

The Mennonite

Blessed to blaze new trails



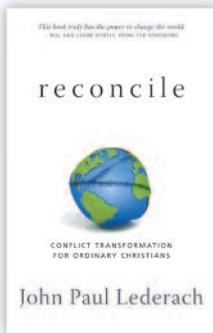
*Inventor
Eldon Hostetter*

September 2014

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- INSIDE:
- World War I and the global church
 - Creativity as holy work
 - Do women cause the church anxiety?
 - Killing print is more myopic thinking
 - Welcome the stranger

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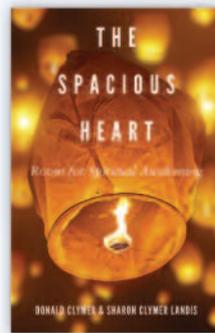
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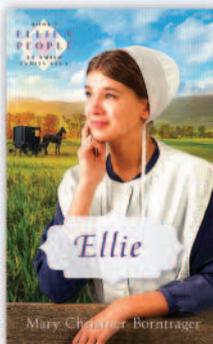
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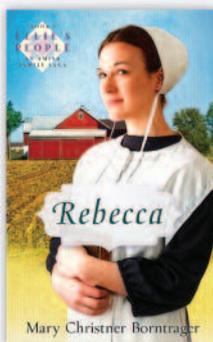
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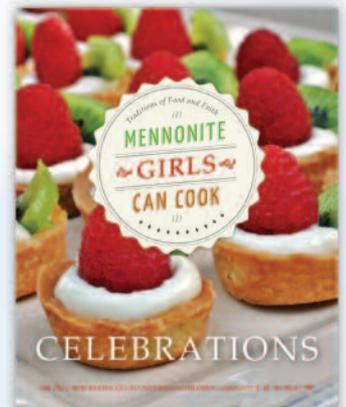
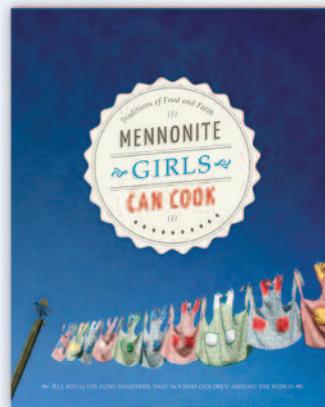
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ON THE COVER: Photos provided by Norm Kauffmann

The Mennonite is the publication of Mennonite Church USA, which established three purposes for the magazine: to provide a forum for the voices within the denomination, to promote the ministries of Mennonite Church USA and to offer an editorial voice distinct from but collaborative with other leadership voices. *The Mennonite* (ISSN 1522-7766) is published on the first Tuesday of each month by the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Periodicals postage paid at Elkhart, IN 46517 and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates for one year: \$46 to U.S. addresses and \$54 USD to Canadian addresses. Group rates available. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite*, or the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

POSTMASTER send address corrections to:
3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4
Elkhart, IN 46517

STAFF

Interim editor: Anna Groff
annag@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Gordon Houser
gordonh@themennonite.org
Advertising, subscriptions: Rebecca Helmuth
rebecca@themennonite.org
Bookkeeper: Celina Romero
Editorial assistant: Nora Miller
Design: Mary Jo Veurink
Editor emeritus: Everett J. Thomas

WEBSITE www.themennonite.org

OFFICES

3145 Benham Ave.
Suite 4
Elkhart, IN 46517
phone: 800-790-2498
fax: 316-283-0454

718 N. Main St.
Newton, KS 67114-1703
phone: 866-866-1703
fax: 316-283-0454

5445 N Georgia Dr.
Tucson, AZ 85704
phone: 717-606-6853
fax: 316-283-0454



LETTERS

This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite*, 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Most influential ideas

Instead of fooling around with a “most influential Mennonites” survey (June) that smacks of the “who is the greatest” question found in Matthew 18, let’s affirm the priesthood of all believers in which everyone is contributing.

Wouldn’t it be more beneficial to discern what’s motivating Mennonite Church USA? Might *The Mennonite* challenge its readers to elaborate the most influential ideas with which the church is grappling today?

Dare we start with “the giant triplets of racism, materialism and militarism” that our recently deceased brother Vincent Harding identified in Martin Luther King’s 1967 Riverside Church speech?

And what might it mean when we realize that, while living in the belly of the militarized empire, some ideas that have historically shaped the church, such as conscientious objection to war, don’t currently hold sway?—*H.A. Penner, Lancaster, Pa.*

Tears of joy and sadness

Central District Conference and the Executive Board met at identical times the weekend of June 26-28. Tears accompanied both meetings. At Central District Conference there were tears of joy as individuals from previously excluded congregations expressed their joy at belonging to a conference that unconditionally accepted their gifts and

their presence. These testimonies warmed the hearts of those in the audience. These tears of joy become tears of frustration and sadness and the warmed hearts grew chilled at reading of the continued exclusion and rejection signaled by the report of the Executive Board.—*J. Denny Weaver, Madison, Wis.*

Thank you to those who are hurt

I have been trying to imagine how I would feel if I were an LGBT person reading and hearing all the discussion going on about “me” in the Mennonite church. I am created in the image of God, like everyone else, and did not choose my sexual orientation. Yet there is all this intense discussion going on as to whether I am worthy to be a part of the church. There is a question whether or not my gifts may be used in ministry, whether or not I can get married to the love of my life, whether or not I should be allowed to teach in a church institution or if perhaps I may influence some young person to become gay.

To those of you who have been hurt by the church because of who you are and are still seeking a place at the table, I say, “Thank you.” To the church leaders who have been willing to put their jobs in jeopardy by speaking and acting on behalf of those who are given no voice in this current discussion, I say, “Thank you.” And to all of you who may disagree with me but are still willing to be a part of my church family, I say, “Thank you.” Let’s listen to each other and stay together.—*Ruby Lehman, Harrisonburg, Va.*

A moral slippery slope

Some Mennonites are sliding down a slippery moral slope on the issue of homosexuality. It is a movement from some concern for morality to little or no concern about morality. It is a movement from believing that there is no moral issue in same-sex people living in monogamous, covenanted relationships to accepting and believing the same about people in the LGBT move-

ment. What is the evidence? One example is the report in the January issue (“Gathering on LGBT Issues in Lancaster, Pa.”).

Only God is the judge in each situation. However, if we profess to take the New Testament seriously, then we must take seriously passages such as Mark 7:20-23 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

Where is the evidence that the LGBT movement (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) has a concern for biblical morality? Willard Swartley, in his excellent but seemingly forgotten book, *Homosexuality: Biblical Interpretation and Moral Discernment*, shows that the sexual revolution had roots in the Woodstock event, which involved free sex and drugs. What has followed is a movement whose only moral criteria is love, defined as what pleases self and does not violate another. To get an update on the movement, just google LGBT and then each word individually. You will find much about sexual encounters and nothing about morality. This movement from accepting people in a covenanted relationship to generally accepting people in the LGBT movement shows a sliding from some concern for morality to little or no concern about morality. —*John R. Martin, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Planting of tobacco not faithful

I am new to the Lancaster, Pa., area and new to Christianity, looking for a church home. I am drawn to the beautiful countryside and simple life of the Mennonite community. However, I was utterly shocked by the sight of young children planting tobacco in the fields in the surrounding area and wondered, Can this church who serves a loving God be so ignorant? According to a Mennonite website, “We believe that we can live life simply and in service to others as a witness to God’s love for the world. ... We believe that the church is called to proclaim and to be a sign of the kingdom of God. Christ has commissioned the church to be his witnesses, making disciples of all nations, baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all things he has commanded.” For those who separate themselves in purity, I cannot stress how incongruous is the message of faith and love for fellow man with the practice of planting tobacco. “A filthy habit by its use results in physical injury and is scripturally inconsistent. The cultivation of and its use should be discouraged by both precept and example. Its use shall disqualify any member from ordination. No one shall be received into church membership who does not do all in his

power to discontinue its use” (*Mennonite News*, 1870). This is a message that must be broadcast over and over until it sinks into all generations, as the

Mennonite community that labors to be set apart from sin appears to be illiterate profiteers.—*T.S. Martin III, Sinking Spring, Pa.*

We read the Bible differently

The answer to the debate about welcoming people from the LGBT community into the church cannot be resolved until we answer the question about how we read the Bible. For example, many people like to quote Leviticus 18:22, “Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.” This, they say, is grounds to keep LGBT people from becoming members of the church.

But on the question of divorce and remarriage, people read the Bible through a different set of lenses. Romans 7:33 says, “So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress.” Divorce and remarriage is a nonissue in the church today because we read the Bible differently than we did 30-40 years ago.

Until recently Blue Laws in Penn-
(Continued on page 54)

IN THIS ISSUE

The story of Eldon Hostetler graces our cover this month (page 12). Hostetler, born in 1922, left the Amish church to become an influential agricultural inventor and entrepreneur.

Marty Lehman, former associate executive director for churchwide operation of Mennonite Church USA, proposed the story of Eldon to our staff earlier this year. The email from Lehman caught our eye when she wrote that Hostetler has over 65 patents. Hostetler represents a member of the business community whose faithfulness and dedication bless the church in various ways.

Also in the feature section, two articles address community in the church. In the first piece (page 17), Paul Born describes community as an investment that “takes time and effort.” We do not necessarily experience the benefits of community immediately, and they may arise in unexpected ways. In the second piece (page 28), Earl Sears relates community and poverty. “People who are not wealthy are often aware of their dependence on each other,” he writes.

This summer, many of us have followed the news of the thousands of Central American children taken into custody after crossing into the United

States. Becky Helmuth, who manages our advertising and subscriptions, addresses this in her first editorial for *The Mennonite*. Helmuth attends North Goshen (Ind.) Mennonite Church, which is home to many South and Central American immigrants, some of whom are documented and some of whom are not.

I want to thank Gordon Houser and Becky for their hard work while I took maternity leave last month.

Finally, we are on track for our new website, which will launch this fall. We look forward to the new design, bloggers and capabilities for engagement.—*Editor*

Urban Anabaptist Ministry Symposium planned for Oct. 2-4

ELKHART, Ind.—Urban leaders and ministry experts will meet in Philadelphia Oct. 2-4 for the Urban Anabaptist Ministry Symposium.

“Beyond Ideas: Practical Ministry That Works” will be the theme of the event, which will take place at The Berean Institute. Sponsors are Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) East Coast.

“Beyond Ideas” will bring together community ministry professionals from Philadelphia, New York City, Washington, Hampton, Va., and the surrounding areas.

“This is not just classroom theory,” says event co-planner Glen Alexander Guyton, chief operating officer for Mennonite Church USA. “This gathering will highlight the years of experience and the best practices of practical ministry application of people who are in the heart of urban communities.”

“This is a grassroots gathering,” adds event co-planner Chantelle Todman Moore, Philadelphia Program Coordinator for MCC East Coast. “When asked how Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite Church USA could be a resource to and strengthen the local Anabaptist community, people named a desire for spaces where urban Anabaptist leaders could hear from each other and learn about the work that was happening in other neighborhoods or cities.”

Registration costs \$50 (includes breakfast and lunch). For the symposium schedule and to register, visit mcc.org/get-involved/events/urban-anabaptist-ministry-symposium.—*Mennonite Church USA*

Three churches leave Virginia Conference

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va.—Three congregations formally left Virginia Mennonite Conference July 25 when delegates at the annual assembly passed motions to release them.

New Beginnings Church in Har-



Bethel nursing students exceed national average

Paulette Wollenhaupt, assistant professor of nursing at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., instructs a class of nursing students on the proper way to give an injection. For the third year in a row, Bethel College nursing graduates exceeded the national average pass rate for the licensure examination for registered nurses.—*Bethel College*

risonburg, Stuarts Draft Mennonite Church and Lambert Mennonite Church in Wymer, W.Va., requested their release as a result of recent actions within Mennonite Church USA regarding sexuality.

Eastern Mennonite University’s listening process on hiring people in same-sex relationships and the licensing of Theda Good, a lesbian pastor, in Mountain States Mennonite Conference sparked conversations in Virginia Conference this spring.

Conference minister Clyde Kratz called the losses “painful and disappointing.”—*Mennonite World Review*

Western District sends survey on sexuality and polity to churches

NORTH NEWTON, Kan.—Western District Conference asked member congregations to participate in a 20-question online survey as the first step in a conference-wide conversation responding to a resolution by Rainbow Mennonite Church in Kansas City, Kan., asking for greater latitude for

churches and pastors to determine their pastoral response to people in same sex relationships.

The resolution came to the annual WDC assembly July 4-6 in Waxahachie, Texas. Over the next year, a task force will study and seek input on issues of sexuality and church polity and give counsel to the district’s Executive Board.—*WDC*

Ohio Conference resolution asking for discipline does not pass

MILLERSBURG, Ohio—An Ohio Conference resolution asking Mennonite Church USA to remove Mountain States Mennonite Conference from membership if it does not reverse its decision to license a lesbian minister did not pass Aug. 9 at a special delegate session.

The resolution needed two-thirds approval to pass, and it received 61.7 percent. The vote was 163-101 in favor of the resolution.

Delegates held three votes in an effort to pass a resolution of some sort re-

lated to the decision of Mountain States to license Theda Good, a pastor at First Mennonite Church in Denver. Good is in a committed same-sex relationship.

Although none of the resolutions passed, Ohio Conference minister Tom Kauffman said he saw thoughtful conversation throughout the day of round table discussions and open floor question-and-answer sessions at Martins Creek Mennonite Church.

Ohio Conference has 76 congregations and 11,098 members.—*Mennonite World Review*

CPT calls for support of refugees in Kurdistan

IRAQ—Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT)'s Iraqi Kurdistan team has partnered with WADI, an Iraqi-German organization, on several occasions in its work to end violence against women, including honor killings and female genital mutilation.

Sarah Gingrich



Scavenger hunt

Brothers Sayban (left) and Vincynt Felmler of Reading, Pa., check out the scavenger hunt on their Global Fair maps. Children's activities, international foods, ethnic costumes to try on and more were part of Eastern Mennonite Missions' annual event on July 12 at the Hans Herr House and Museum.—*EMM*

Because of the overwhelming humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Iraqi-Kurdistan, WADI is focusing on helping refugees. This time it is mainly Yazidis and Christians. Hundreds of thousands of them are seeking refuge in the Iraqi Kurdish Region. They narrowly escaped those from the Islamic State.

After the Syrian refugees (approximately 225,000) and then the wave of Internally Displaced Persons, this new wave of refugees is an immense challenge for the region, which has a population of about 5 million and is now accommodating over 1 million refugees.

Local people are willing to help and share, but the supply situation is tense. With temperatures rising to almost 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit), there is a lack of the most basic supplies, especially food, medicine, clothes, tents and lodging. The municipal infrastructure is overloaded, and the regional government and UN Refugee Agency are overwhelmed by the sheer number of refugees.

WADI, in cooperation with several local partners and activists, is providing relief on the ground. Each donation will directly benefit the people in distress. Go to www.cpt.org.—*CPT*

Ron Sawatsky, Mennonite Church Canada leader, dies at 64

WATERLOO, Ontario—Ron Sawatsky, a key leader in the transition from the Conference of Mennonites in Canada (CMC) to Mennonite Church Canada, died June 28 in Warrington, Pa.



He became moderator of CMC in 1997 and continued in that role through the transition to MC Canada, which he served as moderator until 2002.

He earned a doctorate in religious studies from the University of Toronto in 1986 and served with Mennonite Central Committee in Akron, Pa. In

1999, he became chief executive officer of Rockhill Mennonite Community in Sellersville, Pa., and served until December 2012.—*Canadian Mennonite*

Collaborative MBA kicks off at Bluffton University

BLUFFTON, Ohio—The first cohort of The Collaborative MBA among Bluffton University, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., and Goshen (Ind.) College spent the week at Bluffton for a start-of-the-semester residency Aug. 11-15.

The first cohort of 13 students participated in an orientation to the program, interacted with their professors through video conferencing and finished a class on "Leadership for the Common Good" with George Lehman, the Howard Raid professor of business at Bluffton, chair of its business studies division and director of graduate programs in business.

The Collaborative MBA offers most of its courses through interactive video conferencing and projects in which students talk with their professors either via technology or in person. The curriculum is based on the concept of "leadership for the common good," emphasizing six values—spirituality, community, leading as service, justice, sustainability and global citizenship.

—*Bluffton University*

Somalia president speaks to EMU leaders

HARRISONBURG, Va.—Somalia President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud topped off attendance at the historic U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit hosted by President Obama with a visit to Harrisonburg on Aug. 7, where he renewed 13-year-old ties with Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) and its Center for Justice and Peacebuilding.

Mohamud told EMU leaders: "I'd like to officially request your help for Somalia with the tools and techniques you have here, which are very life-saving tools—not [only] life-saving at the individual level but life-saving at a nation level."—*EMU*

The beauty of funerals



Cyneatha Millsaps

is pastor of Community Mennonite Church in Markham, Ill.

One question I always hear people pondering is, Why do we only come together when someone dies?

I have often wondered this myself, because it is during funeral gatherings that I hear the best stories of family life, the roar of laughter long overdue and the promises to stay in touch. Family and friends travel from far and wide to show respect and their love for the deceased as well as the grieving family. As pastor I have to admit the best part of my job is funerals. You get to see people at their best and worse. You get to see them for who they really are. You find out more in a couple of days about a family and how they take care of one another (or not). I often say to people, “Your funeral will speak more about your life than your life ever did.”

See, once we leave this place, the true essence of our being is released into the atmosphere and it cannot be hidden or covered any longer. Even if one person tries to keep your secrets, someone else will let the secrets out, for their own personal release. Death is not a bad thing. It gives us permission to “let go.” That release, that “letting go,” frees the person who is dying but also those around them. So once we let go, we are free to share our loved one and ourselves openly.

Funerals have some of the best family stories. Funny, gut-busting laughter can be heard throughout the days leading up to and shortly after the funeral. Tears provide comfort from friends and family who have not been able to show their affection. A high school friend, travels from another state, simply to give you a hug and let you know you are in their thoughts. Fear is often suppressed by the presence and promises of family and friends. A son reminds his mother that he will check in more often now that dad has passed on.

Funerals may seem like an unlikely place to see the joy and love of family, but surprisingly, that is where it often shows itself the most. Funerals show the loved ones left behind that others care. Funerals remind us that there are more im-

portant things than jobs, hobbies and even routine schedules. Funerals reveal to us that God is ultimately in control, and we need to pause and respect his work.

Jesus was called to the bedside of a dying little girl. All the people had gathered. They were wailing and praying in the house. When Jesus arrived, he asked them to go outside, and he went into the room with the child. Jesus told them she was not dead but only sleeping.

When we gather together to mourn a loved one, we often speak about that person’s life and how they affected our lives. We must remember that our loved ones who have passed away are also being raised into a new life with Christ Jesus. Our sorrows are an important part of our life journey. Our sorrows are preparation for our letting go.

King Solomon in Ecclesiastes 7:1-3 put it this way: “A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death, than the day of birth.

“It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting; for this is the end of everyone, and the living will lay it to heart.

“Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of countenance the heart is made glad.”

Why do we only come together when someone dies? Because it may be the only

time we can stop our busy lives and reflect on the people and things that really matter. Death gives us permission to examine our lives and change course, if that is what is needed.

When you go to the next funeral of a friend or loved one, pause and really look around at what is going on with the people. Encourage stories of joy and love into that space. Celebrate the honor of sharing in that life. **TM**

Your funeral will speak more about your life than your life ever did.

World War I and the global church

Late in the morning of June 28, 1914, Gavrilo Princip, a young Serbian nationalist standing in a crowd in Sarajevo, Bosnia, drew a pistol and fired two shots into a passing motorcade, killing Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary and his wife, Sophia. Although it seemed at the time to be a matter of only local significance, the event triggered a rapid sequence of escalating diplomatic reactions. Within a few short weeks, all of Europe's major powers had declared war.

The devastation that followed defies the imagination. By the end of 1914, the Austro-Hungarian army had already suffered more than 1.27 million casualties, the French around a million, with some 800,000 Germans killed or wounded. When hostilities finally ceased in 1918, trench warfare, machine guns and mustard gas had become household words, a whole generation of young men had disappeared, and millions of civilians struggled to restore order and meaning to their disrupted lives.

Although the global church today may seem far removed from the events that unfolded in Europe 100 years ago, the aftershocks of the First World War can still be felt, and the lessons of that traumatic conflict are still worth pondering.

1. The world is deeply interconnected. As most historians now acknowledge, the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand was not the cause of the First World War, only the spark that set other events in motion. Long before June 28, 1914, the empires of Europe had been engaged in a frantic competition to extend their power and influence around the world. So when a relatively minor crisis emerged, the response of one nation inevitably affected the others—and, ultimately, the world. Since then, the webs of global interdependence have become even thicker. Today, isolation is not an option. The pressing question is how we will manage our interconnectedness.

2. Be cautious about the claims of nationalism. In retrospect, World War I seems inevitable in part because so many ordinary people in 1914 were wildly enthusiastic about the war, regarding it as an opportunity to demonstrate the virtues of duty and honor on behalf of the Fatherland. By the end of the war—following the death of 16 million people—those patriotic sentiments sounded hollow.

3. Group identity is not simple. The collapse of the Hapsburg, German and Russian empires

following the war gave rise to new questions regarding political identity. President Wilson's principle of "self determination" sounded positive, but it did not clarify what the basis for new groups would be: language? ethnicity? religion? cultural memory? abstract ideals? The violent events in the century since then—in the Balkans, parts of Africa, the former Soviet Union, Iraq and Israel/Palestine—are all legacies of these unresolved questions.

4. The costs of war extend far beyond the battlefield. World War I made it clear that the war did not end when the fighting stopped and the dead were buried. Veterans with missing limbs and lingering trauma of shell shock (what we know today as PTSD) were visible reminders of the ongoing costs of war. The grief of widows and orphans and the loss of irreplaceable cultural treasures were less visible but no less real.

Next summer, as centennial observances of World War I continue, thousands of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ believers from around the world will gather in Harrisburg, Pa., to celebrate the 16th assembly of Mennonite World Conference (MWC).

That gathering of 103 member churches is a visible witness to the fact that we are indeed interconnected—we cannot live in isolation from each other. But our connection to each other is based on love, trust and mutual regard, not on a quest for dominance.

Like Mennonite Church USA, most MWC members are national churches. But we gather as brothers and sisters in the family of Christ, not to defend or promote our countries.

The identity of the global Anabaptist-Mennonite church is not always clear. Differences of belief, practice and worship styles reveal tensions between our groups and within our churches. Ultimately, however, identity is not something we create. It is a gift of our shared life in Christ, incarnated in visible ways in the world.

Finally, at our gathering next summer, we will bring with us the lingering pain and brokenness of our past. We have much to lament. But the MWC assembly also has the potential to heal wounds, restore strength to withered limbs and give new life to the spiritually dead or wounded.

As we remember the beginnings of the First World War, let us also recall that the body of Christ bears witness to a different reality. 



John D. Roth

is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review*.

Identity is not something we create. It is a gift of our shared life in Christ, incarnated in visible ways in the world.

The terror African-American men face in America

In less than a month, from July 17 to Aug. 11, in separate incidents—in Staten Island, N.Y., Beavercreek, Ohio, Ferguson, Mo., and Los Angeles—four unarmed African-American men were killed by police (www.motherjones.com).

In his blog at sojo.net, Ryan Herring writes, “To be young and black in the United States means to live under constant pressure, something most non-black American citizens know nothing about” (“When Terror Wears a Badge,” Aug. 14).

While our government fights a war on terrorism, many African Americans experience terror everyday. As Cornel West has said, “To be black in America for 400 years is to be unsafe, unprotected, subject to random violence and hated.”

Herring notes that “more Americans have lost their lives at the hands of police since 9/11 than in acts officially classified as terrorism. A recent study showed that one black man was killed every 28 hours by police, security guards or self-appointed vigilantes in 2012.”

Beyond the threat of lethal violence is the daily grind of being constantly watched by police, suspected of wrongdoing simply because of the color of one’s skin.

A further threat from police is being arrested and falsely accused. In *The New Yorker* (Aug. 4), Nicholas Schmidle writes about Tyrone Hood, who has been in prison for 21 years for a murder he likely did not commit. The article goes into great detail, with many interviews, to trace the course of events that led to Hood’s arrest and conviction.

Those events included witnesses who told the reporter that Chicago police threatened them with a gun until they said they saw Hood kill Marshal Morgan, a 20-year-old basketball star. Turns out, they didn’t witness that.

A series of articles ran in 2001 in the *Chicago Tribune* titled “Cops and Confessions.” The reporters described how Chicago police had relied on “coercive and illegal tactics” to solicit dubious confessions. Among the articles was a profile of Kenneth Boudreau, one of the officers in Hood’s case who had obtained incriminating statements from several witnesses.

The article pointed out that Boudreau “had targeted suspects espe-

cially vulnerable to intimidation, including teenagers and the mentally retarded, and stood accused of ‘punching, slapping or kicking’ them.” He had helped elicit at least five confessions from suspects who were later acquitted.

Schmidle interviews him, and Boudreau doesn’t budge from his belief that Hood is guilty, despite much evidence to the contrary.

The man who most likely did the murder later murdered several other people. Meanwhile, Hood remains in prison.

In the Aug. 11 and 18 *New Yorker*, Malcolm Gladwell discusses the book *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* by Alice Goffman, who for six years lived in a low-income neighborhood of Philadelphia and documented the lives of two young African-American men.

“They tried to get an education and legitimate jobs, only to find themselves thwarted,” Gladwell writes. “Selling crack was a business they entered only because they believed that all other doors were closed to them.”

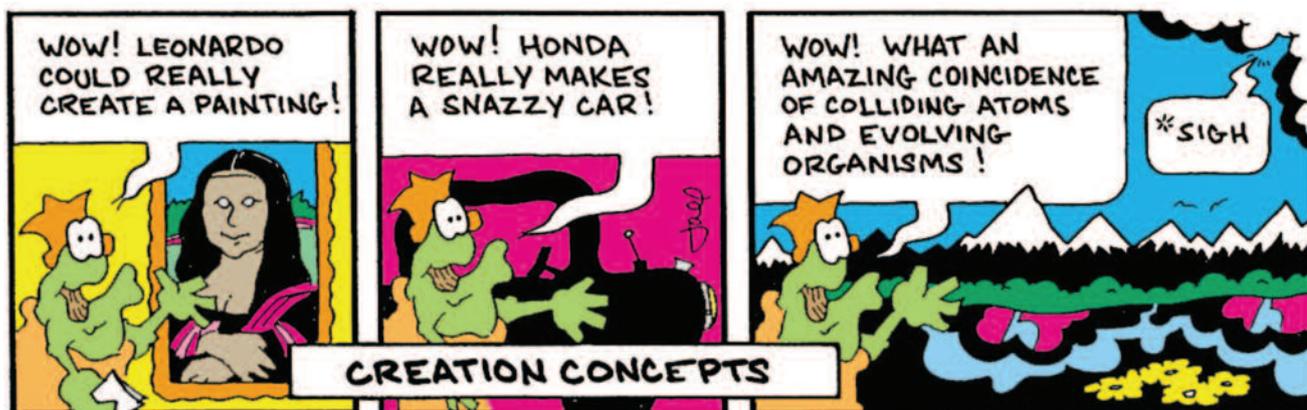
Gladwell compares the climb of Italian crime families in the 1950s and ’60s into legitimacy with that of African Americans today. Back then, cops were paid to overlook crime and focused more on hunting Communists.

Today’s law enforcement is different. “Between 1960 and 2000, the ratio of police officers to Philadelphia residents rose by almost 70 percent,” Gladwell writes.

A black man in America faces many systemic barriers. Whatever we can do to help change those barriers will help make God’s justice for all more visible.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius’ Puddle

Joel Kauffmann



“Prayer is the life of Jesus coming alive in you.—Rowan Williams in *Being Christian: Baptism, Bible, Eucharist, Prayer*



10 poverty myths, busted

1. Single moms are the problem. Only 9 percent of low-income, urban moms have been single throughout their child's first five years. Thirty-five percent were married to or in a relationship with the child's father for that entire time.

2. Absent dads are the problem. Sixty percent of low-income dads see at least one of their children daily. Another 16 percent see their children weekly.

3. Black dads are the problem. Among men who don't live with their children, black fathers are more likely than white or Hispanic dads to have a daily presence in their kids' lives.

4. Poor people are lazy. In 2004, there was at least one adult with a job in 60 percent of families on food stamps that had both kids and a nondisabled, working-age adult.

5. If you're not officially poor, you're doing OK. The federal poverty line for a family of two parents and two children in 2012 was \$23,283. Basic needs cost at least twice that in 615 of America's cities and regions.

A Congressional Budget Office study shows that the concentration of lightly taxed investment income was the source of **80%** of the increase in inequality from 2002 to 2007.—*The Atlantic*

6. Go to college, get out of poverty. In 2012, about 1.1 million people who made less than \$25,000 a year, worked full time and were heads of household had a bachelor's degree.

7. We're winning the war on poverty. The number of households with children living on less than \$2 a day per person has grown 160 percent since 1996, to 1.65 million families in 2011.

8. The days of old ladies eating cat food are over. The share of elderly single women living in extreme poverty jumped 31 percent from 2011 to 2012.

9. The homeless are drunk street people. One in 45 kids in the United States experiences homelessness each year. In New York City alone, 22,000 children are homeless.

10. Handouts are bankrupting us. In 2012, total welfare funding was 0.47 percent of the federal budget.—*Mother Jones*

I know what you did last Sunday

On the phone, 36 percent of Americans report attending religious services weekly or more, while 30 percent say they seldom or never go. But online, a smaller share (31 percent) of people surveyed said they attended church at least weekly, while a larger portion (43 percent) admitted they seldom or never go.—*Religion News Service*

Unrequited love

To gauge the interreligious emotions of the American public, the Pew Research Center asked thousands of Americans about their religious identification and then asked them to rate other religious groups on “a feeling thermometer,” where a zero was “the coldest, most negative possible rating” and 100 was “the warmest, most positive” response. White evangelicals gave Jews a full 69 percent of emotional warmth (very high, by the survey's standards), while Jewish respondents gave evangelical Christians a frosty 34 percent—one of the lowest ratings in the entire Pew data set.—*Religion News Service*

Numbers to ponder

- Minimum percentage change in the past year in the number of reported cases of sexual assault in the U.S. military: +50
 - Date on which the Army suspended its chief sexual assault prosecutor for an alleged sexual assault: 2/21/2014
 - Number of minutes Mexican men and women work each day, respectively: 580, 607
 - Respective percentage of that work that is unpaid: 19, 62
 - Ratio of mentally ill people held in U.S. state prisons and jails to those held in state psychiatric hospitals: 10:1
 - Percentage of Egyptians who say it is necessary to believe in God to be moral: 95
 - Percentage of Americans who do: 53
 - Of Chinese: 14
 - Factor by which an Army soldier is more likely than the average American to be diagnosed with intermittent explosive anger: 5
 - By which a heterosexual U.S. woman is more likely to be killed by her intimate partner if he owns a handgun: 5
 - Percentage of homicides by white women of black men that are deemed justifiable on the grounds of self-defense: 14
 - By black women of white men: 3
 - Portion of all online advertising that is never seen by a human being: 1/2
 - Minimum percentage of ATMs worldwide that operate on Windows XP: 95
 - Date on which Microsoft stopped providing tech support for the operating system: 04/08/2014
- Harper's*

Blessed to blaze new trails

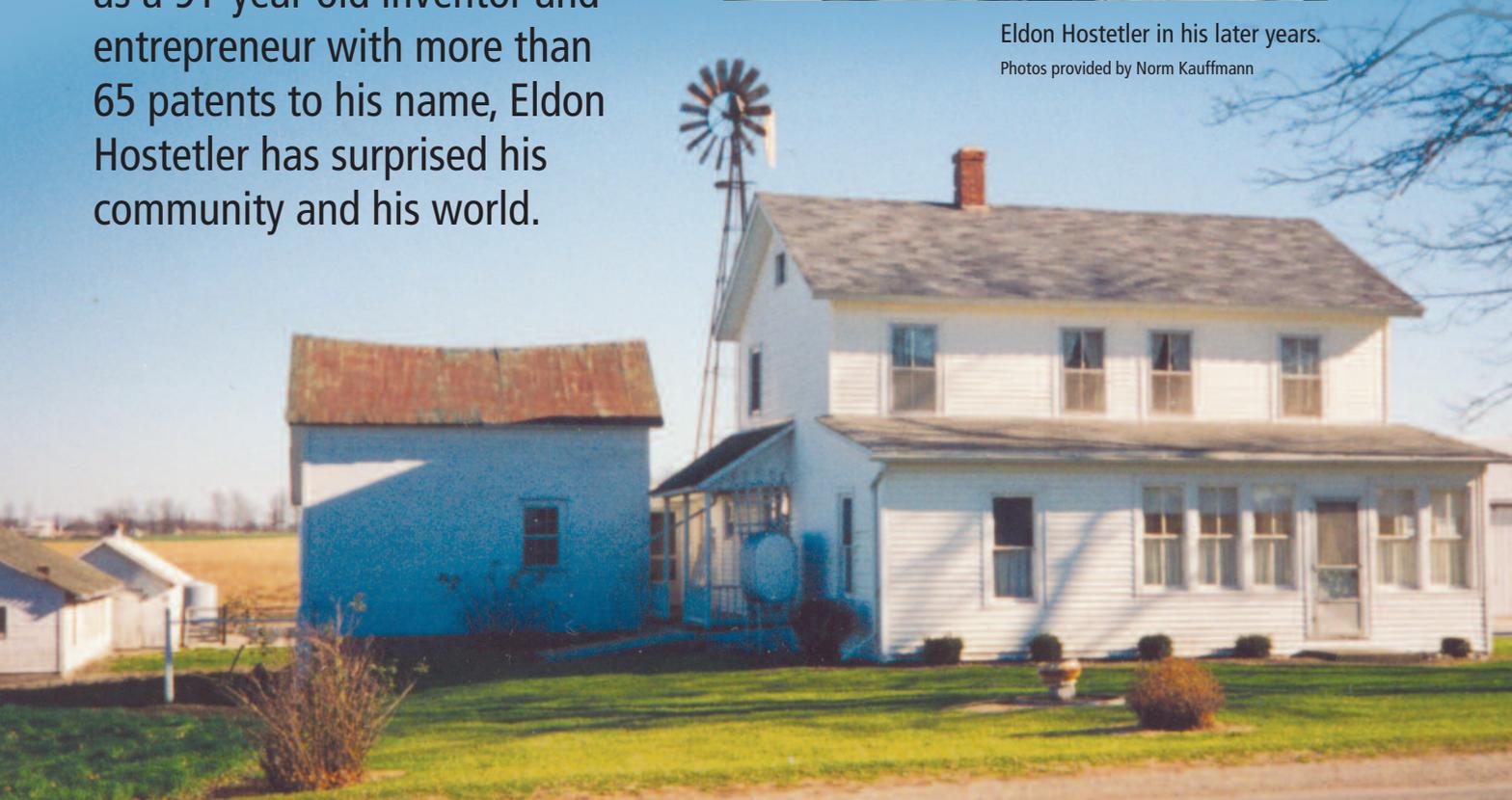
**Eldon Hostetler
left the Amish
church to become
an inventor and
entrepreneur.**

by Laurie Oswald Robinson

From the first week of his life as an Amish baby until today as a 91-year-old inventor and entrepreneur with more than 65 patents to his name, Eldon Hostetler has surprised his community and his world.



Eldon Hostetler in his later years.
Photos provided by Norm Kauffmann



After Hostetler was born on Christmas in 1922, the eldest of 13 children to the late Lizzie and Mahlon Hostetler, he was blessed in a Jewish temple. He was the only Amish young man in his community in Shipshewana, Ind., to own a car. As an adult inventor, he received patents around the world for poultry-raising equipment. And in retirement, he donated his Hudson car collection to a museum in Shipshewana.

These are unusual experiences for someone born Amish who received only an eighth-grade education. However, Hostetler, now a member of North Goshen (Ind.) Mennonite Church, says God called him to take the path less traveled and, in many cases, to blaze new trails. One trail was blazed from his father's fulfillment of the wishes of the late Dr. Black, a Jewish physician who delivered Hostetler into this world.

"Dr. Black told my father that I was a real God send and that he wanted my father to bring me to a Jewish temple in Ligonier, Ind., so they could perform the usual Jewish rite," said Hostetler, of Middlebury, during a mid-July telephone interview.

An influential person

"After the ceremony, the rabbi told my father he thought I was going to be an influential person in the world. My father waited until he was 70 to tell me this story. He said at the time of the circumcision he didn't give the rabbi's comment much thought. But later he realized that I would never have been able to do what I did without that blessing."

This experience would not have occurred if his father hadn't operated on the outer fringes of Amish tradition, Hostetler said. Coupled with his father's free-thinking were the innovative tendencies of his maternal grandfather. Hostetler was the firstborn grandchild of the late David and Anna (Bontrager) Shrock, who had only daughters. And so Hostetler was like a son to his grandfather, a thresher.

Hostetler's parents owned the Pashan Farm in Shipshewana, near where Hostetler attended a one-room school. His maternal grandparents lived about 500 feet south of this farm. His paternal grandparents, the late David and Leah (Lambright) Hostetler, lived in Emmatown, Ind., where they grew mint, spearmint and peppermint.

"My Grandpa Shrock had tractors and threshing machines, and I was much more interested in that stuff than in farming with my father," Hostetler said. "I helped grandfather renovate machinery. He was Amish, but he traded his steam engine in

for a gasoline-fired tractor when I was 4 years old. That was considered a worldly thing to do, and he shouldn't have been doing it, but he did."

In his book *The Life and Times of Eldon "Zig-gity" Hostetler: An Autobiography*, Hostetler writes about how his grandfather traded in his steam engine for a gasoline-powered 20-40 Huber tractor. "Dad took me in the buggy to Goshen [Ind.], and I was privileged to drive back with Grandpa on the tractor, which went three times as fast as the steam engine would go in high gear. On the way back, we stopped to buy a spring wagon that he later converted to what we call an 'oil wagon.' He had a 50-gallon drum with his fuel and oil and things on it, and he pulled it hundreds of miles around the country doing threshing."

Hostetler said that when he was 18, he was helping his Grandpa Shrock in his shop one day when his grandpa told him he felt Hostetler would not stay Amish. "He then said that if I promised never to tell my mother where I got the money, he would loan me \$350 to buy my first car, a 1938

After the ceremony, the rabbi told my father he thought I was going to be an influential person in the world.—Eldon Hostetler

Hudson," Hostetler said. "I was the only person in our community who had a car, and so I hauled a lot of Amish people around. They paid me so much per mile and gave me R stamps [stamps used by farmers] so I could buy gas. It was during World War II, and I couldn't get tires. I had to recap those tires until I couldn't recap them anymore." So he traded in the 1938 Hudson for a 1940 model with 27,000 miles, the second of many cars he owned in the coming decades.

Leniency and legalism shape the faith of a young man

This leniency in conjunction with the more legalistic stance of his mother and paternal grandparents shaped Hostetler's views about God and religion, he said. The mixed milieu—though oft-confusing—was steeped in a faith that later guided Hostetler out of the Amish community into the Mennonite church.

Two of the more striking memories about faith

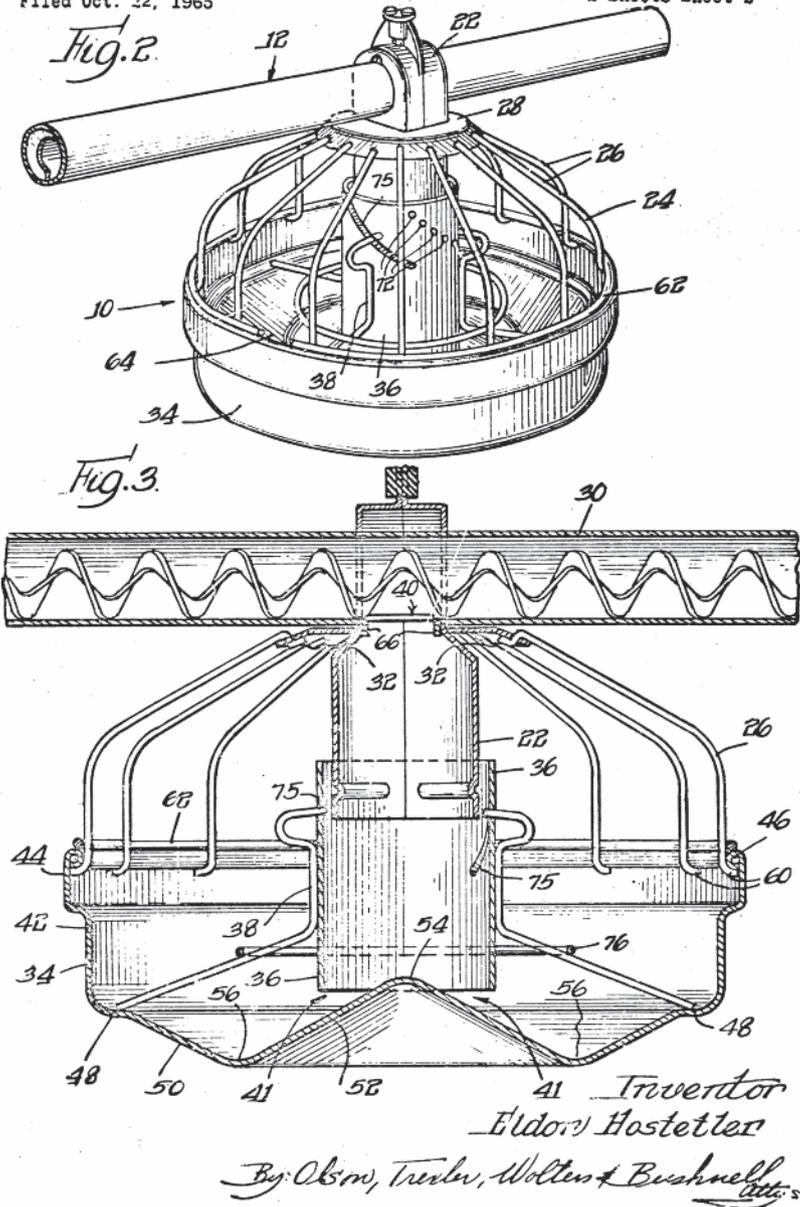
Ninety percent of all broilers grown in the world are fed and watered with stuff I designed, as well as copies of it.—Eldon Hostetler

June 18, 1968 E. HOSTETLER 3,388,690

POULTRY FEEDER SYSTEM AND PAN ASSEMBLY THEREFOR

Filed Oct. 22, 1965

2 Sheets-Sheet 2



Patent drawings showing the inner workings of the monoline feeder system with pan assembly

involved his paternal grandfather, Hostetler said. “I remember how grandfather held me on his lap, showed me pictures in the Bible story book and told me how important it was to obey God. That made such a deep impression on me.”

Equally impressive was his memory of the conflict between his father and grandfather. In the late 1920s, when Hostetler was about 6 or 7, their family attended a conservative Mennonite church—a choice of his father’s that his mother prayed would change, Hostetler said. She did not like the fact that the services were sometimes in English and that some of the people drove cars to church. About this time, his father put a down payment on a 1927 Chrysler, a decision that evoked a visit from his father’s parents.

“Dad and I had just come into the house from working in the fields,” Hostetler said. “When Dad saw his parents, he said, ‘I think you are here because I put a down payment on a car.’ Mother ran out of the room crying but later came back. Grandpa said that if Dad took delivery on that car then he would have to take Dad off his inheritance list. Dad replied, ‘The Bible says that the love of money is the root of all evil.’ Grandpa started crying and said, ‘You are my child and I’ll never quit loving you. But if you get that car, I will have to disinherit you. On the other hand, if you give up that car, and they won’t give you your money back, then I will pay you that amount.’” His father decided against buying the car.

Leaving boyhood behind

Hostetler said it was in the midst of that powerful emotion that he first knew he didn’t want to join the Amish church. He did not want to risk the same kinds of things happening to him. He took his first steps off the farm into work in 1944 and soon after out of the Amish church. That year he married Edna Yoder, whose brother Joe worked at Creighton Brothers in Warsaw, Ind., the largest leghorn farm and hatchery in the United States. Hostetler, who had been deferred on the farm by the LaGrange County draft board, was then deferred by Creighton when he was hired to work there.

His jobs included catching leghorn pullets on range and moving them into laying houses for egg production, traying eggs for the incubators, and egg grading. He later became certified to do poultry blood-testing. Hostetler then moved into the world of invention and innovation. After he became manager of the hatchery at Creighton Brothers, his hands-on work with bird selection and trap nesting led to his learning about poultry

genetics. He began a hobby of cross-breeding for a better and larger white bird that had more breast meat. His experimentation led to a new breed of broilers, the White Meateor.

His first patent was for the E-Z Feeder, an automatic feeder system. In conjunction with having a mind that quickly retained large amounts of details, spiritual experiences sometimes inspired him, he said. “One night, I came home from work after having trouble getting the old feeder to work,” he said. “Ground corn cob and little chunks of rock got stuck in-between the sprocket wheels and stopped the machine. I fell into a deep sleep, and all of a sudden on the bedroom wall flashed a vision of what would make that feeder work better. I got up at 2 a.m. and drove to the plant in Elkhart and started pulling the old machine apart to reassemble it.”

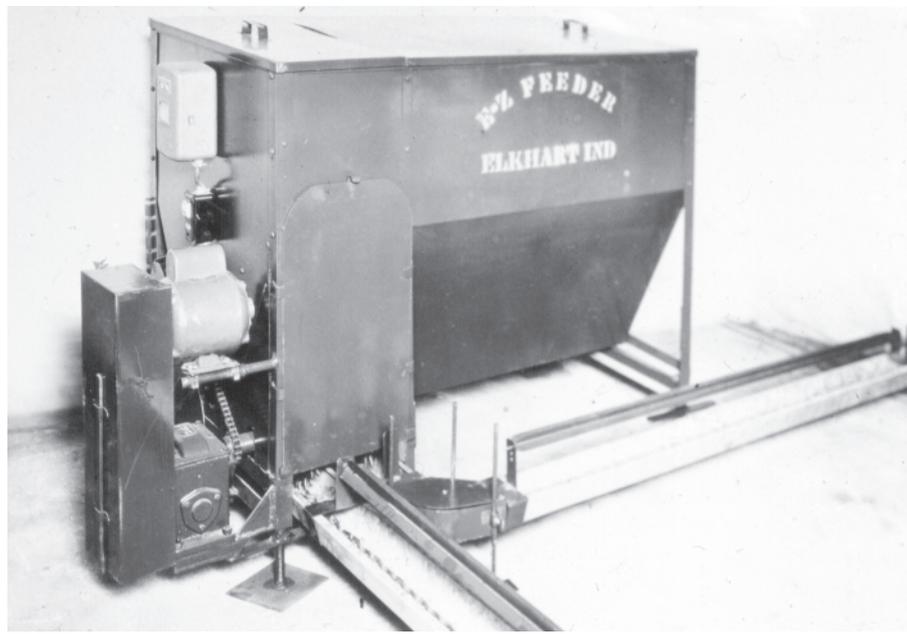
That reassembled feeder became the E-Z Feeder, followed by many other inventions, including the Ziggity watering system, Chore-Time feeders and a ceiling-mounted winch system that was used to raise and lower the feeding system. In April 1977, he opened his own company, Ziggity Systems, Inc. It enabled him to sell his newest product at the time—a snap-in, nipple-type drinker for poultry.

“As a person without an education beyond eighth grade, it was hard to get more educated folks to listen to my ideas for how to do things more efficiently,” he said. “Without an engineering degree, I had to swim twice as fast upstream in order to contribute my gifts. But today, there are 200 million broilers processed every week in United States. Ninety percent of all broilers grown in the world are fed and watered with stuff I designed, as well as copies of it.”

Transitioning from life with Edna to life with Esta

In the fall of 1975, a year and a half before he started Ziggity Systems, his first wife, the late Edna (Yoder) Hostetler, was diagnosed with cancer. For the previous several decades, they had been busy raising a family of six children—MaryEtta, Ruby Arlene, LeAnna, Dale Eugene, Robert Dean and Eldon Jr. And in the mid-1960s, they transitioned from being part of a conservative Mennonite church to becoming members at North Goshen. She died on April 22, 1977, when she was in her 50s.

In April 1978, Hostetler married Esta Yoder, a member of North Goshen and a longtime secretary at Goshen College. “I was 43, and he was 55, and I had not married before,” she said. “In a very



short time, I became a wife, a stepmother to six and a grandmother to eight.” She also became Hostetler’s travel companion on business trips as well as his fellow collector of unusual Hudson antique cars.

In late 1997, Hostetler met with Norm Kauffmann, then manager for the Town of Shipshewana, to explore the gifting of 50 of the cars to the town. “It was a long journey from that first meeting until the completion of the museum [Hostetler’s Hudson Auto Museum, located in Shipshewana Town Center] in 2007,” Kauffmann said during a late July telephone interview.

Hostetler’s first patented invention, the E-Z Feeder, an automatic feeder system

Entrepreneurship is given by God to the church and is a way for people to use their God-given gifts in ways to bless other people.

—Ervin Stutzman

“In our many conversations, it was clear he maintained a deep respect for his parents and grandparents over the years, even though he was no longer Amish. He had a profound appreciation for that tradition. ... His faith was at the core of who he was. It was something that always rooted his life.”

Kauffmann said he was struck by how much





Museum ground-breaking ceremony held Aug. 25, 2005. Left to right, Kevin Carlson, Dean Morgan, Eldon and Esta Hostetler and Roger Yoder, Shipshewana Town Council President.

Hostetler invented and how creative he was. “His creativity was not allowed to come out in the Amish community, so that is why I think his parents and grandparents encouraged him to go do what he had to do,” he said.

“He didn’t have a lot of book learning, but he had an amazing ability to observe life and figure things out. He spent a lot of time in the chicken house and figured out that turkeys would only drink out of green containers and chickens only out of red ones. He tried to share his new design ideas at his work places. And if the people would



Eldon and Esta Hostetler pose next to one of their cars in Hostetler’s Hudson Auto Museum in Shipshewana, Ind.

not do it with him, he would go somewhere else where they would.”

Serving by inventing

It was a spirit of serving God by inventing that Ervin Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, sensed in Hostetler when he met the couple earlier this year, he said during a late July telephone interview. They visited with Stutzman about his book *Jacob’s Choice*, historical fiction about a common Amish ancestor, Jacob Hochstetler.

“Two things struck me about Eldon,” Stutzman said. “First, he was blessed by a Jewish rabbi, which became a formative part of Eldon’s journey. And second, it is really unusual for one person to have that many patents. It makes me wonder if more Mennonites that we don’t know about have patents, too.

“When I travel around Mennonite Church USA, I ask business folks to show me what they do. We don’t often hear from the pulpit how God speaks to business people. But I have discovered, through serving as a devotional Bible study leader for MEDA [Mennonite Economic Development Association], that many entrepreneurs deeply incorporate their faith with their work.

“Entrepreneurship is given by God to the church and is a way for people to use their God-given gifts in ways to bless other people.”

Blessing other people and doing good work were central to Hostetler’s drive to create—values he learned when he sat on his grandpa’s lap, listening to Bible stories.

“At Ziggity Systems, we never had a meeting to talk about how we could make more money,” Hostetler said. “Our goal was making a better product, and the money followed.

“Today I still try to help as much as I can, but there isn’t much energy left anymore. But one thing I will never do is stop thanking God for all the ways he has blessed me. ... If Grandfather were alive today, I would tell him that the things he told me I have never forgotten and that I have learned they are true.”



Laurie Oswald Robinson is a free-lance writer in Newton, Kan., and the author of *Forever Family*.

The joy of together

by Paul Born

"I really do not want more community than we already have at this church," shared a parishioner during a Sunday morning adult Sunday school discussion. "What I like about this church is that no one judges you for not being more involved or attending regularly. If we had more community, people would expect too much from me."

Deepening community enhances our lives and our faith.



I remember being dumbstruck when I heard these words, especially in this church context, having never considered that a Mennonite congregation or any of its members would not embrace community as one of its central organizing principles.

Though I need to admit that my afterthought was, Maybe he's right; if community means I'm expected to be present every Sunday, give money, sit on at least one committee, join a smaller fellowship group, contribute to monthly potluck and provide meals and support to congregational members who are sick or in need, who has the time or energy for all that?

Maybe this is the same reason so many people do not know their neighbors. Do we really want to know when they're sick? Do we want to help them seed a new lawn or dig up one to plant a garden? Do we want to trust them enough to lend them a car or even our favorite kitchen tool?

It would be so much easier to be anonymous in the crowd; come and go as I like, care only for

and hear this recurring voice that reminds me to take care of yourself, because no one else will.

A friend reminded me once that we die alone. Therefore, as we age, this pervasive sense of alone is a kind of preparation for death. That may be the most depressing thought anyone has ever shared with me.

What I find curious is that this alone feeling is not related to the loneliness I feel at times. Loneliness may happen when I'm missing someone or wishing I was with others. I actually like that feeling, since it indicates I still love and want to be around those who are dear to me. By viewing loneliness through this lens, it means I'm very much alive. It is a part of living in community.

Community

During an interview, a young man just out of high school said, "When I'm in community I do not feel alone." He was clearly an introvert, shy and self-conscious. But for him, this feeling of belonging was the antidote of feeling alone.

Community has many benefits, and feeling a sense of belonging is likely the most important. A sense of belonging means we feel we are in the right place: we feel welcome and embraced in a place or with a group. To belong is to be cared for and reciprocate that caring; to know that I am home. It is a willingness to extend our identity to a group of people or an experience.

Having others in your life that you trust can help you make sense of who you are and helps shape your identity and recognize the gifts you have to offer. The African term "ubuntu," often used by Nelson Mandela, means "I am human because I belong. My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up in yours."

Community can better your economic prospects. Those in your community—family, friends, fellow church members and neighbors—can help you find a job, lend you money for a business or to buy a house. They can also teach you to garden or help you learn a new skill. They can support you when you are unemployed and help you choose an educational direction. They can bind together to create a credit union, a school or a community foundation, which all enhance your economic prospects.

Community makes us healthier. Heart surgeon Dean Ornish wrote a book entitled *Love and Survival*. In it he shares his observations of patients with many supportive relationships and how they were more than twice as likely to recover well and live longer compared with those who had fewer or no close relationships. Therefore, the

Having others in your life that you trust can help you make sense of who you are and helps shape your identity and recognize the gifts you have to offer.

those I choose and when I choose. I love this feeling of being free, anonymous: living life on my terms. Besides, my days are so full, I'm constantly with people and exhausted most days when I get home. I deserve that glass of wine by myself, in the back yard, quiet all around ("keep that dog inside" and "only cut your lawn from 11-12 Saturday morning" kind-of-quiet), feet-up, alone.

Alone

I often feel alone and I do not like it. I find this feeling especially troublesome when I'm in the midst of a crowd. You know that feeling you get when you go to a restaurant alone, or you are at a reception and there's an awkward moment when everyone is talking to someone other than you?

I'm not talking about the introverted side of me that loves time alone: to read, re-energize and sit in the quiet of my own thoughts. I'm talking about this deep-pitted feeling that it is all up to me. In the midst of the crowd—people all around, even people that love me—I get this anxious feeling

love, emotional support and positive healing energy others bring us during times of illness contribute to our healing just as much as medical science and procedures.

Perhaps the best reason to pursue more community in our lives is that it makes us happier. A whole body of thinking now catching on is known as the “Economics of Happiness.” Its core is the argument that our GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is not a good measure of human progress. We should instead be measuring those things that enhance our collective quality of life. One of the leading scholars advancing this idea is John Helliwell, a world-renowned professor at the University of British Columbia, who concludes his talks by leading the audience in singing, “The more we get together, the happier we’ll be.”

A missed opportunity

Our Mennonite churches are struggling to maintain membership growth. Many are losing their young people to other denominations, or they are stepping away from church altogether. Most of our Mennonite institutions have opened up to “non-Mennonite” membership, not so much to enhance their mission but to survive.

Most blame this decline in church attendance on shifting priorities in the larger society and people moving away from a faith identity.

What has contributed to my own Mennonite identity has been both a belief system that forms my faith and the historical Mennonite community I belong to. This identity certainly includes borscht and shoofly pie but also peace and service. My Mennonite identity and the people who have shaped it make up for me and many others in our congregations an important core of our sense of community.

Have we taken the importance of our identity as a community for granted? Have we downplayed the community aspect of our faith in order to emphasize the religious or spiritual dimension? I believe we have, and this certainly must be considered when we look to determine the reason for struggling churches.

The imbalance between the community life of a congregation and the spiritual or faith life of a congregation may be contributing to a loss of commitment and membership. Young people, adults in transition or anyone struggling in life and questioning their faith need their community identity and a sense of belonging.

I know there are those who will immediately say that the two are inseparable for them. Their spiritual and church lives are one and the same. I

say, Try for a moment to separate them and recognize the ceremonies we use to strengthen our faith and those that strengthen our community life. They are connected, but it may be helpful to view them as separate to see how we might strengthen each.

Our spiritual life is enhanced through studying the Bible, prayer, sermons, Communion, singing and generally worshiping together. These also support a communal life and bind us in a common experience, though their primary purpose is to strengthen our spiritual life.

Our communal life is enhanced by small group gatherings in our homes or through potlucks, where we sit together and visit; through gather-

The imbalance between the community life of a congregation and the spiritual or faith life of a congregation may be contributing to a loss of commitment and membership.

ing to celebrate a wedding or mourn together at a member’s funeral; through bringing meals to the sick or visiting each other in the hospital; through organizing peace walks, credit unions, foundations, schools, service projects or being together at the Mennonite relief sale. These actions all build faith as we act on our beliefs, but their primary purpose is to strengthen the well-being of the community and community life.

Deepening community

At my home congregation, Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ontario, we are taking four Sunday adult education hours to explore the role of community in our congregational life. The goal of this exploration is to celebrate our communal life by sharing our stories and to consider the importance of and restore our commitment to a communal life together.

We are exploring community by considering these four concepts.

Sharing our story

The journey begins as we share our stories, be they stories of fears or of joy. Sharing helps us open up, become vulnerable and hear other people’s stories. Thus we begin to work together to distinguish truth from untruth and rational fear from irrational fear and determine what we might

do together. When we really hear one another, the bond of community is forged between us. We smile at each other; we feel warmth and joy as if we are home. In these times, we must make it a priority to take time for community. We need one another now, and we will need one another even more as times become more difficult.

Enjoying one another

As we continue to share our stories and do so with the same players over time, reciprocity and trust grow between us. This is an investment in deepening community, and the dividends this investment pays will be crucial to us in times of need. When we enjoy one another in a community

Mutual acts of caring often forge a sense of belonging.

we have invested in, we become a collective witness to the events around us. We can celebrate our achievements and those of our children together. How sweet are the victories and even failures that are experienced in community!

Taking care of one another

Reciprocity and trust have a wonderful effect: reaching out to help one another becomes as natural as breathing. We take care of one another not only because it is the right thing to do and not only because people will help us if we help them but primarily because the bond of love that has grown between us moves us to do so. Mutual acts of caring often forge a sense of belonging. When we feel we belong, we feel safe and fulfilled, and when we feel safe and fulfilled, we can dare to develop hope and common purpose. We have the strength to overcome, together, almost any challenge that comes our way.

Deepening Community: Finding Joy Together in Chaotic Times

Paul Born (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2014, \$18.95) argues for the importance of community in shaping our identity and quenching our thirst for belonging. Born, a Mennonite, writes for a general audience, though he draws from his own experience as well as others. He outlines a helpful continuum of community experience, delineating no community, shallow community, fear-based community and deep community, the goal he says is best for all of us. While he acknowledges that “community is not automatic,” he says that it is key. “No amount of talent or hard work matters if people do not share a sense of community,” he writes. “The deeper the community, the easier and better the outcome.” —Gordon Houser

Building a better world together

The above three acts of community—sharing our stories, enjoying one another and taking care of one another—give us energy for the fourth act of deepening community: building a better world together. In fact, we become a force for change that is unstoppable. The work of restoring our communities feels light and possible. We no longer feel alone in our fear or hopeless in our dreams; rather, we have the courage to see our dreams become real.

Each Sunday, we share a Bible verse, introduce the topic for exploration, and then two members of the congregation share their experience of community. We then take time to share our experiences in small groups. During the four Sundays, we are able to answer these questions: How do we come to know each other’s stories? When do we have fun together, and why is this important for our congregational life? When have we felt cared for by this congregation, and when have we had the opportunity to give or express our caring to others in our community? What do we do together to make the world a better place, and how has working together this way deepened our commitment to our congregational life?

Investing in community

Like any investment, community takes time and effort. We spend years investing for our retirement, setting aside dollars in order to live a good life in our old age. Our financial advisors tell us to start this process early, when we are young, in order to have enough when we’re old (though they’re always quick to add that it’s never too late to start). Investing in relationships to deepen community reaps a similar benefit. A strong family, a faith community or club, neighbors we can rely on and friends who make the hours pass quickly—these are equally worthy investments. The skills we learn by seeking and living in community, and the network of relationships we build, will provide us with the joy and security we need, especially should we experience times of loneliness, financial insecurity or failing health.



Paul Born is a community activist and author of Deepening Community: Finding Joy Together in Chaotic Times (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2014). This article is adapted from an article that appeared in Canadian Mennonite. Learn more at www.deepeningcommunity.org.

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Creativity as holy work

In creativity we express ourselves as made in God's image.

by Ann Minter Fetters

No doubt, it was the highlight of my trip to Italy. Anyone who has seen it knows what I mean. The Creation of Adam, the central image in a long line of frescoes that grace the narrow ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Michelangelo's portrayal of the Creator's finger reaching out to touch the finger of humanity is one I keep returning to, even some 20 years later. It is, for me, one of the most powerful images of God. In it I see that we are not only lovingly created but that our own creative acts are an extension of that love. In the midst of those acts we emulate the Creator. In this way, our creativity becomes holy work.



In our technologically advanced society, true creativity can seem far removed from everyday life. But creative expression is necessary for us to be fully human. It is what transforms us. Peter Korn, who is a master furniture maker in Maine, states in his book *Why We Make Things and Why It Matters*, “The banquet of work, leisure and consumption that society prescribes has left some essential part of us undernourished. We are hungry for avenues of engagement that provide more wholesome sustenance.” He describes how the craft of furniture making can function as a source of meaning, authenticity and fulfillment for many people. “The same is true of other self-expressive, creative disciplines,” he writes.

Of course, many people don’t see themselves as creative or as what the world would consider to be artists. They believe that to be artistic means, for example, being adept at drawing or painting. But this definition limits the scope of what it

was doing. I lost all track of time. This was right-brain activity, and it came from my soul. I was, indeed, bringing something new to life.

The same can be said about rebuilding an engine. Mathew B. Crawford, in his book *Shopclass as Soulcraft*, writes about his experience as a mechanic. “Seeing a motorcycle about to leave my shop under its own power, several days after arriving in the back of a pickup truck, I suddenly don’t feel tired, even though I’ve been standing on a concrete floor all day. The owner hops on his newly repaired bike, and as he revs the engine, that sound pleases me, as I know it does him. The wad of cash in my pocket feels different from the paycheck I earn in my office job.”

How, then, is such work holy? In my fiction, I don’t necessarily write on “Christian” topics. I might use the name of Jesus in my stories; I might not. But if my work is the best I can deliver, if it expresses truth and beauty in their own right, then I believe it is pleasing to God.

It is in the creation of something new that we experience the divine.

means to create. A broader concept of creativity can be found, for instance, in the act of rebuilding an engine or in the disciplined training for a marathon. It is simply the process of tapping into our creative impulses and bringing them to life.

The energizing act of creativity has more recently resonated with me since I’ve started writing fiction. In my own career of teaching college English, my writing has mainly been academic—first, learning it, then teaching it and doing it. Likewise, my work as a free-lance writer has been journalistic. While both of these involve a process of articulating ideas onto paper, that process is primarily left-brain work, structured and prescribed. Though this kind of writing was meaningful for me, after about two hours of doing it, my head would hurt, and I found myself glancing at the clock. I was desperate to take a break.

As my writing became more creative, however, I discovered something interesting. My imagination ran free. I was thoroughly absorbed in what I



So, too, running a marathon can be a godly pursuit. The 1981 film *Chariots of Fire* tells the true story of Eric Liddell, a British athlete training for the Olympics. He possessed a strong faith, and his running was an expression of his spirituality. “I believe God made me for a purpose,” he said. “He also made me fast. And when I run, I feel his pleasure.”

It comes down to this: It is in the creation of something new that we experience the divine. And what of Michelangelo? Did he have a spiritual awakening when he painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel? One can only wonder, but it’s hard to imagine, as his wet brush touched the plaster surface, that he didn’t understand that what he was doing was, in fact, holy.



Ann Minter Fetters is a member of Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church in Wichita, Kan.

Ducks and thugs and tractor trailers

Bringing God's message of peace into the classroom

by Shirley Kurtz

For a brief, happy spell, I had a tutoring job at our public elementary school down the road. Reading, writing and doing math with 20 third graders, I could bore my ideas into their little sponge minds. Even after a statewide funding cut eliminated the tutoring program, the regular teacher let me come back to help out.

Best of all was the deal with the bumper sticker. We'd read a pair of stories I'd brought from home. In the one, Elizabeth Fry, a Quaker social reformer in England in the early 1900s, returns one evening to her upstairs room at the inn where she's staying and stops short in the doorway. Something is wrong. Her candle has gotten knocked to the floor. A dresser drawer is hanging open. Then she spots a man's boot protruding from underneath her bed.

Elizabeth takes time to collect her wits. She then moves to the bed, kneels down beside the boot and starts praying out loud for the thief.

The man who crawls out is ragged and undernourished. He's terrified that Elizabeth will call the police and he'll get sent back to jail. Instead, Elizabeth gives him her husband's sweater. She takes him down to supper. She gets him to divulge his seamy past. Together, she and he talk about how he might find a job.

In the other story, set in 1700s Switzerland, old Preacher Peter awakens in the night to noises on

haul my husband's binoculars to school. And because the above-the-radiator window sat too high for some of the children, they resorted to climbing a chair to peer out.

Perched on her knees atop the radiator, the back pockets of her jeans ablaze with silver-studded bows, tiny, fluffy-haired Sadie tried to hold the binoculars steady. "When

I announced that anybody who memorized—repeated to me—the bumper-sticker slogan on my car would be allowed to pick a prize out of my junk box.

his roof. He steals outside to discover men tearing down his thatch. Realizing these are some of the village folks who've been angered by his church's opposition to war, Peter goes back inside and asks his wife to fix the workmen supper.

He invites the men in, gets them around the table, offers a prayer. But they can't eat the food on their plates. They push back their chairs and flee the room. Soon they're back on Peter's roof, repairing it. Then away they sneak, into the night.

Obviously, with these stories I meant to plant otherworldly notions. As I pointed out to the children, neither of our heroes had a gun stashed under the pillow. To clinch things, I announced that anybody who memorized—repeated to me—the bumper-sticker slogan on my car would be allowed to pick a prize out of my junk box.

Due to the layout of the parking lot, I couldn't park close enough to my classroom. The distance made the words too hard to decipher. So I had to

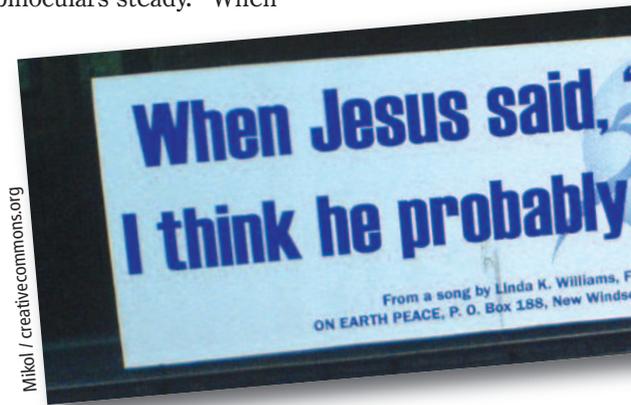
Jesus, said—" Those first words were readable. "When Jesus said, 'Love, your—" But that next word was a stickler. It was too drawn-out and blurry. It took pained squinting.

I had the children copy down the line on scrap paper. They had to do the quotation marks. They had to spell properly. "When J-e-s-u-s said ..."

Benny (not his real name) didn't need a chair, though. He was the one I really wanted to get to. Sleepy eyed, camouflage jacketed, in love with maps and historical facts, he'd told me about his plans to join the military. Sometimes in class (we'd be working on, say, his times sixes: $6 \times 6=36$, $7 \times 6=42$, $8 \times 6=48$), he collapsed into hopelessness. "I can't do it, I can't get it," he groaned. On one occasion I got him to yell out to the parking lot, "I can't do it, I can't get it, I'm stupid." Now the useless thoughts were gone from his head. They'd flown out the window. He seemed tickled—temporarily.

Benny's choice of junk prize, after he memorized the bumper-sticker quote, was the stuffed tiger, or maybe it was a leopard. "When Jesus said, 'Love your enemies,'" recited Benny, concentrating hard, "I think he probably meant don't kill them."

Another child picked out the zebra (or panda—whatever). Konner took off with an old tie of my husband's. Katlyn chose a tie, too. The plastic lizards went, and the turtles. The fake candle. The poker cards. The clock. The jump rope. Ethan went for the scuffed knee guards. He sauntered off to his next class with the purple Velcro straps



wound around his pant legs.

You may be wondering why I never got into trouble. Actually, teachers in the public school system are expected to promote diversity. So if children aren't learning about minorities who hew to odd convictions, that's an



omission in need of rectifying. When I taught at the high school I showed the movie *Gandhi*. I had my juniors and seniors in English class watch a selection from *Soldiers Speak Out*, about the antiwar movement within the U.S. military. Maybe some of the poetry and other literature-textbook selections I'd taught earlier in the semester—the potent, raw evocations of war's hideousness—had created in my students' minds revulsion enough to validate the conscientious-objector mind-set. Think John Hersey's *Hiroshima*. Think "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner" by Randall Jarrell (www.rjgeib.com/thoughts/gunner/gunner.html). Think "Dulce et Decorum Est" by Wilfred Owen (www.rjgeib.com/heroes/owen/owen.html).

At the high school, U.S. Army recruiters are permitted to set up their displays near the gym or cafeteria, in the hall. They can't sign up students on school property, but they can pal around with the kids and spin alluring stories about travel and adventure. Occasionally they even bring their monstrous, jazzily painted tractor trailer and leave it like a brown steel death trap at the far edge of the lot designated for student cars.

One week, my husband says, the principal's voice came over the intercom announcing that teachers, if they wanted, could take their classes out to the truck in the parking lot to see the weapons simulators. "May we go?" asked the ninth graders in my husband's class. "Absolutely not," he yelled. "We need fewer people wanting to kill, not more."

The students, he says, shushed up fast. (To learn more about these specially outfitted semis, go here: <http://www.usarec.army.mil/MSBn/Docu->

[ments/MSBN_USER_Guide.pdf](#))

A third story I took to the elementary school for my third graders, Roald Dahl's *The Magic Finger*, wasn't expressly Christian or about loving your enemies exactly. The girl puts a curse on the family next door, avid hunters, when they come trooping joyously home with another deer carcass tied upside down by the hooves. She hates how they kill for the fun of it.

So when they go out hunting again and mow down 16 ducks, the curse kicks in. Four more ducks fly over—but the shooters keep missing. Weird.

Next morning the family members wake up to discover they've shrunk. They've grown duck wings in place of arms. The family flaps out the window and into the sky, and four oversized ducks with arms instead of wings move into the house. The family spends the day building a nest in a high tree, where they huddle miserably the whole livelong night.

In the morning, they find themselves staring down into the barrels of their own guns. No, no, the people screech, don't shoot. Why not? ask the ducks. Weren't you always shooting at us?

You'll have to find out for yourself what happens

'May we go?' asked the ninth graders in my husband's class. 'Absolutely not,' he yelled. 'We need fewer people wanting to kill, not more.'

next. I assure you, the third graders writhed in excitement. They got it—the unimpeachable logic. Even if Jesus never said anything about loving ducks, not shooting makes sense—not bringing down our enemies by harming them. Schoolchildren need to know this. I can't be reminded often enough. Some stories more than others tell the truth.



Shirley Kurtz is a member of Pinto (Md.) Mennonite Church and author of a novel, *Sticking Points* (shirleykurtzbooks.blogspot.com).



Alex / creativecommons.org

Psalm 139

paraphrased for victims of dementia

by Nancy S. Kaufman

O God, I am lost in a cloud of my mind, but you understand my thoughts buried within me.

When I wander, pace without direction, and can't control what my body does,

You know my heart, my inner core, who I really am.

Though I cannot communicate with words,

You know all I want to say.

I am yearning, searching to find myself, some way to connect; I want to ask, "Do you know me?"

God replies with a quiet comfort, reassuring, "I know you."

I am frantic! I am lost! I search all hours of the day!

You are always with me, beside me, a calm presence in my chaos.

Once in a while I can clear through the fog and make a connection, other times hopelessly lost.

At times, I feel no one can possibly love me; I am too buried in my disease.

I am in complete darkness, alone.

But there you are, sitting beside me.

I remember now—you were there when I was a child, held in my mother's arms.

So much promise and love.

You were the one who made me—I was perfect, whole and free.

I took all of that for granted.

Even when the disease began to seep and overtake my mind,

You still loved me, in spite of all you knew ahead in my life's journey, so unfathomable to me.

You still traveled with me in my walk.

My whole being wants to explode with how you care and love me.

Your presence within even me. This can't be measured.

No matter what I do outwardly, you are within my core that can't be touched by the disease.

Why can't I be free from the chains of my mind?

This disease overwhelms me!

This is not the path I chose.

But then my mind comes back to you. In my weariness.

Having you here beside me, within me. This is all that matters.

I am still.



Nancy S. Kaufman is a member of Trinity Mennonite Church in Hillsboro, Kan. She says she wrote this while working with hospice patients.

A community of character

Jesus calls us to be servants of one another.

by Earl Sears

The blind see while the sighted do not. Insiders are outsiders. Outsiders are insiders.

In Mark 10: 35-45, Jesus' disciples assert a bold request for power. They demand due for sacrifices they made in choosing to follow Jesus. They say, "Grant one of us to sit at your right hand and one at your left hand in your glory." We shouldn't be too critical or judgmental; we might well have asked for the same. After all, these disciples left careers and homes to follow Jesus. They sought roles equivalent to Prime Minister and Secretary of State. Any responsible liberation movement would have allotted this right; it is the wisdom of power.

Jesus responds with supreme irony. He asks them, "Can you drink of the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" The disciples jump up and down shouting, "Yes, yes!" and wonder what they were finally going to get. Jesus says, "You will indeed share my cup, but the intention you seek is not mine to give. You have not yet understood my kind of kingdom."

In fact, what these disciples get is the opposite of what they expect. They desire



Often those with little know instinctively the wisdom of generosity. They understand this wisdom far beyond what we with relative wealth know.

pomp and circumstance and royalty like the Herodian Temple in the walls of Jerusalem. Instead, they survive as servants working in the streets for the early church. They endure persecution and disrespect. Indeed, the final image of the “right and left hand of Jesus” turns out to be two thieves, each nailed to his own cross.

We must notice that blind healing stories frame this central section of Mark. The blind see while the sighted do not. Insiders are outsiders. Outsiders are insiders. Here, conflict arises between Jesus and his disciples, who resist the call to humility he preaches and lives.

In contrast, the later text of Hebrews, written between 60 and 90 A.D., shows understanding of Jesus’ call for servanthood. We know the writers of this later text had a contemporary model in Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:6), a well-known priest figure who served his people with humility. So what happened in the interim between the writer of Mark and the writer of Hebrews that created this radically different understanding among Jesus’ followers? That event we call Jesus’ death and his Resurrection. We know the truth of Jesus’ kingdom when we recognize that Resurrection comes after humiliation and death.

When the disciples dreamed of power and privilege, they were able to hear in Jesus’ teachings only what they wanted to hear. Most of us do this until some event causes us to see in a new way. Pastor Richard Michael (*Christian Century*, October 2011) in his first sermon after 9-11-01 stated, “We are now seen by the world as having joined the ranks of those who know poverty. We ... a people of great wealth and resources, for a moment have opportunity to join Lazarus in a beggar’s view of the world ... here we can learn about value and priorities, it is the wisdom of the poor ... perhaps we can change our prayers from ‘God bless America’ to ‘God make America a blessing to the nations.’”

Subsequent events proved that this country could not sustain so radical a vision. Our leadership continuously refuses to even consider such wisdom. But we, the church, are compelled to heed Jesus’ call to create a community of character. We ought to live as a reminder of what Richard Michael calls “the wisdom of the poor.”

So, like the writer of Hebrews, who looked to Melchizedek, for example, where do I look to understand this wisdom?

In 1962, my wife and I spent time in Puerto Rico. Here, we got a small introduction to this wisdom. Late one Sunday evening, after a worship service, we were taken to Coamo Ribba by jeep on a horse trail over the hills. We came to a wooden house built precariously on stilts with a small outdoor kitchen. At 9 p.m., we were served a meal of arroz con pollo, a relatively rich expense for this family. But they wanted to offer this generosity to their guests from the north.

Many times since, my wife and I have directly experienced such acts of generosity from the poor. I am not talking about those living in abject poverty, neither am I advocating for abject poverty, but often those with little know instinctively the wisdom of generosity. They understand this wisdom far beyond what we with relative wealth know. Statistics are consistent. When incomes are higher, the percentage of that income given to charitable causes is lower.

People who are not wealthy are often aware of their dependence on each other. People who are not wealthy are often aware that everything and every action is a gift from the divine.

We who are not poor need to repent our proud illusion of self-sufficiency. To live as a community of character is to remember that truth Jesus offered to his disciples on that day they asked for privilege: “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve”(Mark 10:43-45).

That the last are first and the first are last—this truth we still find hard to understand. This truth challenges our modern society. This truth teaches us how those who live in a shabby wooden house on stilts can lead us toward the richness of a life lived in loving and generous humility.



Earl Sears is a member of the Mennonite Congregation of Boston. This article is adapted from a sermon he gave there.

Discipling the disinterested



Aaron Kaufman is president of Virginia Mennonite Missions.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.—Jesus

It's time for us to invest at least as much energy in making disciples next door as we do around the world.

Mennonite World Conference membership grew by almost a third in the past decade, from 1.3 million in 2003 to nearly 1.8 million today. There are more Anabaptists in Africa than in North America, more in Latin America than in Europe. Meanwhile, membership in Mennonite Church USA continues to drop. Over the past dozen years, we have lost nearly 1 in 5 of our members.

Clearly we have some work to do.

But what if our next-door neighbors—or even our own children—don't want to be disciplined? What if they find laughable the claim that Jesus is Lord or inconceivable the way of life he invites us to live? How do we disciple the disinterested?

Perhaps the place to start is with **building a bridge of trust**. Many people today distrust Christians and the church, and rightly so. Too many of us look too little like Jesus.

According to Dave Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons in their book *UnChristian* (Baker, 2007) a majority of non-Christians view Christianity as too political, old-fashioned, hypocritical, judgmental and anti-homosexual.

What if rather than defending ourselves when criticized, we simply said, "I'm sorry"? Or imagine if we all refused to argue with or avoid our antagonists and committed ourselves to bless and pray for them instead.

A second way to draw people to discipleship is to **live a life that evokes curiosity**. Not everyone is as closed to Jesus and the church as statistics indicate. Our uncommon actions and attitudes can pique their interest.

Evoking curiosity used to be easy when Mennonites wore distinctive dress. But how often has distinctive dress pointed people to the Lord? External identity markers tend to isolate us in a Christian subculture rather than invite thoughtful questions about who we are and why.

As assimilated Mennonites, we have the opportunity to be different in the things that matter.

A while back, when our next-door neighbor's

father passed away, Laura, my wife, and I did what anyone at our church would have done for us. We asked them if we could bring them a meal. "Sure," they said, looking both surprised and touched. "That would be great." We set a date, and Laura baked chicken and pumpkin pie. For weeks afterward, they thanked us for that small gesture of care.

A third way to relate to those who have been inoculated against the gospel is to **ask questions rather than rush to give answers**. And by questions, I don't mean, "If you die tonight, where will you spend eternity?"

I'm referring to the kinds of questions Jesus himself asked. The Gospels record at least 25 times when people ask Jesus direct questions requiring a simple answer. He only gives straight answers to four. The other 21? Jesus responds with questions of his own, such as:

- What do you want me to do for you? (Matthew 20:32)
- What is written in the law? How do you read it? (Luke 10:26)

Genuine questions can disarm people and activate conversations of the heart.

While serving in Colombia as mission workers some years ago, we met a man named Pachito at church one evening. It was his first time there since childhood. Not realizing what I was getting into, I invited him to come by our house any time he wanted to talk.

To my surprise, the next evening we heard a knock at our gate. It was Pachito. His first words were, "Does God really speak to people?"

"Let's go for a walk," I said. I asked him to share what was on his mind. He spoke of his love of art and music, of his memories attending church as a boy. Eventually, he opened up about his struggles with substance abuse and unhealthy, unfaithful relationships.

I felt prompted to say, "You may have been unfaithful, but God has never stopped being faithful. He can change your life if you're willing to let him. But it won't be easy."

A year later, I joined the local pastor, Jaime Guevara, in baptizing Pachito.

Here's a modest proposal for witness in our increasingly post-Christian culture. Let's treat our non-Christian neighbors the way we do our brothers and sisters in Christ. **TM**

Let's treat our non-Christian neighbors the way we do our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Do women cause the church anxiety?

There is a lot of talk about the “catastrophe” in Mennonite Church USA brought on by Mountain States Mennonite Conference licensing Theda Good for ministry. Theda has an M.Div. from Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Va., is gifted for ministry and happens to be married to another woman. But what if Theda is just the latest woman to make the church uncomfortable? Perhaps the current “crisis” reveals that as a church we have not yet settled the question that was labeled a threat decades ago, that of women in leadership and ministry.

We don’t have to go back too far to read about other women in ministry who have been accused of creating trouble in the church. In the past few years, the Mennonite press has reported about women who have performed weddings or say they are open to performing ceremonies for same-sex couples.

Joanna Harader, Megan Ramer, myself and Joetta Handrich Schlabach had their credentials reviewed; Sheri Hostetler was twice sanctioned; Kathleen Temple had her credentials revoked.

Only one man in recent memory has been in the press and sanctioned for a similar action: Weldon Nisly. [Editor’s note: Randall Spaulding, Michael Schaadt and Richard Lichty had their credentials revoked; Randall and Michael for being in a same-sex relationship and Richard because he was pastor when Germantown Mennonite Church was excommunicated.]

This is not an exhaustive list of either women or men who have officiated such ceremonies or had their credentials revoked, but one might ask why we do not read in the Mennonite press of more men participating in similar ceremonies? Are male ministers not engaging in this kind of ministry? Are they opting out for ecclesial or theological reasons? Do they decline out of fear for their position and status? Or have the powers that be decided not to make their actions public, to save face for everyone involved?

It could be that women in Mennonite Church USA have a different reading of the Bible or approach theology with a different lens and thus do ministry in ways that men do not. Or perhaps the

experience of women in ministry in Mennonite Church USA continues to be so tenuous that to step across a perceived polity line is just one more of the many risks we must take to do our jobs.

We might make a few other observations. The women named above are pastors in urban areas or university towns, where their gifts for ministry are not the exception. These women have developed a leadership style that allows them to act with the backing of their local congregations even if not with the backing of their conferences.

Since they have the support of their local congregations, they are assured they will not lose their jobs. One might ask if they have made the assessment that there are few options as women in ministry. If mobility is limited, there is freedom to follow their understanding of Scripture and the leading of the Spirit.

The trajectory for women in Mennonite Church USA is still one that for the most part ends in the small, local congregation. (The Women in Leadership Project identified that in 2009 there were fewer women in leadership in the Mennonite church than there were 20 years earlier. And women were not moving into executive positions. A quick look at the Mennonite agencies makes it is easy to see that five years later there are still no women as executives of Mennonite agencies. It is not that there are not women in leadership in these agencies but that they are not the lead executives).

On the other hand, we now have two women leaders in elected but unpaid positions: Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, moderator of Mennonite Church USA, and Patricia Shelly, moderator-elect. Is this progress, or are Elizabeth and Patty called now to clean up the mess that has been created since the merger brought us Mennonite Church USA?

Perhaps it is naive to wonder if the anxiety would be roiling this much if it had been men that had taken the lead in performing same-sex ceremonies. But one wonders if Mennonite Church USA is still so captivated by patriarchy that when women dare step out in leadership they are put in their place by those who hold the power in the institution? **TM**



Cynthia Lapp is pastor of Hyattsville (Md.) Mennonite Church.

Are male ministers not engaging in this kind of ministry?

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

MWC Assembly 2015 to include scattered locations

Assembly Scattered will occur before and after the July 21-26, 2015, assembly.

Liesa Unger, chief international events officer for Mennonite World Conference says that “[MWC] Assemblies come with many parts. Two of them are Assembly Gathered and Assembly Scattered.” Unger, who is from Regensburg, Germany, is overseeing the planning of Pennsylvania 2015, the next MWC Assembly, to be held in July 2015.

“Assembly Gathered will happen at one place—Harrisburg, Pa.—during one week, July 21-26, 2015,” she says. “Assembly Scattered will take place at multiple sites, with some events before Assembly Gathered and some following.”

Assembly Scattered first occurred as part of the MWC Assembly in Calcutta in January 1997. Because few Mennonites live in Calcutta, MWC leaders worked with churches throughout India and in other countries in Asia to host travelers on their way to or from Calcutta. Visitors experienced church life in communities across the region, and locals who weren’t able to attend the Calcutta Assembly fellowshipped in their home communities with sisters and brothers from

other parts of the world who were traveling to or from the Assembly.

“Many of the Assembly Scattered sites for Pennsylvania 2015 also include visits to nearby historical or cultural landmarks. Hosts will introduce their guests to places and activities they’ve read about. But this is more than tourism. By experiencing each other’s settings, we learn to know each other better,” says Unger.

Assembly Scattered will take place in more than 10 communities during July 2015.

“This opportunity for fellowship flows both ways,” says Unger. “Visitors learn about day-to-day life in the United States and Canada while also worshipping in Anabaptist-related congregations. And locals are enriched by opening their homes and churches to ‘family’ they would otherwise not have known. This is how lifelong relationships become real.”

Details about Assembly Scattered are available on the registration form for PA 2015 at www.mwc-cmm.org/pa2015.
—Phyllis Pellman Good for Mennonite World Conference

Assembly Scattered opportunities

Before Assembly Gathered: Pennsylvania locations

1. “Mennonites of Lancaster County, Pa.” Visit several Mennonite congregations, dating from the 1700s, which are alive and well in beautiful Lancaster County. Hear their joys and challenges; worship and fellowship with them. Learn about early Mennonite interaction with Native Americans. Tour the oldest home in Lancaster County (www.hansherr.org/home/herrhouse). Visit a farm operated by Amish and a modern farm operated by Mennonites. Become acquainted with Eastern Mennonite Missions in western Lancaster County. From 9:30 a.m., July 18, through the morning of July 21.

2. “Mennonite Farms of Lancaster County, Pa.” Visit some of the farms owned for generations by families who are members of the 300-year-old Mellinger Mennonite Church. Learn about modern farm operations in North America. Why do young people choose farming? Enjoy worship, fellowship and recreation with the congregation on Sunday. From 8 a.m., July 17, through 7:30 p.m., July 20.

3. “Fun and Fellowship with Pittsburgh Mennonite Church.” Discover this urban, multigenerational church’s efforts in environmental stewardship and sustainability, fellowship, peace and justice. Learn the steel-industry beginnings of the “City of Bridges” and its rising economy in technol-

ogy and education. From the evening of July 17 through the morning of July 20.

4. “Anabaptist Welcome and Witness in Philadelphia Since 1683.” Beginning in 1683, Philadelphia was the primary port of entry for Mennonite immigrants. Today, 332 years later, 28 Anabaptist congregations in greater Philly worship in nine languages. Join multicultural worship with testimonies of how God is at work in the city. Experience three urban ministry sites. Visit historical sites in one of the United States’ oldest cities. From noon, July 17, through the evening of July 19.

5. “Living Discipleship in Community.” Visit one of two Bruderhof communities in Pennsylvania: Spring Valley or New Meadow Run. Join in community gardening, work projects, meals, games, outdoor activities and campfire fellowship. From 11 a.m., July 17, through noon on July 19.

Before Assembly Gathered: Eastern U.S. locations

6. “Mennonites, Monuments and African-American History in Washington, D.C.” Take guided and interpreted walking tours of national monuments (focusing on peace monuments, among them Martin Luther King Jr.’s) and of Georgetown (focusing on African-American history). Includes attending area Mennonite congregations. From morn-

ing, July 17, through evening, July 19.

7. “Diverse Anabaptist Communities in Miami Metro Area.” Experience Miami and Dade County, Fla., home to 50 Brethren in Christ congregations, 10 Mennonite and three Amor Viviente fellowships, with members from Hispanic, Haitian, Anglo, Garifuna and other cultural groups. An introduction to immigration realities through testimonies of immigrants and those who offer assistance. Join in spirited worship and fellowship. From July 17, through July 20.

8. “Join North Carolina’s Six Historic African-American and One Hispanic Mennonite Brethren Congregations for a Weekend of Worship, Music and Inspiration.” Learn how the only MB congregations in the eastern United States began during segregation in the South and about their vibrant ministry today in the mountain communities of eastern North Carolina. Enjoy fellowship on the evening of July 17, a visit to the churches and their ministries on July 18 and a final worship service ending at noon, July 19.

9. “Living Discipleship in Community.” Visit one of two Bruderhof communities in New York: Foxhill or Bellvale. Join in community gardening, work projects, meals, games, outdoor activities and campfire fellowship. From 11 a.m., July 17, through noon on July 19.

Before Assembly Gathered: North American locations

10. “DOOR San Antonio (Discovering Opportunities for Outreach and Reflection) in Partnership with San Antonio Mennonite Church, Texas.” Hear from locals about immigration. Witness life at the U.S.-Mexican border. Volunteer with nonprofit agencies in San Antonio. From July 17 through July 19.

11. “Mennonite, Mennonite Brethren and Brethren in Christ Churches in the Pacific Region.” Experience the diversity of MWC-related churches—Indonesian, Latino, Nigerian, Congolese and Korean—while interacting with church members and visiting outreach ministries and church institutions in Fresno, Los Angeles County and San Bernardino/Riverside counties in California. From July 16 through July 20.

12. “Walking with God in the City and the Wilderness: Anchorage, Alaska.” Fellowship with members of Prince of Peace Mennonite Church (the northernmost Mennonite church in the world), visit ministry locations of the voluntary service unit, engage Alaska’s Native cultures and hike and sightsee in the wilderness. From early July 16 through late July 20.

13. “Participate in the 105th annual conference of Conservative Mennonite Conference (CMC) in Hartsville Ohio.” Our theme will be “Step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25). You’re welcome to join with representatives from over 100 North American CMC churches in worship, workshops, discussion and fellowship. Begins the evening of July 16 and concludes at noon on July 19.

After Assembly Gathered locations

14. “Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties: Anabaptist Engagement with Government in the U.S. Capital.” Visit and converse with various Anabaptist-related advocacy offices in Washington, D.C. From morning, July 27, through evening, July 29, or morning, July 30.

15. “DOOR San Antonio (Discovering Opportunities for Outreach and Reflection) in Partnership with San Antonio Mennonite Church, Texas.” Hear from locals about immigration. Witness life at the U.S.-Mexican border. Volunteer with nonprofit agencies in San Antonio. From July 27 through July 29.

Pending Assembly Scattered location

16. New York. Visit with members of the Anabaptist-related Garifuna-, Spanish- and English-speaking churches in at least three of New York City’s boroughs.

Local tours add to PA 2015 experience

Registrants for PA 2015 will be able to choose from 47 tours while attending the Mennonite World Conference Assembly, to be held July 21-26, 2015, in Harrisburg, Pa.

Ten full-day tours will take place on July 20. Registrants may choose among visits to Washington, Philadelphia, New York City and several Anabaptist communities in eastern Pa. One of these is a full day in Lancaster County, where participants will meet with Old Order Amish and Mennonites, have dinner in an Amish home, and join in an evening singing with four Old Order groups.

Areas of focus for half-day tours offered during the Assembly include local historical sites of Mennonite-related groups, activities and locations of current-day Anabaptists, U.S. history, general interest and general interest/family friendly.

Among the destinations of these 37 half-day tours are active, nonfarming Amish businesses; Native American village sites, as well as the Lancaster Longhouse of the eastern woodland Indians; Underground Railroad locations of 1800-1860, used to help enslaved African Americans; and the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, designed to assimilate Native American children from 140 tribes into the United States’ majority culture (1879-1918).

Other tours will visit a used Old Order Mennonite meeting-house and an active buggy and carriage shop, the Ephrata Cloister where the *Martyrs Mirror* was first published in German and a greenhouse employing guest workers from Mexico, the Spanish-speaking Brethren in Christ congregation where many of them worship and stories from the workers.

There will be walking tours of historic downtown Lancaster and the nearby town of Strasburg, kayaking on the Susquehanna River and hiking the Appalachian Trail.

Details are available on the registration form for PA 2015 at www.mwc-cmm.org/pa2015.—*Phyllis Pellman Good*

MCC helps provide needed supplies in Gaza and Iraq

MCC works with its partners to provide relief in the war-torn region.

Photo courtesy of Al Najd Development Forum



A Gazan man who just had received two mattresses from Mennonite Central Committee's partner Al Najd Development Forum talks with others who gathered at Al Najd's office for MCC-supported supplies in late July. The people were displaced from their homes as a result of the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) through one of its longtime partners in Gaza, Al Najd Development Forum, provided emergency bedding supplies to about 2,000 displaced people, or 150 households, in east and north Gaza in late July.

The \$35,000 project included items such as mattresses, sheets, pillows and plastic mats.

By the fifth week of the most recent Hamas-Israel conflict, BBC reported that the Palestinian death toll had risen above 1,900, the majority civilians. More than 60 Israelis, most of them soldiers, have died.

Earlier in July, MCC and Al Najd completed a \$25,000 food distribution of locally purchased items to 230 families in Gaza. MCC is assessing a potential further food response.

Additional needs abound in Gaza, according to a July 23 report from the U.N.'s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Among these are water and sanitation services. Six sewage pumping stations and 15 wells are not operating, meaning that 1.2 million people, more than two-thirds the population of Gaza, have limited or no access to water and sanitation.

Al Najd is a community-based organization begun by women to provide services for women and their families.

"MCC continues to communicate daily with MCC partner Al Najd in Gaza," says Joanna Hiebert Bergen, a representative for MCC Palestine and Israel. "They are exhausted yet work tirelessly to get food and supplies out to families who

have had their homes and livelihoods destroyed and often are grieving the loss of relatives as well. ... The situation is absolutely desperate. Yet all of MCC's partner connections continue to work to assist those most affected." Hiebert Bergen and her spouse, Dan Bergen, also an MCC representative, are from Winnipeg, Manitoba.

In July, MCC joined 33 other organizations in calling for "a ceasefire and sustained solution towards peace." The statement and signatories can be found at mcc.org/callforceceasefire.

MCC and its partner organizations continue to meet needs of families displaced by conflict in Iraq with a mid-July distribution of locally purchased food and personal hygiene items. Supplies in Garmawa Camp in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq were running low when MCC and partner Zakho Small Villages Project arrived with food packages in two large trucks.

The packages of rice, lentils, oil and other cooking staples, plus basic personal hygiene items such as soap, were given to more than 230 families living in the camp. They had been driven from the city of Mosul by the militant group that now calls itself Islamic State.

In June, MCC and another partner in Iraq, Al Amal, distributed food and other vital items to internally displaced persons living with family members and friends in a nearby province. Most IDPs in northern Iraq are with host families, but camps like Garmawa, established by the United Nations, are beginning to be set up.—*Ed Nyce of MCC*



Ryan Rodrick Beiler

Fourteen-year-old Yusuf Yahiat carries a food package distributed by MCC partner Zakho Small Villages Project at the Garmawa Camp for displaced people in northern Iraq. Like most people living in the camp, Yusuf and his family fled the city of Mosul after its takeover by the militant group that now calls itself Islamic State.

MCC urges compassion for Central American migrants

MCC has committed an initial \$30,000 to respond to the crisis.

With an unprecedented number of Central American families fleeing violence and poverty in their home countries and arriving at the U.S. border, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has committed \$30,000 to an initial response and is assessing other potential assistance.

“Our call to welcome the stranger is bigger than ever,” stresses MCC U.S. immigration education coordinator Saulo Padilla, adding that in his six years in the position he has never witnessed as many women and children at the border as he has in recent trips.

In visiting at centers serving those who have been deported into Mexico, meeting people at bus stops on both sides of the border and interacting with Mennonite churches who are caring for these immigrants in their own communities, he finds himself thinking of Matthew 18, especially verse 5: “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.”

MCC staff is working on details of this response, and more information is coming on these plans. Donations of money are welcome at donate.mcc.org/migrants, by calling 888-563-4676, or by sending donations to MCC U.S., 21

South 12th Street, Akron, PA 17501, specifying “Central American migrants.”

This is a continuation of long-standing MCC work. For years MCC has provided encouragement and resources to congregations to welcome newcomers to the United States, worked with Anabaptist churches to provide services for im-

Our call to welcome the stranger is bigger than ever.—Saul Padilla

migrants in the United States and supported projects to address the root causes of migration in Mexico and Central America so more people can choose not to leave home.

MCC invites you to pray for these families and to consider how you can advocate on their behalf. Go to mcc.org/act-for-migrant-families to see an MCC U.S. Washington Office action alert with more background information, a faith reflection and suggestions for action.—*Ed Nyce of Mennonite Central Committee*

Revised polity manual now available

The manual remains a working document until delegate body affirms it

A newly revised polity manual, *A Shared Understanding of Church Leadership: Polity Manual for Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA*, has been released as a working document. It is a joint effort of the two denominations.

The manual builds upon a previous resource, *A Mennonite Polity for Ministerial Leadership*, that was written almost 20 years ago prior to the transformation process that established the two denominations.

In June, the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board named this resource as one of the foundational documents to guide Mennonite Church USA during this time of discernment surrounding the LGBT issue.

The revised polity manual seeks to create a common understanding of how leadership is a service to the local congregations, area conferences and the wider denominations.

A Shared Understanding of Church Leadership remains a working document until it is affirmed by the delegate body at the Mennonite Church USA convention in 2015 in Kansas City, Mo. Mennonite Church Canada’s Christian Formation

Council has already given approval of the manual, and it was taken to the Mennonite Church Canada Spring Leadership Assembly this year.

Denominational ministers Karen Martens Zimmerly (MC Canada), Terry Shue and Nancy Kauffmann (both MC USA) coordinated the revision process. They listened to pastors, area church/conference ministers and other current and former church leaders for input and review.

Feedback helped shape the final product, which is based on the realities of ministry experiences.

The introduction states, “The revisions in this book are a way of naming the missional church we understand God is calling us to become.”

Updates include a revised ethics section, clarification on managing credentials, best practices for resigned or retired pastors, and clarifying the work and relationships among area conferences, among others.

It is available at the MennoMedia store, www.mennomedia.org, or by calling 800-245-7894 (U.S.) or 800-631-6535 (Canada).—*MennoMedia staff*

Mennonite center creates international peacemakers

Hyun Hur, Sue Park-Hur open space for conversations among Korean immigrants.

John Roth



Hyun Hur, Su Park-Hur, with daughter Lynn Hur (standing) and sons Yul Hur and Guhn Hur (at table), are co-directors of the ReconciliAsian peace center in Los Angeles.

The ReconciliAsian peace center brings peace and reconciliation training to the Korean-American community in Los Angeles.

Co-directors Hyun Hur and Sue Park-Hur, who launched the center in January 2013, say that the tools of peace and conflict transformation are gifts the Mennonite church can offer other denominations. The Hurs attend Mountain View Mennonite Church in Upland, Calif., where they were installed as co-pastors in January.

More than 600 people have participated in programs organized by ReconciliAsian over the past year and a half of the peace center's existence. The couple has coordinated day-long seminars, month-long discipleship workshops, shorter seminars and weekly book club meetings. Every session addresses peace and conflict transformation from a Mennonite perspective and offers practical guidance on healthy ways to navigate conflict and work for peace.

"One of our primary roles of reconciliation is to create a space for these types of conversations that you wouldn't normally talk about in the church," says Sue Park-Hur.

When they started ReconciliAsian, they were pastors for their house church, Church for Others, in Temple City, Calif., the only Korean Mennonite church on the West Coast, and the Hurs felt isolated from the other Korean churches in Los Angeles.

"We wanted to connect with other Korean churches," says Hyun Hur. "We tried to think about what gift the Men-

nonites bring to other Christians, and we saw that we could build bridges through the peacemaking and conflict transformation work that Mennonites have done."

All churches deal with conflict, and the Hurs knew of many Korean immigrant churches that had struggled with disagreements and had split rather than work through issues.

"Primarily, we want to help them know their new identity here as immigrants," says Sue Park-Hur. "When you're shaken up about who you are, you feel lost and like you can't do anything. We wanted to teach practical things like 'I' messages and active listening skills, but we realized that to really touch the people and to reframe their understanding of conflict, we had to teach them Scripture and reframe their theology. We want them to see that their identity is to be an international peacemaker for God's kingdom."

Hyun Hur says they use scriptures such as 2 Corinthians 5:17-20, about God's ministry of reconciliation, and Ephesians 2, where Jesus reconciles Jews and Gentiles. These teach people that a Christian's mission on earth is to participate in Jesus' reconciling ministry.

Korean leaders from different Christian denominations are now helping lead ReconciliAsian sessions. The spring justice and peacemaking discipleship school was held at a Presbyterian church.

These leaders also seek out the couple for their specialization. In July, Hyun Hur led a conflict and church seminar at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif., with 10 Korean pastors.

"Now [Korean pastors] see him as more than just a local pastor but as a director of an organization that talks about conflict—and who doesn't have conflict?" says Sue Park-Hur. "Before, they never would have asked him to talk because he was a Mennonite, but now they see him as a resource person in this field and are more open to talk about the struggles in their church and ask for help."

In July, the Hurs visited the Mennonite Church USA offices in Elkhart, Ind., to share about their ministry and to meet some Mennonite leaders. The tie to Mennonite agencies started at the beginning of their ministry, when they connected with Hannah Heinzekehr, who then worked as a church relations associate for Mennonite Mission Network.

"I was impressed with how passionate they were about Jesus' call to peacemaking," says Heinzekehr, who is now director of communication for Mennonite Church USA. "It was an opportunity for Mennonite Mission Network to support people who wanted to do mission in their community. They are genuine bridge-builders because they are so relational. They truly are mission workers in L.A."—*Sara Alvarez of Mennonite Mission Network*

Church members bond with Chinese youth

Youth and adults at Gehman Mennonite Church volunteer at English camp.

Members of Gehman Mennonite Church in Adamstown, Pa., and 15 Chinese youth began new friendships through an English camp, cross-cultural activities, and home stays provided by Gehman and other local congregations July 20-Aug. 2.

"I've been a classroom teacher for 32 years, and this English camp for Chinese students is at the top of my list of favorite teaching experiences," said teacher Bonnie Walls.

"We've been hosting Chinese students for eight years," said Mark Hannay, camp coordinator. "We were encouraged to begin by an Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) worker in China we've partnered with financially for many years. We had a positive experience the first year and have been doing it ever since."

The Chinese students met at the church every weekday morning for Bible stories and prayer with members of the church, followed by an English lesson. The students chose English names and learned English vocabulary and grammar. Youth from Gehman Mennonite volunteered as mentors for the Chinese students.

"We organize the lessons so that the students learn vocabulary words they can use," said Walls. Afternoons included miniature golf, horseback riding, amusement parks and seeing *Moses at Sight and Sound Theatre* in Ronks, Pa.

In addition to the camp experience, Hannay worked with a planning committee to ensure that students got the most out of their experience with host families.

"The Chinese students come from one-child families, so they don't have the experience of living with siblings," said Hannay. "For the most part we had just one student per host family. That way, in addition to being immersed in English, they also get a real sense of family life in the United States."

Hannay encouraged host families to keep their normal routines, including family meal times and devotions, so that the Chinese students could experience Christian family life.

Another aspect of Gehman Mennonite's ministry among Chinese people is annual trips to China during the Christmas season. "Gehman members connect with 'our' EMM worker in China and host Christmas parties in universities and schools," said Hannay. "Chinese students are very curious about Christmas, and in that context we can share the story of the birth of Christ."

Hannay emphasized that these exchanges are important for strengthening ongoing relationships with their Chinese friends. "One of the host families from two summers ago went to China on one of the Christmas teams, and while there they met the family of the student they hosted," said Hannay. "It was really encouraging to hear about the way they connected with each other."

Walls said several of the youth from the church who volunteered at this summer's English camp are considering joining the Christmas team in December.—*Chris Fretz of EMM*



Chris Fretz

Youth volunteers (from left to right) Rachel Musselman, Abby Horning and Hannah Gockley toss bags of ice cream ingredients back and forth to make "baggie ice cream" at the English camp for Chinese students hosted by Gehman Mennonite Church this summer.

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Students witness hope amid conflict in Palestine

Three Goshen College students spend the summer serving in Bethlehem.

Goshen photo



Goshen (Ind.) College students Kiernan Wright, a junior from Orville, Ohio, Sam Carlson, a junior from Goshen, and Jessica Davila, a junior from Goshen, served at the Wi'am Conflict Resolution Center in Bethlehem this summer.

When Sam Carlson walked to work in the morning, he stepped over hundreds of tear gas canisters, stun grenades and smoke bombs. Sometimes, he could feel tear gas lingering in the air.

Carlson, a junior peace, justice and conflict studies (PJCS) major from Goshen, Ind., served at the Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center (Wi'am) in Bethlehem, Palestine, this summer. After making the decision to spend the summer in Palestine, he was accepted into Goshen College's Service Inquiry Program, which offers students the opportunity to serve with a church-related service or mission agency.

Carlson served in Bethlehem along with Jessica Davila, a junior from Goshen, and Kiernan Wright, a junior from Orville, Ohio. Clare Maxwell, a 2013 graduate, also served alongside them until her return in June.

Bethlehem is in the West Bank, a territory to the east of Israel that is home to more than 2 million Palestinians. The West Bank is occupied by Israel and enclosed by a separation barrier that restricts Palestinian movement.

Although the region has been in the news a lot, the West Bank is separate from Gaza, a strip of land to the west of Israel, where there is heavy fighting between the Israeli army and Hamas.

Though Goshen College does not encourage students to visit dangerous locations, the students arrived during a period of relative calm between the two states, before tensions escalated in June.

Witnessing the conflict

Carlson, who lived in the heart of Bethlehem since the

end of May, witnessed nonviolent protests broken up by tear gas and stun grenades. He says the conflict became increasingly violent during his time in the West Bank.

Carlson worked as a children's camp counselor at Wi'am, which works to resolve disputes within the Palestinian community through traditional Arab mediation as well as Western models of conflict resolution. During his first week at the summer camp, two days were cut short by nearby fighting.

"The first day, there was loud gunfire on the street [near] the center," Carlson says. "The children were rushed into the building, seeking safety behind closed doors. The second occurrence came when a cloud of tear gas migrated over the center's facilities. Again, the children were rushed inside."

Tear gas completely debilitates a person, rendering them short of breath and without sight. It's a terrible, terrible feeling.—Sam Carlson

Like most Americans, Carlson had never encountered tear gas before.

"It completely debilitates a person, rendering them short of breath and without sight," Carlson says. "It's a terrible, terrible feeling."

Davila says it was a transformative experience to see the frustration, pain and sadness the Palestinians experience as the conflict becomes increasingly violent.

"I think the most life-changing experience I had in Palestine was witnessing the occupation," she says. "I cannot help feeling a moral responsibility to try to do something about the horrible things I have witnessed."

Service in Palestine

Carlson decided to visit Palestine with the Service Inquiry Program in order to gain firsthand experience in two of his passions: nonviolent social change and the Arabic language.

Carlson, Davila and Wright are among about a dozen Goshen students who came to Palestine in the last few summers at the encouragement of Marcelle Zoughbi, a 2013 Goshen graduate and a Christian from Bethlehem, whose father is founder and director at Wi'am.

Carlson and Wright worked at Wi'am's summer camp as

children's counselors. This involved planning and facilitating daily activities, which included arts and crafts, singing, or organized sports and dabkeh—a traditional Palestinian dance. When the camp was not in session, Carlson and Wright wrote grant proposals for Wi'am.

Davila volunteered at Le Crèche, a Christian orphanage, and served on the medical team at Caritas Baby Hospital, which provides medical assistance to about 35,000 children.

Lifelong lessons

Carlson says he learned a lot about the Israel-Palestine conflict, as well as trauma and recovery.

He expresses frustration with the U.S. role in the conflict and the amount of news that goes unreported. Walking down the street, he often sees tear gas canisters with labels that read "Made in Jamestown, Pa."

"The United States is providing billions of dollars of weapons to the Israeli military," Carlson says. "As an American, I feel partially responsible."

He feels like his privilege as an American citizen shaped many of his experiences in Palestine.

"If my safety is threatened, I have the option of fleeing home," he says. "My Palestinian community, however, cannot flee back to the comforts of their homes."

Carlson says it was difficult to see the people around him being denied basic rights.

"I hope to continue work with Palestine in whatever capacity I can," Carlson says.

Hope for the future

As Carlson came to love Palestine and its culture, his experiences allowed him to see Palestine beyond the conflict it is known for.

The morning after Carlson arrived in Bethlehem, his neighbors—complete strangers at the time—hosted a feast. They opened up their home, serving him plate after plate of lemony olives, warm pita and crisp cucumbers.

"I've seen this sort of genuine compassion and hospitality

for the past two months," he says, "and every day I'm humbled."

Carlson has hope from one powerful moment from his experience. Following a particularly violent night, he attended

The morning after Carlson arrived in Bethlehem, his neighbors—complete strangers at the time—hosted a feast. They opened up their home, serving him plate after plate of lemony olives, warm pita and crisp cucumbers.

a morning worship service next to the Israeli separation barrier in Bethlehem.

"As we concluded the meditative worship, a small child said a prayer aloud," Carlson says. "At 8 years old, she prayed for the safety of all the children in Gaza. She prayed for peace in their minds and hearts."—*Kate Yoder of Goshen College*



Palestinian children at the Wi'am summer camp in Bethlehem.

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Native Assembly 2014 attracts many non-Native folks

Participants learn about Indigenous worldviews and experience.

Of the 250 or so gathered for Native Assembly 2014, held July 28-31 in Winnipeg, Manitoba, non-Native folks overwhelmingly outnumbered Native people.

A few months earlier, planners were concerned that not enough white church folks would attend.

The theme for the gathering was “Ears to Earth, Eyes to God,” which focused on the many references in Scripture that tie people to creation, to the land they occupy and the implications this holds for people of faith.

Vince Solomon led a workshop called “Where do Aboriginal Beliefs and Teachings Intersect with Scripture?” Solomon, the Aboriginal Neighbours Coordinator for MCC Manitoba, said, “There’s only one reason I became an Anglican priest, and that is Jesus Christ.”

Even as he underwent religious training, Solomon was rejected by white society. Fellow students marked his dorm room door with an X, warning others not to associate with him. Many of his own people have rejected him, asking why he chooses to be part of a church that hurt his people and why he is perpetuating that hurt. But in the midst of all that, Solomon recalled hearing God say, “I don’t think I ever told

you to stop being Native.”

Since then, Solomon has been recovering the theology of the land he grew up with. At the same time, he is studying Scripture to understand where Christianity lost the knowledge that the created order is the “stage of God’s revelation in history. ... If you don’t take care of it, the earth will vomit you out” (Leviticus 20:22).

“We see creation in everything. This does not mean animism, monism, polytheism or pantheism.” It was the Creator’s intention for First Nations people to understand God through the attributes revealed to them through the land, he said.

During the question-and-answer time, someone in the audience asked what bugs him most about Western non-Native culture. Solomon said: “Individuality. It should not supersede or get in the way of community.” Individuality, he added, exists in every culture at some level. But he is stunned by the way it trumps community and caring for one another in a non-Native society, he said.

Brander McDonald, the Indigenous Relations Coordinator for Mennonite Church British Columbia, led a workshop exploring Indigenous worldviews. “My grandmother taught me that I shouldn’t look someone in the eye when I first meet them,” he said. “She told me to look at their feet until I got to know them.” He said the Indigenous perspective is about harmony of body, mind, soul and our relationships with others. It places an emphasis on relationships, just as the Bible does, and it’s rooted in the land, a gift of the Creator, designed to provide all we need.

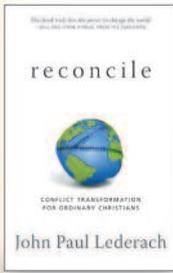
Another workshop explored the loss of Turtle Island, the Indigenous term for North America. Led by Sue and Harley Eagle, Mennonite Central Committee Canada Indigenous work coordinators, the Blaney Exercise had about 30 participants stand barefoot on an array of quilts. Each held a card detailing their fate: skulls, trains and buffalos, residential schools, medicine wheels.

Someone read the history of Canada’s relationship with Indigenous people. The British North America Act put “Indians and Lands reserved for Indians” under the control of the federal government. Spiritual practices were forbidden. Women were relegated to nonentities. Corners of blankets were folded up, forcing participants closer together, some onto foreign territory. The blankets are folded again and again, growing smaller and further apart.

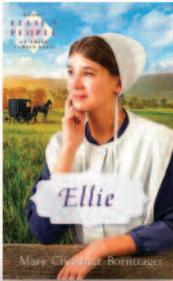
Eventually only a handful of participants held cards of the Medicine Wheel. They were the survivors. The exercise brought history to life in a new way for the non-Indigenous, who formed most of the group.—*Dan Dyck and Deborah Froese of Mennonite Church Canada*



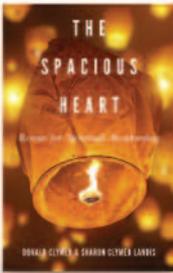
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Filipino pastors strengthen skills for next disaster

MCC works with a local Philippines organization in response to typhoon.



Pastors, from left, Philip Manlupa, Susan Garbe, Virgie Beduya (orange shirt), Lorenza Ecalde and Tony Mantua participate in a water rescue simulation that was part of a recent four-day peace, reconciliation and disaster preparedness workshop for 23 pastors.

A crucial part of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)'s response to last November's Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines includes training pastors to build networks for responding to future disasters and to improve their skills in helping people heal from trauma and resolve conflicts.

MCC is partnering with Peacebuilders Community Inc., (PBCI)—a local Philippines organization and a ministry of Mennonite Church Canada Witness, with ties to the Integrated Mennonite Church of the Philippines—to train pastors in each city in Samar and Leyte provinces.

PBCI's four-day trainings and ongoing education build the pastors' capacities in disaster preparedness and trauma healing and their skills in conflict transformation.

"The process includes a continuing dialogue in which each participant can identify their strengths and areas for improvement," says PBCI's Kriz Cruzado of Davao, Philippines, who is active in the project and also helps monitor MCC's other typhoon response efforts.

As part of trauma healing, pastors share the challenges of ministering to families affected by the typhoon in the midst of rebuilding their own homes. The conflict transformation sessions promote peaceful methods of dealing with stress in the ravaged communities.

In addition, pastors are encouraged to create plans to build disaster response networks in their own communities and of how they will share those plans with local officials.

Pastors also train in practical disaster response skills. PBCI encourages each pastor to purchase basic rescue items, such as a 50-meter-long nylon rope. Instead of life vests, they suggest using something more accessible and affordable such as empty bottles in a backpack.

And the training includes a simulation of a water rescue

in case of flash flooding.

"The physical exercises built my confidence that I can share what I have learned with others," says Lorenza Ecalde, pastor of God's Glorious Church in Samar.

After the training with Ann Campbell-Janz, an MCC staff member who traveled to the Philippines to monitor MCC projects in May, several pastors said they now see the importance of heeding typhoon warnings early, protecting a certain amount of water and food with plastic, preparing a survival kit and encouraging all their congregants to do likewise.

Each pastor who took part in the training is expected to form a disaster response network in her or his community. Cruzado is working with pastors to help them plan and ensure they have the support and confidence they need to pass on their learnings.

"These networks are learning how to encourage their local government unit to develop a disaster preparedness plan and to offer their volunteer services so that their churches and local government can work hand-in-hand when and if another disaster occurs," Cruzado says.—*Laurie Oswald Robinson for Mennonite Central Committee*

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Applying grace in radical ways at Lithuanian university

Alisha and Joshua Garber 'prefer to lead from behind or beside.'

Alisha and Joshua Garber infuse two Anabaptist values, hospitality and reconciliation, into the lives of their students at LCC International University in Lithuania.

The Garbers, mission associates with Mennonite Mission Network, bring their nurturing ministry to the students they mentor at the university. They're about to start their third year at LCC International, a Christian university started in 1991.

Alisha is the director of community life and dean of discipline, while Joshua will be the spiritual formation coordinator after two years of being the resident director.

"We prefer to lead from behind or beside," says Joshua. "I try to be a sounding board, and be transparent. I like to remove myself from a position of power over a student and instead say, 'Hey, let's go on a bike ride' or, 'What's bugging you or going on in your life?'"

Alisha is excited to implement a restorative justice model for the disciplinary process that encourages mentorship. In her role as the dean of discipline, she has noticed that the system, which involved punishment through fines, didn't teach students to make better choices. Instead it taught students to avoid consequences. Or, if they had enough money, they simply had a check ready before they threw a party, she says.

This year, there won't be fines, and when violations do occur, an adult will walk alongside the offenders and talk about what their goals are and how to redirect energy into positive goals.

"The students really bought into this, so next year we're going full force with a restorative justice model," says Alisha. "In a culture where everything is unequivocally right or wrong and where the students most likely grew up in a place that was corrupt, this will not be easy. So hold us in your prayers for that."

She understands the struggle that students will go through as they shift from a punitive model to a model of grace. She didn't grow up Anabaptist and worked as a military counselor for six years.

"With the soldiers I dealt with before, I was legalistic in the way that I bossed them around," says Alisha. "In my time working in Lithuania, I've seen that things are never absolutely wrong or absolutely right. You want it to be, because that's easier, but it never is. Applying grace in radical

ways has been a gradual process for me, but a very important process."

In Joshua's new role as spiritual formation director, he says he is looking forward to being able to accomplish his goal to be in a position where he can talk more deliberately about his faith.

"I also have five students who are incredibly passionate about this same thing," he says. "They told me they wanted to join the team because they wanted to transform the campus. And that's very exciting to me."

He told his spiritual life team that this next year will be about going to the people. They're going to try to implement an incarnational ministry, which is an approach of being like Jesus to the people you connect with regularly and using your gifts to minister.

When the Garbers first arrived on campus, the university was hosting a summer language institute, organized by Mennonite Mission Network worker Robin Gingerich, where students can learn English. They noticed there were only a few people on campus, and they were all isolated.

Since they had just moved from an intentional community, their first thought was that they needed to organize a potluck so that everyone would get together, says Joshua. The potluck brought together faculty, staff and students, who didn't usually do things together outside of the classroom.

One student, Ejike Nnamdi Nwosu, liked the idea so much that he started to host his own "underground potlucks" once regular classes started.

"There were kids from all over the university who have nothing in common, who don't even hang out together, yet they're eating together and talking and sharing their lives," says Joshua. This was a change from the typical dining culture at the school where students usually took their food into their rooms to eat.

The Garbers also noticed a change in Nwosu's behavior. Before, he wouldn't pray in public and asked Joshua to pray before the meals. But now, two years later, Nwosu asks the blessing for the food.

"As Anabaptists, I think God is calling us to be a positive voice in this conversation that is happening in Europe," says Joshua. "We are a new voice, at least to the students, in the faith conversation happening on campus."—*Sara Alvarez of Mennonite Mission Network*



Joshua and Alisha Garber

Anabaptist Witness journal's first issue due in October

New journal renews *Mission Focus* journal under a new name

The editorial committee assigned to renew the 42-year-old *Mission Focus* journal has announced the new name of the publication—*Anabaptist Witness*—and is preparing for the release of the first issue in October.

Editors Jamie Pitts of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., and Jamie Ross of Mennonite Mission Network believe the new name sets a direction for the publication that matches its mission.

“We want to foster dialogue among Anabaptist Christians around the world who are committed to the church’s mission,” Pitts says.

Ross adds: “I think we have the only peer-reviewed journal dealing with missiology from a specific faith tradition. Others are from organizational or ecumenical perspectives.”

We have the only peer-reviewed journal dealing with missiology from a specific faith tradition.

—Jamie Ross

However, while the journal exists for and about Anabaptists and Anabaptism, she notes that there are people in other faith traditions who value the commitment Anabaptists have made to long-term partnerships around the world. The journal will give opportunities for voices from some of these other groups to join the conversation as well.

The audiences, Pitts says, are mission-minded pastors and lay people, mission agency staff, mission workers and people interested in academic study and reflection on missiology. The editors believe their plan for the journal gives it flexibility to speak to these different audiences within the Anabaptist-Mennonite faith groups and to include contributors and readers from the wider church.

The first issue of *Anabaptist Witness* focuses on Anabaptist and Mennonite understandings of mission and the interchange among mission practice, missiology and Anabaptist identity. It will reflect 10 different country and ethnic perspectives as well as different agency perspectives. Articles will vary from an interview to a sermon to more academic reflections. The fall issue contains an article in French with an English translation available online, and another article is intended to be available in both English and Spanish.

The editors have established a website, anabaptistwitness.org, where all content will be available to read online for no cost. Through Amazon CreateSpace services, the journal will be available for digital reading devices and in print. Anyone who wants to receive it in print will be able to place orders on the *Anabaptist Witness* website for \$10 a copy plus shipping charges. Those who wish to have a tradi-

tional subscription may contact Pitts at jpitts@ambs.edu.

Currently the *Anabaptist Witness* website offers the opportunity to sign up to receive updates when issues are available.

The editors also have extended a call for papers for the second issue, scheduled for spring 2015, on the theme of how our understanding of the Anabaptist faith leads us to engage with other religions. To read this call for papers on the theme of how our understanding of the Anabaptist faith leads us to engage with other religions, visit the web page of the previous *Mission Focus* journal: www.ambs.edu/Mission-Focus.

Anabaptist Witness is a collaborative project of Mennonite Church Canada, Mennonite Mission Network and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. An editorial committee works with the editors in guiding the content of the journal. Members of this committee are Malinda E. Berry, Elkhart, Ind.; Steve Heinrichs, Winnipeg, Manitoba; Matthew Krabill, Pasadena, Calif.; SaeJin Lee, Elkhart, Ind.; Gregory Rabus, Backnang, Germany; and Isaac Villegas, Chapel Hill, N.C.

—Mary E. Klassen of AMBS

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Prayer and action for Gaza

Timothy Seidel provides a context for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The terrible situation in Gaza continues. Gaza is one of the most vulnerable, densely populated places on earth, referred to by Israeli human rights organizations as the world's largest open-air prison.

Approximately 1.8 million Palestinians live in a 140 square-mile area that has been under an Israeli siege since 2006. Brutalized under decades of military occupation, the majority of Gazans are refugees from the 1948 war. With decades of limited economic access and opportunity due to Israeli closures, today some 80 percent of Gazans receive international food assistance, 60 percent of households are food insecure or vulnerable to food insecurity. Palestinians do not have control over borders or movement in and out of Gaza, and live constantly under the threat of Israeli military incursions, shelling and extrajudicial, targeted assassinations that terrorize Gaza's population.

The vulnerability of this population is evidenced these past weeks—as it was in 2006, 2008-09 and 2012—with over 1,000 Gazans killed, thousands more wounded and tens of thousands displaced in Israel's ongoing military operation,

The main reason the humanitarian situation in Gaza is such an issue is because the Palestinian people there live as prisoners.

and in which more than 50 Israelis have been killed. This military operation only hurts Gaza's civilian population and unmasks this campaign of collective punishment as a predictable and uncreative display of Israeli military might over and against 1.8 million poor people. The damage to civilian infrastructure, schools and hospitals, raises serious medical concerns.

The main reason the humanitarian situation in Gaza is such an issue is because the Palestinian people there live as prisoners, creating a situation that does not provide the opportunity for a prosperous future but only just prevents Gaza from slipping into humanitarian disaster on a daily basis.

In response to the distressing situation in Gaza, the Mennonite Palestine Israel Network (MennoPIN) has gathered resources for prayer, education, advocacy and action. To learn more, visit the MennoPIN website at mennopin.wordpress.com/gazaunderattack. For example, you will find a "Prayer and Action for Gaza" bulletin insert in English and

Spanish that you can use as a template for your own congregation this Sunday.

You can also keep up to date with what is going on and on ways to get involved, by visiting the websites of Mennonite Central Committee, Christian Peacemaker Teams and Mennonite Church USA. For example, the MCC Washington Office issued an action alert to call on Congress to stop U.S.



complicity in suffering and to support a just peace in Palestine and Israel by addressing underlying causes.

Mennonites in the United States have been building relationships in Palestine-Israel for more than 60 years. Mennonite Central Committee has worked alongside Palestinians and Israelis for decades. An important expression of this work is education and advocacy, drawing attention to the suffering in Gaza and communicating the stories of Palestinian and Israeli peacebuilders to U.S. audiences and Washington policymakers.

Mennonites in the United States have been building relationships in Palestine-Israel for more than 60 years.

This also includes lifting up the voices of Palestinian Christians, for example, in the Kairos Palestine call. The Kairos call understands peacebuilding as a shared work for justice and challenges us to work for justice at home, addressing root causes of violence: a work that requires attention to the U.S. role in this conflict, through our financial and military support of Israel's occupation of Palestine; a work that recognizes seeking justice in Gaza must be complemented by seeking justice at home, actively dismantling structures of oppression such as racism and poverty as well as militarism; a work that requires hope, courage and risk.

The Mennonite Palestine Israel Network (MennoPIN) is a grassroots, U.S. network working for peace with justice in Palestine-Israel. Learn more about MennoPIN, including more information on Kairos Palestine and the call to boycotts and divestment, at mennopin.wordpress.com. To join the network conversation, send an email to mennopin@gmail.com.

The Gaza Strip: context

The Gaza Strip is a narrow strip of land along the Mediterranean Sea in the Middle East, bordered by Egypt to the southwest and Israel to the north and east. The majority of Palestinians in Gaza are Muslim, with less than 1 percent of them Christian. And the majority of Gazans are refugees, living in refugee camps across the Gaza Strip.

Following the British Mandate over Palestine and the 1948 war that saw the creation of the state of Israel, the Gaza Strip was occupied by Egypt. After the 1967 war, Israel gained control over all of historic Palestine and implemented a military occupation over those remaining territories, including East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

In August 2005, Israel unilaterally “disengaged” from

Gaza, evacuating its settler population as well as redeploying its military forces to its border. This ostensibly gave Palestinians total jurisdiction over Gaza. However, Israel maintained complete control over the Gaza Strip, leaving Israel still an occupying power over Gaza.

That same year, the Israeli human rights organizations B'tselem and HaMoked jointly published a report describing the Gaza Strip as “one big prison.” Almost 10 years later, this report remains relevant. With decades of limited economic access and opportunity due to Israeli closures—leading to a debilitating process of what one scholar has labeled “de-development.”

The recent Israeli attack on Gaza has created incredible uncertainty. The military strategy that has marked Israel's “Operation Protective Edge” only hurts Gaza's civilian population. With much of the water supply and sewage system dependent on electricity and the impact on hospitals and limited supplies, the damage to civilian infrastructure raises serious medical concerns and un masks this campaign of collective punishment of the Palestinian people—actions clearly in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, to which Israel is a signatory—as a predictable and uncreative display of Israeli military might over and against 1.8 million poor Palestinians. And with the thousands dead and dying, tens of thousands wounded and homeless, Gaza's children severely traumatized, and Gaza's population without reliable water or electricity, the obvious disproportionality of the Israeli military response only underscores its unacceptability.

As the occupying power, Israel has certain obligations under international law in regard to the Palestinian people. Israel has completely shirked this responsibility and left the burden of responding to the needs of one of the most

As the occupying power, Israel has certain obligations under international law in regard to the Palestinian people.

densely populated areas on earth—the great majority of whom are refugees—to the international community, creating a situation that does not provide the opportunity for a prosperous future but only just prevents Gaza from slipping into humanitarian disaster on a daily basis.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict: context

Many would have us understand the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in abstract religious terms, such as Christian Zionism, or as part of a broader “clash of civilizations” or “global war on terror.” It could be argued, however, that Palestine is

best understood as an encounter between a settler colonial movement—looking for liberation, for a land without a people for a people without a land, seeking to extend control over particular territory—and the indigenous population already inhabiting a land that turned out not to be empty after all. What was independence for one was catastrophe for the other.

For example, for most Israeli Jews, May 14, 1948, is Independence Day—a heroic story of freedom, liberty and success in overcoming great difficulties. No longer would Jews live the uncertain life of minority communities; rather, they would be masters of their own fate in their own land.

But for Palestinians, May 15, 1948, is known as the “Nakba,” an Arabic word meaning “catastrophe.” Nakba refers to the massive dispossession of the majority of the Palestinian people during the period of 1947 to 1949. Between 750,000 and 900,000 Palestinians became refugees, either having been expelled by Zionist militias or having fled for their lives during the fighting. Meanwhile, Israeli military forces destroyed more than 500 Palestinian villages.

Despite the optimism that has accompanied the various peace processes over recent years, the expansion of Israeli domination over Palestinian life and land and the story of Palestinian dispossession have continued.

Even Palestinians who remained inside what became Israel experienced dispossession, with tens of thousands of Palestinians becoming internally displaced people, alienated from their land. “Naksa,” another Arabic word, is used to refer to the expulsion of Palestinians from the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza during the 1967 war, with some 400,000 Palestinians becoming refugees. It also marks the beginning of Israel’s illegal military occupation of these territories.

Despite the optimism that has accompanied the various peace processes over recent years, the expansion of Israeli domination over Palestinian life and land and the story of Palestinian dispossession have continued. Whether it is more land being expropriated for the construction of a 430-mile wall or separation barrier, the dramatic growth of illegal settlements, including in and around Jerusalem, the proliferation of a closure system of checkpoints and roadblocks that obstruct mobility, the demolition of homes and other forms

of collective punishment, the one-big-prison-status of Gaza, or the continuing state of dispossession of 7 million Palestinians refugees worldwide, Palestinian livelihoods are devastated by military occupation, and their experience of dispossession continues unabated.

It appears that the separation barrier—though condemned as illegal in 2004 by the International Court of Justice—will become Israel’s de facto border, leaving a Palestinian quasi-state composed of several isolated islands of land on roughly 40 to 50 percent of the West Bank. Palestinians will be confined to what some have called “reservations” or, evoking South Africa under apartheid, “Bantustans,” which will be partially connected by a network of tunnels controlled by Israel. Industrial zones will be established at the edges of these areas so that businesses can take advantage of a cheap, imprisoned labor pool.

In this version of the language of “two states,” “the state of Israel” essentially equals annexing all major colonies in the West Bank, including “greater Jerusalem” and the Jordan Valley, with control over all of historic Palestine, fulfilling the vision expressed in the 1967 Allon Plan and shared by Ariel Sharon, Ehud Olmert and others, of “maximum territory, minimum Arabs.”

Subsequently, “the state of Palestine” will essentially equal those isolated islands of land on the West Bank—completely unrealistic, completely unviable and completely lacking any sense of human security for them. Ilan Pappé describes the goal of this Israeli unilateralism thus: “a strong Jewish state dominating a small Palestinian protectorate, without a solution to the refugee problem or a significant Palestinian presence or sovereignty in Jerusalem.”

For many, this destroys any hope for a two-state solution to this horrible conflict.—*Timothy Seidel, a member of Community Mennonite Church of Lancaster, Pa., serves on the steering committee of the Mennonite Palestine Israel Network.*

Resources on Gaza and Israel

B’tselem and HaMoked, *One Big Prison: Freedom of Movement to and from the Gaza Strip on the Eve of the Disengagement Plan* (March 2005).

http://www.btselem.org/download/200503_gaza_prison_english.pdf.

See Sara M. Roy, *The Gaza Strip: The Political Economy of Development* (Institute for Palestine Studies, 1995) and Sara M. Roy, *Failing Peace: Gaza and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict* (Pluto Press, 2006).

See Tom Segev, “Maximum Territory, Minimum Arabs,” *Haaretz* (Jan. 13, 2006).

Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.255.

Denver couple receives Everence Journey Award

Regional award recipients also named from around the country



Merv and Ardith Eigsti of Denver

Merv and Ardith Eigsti have been named the recipients of the national Journey Award from Everence, which was presented Aug. 3, at their home church, Glennon Heights Mennonite Church in Lakewood, Colo.

This award recognizes the Eigstis' abundant hospitality to people of all races and nationalities in their hometown of Denver. They are models of how ordinary people can give their time and share their home with many diverse individuals, including immigrants, new neighbors and church attendees.

"Merv and Ardith have lived a life so full of giving that for many in the communities with which they interact, they have become the very definition of humble generosity," said Betsy Headrick McCrae, Glennon Heights pastor at the presentation.

Created in 2001, the Journey Award highlights what people of faith are doing as stewards of their God-given gifts. As a part of the award, Everence will make a \$5,000 donation to the charity of the recipient's choice. The Eigstis will give a portion of the award to the following:

- Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp
- Glennon Heights Mennonite Church

- Second Chance Center
- Community Ministries
- Family Promise of Denver
- Hopi Mission School

Everence also announced the regional Journey Award honorees, who can make \$500 donations to the charities of their choice. They are as follows:

- Ken Harder, Meade, Kan.
- Paul Munk, Chapel Hill, N.C.
- Wilmer Otto, Arcola, Ill.
- Paul and Maryann Payne, Belleville, Pa.
- Ron and Arbutus Sider, Lansdale, Pa.
- Bob Stoner, Millersville, Pa.
- George and Carol Tobin, Harrisonburg, Va.

Everence helps individuals, organizations and congregations integrate finances with faith through a national team of advisors and representatives. Everence offers banking, insurance and financial services with community benefits and stewardship education. Everence is a ministry of Mennonite Church USA and other churches. To learn more, visit everence.com or call 800-348-7468.—*Everence*

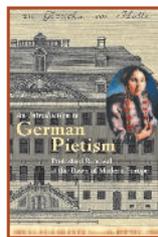
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"[Shantz] has provided an excellent entrée to the history and character of Pietism." — Carter Lindberg, Boston University School of Theology (from *The Catholic Historical Review*)

Join us for Doug Shantz's public lecture at the Young Center on September 23, 2014 at 7:30 p.m.

Nominations for the 2015 Outstanding Book Award are due December 10, 2014. Visit www.etown.edu/youngctr for details.



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CALENDAR

Hesston College Homecoming Weekend, Sept. 25-28, in Hesston, Kan.

Bethel College Fall Festival, North Newton, Kan., Oct. 18.

WORKERS

Gibson, DaQuan, was ordained as pastor at The Way Thru Christ Community Fellowship, Chester, Pa., on June 29.

Horst, Arlin, was ordained as deacon at Shiloh Mennonite Church, Reading, Pa., on April 13.

King, Linford, was installed as intentional interim pastor at Laurel Street Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on June 16.

Peachey, Jeremy, was licensed as minister of youth and young adults at Community Mennonite Fellowship, Milton, Pa., on May 14.

Peters, Jay, was installed as acting lead pastor at Hernley Mennonite Church, Manheim, Pa., on June 1.

Peters, Margie, was licensed as acting lead pastor at Hernley Mennonite Church, Manheim, Pa., on June 1.

Westmoreland, James M., Jr., was installed as lead pastor of Newlinville Mennonite Church, Coatesville, Pa., on June 1.

OBITUARIES

Amstutz, Julia Ruth "Judy" Ebersole, 80 La Junta, Colo., died April 5. Spouse: Mahlon Amstutz. Parents: Clarence and Ruth Ebersole. Children: Lynn, Lori, Rod, Rita. Funeral: April 15 at First Mennonite Church, Denver, Colo.

Bock, Mary Emma Blough, 81, Harrisonburg, Va., died June 22. Spouse: Warren Bock. Parents: Harry and Freda Berkey Blough. Children: Susan Earley, Alan. Funeral: July 12 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Christner, Jeanette May Krabill, 90, Iowa City, Iowa, died July 15. Spouse: Truman Christner (deceased). Parents: Lester and Lena Rich Krabill. Children: Anthony, Brenda Christner, Eric, Cheryl Christner White, Douglas; 10 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 10 at First Mennonite Church, Iowa City.

Dietzel, Arnold Jonathan, 99, Hesston, Kan., died July 4. Spouse: Wilmetta D. Weaver Dietzel. Parents: Samuel and Elma Dietzel. Children: Ronald, Margaret Dietzel Hilegass, Carol Cranston; seven grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 8 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Flanagan, Daniel Joseph, 55, Mishawaka, Ind., died June 28. Spouse: Shabaun Eversole Flanagan. Parents: John and Joseclyn Johnson Flanagan. Children: Cameron Ryan, Connor James. Funeral: Aug. 9 at Kern Road Mennonite Church, South Bend, Ind.

Gwin, Harry S. "Hap," 87, Martinsburg, Pa., died Aug. 3. Spouse: Dorothy Graybill Gwin. Parents: Harry R. and Tressa Snyder Gwin. Children: Barbara Schumacher, Wesley, Shelley, Harry; eight grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 7 at Martinsburg Mennonite Church.

Landis, Clyde Derstine, 84, Franconia, Pa., died July 14. Spouse: Anna Godshall Landis. Parents: Linford A. and Susie N. Derstine Landis. Children: Joeline Landis, Nancy Gaugler, Bradley; nine grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 20 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville, Pa.

Metzler, Emerson James, 5 days old, Lancaster, Pa., died July 18. Parents: J. Karl and Kelly L. Stoltzfus Metzler. Twin brother: Will Ethan Metzler. Graveside service: July 22 at Hershey Mennonite Cemetery, Kinzers, Pa.

Miller, Herma V. Hostetler Blosser, 92, Orrville, Ohio, died April 8. Spouse: Jay Miller. Spouse: Paul Blosser (deceased). Parents: Asa and Ida Miller Hostetler. Children: Lyle Blosser, Myrna Blosser, Nyla Barrett; step-children: Marlene Campbell, Dallas Miller, Fred Miller, Jim Miller, Gary Miller, Anita Bixler, Eric Miller; three grandchildren; 13 step-grandchildren; many great-grandchildren and step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 12 at Smithville Mennonite Church, Smithville, Ohio.

Nussbaum, Irvin A., 89, Goshen, Ind., died July 10. Spouse: Nelda Zehr Glick Nussbaum. Spouse: Arlene Steiner Nussbaum (deceased). Parents: Amos A. and Lydia Falb Nussbaum. Children: Ray, Larry, Dean, Karen Miller, Marlin, Ted, LaJane Moore; step-children: Phil Glick, Kim Glick, Kevin Glick, Mike Glick; 21 grandchildren; seven step-grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; nine step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 16 at Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Olson, Selma Esther Glanzer, 86, Freeman, S.D., died Aug. 2. Spouse: Donald W. Olson. Parents: David D. and Susie Glanzer. Funeral: Aug. 6 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Ruth, Ruth Bower, 84, Souderton, Pa., died Aug. 7. Spouse: Walton C. Ruth (deceased). Parents: Harvey and Lillie Halteman Bower. Children: Marlin, Elaine Grote, Ronald; six grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 11 at Souderton Mennonite Homes.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Stoltzfus, John, Jr., 73, Goshen, Ind., died July 17, of Fahr's disease. Spouse: Colleen Stoltzfus. Parents: John Stoltzfus, Sr., and Laura Beckler Stoltzfus. Children: Tonya Stoltzfus-Miller, Chad; six grandchildren. Funeral: July 22 at East Union Mennonite Church, Kalona, Iowa.

Yoder, Helen Janette Slaubaugh, 93, Wellman, Iowa, died July 14. Spouse: Paul E. M. Yoder (deceased). Parents: William and Naomi Hooley Slaubaugh. Children: Kathleen Erteld, Christine Falcon, Phil, Orië; seven grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 18 at Wellman Mennonite Church.

Letters *(Continued from page 54)*

Church USA." I acknowledge my technical mistake in referring to the "executive director" as a "papal office." The Vatican is the Pope's executive branch, and he has authority over its organization and action, which I assume our "executive director" does not have.

Having said that, the Bishop of Rome is given his papal authority by a bureaucratic election much like the Executive Board's executive director, and there are checks and balances on his authority. In Mennonite Church USA, the director has been "delegated" by an executive board and serves as its executive secretary—a term we used to use for such positions. But how does that make him executive director of Mennonite Church USA? What does our ease with that terminology say about the hierarchical polity issues we face?

And this raises a related question: In what sense does the Executive Board "manage" the affairs of the denomination? What part of the organized church's bureaucracy does the board manage? Its creedal system? Its spiritual life? Its requirements for church membership? Its credentialing certification? I would have thought its primary job is to facilitate the smooth functioning of the organization as it serves the organic spiritual life and witness of the congregations and conferences under its auspices. When we confuse the office of "bishop-pastor" and "executive officer," as it is mixed in the office of the Holy See at Rome, we become embroiled in the episcopal problem of top-down autocratic authority that has plagued the church for thousands of years.

So what is the assignment of the executive director of Mennonite Church USA? Soto Albrecht and Diller's reply notes that he "has been responsible for articulating the theology and understandings of the denomination as expressed in its approved documents." That is like the description of the office of the Roman Catholic archbishop who oversees the "Doctrine of the Faith" as part of the papal office. Does the Executive Board's "spiritual oversight in articulating the vision of Mennonite Church USA" give it authority over the credentialing process of the conferences and congregations? And does that in turn give its executive officer, whatever she or he is called, the administrative role as manager?

The problem is not one of technical organization or about Ervin Stutzman's execution of his office as assigned. It is at the heart of how we understand the lines of authority in our discernment of the vision for the Mennonite Church USA. Is discernment a bureaucratic or a brotherly-sisterly process? And how do we deal with the disagreements within the body of Christ?—*Norman Kraus, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Dwelling on Yoder

How much longer will we dwell on this? Mentioning Yoder's name 15 times in the August issue makes me ask, Does continuing incrimination bring healing to someone somewhere? Could this be a form of revenge? Is it not time to work on ministering to the people who have suffered or are suffering from sexual abuse so that they may redeem their memories?—*Wilma Shank, Goshen, Ind.*

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RESOURCES

Pursuing the Spiritual Roots of Protest: Merton, Berrigan, Yoder and Muste at the Gethsemani Abbey Peacemakers Retreat by Gordon Oyer (Cascade Books, 2014, \$33) reports on an unprecedented gathering of 13 peace activists in the fall of 1964 at the Tappist monastery where Thomas Merton lived. Catholics, including the Daniel and Philip Berrigan, and Protestants, including John Howard Yoder, met over three days to discuss the spiritual roots of protest.

The Road That I Must Walk: A Disciple's Journey by Darrin W. Snyder Belousek (Cascade Books, 2014, \$23) represents the author's own wrestling with the call and cost of discipleship across a decade. The book is a collection of ethical reflections, biblical meditations and spiritual ponderings about following Jesus.

Signs by Jean Vanier (Paulist Press, 2014, \$14.95) identifies the seven paths of transformation at the heart of L'Arche, the community Vanier founded that welcomes people with severe learning difficulties into a life of freedom and dignity. The seven paths are from humiliation to humility, from normalization to the awakening conscience, from exclusion to encounter, from power to authority, from isolation to community, from strength to vulnerability, from secret to mystery.

Being Christian: Baptism, Bible, Eucharist, Prayer by Rowan Williams (Eerdmans, 2014, \$10) explores four essential components of the Christian life: baptism, the Bible, the Eucharist and prayer. Despite huge differences in Christian thinking and practice both today and in past centuries, he says, these four basic elements have remained constant and indispensable for the majority of those who call themselves Christians.

Toughest People to Love: How to Understand, Lead and Love the Difficult People in Your Life—Including Yourself by Chuck DeGroat (Eerdmans, 2014, \$14) explores the basics of how people "tick" and encourages leaders to examine and take care of themselves so that they can better understand and care for others. Difficult people—controlling narcissists, out-of-control addicts, obsessive-compulsive critics, those with a dark side—affect leaders everywhere, from leaders of many to managers of a few. DeGroat has experience as a pastor, professor and therapist.

Reconcile: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians by John Paul Lederach (Herald Press, 2014, \$14.99) is a revised and updated edition of *The Journey Toward Reconciliation* (1999), which was based on Lederach's work in 25 countries across five continents. This new book tells dramatic stories of what works and what doesn't in resolving and transforming conflicts.

Seeking a **part-time bivocational pastor** for a small congregation in a Northern Lower Michigan resort community. Contact: **Maple River Mennonite Church**; Stan Kauffman: 231-330-1661; Heidi Burkhart: heidi.burkhart@hotmail.com.

Explore God's love with the new **Shine Sunday school curriculum!** *Shine: Living in God's Light* has engaging stories and activities that will teach children the Bible, understand that they are known and loved by God and learn what it means to follow Jesus. Find sample sessions, Bible outlines and more at www.shinecurriculum.com.

Executive director: Mennonite Women USA seeks a strong, visionary leader and fund-raiser to direct the overall mission and vision of empowering women and women's groups within the Mennonite church. The executive director supervises dispersed staff and coordinates and develops the various ministries, programs, publications and promotional material. This full-time position requires working independently but also part of a team, excellent verbal and written skills, including public speaking, and ability to build relationships with people of diverse backgrounds. Involves travel. See full description at mwusa.org. Send inquiries or resumé to Kathy Bilderback at kabilderback@cableone.net by Sept. 30.

Landisville Mennonite Church, Landisville, Pa., is seeking a **full-time associate pastor of youth and young adults**. For more information, please contact the search committee at search@landisvillemennonite.org.

Are you the one God has been preparing for us? **Fairview Mennonite Church** is seeking a **full-time lead pastor**. Located in rural northern Michigan, with weekly attendance around 100, the heart of FMC's vision is to build relationships in the community that meet people's needs. If you are interested in exploring possibilities at Fairview Mennonite Church, please email the search committee at fmcpastorsearch@gmail.com or call Don Haskin at 989-335-3153.

Shine: Living in God's Light, the Sunday school curriculum produced by MennoMedia and Brethren Press, is accepting applications for **writers**. Details are available at www.ShineCurriculum.com/Write. Application and sample session deadline is Dec. 15, 2014.

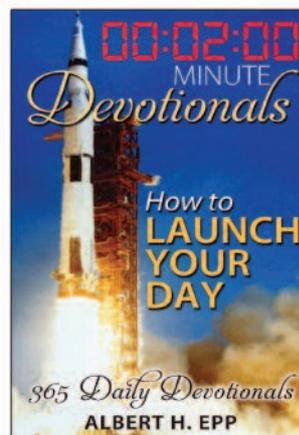
Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford, Pa., is seeking a **full-time lead pastor** for a congregation with 450 active members. We are looking for someone who has experience in providing leadership in developing, promoting and implementing a congregational vision and direction that is an expression of the biblical vision and is led by the Holy Spirit. Please send resumé to Franconia Mennonite Church, 613 Harleysville Pike, Telford, PA 18969, or email to mkratz@franconiamennonite.org. Contact can be made with the search committee chairperson, Wayne L. Derstine at 215-588-5787.

Quakertown Christian School located in Quakertown, Pa., including grades preschool, K-8 and 9-12 (Learning Community) is looking for an **executive director** with a solid Christian faith consistent with the Mennonite or Anabaptist church to manage all aspects of our school. We are looking for an individual with strong management skills including operations, programming and advancement. Individual must have experience in financial management to be considered. Send resume to Brenda Jones: employment@quakertownchristian.org.

Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board staff seeks a **full-time web and social media content manager**. Proven skills in web content management and site maintenance as well as a bachelor's degree in graphic design, information systems, communications, marketing or computer science is required. Office location to be determined, although Elkhart, Ind., and Newton, Kan., preferred. For more information, view Employment Opportunities at www.MennoniteUSA.org or email Iris De León-Hartshorn: IrisDH@MennoniteUSA.org.

Is there a Mennonite spirituality? Read **Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality** by Gordon Houser to learn how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short of what lies at the heart of Mennonite spirituality. Available for \$16.95 from Cascadia Publishing House. Order from cascadiapublishinghouse.com, amazon.com or bn.com.

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Addicted to the culture wars



Peter Epp will begin a master of arts in theological studies at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba, this fall. He can be reached at p_epp@hotmail.com.

If you're hot-blooded like I am, it's probably hard to avoid when you turn on the TV or surf the Internet. You know you're too good for it and you know it's not good for you, but you also know that it's always there waiting for you, enticing you into its embrace of false satisfaction. I'll admit it, and if you're honest with yourself, I bet you will too: We're all addicted to the culture wars these days.

If you don't know what these "culture wars" are that I'm referring to, or if you're not sure if this applies to you, let's try this quiz:

1. Do you mostly watch or mostly scoff at Fox News? If you answered yes to either, you're probably influenced by the culture wars.

2. Do you find yourself feeling emotionally invested in political Facebook posts and arguments, even if you're not really all that

close with—or haven't even met—some of the people commenting? If you answered yes, you're at least somewhat sucked into the culture wars.

3. If you're really honest with yourself, do you know that you will always want to view Obamacare as a success or a failure, regardless of whether or not it seems to be succeeding or failing for the people around you? If you answered yes to this, you're probably under the influence of the culture wars. And if you answered, "I can admit that Obamacare might be a failure, but only because they should have gone with a single-payer approach in the first place" or, "I can admit that Obamacare might help a lot of people, but it's my freedom that I'm worried about," you don't get to pat yourself on the back for this question. Change your yes to a YES! for the purposes of this quiz.

Even if you answered no to all these, chances are you can think of many people who wouldn't. That's what's especially dangerous about the culture wars: We're all under their influence—even if we're not.

To be clear, none of these reactions is anything other than human. We've surely been reacting to one another in these ways since Snorg battled Snarg over whether or not free use of his new-fangled fire would just enable the lazy cave people or just allow them a more equal opportunity to

move into a bigger cave some day. Or, if my reference to the possible existence of cave people is stoking anyone's culture wars fire, just replace that with, "since Cain battled Abel over what sacrifice was most politically correct." Or, if my inclusion of both is troubling to those who would prefer either, just battle it out on my Facebook wall or something.

To get back to the point, there's nothing wrong with convictions, differences of opinion and vigorous political debate. The problem with our time and society is that our ever-present news, news commentary and social media has turned up the

volume on the temptations that come with having convictions, differences of opinion and debates. Where we should be looking out for the common good and using debate and differing political views to get there, we're

now looking out for our political views and reflexively trying to shape reality to win debates on behalf of those views.

So what does all this mean for the church?

Unfortunately, it seems to mean that it's making it really hard to be the church. In fact, it may be undermining the very foundation of how we're supposed to be the church.

In *A Precarious Peace* (Herald Press, 2006), Chris K. Huebner reminds us that Jesus invited us into a faith that is "disruptive" and "unsettling" to our own comforts and self-assurances. And while I'm sure we all know this superficially, I'm not sure how often we apply it to the church like Huebner does. If we did, we'd find that our greatest goals were to create spaces, Huebner writes, "where we can be honest with one another, where we can be vulnerable to one another and, in so doing, become open to the possibility of forgiveness."

In a context like that, we'd know that our differing opinions weren't something we cling to but gifts we give to and receive from one another to help us all maintain Christ's disruption in our lives. We'd recognize that our greatest allegiance isn't to the culture wars but to Christ, who calls us to see one another's differences as opportunities to remain constantly humble, open and unsettled. **TM**

Our greatest allegiance isn't to the culture wars but to Christ.



FILM REVIEW

A Most Wanted Man (R) is based on John le Carré's 2008 novel, which shows how political infighting and overreaction to 9/11 lead to inhumane treatment of people. Set in Hamburg, where Mohamed Atta had planned the 9/11 attacks, the story involves a half-Chechen, half-Russian, brutally tortured immigrant who lays claim to his father's ill-gotten fortune. The U.S. and German security agencies become interested in him.—*Gordon Houser*

BOOK REVIEWS

The Age of Evangelicalism: America's Born-Again Years by Steven P. Miller (Oxford University Press, 2014, \$24.95) is an excellent exploration of "the place and meaning of evangelical Christianity in the United States from the 1970s through the first decade of the 21st century." In detail, Miller tracks the ways evangelicalism influenced American culture and politics and how it changed in the process.—*gh*

Good News: The Advent of Salvation in the Gospel of Luke by Darrin W. Snyder Belousek (Liturgical Press, 2014, \$16.95) explicates the various dimensions of the good news as presented in Luke: deliverance from fear, healing from sin and sickness, repentance and revival, justice in word and deed, praise in songs of peace and freedom, and mission in service to the nations. "Any message that attempts to separate or differentiate 'the salvation of God' from 'the peace of God's reign' is a false message," Belousek writes.—*gh*

Living Thoughtfully, Dying Well: A Doctor Explains How to Make Death a Natural Part of Life by Glen E. Miller (Herald Press, 2014, \$12.99) is a practical and personal book about preparing for our death. Miller writes, "The decisions made in the process of dying will determine the quality of the dying experience for the patient and family." He draws on his own experience of surviving two heart attacks and two incidents of cardiac arrest.—*gh*

Killing print is more myopic thinking

Most of you, though not all, reading this are doing so by holding a magazine made of paper. That print medium is under duress in a culture obsessed with immediate profits rather than long-term health.

In an Aug. 10 article, "Print Is Down and Now Out: Media Companies Spin Off Newspapers, to Uncertain Futures" (*New York Times*), David Carr paints a rather dismal picture of the future of newspapers and magazines.

He reports on how, in just over a week, "three of the biggest players in American newspapers—Gannett, Tribune Company and E. W. Scripps, companies built on print franchises that expanded into television—dumped those properties like yesterday's news in a series of spinoffs."

It's one more example of how the financial desires of Wall Street are deemed more important than the needs of Main Street, where most of us live.

Although newspapers continue to generate cash and solid earnings, those results are not enough to satisfy investors.

Media giant Time Warner cut loose Time, Inc., the largest magazine publisher in the United States, which carried \$1.3 billion in debt.

E. W. Scripps and Journal Communications merged, then spun off their combined newspapers, leaving behind a company focused on broadcast television.

On Aug. 5, the Tribune Company officially introduced a separate publishing division so that it could concentrate on television and handed the new company \$350 million in debt.

That same day, Gannett, the largest U.S. newspaper publisher and publisher of *USA Today*, said its print division would go it alone.

Carr compares these events to one long episode of "Divorce Court." He writes: "It's not that television is such a spectacular business—there are

plenty of challenges on that front—but newspapers and magazines are clearly going to be smaller, less ambitious businesses and journalistic enterprises regardless of how carefully they are operated."

What does this mean for those of us on Main Street? It means a diminishment of quality news reporting.

A better question is, Do we care? Are we happy reading opinions (generally the ones we agree with) and looking at cute cat videos on Facebook rather than learning what's going on in the world and how we might help make it a better place?

Carr doesn't look to blame anyone. "A free-market economy is moving to reallocate capital to its more productive uses, which happens all the time," he writes.

But then he points to our apathy. "It's a measure of the basic problem that many people haven't cared or noticed as their hometown newspapers have reduced staffing, days of circulation, delivery and coverage," he writes. "Will they notice or care when those newspapers go away altogether? I'm not optimistic about that."

We live in a culture where making money for investors supercedes creating a better society for everyone in the long-term. We'd rather build more prisons and live with a crumbling infrastructure than pay for education and help those living in poverty.

Our values are myopic, focused on our immediate desires instead of on the needs of our children or grandchildren.

Leaving newspapers and magazines to make it (or not make it) on their own is one more example of such myopic thinking. We'll all pay for it. **TM**



Gordon Houser is associate editor of *The Mennonite*.

(Continued from page 5)

-sylvania restricted retail sales on Sunday. Many grocery stores were closed on Sunday because the owners believed it was wrong to ask someone to work on Sunday. Exodus 35:2 says: “For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day shall be your holy day, a day of sabbath rest to the Lord. Whoever does any work on it is to be put to death.” Obviously we read the Bible differently today because most grocery stores are now open for business on Sunday.

The apostle Paul had something to say about how we read the Bible. Until his conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul believed Jewish law was indispensable and needed to be followed to the letter. In his book *Rabbi Paul*, Bruce Chilton says, “He continued to follow the Torah himself but believed that Gentiles could inherit the sonship that was Israel’s gift to the world without accepting the Law.”

I pray that we, like Paul, who could change the way he read the Torah and accept Gentiles into the church, can change the way we read the Bible and accept LGBT people into the church.
—Bob Wyble, Ephrata, Pa.

What are the rules?

Is there not a specific rule about ordaining gay/lesbians in a committed relationship that is parallel to the explicit rule about performing same-sex weddings? I read the documents provided by the Executive Board in their release (August) and I understand that at least some folks would see the implication.

Like many of the commenters, I am quite concerned about the report from the Executive Board. If the board’s position is that “rules are rules until the delegates change them,” then we’d better be clear what the rules are.

I really am trying to understand. I will likely say more in the future and I want to have my facts right.

I am old enough to remember when ministers filling out personnel forms were explicitly asked to state which parts of the *Confession of Faith in a*

Mennonite Perspective resonated with them and which parts were less clear to them. The assumption was that no one agreed with everything. The *Confession of Faith* was adopted before the formal creation of Mennonite Church USA. This practice was followed in the General Conference Mennonite Church. Those of us with long memories (or who at least think we have long memories) go a bit nutty when strict adherence to the *Confession of Faith* becomes “the law of the land.”
—George Lehman, Bluffton, Ohio

Response from Terry Shue: The new polity handbook to update the *Menno-nite Polity for Ministerial Leadership* is in print from MennoMedia. However, it is now a “working document” until the delegates in Kansas City approve it.
—Terry Shue, director for leadership development of Mennonite Church USA

Amused

I was amused to read in Douglas Kaufman’s interesting article “What Menno Got Wrong” (August), “This meant not only refusing sinners the Lord’s Supper but also refusing to eat or even greet them.” Refuse to eat them? Let’s hope so.—Jacob M. Tice, Newberry, Fla.

Understanding Menno’s contexts

Re Douglas Kaufman’s article “What Menno Got Wrong” (August): Understanding Menno’s contexts is vital for us since we are so far removed from his era. First of all, Menno carefully documented the history of the ban while pointing out that it was an alternative to the prevailing method of dealing with religious dissenters or transgressors: burning at the stake, drowning and/or torture. The ban, in contrast, he argued, always held the potential for a restoration of relationships in the church. He recognized that Jesus had many interactions with people who were at variance with his own faith positions and that in no case did Jesus call for a permanent break with any individuals or groups. In fact, according to Menno, Jesus’ ministry

demonstrated the opposite: a constant engagement with people who did not share his beliefs. So, even though Menno could explain and justify the ban, he was reluctant to exercise it.

So why did Menno sign the document of excommunication against the South German pastors? Early in his ministry, Menno was under the influence of Dirk Philips and the excommunication document written by Dirk, who then pressured Menno to endorse it. As the years passed, Menno acknowledged that this was the greatest mistake of his ministry. Menno often addressed situations where Anabaptist activities were reported to authorities by (non-Anabaptist) spouses. In those cases, he thought, some form of the ban might be appropriate, but he was not absolute about this, as the following paragraph illustrates.

The Dutch Mennonites in Menno’s time were divided into three factions: Flemish, Frisians (Menno’s heritage) and the Waterlanders. Menno worked diligently to bring these groups closer together and encouraged compromises for the sake of a common mission. Not all were eager to do so. One influential Flemish leader in particular, Thieleman J. van Braght, continued to be a strong advocate for the ban. In contrast, Waterlanders were more accommodating and opposed the ban.

In our day, the context has changed, and major denominations are no longer practicing torture or the death penalty for transgressors in their midst. Maybe it is time for Mennonites to review the gradual development of Menno’s theology, Amman’s second thoughts on excommunication, side with the Waterlanders and abstain from issuing the ban.—Lauren Friesen, Chicago

Response to ‘No Papal Office’

I appreciate the careful explanation that Elizabeth Soto Albrecht and Ed Diller gave in their August letter in reply to my May letter questioning the designation of the board’s executive secretary as “Executive Director of Mennonite
(Continued on page 49)

Who makes the big decisions?

The church exists as a community of believers in the local congregation, as a community of congregations and as the worldwide community of faith.—Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective

During times of conflict and change, many of us turn naturally to leaders for support and direction. And particularly if we are concerned about the direction things are moving, we want to know who is in charge and how those leaders are being accountable to their constituents. Therefore, it seems only right to address the question of who is in charge of decision-making in Mennonite Church USA during a time of strong differences across our national church.

As indicated in the above quotation, “church” exists at several different levels. But in Mennonite Church USA, we give privilege of place to the local congregation. The Purposeful Plan says, “We are a network of congregations joined by a common set of core convictions and commitment to an Anabaptist perspective on Christian faith. Along with area conferences and other communities beyond the congregation, the national conference exists to help congregations do what they could not do on their own. For this reason, we might call these conferences and various organizations beyond the congregation ‘supportive communities’” (lines 310-306). Further, it says, “We believe that congregations are the primary expression of God’s work in the world. Following the lead of other fellowships of faith, we have also organized ourselves at the level of area conferences and a national conference” (lines 785-788).

So, while the majority of decisions about church life in Mennonite Church USA are made in local churches and area conferences, the Executive Board governs the decision-making and programmatic functions of our church at the national conference level. It does so with accountability to the delegates that meet in the biennial assembly of the denomination, a group that met most recently in Pittsburgh (2011) and Phoenix (2013). The board’s accountability to the delegates is succinctly described in the following sentences from the Mennonite Church USA bylaws: “An Execu-

tive Board shall be organized to give leadership and act on behalf of the denomination when the Delegate Assembly is not in session. Executive Board members, with accountability to their appointing/electing bodies, are not expected to be representatives of specific constituencies but are to act in the best interests of Mennonite Church USA as a whole” (Article VI.1).

The role of the delegates is also spelled out quite clearly in the bylaws. Two of the most authoritative aspects in the list of delegate functions are stated as follows: “Discuss and decide major issues of policy for the national conference and discern the voice and the Spirit in the midst of the Delegate Assembly” (Article V.1.b) and, “Provide opportunity to speak to the establishment of general policies and the development of programs to carry out those policies” (Article V.1.c).

Since 1995, the delegates from General Conference Mennonite Church, Mennonite Church or (since 2001) Mennonite Church USA have adopted the documents that govern our denomination today. In the order of their adoption, they are *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, “Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love,” The Plan of Merger (including Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws) and Membership Guidelines. More recently, the delegates gave considerable feedback regarding the content and use of the Purposeful Plan.

The bylaws adopted in 2001 gave the Executive Board authority to repeal or amend some aspects of the bylaws, but the delegates curtailed that authority in 2005. Now, the bylaws may only be amended “by a two-thirds majority vote of delegates voting at any regular or special session of the Delegate Assembly” (Article XI.1).

So, in short, my best response to the question posed in my title is that the duly appointed delegates to our national conference assemblies make the big decisions in Mennonite Church USA. In my next column, I will describe how I hope that happens at Kansas City in 2015. 



Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

The duly appointed delegates to our national conference assemblies make the big decisions in Mennonite Church USA.





Welcome the stranger



Rebecca Helmuth

We have stood helplessly by as families have been torn apart by deportation or the threat of detainment.

Since October 2013, more than 52,000 Central American children have been taken into custody as they crossed the border into the United States. So far, public outcry has been mixed. For some, these immigrants illustrate our government's failure to implement policy and adequately militarize U.S. borders; for others, these child-refugees epitomize a humanitarian desire for immigration reform and an immediate need for aid. For me, this represents a spiritual crisis: How can Christians faithfully follow Jesus if we turn our backs on this desperate situation?

My congregation—North Goshen (Ind.) Mennonite Church—is home to many South and Central American immigrants, some of whom are documented and some of whom are not. We have wept with members of our church family who experienced midnight raids on their homes because a concerned neighbor contacted authorities with a tip. We have stood helplessly by as families have been torn apart by deportation or the threat of detainment. With each frightening experience, the thick strata of loneliness, misunderstanding and degradation are brushed away, and we are left with human beings who want nothing more than to live and work and care for their families.

Old Testament laws did a great job of caring for the stranger (Deuteronomy 1:16-17; 27:19), and repression of the stranger was denounced by the prophets. Jesus himself began life as a refugee (Matthew 2), and while he does not address the topic of immigration directly, his life was spent reaching out to the marginalized. So why do we Christians allow political histrionics, media rants and trivial analysis of immigration policy to guide our inaction? Why can't the Bible's simple words be enough for us?

Several years ago, a member of my congregation noticed a young Hispanic woman walking in the snow with a baby on one arm and holding hands with her 6-year-old daughter. He stopped

and asked whether she needed a ride to the elementary school. She accepted the ride, and he soon learned that she lived more than a mile away. He offered to make arrangements with the kindergarten teacher to drive the little girl to school each day. After several weeks, the girl's mother met the man at her door and asked whether it would be OK to come to his church on Sunday. This man didn't stop on that snowy day to invite the young mother to church. He didn't have an agenda other than to ease the family's burden and see the youngster safely to school. His actions were simple and thoughtful, yet we see them as heroic instead of commonplace. But isn't this the exact behavior Jesus expects of us?

My congregation has seen a steady influx of Hispanic members and regular attenders. The Clase de los Amigos Sunday school class is flourishing. The church provides translation of the service each week, Scripture is read in both Spanish and English, and music is a mixture of songs in Spanish and English. There are Hispanic members of the church in positions of leadership, and I hope more Spanish-speakers will feel encouraged to follow their example. But none of these elements of my church would be possible without one person's willingness to open their arms in welcome.

Jesus cared for the stranger who came to him. He didn't question him, detain him or deport him. There are 52,000 strangers in fear of being sent back to countries where their lives are forfeit. There are more than 12 million additional strangers living in quiet fear of deportation in the United States—thousands of whom live in my community. When at last we love and care for the very people Jesus commanded us to care for and love, maybe then we will come to see the faces impacted by our nation's border policies and immigration reforms. Maybe then we will recognize the stranger Jesus spoke of and act as his advocate.—rh