

Texas Pastor Helps with MDS Assessment



Photo by: Lee Lever

Pastor Lee Lever and MDS Volunteer Patrick Bresnan from the Austin Mennonite Church toured the area 30 miles east of Austin, Texas, devastated by wildfires to provide an assessment for Mennonite Disaster Service on September 16. Over 1500 homes were destroyed in the fire that burned over 34,000 acres before it could be contained.

Pastor Lee noted, “As we drove through the wooded neighborhoods it was eerie how several homes in an area could be totally incinerated and across the street another home looked unaffected. We were not wearing masks and learned that it was recommended. We could taste the ash after a while.”

At the Christian Ministerial Alliance in Bastrop they were told that eleven pastors had lost their homes in the fires. It was reported that the shelters were empty and that about 5,000 people had been assimilated into homes and hotels. Their report, with numerous contacts including the pastor of a Beachy Amish Church in the area, was forwarded to MDS.

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The Basket Never Ran Out



Grace Mennonite Church, Enid, Oklahoma, celebrated God’s abundant provision at the dedication service of their new church building on September 11. When they began the project five years ago, they made the unusual commitment to build debt free. It was a leap of faith for a congregation of fifty or so in worship to imagine building a \$650,000 facility. For the past three years, members have worked every Tuesday and Thursday evening from 6-9 PM and many Saturdays framing, running electrical, hanging dry wall, installing the ceiling, staining, varnishing, and painting. Somehow the building basket always had enough money for the next stage of the project. It reminded congregational members of Jesus pulling fish out of the basket at the feeding of the 5000. A painting of the bottomless basket by member Verna Regier now graces the wall of the fellowship hall to remind the congregation of God’s miracles of provision.

Surprise gifts provided an Estonia grand piano, \$30,000 for new furnishings, a video/sound system, new hymnals, every room décor, and landscaping. As the building was nearing completion, the congregation knew they faced one impossible hurdle – a \$200,000 paved parking lot required by city code. An anonymous donor challenged the congregation with a \$150,000 gift if the congregation would raise \$50,000. The challenge was announced on the next Sunday and \$33,000 was pledged or given. As members gathered for Tuesday evening work, a call came in to complete the challenge with a \$5,000 gift. The basket had again been filled with just-in-time gifts.

Clarence Rempel, Conference Minister preached the dedication day sermon. “When all who are willing give of their talent, time, and treasure to the Lord, there is more than enough for God’s work.” The biblical story of building the tabernacle in the wilderness from Exodus 35-36 served as a paradigm of such generous giving that Moses finally had to ask the people to stop giving.

The congregation is now refocusing on the people-building ministry of the church. As a harbinger of a new future, Pastor Dennis Treat received ten new members into the congregation on dedication Sunday, five by baptism in the new baptistry. The overflow audience of over 200 on Sunday afternoon utilized the closed circuit televisions in the chapel and in the fellowship hall in order to participate.



Photos by: Clarence Rempel

The new building which cost close to \$1.5 million is located in the northwest corner of Enid, an area of substantial new development.

McPherson Church Launches ReUse It Center

Care for the earth, care for the community, and the sharing of God’s good news are all motivations for First Mennonite Church in McPherson, Kansas, to launch what is now named the ReUse It Center. Volunteers from the church and the community are transforming a 6000 square foot warehouse at 1060 W. Kansas Ave. into retail space for the recycling of building supplies. A blessing service for the center is planned for Sunday, October 23, at 10:40 a.m.



LaVon Ediger, a retired builder from the congregation, had a dream of keeping unused building supplies out of landfills, making them available to the community, and using profit of sales to support Mennonite Central Committee and local ministries that serve people on the margins in McPherson. The congregation began consideration of the project in March 2010 and is now in the last stages of putting in shelving and stocking with donated materials.

Enthusiasm for the project has quickly spread to the community. On a recent Saturday six persons from the church were joined by six from the community for painting the interior. The men of Omega Workforce, who struggle with various addictions and who desire to change their lives, have volunteered many hours with workers from the church.

Pastor Kathy Neufeld Dunn says, “Our purpose is to help others, and in so doing to build relationships, share common experiences, and to share the Good News. We pray that we will be part of building God’s Kingdom.”



Photos by: LaVon Ediger