

NOTES FROM THE BELOVED COMMUNITY

JULY 2009

A WORD FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT



conflict resolution. Ms. Peggy Dufresne, Temple University social work student who will be assisting in helping us minister more holistically to the families of the children and youth we are blessed to serve.

In addition we are excited about new partnering possibilities with youth from the opening of the new Fels High School right next door to us and with our own Philadelphia Mennonite High School students!

So how do we explain in mere words such a move of God that is occurring before our very eyes on a daily basis. What is so exciting is that this "move" is enabling us to expand and boldly proclaim that the "Kingdom of God is here!" Well my friends, I believe it is best explained that "we've come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord!"

~Bishop Leonard Dow

"We've come this far by faith Leaning on the Lord Trusting in His Holy word He never failed me yet Oh...Can't Turn Around"

This familiar African American Hymn comes to mind when I think of our journey thus far at Oxford Circle Mennonite Church and Oxford Circle Christian Community Development Assoc. As this newsletter goes to press, we are preparing to fully transition our offices and the OCMC congregation into our newly renovated space which is set for our inaugural worship service on August 23rd at 10:00 AM. Though some renovations will continue up through the end of September, we fully recognize that all the prayers, in kind gifts, financial contribution that have gotten us to this point to be housed in our new facility are nearly answered! Praise God!

However, there is more! It is indeed by God's grace that the end of this summer will

mark the first year in which we have been able to offer a "full calendar year" of educational support (via music, art, photograph, reading) to the children in our community (via the Summer Education Program and After-school) in addition to the support resources/service offered at our annual Oxford Circle Community Festival (Saturday, Sept 12th) and throughout the year. But hold on, because of your continued prayers and generous support and a lot of faith we are now positioned to increase our level of services and ministry in our Oxford Circle community. Beginning this fall in addition to our volunteers, we will have joining Anita Lyndaker-Studer our ED:

Ms. Jung Joo Park, an International Visitor Exchange Program (through a partnership with Mennonite Central Committee) who will be overseeing our After-School Program and helping provide programming in our local elementary school, Carnell, through her international experience in peace and

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

A WORD FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT 1

SHALOM IN ME MEANS PEACE WITH YOU 2

PROPERTY UPDATES 2

OXFORD FAMILY 3

UPCOMING DATES:

- **Community Festival and Open House: 9/12/09 from 12-4 @ 900 E. Howell Street, Philadelphia, PA 19149**
- **After School: Beginning 10/1/09, 3:00-5:30pm (T-TH)**
- **Friends of the Beloved Community Banquet: November 7, 2009 from 6:00-8:30 pm**

SHALOM IN ME MEANS PEACE WITH YOU

Matthew 7: 17-20: “Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.”

Our theme for the summer education program was “Shalom in me means peace with you,” with the image of a tree. If we have peace with God (Shalom in the root system), it changes our story and we can have Shalom with those around us (spreading out into the tree branches). Becoming like a tree rooted in God, with peace and wholeness within ourselves, allows us to produce the good fruit Jesus speaks of.

Applying this to summer education has not been hard. Kids are a lot like trees growing. They take care and patience. Starting with a solid sense of self and Shalom within is necessary to be able to then reach out with good fruit. This is a powerful reminder not only to the kids, but to

all of us who claim to follow Jesus. Matthew 18:3 And he said: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like **little children**, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” So often we forget this or only think of it in the context of sweet children quietly praying to God. But what about the yelling, tantrums, fights, attitude and self-centeredness? These are all parts of adults lives too, children just amplify many of our own underlying issues without trying to cover them up.

I believe that a portion of God is revealed in these children. We as a society could learn a lot if we spent more time with our children. Watching what makes them tick, their honesty, curiosity and willingness to forgive. And of course the abundance of patience people naturally must develop when working with kids.

Just the other day I was listening to a cd and the song “I saw a tree by the riverside” came on. It goes like this, “I saw a tree by the riverside one day as I

walked along, straight as an arrow and pointing to the sky, growing tall and strong. “How do you grow so tall and strong?” I said to the riverside tree. This is the song that my tree friend sang to me, “I’ve roots growing down to the water, I’ve got leaves growing up to the sunshine and the fruit that I bear is the sign of the life in me...”

I think this is exactly what Jesus means. I am continually reminded of how God calls us to love and to be known by our fruit. This does not just happen. We must be rooted in God’s Shalom in order to be able to grow without falling over. This rooting starts at a young age and never stops. Even when we’ve grown large, old and wise, we must continually seek out those young saplings just beginning to grow. To not only help with their growth, but also to learn from them. The Kingdom of God is revealed in these small trees. Praise the Lord.

~ Annali Smucker, Mission Inquiry Intern, Goshen Univ.



Annali Smucker teaching summer campers to practice being rooted as trees.

“If we have peace with God, it changes our story and we can have Shalom with those around us”

~ Annali Smucker

PROPERTY UPDATES

We are moving! August 23, 2009 will be our first church service in the new building. Its hard to know how to even begin to thank everyone that has contributed to making this possible both through financial donations and through donations of

time, materials, and labor. **Please come visit during our Community Festival and Open House, September 12 from 12:00-4:00pm.**

We still need to finish the work on the second floor

for Mennonite Central Committee (East Coast) offices and our offices.

To volunteer: Contact Dan at dumstead@mcc.org or at (610) 574-2959.



Summer camp reading day with Philadelphia Reads.

OXFORD FAMILY

My name is Courtney Walker and I am a third year student at Eastern Mennonite University, majoring in English. I am the president of Community of Praise Gospel Choir and Alpha and Omega Dancers for Christ, as well as the overseer for the Black Student Union. I am a Ministry Assistant with Campus Ministries, where it is my pleasure to provide Bible study and mentorship for the women on my floor. I am also serving as a Community Program Assistant for Multicultural Services where I coordinate and plan events on campus. Along with all these involvements, I am a struggling student trying to earn a degree. I thank God for all that I have been through and I know He is not through with me yet. I am a twenty year old woman with great leadership ability, a load of potential, and a story to tell, but I am limited because of finances and family hardships.

My first year of college was one of the worst years of my life. I stayed home in Philadelphia to help out my family with finances. I held three jobs, family, class and ministry responsibilities. All the while I

tried really hard to keep the family together, but on the inside I was broken.

For my second year, I transferred to EMU. The first semester was rough and lonely. I remember receiving call after call about the things going on at home. Friends blamed me for leaving them and dropped out of school, my cousin and aunt were in the hospital, my mother did not have enough money to cover the rent, my nephew was sick, and a friend of the family died. My church helped me pay my balance, which gave me clearance to return for second semester. During the summer I worked extremely hard as a preschool teacher, a retail manager, a baby sitter, and a hair stylist to earn the money to pay off my tuition balance. I made the money and was able return for my third year.

Back on campus, things were in full force. In the fall I applied for the Summer Cross-cultural Seminar to Paraguay-Mennonite World Conference Assembly. At the first group meeting in January, I knew I was in trouble. The summer is when I work to pay for school. What was I thinking trying to go to Paraguay when I cannot even afford a

decent pair of shoes, let alone tuition?

Along with a strong commitment to my family, I also have a deep love for my church. I am a member of a small urban church in Philadelphia, Oxford Circle Mennonite Church. It means so much to me to represent them at Mennonite World Conference Assembly and the Global Youth Summit in Paraguay. I want to be part of the multicultural worship and activities, and share in the vision for the future church with believers from all over the world: reaching across lines of age, race and cultural differences and talking about what it means to live as the hands and feet of Jesus. I will keep working hard, but I covet your prayers that I find the finances needed to return for my senior year at EMU.

Sincerely,
Courtney Walker

Courtney grew up in the OC community in our summer and after school programs and now she and her mother faithfully attend OCMC along with volunteering in both summer education and after school.



Campers visualizing their photos for class.

“What is so exciting is that this “move” is enabling us to expand and boldly proclaim that the “Kingdom of God is here!”

~ Leonard Dow



Middle school newsletter and photography volunteers.

**OXFORD CIRCLE CHRISTIAN
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
ASSOCIATION**

900 E. Howell Street

Philadelphia, PA 19149-3611

Phone: (267) 265-1709

E-mail: occcda@verizon.net

www.occcda.org

*To extend
healing and hope in the
Oxford Circle community,
believing that God's
purpose of reconciling
all people to Jesus
leads us to minister
on spiritual, physical,
social & economic
levels.*



**Check our website: www.occcda.org
and Facebook page for updates**

NOTES FROM THE BELOVED COMMUNITY

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

- Community Festival and Open House volunteers (September 12, 2009), contact Karen Jantzi @ drkaren55@gmail.com
- After School interns and volunteers—Beginning October 2009, contact Anita Lyndaker-Studer @ occcda@verizon.net or (267) 265-1709
- Professional grant writer to assist in writing grants for community programming
- Ceiling mount projector for worship in new sanctuary
- 10 computers, 2 printers, and software.
- Additional chairs for sanctuary and folding chairs for classrooms
- Work teams to finish work on 2nd floor for MCC and OCCDA (can use any skill level!) - contact Dan Umstead @ dumstead@mcc.org or (610) 574-2959.

**BOARD OF
DIRECTORS**

Officers:

President, Leonard Dow

Vice President, Hong Tran

Karen Jantzi, Secretary

Carlos Rodriguez, Treasurer

Members:

Janelle Junkin

Jennifer Leaman

Bianca Lani Prunes

Tiffany Shoup

Ron Sider

Ken Rush

George Young

OCMC church work nights—proving that everyone has something to offer!

