

gospel evangel

connecting the congregations of
indiana-michigan mennonite conference

september/october 2015 | vol 96, no 5

Photo provided



From L to R: Renee Dalton, Gladier Dalton, Judy Kennel, Charles Dalton IV, Brandi Morris, Pastor Jerone Dabon, Leonard Penner and Ron Kennel forge new friendships in New Orleans in 2014 during the rebuilding of Faith Temple, Church of God. The project was led by members of College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Learning to listen

Indiana pastor relates across cultures in New Orleans

By **Laurie Oswald Robinson**, editor

This past year, Ron Kennel, of College Mennonite Church (CMC) in Goshen, Ind., says he's listened to voices that were silent in his background by reading everything he could about the African American experience, and dialoguing with those who have lived it.

Kennel, a longtime Mennonite pastor, grew up as a Nebraska farm boy, where people of color didn't live. He made a couple of friends with people of color in college. That led to his interest in the multicultural nature of the church to gain traction during his days as a pastor. That interest took a new turn when he met Gladier Dalton in hurricane-ravaged New Orleans.

In 2014, CMC spearheaded the rebuild of her house and her congregation, Faith Temple, Church of God. Several

other Goshen area Mennonite congregations joined CMC to do the restoration through local donations and funds provided by Mennonite Disaster Service's (MDS) Partnership Home Project (PHP). The work team remodeled her house to double as a home and as a church space that replaces the former church building.

By the time restoration was complete, Kennel and Dalton were friends. She has invited Kennel to provide resourcing for pastors of small congregations in New Orleans on Oct. 9-11.

"My first response to her invitation was to question how much (continued on page 3)

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Wayne Chupp, a member of North Main Mennonite Church in Nappanee, Ind., gives leadership to a community garden sponsored by The Builders Sunday school class. The garden supplies vegetables to a local food pantry. Photo by Ruben Chupp

Joining God's harvest Nappanee church grows Seeds for Needs outreach

By **Ruben Chupp** with **Laurie Robinson**

For 100 bucks worth of seeds and supplies and volunteer elbow grease, North Main Mennonite Church in Nappanee, Ind., has reaped the priceless riches of participating in God's harvest in their community.

For the past two summers, Wayne Chupp and his Sunday school class, The Builders, have raised vegetables in their community garden for families served by the food bank of the Family Christian Development Center (FCDC). The multifaceted assistance ministry includes rent/utility aid, baby care and a clothing closet.

In its second summer, the project, Seeds for Needs, has produced about 2,000 pounds of vegetables, including

tomatoes, potatoes, sweet corn, green beans, cabbage, broccoli, carrots and zucchini. The beauty of the project for Chupp and team, besides the color of deep reds, greens and yellows, is that they are joining in what the God of seed, sun, soil and souls is already doing.

"We had been talking for quite a while about getting more involved in the community, but we wanted to join something that was already in progress rather than starting something from scratch," Chupp said.

"I wanted to get my hands dirty and do something, rather than just throw money at a problem."

(continued on page 7)

This issue is available online:

im.mennonite.net/gospel-evangel



Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference—a conference of **Mennonite Church USA**—is a community of congregations in Indiana, Michigan and Kentucky, gathered together for mutual encouragement in kingdom mission and inspiration to joyfully follow Jesus.

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Gospel Evangel is published six times annually by Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference (Jan/Feb, Mar/Apr, May/Jun, Jul/Aug, Sep/Oct, Nov/Dec). It is printed and mailed by Duley Press, 2906 N. Home Street, Mishawaka, IN 46545. Periodical postage is paid at Nappanee, IN 46550 (USPS 575-940). Postmaster: Send address changes to IN-MI Mennonite Conference, 109 E. Clinton St., Suite 100, Goshen, IN 46528.

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We invite you to submit articles and article ideas.

Printed on 30% PCW recycled paper.

Listening, learning (continued from cover)



Before/after photos of Gladier Dalton's home that also serves as Faith Chapel, Church of God, in New Orleans. Members of College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., helped restore this property through donations from several IN-MI congregations and resources from Mennonite Disaster Service's Partnership Home Program. Photo provided

a white guy like me from up North could offer these new friends in their setting," Kennel said. "But because of the bonds we have established in these past months, there has been an opening of a door for me to have a much closer relationship with my fellow African-American brothers and sisters than I have ever experienced before."

Kennel said he hopes such exchanges foster a greater awareness for Caucasians on the challenges being faced by their African-American brothers and sisters.

"I hope for growth in mutually supportive relationships and a sense of belonging to each other," he said. "This can be by more personal contact and partnering between traditional congregations with minority congregations."

Kennel said he enjoys some cross-cultural engagement in IN-MI through friendships with John and Cora Brown of the Church Without Walls in Elkhart, Ind., and John Powell, IN-MI regional pastor. Powell is connecting the conference with God's work in the Detroit area.

Leonard Penner, of CMC, first connected Dalton and the Mennonites. IN-MI congregations joining CMC in

the restoration project were East Goshen Mennonite Church, Eighth Street Mennonite Church, North Goshen Mennonite Church and Waterford Mennonite Church. From these congregations came labor from 70 volunteers and donations of about \$83,196. This was added to the \$10,000 in PHP funds to finance reconstruction, for a total of about \$93,136.

"Our ministry is surviving because of how God connected us to these Mennonites," Dalton said. "They have brought the cool spring water that was absent from my ministry for so long."

The "Living water" flows both ways, said CMC senior pastor Phil Waite said. "I always try to get people to talk about their faith, but it can be such a challenge," he said.

"After the Faith Temple involvement, participants began talking about the experience of God in their lives in authentic and real ways. It's been a thrilling and holy moment for me."

(Portions of this story reprinted by permission from *Mennonite World Review*)

For an expanded reading list on the African-American experience, Kennel recommends the **#Charlestonsyllabus** recently compiled by many scholars in response to the massacre in Charleston, S.C., June 17, 2015. The list is available on the internet.

Learning lasts, faith lives

“Who we are shapes what we do”

By **Kevin Miller**, Bethany communication director

Bethany Christian Schools begins a new era of leadership with the appointment of Tim Lehman as head of school. He succeeds Jim Buller who served on an interim basis since Allan Dueck retired in December 2014 after nearly 20 years as Bethany’s lead administrator.

Lehman is quite familiar with Bethany. Most recently principal at Iowa Mennonite School (2014-15), he served at Bethany from 2002 to 2014, as teacher, coach and assistant principal. As a previous member of Bethany’s leadership team, Lehman brings proven administrative skills and leadership capabilities.

He recognizes the inherent dignity and uniqueness of each individual and believes that students need to be empowered to learn while being encouraged to live out their faith in tangible ways.”

“We are intentional about building a caring community that fosters learning that lasts and faith that lives.” — Tim Lehman

Lehman strongly supports Bethany’s commitment to equip students for Christian discipleship in the church and around the world.

He says, “Who we are shapes what we do, and being rooted in the Anabaptist tradition, I’m excited about Bethany’s mission and direction. We are intentional about building a caring community that fosters learning that lasts and faith that lives.”

Lehman is supported on Bethany’s administrative team by five experienced administrators, four who continue from the previous administrative team: Hank Willems, principal; Jim Buller, guidance counselor; Sarah Kraybill Lind, admissions director; Scott Richer, advancement director.

The sixth member of the new administrative team is Anne Horst Hanby, who began as business manager in August. A graduate of Bethany (1996) and Goshen College (2000), Hanby has served on the board of PULSE (Pittsburgh Urban Leadership Service Experience), as associate director of Southwest Women Working Together in Chicago and as a grants manager for a child welfare and youth development agency in Chicago.

As an independent grant writer, she authored a grant last year that secured \$100,000 for Bethany’s renewable energy initiatives.

She combines her faith and work by engaging with the Michiana chapter of MEDA and has served with Bethany’s outgoing business manager, Patrick Farran, as co-chair of the Michiana Mennonite Relief Sale’s silent auction.



Bethany Christian Schools’ Administrative Team: (front L-R) Jim Buller, guidance counselor; Tim Lehman, head of school; Hank Willems, principal; (back) Anne Horst Hanby, business manager; Sarah Kraybill Lind, admissions director; Scott Richer, advancement director. Photo by Kevin Miller

Lehman’s breadth of educational experience, excellence in teaching, knowledge of Bethany, and affirming rapport with his peers allows him to step into this role informed and prepared to offer excellent leadership from the outset. He understands Bethany’s unique and dynamic learning environment, and supports the vision for the future recently articulated as part of Bethany’s Campaign for Sustainability.

In announcing his appointment as head of school, Bethany Board chair Sharon Yoder says, “Tim understands that the integration of faith and learning encourages critical thinking, creativity and innovation.



A group of campers enjoy canoeing at Amigo Centre during this past summer. The more than 300 summer campers and 24 staff members focused on the theme, LIFE: Living for God, Identity in Christ, Overcoming Fears and Engaging the Culture. Photo by Mandy Yoder

Pointing others to God

Camping fun leads to faithful LIFE

By **T Mounsithiraj**, summer youth program director

I am writing this reflection on an August morning when I am back in my church office in Goshen, Ind. As the busy sounds of life in the city hum in the background, I marvel at how our Heavenly Father stewarded us to the simplicity and quietness of Amigo Centre to minister to more than 300 campers and 24 staff this past summer.

As a former school counselor, a coach, a youth worker and parent of six children, I have crystalized a few beliefs about young people over the years: They are fun-loving and drawn to exciting and entertaining things. They are products of their environment. They are curious and prone to explore the boundaries. They are hard-wired to crave structure and discipline in their lives at the same time. These beliefs are based on tendencies I have observed repeatedly in my work and at home.

Every fun activity in which campers participate has been carefully designed with these observations in mind. Our summer program began when we gathered our summer staff and potential summer staff together last December over Christmas break for a retreat to plan our theme and to implement changes to our program. We wanted give the campers a fun and meaningful experience. We wanted to equip the campers to live in a way that points others to God, not to themselves.

We identified Galatians 3:20 as our guiding verse. Our theme was **LIFE**: Living for God, Identity in Christ, Overcoming Fears and Engaging the Culture.

A variety of speakers shared our LIFE theme, including Pastor Scott Miller and Pastor Gessica Garber. As part of our leadership development program, we also had four summer staff speak as well.

We wanted to equip the campers to live in a way that points others to God.

At Amigo we recognize campers are very valuable to their parents. Leading those campers requires a high level of emotional and spiritual maturity. The counselors' tasks include leading chapel time and cabin devotions. The staffers are tireless in their pursuit to define God to the campers.

Outside the camp program office is a majestic, mature and magnificent cherry tree. It has been privy to many conversations, singing and laughter during our free time. If this wise tree could talk, I wonder what deep stories of joy and transformation it would tell.

leading the way



Members of IN-MI's Missional Leadership Team gather for an early summer meeting. From left, Rebecca Kauffman, Orleans, Ind., treasurer George Thompson, Auburn Hills, Mich., moderator Gene Hartman, Topeka, Ind., Bob Yoder, Goshen, Ind., and moderator-elect Paula Killough, Elkhart, Ind. Photo by Dan Miller

Table talk transforms

Summer events connect conference to wider church

Some members of IN-MI's staff and Missional Leadership Team (MLT) were reminded this summer that one can't engage with the wider church without being changed.

In July, some IN-MI leaders engaged with Mennonites beyond conference borders at the Mennonite Church USA convention and the Mennonite World Conference.

"Regardless of how things unfold in the coming days, we are different because of time spent around tables in Kansas City," said Dan Miller, IN-MI conference pastor. "And Mennonite World Conference was a reminder that Mennonite Church USA is one part of an Anabaptist family stretching around the world."

Transformation also occurred closer to home. For example, on Aug. 23 Hilltop Mennonite Fellowship in Petoskey, Mich., had a closing celebration, and Wildwood Mennonite Church in Engadine, Mich., celebrated 75 years. "We give thanks for the good news of Jesus being shared, and lives being touched," Miller said.

Unwanted changes, such as decreases in staff FTEs, can nudge us toward transformation. The conference hopes its congregations can leverage this "season" of changes as an opportunity to be converted to be more like Jesus.

For example, staff, MLT and the Unity and Variance Task Group (UVTG) are inviting pastors to share a Sabbath Day on September 21. "We believe this can be a significant moment to gather in God's presence," Miller said. "We want to listen, speak and discern together."

"Stories of what is being learned and how it impacts congregational reality help everyone know we are not alone on the journey." — Dan Miller

Further, the IN-MI Leadership Enhancement Team invites congregations to strengthen life together by enlisting the ministry of a congregational coach. Staff also invites congregations to share their stories regarding the oft-messy process of exploring new mission initiatives.

"The direction we've set for ourselves is sometimes bumpy and challenging, sometimes rewarding and nourishing," Miller said. "Stories of what is being learned and how it impacts congregational reality help everyone know we are not alone on the journey."

Seeds for Needs (continued from cover)

In the end, the fruit of the labor of love has been huge, both in the dollar amount of vegetables raised for a little seed money and the congregation's visible witness to the community of God's goodness.

Chupp first spotted the potential garden when he kept driving by an empty lot two blocks north of downtown Nappanee. The creative juices began to flow for Chupp, a former farm boy and current gardener in town. Soon friends at church were joining him in transforming wasted space into a plot of plenty.

The Builders class created a plan: Class members would plot the garden and provide leadership as well as seeds and fertilizer. The entire church was invited to be part of the project, and many individuals responded. As a result, a wide spectrum of congregation is now intersecting more with the community.

For example, the church's youth group does weeding, and other adults participate as time allows. Sometimes produce is given away. Sometimes generosity generates conversation. Sometimes faith is discussed. The garden is bordered by a sidewalk on two sides. As Nappanee residents wander by, people ask about the garden and its intent.

“I wanted to get my hands dirty and do something, rather than just throw money at a problem.”
— Wayne Chupp

When produce is distributed at FCDC, clients wonder, “Who grew all this food?” Expressions of compassion and care tint many discussions. Idella Chupp, FCDC office manager, notes that “those who come here for the food pantry appreciate the summer availability of fresh fruits and vegetables.”

When asked why they do this, The Builder class members responded: “I like digging in a garden.” “It's a way to help people.” “The neighbors like having a garden there rather than an empty lot growing nothing but weeds.” “It brings the congregation together.” “It gives North Main positive visibility in the community.” “It fills the shelves at FCDC with healthy food.” One class

member recalled that “this is not something new for North Main. In the mid- to late 50s, North Main's youth group put out gardens on parcels of ground made available by different area farmers.”

In its second summer ... Seeds for Needs has produced 2,000 pounds of vegetables.

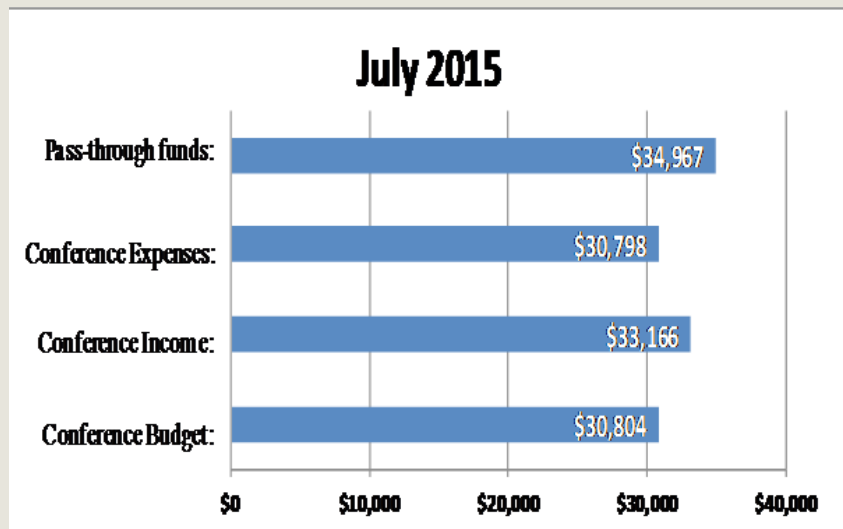
There have been aggravations too: not enough help; and lack of respect for the garden. But the gardening continues. The duration of this project is indefinite, its impact uncertain. It is not defined as an attempt at conversion or church attendance, though that may happen. The congregation is simply trying to understand what God is doing and joining in that work.

The hope is that next spring seeds again will go in the ground. Rain will come down. Plants will come up. And God's provision of good food, fellowship and witness will grace supper tables and feed hearts.

financial report

By **Jim Norton**, IN-MI bookkeeper

We are off to a good start financially in this new fiscal year thanks to your generous support. Income is above budget and expenses are below budget. As your new bookkeeper, I look forward to becoming better acquainted with the workings of IN-MI so that in future reports I can share more of these aspects that will be helpful in your understanding of the financial part of conference.



journeying with our pastors



Dan Miller, conference pastor for IN-MI Conference, shares reflections from his wider church travels this summer.

Summer offered several chances to connect with the church beyond the local congregation. It was a joy to see many of you at June Annual Sessions in Indianapolis, at Mennonite Church USA convention in Kansas City and at Mennonite World Conference (MWC) in Harrisburg, Pa.

I felt God's presence in all three settings. In the Annual Sessions, we heard of new ministries by our host church, we learned of new church planting possibilities in Goshen and Detroit and we participated in Unity and Variance table discussions. In Kansas City delegates at my table spoke forthrightly and humbly about significant issues. We held the pain of divergent hopes and disappointments. Many of you had the same experience. We heard encouraging input from people like:

- Alan Hirsch (theologian and founder of Forge Mission Training Network),
- Cesar Garcia (MWC General Secretary), and
- Alex Awad (missionary serving in Israel/Palestine).

I attended the service of lament and hope led by the discernment group on sexual abuse in the church. God was present in all those settings.

This summer was my first experience with MWC. It was glorious to sing and pray and hear preaching from around the world. I often felt God holding IN-MI Conference and Mennonite Church USA in the midst of this global Mennonite fellowship. At times it seemed the Spirit suddenly enlivened the whole auditorium in worship and prayer.

It has been a big summer, and it was good to connect to the church at conference, national and international levels. I hope you have been able to take advantage of such opportunities.

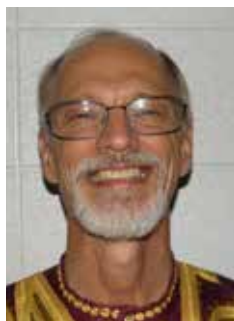
Fall To-Do List:

1. Contact the IN-MI Leadership Enhancement Team to engage a congregational coach for your church.
2. RSVP for your part in Pastor's Sabbath Day on September 21.
3. Inquire about volunteer opportunities at the IN-MI Conference offices.
4. Send conference a story idea about your congregation's new mission initiatives.

*For information on the above, call the conference office at:
574-534-4006

ministry transitions

Beginnings



Rodney Hollinger-Janzen was ordained for his ongoing work as executive coordinator for Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission (AIMM) on July 12 at Waterford Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind. He was ordained by Doug Kaufman, IN-MI conference pastor for leadership transitions. Siaka Traore, of the Burkina Faso Mennonite Church and chair of the AIMM board, preached the sermon.

CORRECTION: Veva Mumaw's ordination in the July/August *Gospel Evangel* notes that she was ordained for youth ministry at Olive Mennonite Church in Elkhart, Ind. Her title is pastor of children, youth, and young adults; not youth only.



Rebecca Kauffman was ordained as pastor at Paoli (Ind.) Mennonite Fellowship by Lois Kaufmann, conference minister for Central District Conference, and Doug Kaufman, IN-MI conference pastor for leadership transitions.

Endings



Kelly Carson's final Sunday as pastor of Mennonite Fellowship of Bloomington, Ind., was Sunday, Aug. 9.