



Intersections

Stories from Franconia Mennonite Conference



Community Gardens

“When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not . . . gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and for the alien . . .” (Leviticus 23:22) The landowner Boaz even exceeded that counsel when he instructed his reapers to deliberately drop some extra grain so that a young Moabite widow could easily gather. (See Ruth 2)

While these older patterns for providing for the poor and stranger may seem impractical in the age of corporate agriculture, some new possibilities have emerged. Across Franconia Conference, congregations are finding ways to provide food for people with limited resources.

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Find more at www.franconiaconference.org

Editorial

Whether we're reading about the Garden of Eden or the apostle Paul's illustrations throughout his letters to other believers, we are constantly reminded of how God's work in, with, and through us is much like gardening.

Let me be clear that any planting that goes beyond a small pot and a few seeds begins to stretch my abilities! Having said that, here are some basic but helpful gardening principles that speak to me.

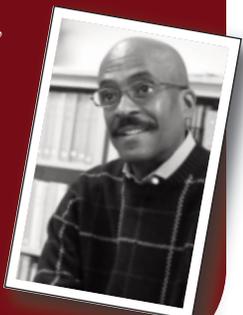
First, it is important to keep in mind that God is always involved. Gardening is an example of a need for cooperation between sun and rain or one that plants and one that waters. I am reminded that whatever effort I expend in cooperation with God is a partnership and we are not alone in our ministry.

Secondly, there is often a very clear division of labor or effort. God in some way says, "This is what I have done, am doing, or will do" and then will show us what is our responsibility. When God says to plant and that He will prune but I try to reverse the roles, it becomes a problem. It's important that we tend to our task and let God tend to His.

At the end of the day, God owns it all. The garden, the plant, and all that is produced belong to Him. If we are able to keep these simple thoughts in perspective, we know that something or someone will grow.

May you bear fruit as you participate in God's work!

— *Ertell Whigham,*
Executive Minister



Meet Kirby King

Kirby was licensed in October as Minister of Adult Formation at Souderton (Pa.) Mennonite Church. He is a teacher at Christopher Dock Mennonite High School and is married and has two daughters.

Get to know Kirby King and other new leaders in Franconia Conference by reading their stories on our website: franconiaconference.org/call.



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Some years ago the Salford congregation (Harleysville, Pa) acquired some land next to its existing property. Only so much land was needed for parking lots, cemetery, and a ball field. So the idea emerged to use some of the land for a garden.

Now instead of grass there are tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, beans, eggplant, and other vegetables. Those who work in the garden—planting, weeding—are welcome to gather from the harvest of vegetables.

But the garden has produced greatly so that bushel upon bushel of vegetables has been distributed to such social service agencies as Manna on Main Street and Liberty Ministries. Produce has been shared with the Nueva Vida Norristown New Life congregation for distribution.

The Bally (Pa.) congregation offers a variation on the Community Garden concept. Small gardening plots are offered to congregational members and persons in the community for gardening. Each person/family can plant what they wish and harvest the produce for their use.

But well-tended gardens usually produce more than a family needs. The abundance is gathered and taken to a social service agency in nearby Pennsburg for distribution. Accompanying some of the vegetables are recipes to guide in the preparation of the vegetable.

A year ago a neighbor to the Doylestown (Pa.) congregation requested use of a part of the congregation's land for a community garden. Sandy Ridge Community Garden emerged in 2011 and 90% of the produce went to Bucks County food banks—more than 950 pounds.

The project is well organized with committees designated to design plantings, coordinate volunteers, an outreach and fundraising committee, and one for communication. Leaders at Doylestown see the garden project as a setting for significant interaction with the community and a new dimension of the congregation's mission.

Likely Boaz would be pleased.

— *James Longacre, Bally*

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Franconia Conference
569 Yoder Road, Harleysville, PA

Stephen Kriss,
Director of Communication
Emily Ralph, Managing Editor

Dawn Ranck Design
Miller Proofreading



@franconiamc
#fmclife



FranconiaMC



Sunday Service, at 10 a.m. Photo by Tjhing Yong.

Prayer empowers church plant

In February Georgia Praise Center celebrated its 1st anniversary. By the grace of God, the church continues to fulfill God's calling to be a blessing in Atlanta.

This past year has been a challenge because of changes in Georgia's immigration law. Some of our members have moved and others were deported. During these times we have completely surrendered ourselves to God and kept praying earnestly for grace and mercy. God answers our prayers!

When the law was first enacted, we had to postpone our weekly midnight service. Now we have our midnight service every Wednesday in Atlanta

and on Mondays in Jonesboro, near Atlanta-Hartsfield Airport. We also have church services twice a month in Macon, two hours away from Atlanta. We believe there is power when God's people pray together!

Our congregations have been joyfully sharing the Gospel and bringing people to the Lord Jesus! Our numbers keep growing. We are also grateful that we can praise the Lord with our new music team.

Georgia Praise Center would like to thank you for all your precious prayers and support. May God continue to bless us and our ministries. To God's almighty name be the glory.

— *Yunus Perkasa, Georgia Praise Center*

You're never too old to play!

Residents at Dock Woods, one of the Living Branches communities, were pleased to host the third annual Montgomery County Centenarian Celebration on May 16. May is Older Americans' Month and the event was held in honor of all those in Montgomery County who are at least a hundred years old.

The day included lunch, a guest appearance from George Burns, musical acts ranging from the Children's Center Choir to the Dock Woods Players, and greetings from several local elected officials. A sense of fun enveloped the entire celebration, in part because the theme of the event was, "You're Never Too Old To Play." Centenarians left the event with a colorful beach bucket full of pinwheels, Cracker Jacks, peg boards, and other tokens of childhood games.

There were 56 Centenarians in attendance, including seven from the Living Branches communities of Dock Meadows, Souderton Mennonite Homes, and Dock Woods. This is the second year that Dock Woods has hosted the event, and the residents really appreciate the opportunity to share the community with guests from Montgomery County. Residents are already planning to welcome them back next year.

— *Alex Metricarti, Living Branches*



Living Branches centenarians: Standing (L to R): Anna Alderfer, F. Ruth Hunsberger, Arthur Barnett, Elizabeth Sinclair. Seated (L to R): Nellie Sellers, Ruth Yothers, Clarence Musselman. Photo by Alex Metricarti

Conference Related Ministries (CRMs) are organizations that collaborate with Franconia Conference and serve congregations and neighborhoods in the name of Jesus. To see a full list of CRMs, head to franconiaconference.org/directory.

Conference Financial Update

3 months (February-April)

Operating Budget	Actual	Budget	Last Year
REVENUE			
Congregational contrib.	\$43,899	\$79,574	\$88,233
<i>All Other Sources</i>	\$100,640	\$78,441	\$74,396
Total Revenue (+)	\$144,539	\$158,015	\$162,629
EXPENSES			
Ministries/Programs	\$145,406	\$135,111	\$149,171
Support Services	\$59,813	\$60,648	\$56,008
Total Expenses (-)	\$205,219	\$195,759	\$205,179
Line of Credit Payment	\$6,250	\$6,250	\$6,250
NET	(\$66,930)	\$(43,994)	\$(48,800)



Pastor Aldo Siahaan, Philadelphia Praise Center, took to the streets to find out what Philadelphians think of Easter.



Sharon Shaw, the leader of Doylestown's Community Garden, and KrisAnne Swartley, minister on the church's missional team, pose at the photo booth at the Garden celebration on April 29.



Pastor Dawn Ranck presents Ava Fletcher with a check as the Grand Prize winner of Plains' mural contest. Photo by Heather Gingrich.

Read the full stories at franconiaconference.org/intersections