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inter mennonite urban newsletter

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Kingdom, Community, Priesthood of All Believers

What Anabaptists Can Offer the City

by Paul G. Hiebert

Anabaptists an urban people?

That seems a contradiction in terms. Everyone knows Anabaptists are solid farm people of Teutonic origin. The facts, however, show another reality. Anabaptists are moving rapidly to the cities, and today many Anabaptists have no European roots. In L.A., for example, **Samudio, Dorado and Hara** are typical Mennonite names and *manudo* a common dish at church dinners.

Stereotypes

Unfortunately there are old stereotypes about the Anabaptists, and these die slowly. On the one hand, outsiders see us as a tight ethnic community and avoid our churches. On the other, we, too often, see ourselves as a rural people. We move to the cities, but our hearts and our ways of thinking are still in the small towns of North America.

We schedule and conduct services like we did in the country where seasons and community life dominated our thinking. We hold services at regular times and expect everyone to attend all of them. We assume that most members will live in the neighborhood and attend our church all their lives. It should not surprise us that we have difficulties planting city churches when we think rural. To minister

effectively in the cities we must love--truly love and identify with--our cities.

The transition of moving from a rural to an urban identity comes not without a great deal of pain. This transition also offers us the possibility of a new beginning.

The center of the early church was in Jerusalem (Acts 1-12.) From there the gospel went out to the Jews scattered throughout the Roman Empire. Jerusalem, however, was the center of Jewish ethnicity. To break out of its ethnic

encapsulation the church needed a new center and that center was Antioch (Acts 13ff.) Here a multi-ethnic congregation gathered for prayer and heard God's call to go to the Gentiles. Maybe, just maybe, our move to the cities will help us break the ethnic walls that have imprisoned us.

Anabaptist Contributions to Urban Ministry

As we move to the city, what do we as Anabaptists have to offer it and the urban church? In a time when churches are looking for a theology of the city, I believe our Anabaptist vision provides us with an understanding of God and of humans that encompasses the whole of urban ministry.

First, we see the Kingdom of God as the larger framework within which to understand redemption and ministry. It is



important to speak of the new birth and personal conversion. If we stop here, however, we portray Christianity as an individualized, privatized religion that will have little impact on the city and its systems.

We need to speak of the church as a community of believers standing as a counter-cultural testimony in the urban world with its extreme individualism and alienation. But counter-cultural witness is not enough. It leaves the city and its systems unredeemed.

What we need to proclaim is what Jesus proclaimed--the Kingdom of God. This encompasses all that God is doing in the city. It includes the salvation of individuals, the formation of communities that embody new life in Christ, and the challenging of systems that destroy humans in the cities, both now and in eternity.

But we dare not speak of the Kingdom of God without starting with the King, or we will define the Kingdom in terms of our own visions of utopia. As Anabaptists, we are called to be followers of Christ in the city.

A second Anabaptist distinctive is our vision of the church as a gathering of believers acting as a hermeneutical community. We do have our theologies, but behind these we have a meta-theology--a belief about the way theologies should be formed. We go to the scriptures, seeking as a community to understand what they are saying to us. Free to speak and committed to listening, we do so humbly, and we do so on our knees, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Theologies are very important. They provide us with fixed frames of reference. But in the city with its flux and change, we need above all a meta-theology, a process by which we do theology in the context of everyday life. Nowhere is this uniting of faith and practice, of belief and action, of eternal truths and immediate application, needed more than in the city.

Third, as Anabaptists we believe in the priesthood of all those gathered in the church as a hermeneutical community. We call all believers to righteousness and to ministry. There is an Indian proverb which says, "Nothing grows under a banyan tree." The banyan sends out

branches, drops air roots that form new trunks and spreads across the land, sometimes covering more than an acre of land. Many find shade under its leaves. But the foliage is extremely dense, and when the tree dies, nothing is left but a barren waste.

The proverb speaks of leadership styles. Some are strong, authoritarian leaders who build large empires, but when they die, little remains. The banyan stands in contrast to the banana tree. When the young tree is six months old, young shoots sprout around its base. At twelve months the tree is tall and surrounded by young ones, and another crop of shoots appears at the base. At 18 months the tree matures, bears fruit and dies. But it leaves mature trees now 12 months old, young trees six months old, and a new cluster of sprouts beginning their growth.

As Anabaptists we have stressed the banana, not banyan, style of leadership. We seek to train all believers as leaders who follow Christ, not as followers who imitate our ways.

A clear vision of what God is doing in the city, a community of believers who seek to understand God's intention for their lives in the world, and a commissioning of all for ministry: if we rediscover these elements as we move into cities, we may rediscover the initial vitality of the Anabaptist movement--and of the early church. ■

Paul Hiebert is a cultural anthropologist and former Mennonite Brethren missionary to India. Recently he moved from a position at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA to teach in the missions department at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, IL.



Editorial: Our Gift to the City

"Can the traditionally Swiss-German, agricultural Anabaptists make an impact--or even survive--in an urban culture?" ask writers Thomas A. Tarrants III and Fletcher L. Tink in a feature article on urban Anabaptists in the October 22, 1990 issue of CHRISTIANITY TODAY. I have frequently heard Mennonites excuse our denominations' skittishness towards city ministry by claiming we are inherently a rural people. But is that true?

While persecution and martyrdom may have led us to become "the quiet in the land" for a time, we did not begin as rural people. We trace our roots as Anabaptists to the radical reformers of 16th century Zurich and other European cities. In North America, we can point to 100 some years of urban "mission work" as part of our historical legacy. Many people in our Anabaptist congregations today are indigenous city dwellers, not rural migrants. Perhaps our self-image needs to do some catching up with our past history and current reality.

This issue of URBAN CONNECTIONS looks at the positive gifts Anabaptists have to share with the city--rural roots notwithstanding. Paul Hiebert explains why our theological distinctives are critically needed by those seeking to form a theology of the city.

Harriet Bicksler challenges attitudes of paternalism rural Anabaptists bring to the city, while Chicago's Buzz Hargleroad speaks of unique contributions people from farm and small town backgrounds can make to urban ministry.

Les Tolbert shares the strong mission legacy which the African-American church models to us. Philip Sauder speaks of the excitement and struggle of working on the front lines of urban mission in Miami.

From eastern Canada, Brice Balmer shares structures and resources congregations in his conference have found helpful in promoting local and international mission consciousness. Vern Blackwood profiles resources of particular value to urban churches as they seek to reach out to their communities.

May these offerings stimulate our thinking on what impact Anabaptists can and do make in an urban culture.■--SAS

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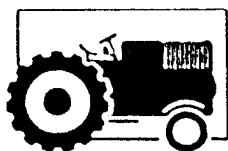
Confessions of a Rural-to-Urban Anabaptist by Harriet Bicksler

I think it's very easy to be paternalistic or condescending when it comes to our attitude toward the city. Because most of us are rural people by tradition and inclination, with a strong missionary vision, we often tend to view the city as a foreign country. In many ways it is--it presents us with many of the same cross-cultural challenges, for example. But I've often felt we are tempted to adopt the same attitude of superiority toward the city that Americans especially have had toward undeveloped and developing countries.

I struggle against that "arrogance of superiority" in myself in my own small urban setting. Would we help ourselves as we think of "urban ministry" if we were able to see the city as simply another place where people (lots of them) live who need the Gospel--a place which is neither good nor bad, but just is? ■

Harriet Bicksler is director of the Board for Brotherhood Concerns for the Brethren in Christ Church and lives in Harrisburg, PA. She edits CityTalk, a newsletter on urban ministry recently begun to promote networking and support among BIC urban workers and increase urban mission awareness in the BIC denomination. Write her for a copy at P.O. Box 246, Mount Joy, PA 17552.

Good Stuff from the Countryside



by James (Buzz) Hargleroad

Small town and rural life equip individuals for the big city experience far better than is often realized. People from rural areas and small towns who come from homes free of bigotry often make excellent urban volunteers. Free from some of the urban stresses that cultivate negative overt and covert racist feelings, these volunteers not only do outstanding jobs in the city; many also choose to make the city their permanent home after their voluntary service is over.

Volunteers from rural areas come with a strong work ethic, a deep concern for people as individuals of great worth, and a strong compassion to be partners in mission. Work in the rural U.S. and Canada is not just a job to do. Families work together. The value of work is not just a paycheck; it is the way families share their lives with one another.

In small towns everyone tends to know everyone else. There are no faceless individuals. You go down the street and everyone says, "Hi." Translated into the city this means a sincere concern for all people and a desire not to be anonymous, but instead to "make a difference."

People raised in the rural U.S. and Canada with a strong sense of Christian mission develop a curiosity and concern about the rest of the world. The so-called peace churches transmit their strong sense of mission through their church-related schools in ways which fuel young people's curiosity and caring for the rest of the world. Rural life can make one additionally restless to explore the city and live in a cross-cultural setting. Many rural persons thus come to the city not only prepared but "biting at the bit" to share their gifts amidst the concrete and skyscrapers.

Some important distinctions need to be made here. There is a vast difference between the volunteer who comes to the city and shares gifts with those in need and the person who comes for the glitzy job. The rural, mission-oriented volunteer wants to serve the whole city; those wooed by the city lights

usually seek a safe neighborhood and try to find friends exactly like themselves.

Many volunteers after completing their term of service choose to stay in the city and continue in people-serving jobs. Their volunteer experience serves as an entry and rooting experience. Oftentimes these volunteers grasp the mission of an organization in such a fine way that they become that organization's best mission interpreters.

Rural and small town churches' greatest gifts to the city could well be their open, caring volunteers. ■

Buzz Hargleroad currently serves as executive director of Chicago's Interfaith Council for the Homeless. As pastor of Lakeview Presbyterian Church he had extensive experience working with the Lakeview and Pleasant Valley Mennonite Voluntary Service units. He spent his growing up years in rural Nebraska before coming to the city.

A Lesson from History



African-Americans: a People with a Mission

by Les Tolbert

When Daniel Payne, the African Methodist Episcopal leader, uttered the plaintive cry, "Who am I, God? And what?," he was articulating the struggle being waged by the African in America. There was no dearth of possible answers then or now. I would like to reflect on one aspect of who these people of color were--a people of mission.

Initial attempts to spread the gospel among the early Africans in America were unsuccessful, largely due to the example of "Christian" slave owners. Contrary to popular white assumptions, the slave was not stupid. No amount of propanganda, such as prescribed-text preaching, could convince the African that the Christianity being modelled was what he or she was looking for. The lash of the whip and the degradation of the soul kept slaves safe from such illusion.

In spite of such hypocrisy, there is evidence that the gospel was spread to the slave, primarily through black preachers and later through the black church. What type of Christianity secured the slave's attention and commitment?

Evangelicalism and its emphasis on a conversion experience with a clear and explicit decision to surrender to God were appealing to the African mind. In addition, the prospect of a personal relationship to "the Liberator of all liberators" through prayer, scripture reading/listening, a strict code of personal morality, and witnessing to others brought the kind of hope that caused the early African-American to be receptive to Christianity as advanced by the preachers of the first and second Great Awakenings.

Possessing a new version of Christianity antithetical to that of the proponents of slavery, blacks now began to spread the message of a God who had a heart for freedom. After all, a God who would call Moses from the backside of the desert to deliver slaves from Egypt was worthy of their allegiance.

For at least a century whites were cool to the idea of "Christianizing" blacks. And the African-Americans, though chained, brutalized and mistreated, were not naive. Realizing that help would come largely from within, they early on developed a theology of mission.

These early Americans developed a concept of mission that combined faith and works. They understood that God was not only asking them to "tell somebody," but to "help somebody." Consequently, mutual aid was an integral part of the way blacks did church. By 1821 there were 30-40 such societies in Baltimore. By 1838 Philadelphia had 100 mutual aid societies with 7,448 members.

The **Free African Society** was the germinal body out of which many of these societies sprang. They were collective business enterprises with ethical, fraternal, welfare and insurance dimensions. And at the bedrock of all these endeavors was the black church. Because blacks could now participate in the religious structure, their creativity and "will to win" found refreshing outlets. Not only did they seek to minister in practical ways at home, but they also

sought to export Christian help. Throughout the 19th century black Christians maintained the belief they were God's agents to redeem all sons and daughters of Africa wherever they were found. In fact, **Leroy Fiets** seems to think that "the foreign mission movement predates the home mission movement." In any event, we have the lives of **David George** (Sierra Leone) and **George Liele** (Jamaica) as testimony of the presence of a mission mindset among early African-American believers.

There is also evidence of criticism by black church persons who felt that domestic issues should take precedence over foreign missions. And we can understand that perspective, given the tremendous uphill climb facing the fledgling African-American community in the United States.

Mission in the African-American community can be understood as operating in three tiers. As individuals emerged who sensed the "call" from God, they composed the first tier. These were not always slave preachers. Some were lay people like **Harriet Tubman** or **Sojourner Truth**, intellectuals like **Frederick Douglass** or pathfinders like **George Washington Carver**. As these leaders struggled to carry out their God-given mandates, the second tier to emerge came with the formation of black churches. The black church was founded not only for fellowship of like-minded people but for solidarity and power. This base made way for the third tier--the development of organizations which further created a sense of community. All these tiers were rooted in a strong sense of God's direction.

A review of this legacy dispels the myth that the black church has been weak in the area of missions. The **Underground Railroad**, one of the greatest examples of mutual aid and social action this country has ever known, reminds us that mission is at the very heart of our African-American heritage. ■

Les Tolbert is consultant for African-American Church Leadership Development, a department of the Commission on Home Ministries of the General Conference Mennonite Church. He also serves as co-pastor at Community Mennonite Church in Markham, IL.

Miami: Mission on the "Front Lines"

by Philip Sauder



When I was younger, I used to have arguments with my older brother over which type of Christian work had greater value. I believed it was better to challenge and encourage lukewarm or complacent Christians to be mission-minded than to go to a distant location to work with new believers. I argued we had a vast amount of Christians here who upon receiving vision would take up the missions cause. One messenger/encourager with a vision could thus produce many others to engage in mission work.

Although my argument sounded good, my brother was not convinced. He said my plan wouldn't work because too many older Christians wouldn't change their ways. One could spend a whole life trying to inspire others to do mission work and not have much to show for it in the end. On the "front lines," however, he said people are eager to hear the Word and once they believe, are willing to change, be molded and do God's work. Therefore by working with new converts, the same goal of getting others involved in missions could be accomplished with better results.

We never did come to an agreement. I stayed in Lancaster, with nothing to show for my efforts. My brother worked in Philadelphia, seeing results. I guess that means he won. I always remember this argument because when I moved to Miami, I quickly became convinced of my brother's viewpoint. It makes sense that if you want others to be involved in missions, it's better to lead by example instead of just talking about it.

After five years in Miami my wife and I started working with inner city youth. With Christian youth, every Bible study I'd done was boring. I had to pull teeth to get them involved in activities, even entertaining ones. But with the inner city kids, the exact opposite was true.

Although they present me with discipline problems, these are overshadowed by their excitement for learning God's word and getting involved. It's rewarding to see them grow. We have to hold back on the reins as they try and

motivate us to do more! It is a truly positive experience compared with my former youth work.

Now that I have come to Miami, I find myself on the "front lines" in more ways than one. The city can be a source of real pain and I find myself asking sometimes, "Is it worth it?" I try and convince myself I'm doing a worthwhile ministry, but around me stable Christian friends are leaving for the suburbs or for quieter communities. They "sell out" on the vision. Then there are those who live outside the city, who only know about it from the media, who continually question my commitment. They ask, "How can you live here? This is really a bad neighborhood! I would never go to Miami."

Yes, it is a pain to have to go through streets where people are selling drugs, harrassing me because I am white. The only other whites who go there come to buy drugs. But some of my youth live here and they are inviting their friends to church. They need the Lord. A worse pain comes when someone I know who tried the Lord's way starts to get involved selling drugs.

Another pain came when a relative visiting Miami on a mission project got shot point-blank for a little bit of money. When I go into tough sections of town as he did, I go in my car, not on foot. I ask myself, "Is there hope for those who have to live here on a daily basis?" It is a pain to confront the prejudice and discrimination running rampant in this city. The spirit of revenge is as strong as steel embedded in concrete. Who is going to speak the truth and live it out among people here?

Who will accept the call to be a disciple ministering in the city, without all the conveniences? Does God call us to live a safe, pain-free life? There are no easy answers in the city. I would challenge all Christians to try to understand the city situation as well as that of the foreign mission field. If you yourself have not been called, heartily encourage those who are doing the "front lines" work. ■

Philip Sauder works at New Hope Mennonite Church in Miami, FL as a Mennonite Central Committee volunteer.

Promoting Mission Consciousness in Eastern Canada



by Brice Balmer

Recently the Mission Promotion Committee of the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada conducted a survey to discover what resources are needed to help congregations promote greater participation in mission. The 53 questionnaires returned from 48 churches yielded information helpful in understanding the churches and their needs.

1. Mission Committees: 29 congregations have mission committees with very similar mandates or job descriptions:

--Promoting denominational mission boards, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), and conference missions were listed for most committees. Planning special events within the congregation to promote mission is in many job descriptions.

--Helping the church reach out to the city, community, neighborhood or area was listed. Some used evangelism and witnessing concepts; some spoke of outreach and service; some had both mandates.

--Encouraging members to consider voluntary service or to become involved in outreach work was on the agenda of many committees. Some said their committee "shoulder-tapped" members for service.

--Developing a missions budget or having an overall strategy for mission within the congregation was listed often. In addition, there were a number of other tasks mentioned: peace and social justice; specific congregational projects for outreach or community service; refugee work; greeting visitors, mutual aid, helping members with financial problems, planning social events, etc. Such varied responses illustrate the diversity of our congregations and their ideas of mission work.

A few congregations had only a mission representative. These tended to be newer or smaller congregations. The church council then looked at mission

promotion and outreach issues.

The most significant finding here is that most of our congregations do have mission committees with very similar job descriptions. *If your congregation does not have a committee or taskforce, check out these tasks. How are these activities done in your congregation?*

2. Use of Mission Resources:

Although one response said, "People, not paper," it appears that mission reps and committees are using what is available to them. More than information published by the church papers, respondents affirmed mission speakers and people resources as the most effective means to communicate about missions within the congregation. *Could conferences publish lists of missions speakers and workers available locally because of furlough or end of service terms to make such people resources more readily available?*

Models and stories of mission activity are the resource most desired from conference and mission boards. They are used in worship, Sunday school, and special events. Although these stories are best when told by people with first-hand experience, they can also come through our papers, videos, bulletin inserts and Sunday school materials.

A number of mission committees are looking for new ways of stimulating mission interest within their congregations. Old ways are no longer working with youth, young and middle-aged adults and some urban people.

3. Loyalty to Denominational and Mission Programmes: There was much hesitancy among the respondents--pastors and mission reps--to say that the members of their congregation took the larger church and its mission programmes seriously or were interested in outreach beyond the local congregation. In urban settings there are many first generation Mennonites who don't have connections beyond the local community.

MCC seems to draw more loyalty from the local congregation than the conference or bi-national denominations do. Is this because MCC has provided so many ways of becoming involved while Mennonite Board of Missions and the Commission on Overseas Missions have

not? Are MBM and COM communicating in language that youth, young adults and middle-aged people are understanding? There seems to be more loyalty for them among the older people.

Summary: Providing more speakers and resource persons who can come or be in touch with our congregations is the highest priority for the respondents to this survey. As fewer mission workers and returned VS'ers are available to itinerate for long periods of time, are there other ways to provide people and stories for congregational mission promotion?

Denominational periodicals are appreciated by leaders for their ideas, stories and models. Posters and bulletin inserts are also being used. But we do well to evaluate how much paper is flowing into the congregations.

Most congregations have mission committees with very similar job descriptions. Can conference and mission agencies find more ways to help mission leadership do an effective job of promotion, outreach and volunteer recruitment?

Brice Balmer is on the pastoral team at First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ontario and serves as editor of Share the Light, a newsletter promoting mission awareness in the Conference of Mennonites in Eastern Canada.

Readers: We invite you to share your ideas for promoting local and international mission work in your urban congregation. Send your stories to: Editor, URBAN CONNECTIONS, 30 W. Chicago Ave., Chicago, IL 60610.



Amerson, Philip, Tell Me City Stories (Chicago, IL: SCUPE Urban Church Resource Exchange Center, 1988.)

For urban congregations to grow, they must listen and reflect upon their own unique stories and those of their context. As a manual to help urban church leaders explore the future, this book contains useful exercises and study questions. Amerson's interweaving of story and social analysis encourages urban congregations to continue their journeys of shared faith with greater imagination and hopefulness.

Bakke, Ray, The Urban Christian: Effective Ministry in Today's Urban World (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1987.)

Veteran pastor, theological educator, and urban missions consultant Ray Bakke shares his personal pilgrimage into the city, an urban theology, and a global perspective on urban mission in this introductory-level book. A valuable source of practical suggestions for developing effective outreach ministry in the local urban church.

Dorothy Bloom, Church Doors Open Outward (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1987.)

This manual gives very practical steps for a local congregation to begin community outreach programs. Bloom suggests that churches proceed through a five step sequence, beginning with the biblical basis for mission and service. Broad societal analysis, local community study, strategizing for mobilizing the church, program development and action round out the picture.

Carroll, Jackson, Carl Dudley and William McKinney, Handbook for Congregational Studies (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1986.)

These authors suggest ways to study the local congregation and its mission in the community in terms of identity, context, process and program. The book contains a good brief introduction to social service research process and methodology, which some beginners may find too technical. Numerous sample instruments for data collection are included in the appendices.

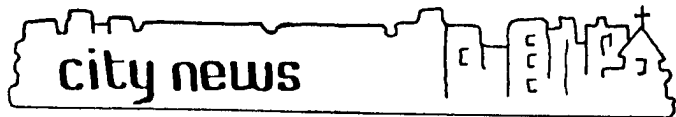
Edgar, John, Reconnecting the Urban Neighborhood Church (Columbus, OH: Columbus United Methodist Church Office of Urban Ministry, 1990.)

This handbook ably depicts the diverse forces contributing to the disconnecting of urban congregations from their communities and points the way to meaningful paths of reconnecting. Strong in its description of basic strategies for redeveloping urban churches, it is filled with excellent examples of how mainline parishes have worked at reconnecting.

Van Houten, Mark E., God's Inner-City Address: Crossing the Boundaries (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988.)

Few more practical and realistic books of how-to's on urban ministry have been written than this. As a pastor to homeless youth on Chicago's north side, the author delineates five major elements of urban ministry: prerequisites (analyzing a neighborhood, networking, attitude, safety precautions, language, sexuality, being non-judgmental, and respecting turf), the prophetic role of presence, the priestly role of visibility, the kingly role of accessibility and finally, an authentic message and vision for urban ministry. ■

Vern Blackwood is resource coordinator of the Urban Church Resource Exchange Center at SCUPE in Chicago. He is a member of Reba Place Church (MC/COB) in Evanston, IL.



Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton

A church planting begun several years ago in the Lehigh Valley, PA metropolitan area ceased operations in June. The final pastors of the BETHLEHEM MENNONITE CHURCH were EDMOND and WENDY MILLER. A new pastor, KEITH ESPENSHADE, began duties at the ALLENTOWN MENNONITE CHURCH in South Allentown this summer. Keith is a SCUPE graduate who worked in a church planting venture in north suburban Chicago.

DAY ONE MINISTRIES, offering the hope of recovery to persons with homosexual struggles, was represented this summer at both the national EXODUS and COURAGE conferences. Exodus is the international coalition of recognized Protestant ex-gay ministries. Courage is a Roman Catholic organization with a similar focus. Day One is affiliated with the Eastern District of the G.C. Mennonite Church.

--Mark Winslow

Anchorage

Church planting efforts are moving forward in Anchorage, Alaska. After moving to Anchorage last fall, church planters JIM and FAITH CARPENTER began Sunday services April 29 with 22 in attendance. MERLIN and WILMA CLASSEN moved to Anchorage April 6 to help with the new congregation, which meets at a local recreation center. As many as 23 people have attended a weekly Bible study, Carpenters report. The church planting is sponsored by Northwest Mennonite Conference, in cooperation with Mennonite Board of Missions and local Mennonites

--MBM News Service

Birmingham

SOUTHSIDE MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP recently finished a remodeling project which doubled the seating capacity of their facility to 90. Average attendance at present is 50. Five persons were baptized in August. The church is working on setting up a food bank through the United Way in order to distribute food to needy families nearby.

In May COVENANT COMMUNITY CHURCH united with another congregation whose pastor left for a pastorate in West Virginia. This has doubled attendance to 40-45 per Sunday. With almost half of these being children, the congregation is working at starting a Sunday morning children's ministry.

With an average attendance of 40 per Sunday, GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH continues to involve all its members in outreach to unchurched friends and family. After several months of fund-raising efforts they took a group of 55 people to Six Flags Over Georgia amusement park as part of their outreach efforts. The congregation recently baptized eight persons.

As of September 1, STEVE LONGENECKER became the new bishop for the North Alabama district. He and his wife Lenora have worked as church planters. Most recently Steve was employed as director of PRISON FELLOWSHIP in Alabama. Steve replaces GLEN YODER who has accepted the position of director of Home Ministries with Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities in Salunga, PA.

--Bonnie Sauder

Chicago

Twelve Chicago Area Mennonite congregations banded together to raise over \$15,000 at the recent CAM Festival and Quilt Sale September 8. To supplement the generous donations of quilts from rural Mennonite churches, Chicago churches contributed fresh garden produce, Lithuanian kugelis, Mexican tacos, soul food, whoopie pies, handcrafted noteholders and more. Two local congregations made two beautiful quilts which were auctioned. LEROY KENNEL, chairperson of the sale, was pleased with the creative witness of the Chicago Mennonite community. His tireless efforts have made the sale one of the most successful events Chicago Area Mennonites have ever ventured to do together. Sale proceeds will be made available to local congregations and ministries for their outreach projects.

CHICAGO MENNONITE LEARNING CENTER reopened Sept. 4 to 19 students, grades K-6, using the facilities of LAWNSDALE MENNONITE CHURCH. KAREN EWERT of COMMUNITY MENNONITE CHURCH in Markham serves as principal. Three recent Goshen College graduates, KIM BURKHOLDER, SUSAN HUNSBERGER and DAWN KAUFMAN, who are all bilingual and have Latin American experience, are serving as teachers in a voluntary service capacity.

LEE LOWERY (BETHEL MENNONITE), SAMUEL PAGAN (LAWNSDALE MENNONITE) and ULLI KLEMM (ALBANY PARK MENNONITE) all recently resigned from their respective pastoral duties. Lee is working with NORTHSIDE ECUMENICAL NIGHT MINISTRY with homeless and runaway youth, Samuel is finishing his studies at Bethany Theological Seminary and Ulli is taking an open-ended sabbatical leave before considering other ministry options. In light of dwindling numbers and limited resources, ALBANY PARK MENNONITE CHURCH is closing October 28 after six years of worship, fellowship and service in its neighborhood.

RAYMOND BELL is giving temporary pastoral leadership at BETHEL. ANGEL CANON began pastoral duties at LAWNSDALE September 2. Angel is from Colombia, where he was a pastor and Mennonite Church leader for nearly 25 years. STEVE YODER, a student at Bethany Theological Seminary, is serving as a pastoral intern with FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH of Oak Park.

EVANSTON MENNONITE CHURCH recently hosted a neighborhood meeting addressing the increase of gang activity in their area. CHRIST COMMUNITY CHURCH is developing a mentor program so that all persons in the church will be supported and held accountable by another spiritually. COMMUNITY CHURCH, Markham, is in the process of developing long-term small groups to enable growth and spiritual development in the congregation.

On Labor Day REBA PLACE CHURCH joined hands with a neighboring black church to host an outdoor "Gospel Fest" in a neighborhood Park. September 28-30 Reba Place hosted the Illinois-Wisconsin Church of the Brethren District Conference in its facilities.

Members of LOMBARD MENNONITE CHURCH and NORTH SUBURBAN MENNONITE CHURCH joined Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) teams to help with the clean-up following the devastating tornados that ripped through the Joliet area.

--Ulli Klemm

Denver

Residents and business owners in Denver's West Side neighborhood were surveyed this summer as part of a project aimed at increasing job opportunities in this largely Hispanic, low-income neighborhood. The WESTSIDE JOBS INITIATIVE COALITION spearheaded the effort to match up community residents' skills with the job opportunities existing among businesses in the neighborhood. MENNONITE URBAN MINISTRY is one of several agencies, churches and businesses which make up the Westside Jobs Initiative Coalition.

--Mervin Dick

Students, peace workers, lay people and pastors are expected to join in the second annual CHRISTIAN PEACEMAKER TEAMS (CPT) training/action conference in Denver on Nov. 9-11. CPT is an international joint effort of Mennonite, Brethren, General Conference Mennonite, and Brethren in Christ churches. The gathering will include seminars on militarism, military economy, discipleship, and training in nonviolent action for the 1990's. Participants will gather in the final meeting at Lowry Air Force Base for worship and the presentation of an offering of food for victims of militarism. Actions of civil disobedience will also be part of the event. The CPT Steering Committee in cooperation with a steering committee from local Denver area churches has developed plans for the conference.

--"Signs of the Times" CPT Newsletter

Detroit

18 youth volunteers from Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference were cautiously welcomed for a week of service June 11-17 by DETROIT RESCUE MISSION Ministries staff and some 60 residents in a drug rehabilitation program. By week's end, the youth had won the respect and praises of staff and residents for a job well done and had gained many friendships. A temporary housing and substance abuse program center, DRM shelters up to 100 men 15 nights a month and serves meals at 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. every day to low income men and women. Talking with residents was the week's high point, most of the volunteers said. But their work also made an impact. Lodged at a Salvation Army temporary shelter dormitory, the group met for debriefing, singing and prayer each evening under the leadership of RITCH HOCHSTETLER, youth pastor at CLINTON FRAME MENNONITE CHURCH, Goshen. The group made contact with local Mennonites through a Thursday Bible study begun by church planters SAM WILSON and ROD WILLIAMS and through Sunday morning worship at PEACE COMMUNITY CHURCH led by Pastor EVELYN CHILDS.

--Pat Swartzendruber, MBM News Service

Eastern Canada

DELTON JANTZI, chaplain at Jain Finch housing project in Toronto, will be going on sabbatical in January. BEV SUDERMAN, seminary intern at TORONTO UNITED MENNONITE CHURCH, will be interim chaplain. JOANNA RESSOR-McDOWELL is the programme director in this subsidized apartment tower in Northwestern Toronto.

AUDREY BECHTEL has recently replaced MARILYN BRENNEMAN as outreach worker serving the needs of seniors and others through the DANFORTH MORNINGSIDE CHURCH in Toronto. November 2 executive members of ONTARIO WOMEN IN MISSION will engage in an Urban Mission Tour of mission projects in Toronto.

RUDY BAERGEN has begun at FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH in Kitchener as pastor with English and Spanish members. He and his wife HELEN served with the Commission on Overseas Missions for four years in Bolivia as seminary teachers.

ST. JACOBS MENNONITE CHURCH now has 70 Laotian people participating regularly. ONG ATH PHOUNSAVATH is the pastoral leader. Some worship is together with the Anglos; some services are separate. The church sponsors English as a Second Language classes for Mennonite women from Mexico, with the local board of education providing the teacher and the church assisting with child care and transportation.

--Brice Balmer, Share the Light Newsletter

Jackson

Joining VOICE OF CALVARY FELLOWSHIP staff this summer in Jackson were five Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Urban Community Development Summer Service Program workers. They were DWAYNE BANKS, NADRA BINGHAM, JASON GOVAN, MARY MAY and TARSHA McLaurin, all from Jackson or nearby Pearl, Miss. The MCC U.S. Program supports young people in jobs in their home communities that develop leadership skills and provide an opportunity to explore career options. The workers taught reading classes, worked in the VOC Mission nursery school, led Vacation Bible Schools in local backyards, and oversaw recreation activities. This year 61 young people participated in the MCC Summer Service program, with costs shared by MCC U.S. and local congregations.

Miami

A second Haitian congregation in Miami has affiliated with Southeast Mennonite Conference. EGLISE DU BETHLEHEM, led by Pastor DIEUDONNE BRUTUS, has entered an associate member status in order to get acquainted with the Mennonite Church. The congregation of 50 members meets in a rented facility also located on 79th Street two miles east of EGLISE DU NOUVEAU TESTAMENT, the other Haitian Mennonite church.

Mennonite Central Committee has assigned DAVID HARDER to direct the LITTLE HAITI HOUSING ASSOCIATION. David, a contractor from Winnipeg, MB, will try to revive the housing program which has been dormant for two years. The Association was first organized by MCC in cooperation with local Haitian congregations in an effort to stabilize some of Little Haiti's poorest neighborhoods.

--Walter Sawatzky

New York

In a city of 7-8 million people known for much despair and fear, 300 Mennonite from 16 congregations in New York City proclaimed "Living Hope" in sermon and song at their seventh annual convention held September 28-29 at the Interchurch Center on Riverside Drive in Manhattan. LINDSEY ROBINSON of Eastern Mennonite Board served as keynote speaker at the assembly sponsored by the New York City Council of Mennonite Churches.

A 40-voice choir representing varied Mennonite ethnic groups from all five boroughs sang songs reflecting these cultures. Each congregation shared a five-minute presentation on highlights of the past year. Afterwards congregational representatives chose a scroll from a basket on which another congregation had written a goal for the coming year, with a promise to partner with them in prayer.

URBAN CONNECTIONS

BURNSIDE shared about its installation of two stained glass windows in time for Good Friday and Easter celebrations. MANHATTAN MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP formalized membership as people committed themselves to the church on Easter. NORTH BRONX welcomed DUNCAN SMITH after a year's search for a pastor. SEVENTH AVENUE and EBENEZER continue to look for pastors, searching now for almost two years.

--Marian Sauder

Ottawa

Canadian church leaders from over 40 denominations and parachurch organizations gathered in Ottawa May 16-20 to coordinate their thinking and plans about evangelism. Sponsored by the Task Force on Evangelism, a ministry of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, in cooperation with the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, the consultation launched Vision 2000 Canada. Participants hope to involve Canadian churches in unprecedented evangelistic outreach in the present decade. Today only about 7% of all Canadians are active Christians.

Keynote speakers such as RAY BAKKE, DON POSTERSKI and MICHAEL GREEN shared some common themes--denominations must learn to work together and support one another, word and deed must go together, evangelism in Canada is hard work and we must seek God's empowering, and the urban centers are where we must go to minister. The point was made many times that evangelism in Canada must be built on relationships where Christ can be shared with neighbors and fellow workers.

--Dale R. Bauman, ELMIRA MENNONITE CHURCH

Philadelphia

GERMANTOWN MENNONITE CHURCH has called JIM DERSTINE as pastor, beginning November 1. He will serve on a 2/3 time basis. For the past years Jim has served in church relations with Mennonite Board of Missions in Elkhart, IN. The congregation is searching for a woman to join Jim on the pastoral team.

WEST PHILADELPHIA MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP continues to be an "international sending church." Over the summer the church commissioned a couple for MCC service in Chad, Africa, a woman to a refugee ministry in Thailand, a man to a teaching ministry in Summit Hills, Puerto Rico and a couple to an administrative ministry in a Christian health clinic in Chicago.

CHRISTIAN LIFE MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP was born on July 1. Located in the Mt. Airy section of northwest Philly, the fledgling group meets on Sunday mornings in a Seventh Day Baptist facility. PARKER MAUI, a South African, serves as church planter. About 25 persons relate to the new group. This is a Lancaster Conference effort.

--David Greiser

Portland

PATTY FRIESEN joined the staff at PORTLAND MENNONITE CHURCH as associate pastor last summer.

One of the year's highlights at PORTLAND MENNONITE is the International Gift Festival of Self-Help Crafts held November 9-10. The two-day festival has grown larger every year since it was first started in 1981, peaking last year with a gross income of \$46,000. The festival is advertised in local papers and draws a large crowd of non-Mennonites from all over Oregon. Special attractions this year include an art display of Haitian paintings, sweaters from South America, a local quilt display and a coffeeshop where REG and PHYLLIS TOEWS from Winnipeg will share stories as a way of interpreting the mission of Self-Help Crafts.

--Patty Friesen

Roanoke

The ministry of JUSTICE HOUSE and JUSTICE CHURCH in Roanoke, Virginia continue in spite of the revocation of director DAVID HAYDEN's ministerial credentials and Virginia Mennonite Conference's cut-off of direct funds last fall.

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Roanoke (cont'd.)

"We are a prophetic community as well as a community of hospitality. We raise up the cry of the poor and by so doing offend some people," Hayden comments. "All of the leadership in our community comes from women and men who have been homeless and poor. We have no paid staff and no bureaucratic structure to absorb resources so desperately needed by the poor."

An interested group of persons from the Harrisonburg, VA area have reestablished a support base for regular funding for the ongoing work of hospitality to some 70-80 homeless at Justice House. Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions still accepts designated donations and channels them to Justice House.

--compiled from information from David Hayden and Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions

Texas

For the first time in many years, all the Mennonite churches in central Texas have pastoral leadership. This occurred when the AUSTIN FELLOWSHIP hired KATHY REID on a 1/2 time basis September 1.

Kathy's family moved from California to Austin where her husband STEVE teaches Old Testament at Austin Presbyterian Seminary. The Austin Fellowship is typical of urban Mennonite congregations in that there has been a complete turnover in membership in just four years.

The HOUSTON MENNONITE CHURCH is serving a coordinating role for the first Texas MCC Relief Sale on November 10. The event has received featured coverage in several periodicals in the Houston area. IRIS HARTSHORN, event coordinator, has arranged for advertising on four billboards around the Houston area. Area Mennonite churches are participating with volunteers and donations of crafts.

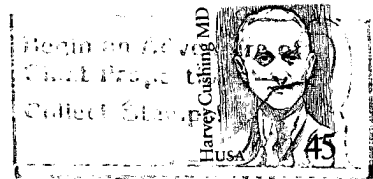
DALLAS MENNONITE and HOPE MENNONITE CHURCH of Fort Worth are completing self-study projects, with facilities an issue for both churches. High property values in the Metroplex make moving improbable at this time. Hope Mennonite is exploring outreach through a children's community choir. Several contacts were made and the response has been promising.■

--Don Rheinheimer



inter mennonite urban newsletter

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