



# Intersections

Stories from Franconia Mennonite Conference

WINTER 2012-2013

## Conference Assembly 2012

### God @ work beyond our imagination

The passion of Paul himself permeated the auditorium as Ervin Stutzman, Executive Director of Mennonite Church USA, stood from his kneeled position and—hands stretched towards the sky—proclaimed the words of Ephesians 3:20-21. It was a fitting end to the 2012 United Conference Assembly, in which 175 delegates, credentialed leaders, and other participants gathered to reflect upon and imagine where God has been and might be at work amidst Franconia and Eastern District Conferences.

In the Franconia Conference business session, moderator John Goshow (Blooming Glen congregation) and assistant moderator Marta Castillo (Nueva Vida Norristown New Life congregation) acknowledged the challenge of loving one another and remaining in unity—particularly in the midst of disagreement over issues of human sexuality.

*continued on page 2*



Aldo Siahaan (Philadelphia Praise),  
SP Kalaunee (Nueva Vida Norristown  
New Life)

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Credentialed Leader  
Franconia Conference

## Editorial

We see God's power at work in Franconia Conference. God is @ work birthing new congregations, including our newest member community—Ripple Allentown—birthed out of Whitehall Mennonite Church. It is an urban Anabaptist gathering of people committed to extending God's shalom in the inner city.

God is @ work in the increasing collaboration between Franconia and Eastern District Conferences. We have together named a youth minister and a minister of peace and justice. Our boards have increased communication and we have encouraged leaders from both conferences to get to know each other and work together.

God is @ work in the three priorities identified by our Board in early 2012:

- Developing missional initiatives.
- Networking and cultivating intercultural ministry relationships.
- Building leadership capacities across geographies and generations.

God is @ work in our conference staff. In February of 2011, Ertell Whigham was appointed to the role of Executive Minister. Ertell's vision, energy, and passion for advancing God's Kingdom has been received with appreciation by our board and our congregations.

At Assembly 2010, Ervin Stutzman said, "Trouble + Grace = Hope." At that time, many of us could ask for very little. Now looking back, we see that God has done more than we could ask or imagine.

— John Goshow & Marta Castillo,  
moderator & assistant moderator



Delegates conferred around tables to discuss Conference priorities, discernment around human sexuality, finances, and continuing conversation with Eastern District. Randy Nyce (Salford) & Melky Tirtrasputra (Nations Worship Center)

*continued from page 1*

"We acknowledge that further discernment on this subject is needed and desire that disagreeing voices be heard non-judgmentally and with patience and respect," Goshow said. "We believe that God will be at work as we seek further discernment on this important issue."

The ongoing relationship with Eastern District was another key topic of conversation. Franconia's executive minister Ertell Whigham and Warren Tyson, Conference Minister for Eastern District, conferred with delegates about their responses to this common work; many delegates affirmed the benefits of working together and sharing resources.

The desire to share resources speaks to a continued trend of decreased giving to the conference budget. Randy Nyce (Salford congregation), Conference Board Financial Committee Chair, alluded to the decreased financial support that Franconia Conference receives and a likely accompanying decrease in staff. This concerned some delegates, especially credentialed leaders who depend upon the support of their LEADership Ministers.

In the midst of these uncertainties, delegates were reminded of the many ways God has been and is at work throughout the conference community. Stutzman challenged the assembly to look for God "at work in every aspect of our lives" and within sessions and around dinner tables, participants shared of laundromat and garden ministries, appreciation dinners for local firefighters, and other creative, hands-on ways of entering into God's work. Participants were challenged to trust and to take risks out of the knowledge that God can "do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us."

— Krista Showalter Ehst, Bally

**Intersections**  
Volume 75, Issue 4

**Franconia Conference**  
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*Intersections* is now available in English, Spanish, Indonesian, and Vietnamese. For copies, contact [office@franconiaconference.org](mailto:office@franconiaconference.org).

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 FranconiaMC

#fmclife

In new people coming to the church and saying they feel like we are family. People come to the church sad, worried, downcast, shy. The Holy Spirit little by little molds their character and they come with a smile, participating in the church, asking how they can help. Because God is at work in their lives, their countenance reflects hope and faith.

— *Lety, Philadelphia Praise Center*

Through deep listening to one another. Pastor Lorie and our elder team have shown exemplary leadership as they opened up a space for reflection and discernment . . . The congregation has responded with an ability to allow our vulnerabilities and disagreements to be witnessed compassionately by one another. There have been times this year that I have sensed openness to Spirit in our gatherings that have felt so precious, so sacred, that many of us were moved to tears or silence.

— *Julie, West Philadelphia*



Ervin Stutzman, Executive Director of Mennonite Church USA, dropped to his knees to pray the blessings of Ephesians 3:20-21 over the conferences.



An intercultural worship team led the delegates in multi-lingual worship. Jim and Sharon Williams (Nueva Vida Norristown New Life) and Lety Castro (Philadelphia Praise)

Other Franconia Conference churches coming alongside Ripple in shared ministry: cooking meals, distributing groceries, financial & prayer support, worshipping with us, sharing in our youth ministry. — *Carolyn, Ripple*

As we work on changing our structure. I've also seen God at work changing the hearts of a few people in regard to violence. — *Jenny, Ambler*

“Salt & Light Sunday:” scattering on Sunday morning to serve our friends and community and then gathering back to share reflections. — *Ken, Deep Run East*

Intellectually challenged volunteers showing us God’s love through service! Come join us and see! — *Sarah, Care & Share Shoppes*

Small groups meeting together and sharing life’s challenges and blessings. — *Steve, Swamp*

As we meet monthly for Table Church: sharing a meal, connecting with God’s Story, and sharing our stories, encouraging words, and hopes with each other. — *Chris, Spring Mount*



Assistant Moderator Marta Castillo embraces Diane Muth from Ripple after the congregation is welcomed into Conference membership.

# How have you seen God @ work?

# Conference Financial Update

9 months (February-October)

Operating Budget	Actual	Budget	Last Year
<b>REVENUE</b>			
Congregational contrib.	\$291,719	\$264,364	\$316,337
All Other Sources	\$258,368	\$269,468	\$218,848
Total Revenue (+)	\$550,087	\$533,832	\$535,185
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Ministries/Programs	\$405,000	\$404,583	\$444,909
Support Services	\$177,674	\$185,212	\$168,127
Total Expenses (-)	\$582,674	\$589,795	\$613,036
Line of Credit Payment	\$18,750	\$18,750	\$18,750
<b>NET</b>	<b>\$(51,337)</b>	<b>\$(74,713)</b>	<b>\$(96,601)</b>



Delegates and non-delegates participated in four different workshops during Assembly, learning about multi-cultural worship, faith formation in children, including people with disabilities, and church planting. Brent Camilleri (Deep Run East)



(Above) Franconia & Eastern District Conferences' Peace & Justice Committee awarded its peace mug to Becky Felton (Perkasie congregation), a long-time committee member who had recently lost her battle with cancer. Samantha Lioi (Whitehall) and Jason Hedrick (Zion)



Photographer Andrew Huth (Ambler congregation) shared a slideshow from his recent trip to Staten Island, NY, with Mennonite Disaster Service in the wake of Superstorm Sandy. "If we aspire to be the kind of people who, at a moment's notice, are ready and prepared to do the work of God," Huth reflected, "then we must come pre-dirty."



(Right) Newly credentialed leaders were recognized and blessed during the afternoon delegate session. This Assembly marked the 25th anniversary of the delegate body's decision to ordain women. To read these leaders' call stories, visit [franconiaconference.org/call](http://franconiaconference.org/call). Dawn Ranck (Plains), Sandy Drescher-Lehman (Souderton), Susan Gingrich (Blooming Glen), Frieda Myers (Doylestown), praying for Joy Swartley Sawatzky (Plains)

Read the full stories at [franconiaconference.org/intersections](http://franconiaconference.org/intersections)

All photos in this issue by Andrew Huth.