

The Mennonite



Mary Emma Showalter Eby,
brainchild and compiler of
Mennonite Community Cookbook

The woman behind the cookbook



February 2015

www.TheMennonite.org

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- Praying with Jesus for unity
- Sexuality: commitment or celibacy
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- Discipleship and implicit bias



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ON THE COVER: Photo provided by MennoMedia

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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*

Thanks to the Showalters

Thanks to Jewel and Richard Showalter for their well-written, straightforward and meaningful letter “to the global family” (January). I am sure that there are many who with them feel called by Jesus “to honor him above self, family, clan, tribe and nation.”—*Wilma Shank, Goshen, Ind.*

Disagreeing with Wenger

I just read “An Open Letter to My Beloved Church” by Chester Wenger (December 2014). Wenger should’ve rebuked his son for living such an immoral lifestyle instead of marrying him. After all, they were practicing this for 27 years. May our heavenly Father have mercy. One of the 10 commandments states, “Thou shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). Hebrews 13:4 says, “Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” Read also 1 Corinthians 6:9. It is that simple.—*Perry D. Lehman, Lowville, N.Y.*

At the table, all are welcome

I doubt that as a Mennonite church we will be able to agree on what the Bible teaches about homosexuality.

Even though we may see others as “sinning” by living a homosexual lifestyle, we can still commune together as those who also need forgiveness and grace. Each local congre-

gation, after considering the counsel of the conference and denomination, should be respected and not judged for their discernment, even if other congregations discern differently.

My own family—both my children and siblings—have different views in relation to homosexuality, yet we have committed ourselves to continue to share our love with each other and to not break relationships. I don’t ask them to agree with my point of view or to change theirs. They in turn do not try to change where I am at on this issue or any others. I am so grateful for the unconditional love we share with and for each other.

A friend of many years who has really struggled and has not been stable in his relationship to the Lord and to the church recently returned and gave witness to a deep sense of regret and sorrow for his unstable and wandering ways and committed himself to not waste any more of his life by his sinful behavior and instability. (His issues did not include his views or practice of homosexuality.)

Following our morning celebration of the Lord’s Supper in a circle of some 30 people, including several children, I passed the peace of Christ to my friend and him to me. My friend said, “Dave, I can’t tell you how much I needed this participation in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper.”

For my friend, as for me, it was a time of confession and forgiveness as well as healing and a time to give thanks for what Christ has done for us by his life and death. As my friend and I gave each other a big hug, I said to him: “I, too, am a repenting sinner in need of grace and grateful for the work of Christ on my behalf, and I also needed and benefitted from this celebration of the Lord’s Table this morning.”—*David Helmuth, Goshen, Ind.*

On issues other than sex

For the past decade or more, the letters to the editor have discussed the pros and cons of accepting LGBTQ individuals as members into our fellowship.

Lately it seems discussions on sex are everywhere in the Opinion columns.

Might it not be time to move on to other subjects, especially about our endless wars, gross injustices perpetrated by our governmental agencies, such as the CIA, the FBI, the NSA, the TSA and the Department of Homeland Security and the ongoing destruction of our planet? In our Mennonite media we do not see titles such as, “What’s the Next Step to Stop Torture” by Ray McGovern or, “Want to Know the Reality of U.S. Torture? Ask Shaker Ammer” by Olive Stafford Smith or, “Torture Report Exposes Sadism and Lies” in *Consortium News* or, “U.S. Shootings by Police, Prison Conditions Trouble *UN Care2 News Networks* or climate change articles about Pacific Ocean islands sinking into the sea or the fact that India is fencing off its border with Bangladesh in anticipation of millions of climate-change refugees trying to escape into India. Neither do we talk about the horrors of the death penalty, which is as heartless as war (<http://original.antiwar.com/lucy/2014/04/30/the-death-penalty-is-as-flawed-and-heartless-as-war/>) or hear much about the hunger crisis in Afghanistan, which doctors blame on our war, or about the U.S. presidential kill lists and

the horrors of the drone bombings of wedding parties, funerals and even rescuers seeking to help the wounded and dead from a previous drone attack, or that the United States and Israel have bombed eight Muslim countries this year. Add to that the millions we have murdered in our wars, the threat of nuclear holocaust and other injustices.

Might not some of the above subjects be more important than concentrating solely on the one issue of who we should or shouldn’t accept into our fellowship?—*Daniel Riehl, Lititz, Pa.*

Loving but not open-minded

What made the Radical Reformation of the Anabaptists radical was their biblical literalness. The martyrdom we admire today was driven by principles based on that literalism that separated them from other reformers and the Roman Catholic Church. The Anabaptists were loving but not open-minded. Prohibitions against homosexuality and against killing enemies (among other things) were based on literalism, without which both positions are open to challenge. If biblical literalism is obsolete, then perhaps denominations founded on it are obsolete as well. It can be argued that abolition of the Mennonite church could promote unity

in the body by eliminating the walls separating it from other denominations and freeing former members to demonstrate open-mindedness at the Christian church closest to their house.
—*Scott Smith, Greensboro, N.C.*

Lessons from Yoder

From what I have learned indirectly about the theories Yoder used to justify his real-life experiment, they may be worth looking at. Twisted as they may seem, these theories apparently attempt to expose the unhealthy inhibition and rigidity of definition in many conventional religious views of sexuality, including issues playing out in the church’s current discussions of LGBTQ inclusion.

One of the many “lessons” I draw from this sad story is how an ideology/intellectual construct/scriptural interpretation can blind one to the actual human suffering involved in putting it into practice. Or how one can intentionally or unintentionally use an ideology to justify behaviors satisfying to oneself but injurious to others.

This insight might provide a bridge to reassessing other aspects of Yoder’s theology and theology in general as often practiced. That is, when and how
(*Continued on page 54*)

IN THIS ISSUE

Cookbooks are popular today. In our cover story, Melodie M. Davis introduces us to Mary Emma Showalter Eby (page 12), who compiled the first Mennonite cookbook published by anything more than a local congregation or small regional printer.

Three articles help us look at prayer. In “Praying with Jesus for Unity” (page 18), Alan and Eleanor Kreider call us to pray the prayer for unity that Jesus prayed. Their concern is that “some of us may be acting against Christ’s prayer.”

Roger Martin (page 21) relates his journey with prayer. He acknowl-

edges the difficulty of prayer and encourages us to pray always, even in the absence of certainty.

Carole Christman Koch (page 24) offers a history of Christian prayer as a model we may want to follow.

Jason R. Moyer (page 26) calls us to follow “the rule of Paul,” in which everyone has a voice and is welcome around the table.

Melissa Florer-Bixler (page 28) reminds us that church is a place for the vulnerable, not just for those who have it all together.

Early last month, the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board released findings from a 2014 survey of

credentialed leaders. See pages 32-33 for reports about responses to this survey.

In this month’s News Analysis (page 40), Tim Nafziger reports on various responses to Mountain States Mennonite Conference’s decision to license Theda Good, who is a lesbian.

On pages 43-45, we offer thanks to the many households, congregations and agencies who contributed money toward the work of *The Mennonite*.

The editorial (page 56) looks at the implicit bias we all carry and calls us as disciples of Jesus to recognize this bias and work to bring change to ourselves and our society.—*Editor*

Mennonite Church Canada pastors officiate same-sex wedding

SASKATOON, Saskatchewan—Craig Friesen and Matthew Wiens joined their hands and committed their lives to one another in front of friends and family on Dec. 31, 2014. It was the first same-sex wedding publicly officiated by Mennonite Church Canada pastors.

Wiens and Friesen, who attend Nutana Park Mennonite Church in Saskatoon, were married by their co-pastors, Anita Retzlaff and Patrick Preheim, at Osler Mennonite Church.

Nutana Park Mennonite didn't become welcoming overnight, however.

According to members, this marriage is the outcome of a process that spanned nearly 20 years, through a gradual and intentional culture shift.

It began to take shape because of Connie Gutwin, who has attended the church for more than 30 years.

Her daughter Catherine is a lesbian, and although she doesn't attend church, Gutwin felt it important for the church to welcome those who are same-sex attracted.

Ten years after Catherine came out, Nutana Park began adult education classes on same-sex relationships that drew LGBTQ people and their friends and family from all over the province.

Seven years later, the church sent a letter to Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's pastoral leadership committee stating its intention to engage all members of the church fully in all aspects of church.

According to Trish St. Onge, Nutana Park's congregational chair, the assumption was that this included marriage, although it wasn't stated in so many words.

In October 2014, the area church's pastoral leadership commission released a statement in response to questions throughout the province wondering what would happen to pastors who perform same-sex marriages.

The commission said individual congregations can decide if they will marry same-sex couples or not, and that no

Photo provided



Game show format helps put Ebola in context

Ross Kauffman (left) and Bluffton (Ohio) University senior Alicia Rodriguez listen to Alex Parker, a Bluffton junior and the announcer for a Jan. 6 "game show" featuring student contestants. The faux show, with Kauffman as host, was part of his campus presentation on "Ebola and Fear: A Public Health Perspective." Kauffman pointed out that the number of deaths from Ebola is "dwarfed" by the nearly 600,000 yearly deaths estimated from malaria—a preventable disease whose victims are primarily African children under 5.—Bluffton University

action will be taken against pastors for doing so.—*Canadian Mennonite*

Marlene Bogard new Mennonite Women USA executive director

MINNEAPOLIS—The board of directors for Mennonite Women USA has named Marlene Harder Bogard, Newton, Kan., as executive director, beginning in April. The search for an executive director after Ruth Lapp Guengerich announced she would retire early this year.

Bogard has a Master of Arts in Christian ministry and brings many gifts to Mennonite Women USA, including teaching, administration, speaking and writing, according to the board.

She has served Western District Conference for almost 25 years as director of the Conference Resource Library and as minister of Christian formation.



"I wish to offer my gifts to further empower women as they seek to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ," Bogard writes. "I hope to help them embrace and release their gifts, dreams and love for the common good of the church and for future generations of girls and women."

For the past four years Guengerich and Rhoda Keener have been co-directors for Mennonite Women USA.

Prior to that, Keener was executive director for 10 years.

When Bogard assumes the duties as executive director, Keener will become Sister Care Director, continuing to work part time for MW USA.—*Mennonite Women USA*

Registration opens for KC2015; BMC allowed exhibit space

ELKHART, Ind.—Registration opened Jan. 15 for Mennonite Church USA's 2015 biennial convention, to be held June 30–July 5 in Kansas City, Mo. Hotel registration opens March 3.

In consultation with the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board, convention planners have accepted the application of Brethren Mennonite Council for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Interests (BMC) for exhibit space at KC2015. The board is also allowing convention planners to work with leaders of the Pink Menno campaign to negotiate rental of a meeting room on site at the convention center.

BMC has applied for exhibit space at previous conventions; this is the first year that their request has been approved. Pink Menno applied to be an exhibitor at convention for the first time this year; the group's request for exhibit space was denied, although convention planning staff members hope to work with the group to negotiate the rental of a meeting room inside the convention center.

"The decision to grant exhibit space to BMC is not a radical one," says Glen Alexander Guyton, chief operating officer and convention planning director for Mennonite Church USA. "BMC has long been part of our conventions. They are an established organization with clear points of authority. We have

had good conversations with BMC leaders about our shared expectations for the exhibit hall at convention."

Special presenters at KC2015 will include Alex Awad of Jerusalem, pastor of East Jerusalem Baptist Church and a professor at Bethlehem Bible College in Palestine; Drew Hart, a Ph.D. candidate at Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia; and Alan and Debra Hirsch, founding directors of the Forge Mission Training Network.

For more information about convention events and speakers and to register, visit convention.mennoniteusa.org. —*Mennonite Church USA*

Goshen College to offer film production major

GOSHEN, Ind.—Next fall, Goshen College will offer a new film production major for students interested in studying film.

Previously, students interested in film could study general communications with an emphasis on film. The new major allows students to "get credit for what they've already been taking and show[s] that the courses they're taking are contributing to their

actual major," says Seth Conley, associate professor of communication.

Although there aren't new courses being offered, the film department has flourished in the past five years. The addition of FiveCore Media as part of the curriculum brought about three new video production classes, each offered once every three years.

The idea for the major came to Conley and FiveCore Media General Manager Kyle Hufford, with the realization that the film department was quickly gaining traction. Their initial intent was to create a film studies major, but they found that a stronger emphasis on film production would prove itself more useful.—*Goshen College*

Leaders of color discuss privilege and power

FORT MYERS, Fla.—Privilege and power in Mennonite institutions was the focus of this year's Hope for the Future, a gathering for leaders of color and Mennonite Church USA leaders to work at finding adaptive solutions for culturally appropriate leadership development. It was held Jan. 23-25 at Iglesia Menonita Arca de Salvación in Fort Myers, Fla.

Over 100 individuals registered for the meeting—the largest number for a Hope for the Future event. Seventy-eight of the participants were people of color, and 26 participants were white. Students from Hesston (Kan.) College, Goshen (Ind.) College and Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., joined this year.

"Power is not easy to talk about," said Iris de León-Hartshorn, Mennonite Church USA director of transformative peacemaking. But she reminded the participants that it is "kingdom work." She also led an exercise using the Power Cube to evaluate case studies. Drew Hart of Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia provided the opening sermon on Jan. 23. Gilberto Perez, Jr. of Goshen (Ind.) College led worship on Jan. 24. Sue Park-Hur of ReconciliAsian preached on Jan. 25. —*Anna Groff*

EMU photo provided



EMU students at work "in the field."

EMU gets \$200,000 grant

In September 2014, the Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund awarded Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., a \$200,000 grant to address water quality issues and change agricultural impacts in the nearby Bergton community. The project team will work with community leaders and farmers to assess local streams and prioritize restoration practices to include implementation of livestock exclusion, stream and buffer restoration and other agricultural water quality best management practices. One of the most innovative aspects of the project includes a partnership with EMU's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding, which will integrate social science to aid in community outreach. Students will assist in stakeholder mapping and identifying the community values and attitudes toward local streams.—*EMU*

Saying 'I love you'



Sara Dick is pastor at Shalom Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan.

I love to watch you play.” I recently received this phrase as parenting advice about how to show appreciation for your kid’s athletic efforts.

Whether the kid stinks or soars, the point is to express your parental enjoyment at watching her swim, jump, run, dribble, throw or approximate those activities.

This advice would also work as “I love to hear you play.” The sounds of a child playing the viola or playing with a friend can be delightful.

This is super useful for someone (me) who isn’t currently allowed to tell her kid that she loves her. I take comfort in knowing I’m not the only person who has ever been in this situation: Anne Lamott wrote that her son disallowed those three little words (“I love you”) for a time, too.

I am left to express my love indirectly—through affirmations and acts of love.

Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action (1 John 3:18).

Paradoxically, my kid’s favorite Scripture passage right now is 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, a genuine Pauline love-a-thon: “Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude,” it begins.

She probably hasn’t read all the way to verse 11: “When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.”

She thinks that limiting my vocabulary will ease the pain of past losses, and perhaps it will in the short-run. Eventually, though, I hope she’ll allow me to tell her “I love you” without grumbling in response.

This predicament isn’t unique to parenthood. We may feel deep affection for a coworker or friend but would feel awkward telling them, “I love you.” Instead we show our love by listening, affirming, helping, playing, praying or working with them on a project.

Listening is an Act of Love is a collection of StoryCorps interviews with “real” Americans (see www.storycorps.net). I love the stories in the

book, but right now I especially love the title of the book. It suggests a powerful way to communicate care without saying those potentially pesky words.

We humans can feel deep affection for animals, too, but the words “I love you” are lost on them. The chickens want kitchen scraps, the cat (always) wants to be fed, and the dog wants to either cuddle or play fetch.

When we bear witness to someone’s—or something’s—life, we show love. We listen, we watch and we convey our deep care for the person or creature.

My Grandma Helene Dick would often tell us grandchildren, “I love you, but God loves you more.” Her words put human love into a perspective I needed as a child and still need now, as an adult.

Jesus calls us even to love our enemies: listening and watching them, too, bearing witness to their lives even when we might wish them ill. This kind of love draws on a deeper well than one’s own individual resources.

We love because God first loved us. Those who say, “I love God,” and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment

we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also (1 John 4:19-21).

This month, as we celebrate—or ignore—Valentine’s Day and enter into the season of awaiting spring and resurrection, we recollect Jesus’ command to love one another, as he has loved us.

In her novel *Imperfect Birds*, Anne Lamott writes, “God loves you crazily, like I love you, ... like a slightly overweight auntie, who sees only your marvelousness and need.”

I trust that God loves me even more than my aunts and uncles do, seeing my “marvelousness and need” through unfathomable mercy.

Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old (Psalm 25:6). **TIM**

This predicament isn’t unique to parenthood. We might feel deep affection for a coworker or friend, but would feel awkward telling them, “I love you.”

5 reasons to attend MWC Assembly 16

On June 13-15, 1925, a small group of Mennonite pastors—perhaps 40 altogether, from seven different countries—gathered at the Vereinshaus Nadelberg in Basel, Switzerland, for several days of worship and conversation. The business of the meeting focused on the material and spiritual needs of the Mennonites in Russia, who had been devastated by the Bolshevik Revolution, along with the ensuing famine, and the imprisonment, deportation and murder of hundreds of their members. But the group was also seeking to re-establish a common sense of identity in the aftermath of the First World War, a war that had brought Mennonite soldiers from France, Germany, Poland, Russia and even North America into mortal combat with each other. Christian Neff, the main organizer of the event, hoped that a celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Anabaptist movement could provide a framework for a new sense of shared unity and commitment.

That modest event marked the beginning of the Mennonite World Conference (MWC).

Less than six months from now, July 21-26, Mennonites from all around the world will gather in Harrisburg, Pa., to celebrate the 16th Assembly of MWC. If the 1925 event was attended primarily by middle-aged men, nearly all from Europe, Assembly 16 will reflect the colors and diversity of a church that has become truly multicultural and international. North American Mennonites host the MWC assembly roughly every 30 years. The event in July is a rare opportunity for you to represent the face of the Anabaptist-Mennonite church, along with several thousand other brothers and sisters in Christ who will be gathering from more than 50 countries.

Here are five reasons why you should be part of this global gathering.

1. Come to the MWC assembly to renew friendships. According to a recent survey of Mennonite Church USA congregations, nearly 40 percent of our churches have a relationship with a sister church outside the United States, and 76 percent include members who have served in international settings with Mennonite Central Committee or a Mennonite-related mission agency. Assembly 16 is a wonderful opportunity for your congregation to strengthen these long-established friendships with face-to-face encounters.

2. Come to make new friends. Anyone who has traveled knows the joy of unexpected, sometimes life-changing relationships, seemingly formed by accident. Participants in Assembly 16 will have a chance to meet regularly for conversation in internationally diverse discussion groups. Meals, workshops, field trips and recreational activities will provide dozens of additional opportunities to meet other participants. Go to the conference assuming that you will exchange phone numbers, email addresses and Facebook links. The connections you make could blossom into lifelong cross-cultural friendships.

3. Come to learn more about the global church. In addition to inspirational worship, the gathering in Harrisburg is a rare opportunity to learn more about sister churches in other countries. Dozens of workshops, booths at the Global Village pavilion, the Global Youth Summit and encounters with church leaders from the 102 groups that are members of MWC will help you gain a fuller picture of who we are as a global church. You will return home wanting to learn more.

4. Come to offer hospitality. The story of the early church is filled with accounts of Christians extending hospitality to each other as they traveled across cultures and languages. Hospitality is a fundamental Christian virtue. If you have spent time abroad—even as a tourist, a short-term volunteer or on a study tour—you likely remember times when you experienced a gracious and generous reception from others. Assembly 16 now provides us a rare opportunity to extend Christian hospitality to brothers and sisters from around the world. Regardless of whether you can attend in person, consider demonstrating your hospitality with a financial gift that will make it possible for someone else to participate.

5. Come to be renewed and transformed. Our congregations and conferences have been facing difficult times in recent years. Sometimes it's difficult to be hopeful about the future. At Assembly 16 you will encounter Mennonite brothers and sisters from churches around the world who are also facing enormous challenges—poverty, access to education, HIV-AIDS, profound political instability and even persecution. Come ready to share, listen, bear each other's burdens and be renewed by Christ's promise that he will never leave or forsake his people. 



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*.

The connections you make could blossom into lifelong cross-cultural friendships.

We think we know more than we do

We've all done this, right—pretended we know something that we really don't? Or we've argued for a position we're sure about, but if we're honest we'd have to admit that we really don't know all that much about the subject.

That word "we" is important in David Dunning's article "We Are All Confident Idiots" (*Pacific Standard*, November/December 2014) because it helps us realize he's not looking down on us. This false confidence is a human trait.

Dunning is a professor of psychology at Cornell University, and his article draws on research from various sources.

But he begins with a couple of humorous examples. Last March at the South by Southwest music festival in Austin, Texas, he writes, "the late-night talk show *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* sent a camera crew out into the streets to catch hipsters bluffing."

Since people at such festivals pride themselves on knowing the new acts, the crew played a trick on them. They asked one man about Contact Dermatitis, "Do you think he has what it takes to really make it to the big time?"

"Absolutely," the fan said.

However, there's no such act.

The crew asked a young woman what she knew about Tonya and the Hardings. Not getting the joke, the woman launched into an elaborate response about the fictitious band.

For more than 20 years, Dunning has researched people's understanding of their own expertise. His research has led him to the conclusion that "to a great degree, we fail to recognize the frequency and scope of our ignorance," he writes.

In 1999, he and a graduate student published a paper that documented how, in many areas of life, incompetent people "cannot recognize just how incompetent they are."

What's curious, he writes, is that rather than leaving people disoriented, perplexed or cautious, "the incompetent are often blessed with an inappropriate confidence, buoyed by *something* that feels like knowledge."

We all tend to overestimate our knowledge and performance, Dun-

ning writes, "whether it's grammar, emotional intelligence, logical reasoning, firearm care and safety, debating or financial knowledge."

We may like to call others idiots, but we're all guilty of this. Dunning says one should not think of the ignorant mind as uninformed but as "misinformed."

So how do we address this ignorance?

Traditionally we think of ignorance as lack of knowledge and appeal to more education. But education, writes Dunning, "even when done skillfully, can produce illusory confidence."

He offers the example of driver's education courses, which, "particularly those aimed at handling emergency maneuvers, tend to increase rather than decrease accident rates." Training people to handle snow and ice, for example, leaves them feeling like they're experts at it, when in fact their skills usually erode rapidly after they leave the course.

"The most difficult misconceptions to dispel," Dunning writes, "are those that reflect sacrosanct beliefs." This is because calling such a belief into question calls the entire self into question. This can be addressed, however, by shoring up the person's identity elsewhere.

Studies have shown that people are more open to alternative beliefs when, for example, they've written an essay about an important aspect of themselves.

Knowledge of our own ignorance is hard to come by, especially when our heads are full of immense knowledge. Sometimes the best response we can give to a question is, "I don't know."—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle



Joel Kauffmann



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“We need writers who know the difference between production of a market commodity and the practice of an art.”—Ursula K. Le Guin, accepting the Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters

Docs to parents: Limit kids' texts, tweets, online activity

An influential pediatricians group says parents need to know that unrestricted media use can have serious consequences.

It's been linked with violence, cyberbullying, school woes, obesity, lack of sleep and a host of other problems. It's not a major cause of

these troubles, but “many parents are clueless” about the profound impact media exposure can have on their children, says Dr. Victor Strasburger, lead author of the new American Academy of Pediatrics policy, a University of New Mexico adolescent medicine specialist.

The policy is aimed at all kids, including those who use smartphones, computers and other Internet-connected devices. It expands the academy's long-standing

recommendations on banning televisions from children's and teens' bedrooms and limiting entertainment screen time to no more than two hours daily.

Under the new policy, those two hours include using the Internet for entertainment, including Facebook, Twitter, TV and movies; online homework is an exception.

The policy statement cites a 2010 report that found U.S. children aged 8 to 18 spend an average of more than seven hours daily using some kind of entertainment media. Many kids now watch TV online, and many send text messages from their bedrooms after “lights out,” including sexually explicit images by cellphone or Internet, yet few parents set rules about media use, the policy says.

“I guarantee you that if you have a 14-year-old boy and he has an Internet connection in his bedroom, he is looking at pornography,” Strasburger said.

The policy notes that three-quarters of kids aged 12 to 17 own cellphones; nearly all teens send text messages, and many younger kids have phones giving them online access.

“Young people now spend more time with media than they do in school; it is the leading activity for children and teenagers other than sleeping” the policy says.—*Associated Press*

Fewer people are dying from war

The decline in war-related deaths is a huge story—one of the most encouraging of the 20th century, for sure. “On average, about 15 percent of people in prestate eras died violently, compared to about 3 percent of the citizens of the earliest states,” writes Harvard's Steven Pinker. “The rate of documented direct deaths from political violence (war, terrorism, genocide and warlord militias) in the past decade is an unprecedented few hundredths of a percentage point.”—*Vox*

Numbers to ponder

- Estimated annual cost of invasive animal, plant and microbe species to the U.S. economy: **\$120,000,000,000**
 - Percentage of white U.S. Protestants who say they sympathize with Palestinians: **37**
 - Of black U.S. Protestants: **52**
 - Of religiously unaffiliated Americans: **57**
 - Portion of American police officers who are white: **3/4**
 - Percentage of white Americans who say police do a poor job protecting people from crime: **10**
 - Of black Americans who say so: **33**
 - Estimated number of times SWAT teams were deployed in the United States in 1980: **3,000**
 - In 2013: **60,000**
 - Percentage of Americans who support military intervention against the Islamic State: **62**
 - Who think it's unlikely to succeed: **68**
 - Amount the city of Fairbanks, Alaska, has spent to appeal a \$37.50 campaign-violation fine levied against its mayor: **\$7,000**
 - Average amount U.S. customs officials paid to build each of 21 houses for employees in rural Arizona: **\$680,000**
 - Average market price of houses in the area: **\$86,500**
 - Portion of Americans who want their state to secede: **1/4**
 - Portion who cannot name all three branches of the federal government: **2/3**
 - Percentage of women worldwide who believe energy conservation is a “vital issue”: **68**
 - Of men: **47**
 - Number of U.S. states that observe a Martin Luther King Jr. holiday and a Robert E. Lee holiday on the same day: **3**
- Harper's*

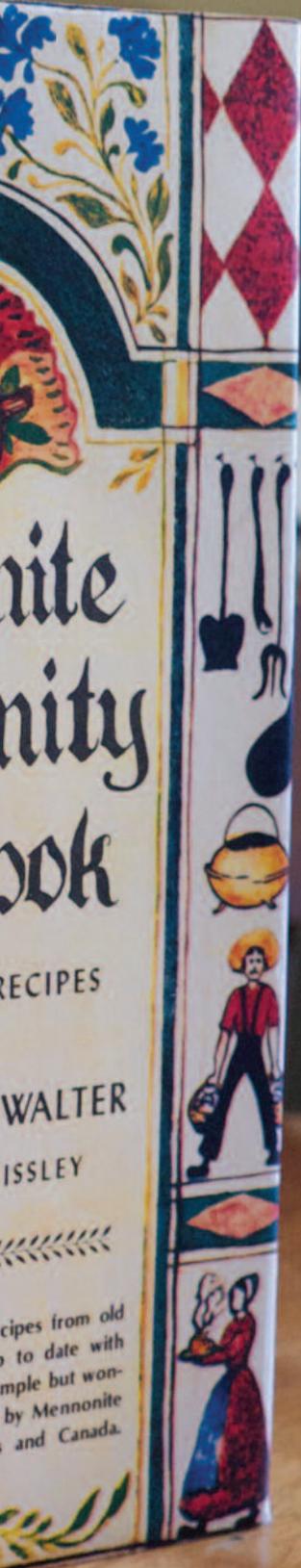
The woman behind *Mennonite Community Cookbook*

A look at the life
and influence of
Mary Emma Showalter
(1913-2003)

by Melodie M. Davis

Many Mennonites today know Mary Emma Showalter Eby as the brainchild and compiler of *Mennonite Community Cookbook*. It was the first Mennonite cookbook ever published by anything more than a local congregation or a small regional printer.





People have referred to this cookbook as the “mother” or “grandmother” of all Mennonite cookbooks. When one person heard the cookbook was about to be published in a new edition, she exclaimed, “You mean you would mess with god herself?” (No irreverence intended for either God or Mary Emma, but this quotation does highlight the importance of the book among Mennonites.)

Mary Emma would perhaps roll over in her grave if she heard any of these quips. She’s buried at Trissels Mennonite Church cemetery near Broadway, Va., a church that kindled her early understandings of compassion and service, according to a tribute written by colleague Catherine R. Mumaw after 90-year-old Mary Emma died in 2003 (see sources on page 16). Mary Emma lived in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia most of her life, the oldest daughter in a family of nine children. It seems fitting that her bones now rest merely 10 miles away from the offices of MennoMedia, the churchwide agency that continues to publish her cookbook.

This is the story of Mary Emma, who was much more than a home economics professor and cookbook compiler. She was an innovator and trailblazer for other women.

World War II: years of service

During World War II, which impacted so many of Mary Emma’s generation, she was caught in a professional dilemma as she finished college. She had first attended Eastern Mennonite School (EMS) from 1935-37 with the goal of teaching home economics. She finished her degree at a nearby state school, Madison College (now James Madison University) in 1942, a few months after the December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. She wanted to begin teaching but felt that given the ardent patriotism of the war, she would be expected to support the war effort as a public school teacher.

In the Sinai desert, Mary Emma organized a program to feed some 1,075 children, whom she called ‘her nice-sized family.’

Instead, she worked for the Civilian Public Service (CPS) program and was first stationed at the Grottoes, Va., CPS camp. Her lead professor at Madison was disappointed, saying she’d be working for “cowards.” Mary Emma replied that if they were cowards, she was one, too; furthermore, they were her brothers and friends. This stance swayed the professor to help her find materials to use in her work. As one of



Mary Emma Showalter Eby
Photo provided

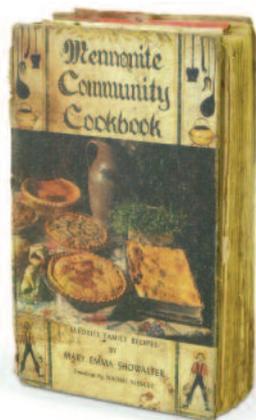


Mary Emma and others dressing chickens at the Grottoes, Va., Civilian Public Service camp. Photo provided

only three women among 120 men at the camp, Mary Emma also taught nutrition and craft courses. Her efforts at this one camp led to her being asked to conduct a cooking school for the other CPS camp cooks.

Orie O. Miller, then head of Mennonite Central Committee and instrumental in helping organize the CPS program, asked Mary Emma to visit 15 CPS camps throughout the country and evaluate camp food expenditures (42 cents a day per person was budgeted). She was to recommend any needed changes.

When Mary Emma first contacted Herald Press, the church publisher, with her proposal for the cookbook, the answer was pointed and now ironic: 'We are not in the business of printing cookbooks.'



Mary Emma told Miller she would rather go abroad to do relief work than visit all the camps. He replied, "Well, do this first, and then we'll talk about relief work." She agreed, and her visits to the camps became the seed for creating *Mennonite Community Cookbook*. Wherever she went, Mary Emma observed that Mennonite cooking was much the same. The dishes the men hankered for came from their home communities. She later said her CPS experience was the "door

that opened up all my professional life."

Eventually, in 1944, she did go abroad with MCC—on a large American troop ship carrying 3,000 soldiers headed to Alexandria, Egypt, to work as a dietitian in a United Nations feeding program. In the Sinai desert, Mary Emma organized a program to feed some 1,075 children, whom she called "her nice-sized family." There she also taught nutrition and culinary skills to cooks. Later she was the matron, cook and dietitian at MCC's center in London, where she was said to have served "Virginia-style dinners."

After the war, in 1946, she returned to the United States and sought a teaching job. Catherine Mumaw's tribute notes that Mary Emma "was more interested in being a professional than getting married" at that point. EMS President John L. Stauffer asked Mary Emma to be the school's dietitian and teach high school home economics, a job she readily accepted. In 1947, the school became Eastern Mennonite College (EMC), and Mary Emma began putting in motion two dreams: setting up a college degree program in home economics (for which she'd need a master's degree) and putting together a cookbook featuring the Amish and Mennonite cooking of her generation's parents and grandparents.

Master's degree and cookbook

After observing her mother's old hand-written notebooks of recipes and learning that women in every Mennonite community had similar written collections, she longed to preserve that history and "compile such recipes before they were destroyed by the daughters of today [who] were guilty of pushing them aside in favor of the new," Mary Emma writes in her introduction to the cookbook.

She asked Paul Erb, editor of the denominational magazine *Gospel Herald*, to run an announcement seeking recipes for desserts, salads, meats, soups, pickles and more, hoping to have each Mennonite community in the United States and Canada represented in the book.

Mary Emma also sent out letters to wives of ministers using a directory of Mennonite ministers. One minister, Mary Emma wrote later in a series of reflections on the creation of the cookbook in *Mennonite Weekly Review* (July-August 1978), "clipped my wings a bit when he said that his wife had more important things to do than to survey the community in search of recipes." (That pastor's congregants eventually asked Mary Emma why they weren't given an opportunity to contribute recipes.) Ultimately she was able to

round up 125 women to canvass their church communities and collect more than 5,000 recipes.

It took roughly two years of historical research and writing as part of her master's research at the University of Tennessee (Knoxville) to compile the cookbook, including extensive testing. The chair of her thesis committee was not in favor of the cookbook project, hoping that Mary Emma instead "would do research for her." Almost 600 cake recipes were to be tested. The chair apparently wanted to make the requirements tough: "[It was] neither logical nor scientifically related that [the professor made it a requirement for] each of the 100 cake recipes be beaten by hand rather than a mixer," wrote Mary Emma in *MWR*. But she nursed her sore arms and baked those cakes, eventually choosing the 79 cake recipes now included in the book.

M.T. Brackbill, a physics professor at Eastern Mennonite College, took all the original food photographs in the book. Mary Emma's home in Harrisonburg was the setting, using her own dishes or treasured family serving plates, tablecloths and place settings. Don Showalter, a Harrisonburg attorney and Mary Emma's nephew, recalls tasting the decorated fruit cake his mother made when he was 9 years old, which was photographed for the original cookbook.

When Mary Emma first contacted Herald Press, the church publisher, with her proposal for the cookbook, the answer was pointed and now ironic: "We are not in the business of printing cookbooks." So an ad hoc group of folks in Scottdale, Pa., organized the Mennonite Community Association to move the project forward. They found a much larger publisher based in Philadelphia, the John C. Winston Company, ready to tackle the project. Later, after the book sold exceedingly well for almost 20 years, Herald Press snatched up the chance to become the publisher. This move greatly satisfied Mary Emma because of her lifelong dedication to the Mennonite church.

The John C. Winston Company went all out when they launched the cookbook in 1950. Numerous tales of the publicist's demands on Mary Emma are told in the new 12-page historical section in the 2015 edition of the book (such as baking 2,000 cookie samples to send to magazines and reviewers). They also sent her on a short author tour, including Philadelphia and Lancaster County, Pa. Mary Emma felt comfortable among friends in Lancaster County, but the planned events and interviews in Philadelphia made her a little anxious, especially when she learned she



Mary Emma pours tea. Photo provided

was being asked to be on TV.

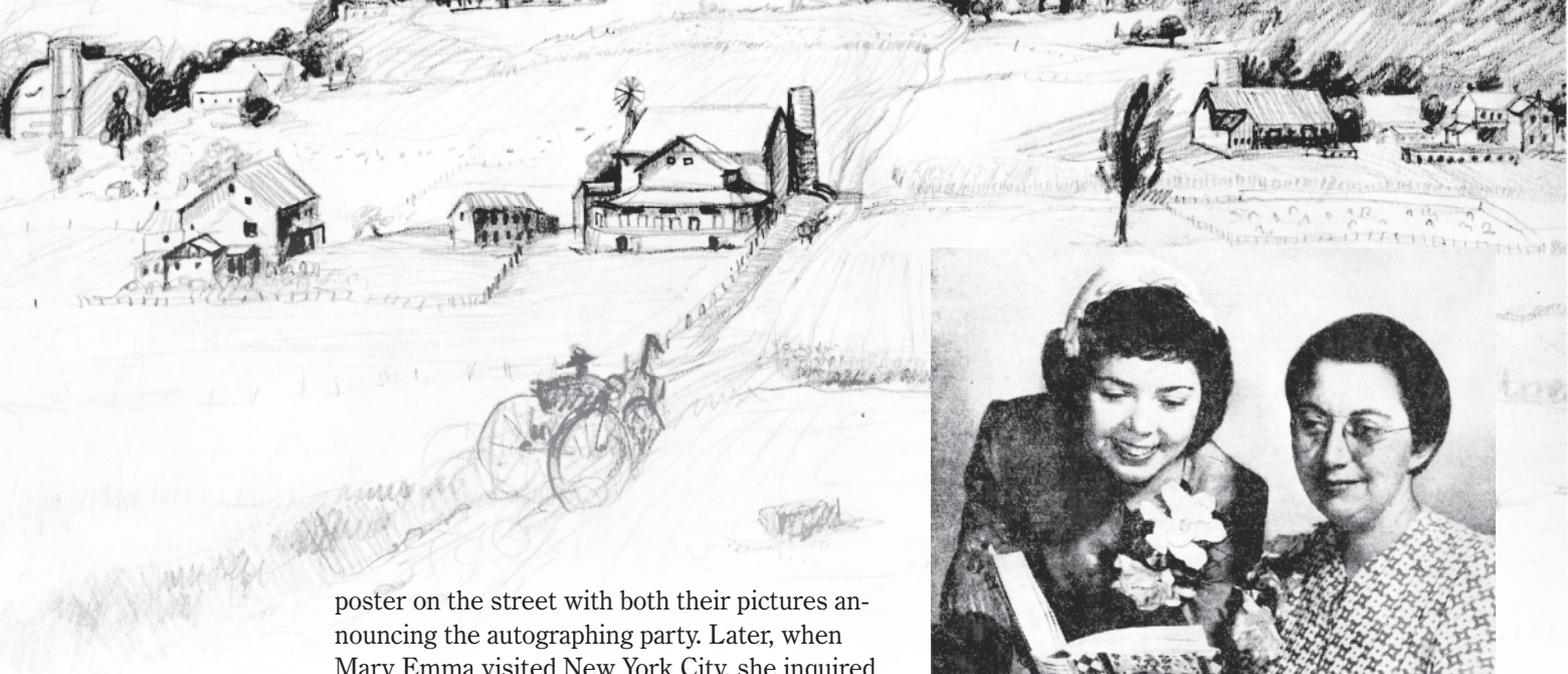
So she was delighted that Naomi Nissley, the artist who drew the original cover and interior food and scenery sketches, was happy to accom-

Seven years after the book came out, in 1957, Mary Emma became the first Eastern Mennonite College faculty woman to earn a doctorate.

pany her. Naomi had gone to art school in Philadelphia. At Wannemakers, one of the largest department stores in the city, there was a huge



A photo from the cookbook, taken in Mary Emma Showalter's home in Harrisonburg, Va. Photo provided



poster on the street with both their pictures announcing the autographing party. Later, when Mary Emma visited New York City, she inquired of a clerk at Macy's whether they carried *Mennonite Community Cookbook*. The clerk replied yes, but when she couldn't find any copies, she apologized saying, "It is so popular that we can't keep it in stock." Then the clerk recognized Mary Emma and asked, "Aren't you the author?" Mary Emma confessed she was and wrote later, "was my face red!"

Seven years after the book came out, in 1957, Mary Emma became the first Eastern Mennonite College faculty woman to earn a doctorate.

Memories from students and colleagues

Doris Bomberger and Catherine Mumaw were the first two women to graduate from the home economics department that Mary Emma started at Eastern Mennonite College. Catherine Mumaw



Naomi Nissley and Mary Emma Showalter confer over a copy of *Mennonite Community Cookbook*. Photo provided

material, they could only muster a B+ out of Miss Showalter.

"She was a strict teacher, who didn't give out A's," Doris recalls. But Doris, an educator and artist, holds no grudges, knowing that high standards frequently pull the best out of students.

Doris also lived with Mary Emma for a year—in the same house where Mary Emma prepared the dishes for the now historic cookbook and where M.T. Brackbill photographed them. Doris did the cleaning, laundry and ironing as a maid to help pay for her board. Mary Emma did most of the cooking, and they ate meals together. But one day, when Doris cooked, she says, "I put an egg yolk in the garbage after using just the egg white. Mary Emma wanted to know, 'Why did you do that? You could have saved it and used it later. That's wasteful.'"

Doris called her Miss Showalter in this setting, and she was expected "to keep things nice." One day, when Doris was cleaning the quarters, she discovered money under the carpet. Doris pondered, Should she tell Miss Showalter she had found it? She reasoned she should, or else if some came up missing, Mary Emma might think she had taken it. So Doris informed Mary Emma simply, "I know where you keep your money."

Mary Emma responded, "I can tell you are cleaning well."

After selling nearly a half million books, she also likely saved a few meals for many a confused or harried cook.

passed away in July 2014, while Doris Bomberger continues to live not far from where much of this Mennonite history happened. Both Catherine and Doris served as chairs of the home economics department at various times, as did Mary Ethel Heatwole, another student of Mary Emma's.

Some of Doris's stories reveal intriguing tidbits into the personality and character of Mary Emma. Doris says she and Catherine took an "advanced cooking" class, and even though Mary Emma said their work demonstrated they had learned the

Catherine Mumaw said Mary Emma was a “person who could laugh at herself,” which likely was what was behind her rejoinder to the found money.

Indeed Mary Emma was dutifully proud of her first two graduates from the EMC home economics department she founded, “almost as proud as if you were my daughters,” she said. Both women received an autographed, tabbed copy of the cookbook as their graduation gift, which Doris still uses and holds dear.

Later on, Catherine, Doris and Mary Emma were all graduate students at Penn State University (State College, Pa.) and lived together in a rented house more as equals. Catherine and Doris were working on master’s degrees, and Mary Emma was finishing her doctorate. One escapade there raised the ire of their roommate. Catherine and Doris got into a landlord’s cedar chest, found a wedding gown, and one of them modeled it. When they showed it to Mary Emma, she was horrified, not wanting them to get in trouble with the landlord. But they all stayed collegial friends. Doris helped host a small wedding reception in her home when widower Ira Eby of Hagerstown, Md., married Mary Emma in 1960.

Although Mary Emma never had children of her own, her stepdaughters, Phyllis of Broadway, Va., and Eleanor from Harrisonburg, and stepson Robert of Scottdale, Pa., became like daughters and son. The family treasures not only the cookbook—especially in its original hardback form and original photos—but are also guardians of Mary Emma’s diaries and dishes they inherited from their renowned stepmom. They have also made sure all the cookbook royalties continue to go to the school where Mary Emma first felt called to teach, what is now Eastern Mennonite University.

Mary Emma dreamed of writing another cookbook and had started on one, but it never “sufficiently crystallized.” She was happy to write an introduction for *More-with-Less Cookbook* by Doris Janzen Longacre. She also considered starting a restaurant featuring Mennonite cooking and even inquired whether using the name Mennonite Community Restaurant in the name would be permitted. Longtime Herald Press book editor Paul Schrock responded to her letter saying, “We think this is a delightful idea that should enhance rather than detract from the sale of the cookbook.” Unfortunately, that never came to pass, either.

Mary Emma’s life and legacy went beyond being a well-known cookbook author and home economics teacher. Her lived faith, sparked by the



teachings of her church and family, refined in the maelstrom of World War II and lived out through her long service at a church college, benefited the church, the larger world and countless families. After selling nearly a half million books, she also likely saved a few meals for many a confused or harried cook.

There are many more stories about Mary Emma’s experiences launching and promoting *Mennonite Community Cookbook*. What should she do when asked to wear makeup and be on TV—a medium still forbidden at that time in Virginia Mennonite Conference? Find the tales in the new 12-page historical supplement printed in the back of the 2015 “65th Anniversary Edition.”

Doris Bomberger with a signed copy of *Mennonite Community Cookbook* that she received from Mary Emma as a college graduation gift.

Photo provided



Melodie M. Davis served as managing editor for the 65th anniversary edition of Mennonite Community Cookbook for MennoMedia/Herald Press in Harrisonburg, Va.

Sources

The author is deeply indebted to “A Tribute to Mary Emma Showalter Eby,” Feb. 24, 1913-May 3, 2003 by Catherine R. Mumaw, in the *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*, July 2005. Catherine did wide research into many original source materials, including Mary Emma’s diaries, letters, taped interviews and family.

“Cookbook Reminiscences,” a four-part series in *Mennonite Weekly Review*, July 6, 20; Aug. 3, 17, 1978.

Archives at MennoMedia, Harrisonburg, Va.

Praying with Jesus for unity

The difference praying for unity can make in our lives and congregations

by Alan Kreider and Eleanor Kreider

Silence, prayer, work, worship. Mennonites living like this? We tried it. Thirty years ago we were guests for 11 weeks of the Community of Grandchamp near Neuchâtel, Switzerland, whose sisters live by the Taizé rule of life as a part of the Swiss Reformed Church. The sisters' noon prayer, centered on the Beatitudes, always concluded with Jesus' own prayer for his followers: "May they all be one" (John 17:21). They want Jesus' prayer to shape their day and change their world—that there may be unity among Christians.

We were astonished by this daily repetition. After all, we were Mennonites. We thought, Weren't we the ones committed to do what Jesus taught and did? Unlike other Christians who paid too little attention to the Sermon on the Mount, who fought their enemies and swore oaths, we Mennonites were faithful to Jesus. Yet the Grandchamp sisters also listened to Jesus. Further, they prayed with him, using his very words, that his followers may all be one, as the Father and the Son are one.

The sisters inspired us to think more about John 17. How was it that we Mennonites, so keen to obey and imitate Jesus, had sidelined this passage? The 26 verses of this chapter form what is called Jesus' "high-priestly prayer." Jesus concludes this by praying for his disciples and for those who will come later, those who will believe in him through the disciples' word. No fewer than three times he prays, "May they all be one" (17:21, 22, 23). And he anticipates that his prayer will have a consequence: "that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them

even as you have loved me" (17:23).

Why did Jesus pray this way? We came to see that the prayer

- sums up what Jesus had said: He had taught reconciliation, love of God, neighbor and enemy, the incorporation of enemies (Gentiles);
- reflects what Jesus had done: He had called varied people to follow him, who had different life experiences and understandings, especially Zealots and tax-collectors;
- anticipates what Jesus would do: On the cross he would draw all people to himself (12:32);
- reveals what Jesus saw as the gravest obstacle to the credibility of his followers' message—their disunity.

So to Jesus this final prayer was crucial. As we prayed this every day with the sisters, we came to understand why. His prayer worked on us. It made us newly aware how important unity was to Jesus; he wants his followers to be "one." And for good reason: Their unity is to be a means of embodying his message and work and of enabling others to get the point of it all and to believe. Why, we won-

Why had we
Mennonites
so rarely
prayed this
prayer or
seen its
importance?

dered, had the Grandchamp and Taizé communities honed in on his prayer and allowed it to shape their lives? And why had we Mennonites so rarely prayed this prayer or seen its importance?

Listening to the sisters' stories helped us understand why the prayer was important to the Taizé/Grandchamp movement. World War II had been a catastrophe; it had led to the fracturing of Christian churches in Europe whose members had killed vast numbers of Christians from other countries. In disillusionment, many Europeans turned their backs on Christianity. In this setting, Jesus' prayer for unity among his followers came alive, and the Grandchamp sisters found their mission. Together, from varied countries and outlooks, they would be "a sign of the coming kingdom ... a place of reconciliation, of Communion and of praise."

Why had we, as Mennonites, not seen that Jesus' prayer was crucial? Perhaps our history has shaped us, too. Like members of most Christian traditions, we Mennonites are the children of splits. After our initial departure from Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed state churches, we in the Anabaptist tradition have continued to split. We have often been peaceable people, and at our best we have said, in humility, "We recognize that we may be wrong." But often, with moral perfection in our sights, we have distanced ourselves from other Christians. At times we have been especially dismissive of people in our own tradition who have disagreed with us. Our impatience with each other has led to hundreds of Anabaptist/Mennonite denominations. Perhaps we need to ponder more deeply Jesus' parable of the two pray-ers: the righteous Pharisee who prayed about his good works and the despised Publican who pleaded for God's mercy (Luke 18:9-14).

Nevertheless, we Mennonites, like the sisters of Grandchamp, are in the body of Christ. As Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:4-6, we are one in the Spirit. Our unity is the work and gift of God. To be sure, we live in a world that defies and devalues this unity. There are 6,000-plus Christian denominations, and people are constantly founding new ones. Our own Mennonite Church USA is in danger of behaving like this and splitting into fragments. But we do not need to be worldly. Fragmenting is not in the spirit of Jesus' prayer, and that creative ways to resist fragmenting will grow out of praying it together with Jesus.

Proposal: We propose that we pray with Jesus for unity. Let us commit ourselves to pray, with him, that his disciples "may all be one."



Why? We pray for unity because Jesus prayed for unity. The unity of his disciples mattered to Jesus, and Jesus is the foundation upon whom we build (1 Corinthians 3:11). As his disciples, we are called to have his priorities and do what he did. And the resurrected and ascended Jesus is praying this now. According to Paul (Romans 8:34), Jesus is now "at the right hand of God, interceding for us." Imagine. Jesus, who in John's Gospel

Eleanor Kreider (left) with sisters at Grandchamp.

Photo provided

Praying as a congregation develops the practice of listening well to each other and motivates us to find common ground.

prays for the unity of his disciples, is offering up constant prayers for our unity now. When we pray "that they may be one," we are praying not only what Jesus wants us to pray. We are praying with Jesus.

When? Often. Daily: in the morning, when we get up or at bedtime, we ask God that Jesus' disciples may be one. Throughout the week: in small groups, prayer meetings or while driving. Weekly: on Sundays, when we gather for worship, in our congregational prayers we pray for the unity of God's people. As we do this, we overcome our hesitancy as Mennonites to pray for ourselves; we realize that it is an act of love to pray for ourselves and especially for the unity of the Christian family.

How? We can pray for unity in our own words, expressing to God our own deep longing. We also can pray using Jesus' strong John 17 words; with



feeling we can pray, “God, may we become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent Jesus.” And we can pray words that others have developed, as in the song in which we pray: “Bind us together, Lord, bind us together with cords that cannot be broken; bind us together with love.”

Somehow, in ways that the Bible never spells out, prayer enables God to work.

What difference does this make?

• **Praying for unity changes us.** Prayer changes the pray-er. As we pray with Jesus for unity we become humbler, more patient, more alert to find good in the other. We become more able to “maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). Praying for unity changes us so we are less likely to require everybody to do things our way or to think precisely what we think. Praying with Jesus makes it harder to split.

• **Praying for unity changes our congregations.** Because unity in love mattered to Jesus, it matters to all of us. Praying as a congregation encourages the spiritual discipline of patience. It develops the practice of listening well to each other and motivates us to find common ground. Praying for unity also changes the way we talk; it modulates our voices and gives us a humbler way of expressing ourselves. And as we pray for unity, God opens us to new possibilities, where new affinities and overlaps emerge between brothers and sisters who disagree.

• **Praying for unity transforms mission.** Jesus’ prayer for his disciples’ unity was rooted in his deep sense that his Father’s mission was to unite all things (John 17:21; Colossians 1:20). As we pray for unity, God draws us to play our part toward the completion of God’s mission. Forces for fragmentation constantly attempt to frustrate this. Think of news stories on TV that focus on the abuses and divisions of Christians. In his high-priestly prayer, Jesus is intensely aware that his disciples’ divisions will make it hard for people to come to faith. What if Christians were known, locally as well as nationally, not for abusing people and fighting each other but because they serve

the world in creative new ways? Further, when we as Christians are at peace with our brothers and sisters, we are less defensive and more open in our dealings with non-Christians. The disciplines of unity help mission.

• **Prayer for unity has hidden potency.** In a mysterious way, prayer moves things forward. Somehow, in ways that the Bible never spells out, prayer enables God to work. In the Bible, God, is moving all things toward reconciliation in Christ. Mysteriously, the Bible connects God’s work with prayer. God doesn’t force people, but Jesus insists that our praying makes a difference. Jesus underscores this in parables, where he urges us to approach God with our concerns. He commands us to ask, seek and knock (Luke 11:9). Jesus tells us to be persistent, in faith “to keep bothering” God who at the right moment will answer (Luke 18:5). The early Christians knew this: “You do not have because you do not ask” (James 4:2). And they sensed that when they prayed, Jesus prayed with them. Hebrews 7:25 confesses that Jesus, the eternal high priest, “is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercessions for them.” In praying for unity, we join with Jesus’ passionate prayer at the very end of his ministry. We may confidently believe that the resurrected and ascended Jesus in all eternity continues to pray for the unity of his disciples.

To many Mennonites, leaders and ordinary members, what we are saying is familiar; they intercede faithfully for the future of Mennonite Church USA. They also pray for the unity of their congregations and for the unity of Christ’s 2-billion-strong church globally. It is not only the sisters of Grandchamp who pray with Jesus for unity.

However, we sense that most Mennonites and most Mennonite congregations can grow in this prayer; we have tried to indicate reasons for this and ways forward. We are concerned that, in various ways, for reasons that seem persuasive, some of us may be acting against Christ’s prayer. May God empower us all with wisdom, fidelity and love so that we may be “completely one.” May we pray Jesus’ prayer with him so “that the world may believe.”



Alan Kreider and Eleanor Kreider are members of Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Elkhart, Ind.

A journey of faith in the absence of certainty



How I pray

by Roger Martin

A bestseller in the year 2000, *The Prayer of Jabez* quotes 1 Chronicles 4: 10, where Jabez cries out to God, " 'Oh, that you would bless me indeed and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from hurt and harm!' And God granted what he asked." The prayer bothers me. Once the word got out that some folks had enlarged their border this way, wouldn't that start a land rush?



Still, for many Christians, prayer seems to involve making requests that produce results. In fact, that spirit animated my first prayer, this cheerless ditty: “Now I lay me down to sleep / I pray the Lord my soul to keep / If I should die before I wake / I pray the Lord my soul to take.” I doubt my mother knew the verse came from *The New England Primer*, first published in the late 17th century (which also gave us the grim verse “Xerxes did die / And so must I.”)

said: “A man prayed, and first he thought that prayer was talking, but he became more and more quiet until in the end he realized that prayer was listening.”

In my case, asking God for favors never produced a lot of results. As a young man, I was a fevered mess, never so much as during my freshman year at the university. I prayed desperately for Jesus or God or whomever to give me a sign that they weren’t fictions. But they didn’t seem to fancy my desperation and kept still. I left the church for 32 years.

So when I reengaged with Christianity at age 50—I chose the Mennonite church in a Kansas university town, and 17 years later I’m sure I was right—I was ready for God’s silence. I have learned to wait, without expectation, for a little something, a nudge or word perhaps. (During that period of my life when I was enraged at my friend, my pleas for peace led to my hearing a single word several times, at various intervals: Wait. Eventually I learned to pray for an end to my anger, not the return of my friend, and that helped.)

Yet I still find it hard telling what comes from the divine and what’s just background noise. I’m like one of those astronomers who, in the search for extraterrestrial life, use radio telescopes to sift through electromagnetic radiation, hoping to receive a telegram from the stars.

The 19th-century psychologist William James managed to juggle his yearning for faith and his doubt in a way that kept them in tension without creating despair.

“We have heard much talk of late against prayer, especially against prayers for better weather and for the recovery of sick people,” James writes. Then, giving a nod to science, he adds: “In certain environments prayers may contribute to recovery. The case of the weather is different. ... Everyone now knows that droughts and storms follow from physical antecedents and that moral appeals cannot avert them.”

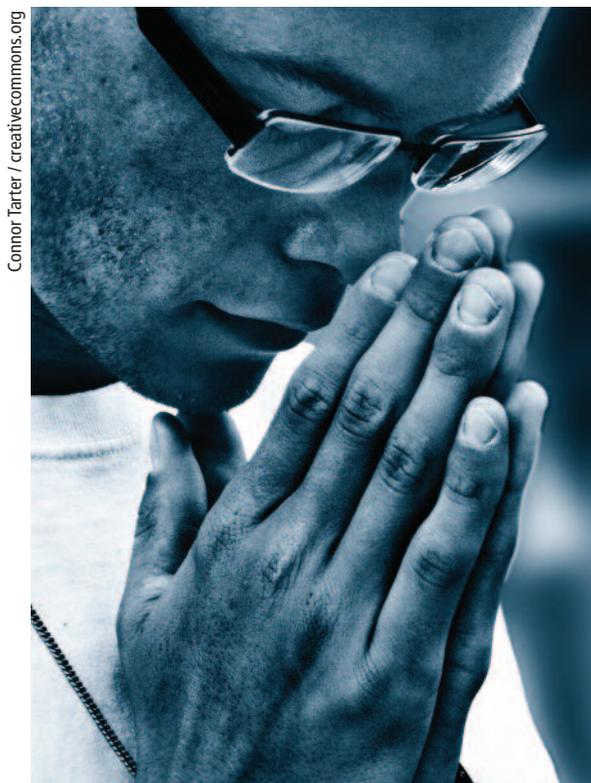
Further, James writes, the influence of prayer may only be internal, such that “what is immediately changed is only the mind of the praying person.” When I read those words, I want shout, *What do you mean “only”? I’ll take it.*

At times, I’ve wondered whether I’m praying to the right part of the Triune God. Frankly, I tend to overlook Jesus, thinking of him as the blueprint for human action—the model for us to follow as we engage with our fellows—and of God as the healer. I ignore the moment when Jesus tells

I have learned to wait, without expectation, for a little something, a nudge or word perhaps.

Christians who doubt that the Almighty is a radical interventionist still may return, in times of struggle, to begging God for help. I did. For a spell during my agnostic years, my rage at a friend who cut me off had me begging God for the revival of the relationship. Nevertheless, in time some inner scold took to berating me for trying to use God like Extra Strength Tylenol.

Indeed, I have tried a variety of routes to approaching the Almighty, but at some point, I came to agree with philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, who



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Thomas, “No one comes to the Father except through me.”

About the Holy Spirit’s role, Romans 8:26 notes that at times “we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.” Given my frequent bafflement about what I’m doing when I pray, I’ll take all the help I can get.

At one point, my failures with prayer led me to a spiritual adviser, a bearded Episcopal gnome named Joe, who coached me in contemplative prayer, a practice that emphasizes prayer as a soul soother rather than a prybar.

Joe and I met once a week, working from Tilden Edwards’ *Living in the Presence*. It contains 27 exercises in contemplative prayer. Before I describe a few forms of contemplative prayer, I want to address a question: What is contemplation? Thomas Merton, in his book *Contemplative Prayer*, defines it as expectant listening, “and yet in a certain sense, we [will] truly begin to hear God when we have ceased to listen.” It annoys me when mystics say stuff like that, but then Merton tries to clarify himself, referring to “a higher kind of listening, which is not an attentiveness to some special wavelength, a receptivity to a certain kind of message, but a general emptiness that waits to realize the fullness of the message of God.”

Reading Edwards, I learned about centering prayer. You choose a word to signify your willingness to be quiet in God’s presence, returning to the word whenever thoughts start to march through your head. I also experimented with *lectio divina*, letting myself enter a scene described in a passage of Scripture.

Normally, my mind is so crowded that, amid the racket, it’s hard to hear God. During contemplative prayer, the street bazaar of consciousness shuts down, replaced by a warm quiet.

Yet after I return from this space, I keep thinking there is more, well, more of God somewhere. I think that maybe all I’ve really found is a cool way to meditate, not the *mysterium tremendum*. Part of the problem is simply not knowing what to expect. God is said to communicate through dreams, fantasies, intuitions and the fabled still, small voice, but also, perhaps, through the chance utterances of friends or strangers, through accidental meetings, through losses and crises.

If I’ve seemed to narrow the motivations for prayer to petition and contemplation, I acknowledge many other motives, including, for example, confession, gratitude and adoration. Inside a cathedral in Peru, I once watched people gather

around a statue of Christ. One man was at Christ’s side, gazing, riveted, at his face, and reaching toward the figure. His rapture alone seemed a kind of prayer. I sensed he was in a relationship that I knew nothing about.

Church is for Sundays, a little more often if you’re an evangelical. But prayer is a way to go to church every day—or every minute.

In J.D. Salinger’s *Franny and Zooey*, Franny Glass becomes entranced with the idea that one might pray without ceasing. She hits upon the Jesus Prayer—“Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner”—as a mantra. I read the book as a teenager and remember talking with my mother about the possibility of life’s becoming a sustained prayer. The idea fit perfectly with my adolescent love of extremes, but I was more thrilled by the notion than the practice. I soon forgot both.

But the idea is still attractive. To pray without ceasing is to form a radical bond with God. Surely, such a bond would make things easier for those who struggle against doubt. That’s what 17th-century Englishman John Donne seems to be saying in a poem that begins, “Batter my heart, three-personed God.” Donne wants his reason shattered, wants to be broken and made new, so that all doubt vanishes. He fails. “I ... labor to admit You,” he writes, “but oh! to no end.”

Church is for Sundays, but prayer is a way to go to church every day—or every minute.

Such a takeover would, no doubt, end the confusing work of knowing God. I’d settle for less. I’d be happy just to be sure that what I thought came from God actually did. Writing this essay led to my recalling a definition of prayer provided to me at age 13 by our confirmation class leader, the Rev. Oscar Nussman. Prayer, we learned, is “the communion of the heart with God.” In the absence of certainty, we are left with faith, alone, that God will meet us at the table.



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Christian **prayer** through the ages

Early Christians prayed often. How often do we pray?

by Carole Christman Koch

How many times a day do you pray? If you had lived in Rome as a Christian convert in the early third century, you would have been obligated to pray privately six times a day—on rising, the third, sixth and ninth hour, when you went to bed and in the middle of the night.

These hours for Christian prayer are said to have originated in the Jewish hours for prayer found in Scripture. The Old Testament tells us that Daniel prayed three times a day, and the Psalms mention evening, morning and noon as hours of prayer. One Psalmist tells us he prayed seven times a day.

References in the New Testament refer specifically to the third, sixth and ninth hours of prayer. We read that at the ninth hour, Peter and John went to the temple to pray. Peter also went to the housetop to pray at the sixth hour. And on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended when the disciples had gathered at the third hour.

In conformity with the Psalmist, the monks were the first to organize an office—the hours of prayer—at certain intervals day and night. This manner of worship is called the Divine Office. The offices consisted of recitations of Psalms, collects, versicles and responses of the monks. They grew from the earliest forms of Christian corporate worship.

It wasn't until the sixth century that St. Benedict had the offices standardized to seven.

Vigils or nocturns, later called **matins or lauds**, came from the Latin word “vigilare,” meaning “to watch at night,” and “matutinae,” meaning “of the morning.” It was the practice of the early church to have an evening preparatory service prior to a great annual festival, such as Easter. Later, it was shifted to dawn by the 16th century reformers and simplified as well. Most times lauds, or praises sung to God at daybreak, were combined with matins to make one service.

Prime, a petition for grace, was said at sunrise.

Terce, said at midmorning, **sext**, said at noon, and **none**, said at midafternoon, were to emphasize petitions to God. At none the religious orders ate their main meal, which could be anywhere from 11 to 3 o'clock. It is said that Abbot Dunstan stabilized the hour to noon so his hungry monks could stop their grumbling stomachs.

Vespers was said at sunset. The Latin *vespera* means “evening” and consisted of prayers, reading and chants in praise, and thanksgiving for a good day. The *Nunc Dimittus* (Luke 2:29-32) and Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) were often sung.

Compline, said at nightfall, was used mainly by the monasteries. It was impractical for most to travel when churches were miles from home.

The main focus of the canonical hours was to have a consecutive reading of Scripture—the Old Testament to be finished in a year, the New Testa-

ment twice, and the Psalms once a week.

In the liturgical churches, these offices of the monks developed into liturgy of the hours. One can see how a formal structure of worship called liturgy—Greek “laos” and “ergon,” meaning “work of the people”—came about.

Yet some scholars say the origin of the canonical (fixed) hours came from the Roman division of the day into four hours and the night into four watches. The Romans called together the people in the first day of the month, called *calends* (our word calendar), and informed the people of the secular and sacred festival days to be observed. Announcing the hours of the day publicly was also common; thus, it would have been natural for Christians to adopt the time announced as hours of the day for prayer hours.

The Psalmist called on the Lord seven times a day. We have access to God at any time.

These offices became so elaborate as years went by that they were in continual reform.

The Second Vatican Council reformed the liturgy of the hours by omitting prime and reconstructing matins and other hours. Matins came to be called morning prayer; terce, sext and none became daytime prayer; vespers became evening prayer; and compline, night prayer.

After the Reformation, it became customary for the parish church to say the canonical hours in two groups—one in the morning (lauds) and one in the evening (vespers). In this way, the essential purpose of reading Scripture was resolved by the Psalms being read in a month and most of the Old Testament read in a year. The New Testament was read twice a year.

Today, most Protestant churches have a morning service every Sunday and an evening service on special church celebrations.

The Psalmist called on the Lord seven times a day. We have access to God at any time. How often do you pray to him? Why not call him now?



Carole Christman Koch lives in Allentown, Pa.



Mennonite Mecca in the rifted rock

Photo provided

Like the early Anabaptists, we are called to follow the rule of Paul.

by Jason R. Moyer

Both Zwingli and Grebel used the Bible to back their claims, but the difference between the two came down to a question of who could or who could not be included around the table to discuss interpretations of Scripture.

During a wintry trip to Switzerland, my friend Erik and I decided to take the train southeast out of Zurich, hop a bus to the end of its route, then walk a few miles into the foothills of the Alps to our destination, a 16th-century Anabaptist cave. Our journey connected us with a story Erik and I had learned from the Mennonite community in southeastern Pennsylvania where we grew up. Pastors, historians, choir directors and others in our church community helped us to feel part of a Christian story that had a formative experience hiding from Swiss religious or political authorities in the 16th century.

Snow forced us to take the circuitous route along a plowed street instead of the more direct path up a steep rolling hill. When we finally found a sign providing directions to the cave, snow obscured the path. We ended up walking aimlessly in the opposite direction of the cave for a couple of hours, and our hiking took us further from our destination.

In a 16th-century version of our hike, we would have attempted to avoid Täuferjäger (Anabaptist hunters), securing both the countryside and a particular version of Christian thinking from insurgents. In Switzerland, the Anabaptist movement started as an offshoot of the leadership of Ulrich Zwingli, who rejected the Roman Catholic Church for its unbiblical practices but continued to use the power of the state to regulate what distinguishes “good Christianity” from “bad Christianity.” Conrad Grebel and other reformers refused the state’s wishes and broke the law with their biblical theology. Both Zwingli and Grebel used the Bible

to back their claims, even some of the same verses, but the difference between the two came down (in at least one moment) to a question of who could or who could not be included around the table to discuss interpretations of Scripture.

In *Body Politics*, John Howard Yoder recounts that 1 Corinthians 14, the “rule of Paul,” became an important passage for both Zwingli and the Anabaptists who countered his claims. Paul wrote to a community in Corinth that was divided between Jewish and Greek cultures and disagreed about how the Christian community should live together. Despite Jewish restrictions on eating with those who didn’t follow dietary law and the Greek acceptance of speaking in tongues, Paul instructed the church in Corinth to hold a meeting together where everyone who has something to say, given to them by the Holy Spirit, should be allowed to speak. Zwingli cited this passage as a way to open up the discussion of scriptural interpretation to him and his reformers. However, contradicting the openness of the rule of Paul, Zwingli didn’t include the voices of Grebel and his colleagues. As a result, Anabaptists cited this passage as a criticism of the reforms underway in Zurich.

We knew we were lost in the woods when we realized we were walking away from the Alpine foothills rather than into them. That’s when we met Jan, a 70-year old stereotype of Alpine life who plays the Alpine horn, uses wood skis to travel up hills and was jogging through a foot of snow. Jan not only directed us to the cave but invited us after our hike to visit a farmhouse where friends of his gathered for dinner. This felt like a God moment. In our time of faithful yet aimless wandering, God sent us a guide.

If there was anything special about the cave upon approaching it, it was how camouflaged it was in the steep hillside where it sat. The crisp air and the shadowy images our cameras captured in the evening light served as good memories of our trip. The pictures didn’t turn out as planned, but they helped remind me I was part of a broader story. Instead of clear images of our relieved faces finally at our destination, the images we captured that day were in silhouette, mere outlines of our bodies sitting in the caves. These images constructed our identities as indistinguishable from the lives of the Anabaptist reformers fleeing from their caves. We were just shadows, outlines of Anabaptists in the rifted rock. In this way the images function to collapse time between the restive moment in the cave’s protective shadow that I experienced and the more dangerous experience

Anabaptist reformers had centuries earlier. As the shadows blended our identities with the reformers, Erik and I ritually reaffirmed our identity as part of the Anabaptist-Mennonite story.

Leaving the cave, we decided to visit the Swiss family’s farmhouse Jan invited us to. A gregarious Swiss mother instructed her children to take our soaked shoes, stuff them with newspaper and place them by the fire. They fed us cheese, meats, bread and cherry water. We felt warm after our travels and secure despite the strange surroundings. The family even helped us procure local cheese and drove us back to the train station so that we could return safely to Zurich, where our journey had begun that day.

We in Mennonite Church USA live in the legacy of the Anabaptist emphasis on welcoming everyone around the table. That is one of the major biblical criticisms made against the theological changes happening in Zurich. Today conferences face questions about who should and should not be allowed at the table. In this time we should

As the shadows blended our identities with the reformers, Erik and I ritually reaffirmed our identity as part of the Anabaptist-Mennonite story.

be reminded that our church has never been able to determine once-and-for-all the proper beliefs we should hold. But that isn’t the measure of what makes the church a good church. The church that Paul wrote to in Corinth didn’t have everything sorted out, but it was nevertheless a good church if it followed certain procedures. One of those procedures was that everyone should have a voice at the meeting. Following from this, all that we need to do as a church today is continue fellowshiping together. Anyone who sees their identity in the shadow of the cave, anyone willing to turn themselves over to the Anabaptist-Mennonite story, should join the discussing table. And it is then that we will be the church.



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Coming to church



**Church is a place for the vulnerable,
not just those who have it all together.**

by Melissa Florer-Bixler

After the service, I paused, cultivating a last sliver of energy, before attempting to lower my nine-months-pregnant body to the floor. There, littering the length of the pew, were the remnants of the last hour—coloring books, notepads, crayons, discarded hymnals, bulletins with all the hymn numbers circled. I noticed my children’s boots shoved into one corner, meaning they both managed to get over to the nursery across the parking lot barefoot on this 40-degree Sunday in January.

This is the aftermath of the disaster that spread throughout the service. My 2-year-old son was talking loudly about “playing soccer ball outside” throughout the prayers. My 5-year-old daughter, overtired and bored, took several illicit trips to the bathroom and water fountain, with each return making her presence known by stomping loudly back through the sanctuary. On the final trip, I ushered her out, where she sat on a chair, hands covering ears, screaming, while my son pulled all the books off the shelf behind him.

We know a lot of people who take off a year or more from church after their babies are born. I know why. At times I am barely able to pull myself out of the hole of sleep deprivation, let alone gather up my two children along with a corn casserole for the after-church potluck.

I often hear from people who leave during the Young Child Years that the church projects the sense that you have to have it all together to show up at the door. We wear our Sunday best. We pray for those “in our community,” embarrassed by the abuse, addiction and mental illness that haunt those beside us in the pew. We click our tongues and reminisce about the days when children sat placidly in the service, hands folded neatly in their laps. If you are in the whirlwind of caring for children, the disabled or an aging relative, this simply does not feel like a place for you.

As it turns out, this is not a new story for Christianity. On this particular Sunday, after my husband finally settled down our children in the nursery, after I squeezed past the back row of the church for the fifth time, I listened to the last bit of the sermon.

My friend Isaac was preaching from 1 Corinthians, where Paul is speaking to a people captivated by the beauty of the spoken word. Paul accuses the Corinthians of being led astray by a culture intoxicated by artful lyricism even when the poetry lacked substance. He is writing at a time when the Corinthians were under the influence of a preacher named Apollos, someone who possessed all the talents of a rhetorician—the silver tongue, the turn of phrase.

But Apollos’ eloquence betrayed a basic tenant of the gospel. God is not present in profound speeches that entertain and enlighten but in stumbling, clumsy bodies that follow after the broken body of Jesus. This is the foolish gospel Paul preached to the Corinthians when he was with them. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the one poured out for us on the cross, what Isaac called “the language of the broken body.”

Paul asks us to release ourselves into the vulnerability of being broken before one another, to be foolish and weak instead of simply talking about how we are foolish and weak. The former is rhetoric, good speech. The latter is one’s life and body being formed into something new. When we’ve fallen into the trap of thinking that church is a place for people who have it worked out—for toddlers who don’t fuss and for pain we can neatly contain—we have lost hold of the gospel.

This is our family’s experience Sunday after Sunday. In this season of life, when my husband and I spend more time in the nursery with our anxious 2-year-old than in the sanctuary, we remind ourselves that this is also where church is happening. We know of others who experience this: the grad student whose mother is dying of

When we’ve fallen into the trap of thinking that church is a place for people who have it worked out, we have lost hold of the gospel.

cancer, the father whose difficult marriage is headed toward a separation, the woman facing crippling depression. Here we sit in the vulnerability of our own exhaustion, at the end of our tempers, ready to call it a day. Every Sunday our lives confess to those in our church, We need you. We need Jesus. We can’t do this on our own.

We have good preaching here, a full roster of excellent women and men who proclaim the Word of God. Because of these many gifts I have to remind myself that I’m not here to be entertained. We show up, week after week, because getting here 10 minutes late with our stain-ridden, shoeless children is how we meet the person of Jesus. It may also be how we can help others to see him, too.

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Maintaining the inner life in difficult times



Russ Eanes of Harrisonburg, Va., is executive director of MennoMedia.

Prayer is probably the most overlooked and transformative activity we can do.

Let your good spirit lead me on a level path.
—Psalm 143:10

Maintaining the soul, spirit and inner life in difficult times is a challenge, though reading the psalms suggest that nothing is new. What is new is the pace of change and the effect that it has on our inner being. I feel it especially these days in my work, but I am not unique.

In publishing and media, we face the daily challenge of keeping pace with new trends and technological developments. At a recent meeting of some denominational publishing peers, one colleague put it this way, “You are behind every day that you wake up ... everything that I need to know I will learn tomorrow.” Such words can be discouraging; keeping awake and alert to rapid trends takes lots of time and effort and can easily overwhelm.

Since I am a denominational publisher, I also work alongside Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada, where we face the challenge of declining numbers, fiscal challenges and draining conflict over issues of sexuality. While I am called to my work and enjoy it, tending to the spirit and soul has to be part of my vocation.

While some people talk in terms of achieving a “balance” in life, I prefer to think of “grounding,” since it is so easy and quick to get out of balance. When asked about what keeps me and/or other leaders grounded and invigorated, I can come up with a long list: prayer, rest, reading, the outdoors, exercise, family, celebration and laughter, journaling and solitude. Here’s some essentials:

1. Keep your soul fed. I feed mine especially through reading. My personal tastes include novels, history, social critique and travel. I especially like the “Spiritual Classics,” since they have passed the test of time. As a guide to spiritual formation, I am currently enjoying the very accessible and cleverly written *Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything* by James Martin, SJ.

2. Pray. For me this has to be every day, and hopefully more than once per day. A dozen years ago I began studying about and incorporating the use of the “daily office” of prayer into my life, even writing my own small, personal “office.” Office here is understood as a regular form and rhythm of prayer that is mostly corporate, but can be personal, too. I’m fortunate to be in a work-

place each day where several of us now pause mid-morning to pray the office together, using our own Anabaptist prayer book, *Take our Moments and Days*. Prayer is probably the most overlooked and transformative activity we can do. It takes time and discipline. As Eugene Peterson says, the demands of prayer mean, “... entering realms of spirit where wonder and adoration have space to develop, where play and delight have time to flourish.”

3. Enjoy beauty. I’m a news junkie, but honestly, I find much of the news depressing these days. Lay that alongside work and vocational challenges and it’s easy to see too much ugliness. I combat that with a good, daily dose of beauty. I am privileged to live on a hillside that looks out over a valley. Each morning that weather permits, I start my day with a cup of coffee on my front deck and enjoy the light and cloud show that fans out across the mountains west of our home. Music, art, film and reading all contribute to my sense of beauty, but it’s the outdoors that does it best and it’s free.

4. Let your spirit rest. Our inward selves and our minds need days off, just like our bodies. Try to do it in nature. In an article from a few years ago in “Adbusters,” Nicolas Carr (author of *The Shallows*) wrote: “A series of psychological studies over the past 20 years has revealed that after spending time in a quiet rural setting, close to nature, people exhibit greater attentiveness, stronger memory and generally improved cognition. Their brains become both calmer and sharper ... when people aren’t being bombarded by external stimuli, their brains can, in effect, relax... The resulting state of contemplativeness strengthens their ability to control their mind.”

5. Laugh. Some of our family recently went to watch a performance of Shakespeare’s comedy, “Much Ado about Nothing.” Perhaps I was a bit conspicuous, but I laughed hard and loud for two hours and it felt good. Too often there is much in life to make us cry, but laughter can release our emotion in the same way.

We can find and hold onto “still centers” in the midst of storms of change, stress and conflict, but it takes work, effort, intentionality. It won’t happen on its own. For the year ahead, I pray for us all to have lives where, “play and delight have time to flourish.” 

Sexuality: commitment or celibacy

Isn't that an oxymoron?" my son asked when I told him about my gay friend who would be joining us for dinner. I was widowed, and some of my children were not ready for me to date again. This friend wasn't interested in dating because he was celibate. My son had not considered that there might be people with a homosexual orientation who were not sexually active. A lot of people confuse same-sex attraction with having a sexual partner and with promiscuity. Not all people with a homosexual orientation have sexual partners. The fact that hundreds of same-sex couples rush out of closets at the first legal opportunity to be married indicates that many people with a homosexual orientation are not promiscuous. Many gay people are in—and want to remain in—monogamous relationships. And some of these couples are in Mennonite Church USA and want to remain Mennonites because of important values of our denomination.

With ongoing discussions about homosexuality and sexual abuse in Mennonite Church USA, although necessary and important, I am concerned we may have neglected other crucial concerns about sexuality, such as fidelity and chastity and celibacy outside marriage. We may never agree on whether same-sex, monogamous, committed relationships are right or wrong. (We do have a fine contribution from Hispanic pastors in the Western District Conference about how to live with our differences: See December 2014 issue, page 41.) I think the day will come when the pressing issues will be unimaginably different, and we will accept gay marriages as a matter of fact.

So let us instead focus on love, peace, justice, grace, discipleship, integrity, honesty, fidelity, chastity and commitment. Rather than being concerned about the gender of people who make commitments to relationships, let's attend to helping people make commitments before having genital sexual relationships—regardless of sexual orientation. Young people explode with sexual energy before they are ready for sexual intimacy. Let's help them find creative outlets for that energy that will not be harmful to themselves or others. Let's welcome people with all sexual orientations into the church where they can learn to be honest and faithful followers of Jesus while exploring relationships with peers and mentors, where they can be supported in taking on disci-

plines that enable them to be countercultural when it comes to individualism, materialism and self-indulgence. Let's nurture our youth as well as older single people to experience emotional and intellectual and spiritual intimacy so they don't seek sexual intimacy in genital relationships that are not intimate.

If we believe genital sexual intimacy is intended to be expressed within a monogamous, lifelong, covenanted relationship of mutual respect and equality, then let us focus on developing attributes of friendship where needs for emotional intimacy can be met for both single and coupled people. Let's emphasize that we are created in God's image for relationships with God and others but that relationships don't need to be genital to be satisfying. Let's be clear that a sexual orgasm does not fulfill the need for intimacy. Let those of us who are celibate talk about how we have learned to live with unmet desires so that the greater values of love and honesty and integrity can be realized. Let's be honest that self-stimulation can be an effective way to relieve sexual tension, that masturbation can be wholesome if it does not interfere with real relationships with other people. Let's talk about healthy sexuality rather than getting bogged down in debates about sexual orientation.

God's intentions for human sexuality include communion, procreation, creativity and pleasure. Let's change our discussions about sexuality so that we encourage people to develop relationships rooted in love, fidelity, respect, mutuality and trust, and let's support and bless commitments to such healthy relationships where they already exist. Let's educate our youth about the risks and dangers of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and promiscuity. Let's give more attention to victims of sexual abuse who need tender loving care. Let's equip ourselves with knowledge, language and self-confidence to make good choices, to either be celibate or make monogamous lifelong commitments before engaging in genital sexual activity. Let us be the countercultural group of people that Jesus calls us to be.

Mennonite Church USA has good resources. MennoMedia's *Body and Soul: Healthy Sexuality and the People of God* is for individuals and congregations. Go to www.faihandliferesources.org/titles/bodyandsoul/principles.html. 



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Let's talk about healthy sexuality rather than getting bogged down in debates about sexual orientation.

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

Executive Board releases survey of credentialed leaders

Diverse responses to LGBTQ inclusion, denominational arrangements

The Mennonite Church USA Executive Board (EB) on Jan. 5 released reports written by Conrad Kanagy, professor of sociology at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College, highlighting findings from a 2014 survey of credentialed leaders commissioned by the board.

The survey included questions about benefits ranging from affiliation with Mennonite Church USA to denominational, conference and agency services; beliefs about inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) individuals as members of congregations or in leadership roles; and alternative organizational arrangements for the denomination.

The survey—sent to approximately 2,000 credentialed leaders in August 2014—drew 1,323 responses, a 66.2 percent response rate. Of these, 799 (60.4 percent) served in congregational assignments, 310 (23.4 percent) in other assignments, and 214 (16.2 percent) were retired. Leaders with congregational assignments were invited to complete the entire survey; those with other assignments and who were retired completed those parts of the survey most relevant to their status.

Kanagy also directed a survey of credentialed Mennonite Church USA leaders in 2006; the responses to that survey provided some historical context for the current one.

Kanagy's report suggests that correlations exist between age, gender, area of residence and education level and one's attitudes about LGBTQ inclusion. He also organized the 21 area conferences into three groups depending on their views of inclusion of LGBTQ individuals as congregational members. These three groups differ from one another in age, sex, area of residence and educational level, he writes.

Survey respondents also reflected on hopeful ways in which they have seen God at work across Mennonite Church USA. Many respondents expressed gratitude for the ways their church has been a supportive community; strong youth groups and young adult church involvement; and opportunities for outreach and engagement both locally and around the world.

"While the [survey] results reflect the tenuousness and fragility of Mennonite Church USA as well as the fissures within the denomination, they also reveal congregations actively pursuing God's purposes, experiencing God's presence and influencing the communities around them," writes Kanagy in his conclusion. "Despite disruption and uncertainty at area conference and denominational levels, the ministry and mission of the local church continue."

An ad hoc committee appointed in September 2014 by the EB to explore possible options for restructuring the denomination will draw on the survey results in their work, in addition to counsel received from the Constituency Leaders Council in October 2014 and the results of a survey of Mennonite Church USA delegates to be conducted early this year.

The ad hoc committee is looking for ways to enhance the ministries and missions that congregations and area conferences are able to do better together as a national church and to find ways to celebrate members' shared commitments to "Jesus as the center of our faith, community as the center of our lives and reconciliation as the center of our work" (from Palmer Becker, found in the Purposeful Plan). The committee plans to bring an action to the Delegate Assembly at Kansas City 2015 (June 30–July 5).—*Mennonite Church USA*

Responses to survey related to age, place and sex

Area conferences divided on attitudes toward LGBTQ membership.

Conrad Kanagy's reports of findings from a 2014 survey of credentialed leaders in Mennonite Church USA includes a "Summary of Major Findings" (see www.mennoniteusa.org/wpcontent/uploads/2014/12/MCUSA_2014Survey_ExecSummary_Dec17.pdf).

"As compared to a survey of Mennonite Church USA credentialed leaders in 2006," Kanagy writes, "Mennonite pastors today are older, more likely to be female, more highly educated and more urban."

He summarized respondents attitudes toward LGBTQ membership (see three summary questions on page 33),

then noted some key relationships between leadership and LGBTQ membership.

One of these has to do with age. "Among 18–35-year-olds, 65.8 percent support membership for LGBTQ persons, compared to 45.2 percent of 36–45-year-olds, 51.2 percent of 46–55-year-olds, 55.2 percent of 56–65-year-olds, and 52.5 percent of those 66 years of age or older."

Another factor is one's area of residence. Among those in cities with more than 10,000 residents, 66 percent support LGBTQ membership."

Another area is sex: "Among leaders with local congrega-

tional assignments, 50.6 percent of women and 21 percent of men believe that LGBTQ persons should be congregational members without conditions,” Kanagy writes.

One’s conference affiliation is another factor that showed differences. Kanagy divided the 21 area conferences of Mennonite Church USA into three groups according to their attitudes about LGBTQ membership:

- Eight conferences in which fewer than one-third of credentialed leaders support membership: Franklin, Gulf States, Lancaster, New York, North Central, Ohio, South Central and Southeast.
- Seven conferences in which one-third to two-thirds of credentialed leaders support membership: Allegheny, Atlantic Coast, Eastern District, Franconia, Indiana-Michigan, Pacific Southwest and Virginia.
- Six conferences in which at least two-thirds of credentialed leaders support membership: Central District, Central Plains, Illinois, Mountain States, Pacific Northwest and Western District.

The survey also asked questions about denominational structure. A question about the “preferred future” for denominational organization provided five options, three of which garnered almost equal support:

- 25.2 percent said, “Not sure.”
- 24.6 percent said, “Reorganize so that area conferences are fully the centers of authority for credentialing.”
- 23.4 percent said, “Current organizational structure is satisfactory.”

Kanagy adds that, separate from the survey, he conducted interviews with representatives of six racial-ethnic constituency groups on the Intercultural Relations Reference Council: African American Mennonite Association; African, Belizean, Caribbean Mennonite Mission Association; Asian Mennonite Ministries; Iglesia Menonita Hispana; Indonesian Mennonite Association and Native Mennonite Ministries. In general, their answers paralleled those of the conferences where less than one-third of leaders supported membership for LGBTQ members.—*Gordon Houser*

Question: Under what conditions, if any, do you believe that people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered or queer (LGBTQ) should have opportunities for membership within Mennonite Church USA congregations?

LGBTQ individuals should be members without conditions	Only LGBTQ individuals who remain celibate or are in committed monogamous relationships should be members	Only LGBTQ individuals who remain celibate should be members	Under no conditions
31.9	21.3	38.5	8.2

Question: Under what conditions, if any, do you believe that people who are LGBTQ should have opportunities to serve in congregational leadership roles, including the pastorate, as called by congregations of Mennonite Church USA?

LGBTQ individuals should have opportunities to serve in leadership roles without conditions	Only LGBTQ individuals who are celibate or in committed monogamous relationships should have opportunities to serve in leadership roles	Only LGBTQ individuals who remain celibate should have full opportunities to serve in leadership roles	Under no conditions
19.5	26.2	35.8	18.5

Question: Which of the following best characterizes your personal convictions in regard to the organizational decisions being faced by Mennonite Church USA?

Want to be part of a church fellowship that fully includes LGBTQ persons as a matter of faithfulness to God, even if losses occur	Want to be part of a church fellowship that upholds the vision of marriage expressed in the Mennonite Church USA Membership Guidelines, which prohibit same-sex relationships, even if losses occur	Value unity of the church so much that they are willing to live with ongoing differences within the denomination
15.9	42.7	41.4

Bible stories available in print; movie translation next

With Qom Bible translation done, churches begin new movie project

Photo courtesy the Sociedad Bíblica Argentina



A procession of church members in Fortín Lavalle, Argentina, celebrate the arrival of Bibles in the Qom language on Dec. 13.

In the town of Fortín Lavalle in Argentina, 200 people celebrated the arrival of the Qom (the Toba indigenous people are reclaiming the original name for their people, Qom) Bibles at the Iglesia de Dios on Dec. 13, 2014. Songs, dance and prayer accompanied a procession of the Bibles from the entrance of the church property to the place of worship underneath the shade of a grove of trees.

“Today we are recovering our religion, our worldview,” says Orlando Sánchez in an article about the celebration on the Argentine Bible Society’s website. Sánchez is one of the Bible’s translators, who also wrote a history about the different times when the community was involved in Bible translation projects.

This project to translate the parts of the Old Testament not previously translated and to retranslate the New Testament to reflect current language use, started in 2000. The translation required collaboration among the indigenous churches and believers, the Sociedad Bíblica Argentina (Argentine Bible Society) and the Mennonite team in the Chaco. Team members Luis Acosta and Richard Friesen coordinated indigenous translation teams. Other team members also helped in multiple ways.

The Sociedad Bíblica Argentina reported that Juan Victorica, a Qom leader who led the Dec. 13 event, spoke about the error Christians had made when they originally taught the Qom people that they had to leave the Qom ways of life and adopt European customs to become Christian. He went on to affirm the current Christian Qom identity that is reinforced now that the Bible is available in the Qom language. “God is a Qom God,” said Victorica.

In an article written in 2012, Rafael Mansilla, a Qom community leader, pastor and translator, said that although the Qom people have read the Bible in Spanish and portions in their own language for many years, the new translation will bring greater insights and understanding for native Qom speakers, who will finally be able to read the full Scriptures in their heart language.

Movie about Jesus’ life

Another recent translation project is the “the Jesus film,” a movie about Jesus’ life according to the Gospel of Luke.

A cast of 26 Qom voice actors read their parts in a recording studio set up in Alfonsina and José Oyanguren’s house. The Oyangurens, sent by the Bragado (Argentina) Mennonite Church and serving as international partnership associates with Mennonite Mission Network, helped coordinate this effort with the Evangelical Linguistic Missionary Association. Two producers with the association, Laerte Zorzetti and Dan Kubitzka, came to Castelli from Brazil last September.

“It was a lot of work since each reader had only seconds to dub their voices to the movement of the actors,” writes Alfonsina and José Oyanguren in their prayer letter.

The Oyangurens say the Qom language is slow, and the meaning changes if spoken quickly. So it was difficult to coordinate the spoken recording with the on-screen actions. They had to reduce the number of words in some of the actors’ lines without losing the meaning of the phrase.

The five-hour-long dubbed movie should be ready early this year. A CD of the audio will also be made.

“We would like to use the movie for biblical reflections in educational institutions, churches and homes,” say the Oyangurens.

Importance of translation

Translation and bilingual education have been big parts of the Oyangurens’ ministry in the Chaco.

According to *National Geographic*, language is important because it “defines a culture through the people who speak it and what it allows speakers to say.” Some cultural experiences or ideas don’t translate well to other languages, so these traditions disappear once the language disappears.

José Oyanguren teaches bilingual education classes that help student teachers learn how to integrate indigenous language and culture into their classrooms. He focuses on reading and writing and includes aspects of indigenous culture.

An example of how José Oyanguren teaches the value of indigenous culture is by asking students to create an illustrated allegorical story. One student, Gustavo Sánchez, told Oyanguren that he has been happy to improve his writing skills. The story project also motivated him to create other, similar, illustrated booklets outside class.

“Bilingual classes are important because they help future teachers in indigenous contexts bridge the gap between government educational standards and the indigenous reality,” says Oyanguren. “Without these classes, the student teachers would give their students a colonial education and gradually destroy indigenous teachings and practices.”—Sara Alvarez of Mennonite Mission Network

FAQs about Mennonite World Conference Assembly

César García responds to questions overheard in North America about PA 2015.

Amid anticipation of the Mennonite World Conference Assembly (PA 2015) to be held July 21-26 in Harrisburg, Pa., questions keep surfacing in North American churches. César García of Bogotá, Colombia, MWC General Secretary, shares his responses to some of these.

Should we really come to PA 2015? I hear they don't want too many North Americans there. Will there be enough internationals for this to be a truly global event?

García: At MWC assemblies, the people of the hosting country always outnumber their guests. It was true in India, Zimbabwe and Paraguay. It's also a chance for the various Anabaptist groups in the hosting country (and continent) to work and worship together. This will include not only the host churches (Mennonite, Mennonite Brethren, Brethren in Christ, Conservative Mennonite Conference) but newer, immigrant churches (e.g., Vietnamese, Ethiopian and Korean congregations) that are planted and growing in strength and numbers in the United States and Canada.

All of these MWC members based in North America will be at PA 2015, fully participating. And, yes, there will be enough internationals for this to be a truly global event. Registration so far shows strong enthusiasm.

What is being done about ensuring that our sisters and brothers from the Global South can get visas?

Mennonites in the United States are saying, "We humbly acknowledge that we live in a fearful society and our government is preoccupied with security. But we need the presence of our faith family with us. We believe they can help us be more faithful if they spend a week in our country."

We have established a Visa Task Force (go to www.mwc-cmm.org/visaissue to read about its efforts) to work with this issue. And we've called a prayer network into being so that together we can ask God for guidance, hope and strength as hosts of this global gathering.

Why is the Mennonite Church USA convention being held just a few weeks before PA 2015?

MWC is a global community. Each member church has its own calendar of events. MWC hasn't been able to find dates for its assemblies that don't conflict with major events put on by its member churches somewhere in the world.

In fact, two of the inviting churches within the United States have their conventions close to the time of PA 2015. But when the MWC member churches in North America invited MWC to bring its every-six-year Assembly to its continent in July, MWC wanted to accept their invitation rather than (impolitely) question the wisdom of holding its event so close to Mennonite Church USA's convention (June 30-July 5) and to Conservative Mennonite Conference's annual meeting (July 16-19).

Why is the registration cost so high for PA 2015?

"Global North pricing" and "Global South pricing" is the way MWC recognizes the economic differences in our global family. MWC uses the principle of each paying their fair share—based on their country of citizenship—when calculating how much people should pay to attend PA 2015.

Why does PA 2015 include two "youth" events and one of them is not even for youth? Why didn't MWC change the name of the young adult event so it wouldn't be so confusing?

The Global Youth Summit was created for people aged 18 to 30. It began in Zimbabwe in 2003 with more than 220 registrants and happened again in Paraguay in 2009 with more than 700. It is a growing movement. More than 1,000 registrants are expected to attend this GYS.

At PA 2015, there will be planned activities for children and high-school-aged young people at an MWC Assembly. Children from ages 4 to 11 will gather every day from 10:15 a.m. to 5 p.m.

There will be a special program for youth ages 12 to 17 every day from 10:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. In the afternoons, youth will be able to choose from workshops with a special focus on sports, games and fun, afternoon tours, service opportunities and the Global Church Village & Stage.

Why should I take a week off and come to PA 2015?

We hope North Americans will feel called to join this global experience. Yes, it does involve committing time and money, but we believe that this is a rare opportunity to become involved in a spiritual experience that will be truly transformative.

What is Mennonite World Conference?

Mennonite World Conference began as an event, a single meeting in 1925, when a relatively small group of European and North American Mennonites planned a "conference" to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the founding of Anabaptism in Switzerland in 1525. (The Mennonite world at that time was largely confined to Europe and North America.)

Other Mennonite World Conferences followed, held every five or six years, to consider themes of interest and concern to Mennonites as a whole. Fellowship and support for each other became increasingly important, although MWC has never had the authority to control or impose doctrine or practice on its members.

Today, in addition to its global Assemblies, MWC sponsors World Fellowship Sunday, nurtures solidarity and networking among its member churches, publishes periodicals, encourages the publishing of the Global Anabaptist Shelf of Literature, includes commissions that support the faith life of MWC member churches and much more. All this contributes to our becoming a global communion.—MWC

Vietnamese pastor severely beaten

Nguyen Hong Quang beaten while helping another pastor attacked by strangers

Photo provided



Pastor Nguyen Hong Quang in the hospital after being beaten.

Nguyen Hong Quang, leader of the unregistered Vietnam Evangelical Mennonite Church, was severely beaten on his way to worship on Jan. 18 in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

A few minutes after leaving his home in District 12 in the northwest area of the city with another pastor, Huynh Thuc Khai, each on his own motorcycle, they were accosted by two strangers who knocked Khai from his motorcycle. Pastor Quang, who was following, stopped to assist the younger pastor. The two unknown men signaled five other men, who assaulted Quang with clubs and bricks. Quang says he recognized two of these men, who often lounged by the gate of the house adjacent to his home.

Passersby tried to stop the attack but were threatened by the assailants, who fled after Quang lost consciousness. A husband and wife, members of the church, happened along and took Quang to the nearest general hospital. Family members later had him transferred to the Saigon Hoan My International Hospital.

The next morning, doctors at the hospital reported that Quang suffered a fractured nose and serious internal injuries.

The two pastors were on their way to attend a worship service of the church in District 2 in the southeastern area of the city when they were attacked. Khai only suffered brush burns.

Pastor Quang was sentenced to prison in 2004 but was granted amnesty the following year. He is no stranger to

personal attacks. In late 2010, he was beaten when evicted from his home in District 2 as part of an urban renewal project.

Quang then moved to Ben Cat town north of Ho Chi Minh City, where the church had earlier established a worship and training center. There he coordinated the church's leadership education program.

Beginning last September, authorities tried to close the unauthorized training program and harassed persons who came to the church center. Plain-clothed attackers repeatedly threw stones and garbage at the building while security police did nothing to stop them. Eventually the building itself was broken into and trashed, and members were forbidden to come. Church leaders in December 2014 decided to temporarily terminate all activities at this center, and Quang and his family moved into the home of a son in District 12.

The other Mennonite body in Vietnam, Vietnam Mennonite Church, has legal status and an officially authorized theological training program. Twelve students have graduated from the first five-year Bachelor of Theology program.

—*Luke S. Martin*



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Beauty can be found in the unfinished

An MCC worker pens a letter to his Haitian-American daughter.

Dear daughter: Most new parents worry about the state of the world they've brought their child into. Your mom and I are no different. You're not even a year old, but here's what I'd tell you right now, if you could understand me.

Your mother is Haitian. You were born in Haiti, a beautiful country with an incredible history. I'm from the United States, also beautiful but much bigger, richer and more powerful than Haiti. These two countries have a long, conflicted relationship. Eight years ago, I left my home country to live in Haiti, and I fell in love with it, just as I fell in love with your mother.

Five years ago, an earthquake caused massive damage to the city where we lived, Port-au-Prince. Those of us who lived through it will always remember the running, screaming, digging through rubble for survivors and wondering if the world had ended.

That day many of the concrete walls that separated private homes from the public crumbled, and the ones that didn't crumble didn't matter anymore because everyone took their bed sheets out to sleep in the middle of the street. They didn't want the concrete structures to fall on them during the aftershocks.

Before the earthquake, Haitians were divided by all kinds of barriers—class, religion and race. But that night and for weeks afterward, everyone slept under the stars.

Even the world, led by the United States, came together to help Haiti. Haitians were used to feeling despised, pitied and isolated, but people from all over the world gave money to charities, and many governments committed billions of dollars to Haiti after the Jan. 12, 2010, earthquake.

We were hopeful the earthquake was the wake-up call Haiti needed. We thought people wouldn't just rebuild houses; we would witness the rebirth of Haitian society.

No more corrupt, unresponsive government that allowed haphazard building. No more monopolies and controlling business networks that overpriced building supplies and basic necessities. No more letting foreign powers dictate Haiti's development policy for their profit, causing Haitians to abandon farmland for slums in the capital.

Excitement around these ideas grew, even though 1.5 million people were living in tents. Most of the schools and government buildings were gone, yet we thought this was Haiti's moment to shine. But the weeks wore on. Heavy rains came in spring, and many tent camps flooded.

In the tent camps, parents weren't able to supervise their kids the same way they did when they lived in their own apartments. Lots of teenage girls got pregnant. It breaks my heart to think of the thousands of babies just like you spending their first months and years in a tent.

Then cholera broke out, and the commission to manage the recovery was mismanaged. All this before the first anniversary of the earthquake.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), the organization I work with, did as much as it could with money people donated. Haitian staff brought food, blankets, water filters and other supplies to people without homes. Volunteer engineers evaluated schools, churches and houses and tell people if these buildings were safe to enter.

MCC used its donations mostly to support Haitian organizations as they did the important work of relief and recovery during the last five years—building and repairing buildings and teaching masons how to build safely, teaching vocational and agricultural skills, training people how to deal with trauma, strengthening rural towns so that people could live well outside overcrowded Port-au-Prince. MCC's partners are close to the people they work with, and they know their needs better than we do.

They did great work at the community level, as did many other organizations, but it was a small part of a big, overwhelming picture. So far we've been discouraged by the Haitian and U.S. governments.

The money promised to Haiti could have built new homes with access to electricity, water and sanitation for every displaced family. Instead, the government chose cosmetic fixes to encourage private investment and tourism. Little by little, rubble was cleaned up and big tents camps relocated, but most of those people ended up in slums.

MCC and our Haitian partners haven't given up on big-picture changes. They were in Washington, D.C., last November, urging the U.S. and Haitian governments to be more transparent about how the aid money was spent and to address the ongoing housing crisis, including 85,000 people still living in tents.

In Haiti, the roads, houses and markets all seem to be in a state of construction or decay or both. But when I look at you, I'm reminded that something unfinished can be something beautiful. Something full of potential.—*Kurt Hildebrand and Wilda Mondestin, representatives for MCC in Haiti*



Kurt Hildebrand, Wilda Mondestin and their daughter Akila

Saving lives in their spare time

Married couple, EMU graduates, work with Harrisonburg Rescue Squad.

Michael Sheeler



Jackson and Katie Maust in one of Harrisonburg's ambulances.

On any given Saturday night, when most married couples are relaxing in front of their TVs or maybe eating out, this one is more likely to be found at an accident scene or a strange home—"seeing things no one else will see."

Jackson and Katrina (Lehman) Maust have been rescue squad members since they were students at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Harrisonburg, Va., six years ago.

The pagers connecting them to Harrisonburg-Rockingham County emergency dispatch are never far from their side—especially on Friday nights, and even more so when that night happens to be both Halloween and the beginning of Homecoming Weekend at James Madison University.

Such a coincidence often makes pagers crackle with incoming calls and the all-volunteer crew at the Harrisonburg Rescue Squad (HRS) busy in response.

In times like that, the Mausts—Jackson is a physical therapist and Katie an emergency room nurse—come to lend their capable hands.

"Sometimes I think about what normal people do on a Saturday night," Katie says. "We sometimes end up helping the rescue squad. In situations like that, I think it's easier that the two of us share that common commitment and that common interest."

Helping people in need and walking with them through those times is a calling to the Mausts, and in their work they are sustained by their faith, their family and friends, their colleagues and each other.

"Both my jobs are high stress, intense places to work where sometimes horrible, awful things happen," says Katie. "You see very raw human emotion and the human experience right there in front of you. It's a gift to experience those things, but it's also a challenge. It's a way we serve God, being with people and walking through."

Growing at EMU and in the community

Jackson and Katie became involved at the rescue squad while undergraduates at EMU (the two had met as freshmen

but started dating as seniors). Jackson, a biology major from Michigan, was interested in physical therapy. Katie, from Ohio, was also a biology major interested in health care.

Their majors and preprofessional interests required clinical exposure and contact hours, but both Jackson and Katie fulfilled that requirement before volunteering with the squad. They joined together to gain more experience but not with an equal sense of certainty, Jackson recalls.

"I didn't think of myself as someone who would have any interest in high-stress, emergency situations," he says.

After graduation, he and Katie stayed in Harrisonburg for a year. That time solidified their commitment, both to volunteering in medical services and to each other.

The couple married in 2011 in Columbus, Ohio, where Jackson was working on a doctorate in physical therapy at The Ohio State University, and Katie, who was accepted into medical school but decided not to pursue the profession, was completing a second bachelor's degree in an accelerated nursing program at Capital University. They also volunteered with a small one-ambulance squad in Columbus. (For comparison, Harrisonburg has nine.)

Coming back to Harrisonburg

Fast-forward to Harrisonburg in 2014, and a similar life, carrying pagers and running calls for the rescue squad. Now Katie, 28, and Jackson, 27, are seasoned members among the 160 volunteers. R40 responds to approximately 8,000 calls per year.

The couple has taken on mentoring, training and supervisory responsibilities. Katie was recently voted to a one-year term on the board of directors and also sits on the training committee.

Jackson serves as one of three fleet maintenance officers and also one of four deputy chiefs (each chief is in charge of the squad's operations on a rotating four-week schedule). He is one of a small group of volunteers certified to drive the squad truck and operate its heavy equipment at accident scenes requiring extrication equipment.

These responsibilities are in addition to the 48 hours a month of shift work required of all members. Shifts vary from six hours on the weekdays to 12 hours on weekends.

The couple admits to sometimes feeling exhausted by their busy schedules and stressful jobs. Katie says each shift always brings affirmation for both her and for their commitment as a couple to this special kind of service. "Seeing it as a calling and an opportunity to serve gives this a different meaning than something we're signed up to do and we should keep doing because we've been doing it a long time."

"Is this where we still feel like God's calling us to be?" she asks. The answer is yes.—*Lauren Jefferson of EMU*

Three Lancaster, Pa., churches begin The Shalom Project

Nathan Grieser heads initiative to promote community, learning opportunities.

This fall, Lancaster, Pa. will become home to a new initiative providing intentional community and learning opportunities for young adults.

The Shalom Project, a partnership of three Lancaster city churches, will promote wholeness and peace by cultivating an urban community of servant leaders committed to living amid diversity, connecting with community and engaging in intentional faith formation.

New college graduates who enter the program will live for one year in community, working at internships in city businesses and nonprofits, and participating in vocational discernment, community-building and spiritual formation.

“The Shalom Project will work with young adults in that tender time right after graduation from college,” says advisory board member Carmen Horst of James Street Mennonite Church, “walking alongside them when there are lots of questions about spirituality, real-life finances and job skills.”

Vision for The Shalom Project was born when a young adult from Sunnyside Mennonite Church returned from Mennonite Voluntary Service with the desire to see something similar in Lancaster. This sparked conversation among pastors from Sunnyside, James Street and Community Mennonite Church of Lancaster, who soon discovered they shared similar ideas for a local service-learning unit. Motivated by a commitment to Lancaster, a care for young people and a desire to continue learning what it means to love God, neighbor and self, the conversation grew into a clear vision.

Nathan Grieser, youth pastor at Sunnyside, has been named executive director. He says: “The Shalom Project presents young adults with a unique opportunity to develop personally, vocationally and spiritually.” But the project is also about something much bigger—the relationship between young people and their community. “I look forward to walking alongside participants as they engage this process of

whole-person development, build relationships and impact the neighborhood.”

Grieser, who has lived in Lancaster city since 2009, will graduate from Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va., with a Master of Divinity degree this summer.

“Nathan has been a vital and thoughtful voice contributing to the development of The Shalom Project from the beginning,” says advisory board member Chad Martin of Community Mennonite. “His desire to engage as a person of faith with the world around him is clear.”

Grieser will work with participants to find an internship placement that is a good fit for their skill set and vocational interests. Participants will also create a covenant for building community within and beyond the household.

“The Shalom Project is about congregations rooted in a particular place responding to a shared sense of call to find new ways to partner with and invest in young adults,” says advisory board member Brian Miller of Sunnyside Mennonite. “It’s bringing together diverse partners and stakeholders in a common mission—seeking the peace and flourishing of Lancaster.”—*The Shalom Project*

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Discussion of MSMC decision 'complicated and difficult'

A report on various responses to a conference's licensing decision

When Mountain States Mennonite Conference (MSMC) announced the decision to license Theda Good on Dec. 23, 2013, church leaders responded in a February 2014 letter.

MSMC leaders hold that this letter stands in contrast to earlier instructions based on a June 13, 2012, letter from the Executive Committee of Mennonite Church USA (MC USA) regarding same-sex relationships.

The ongoing discussion regarding the decision and its consequences within MC USA in the past year remain complicated and difficult for the leaders involved.

Despite these challenges, MC USA and MSMC reps have agreed to find ways to move forward despite differences. For example, in April 2014, a group of MSMC and MC USA reps met to discuss the licensure process, review any regrets about the events as they transpired, and think together about a way forward that could bring unity to the broader church.

Those of us working at this for MSMC were trying our best to follow Jesus.

—Herm Weaver

Also, for this article, Herm Weaver, conference minister of MSMC, and Ervin Stutzman, executive director of MC USA, asked to be interviewed together as a symbol of their commitment to work together going forward. In their conversation on Dec. 19, 2014, they both emphasized their hope for the church moving forward together.

"Those of us working at this for MSMC were trying our best to follow Jesus. That continues to be what we aim for every day," said Weaver in a Jan. 6 email. "I know the same could easily be said about my friend Ervin and likely the EB and many other folks who are disappointed in the outcome."

The EB's February 2014 letter states: "Mountain States Mennonite Conference acted without sufficient counsel from the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) and the Conference Ministers' group."

According to multiple sources, MSMC reached out in many different ways during their year-long discernment process and followed the most recent letter from the executive committee of the EB regarding same-sex relationships.

In the fall of 2012, MSMC invited counsel from Stutzman into their discernment on licensing Theda Good. According to MSMC's timeline of events (www.mountainstatesmc.org/Licensing_Decision_Documents), "Ervin's instructions

were to keep Nancy [Kauffmann] involved." Kauffmann is denominational minister for MC USA.

"The MSMC leadership board and the credentialing committee were moving with as much integrity as possible," Kauffmann said on Dec. 10, 2014. "I encouraged them to make their decision based on whether this person was called, not on their LGBTQ identity. While I was able to speak into their process and offer counsel, both myself and my supervisors agreed, based on existing ministerial polity, that it was the conference who would decide on whether or not to license Good." MSMC included Kauffmann regularly in their conversations about Good's licensing process through the year of 2013.

"[Kauffmann] presented an alternative to ministerial credentialing for the conference to consider, but they made a different choice," said Stutzman in a Jan. 16 email.

June 2012 letter from the Executive Committee

Among the documents that Kauffmann provided MSMC as part of their discernment process was the most recent letter from the MC USA Executive Committee (EC, which is a subcommittee of the EB that provides leadership for the board and "acts for the Executive Board as necessary between regular meetings of the board," according to the board's policies) on the topic of same-sex relationships, written on June 12, 2012.

"It gave an understanding that it would be the conference that made that decision and that we wouldn't be jumping in and telling them," Kauffmann said.

The letter (see www.themennonite.org/daily-news/mc-usa-executive-committee-responds-sex-unions/) states: "Ministerial credentials are held at the conference level and thus ministers' accountability is to the area conference rather than the national conference." It continues: "We understand the frustration of persons who wish that the

They didn't envision the situation of ordaining a person in a same-sex relationship.—Ervin Stutzman

national conference would make decisions that our polity has given to area conferences of Mennonite Church USA to resolve."

"The June 2012 letter was fairly significant for us early on," said Weaver on Dec. 19, 2014. "It reinforced for us a bit of a hands-off approach from the wider church."

Given the significance of the June 2012 letter in guiding

their decision-making process and their guidance from Kauffmann, Rhoda Blough, moderator of MSMC at the time, said it was painful to read the EB's February 2014 letter. "It felt very demeaning to read that our 'conference decision has exacerbated the polarities within our church and frayed the fragile strands of accountability that hold our church together,'" she said in a statement to the Constituency Leadership Council (CLC) on March 20, 2014.

Stutzman said the letter was written exclusively to address ministers performing same-sex covenant ceremonies. "They didn't envision the situation of ordaining a person in a same-sex relationship," he said on Dec. 19, 2014.

Richard Thomas, member of the EB and MC USA moderator at the time the letter was written, agrees with Stutzman. He says the letter, which he signed, was taken out of context by MSMC. In a Jan. 9 email he wrote that their interpretation "does not take seriously the whole letter but perhaps picks out several sentences which out of the context of the whole letter may be used to support a conference action in violation of national polity." The national polity Thomas references is Part 3 of the 2001 Membership Guidelines (www.mennoniteusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/MembershipGuidelines_2013_July.pdf).

Conference ministers meetings in 2013

The EB's February 2014 letter said MSMC did not adequately consult the conference ministers' group, a nongovernance body made up of conference ministers from MC USA's 21 conferences.

This group meets for one evening twice a year during the CLC gathering and a third time each year for three days in a joint gathering with area conference ministers from Mennonite Church Canada.

Conversation—or lack of conversation—surrounding MSMC in those conference ministers' meetings is interpreted differently.

"We did reach out a few times to invite involvement from the wider church in our process," said Weaver. "A number of times I talked about this at conference ministers' meetings and got almost no response. It was pretty quiet in the room."

Stutzman spoke to the challenge of discussing LGBTQ inclusion in these gatherings. "In 2013, a year ago, getting conference ministers to talk about this area was very difficult," said Stutzman. "I'm not faulting Herm here at all. I think Herm has reached out to conference ministers. The ethos of that meeting was such that people had strong feelings but didn't feel free to speak up."

According to Stutzman, the topic is difficult to bring up. In an exercise at the December 2013 conference ministers' meeting, participants were instructed to write down their personal convictions on the inclusion of LGBTQ people in the church. The process created some anxiety in the room and not everyone participated, he said.

"I assumed that when the [MSMC] board got close to making a decision, we'd have the broader group engage it,"

Stutzman said. "People were uncomfortable asserting themselves into that [MSMC] process because they felt it was an imposition, but they had an expectation that there wouldn't be a decision different from what they had agreed before."

Carol Wise sees this expectation of a status-quo-affirming decision by MSMC and the surprise at a different result as a problem. Wise is director of Brethren Mennonite Council for Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Interests (BMC). "In some ways it's an indicator of how removed leadership has been from what is happening in many of our congregations," she said on Dec. 31, 2014. "You've really had to work at being uninformed to not know that attitudes toward LGBTQ people are changing."

You've really had to work at being uninformed to not know that attitudes toward LGBTQ people are changing. —Carol Wise

Several conference ministers spoke to the MSMC issue and the conference ministers' meetings.

James Wenger, conference minister for South Central Mennonite Conference, said he perceived Weaver's comments to the conference ministers gatherings in 2013 as more of a report than an invitation.

"We were just informed that they were doing this. Giving and receiving counsel wasn't part of that," Wenger said on Dec. 30. "I guess people individually could have gone and talked to him."

At the same time, Wenger acknowledged that Terry Shue, director of Leadership Development for MC USA, and the others setting the agenda for the conference ministers' meetings did not want to discuss MSMC's discernment either. "There was a sense that people were afraid to really make it in an agenda item because it was so controversial and they didn't know how they were going to handle it," Wenger said.

In a Jan. 5 email, Fred Kanagy, North Central Conference conference minister, said, "It is very difficult, if not impossible, to carry on profitable discussions when speaking different languages; when words are defined very differently."

Correspondence to Mennonite Church USA leaders in January 2014

Stutzman acknowledges that he and the EB staff chose not to bring up MSMC's discernment process at CLC gatherings or conference ministers gatherings. Still, the EB's February 2014 letter states that MSMC "acted without sufficient counsel."

When asked about this incongruity, Stutzman referred to the board's Feb. 13-15, 2014, meeting as a "perfect storm."

Along with a blizzard that kept five board members from

the meeting, Stutzman also points to what the February 2014 letter refers to as “a significant amount of correspondence to Mennonite Church USA leaders” generated by MSMC’s decision to license Theda Good.

“Quite a few conferences had written very specific critiques of the board for not having taken action on MSMC,” said Stutzman.

Wenger provided this reporter with a letter that the executive committee of South Central Mennonite Conference wrote to the Executive Committee of MC USA.

It was reassuring to us that our denominational leaders were not being swayed by a minority to change our denominational position or simply look the other way.—Fred Kanagy

“If no action is taken in this matter, we expect that some South Central congregations will not continue as members of MC USA,” the South Central letter said, “and suspect that other conferences may be facing a similar possibility.”

It cites this potential loss and harm to “the unity of the church” as a factor that should limit the autonomy of congregations and conferences. They do not specify what action they are asking for from the Executive Committee, but Wenger said they were not asking for MSMC to be expelled or disciplined.

The letter asserts that MSMC’s decision was in “direct opposition to core documents of the Mennonite faith.” According to Wenger, this feeling is stronger in the case of MSMC because of their unique process of joining MC USA as a conference in 2007 and the specific commitments they made to the membership guidelines in that process.

These commitments can be read here: www.mennoniteusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/MSMC-Response-to-Mennonite-Church-USA-Criteria.pdf.

Wenger said he understands the shift in tone from the EB’s June 2012 letter to the February 2014 letter. “I can see why they changed their mind between the first and second letter,” he said. “When MC USA was formed, we lost 200-300 churches, and the EB saw that with MSMC’s decision we might be gearing up to lose another 200-300 churches. And for that reason they saw that they needed to take a different course.”

Kanagy said his conference (North Central Conference) was glad that MC USA did not recognize Good’s license. “It was reassuring to us that our denominational leaders were not being swayed by a minority to change our denominational position or simply look the other way,” he said.

Allen Lehman, Franklin Mennonite Conference minister, said in an email on Jan. 6: “If you see some evolution in the Executive Boards’ journey toward more responsible actions and decisions, I rejoice. If they overstepped their authority, then I ask, if not them then who will do something? I am sure if the Executive Board would have led in a way that affirmed MSMC, those who see themselves as progressive would not care a bit if they exercised authority in that direction.”

“In MC USA, we are a very diverse set of conferences,” said Stutzman. “We need every possible way to find commonalities to keep us together.”

Hopes and challenges going forward

Many of the Mennonite leaders interviewed for this article agree that Mennonite church polity is rooted in and dependent on personal relationships rather than church-based judicial proceedings like those used by Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist churches.

“When we depend on personal relationships [in our denomination] and there is high stress, it’s not an easy place,” Stutzman said. “We believe in peacemaking, in working with each other, and so instead of a generalized conflict we need sharpened conflict and more trusting relationships. When I speak about relationships being the main thing, some conferences feel like I’m abandoning truth.”

Along with MC USA leaders, Weaver cited Willard Metzger, executive director of Mennonite Church Canada, as a hopeful example of Mennonite leadership. “I’ve really appreciated Willard’s capacity to let go and trust God and know that whatever structure we have may come undone, but God

When we depend on personal relationships [in our denomination] and there is high stress, it’s not an easy place.

—Ervin Stutzman

doesn’t come undone in the midst of our structures,” Weaver said. “I’ve tried to focus a lot of my own personal energy in that direction. God is able to do more than we can even imagine.”

According to Weaver, some of the conference ministers have been discussing how to build more trust among the 21 conference ministers of MC USA. “Keith Weaver [conference moderator of Lancaster Mennonite Conference] and I have been talking about doing some retreats where we don’t do work, but we just get to know each other,” said Herm Weaver.—*Tim Nafziger, a writer who blogs at www.themennonite.org, attends Ojai Valley (Calif.) Community Church*

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WORKERS

McKinney, Karl, was installed as lead pastor at Erisman Mennonite Church, Manheim, Pa., on Nov. 2, 2014.

OBITUARIES

Albrecht, Lyle J., 79, Bay Port, Mich., died Dec. 20, 2014. Spouse: Alice M. Hoffman Albrecht. Parents: Mose and Mary Gunden Albrecht. Children: Starla McKenzie, Barry; four grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Dec. 24 at Michigan Avenue Mennonite Church, Pigeon, Mich.

Bechtel, Elmer J., 96, Ligonier, Ind., died Dec. 24, 2014. Spouse: Mildred Amelia Reed/Reynolds (deceased). Parents: Eden S. and Mary Etta Rudy Bechtel. Children: Melva Sanders, Eva Miller, Arlene Hartsough, Pauline Graff, Elmer "Jay;" four grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 29 at Yoder-Culp Funeral Home, Goshen, Ind.

Beck, Berneda P. Short, 92, Archbold, Ohio, died Dec. 26, 2014. Spouse: Donald V. Beck (deceased). Parents: Edwin and Wilma Short Short. Children: Rex, Dianne Roth; three grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 28 at Fairlawn Haven Chapel, Archbold.

Davidhizar, Ellen Catherine Jennings Oyer, 83, Canby, Ore., died Nov. 27, 2014, of a stroke. Spouse: Paul Samuel Davidhizar. Spouse: John Oyer (deceased). Parents: Ervin Brunk Jennings and Alice Louise Groff Jennings. Children: Phil Oyer, Stan Oyer, Gary Oyer; eight grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 13 at Zion Mennonite Church, Hubbard, Ore.



Fretz, Helen Christine Habegger, 92, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 6 at Greencroft Healthcare. Helen was born April 19, 1922, in Forsythe, Mont., to Alfred and Barbara

(Hirsch) Habegger, who were missionaries to the Northern Cheyenne Native Americans in Busby, Mont., 20 miles east of the Custer Battlefield. Her parents are deceased as are her siblings, Marden, Jeanne, Esther, Lois, and Bernard. One brother, David Habegger, of Elkhart, survives, as do her four children, Barbara (Archie) Ross of Longmont, Colo., Susan Boushele of Pocatello, Idaho, James H. (Mary) Fretz of Killingworth, Connecticut, and Joseph H. (Ann) Fretz of Centennial, Colo.; seven grandchildren, Jason, Don, Christina, Charles, Samuel, Zachary, Emily; and four great-grandchildren, Ezra, Isaac, James, Bridget Helen, and many nieces, nephews, and cousins. Helen's husband, J. Herbert Fretz, preceded her in death on Aug. 10, 2013, and is buried at Deep Run West Mennonite Church cemetery, Bedminster, Pa. According to her wishes, after cremation, Helen will be buried there with him. Helen's early education was with the Cheyenne in Busby, Mont., and they gave her the name Voesta, which means "White Buffalo Cow" in Cheyenne, a rare occurrence. Her father baptized her at age 13 upon her confession of faith, along with several Cheyenne youth. She completed her high school education in Berne, Ind., while living with her grandparents, David and Matilda Habegger. She met her future husband while attending Bluffton College in Bluffton, Ohio. She graduated in 1944, as an educator. After teaching high school for a year in Arcanum, Ohio, while Herb was attending Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, they were married on June 9, 1945, in Berne, with her father, Alfred Habegger, officiating. Helen and Herb were married for 68 years. Helen taught third

grade for one year in Blue Bell, Pa., while Herb finished his senior year at seminary. They then moved to Bedminster, Pa., where Herb became the pastor at the Deep Run West Mennonite Church from 1945 to 1953. Herb's grandfather, Allen M. Fretz, had been pastor there for 60 years. Helen and Herb moved to Freeman, S.D., where he was pastor at Salem Mennonite Church from 1953 to 1963. Helen enjoyed staying home for 18 years to raise and care for her family. Gardening, sewing, and doing projects with the children were pleasurable and treasured times. When the family moved to Goshen, Ind., where Herb was pastor of the Eighth Street Mennonite Church from 1963 to 1968, Helen earned her Master's Degree from Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, and she taught Consumer and Home Economics at Whiteman Junior High School (in Goshen from 1964 to 1987. Helen willingly served her Lord as a pastor's wife, taught Sunday School, worked on the Fellowship Committee, and served one term as deacon at Hively Mennonite Church in Elkhart, Ind., where Herb worked at the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary) for 20 years from 1968 to 1988. Helen and Herb again became members at Eighth Street Mennonite Church in Goshen in 1989. The children thank the staff of Greencroft Healthcare for the loving care they gave Mom. Helen and Herb will be greatly missed by their children. A memorial service was held Jan. 9 at Eighth Street Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Ginder, Verna M. Gruber, 97, Lancaster, Pa., died Sept. 23, 2014. Spouse: Herman Ginder (deceased). Spouse: Lester M. Brubaker (deceased). Parents: Irvin and Cora Martin Gruber. Children: Gerald G. Brubaker, Ray G. Brubaker, Phyllis Clugston; 11 grandchildren; 21 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 28 at Erisman Mennonite Church, Manheim, Pa.

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.

Gnagey, Omar J., 84, Archbold, Ohio, died Oct. 4, 2014. Spouse: Velma Sauder Gnagey. Parents: Elias and Amanda Gnagey. Children: Kathy G. Short, Les, Marv, Gail, Doug; seven grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 10 at Tedrow Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

Graber, LeRoy, 94, Freeman, S.D., died Dec. 13, 2014. Spouse: Virginia Kleinsasser Graber. Children: Jan Johnson, Randy, Kim, Nancy Ratzlaff, Viki, Donald; eight grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Dec. 27 at Salem-Zion Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Greene, Donna J. Tyson, 66, Telford, Pa., died Dec. 21, 2014. Spouse: Dale H. Greene. Parents: Millard and Jeanette Moyer Tyson. Children: Jeffrey A., David, L.; one grandchild. Funeral: Jan. 10 at Anders-Detweiler Funeral Home, Souderton, Pa.

Hertzler, Ruth Harnish Stoner, 88, Mechanicsburg, Pa., died July 29, 2014. Spouse: Norman Lloyd Hertzler (deceased). Parents: Daniel and Sabina Stoner. Children: Duane, Dale, Dean, Julia Quickel, Jeanette Martin; nine grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Aug. 2 at Slate Hill Mennonite Church, Camp Hill, Pa.

Hofer, Harold G. Pullman, 76, Marion, S.D., died Dec. 26, 2014, from injuries sustained in a motor vehicle accident. Spouse: Phyllis June Tschetter Hofer (deceased). Parents: John A. and Mary S. Pullman Hofer. Children: Steven, Bryan Harold; five grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 2 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

Hofer, Phyllis June Tschetter, 73, Marion, S.D., died Dec. 26, 2014, from injuries sustained in a motor vehicle accident. Spouse: Harold G. Pullman Hofer (deceased). Parents: Emil J. and Barbara Hofer Tschetter. Children: Steven, Bryan Harold; five grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 2 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

Kaufman, Shirley A. Stalter, 76, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 5 of cancer. Spouse: Merrill J. Kauffman (deceased). Parents: Fred and Mary Heatwole Stalter. Children: Joy Detweiler, Kent, Steve; five grandchildren; two step-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 10 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Keim, William R., 74, Berlin, Ohio, died Nov. 11, 2014, of cancer. Spouse: Eva Yoder Slabach Keim. Spouse: Carolyn Schlabach Keim (deceased). Parents: Roman and Mary Beachy Keim. Children: Robbie Keim, Maria Keim, Eric Slabach, Kimberly Mullet, Heather Fike, Bethany Keim; six grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 13 at Walnut Creek Mennonite Church, Walnut Creek, Ohio.

Kennel, Arthur J., 85, Rochester, Minn., died Dec. 14, 2014, of Parkinson's Disease. Spouse: Lois Kennel. Parents: John E. and Anna Mary Summers Kennel. Children: Susan Harrison, Kurt; five grandchildren. Celebration of life service: Dec. 23 at Charter House, Rochester, Minn. Celebration of life service: April 2015 in Lancaster County, Pa.

Metzler, Eugene K., 87, Manheim, Pa., died Sept. 15, 2014. Spouse: Jean S. Hollinger Metzler. Parents: John N. and Mary B. Metzler. Children: K. Marlene Knode, Darwin, Gerald, C. LeAnn Parmer; 11 grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Oct. 5 at Erisman Mennonite Church, Manheim.

Miller, Freda Miller, 74, Trail, Ohio, died Nov. 18, 2014, following a lengthy illness. Parents: Valentine and Sara Schlabach Miller. Children: Allan, Roger, Scott, Stacy Mishler; six grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 21 at Walnut Creek Mennonite Church, Walnut Creek, Ohio.

Miller, Sally R. Gall, 81, Goshen, Ind., died Oct. 8, 2014, of a brain tumor. Spouse: Kenneth L. Miller (deceased). Parents: Claude and Lulu Umbaugh Gall. Children: Bruce, Ed; six grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 14 at Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Miller, Velda Fern Slabach, 83, Goshen, Ind., died Nov. 29, 2014. Spouse: Lloyd A. Miller. Parents: Joseph and Lydia Ann Miller Slabach. Children: Linda D. Miller, Wayne E. Beachy, Keith R. Beachy, Karol D. Beachy, Kenneth L. Beachy; stepchildren: Joanna Becker, Julia Lee; 20 grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 3 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Miller, Viola Ruth Miller, 80, Goshen, Ind., died Dec. 17, 2014. Spouse: Crist W. Miller. Parents: Dan R. and Katie Schrock Miller. Children: Krista Murray, Kenneth, Ronald; 10 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Dec. 22 at North Goshen Mennonite Church.

Preheim, Calvin James, 82, Freeman, S.D., died Dec. 23, 2014. Spouse: Dorothy A. Hofer Preheim. Parents: Henry J. and Ella Schorzman Preheim. Children: Jill Zerger, Ross, Todd; five grandchildren; two step-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 29 at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Schmidt, Jeanette Wiens, 87, Newton, Kan., died Sept. 19, 2014, of Alzheimer's disease. Paul Schmidt (deceased). Children: Vyron, Dennis; six grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 22 at Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Schwartzentruber, Earl David, 85, Goshen, Ind., died Dec. 20, 2014. Spouse: Genevieve Leichty Schwartzentruber. Parents: David and Barbara Streicher Schwartzentruber. Children: Douglas, David, Donita S. Rhodes; eight grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Dec. 27 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Shank, Audrey Brunk, 82, Harrisonburg, Va., died Jan. 18, 2015. Parents: J. Ward and Stella Brunk Shank. Funeral: Jan. 24 at Greenmount Church of the Brethren, Harrisonburg.

Stalter, John D., 97, Goshen, Ind., died Dec. 28, 2014. Spouse: Kathryn Mumaw Stalter (deceased). Parents: John D. and Ida Yoder Stalter. Children: Sanford, Kathy Najjar, Loretta Cross. Funeral: Jan. 3 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Swartley, Valeria Landes, 95, Souderton, Pa., died Dec. 26, 2014. Spouse: William D. Swartley (deceased). Parents: Henry T. and Clara Schlosser Landes. Children: Carol L. Longacre, Janet L. Goshow, Betsy L. Heavener, William L.; 11 grandchildren; 26 great-grandchildren; four great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 30 at Souderton Mennonite Homes.

Weaver, Nathaniel "Nate" David, 29, Berlin, Ohio, died Nov. 27, 2014. Parents: Robert C. and Kathy Miller Weaver. Funeral: Dec. 1 at Walnut Creek Mennonite Church, Walnut Creek, Ohio.

Weber, Patricia King, 82, Waterloo, Ontario, died Dec. 10, 2014, of ovarian cancer. Spouse: John Weber. Parents: Ivan and Margaret King. Children: John, Susan Weber, Robert, Peggy Nitsche, Ann Weber Boon, Timothy; 11 grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 4 at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, St. Jacobs, Ontario.

Witmer, Ethel M. Wenger, 90, Lancaster, Pa., died Aug. 9, 2014. Spouse: J. Stanley Witmer. Parents: Clayton S. and Mary S. Wenger. Children: Jay E., Linda E. Witmer; seven grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Memorial service: Aug. 30 at Erisman Mennonite Church, Manheim, Pa.

Witmeyer, Donna Jean Unger, 84, Burr Oak, Mich. and Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 10, 2015. Spouse: Byron Witmeyer (deceased). Spouse: Simon Bontrager (deceased). Parents: Donald and Berdine Folk Unger. Funeral: Jan. 15 at Hohner Funeral Home, Three Rivers, Mich.

Yoder, Dorothy J. Miller, 84, Hesston, Kan., died Dec. 7, 2014. Spouse: Gene Yoder. Children: Brent, Ken, Beth Hostetler; seven grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Dec. 9 at Eastlawn Cemetery, Hesston.

Yoder, D. Virginia Ash, 90, Springs, Pa., died Dec. 25, 2014. Spouse: Raymond J. Yoder (deceased). Spouse: Samuel Brennenman (deceased). Parents: Clyde and Elsie Killius Ash. Child: Norma Jean Doyle; one grandchild. Funeral: Dec. 29 at Springs Mennonite Church.

Zehr, Floyd J., 85, Lancaster, Pa., died Sept. 18, 2014, following a stroke. Spouse: Pearl Bauman Zehr. Parents: Elias and Martha Zehr. Children: David, Kenton, Mary Ann, Bonnie; nine grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Graveside service: Sept. 20 in Croghan, N.Y. Memorial service: Oct. 2 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, New Wilmington, Pa.

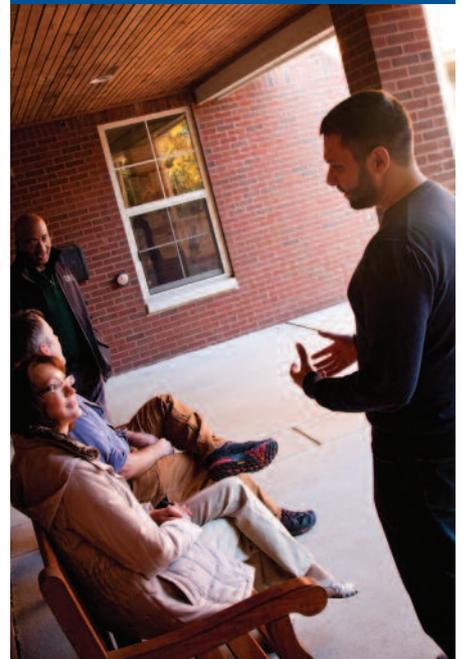
THANK YOU continued from page 45

Darvin Yoder
Del & Linda Yoder
Delvon & Shirley Yoder
Ed & Theo Yoder
Edwin & Clara Yoder
Elaine Yoder
Esther Yoder
Gordon & Esther Yoder
Hazel Yoder
John & MaDonna Yoder
Kathryn Yoder
LeRoy & Martha Yoder
Lillian Yoder
Marcus & Vonna Yoder
Marvin & Neta Faye Yoder
Nelson & Pat Yoder
Norman & Linda Yoder

Paul & Anita Yoder
Ray & Jane Yoder
Roveen Yoder
Timothy & Brenda Yoder
Zelda Yoder
Daryl & Marlisa Yoder-Bontrager
David & Janice Yordy Sutter
David & Laurie Yost
Lloyd Zeager
John Zehr
Marv & Jeannie Zehr
Marvin Zehr
Wesley & Carolyn Zehr
Richard & Betty Zimmerman
Wayne & Martha Zimmerman
Jeanne Zook
William Zuercher

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RESOURCES

True Confessions of a God Killer: A Postmodern Pilgrim's Progress by Emily Hedrick (Cascadia Publishing House, 2014, \$14.95) is an allegory inspired by a young woman's need to kill the God she knew to make space for a God beyond the cherished notions through which she and many of us imprison God.

Discovering Forgiveness: Pathways Through Injury, Apology and Healing by Larry A. Dunn (Cascadia Publishing House, 2014, \$14.95) provides an accessible and interdisciplinary approach to understanding the complexity of forgiveness while generating practical applications.

Rachel: Book Three, Ellie's People by Mary Christner Bortrager (Herald Press, 2015, \$7.99) tells the fictional story of Rachel, the granddaughter of Ellie from Book One of *Ellie's People: An Amish Family Saga*.

Vainglory: The Forgotten Vice by Rebecca Konyndyk De Young (Eerdmans, 2014, \$14) tells the story of this vice, moving from its ancient origins to its modern expressions. After exposing the many ways vainglory can rear its ugly head, the book explores the spiritual practices that can help us resist it and the community practices that can help us handle glory well.

The Gift of Ethics: A Story for Discovering Lasting Significance in Your Daily Work by Trevor Bechtel (Cascade Books, 2014, \$13) is a short, readable introduction to the major ideas in Christian ethics that engages the reader through stories to draw out reflection on the good life.

John Howard Yoder: Radical Theologian, edited by J. Denny Weaver (Cascade Books, 2014, \$48), argues that for Yoder both theology and ethics are expressions of the meaning of the narrative of Jesus. It includes 13 essays by various writers and acknowledges Yoder's sexual violence.

If Not Empire, What? A Survey of the Bible by Berry Friesen and John K. Stoner (CreateSpace, 2014, \$17) approaches the Bible as a collection of arguments about life, love and power. It asks readers to pay attention to the big argument, whether God created the world to work by the imperial paradigm of domination and homicidal power or by the peasant-and-commoner vision of compassion and community.

In Plain Sight: Stories of Hope and Freedom produced and narrated by Natalie Grant (Word Films, 2015, \$15.99) features six modern-day abolitionists as they fight sex trafficking across America. See www.wordfilms.com.

Advertising space in *The Mennonite* is available to congregations, conferences, businesses and churchwide boards and agencies of Mennonite Church USA. Cost for one-time classified placement is \$1.30 per word, minimum of \$30. Display space is also available. To place an ad in *The Mennonite*, call 800-790-2498 and ask for Rebecca Helmuth, or email advertising@themennonite.org.

Three couples, members of Park View Mennonite Church, jointly own a sailboat kept on the Chesapeake Bay. One couple needs to sell their share. See tinyurl.com/meander4sale.

March 9-13, 2015, **Amigo Centre** will host **Transitional Ministry Training** for individuals interested in leading congregations through a process of preparation for a new chapter of leadership. Visit tmt.amigocentre.org for additional information, or contact Amigo Centre at 269-651-2811.

Communications Internship, Camp Deerpark service opportunity. Located 80 miles northwest of NYC, Camp Deerpark is dedicated to providing affordable Christian camping for inner city Mennonites with a mission to empower youth to serve Christ in the city. Seeking young adult, aged 18-25, with writing/photography skills to assist communications for one year. Tasks include: social media, website maintenance, video production. Rm/bd, living allowance provided. More information at: <http://www.campdeerpark.org/index.php/en/get-involved/service-opportunities> or contact Ken Bontrager: deerparkdirector@gmail.com, 845-283-8669.

Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) invites qualified candidates to apply for a tenure-track, continuing faculty position of **Assistant or Associate Professor of Restorative Justice and Peacebuilding** to begin Fall Semester 2015. The faculty member will teach both graduate and undergraduate courses in restorative justice, conflict analysis and community assessment, design of interventions into conflicted relationships and systems, and basic skills for working with individuals and groups in conflict. Faculty member will work closely with a team in providing leadership in core courses, explore new courses and majors in the restorative justice field, and will engage in mentoring and supporting graduate students and traditional undergraduate students in practicums and professional fields. PhD and three to six years of field experience required. Application review begins February, 2015. Some applicants will be asked to respond to questions specific to EMU's mission after the initial inquiry. Send letter of application, curriculum vitae, transcripts (unofficial acceptable), and three letters of reference to: Dr. Jim Smucker, Vice President and Dean of Graduate Studies, Eastern Mennonite University, 1200 Park Road Harrisonburg, VA 22802, or jim.smucker@emu.edu. For more information, visit our website: www.emu.edu/humanresources. EOE

Visit Europe the Mennonite Way! Multiple Hotel Tours focusing on Mennonite-Anabaptist history in Holland, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Poland and Ukraine. Organized by Mennonite Heritage Tours, www.mennoniteheritagetours.eu

Franconia Mennonite Church is seeking a **full-time youth pastor** to work with the senior high youth of our congregation (grades 9-12) as well as our junior high youth (grades 6-8). We are looking for someone with energy and enthusiasm who exhibits strong Christian character that demonstrates a close relationship with Christ. Responsibilities include teaching Sunday School and Bible Studies, leading and organizing service trips and working with a team of sponsors to plan and organize events to challenge youth to commit their lives to Christ. Send resumé to Franconia Mennonite Church, Attn: Monique Kratz, 613 Harleysville Pike Telford, PA 18969 or mkratz@franconiamennonite.org. A complete job description will be made available upon request by calling 215-723-3220.

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 mkratz@franconiamennonite.org. Contact can be made with the search committee chairperson, Wayne L. Derstine at 215-588-5787. A complete job description will be made available upon request.

Western District Conference (WDC) of Mennonite Church USA seeks a full time **conference minister** to provide leadership to the mission, ministry and well-being of WDC churches. M.Div. and pastoral ministry experience required. Individuals who bring diversity are encouraged to apply. Full job description appears at mennowdc.org/wdc-conference-minister/. Please send cover letter and Ministerial Leadership Information form to Sondra B. Koontz, Search Chair, 820 E. Seventh St., Newton, KS 67114, or skoontz@bethelks.edu. Applications will be accepted until position is filled.

Bluffton University invites applications for a **full-time tenure-track position in communication** (multimedia journalism) beginning fall 2015. For details visit www.bluffton.edu/employment. Review of applications begins immediately and continues until an appointment is made. EOE.

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.

Precious or Poisonwood?



Aaron Kauffman

is president of Virginia Mennonite Missions. His email address is aaron.kauffman@vmmissions.org.

Jesus calls us to surrender all identities—national, religious, ethnic or otherwise—that compete with our primary allegiance to his lordship.

In many circles these days, mission is an unpopular subject. It evokes images of Nathan Price, the arrogant, insensitive protagonist in Barbara Kingsolver’s bestselling novel *The Poisonwood Bible*.

In the book, Price uproots his family from Georgia to resettle in the Belgian Congo, intending to “bring salvation to the heathen.” He proceeds to commit every stereotypical missionary no-no you can imagine:

- Rejected by every mission agency he contacts, he goes on his own.
- He comes with answers to questions no one seems to be asking.
- He shows no interest in understanding the local cultural and religious landscape.
- He refuses to leave even when it’s clear his ministry is fruitless and unwelcome.

But it is Nathan Price’s terrible language skills that give rise to the title of the novel. In an attempt to communicate the value of Jesus and the good news, he declares, “Tata Jesus is bāngala!” He means to say, bangala, or precious. But his careless pronunciation communicates the opposite of his intended message. He has proclaimed that Jesus is poisonwood, a local tree that “will make you itch like nobody’s business.”

Even when corrected, Price insists on saying, “Tata Jesus is bāngala.” Jesus is poisonwood.

Imagine my discomfort in reading this novel while serving a three-year mission assignment in La Mesa, Colombia. Is Christian mission nothing more than an offensive enterprise aimed at imposing Western values on the rest of the world?

Yes and no, says Emmanuel Katongole, a Ugandan Catholic priest and professor at the Notre Dame’s Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. In his book *Mirror to the Church*, Katongole examines the case of Rwanda, where Hutus hacked over 800,000 Tutsis to death in the genocide of 1994. Apparently successful Christian mission—nine out of 10 Rwandans called themselves Christians at the time—did little to prevent this disaster.

Yet, according to Katongole, the problem with Christian mission in Rwanda was not that it was missionary in nature but that it was insufficiently Christian. The New Testament vision for the church is one body of diverse people reconciled through the cross of Christ (Ephesians 2:11-22;

Revelation 7:9-10). However, the European missionaries who first set foot in Rwanda were captive to another vision: the secular notion of progress that considered Europeans the pinnacle of human evolution. As Katangole describes it, “They already had in their minds all the categories of race and tribe, primitive and advanced. As a result, they could not allow for a new Christian social reality that would not follow the logic of race, modernity and so-called Western civilization.”

The unspeakable tragedy of Rwanda points not to the inherent flaws of Christian mission but to the inadequate evangelization of the Western mind. Too often, we as Christians in the West have allowed thoroughly unchristian assumptions to colonize our hearts. And as Jesus reminds us, “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34). Our unconverted hearts lead us to preach a gospel of progress or prosperity rather than the peaceable good news of God’s reign in Christ.

Mission is not an outdated concept. We simply have to acknowledge that we North American Christians are also in need of conversion. Jesus calls us to surrender all identities—national, religious, ethnic or otherwise—that compete with our primary allegiance to his lordship.

Again, to quote Katongole: “The church’s primary purpose is not to make America more Christian but to make American Christians less American and Rwandan Christians less Rwandan. We are no longer Rwandans or Americans, neither Hutu nor Tutsi. If we are in Christ, we have become part of a new creation.”

A year ago I heard César García, General Secretary of Mennonite World Conference, speak about the role of North American mission agencies in the global church. When someone asked García whether Westerners should continue to send missionaries to other parts of the globe, I held my breath. Would he tell us our message had been precious or poisonwood?

García strongly affirmed the ongoing mission efforts of North American Anabaptists. But he offered one major qualification: “Don’t go it alone. We need each other in mission. Only as a multicultural body, listening to voices from every context where people follow Jesus, can we overcome our cultural blind spots and grow to the full stature of Christ.” 

BEST FILMS OF 2014

1. **Boyhood**
2. **Ida**
3. **Whiplash**
4. **Birdman**
5. **The Grand Budapest Hotel**
6. **Calvary**
7. **Under the Skin**
8. **Selma**
9. **The Imitation Game**
10. **The Immigrant**

—Gordon Houser

BEST BOOKS OF 2014

Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships by James V. Brownson

Family Furnishing: Selected Stories, 1995-2014 by Alice Munro

Lila: A Novel by Marilynne Robinson

The Novel: A Biography by Michael Schmidt

Strangers and Pilgrims Once More: Being Disciples of Jesus in a Post-Christendom World by Addison Hodges Hart—gh

FILM REVIEW

Selma (PG-13) tells the story of the voting rights marches in 1965 from Selma to Montgomery, Ala., in which Martin Luther King Jr. had a key role. While many have noted its historical inaccuracies (see column at right), it's a powerful drama about the efforts of courageous people to fight injustice nonviolently. David Oyelowo's performance as King is gripping.—gh

BOOK REVIEW

What's in a Phrase? Pausing Where Scripture Gives You Pause by Marilyn Chandler McEntyre (Eerdmans, 2014, \$14) is a collection of brief reflections on phrases in Scripture, organized in three sections: "Assurance," "Invitation" and "Surprise." It's a rich resource to read and ponder at one's leisure.—gh

Not 'based on a true story'

You're at the cinema, and a movie comes on. After the title appears, you see the words "Based on a true story." Anymore you have to wonder what this means.

Every year, it seems, we encounter in the media a debate about the veracity of certain dramatic film portrayal of historical events. This year is no different.

The historical events that inspired the making of *Selma* (see review at left) are the marches from Selma to Montgomery, Ala., in 1965, led by Martin Luther King Jr. and how these helped lead to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

But with the release of the film has come much criticism of the film, particularly its depiction of President Johnson (LBJ) and his differences with King.

As Elizabeth Drew writes in the *New York Review of Books* (Jan. 8): "The film suggests that there was a struggle between King and Johnson over whether such a bill should be pushed following the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, signed into law in July of that year." She says this is "pure fiction."

Amy Davidson, writing in the *New Yorker*, disagrees. She says the film "is fair to Johnson; the portrayal is multifaceted and respectful and fully cognizant of his essential commitment to civil rights."

Another recent film, *American Sniper*, is based on the life of Navy SEAL marksman Chris Kyle. The Clint Eastwood film depicts his life in "mythical proportions, avoiding more disturbing aspects of his life," according to Jake Coyle of the Associated Press. Meanwhile, the real Kyle boasted of killing looters after Hurricane Katrina.

To illustrate the pressure directors may face, Kyle's father reportedly told Eastwood before production started: "Disrespect my son and I'll unleash hell on you."

Another recent film, *The Imitation Game*, has also come under fire. Based on the life of Alan Turing, a British

mathematician, logician, cryptanalyst and pioneering computer scientist who led a team of cryptanalysts in breaking the Nazis' Enigma code during World War II. Christian Caryl in the *New York Review of Books* (Dec. 19, 2014) says the film "represents a bizarre departure from the historical record."

There was an outcry two years ago over Kathryn Bigelow's *Zero Dark Thirty* because it showed that intelligence gathered through torture helped lead to Osama bin Laden's capture. Senators Diane Feinstein and John McCain claimed the film was "perpetuating the myth that torture is effective" and told the film's makers they had "a social and moral obligation to get the facts right."

Bigelow responded, "We're not making documentaries."

Drew takes a different view. "No one is asking for a documentary," she writes. However, "Our history belongs to all of us, and major events shouldn't be the playthings of moviemakers to boost their box-office earnings."

Ava DuVernay, who directed *Selma*, says the concern is not box-office earnings but the director's artistic vision. "You can look at everything with a lens of scrutiny and miss the greater truth that the artists are trying to share," she said in an interview.

Even historians have to condense and simplify their telling of events. You just can't include everything and every nuance. And directors of dramatic films are interested in a dramatic story that fits their larger vision.

That doesn't excuse portraying falsehood. It hurts the film's credibility when such inaccuracies are part of it.

Maybe that's why eight of my top 10 films of 2014 don't claim to be based on a "true story." TM



Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

(Continued from page 5)

does an intellectually engaging, abstract discourse become disconnected from individual and collective experience, past and present? What happens when the head becomes disconnected from the heart?—*Phyllis Bixler, Bluffton, Ohio*

Krall also wrote about Yoder

Thanks to Rachel Waltner Goossen and Mennonite Church USA for documenting this history (January, page 26). It is important to note that Ruth Krall first documented and analyzed the church's silence and defense of John Howard Yoder and his sexual abuse in her insightful book *The Elephant in God's Living Room: Clergy Sexual Abuse and Institutional Clericalism* (<http://ruthkrall.com/downloadable-books/elephants-in-gods-living-room-volume-one/>), which provides an important analysis of sexual abuse in religious contexts.

Krall and other women who attempted to raise important issues of pacifism and theology with church leaders were silenced and vilified. Based on a false assumption that Krall's book is somehow a vendetta (a claim made by men who also deny the severity of Yoder's violent impact on women), few Mennonite theologians have even taken the time to read Krall's book or understand the broader field of study of sexual abuse in religious contexts. In all the many books on Yoder, few Mennonite men do the courtesy of citing Krall's or other Mennonite women's writings about Yoder. This raises the important question of the broader institutional setting that nurtured Yoder's disrespectful relations with women.

Some Mennonite theologians continue to punish and exclude women who speak out on issues of sexual violence and sexism and patriarchy in the church. While a handful of Mennonite men have stepped forward to support our voices, far more are silent or complicit in the abuse. Mennonite theologians have emailed me, accusing me of taking their time away from the impor-

tant work of pacifism's resistance to war by highlighting sexual abuse in the church. They chastise me for not forgiving Yoder, as if pacifism required silence on issues of sexual injustice. Some accuse me of attempting to attack Yoder's legacy. Those of us working to prevent sexual violence are not attempting to *de-Yoderize* peace theology by taking Yoder's contributions away. The goal is to *deodorize* peace theology, for the sickening wounds of silence and denial of Yoder and the broader patterns of sexual abuse in the church require the light and oxygen of public acknowledgement and lament to heal. Forgiving Yoder is important. But forgiveness does not require silence on issues of sexual violence in the church.

Because of my pacifism, not in spite of it, I feel compelled to keep the focus on the broader issues, a pattern of disrespect and abuse of power. Mennonite Church USA continues to highlight the voices of men at the expense of women, to silence those of us who want a pacifism with interpersonal integrity and to be blind to the dynamics of power and its abuses in heterosexual relationships by instead focusing on consensual homosexual relationships. —*Lisa Schirch, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Why expose Yoder?

I am unsure why *The Mennonite* and others have continued to crucify John Howard Yoder (January). Although the data is apparently overwhelming that the man inflicted pain in the lives of many women, the reasons for exposing this part of his life are nebulous and, moreover, downright unchristian. Of course, we must have sympathy for those who have been scarred by his behavior, and perhaps rehashing the details helps bring some closure to the unimaginable pain. However, if we overlook the teaching and training he gave to many students of the Bible, we take away from the positive part of his life. My father was one of his students, and he marveled at his knowledge and incite into the Scriptures.

We are missing one of the main les-

sons of the Jesus I have come to understand. There is something we call grace that has been given to all of us, no matter how we conduct ourselves on earth. This does not mean we are given free rein to overpower, mistreat or abuse anyone. It does imply that we all are sinners. Maybe those who are leaders in our church should be held to a higher standard. However, if we truly understand that forgiveness is what Jesus taught us all to practice, it is not Christlike to continue this defamation. Although it seems improbable and even illogical, perhaps forgiveness is in order. Within hours after the heinous murder of five Amish school girls in Pennsylvania in 2006, members of the Amish community went to the murderer's mother to tell her they loved her. Forgiveness was present even before the full effect of the unbelievable pain was felt.

There are reports of misconduct of George Blaurock, David Zwingli and Conrad Grebel, but it is not necessary or wise to uncover any such behavior. Yoder was a sinner. So am I. Father, forgive us, for we know not what we do. —*Mark Krehbiel, Salina, Kan.*

Two glimpses of truth

Here are two glimpses of the truth concerning heterosexuality and homosexuality. The conservatives have this glimpse: The body of a man and the body of a woman are designed for each other. God has created the complementarity of maleness and femaleness. I invite all of us in Mennonite Church USA to acknowledge this piece of truth.

The liberals also have a glimpse. Some people are born gay. They do *not* choose this orientation. Most people are born heterosexual. And they do *not* choose this orientation. I invite all of us in Mennonite Church USA to acknowledge this piece of truth. Together let us embrace *all* God's truth about heterosexuality and homosexuality.—*Brent A. Koehn, Elkhart, Ind.*

A dream for following Jesus

God calls us to follow Jesus Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow us communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.—Vision: Healing and Hope statement for Mennonite Church USA

I'm a Mennonite Christian today because I am drawn so deeply to the Anabaptist emphasis on discipleship, or following Jesus in daily life. I resonate with the early Anabaptist who said, "No one can truly know Christ who does not follow him in daily life, and no one can truly follow him who does not know him."

I also identify with the Anabaptist conviction that Jesus is the center of our faith, that community is the center of our lives and that reconciliation is the center of our work. Further, I heartily affirm the high priority we place on Christian formation.

Nevertheless, I dream of a day when we follow Jesus in a more complete way across Mennonite Church USA. Here's the heart of my dream: that we develop a range of Christian practices that more fully embrace Jesus in the four primary ways he is revealed to us in Scripture. They are named on the Renovaré Covenant card I have carried in my wallet for many years: "In utter dependence upon Jesus Christ as my everlasting Savior, Teacher, Lord and Friend, I will ..."

As Anabaptists, we are not content with a statement of beliefs. Like many other sincere Christians through the centuries, we have sought to put our faith into practice. Over time, our practices have grown into traditions that both reveal and conceal the four aspects of Jesus' life and character. As individuals and congregations, we can become so accustomed to our particular practice of following Jesus that we may look down on Christians who follow Jesus in a different way. In my travels across Mennonite Church USA, I have observed that different streams of spirituality inform the way we follow Jesus. While each of these is inspirational in its own way, it tells only part of the Jesus story.

Richard Foster, the founder of Renovaré, speaks of six different spiritual streams or traditions that inform Christians who seek to follow Jesus. Each of them sprung from a particular emphasis in the

Gospels or the book of Acts. Each of them seeks to follow Jesus as Savior, Teacher, Lord or Friend. Following are the six traditions as Foster views them:

- Contemplative—spending time with God in prayer and meditation;
- Holiness—having pure thoughts, words and actions, and overcoming temptation;
- Charismatic—welcoming the Holy Spirit while nurturing and exercising my spiritual gifts;
- Social justice—helping others less fortunate than I;
- Evangelical—sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ and reading the Scriptures;
- Incarnational—unifying the sacred and the secular areas of my life while showing forth God's presence.

The time has come for us to more explicitly embrace these six streams as means of growth in Christian discipleship. Mennonite Church USA can be an ideal place for us to grow in our understanding of Jesus, if we are willing to learn about these streams from each other.

While some of these streams may seem more "Mennonite" or "Anabaptist" than the others, our church will be stronger and more faithful if we foster these complementary ways of following Jesus in keeping with the Scriptures. Each of them is consistent with our Anabaptist emphasis on following Jesus in daily life. That's one reason we stay in fellowship with Anabaptist Christians in other denominations, as well as the broader Christian movement, such as Christian Churches Together.

Over the next months, I intend to use this monthly column to explore the practical implications of my dream for our denomination, particularly as expressed in the six streams Foster named. Let's learn from each other to follow Jesus in all his fullness. **TM**



Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

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Discipleship and implicit bias



Gordon Houser

While it is good to work at changing overt, conscious racism, we also need to address implicit bias, which is more hidden.

Jesus calls us to be his disciples, or learners. Mennonite Church USA has committed itself to become an antiracist church. How do we, as Jesus' disciples and members of Mennonite Church USA, learn to become antiracist?

Racism, we've learned, is a systemic reality, one of the "powers" the Bible mentions that we are to struggle against (Ephesians 6:12).

Part of being a disciple of Jesus is being involved in that struggle. And part of that struggle is acknowledging our bias.

Ask just about anyone if they're a racist, and they'll say no. We try not to have an explicit bias. We confess, with Scripture, that all humans are created in God's image (Genesis 1:27).

But, as humans, we all have an implicit bias; we just may not realize it.

Chris Mooney, in his article "Are You Racist?" (*Mother Jones*, January/February), writes about research being done that shows "the bigot inside your brain."

Mooney talked with David Amodio of New York University and sat for an Implicit Association Test (IAT), which Mooney calls "extremely simple and pretty traumatic."

The IAT asks people to rapidly categorize images of faces as either "African American" or "European American" while also categorizing words (such as "evil," "happy," "awful" and "peace") as either good or bad.

Mooney learned that "racially biased messages from the culture around you have shaped the very wiring of your brain."

As humans we constantly categorize. The problem occurs when we essentialize human attributes (gender, age, sexual orientation, race). "This means," writes Mooney, "that when you think of people in that category, you rapidly or even automatically come up with assumptions about their characteristics, [ones] your brain perceives as unchanging and often rooted in biology."

According to research at Tel Aviv University, "Essentialism appears to exert its negative effects on creativity not through *what* people think but *how* they think," writes Mooney.

The point is, while it is good to work at changing overt, conscious racism, we also need to address implicit bias, which is more hidden.

How do we do this? Studies show that at least for a relatively short time, "there are cognitive ways to make people less prejudiced." You can trick your brain, says one researcher. "By deliberately thinking a thought that is directly counter to widespread stereotypes, you can break normal patterns of association," he says.

This isn't the same as cultural bias, but both need to be addressed. "A good start," writes Mooney, "may simply be making people aware of just how unconsciously biased they can be."

As disciples we can work at changing the cultural biases while also working on our own implicit bias. Bias rears its head in many ways, and as a result, when conflicts occur in the church, we may tend to categorize people and essentialize their characteristics.

Last fall, our pastor preached on Daniel 2. In that chapter, King Nebuchadnezzar is going to have Daniel and "the wise men of Babylon" killed because they cannot interpret his dream. But Daniel tells the king's executioner that he will interpret the dream. "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon," he says.

That seems a good example of Jesus' teaching to love one's enemies (Matthew 5:44). And can we not, then, love our brothers and sisters in the church and believe the best about them (see 1 Corinthians 13:7) instead of assuming the worst about the people we disagree with?

As disciples we can learn to acknowledge our implicit bias and seek to change it. At the same time, we can work together at struggling against the powers that seek to divide us.—*gh*