

SOJOURNS

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The Newsletter of the Sonnenberg Mennonite Church

August 16, 2009

UPDATE FROM SUNDAY & SARA OBRI

We hope you have been enjoying the summer months!! Sunny and I have sure enjoyed the warmer weather and fun summer activities!

Things for Sunny and I continue to go well as we adjust to the states, new job, and soon to be classes for Sunny. After spending a fabulous two months in Kidron, we moved to Cleveland, mid-June and have really enjoyed our apartment and area we are living in! We chose an apartment that is commonly called an "up and down" type apartment, a house that the owners provide separate entrances to the 1st floor, 2nd floor, and usually 3rd floor which makes up 2 - 3 apartments all in one house. We like this set up because even though in our case, we occupy the 2nd and 3rd floor, it feels like we live in a cozy house all to ourselves...you just have to climb up one flight of stairs to get there! We have enjoyed getting to know our neighbor who lives below us, having a front and back yard (although small), our own garage, etc! The location is within walking distance to lots of good restaurants, a library, Cedar Lee theater, and we are also about a 15-20 minute walk to Cain's Park and many other parks too. I've never lived in a house where we can hear the ice cream man's luring music from our own home most afternoons! Sunny and I have enjoyed exploring the city either by car, foot, or bike!

I started working at the Cleveland Clinic (Main Campus) Emergency Department, June 22, and things are going well so far. I never thought I would work for a foundation so large that it has it's own zip code, but it's exciting all the same. I have really appreciated the nursing orientation program which has helped me get back into the demands and technology of this side of the world as well as my friendly and encouraging co-workers. The emergency department is made up of 46 beds and is usually full with the sickest of the sick patients. Since Cleveland Clinic is a specialty hospital in Cardiac and Stoke and many other things, instead of shipping very critical patients to another hospital, we are the ones who the critical patients are referred to. All that said though, it is not a trauma center, so most of the accidents, burns, gun shot wounds, etc go directly to another nearby hospital. Like any ED, we get a wide range of patients like those who are hanging on for dear life from a bleed in

their brain or an acute heart attack, all the way to someone who comes in complaining of a swollen pimple!! I'm always amazed sometimes who comes through the doors of an emergency department.

Sunny begins his Masters in Public Health (MPH) classes at Case Western Reserve starting in August. He has been studying hard for an entrance exam for Masters in Business Administration (MBA). He is hoping to add on an MBA to his MPH which means in 3 years time, he will have a dual masters. I'm glad we are both not adjusting to school and work at the same time!!

We have visited both Lee Heights and Friendship Mennonite Churches and are discerning which one to attend. It's nice having good options to choose from! We miss our Sonnenberg church family though, not to mention our friends and family in Nigeria and other part of the US.

Thanks again for all your prayers and encouragement throughout these last couple of months. Please keep in touch!

*Sara and Sunny Obri
3140 Meadowbrook Blvd
Cleveland Hts., OH 44118*

MENNONITE CHURCH USA CONVENTION 2009

Mennonite Church USA congregations,

The Mennonite Church USA Convention in Columbus was a time of celebration and challenge and I want to share some of both with you.

Many, many people have expressed affirmation and gratitude for the convention as a whole. The responses received by the listening committee are very positive. Special things happen when we are together as a people, and our time at the convention in Columbus was no exception. God's spirit was present with us!

Beyond this affirmation which was the overall response, I want to acknowledge some aspects of the convention experience, primarily related to some activities of advocacy groups, which were not what we had hoped.

As you know, in one remarkable assembly in 1995, delegates of both the Mennonite Church and General Conference and traditions meeting together adopted the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love and our vision statement, Vision: Healing & Hope.

—over—

NEWS & NOTES

During the final session of the Delegate Assembly in Columbus, delegates adopted a resolution calling the church to find ways to be in dialogue with those who do not agree with parts of our Confession of Faith.

While we were trying to model a more open posture to diverse perspectives during the Columbus assembly, there were certain occurrences at Columbus that were problematic, primarily related to the distribution of literature by persons associated with a group calling itself PinkMennos. PinkMennos is a group which is advocating for the full inclusion of lesbians and gays into the life and expression of our church.

Our convention staff did not authorize or approve this distribution of literature. When they learned about the unauthorized distribution of literature in the exhibit area, they repeatedly requested that this activity stop. These requests were followed for a time but then continued again later in the week.

Some may have also read the Associated Press story in their local or regional newspaper that reported a one-sided and sometimes inaccurate view of our attempts within Mennonite Church USA, its conferences and its congregations, to recognize and practice our commitment to be in dialogue when we disagree. Leaders of the Executive Board and its Executive Leadership staff do not accept the inaccurate account presented in the secular press.

The delegate body overwhelmingly (about 90 percent counted in a hand vote) passed a resolution that acknowledges the teaching of our Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective which states that "We believe God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life" (Article 19). The Columbus delegate statement also says, "We confess that we as a church (congregations, conferences, denomination) have rarely found a way to create a healthy, safe environment in which to have this dialogue, one that builds up the Body of Christ, and is respectful and honest about our differences."

In our attempts to work with advocacy groups from within our denomination prior to the convention, we tried to establish expected patterns of conduct, but we acknowledge that, despite our best efforts to "agree and disagree in love" in this setting, what actually happened did not always meet our expectations and our understandings were not honored.

We accept our part of the responsibility for some youth receiving unwelcomed and unauthorized literature, or other incidents that may have brought offense or confusion to you or others in your congregation.

May God continue to have mercy on us and God's Spirit guide us, which invites us all to extraordinary patience and perseverance with each other in the midst of sincere disagreement and contrasting interpretation of scripture.

*In Christian Love,
Jim Schrag, Executive Director
Mennonite Church USA*

DAVE RAMSEY'S FINANCIAL PEACE UNIVERSITY is being co-sponsored by MMA and Kidron Mennonite Church. During this life-changing course, you will learn: how to put together a monthly spending plan that really works, the process for getting out of debt for good, and how to set financial goals and communicate about money.

A free preview will be held this evening, August 16, 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary at Kidron Mennonite Church. Classes start Wednesday, August 26, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. and will run for 13 consecutive Wednesdays at the church. The cost is \$99.50 per family (includes a class kit and lifetime membership). You must be pre-registered for the classes. Contact Gene Lehman 330-683-3771 for more information or to pre-register. You may also pre-register for classes at the preview.

RELIEF CANNING dates for this fall are October 19-22, 2009. You can learn more about Relief Canning at a workshop which will be held on August 20-21, 2009 at Carlisle Inn in Walnut Creek. Call 330/893-9412 or 330/763-3963 to register for this workshop or find out additional information. You can also check out the website: www.reliefcanningkidron.org for additional information.

ANABAPTIST VISION & DISCIPLESHIP 2009 will be held at Hesston College October 30 to November 1 - "Learning the Bible in Lifegiving Ways: History, Hooks, and Heilsgeschichte." Join Marion Bontrager, Michele Hershberger, and special guest Ted Swartz (Ted and Company!) as they teach, laugh, and lead participants through Bib. Lit. as taught at Hesston College. Discover how the Bible's stories are connected to each other, and how God has worked in history to "solve the sin problem." Celebrate Hesston's centennial year! For additional information check out Hesston's website: www.hesston.edu

TODAY'S CHRISTIAN, July/August issue has arrived and is available on the counter by the library for \$3.99. Money can be placed in the box provided. This issue features people of faith and provides inspiration, encouragement, information and spiritual insights. Stories feature lifestyles and experiences that will help you navigate the rough waters of life and learn to live a life of significance. Pass it on to a neighbor when you are finished with it.

MAIN STREET CAFÉ: The Main Street Café is in need of a person to be in charge of Saturday morning breakfast. This would include scheduling volunteers, making sure the needed food is there and clean up. Volunteers are in place to do the cooking. If you are interested in helping the ministry in this way please contact Main Street Café by e-mail at: mainstreetcafedalton@juno.com. Or you may call 330-828-8855 and talk with Phil or Teresa.

*** Note that there was no Sojourns for Sunday, August 2.***
The next issue of Sojourns will be printed for Sunday, September 6, 2009. Please submit any items for this issue by Thursday, September 3, 9:00 a.m. Thanks!