

# *The Shalom* MINISTRIES CHAMPION



Volume 3, Issue 1 January 2008

Your source for all the latest in Shalom Ministries News **Cham-pi-on n.** an ardent defender or supporter of a cause.

## **Why partner?**

Twenty-one years ago, in January 1987, the pastors and leaders representing the twelve Mennonite and General Conference Mennonite congregations in Southern California met in Upland, and ratified a new partnership. Assuming control of an already existing but then dormant nonprofit corporation, these leaders created a new nonprofit organization, Shalom Ministries, and formed the Council of Anabaptist Leaders (CAL) as a ministry of that new corporation. Under the leadership of then-Southwest Mennonite Conference Minister Allan Yoder, these leaders took up the call given by the Boards of the former Pacific District of the General Conference and the former Southwest Mennonite Conference to take responsibility for collective action as a network of churches in the second largest urban center in the nation.

Things have changed in twenty-one years! Twenty churches have been added to the partnership. The civil unrest in 1992 spurred a new emphasis on urban ministry in the Mennonite Church, and led to significant growth for Shalom Ministries. The regional conference bodies merged, and the Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference was created in 1994, driven in part by a need for Southern California churches to be united. In 2000, the PSMC invited Shalom Ministries, and its ministry arms, including the Center for Anabaptist Leadership (still CAL!), and later, Amahoro International, to replace the Evangelism and Church Development committee structure within the PSMC that was not functioning. To provide for transparency, and to give significant denominational input into the missional efforts of Shalom Ministries with the PSMC, a "Conference Mission Team" was created which included all the PSMC Conference Ministers, Shalom Ministries staff, Staff from Mennonite Mission Network and West Coast Mennonite Central Committee, and PSMC Board members who wished to attend.

At the same time, Shalom Ministries, and its Center for Anabaptist Leadership broadened its partnerships to include participation in an alliance with Design for Ministry™ -- a for profit consultancy, with offices in the greater Milwaukee and Philadelphia areas. Our relationship with Design for Ministry™ allows for increased opportunities to serve a more ecumenical community, and gives us access to specialized consultative resources on a fee-for-service basis.

Today, with ministries that reach with partners into cities around the world, Shalom Ministries, while still a small, lean operation, is focused on equipping leaders to empower the church to embrace God's global, urban mission.

Much has changed in twenty-one years, and 2008 promises to be a year of change as well, as we continue to strive to equip leaders in and for the church, who will have the skills to lead congregations to be God's missionary agencies in their city, and wherever God leads. God is using your continued prayer support and your encouragement to our team as a great source of strength to continue and continually redefine the work of equipping leaders for a global, urban church.

*Jeff Wright,  
President/COO*

## New vision set for historic East Coast conference

When John Ehst, pastor of the historic 800 member Franconia Mennonite Church, opened Franconia Conference's 2007 Assembly conferring sessions with a prayer, "that all of Jesus matters to everyone, everywhere" it was evidence that Jeff Wright's work had marked the life of this over 300 year old community. Pastor Ehst was quoting a line from the Franconia Conference Vision and Finance Plan recommendations, a document authored primarily by Jeff through his work as a consultant for the last 18 months through Design for Ministry. It was a sure sign that Jeff has imbued a bit of his own and Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference's DNA into this East Coast body.

Jeff was invited to serve as a consultant in a volatile and visionary process of aligning resources with vision in a conference community quite different from his own. Franconia Conference has centuries of history that include both struggle and flourish. The conference is comprised of 42 congregations stretching from Philadelphia to Vermont, a half dozen emerging congregations, 23 conference related ministries and both local and international mission partners that hold an estimated total of \$500 million in property and capital. The Conference is staffed by about 30 persons who work mostly from the office in Souderton, PA, outside of Philadelphia.

Jeff served alongside a group of 11 persons from Franconia Conference as a coach and guide through the listening and imagining process. The key issues for the document included the use of real estate as well as a process for opening the conference system toward accountability and missionality. The recommendations were affirmed by the Conference's delegate body at the annual assembly on November 10, 2007, at Telford, PA, after months of deliberation, listening and constructing. The process included multiple opportunities for feedback and reshaping that spanned Conference communities.

Franconia Mennonite Conference and Pacific Southwest Conference work together regularly in a variety of areas sharing ideas bi-coastally as regional bodies of Mennonite Church USA, including emerging initiatives in the U.K., conversations with the Emergent Church movement and collaborative work within Indonesian-speaking congregations in Southern California and the Philadelphia area. The process opened further cross-fertilization possibilities. We've appreciated Jeff's diligence, patience, focus and hope in the work and in building connections as we together seek to equip, empower and embrace God's mission.

*Steve Kriss,*  
*Director of Communication and Leadership Cultivation,*  
*Franconia Conference*  
[skriss@franconiaconference.org](mailto:skriss@franconiaconference.org),

## Speaking Plainly

### *An Iran Study Group*

“Why do I speak to you at all!” Jesus yells at the Judean leaders (John 8:25). He has tried to speak to them in metaphor and parable, but they cannot hear. So he tries to speak to them plainly, yet they are still deaf to his message. Although he desperately wants to reach them, he has to face the reality that the truth he speaks is very difficult for people of power and privilege to comprehend.

The masses of the common poor are drawn to his wisdom, but they do not immediately understand it either. Sometimes he has to explain it to them, as with the parable of the sower (Mark 4:1-20, Matthew 13:1-23). In John 16:29, his disciples say to him, “Now you are speaking plainly.” They begin to understand.

Truth, the kind that changes people and heals the world, cannot usually be spoken plainly because it sounds, in this world, like insanity. A world steeped in falsehoods cannot tolerate plainly spoken truth. Truth has to sneak in through parables and riddles. It has to gain entry through a back door.

But there comes a time when it must be spoken plainly. When Jesus spoke plainly to the authorities, he was accused of being demon-possessed (John 8:48) and was finally crucified.

Today we live in similar world where truth often sounds insane. A world steeped in the falsehoods of war and injustice rejects the Word of Truth. Sometimes we must speak in parable and metaphor, as we did last year in the Palm Sunday Peace Parade. Since Palm Sunday coincided with April Fools Day last year, the parade became a performance of absurdist theater, contrasting the “foolishness of God’s wisdom” with the wisdom of the world that leads to war and misery. The theme was “Fools for Christ.”

This year we will try to speak plainly. We are currently forming an “Iran Study Group” that will examine the Bush administration’s case for war against Iran. The findings will be publicly presented to various authorities who represent us in government. We do not know what they will do with the information, but our job is to be faithful to the truth and to continue to speak it, whether in parable or plainly. And this we will do.

*Bert Newton*  
*Director of Peace Center*  
*Shalom Ministries*

### School for Urban Mission 2008 course offering

**Kingdom of God in the City** seeks to engage urban practitioners in their role as God’s agent for missional transformation in the city by exploring human relationships from multifaceted experiences. Special consideration will be given to the ethics of the Kingdom of God, exploring Christian responses to urban problems and tools for confronting the powers of the city.

Drawing on Biblical, historical, and applied sources, students who complete the course should be able:

To clearly articulate an ethic of the Kingdom of God for the city.

To critically reflect on what a Christian response to urban problems might look like in the city.

Be better equipped to confront the powers in the city.

**Instructor** Valentina Satvedi

**First class** will meet February 9, 2008

**Course Sessions** will take place from **9 am to 1 pm** on the campus of William Carey International University located at 1539 East Howard Street, Pasadena CA 91104.

To **register** for this course please contact our office at (626)727-8100 or send an email to [urban.anabaptist@gmail.com](mailto:urban.anabaptist@gmail.com)

## ***Annual Winter Assembly Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference***

We would like to extend a warm welcome to you to attend the *Annual Winter Assembly of the Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference*. The event will take place on Friday and Saturday, February 1-2, 2008, and will be co-hosted by Family Mennonite Church and Royal Dominion Family Chapel located respectively on 6520 and 6505 S, Normandie Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90044.

The theme for assembly this year, based on Philippians 3:12-14, is "*Pressing on Toward the Goal.*" Keynote Speakers include David Greiser from Hesston College, Pastor Virgo Handojo from Jemaat Kristen Indonesia Anugerah, and Pastor Steve Penner from First Mennonite Church of Reedley. Following the assembly, the Concert for the Nations will take place coordinated by Brother George Makinto.

For more information and to register, visit  
[www.pacificsouthwest.org/Assembly](http://www.pacificsouthwest.org/Assembly)

## **Peace Out: The Shalom Ministries Champion Signs Off**

The Shalom Ministries Champion is a monthly venue for sharing the good news about Shalom Ministries. You are invited to submit articles for consideration to the editor. Articles should be sent no later than the 10th of the month for possible publication in the next month's newsletter. We look forward to hearing from you and wish you and yours peace. Send your submissions via email to [urban.anabaptist@gmail.com](mailto:urban.anabaptist@gmail.com).

Shalom Champions is published by  
Shalom Ministries Inc.  
Box CAL 1539 E Howard Street  
Pasadena CA 91104

Valentina Satvedi - Editor  
Jeff Wright - Development