that we would come into this family. I want to thank Pastor Pam and conference minister Jeff (Wright) for including us, bringing us to the family – and three years later we are equipped leaders of a Mennonite Church that has a heart to make a difference among the people around us."

Hesston Pastoral Ministries director David Greiser urged the students – and the other church leaders listening in – to take seriously a question never asked on a ministry exam but vital to Jesus as he grilled his discipleship graduate, Peter: "Do you love me?"

Academic training, skill at interpreting the urban context and good theology are all important, "but a warm, growing, personal intimate relationship with Jesus Christ is absolutely essential," Greiser said. "Without that, all the rest doesn't matter a great deal." And when there is a calling to tend the sheep, "there are no conditions."

It began as a casual query from a member on the Pasadena Mennonite Church email list who found herself pondering what to do with her tax rebate check.

"I'm wondering," the writer said, "if there would be interest in banding together as a community and creating a fund from those funds and seeing if we can do some 'upside-down' kingdom stuff with it instead."

The lively discussion that followed – which eventually moved from email to the adult education time – led to lots of exciting ideas (as well as a few rueful jokes about thwarted plans for Jet-Skis and new clothes). It moved the congregation to challenge not only its own members but also other Mennonites and the broader church in Southern California to think about how to use this windfall as a "Kingdom Stimulus Package" instead of just an encouragement to consume more stuff.

In a letter sent to Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference and to the Ecumenical Council of Pasadena Area Churches, the congregation described the conversation it had begun "with the purpose of faithfully discerning alternative spending options for this additional income."

"For those of us whose basic needs are already met," the letter said, "this extra income offers an important opportunity to participate in a faith-based alternative to consumerism. By acting together as a body of believers we hope to: benefit from group discernment and wisdom,

JKI Imanuel in Downey, Calif., marked its 25th anniversary on Feb. 21, with prayerful worship and a celebratory feast, Indonesian-style. The congregation is pastored by Steve Jachin.



witness more effectively to the kingdom of God in our communities, and pool our resources for greater impact in a focused area of giving.

“Pasadena Mennonite Church will be selecting one Pasadena area agency and one international agency towards which to direct our surplus resources. Would you consider redirecting all or part of your ‘economic stimulus’ check to a ‘kingdom stimulus’ project? We invite and challenge you and your congregation to consider ways in which you might join in this opportunity to witness to Christ through an act of radical generosity.”

The letter included a list of worthy ministries and charities in the local community as well as global agencies such as Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Mission Network and the OneWorld Community Investment Program.

As discussion of how to deploy the money progressed, church members were urged to be in prayer for the Spirit’s guidance – and to carry on the conversation with their family, friends, co-workers and other Christians as an opportunity to share their witness.

Has your church had a similar conversation? Have you made any special plans for donations coming out of the tax windfall? If so, please let us know at Panorama so we can share it in our next issue (panorama@pacific-southwest.org).

Plates clinked and conversation flew in the fellowship hall of Trinity Mennonite Church in Phoenix. It was a Monday night and participants in the SOOP program were gathered to share a meal with members of the Goldensun community.

Goldensun is a faith-based organization that provides supportive living communities for adults with developmental disabilities. Members of the program live in three houses within walking distance of the SOOP house and Trinity Mennonite Church. About 15 SOOP participants gather each week to share a potluck meal with all of the Goldensun households. After eating, they sometimes spend time singing and worshiping together.

“The SOOPers and Goldensun residents are such a natural fit. The SOOPers bring a wealth of life experience and a deep spirituality to our community, but it goes both ways,” said Aaron Gouldthorpe, director of Goldensun. “Our Goldensun guys bring so much life and help to bring other people’s gifts out.”

SOOP, a joint Christian service program through Mennonite Mission Network, Mennonite Association of Retired Persons, and Mennonite Central Committee Canada, gives adults of all ages a chance to use their gifts to help others. In Phoenix, volunteers come to serve for periods ranging from several weeks to several months.

Trudie Kehler, a nurse from Gimili, Manitoba, has spent her annual month-long holiday in Phoenix for four straight years. “I was searching for some kind of fulfilling winter holiday, and SOOP turned out to be a good mix of work and relaxation,” she said.

During their stay, SOOPers help to run activities at the Glencroft retirement community, tackle construction projects for Trinity and other congregations, serve at a local food bank, help teach GED and ESL classes, work at a thrift store, and serve in a variety of other settings.

But for many SOOPers, one of the most important experiences is getting to know Goldensun residents.

“The interactive communication with the Goldensun

residents is a highlight,” said Norma Leaman, of Landisville (Pa.) Mennonite Church. “At home we don’t have much interaction with people with disabilities.”

Goldensun residents and SOOP participants fellowship at meals, through informal conversations and gatherings, and at church. “The most exciting piece is building community with Goldensun, Trinity and SOOP. It’s a tremendous blessing and it really energizes me,” said Marlin Hershberger, a Trinity member involved with both Goldensun and SOOP.

Goldensun participants like Mike Sterrett and Dede Seever bring their energy, joy for life and talents to interactions with SOOP participants. Sterrett enjoys playing along on guitar with the worship band after meals and Seever’s welcoming personality helps all to feel at home.

At one gathering when Mary Dyck, a SOOP participant from Chilliwack, British Columbia, was celebrating her 85th birthday, Seever led the group in celebration. As soon as the cake appeared, Seever began a search for Dyck, letting everyone that she passed know that it was “Mary’s special day.” Upon finding Dyck, Seever began clapping and led the group in singing “Happy Birthday.”

The SOOP program lets participants choose their own location, time and length of service. They also work directly with on-site coordinators, who frequently help to arrange housing. For more information or to apply, visit Service.MennoniteMission.net.

– Hannah Heinzkehr/ Mennonite Mission Network

How can we as churches of the Pacific Southwest get to know one another better and become more of a family with a shared sense of mission? And how can PSMC be a channel for our diverse congregations to work, pray and even have fun together?

An ad hoc committee that’s been working at that question for several months has come up with several creative ideas that are being launched this spring:

- **Church Banners:** Create a 3x4-foot vertical banner that represents your congregation, suitable for hanging from a wire in another church’s worship space, and bring it along to the June assembly in Tucson along with some written information about your congregation, its people, activities, mission and prayer requests. Congregations can exchange their banners for a few months, hang the banner, perhaps connect a few times and remember to pray for each other.
- **Pulpit exchange:** Congregations interested in switching preachers for a Sunday will be able to do so on a particular Sunday designated by the conference – a great way to learn about a neighboring church, especially if it’s predominantly of a different culture.
- **Bulletin inserts:** Monthly inserts will be created to share information about the conference, highlighting a particular congregation each time. A questionnaire will go out to churches to gather details to be shared in these inserts.

Other potential projects include a DVD about PSMC.



Goldensun resident Anna Klitzke and SOOP volunteer Roland Yoder enjoy a meal together.

Mennonite volunteers from Kansas and South Dakota have helped Hopi Mission School make fast progress on building a duplex to house staff of the Mennonite-founded Christian school. Forty volunteers have served on the project, sometimes when temperatures at the 6,000-foot elevation were dipping into single digits.

With the cost of the duplex now close to covered, thanks to generous donations, the school is next looking at constructing a center to house volunteers – hundreds of whom have helped build and maintain this important ministry for 57 years.

2007 was a banner year for donations through an Arizona tax credit that allows state residents to painlessly redirect some of their tax into a scholarship fund. For information on how you can help – even if you don’t live in Arizona – check out the school website at www.hopimissionschool.org

What's the scoop?

People and events



Conference minister **Jeff Wright** welcomes **Pastor Makmur Halim**, center, and other leaders of **ICCF Colton** to full membership in **PSMC**, one of a growing number of congregations whose roots are primarily in Indonesia.

PSMC has another new congregation! In February, with hearty applause, assembly delegates welcomed into the fold **Indonesian Christian Community Fellowship Colton**. The 16-year-old congregation's leaders said they had found in PSMC "a place that can give us encouragement in mission" that could help them move forward over the next 16 years. "We are not easy to be a part of," replied conference minister **Jeff Wright**, only half in jest, "but we hope we'll be a blessing to you." Fellow Indonesian pastor **Rena Kusumi** of **GKI Pomona** prayed blessings on the church leaders and congregation.

In May, **Shalom Ministries** (parent organization to the Center for Anabaptist Leadership) planned to host 18 students and two adult leaders from **Bluffton University**, a Mennonite college in Ohio, in an annual **Urban Plunge** experience. The program, coordinated by **Joel Shenk**, **Shalom's** director of learning and service programs, is an introduction to the joys, challenges and complexities of ministry in a global, urban setting. Highlights include a "Los Angeles Power Tour," analyzing how economic, cultural and religious power has shifted through L.A.'s history; an urban scavenger hunt; service and learning opportunities with **Union Rescue Mission** and **My Friend's Place**; and a trip to **San Diego** and **Tijuana** to explore the effects of global trade. Seminars with **Shalom** staff and board members as well as fun excursions around L.A. are also part of the experience. Two PSMC congregations, **Family Mennonite** and **JKI Maranatha**, graciously agreed to host students during worship for a time of fellowship, relationship building, and a chance for students to learn from their unique stories and ministries.

Several PSMC leaders have been in the spotlight in the broader Mennonite church of late. **Mukarabe Makinto-Inandava**, a native of Burundi and member at **Los Angeles Faith Chapel**, presented the April 17 commencement address at **Goshen College**. The former U.N. employee is an advocate for issues challenging developing countries: HIV-AIDS, poverty and war.

Shane Higgs, pastor at **Trinity Mennonite Church** in **Glendale, Ariz.**, will serve as key speaker for a **Hesston College** event on **Digital Discipleship: Forming Faith in an Electronic Culture**. The Nov. 7-9 event will examine the radical changes the church is undergoing under the force of electronic culture. **Higgs** is author of *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture: How Media Shapes Faith, the Gospel, and Church*.

Duane Oswald, former moderator of **PSMC** as well as **Mennonite Church USA**, has been appointed to the 12-member board of **Mennonite Mutual Aid**. **Oswald**, of **Fresno's Mennonite Community Church**, is president and CEO of **Avante Health**.



L.A. Urban Corps director **Joel Shenk** accepts the gift, a legacy of the **San Jose Mennonite assembly**, from **Bethel College** president **Barry C. Bartel**.

When he was in Southern California at the end of January, **Bethel College** president **Barry C. Bartel** delivered the third and final check to be presented to **Pacific Southwest** projects from the fundraiser the college sponsored at last summer's **Mennonite Church USA** assembly in **San Jose**.

The check, for \$1,029, went to **L.A. Urban Corps**, which seeks to build a network of young adults in Mennonite congregations in the greater **Los Angeles** area, and ultimately across **Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference**, for spiritual reflection, service and church leadership.

L.A. Urban Corps director **Joel Shenk** accepted the **Bethel** gift, along with a large canvas signed by youth who visited **Bethel's** booth and dropped off tickets that added up to the donations made to several service projects in the **PSMC** area. **L.A. Urban Corps** will use the funds "as seed money for the program and to host a region-wide youth and young adult event," **Shenk** said.

Other fundraiser recipients in the **PSMC** area were **Goldensun Peace Ministries**, **Glendale, Ariz.**; and **Hopi Mission School**, **Kykotsmovi Village, Ariz.**

The youth group at **Harrisonburg (Va.) Mennonite Church** won the fourth-day drawing and will use the money for their summer service project.

—Melanie Zuercher/photo by Shawna Stutzman



Mukarabe Makinto-Inandava

News from our students: **Reuben D. Houser**, of **Sunnyslope Mennonite Church** in **Phoenix**, received a bachelor's degree in history at **Goshen College's** April 27 commencement.

Kristen Nussbaum, of **Trinity Mennonite** in **Glendale, Ariz.**, played softball on the **Hesston College** team (the **Larks**) this year in the **National Junior College Athletic Association, Division III**. Fellow **Trinity** congregant **Kelsey M. Wiebe**, a first-year recreation and sport leadership major, was named to the spring semester dean's list at **Eastern Mennonite University**, in **Harrisonburg, Va.**

Bethel College students **Alex Boldt** and **Michael Linscheid** have each received the **Bethel Scholar** scholarship, valued at \$17,600 over four years. Both attend **First Mennonite Church, Reedley**. **Keila Quenzer**, of **Mennonite Community Church** in **Fresno**, received the **Dean's Scholarship** from the **Kansas Mennonite college**, valued at \$27,200 over four years. She was named to the dean's list. Senior **Jordan Penner**, a member of the **Bethel men's soccer team**, was named a **Daktronics All-**

America Scholar-Athlete by the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics. Jordan, who also attends First Mennonite Reedley, was named to the honor roll as well.

A report from a **Mennonite Central Committee** “listening project” titled *What the Church is Saying* suggests that congregations with a lot of recent immigrants are also the most active in befriending newcomers and helping with needs such as food and housing, despite the high needs they already face.

MCC staff members visited more than 30 congregations in 10 states, one-third of them primarily made up of families who have immigrated within one generation.

They found that Anabaptist churches largely oppose unjust treatment of immigrants. However, members of predominantly white congregations without recent immigrants tend to be more reluctant about supporting undocumented immigrants.

Rebeca Jiménez Yoder, the listening project coordinator, says she believes God calls churches to welcome strangers in their community regardless of legal status. “We do have undocumented immigrants in our churches,” Yoder says. “They are our brothers and sisters.”

Yoder says the project’s purpose was to encourage conversation about immigration. If the conversation leads to action, there are many ways for churches to support immigrants, from teaching English to advocating for more humane immigration laws, she says.

The MCC U.S. Listening Project report is available online at mcc.org/us/immigration. The website includes other resources for churches, including “Loving Strangers as Ourselves,” a series of biblical reflections on immigration, and “Welcoming the Newcomer: Doing Advocacy with Immigrants.”

—from an MCC report by Tim Shenk

Members of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada will meet together at a binational **People’s Summit for Faithful Living** at the Canadian Mennonite University campus in Winnipeg, July 8-10.

The term “summit” conveys a sense of urgency. Under the theme “At the Crossroads: Promise and Peril,” participants will focus on the urgent task of being a faithful community of God amid the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. Deut. 4:1-9 will be the theme text.

Deuteronomy, says MC Canada general secretary Jack Suderman, is “directed at God’s people as they move into the land God has allowed them to possess, where they face important questions like : Why does God work through peoplehood even when that people is not deserving? What does covenant mean and how does that inform our questions of faithfulness? What are the temptations of God’s people in the land in which they live? Where do God’s people find security as they live in the land and are tempted by wealth, power and ownership?”

The summit will address these urgent questions through worship, study and discussion. Mennonite Church USA identified similar questions at last summer’s convention in San José, when it passed a resolution calling for “resources that help us live faithfully in Christlike ways, sometimes at odds with our national culture, acknowledging that no culture is either completely redeemed or completely fallen.”

The Canadian and U.S. groups last held a joint convention in Charlotte, N.C., in 2005, where delegates

strongly supported continuing to meet together.

Information and registration is at summit.mennoniteusa.org (for Mennonite Church USA)

James and Michelle Stabler-Havener, members of **Pasadena Mennonite Church**, were among the English teachers serving with Mennonite Partners in China in the area affected by the recent earthquake in Sichuan, China. In their home in Chengdu, the shaking toppled bookshelves and left the house a mess, but power and water were restored fairly quickly. Classes at the 35,000-student Sichuan Normal University campus, where they teach, were cancelled for several days and students lived temporarily in tents.

Aftershocks continued to produce anxiety. However, “I’ve been very impressed by the efficiency and the sense of community that developed on campus,” James reported.

“It’s about a 45-minute drive from Chengdu to the disaster zone in Dujiangyan, which then extends deep into the mountains,” James explained. “The areas of intense devastation are northwest of the city, in my assistant’s hometown, Dujiangyan (about 30 minutes from the epicenter). There, the loss of life and property is staggering. She has lost friends and classmates, as well as the family’s ancestral home (her family survived).”

Teachers with MPC (formerly China Educational Exchange) are working with local friends and students to provide aid in their respective cities, he said. “We will also be working with our local partners in the church and schools to provide aid as directly as possible.”

The Stabler-Haveners encouraged American friends to keep Sichuan in their prayers and to give to agencies, including MCC, that are providing funds for relief and rebuilding. “Thank you for your prayers and support,” James wrote. “It is profoundly meaningful.”

Every Palm Sunday since before the Iraq war began, members of **Pasadena Mennonite Church**, led by PSMC peace centre director **Bert Newton**, have taken a **Peace Parade** through the streets from a poor neighborhood to the city’s political and economic heart, echoing the journey Jesus made into Jerusalem. Songs and prayers for peace filled the public vigil held this year outside an upscale downtown shopping complex. The event that has drawn growing numbers of other Christians over the years; at least 13 churches were represented this year.

Fuller Seminary professor and author **Glen Stassen** reflected before the walk began on the Mennonite-Quaker meeting with Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmedinajad last year, in which he participated, and on the Matthew 5 Project, an effort to encourage negotiated settlements to conflicts in the Middle East.

“I felt energized and uplifted by seeing so many Christians who care about peace,” wrote one first-time Quaker participant later.



June 20-21
**PSMC Summer
Assembly,**
Tucson

July 8-10
**People’s Summit
for Faithful Living**
Winnipeg



Oct. 5
**World Communion
Sunday**

**Pasadena pastor
Jennifer Davis-
Sensenig takes the
mike as the peace vigil
draws attention on
Colorado Boulevard.**

News you can use: Resources for congregations

A new free monthly Spanish-language ezine, *Meno Acontecer*, was recently launched in a partnership between *The Mennonite* and the Mennonite Education Agency, through MEA's Hispanic Pastoral and Leadership Education Office.

Meno Acontecer, which means "Menno happenings," provides news and articles from Mennonite Church USA to strengthen the Anabaptist identity of Hispanic Mennonites, shares stories from Hispanic congregations and helps promote theological education.

"Electronic communication is helping us to keep in touch and be informed," says Rafael Barahona, the managing editor. "Not everyone in the Hispanic constituency has an Internet connection and email, but the numbers are rising. *Meno Acontecer* will be vital in bringing fresh information to our Spanish speaking constituents." To subscribe, send your email address to MenoAcontecer@themennonite.org or call (412) 894-8705.

Mennonite Creation Care Network, which is encouraging people across the church to engage in caring for creation, has a newsletter. If you have a story or an idea you'd like to share, write to lukeag@goshen.edu. To learn more about the creation care network and what your family, congregation or school can do to be better stewards of Creation, visit <http://mennoncreationcare.org>.

The Anabaptist Gather 'Round Sunday school curriculum is offering a new *Youth/Junior Youth Summer Supplement* this year. It accompanies either the Summer 2008 Connect guide for parents and caregivers of children or the teacher's guide for multiage groups.

"The Things that Make for Peace" is the Gather 'Round theme for the summer curriculum, which runs June 1 through Aug. 24.

"Peace is fundamental to our understanding of the biblical message," said Gather 'Round director and editor Anna Speicher. "Often we think of peace as a particularly New Testament theme, but this summer we will explore perspectives on peace and peacemaking from the Old as well as the New Testament. Children and adults alike will enjoy the creative ways our writers present both familiar and unfamiliar stories." Congregations that buy the summer Connect or Multiage teacher's guide may purchase the supplement as a download or on a CD. For more information, see www.gatherround.org



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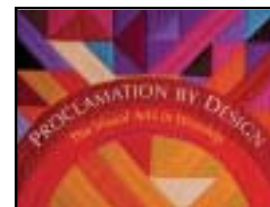
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Mennonites a generation ago were nervous about visual art in worship, if not downright condemning. Many assumed that only unadorned worship spaces would keep the Word central, whether spoken or sung. But focusing only on verbal and musical arts doesn't fit our postmodern age, say Karmen Krahn and Leslie James in their book, released by Faith & Life Resources. *Proclamation by Design: The Visual Arts in Worship* (\$32.99), says people today think visually, and that the biblical story has always lent itself to visual expression. Written for worship planners, pastors and congregational artists, it draws on the authors' year of visits in Mennonite congregations. They found Mennonite worship planners often want to use visual art but don't how, or they want more theological grounding for the visual art they do. *Proclamation* meets both needs, including practical and visual resources on everything from candle care to organizing a visual arts ministry. It offers biblical and Anabaptist reflections on the place of art in our understanding of God, the Bible, and peoplehood, sprinkled with quotes, stories, and photographs from the authors' field work.



To order, visit www.mpn.net, or call 800-245-7894.

How can Christians today truly live like Jesus and be more faithful disciples? Ron Sider takes a fervent look at these and other foundational questions, many of which have been the passion of his life.

In *I Am Not a Social Activist* (\$16.99, available at www.mpn.net), Sider urges all Christians to "make the Incarnate One the center of all we think and do."

As founder and president of Evangelicals for Social Action, Sider for more than three decades has worked towards a meeting of the minds between two "branches" of the church vine. In the essays in this book, Sider calls on those in the evangelical stream to become more aware and concerned about poverty, injustice and peacemaking, while he urges socially active Christians to embrace the great commission and to be more committed to Christ than to political agendas.



Support for PSMC

Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference gathers California, Arizona and Nevada churches in partnership for leadership, mission and congregational renewal. Giving by congregations and individuals ensures that conference ministers are funded, mission activities flourish, and resources are available for church nurture.

Donations may be sent to:
Treasurer, Box CAL, 1539 E. Howard St.,



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