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PRESS RELEASE

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Healthcare Gathering Considers Healthy Communities Worldwide

Healthcare workers from around the world will gather immediately prior to Menonite World Conference Assembly for inspiration, learning, fellowship, and networking in a special event sponsored by Menonite Healthcare Fellowship (MHF).

The MHF Annual Gathering 2015 will be held July 19-21, 2015, in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania using the theme "Walking Together for Healthy Communities." Plenary presentations include a performance by Ted & Company entitled "The Jesus Stories," a challenge by Christian community-builder Shane Claiborne to "Another Way of Doing Life," and a testimony from Indian physician, Ann Thyle on her calling to serve the poor.

In order to facilitate the participation of doctors, nurses, dieticians, therapists, chaplains, mental health workers, and many other healthcare workers and their families from around the world, this year's Annual Gathering will begin on Sunday evening, July 19, at the Sheraton Harrisburg Hershey Hotel. The event concludes with a communion service and noon meal on Tuesday, July 21, just in time for participants to check in for the larger global Assembly of Menonites which begins late Tuesday afternoon.

The closing communion service will feature David Gullman, a chaplain to persons with disabilities, their families, and caregivers in Harrisonburg, Virginia. He will reflect on the theme: "Discovering Healthy Communities through the Broken Body."

Worship is an integral part of the Annual Gathering. Each of the four plenary sessions will begin with a time of worship, including plenty of singing, led by Nan S. Garber and Jane Hooper Peifer. In addition, a hymnsing will be held on Monday evening following the plenary session.

A full day of activities on Monday, July 20, will also feature multiple workshops on a variety of international themes. Many workshops will feature presenters who have lived and worked in Latin America, Africa, or Asia. Among the workshops are the following:

- Out of her background as a nurse, mission leader, community developer, educator, and spiritual director in both Guatemala and the U.S., Linda E. Witmer will share ideas and insights on "Engaging Congregations in Health Ministries."

- Bwire Chirangi, chief medical officer at Shirati DMK Hospital in Tanzania will discuss a recent study in which he participated and co-authored an article on “Reducing Maternal Mortality in Rural Tanzania.”
- Catherine Thomasson, MD, Executive Director of Physicians for Social Responsibility, will discuss climate change as it relates to global health.
- Maurice Odhiambo Anyanga will focus on the contribution of the Kenya Mennonite Church to the challenging and complex fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS.
- J. Fred Kauffman & Curtis W. Book will look at gun violence as a public health problem in the United States that also has international dimensions.

Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship is extending an invitation to all healthcare workers, especially those already planning to attend the Mennonite World Conference Assembly to come early and take advantage of this “pre-meeting.” Persons from the medical and mental health professions as well as therapists, dieticians, chaplains, and others are warmly welcomed. Grants are available for students, volunteers, and those from outside of U.S. and Canada.

The Annual Gathering is a family-friendly event with childcare and a Children and Youth Program available for ages 0-18. A team of persons from Slate Hill Mennonite Church led by Rachael Zimmerman will coordinate children and youth activities.

Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship (MHF) is an interdisciplinary community of Anabaptist health professionals which seeks to nurture the integration of faith and practice, to provide opportunities for dialogue on health related issues, and to address specific needs through education, advocacy, and service. MHF was formed in June 2011 when Mennonite Medical Association (MMA) and Mennonite Nurses Association (MNA) joined to form a new organization open to all Anabaptist healthcare professionals.

In addition to the Annual Gathering, MHF publishes the quarterly online *Mennonite Health Journal*, conducts regional meetings in various parts of the country, and sponsors scholarships for graduate students in healthcare fields to do a 4-8 week term of study and service in overseas mission settings. Paul D. Leichty has been Executive Director of the organization since September 2011, working from an office in Goshen, Indiana.

Since its formation in 2011, MHF has held Annual Gatherings at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center in Pennsylvania and Goshen College in Indiana. The 2014 Gathering at Laurelville featured the theme “Faith at Work: Practicing our Profession.”

For more information about MHF and Annual Gathering 2015, go to www.mennohealth/gathering, email info@mennohealth.org, or call toll-free to 1-888-406-3643.