

The Mennonite

The art of quilting

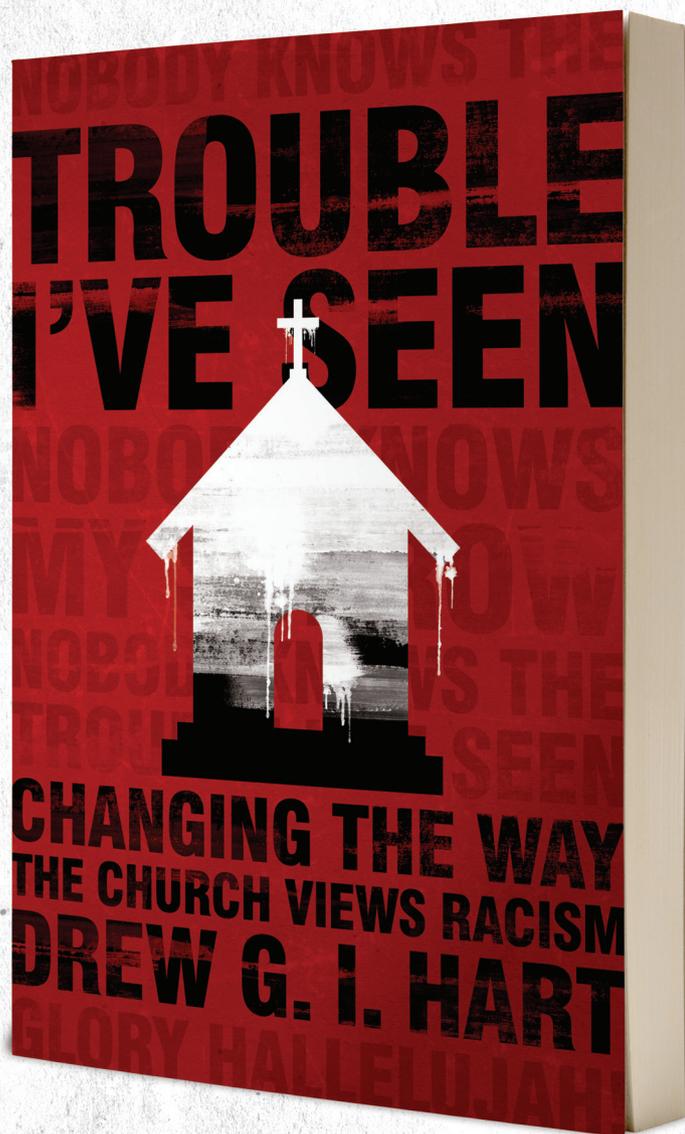
Dave and Shirley Shenk work to keep it alive

January 2016

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- INSIDE:
- The value in mourning
 - A peace-seeking education
 - Jesus was a Jew
 - Film shines light on sexual abuse
 - Don't be afraid to learn

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DREW G. I. HART

is a blogger, theologian, pastor, and activist. His blog, *Taking Jesus Seriously*, is hosted by the *Christian Century*, and he speaks regularly at churches, universities, and seminaries.

 **Herald Press**
A Fresh Approach



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ON THE COVER: Photo by Tyler Klassen

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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*

Let's eat together

"Let's Eat Together" (Editorial, November) is a good reminder to "invite others to our table and offer the good news of Jesus, who welcomes them through us." Inviting "people unlike us" and "those others look down on" has been a joy and great blessing. We relish the memories of guests from other countries, races and cultures. We recently were introduced to the Egyptian culture when Youssef stayed with us for several weeks.

After 50-plus years living in the Washington suburban area, we moved to a more rural location. We were looking for a house that is hospitality and handicap friendly. After finding a property on a private gravel road over a mile long, we had such a house built. There were six other houses along this back-in-the-woods road. Rural country folks there were a bit skeptical about getting a Mennonite neighbor. One of the first events after moving there was to invite everyone on the road to our "table." Only one person did not attend. I explained how we believe God led us to this place, and then we enjoyed a good meal together. The neighbors were somewhat awestruck to find themselves together and learning to know each other. Now the neighbors anticipate this annual event.

The real joy is to have one of the neighbors attend our church. Now he and his wife attend regularly.

At our last small group Bible study around our table he told us, "I've

changed," meaning his walk with God since attending church. He was right, he did change. And other neighbors had already commented about his change. We have enjoyed being Anabaptists in this hillbilly-like community, and they have enjoyed being at our table. As Gordon wrote, "Let's invite others to our table and offer the good news of Jesus, who welcomes them through us." Thanks for the reminder.—*Simon Schrock, Catlett, Va.*

Mennonites pay for Empire's wars

Currently 54 percent of our federal income taxes go to war, according to the National Priorities Project. Someone has estimated that for every \$5 Mennonites pay to charity, they contribute \$9 to the military. What do we Mennonites get for these taxes?

Since World War II, we helped pay for 201 armed conflicts started by the United States, 81 percent of the total of 248 wars in our world since 1945. These conflicts killed some 30 million people, 90 percent of them innocent civilians—children, the elderly and ordinary working men and women—many more than Hitler killed.

With that we also helped pay for the ravages of war: rape, torture, hunger, homelessness, repeated "shock and awe," PTSD and a whole gamut of Satanic mayhem, all based on lies. Meanwhile, our own dispossessed people in the United States are neglected. Thus our war-tax dollars are a double whammy, raping the world while impoverishing our own citizens.

What might happen if Mennonite Church USA took meaningful action to stop committing these sins with our tax dollars?—*Daniel Riehl, Lititz, Pa.*

Simple as that

This is my response to the resolution of Mennonite Church USA delegates in Kansas City, Mo., last summer that denies acceptance of and full participation of our LGBTQ brothers and sisters in the church.

The more we simplify something the clearer it is. When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, he responded, "to love the Lord your

God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.” And the second was to love your neighbor as yourself. That’s it. Simple as that.

It seems the more complicated we become with our answers the more divisive we become.

When an issue (theory) becomes a face (reality), it makes all the difference in the world.—*Rhoda Stoesz, Goshen, Ind.*

Thanks for funds to Dove’s Nest

Dove’s Nest staff and board want to extend their gratitude to Ervin Stutzman and the Discernment Group on Sexual Abuse in the Church, as Dove’s Nest was one of three organizations that received a portion of the Care and Prevention Fund (after funds had been disbursed to victims of sexual abuse). We are honored and humbled by the generosity of those in the church who want to not only support victims but also work at prevention.

We at Dove’s Nest are also thankful for the new resolution from Mennonite Church USA: Churchwide Statement on Sexual Abuse. We are delighted to see the church put forth these goals for abuse prevention. However, as Stutzman mentioned, the statement alone is not enough in preventing abuse, as time and resources are also required.

Growing out of this resolution is a panel on sexual abuse prevention, which we look forward to serving on and collaborating with.

Dove’s Nest’s mission is to empower and equip faith communities to keep children and youth safe in their homes, churches and communities.—*Jeanette Harder, Omaha, Neb., board president of Dove’s Nest*

Antiwar and proveteran

In response to Scott Smith’s letter “‘Valiantly’ or ‘Sinfully?’” (December), I, too, like Scott, am a military veteran. Scott questions my admiration for the “valor” of military personnel in combat.

I am a Mennonite pacifist, but I refuse to disparage our veterans. I do not deny any nation the right to use military force to protect their borders or citizens. Smith implies that the actions of our soldiers were sinful. I am reminded of the story of King David and his role in the death of Bathsheba’s husband, Uriah. David ordered Joab, his military commander, to put Uriah on the front lines of battle against the Ammonites and withdraw from him. Clearly, David was responsible for the sin of Uriah’s death, not Joab, his military commander, or the Ammonite archer whose arrow struck and killed Uriah. In the same way, I prefer to lay

responsibility for military action on politicians who send troops into battle. It is not the soldiers, on either side, but those who command the troops who bear the responsibility of the orders they issue.

Even as Jesus was teaching his disciples to love their enemies, he healed the centurion’s servant (Matthew 8:5-13) without condemning this military commander who had charge over 100 Roman troops. Likewise, Cornelius, another centurion, is described as an “upright and God-fearing man” (Acts 10:22). As a Mennonite and a veteran, my position is “antiwar and proveteran,” which I believe is consistent with the biblical record and a Mennonite understanding of “two kingdoms” in which war is waged outside the “perfection of Christ.”—*Steve Carpenter, Harrisonburg, Va.*

War is a crime against humanity

Shootings in our communities are not senseless violence but the predictable results of a violence-preoccupied society. When will our militarized world acknowledge that carpet bombing until the sand glows and through-the-roof domestic gun sales are just the opposite of what’s needed to bring peace on earth?

(Continued on page 54)

IN THIS ISSUE

We begin a new year with the story of a couple who seek to keep the art of quilting and the art of giving alive (page 12). Dave and Shirley Shenk have run their quilt business in unique ways that both help their customers and encourage giving to those in need.

We include two articles that highlight the work of Mennonite Education Agency and the schools it oversees (pages 16-23). Kelli Yoder writes about Mennonite schools’ commitment to peace-seeking and service-giving education.

Sara Wenger Shenk, president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical

Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., presents a call for schools to follow a biblical vision of love and justice and guide students in professional development (page 24).

We may all agree that Jesus was a Jew (page 27), but James Hamrick reminds us how easily the church exhibits anti-Jewish tendencies.

Our columnists often write about up-to-date issues. John Roth (page 9) asks, How do we respond to terrorism?

Martin Navarro (page 31) reflects on the killing of Laquan McDonald and his own experience growing up in a similar neighborhood in Chicago and facing some of the same injustices as a person of color.

In our news section, we report about Mennonite colleges updating their nondiscrimination policies (page 32) and Iglesia Menonita Hispana considering its future with Mennonite Church USA (page 33). We also look back at the top stories from 2015 (pages 36-38).

Darrin W. Snyder Belousek analyzes the biblical views on marriage (page 44) and calls for discernment.

Aaron Kauffman (page 52) looks at the struggle to believe in God.

My editorial (page 56) calls us to be willing to learn and thus to change, no matter what our age.

We pray your year will be one of growth in drawing closer to God and to your community.—*Editor*

CPT post goes viral

CHICAGO—The San Bernardino massacre on Dec. 2, carried out by Tashfeen Malik and Syed Rizwan Farook, exposed U.S. Muslims to another round of Islamophobic violence and vitriol on social media. Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) decided to take a proactive stance the next morning by publishing the following paragraphs on Facebook:

Dear Muslim friends, family and colleagues in the U.S.:

Because of the still unfolding #San-Bernardino mass shooting, we know this week may be difficult for you. People may make connections between your faith and culture that they did not make when Robert Dear, Christopher Sean Harper-Mercer, Dylan Roof, Adam Lanza or many other white mass shooters gunned down innocent civilians.

We want you to know we will commit ourselves this week to challenging those who make racist, ignorant generalizations about Islam and violence. We commit ourselves to drawing connections between whiteness and violence. Because God has no place in this beautiful creation for the evils of racism.

We invite our Facebook followers to leave encouraging comments for our Muslim brothers and sisters.

By Dec. 5, the post had reached more than 280,000 people, been liked by 3,400 people and shared by 1,900 people. Far more of the 500 responses were from Muslims expressing gratitude for the sentiments expressed in the post and for the supportive comments.—CPT

Trinity Mennonite Church pastor dies in accident

NEWTON, Kan.—On Oct. 19, 2015, Hal Shrader, lead pastor of Trinity Mennonite Church in Glendale, Ariz., died in a motorcycle accident outside of Blanding, Utah. Shrader was on a motorcycle trip with his father, JB. His father was not injured.

Shrader spoke to adults at the Mennonite Church USA convention in Kansas City, Mo., last summer, focusing on



Lighting of the Green at Bethel College
Tim Regier (left) and Javen Zellner of Newton, Kan., take part in the Lighting of the Green on Dec. 6 at Bethel College in North Newton, Kan.—Bethel College

the resurrection story in Luke 24.

In a statement to members on Oct. 20, Trinity Mennonite Church said,



“We know Hal anticipated this motorcycle trip with his dad with great joy. We are all very sad and will be so for a long time. But we know Hal loved Jesus with all his heart and he is now on a

greater trip with his Heavenly Father—with great joy.”

Shrader was first drawn to the Anabaptist way of following Jesus when in college he first considered the concept, “What if Jesus was really serious about what he said in the Sermon on the Mount?” He held a Master’s degree in religion from Pepperdine University (Malibu, Calif.), and taught as an adjunct professor at Hope International University’s School of Professional Studies (Fullerton, Calif.). Before moving to Arizona, he served with his wife Chrisie, and two daughters, Mollie and Madison, in Chile for three years. Prior to that he was a student ministries pastor in Ventura County, Calif., for 10 years.—The Mennonite

SNAP-Menno joins international research study

The Anabaptist-Mennonite chapter of the Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests, SNAP-Menno, is partnering with the Stress Research Section of the World Psychiatric Association and the Center for Neuropsychiatric Research of Traumatic Stress at Charles University, Prague, in a groundbreaking research study.

Chris Kerns, a graduate student at Charles University and his research colleague and professor, Petr Bob, from the Czech Republic, are undertaking a detailed scientific survey to help explain the causes of delay in reporting and treatment strategies for victims of sexual abuse by church leaders.

Kerns and Bob approached Cameron Altaras and Barbra Graber of SNAP-Menno with an invitation to recruit a Mennonite cohort of participants for their research.

For the purposes of the survey for the Mennonite community, “church leader” is defined broadly and includes pastors, youth pastors, theologians, bishops, deacons, elders, church camp

counselors, church-affiliated health professionals, university professors, schoolteachers, guidance counselors, choir directors, coaches, music teachers and others from inside or outside the victim's own family.

Altaras and Graber are inviting any Mennonite survivors of abuse by church leaders to participate in the study, which involves filling out a survey with questions about the impact of church leader abuse on the victim's life. The survey does not ask for names or details of the abuse experience itself.

For more information or to participate with full confidentiality, send your mailing address to Mennonite@snapnetwork.org.—*SNAP-Menno*

Young engineers use skills to help others

Sam Rhoads and Ethan Gingerich are watching Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) volunteers build a driveway bridge, also called a personal access bridge, across a West Virginia creek that frequently floods.

As the steel beams and wood decking are put in place, the young engineers are seeing their design come

to life, enabling a couple in their 80s to come and go from their home, even when the creek is high.

Both engineers are in their 20s and work for JZ Engineering, a structural engineering and sustainability consulting firm in Harrisonburg, Va. The company, owned by Johann Zimmermann, specializes in the engineering of pedestrian bridges, solar arrays, residential and light commercial structures, and nonprofit projects.

Rhoads, says he and Gingerich are proud to have been involved in the West Virginia bridge project when it was simply the beginning of an idea. "We helped design and draw the plans," he says.—*MDS*

Chester Wenger honored by EMBRACE of Lancaster

LANCASTER, Pa.—EMBRACE of Lancaster honored Chester Wenger Sept. 19, 2015, with a Legacy Award for his faithful service and witness to the Christian inclusion of all people.

EMBRACE is an interfaith group promoting dialogue and assisting individuals, faith communities and organizations in their growth to affirm and welcome lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA) people.

Wenger's open letter to Mennonite Church USA, written after he performed a same-sex wedding ceremony for his son, went viral and was viewed over 240,000 times on The Mennonite, Inc.'s website and led to national coverage. Wenger's pastoral credentials were revoked after performing the ceremony.—*EMBRACE*

Lilly Endowment awards Goshen College \$600,000

GOSHEN, Ind.—Goshen College has received a grant of \$600,000 to help establish the Study-Service Theology Term, a program for diverse high school students with intensive study on campus and in Latin America and service in the community. It is part of Lilly Endowment Inc.'s High School Youth Theology Institutes initiative, which

seeks to encourage young people to explore their religious beliefs and their concerns about contemporary challenges by studying theology and examining how faith calls them to lives of service.

Goshen's program, which begins in 2017 and continues through 2019, will involve taking 20 high school students each summer to study theology and vocation in Guatemala or another Latin American country. Each two-week study tour will begin with a four- to five-day orientation and conclude with a day or two of reorientation on campus. Incoming high school juniors and seniors will be drawn primarily from the Latino and African-American communities through a competitive application process, and will represent diverse faith traditions.—*Goshen College*

Churches call for freedom of religion

WINNIPEG, Manitoba—Representatives of every stream of global Christianity met in Tirana, Albania, Nov. 1-5, 2015, for a consultation on Discrimination, Persecution, Martyrdom: Following Christ Together, convened by the Global Christian Forum.

These 145 Christian leaders recognized the continued persecution of Christians, repented of the times Christians have persecuted those of other faiths and called on governments and churches globally "to respect and protect the freedom of religion" as a fundamental human right.

César García, Mennonite World Conference general secretary, Amela Puljek-Shank, Mennonite Central Committee director for Europe and Middle East and a church leader from Eritrea represented MWC.

The consultation produced a document in which the leaders committed to "listen more, ... pray more, ... speak up more, ... and do more in mutual understanding to find effective ways of solidarity and support."

The document also calls churches, persecutors, governments, media and people of goodwill to act in respect and justice toward all people.—*MWC*

Londen Wheeler



Future pediatric nurse

Taylor Mortensen, a sophomore at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., has been inspired to pursue a career in pediatric nursing because of her experiences with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis.—*EMU*

The value in mourning



Cyneatha Millsaps is pastor of Community Mennonite Church in Markham, Ill.

It's official. Until this year, I had never been in mourning, at least not from the death of someone whose life and death changed my life. Sure, I have lost a lot of people in my life, but I realize sorrow and grief for loved ones vary depending on one's connections. As a pastor, I have sat and counseled many people through their loss of a loved one, and for the most part I thought I was handling it correctly. Maybe I was, but maybe I was missing something key to the mourning process. The value in mourning.

In the movie *This Is Where I Leave You*, Jane Fonda's husband dies, and when their adult children arrive home for the funeral, they realize they are being asked to participate in a Jewish custom (ritual) called Shivah. The children are confused because the family is not Jewish and really not religious, so why would their father request something of this nature. Well, the family consents to the father's dying wish, and for seven days, they engage in Shivah. Over the course of the week, they come to various revelations about themselves and their family as a unit. Emotional hurts, anger, resentments and profound love all come to the surface, and this family is forced to deal with their issues personally and collectively. The family mourns whether they want to or not.

Genesis 50:1-14 tells the story of Joseph's mourning for his father, Jacob, and the need to set aside other responsibilities and show respect for a loved one. Verse 10 reads: "When they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they held there a very great and sorrowful lamentation; and he observed a time of mourning for his father seven days."

Americans seem to have skipped the act of mourning during the loss of a loved one. We have assigned specific bereavement days such as three days for relatives and seven days for a close family member like a child or parent. We visit the bereaved after the funeral for a day, and we check in or call the bereaved over the next couple of weeks to see how they are doing. These are important steps after someone dies, but within short order

life goes back to normal at least for the rest of the world. Truth be told, the bereaved can't seem to find their footing, and we suffer in silence.

African-American women are probably the worst at mourning. We are so used to taking care of everything, we do not know how to stop and simply let life happen around us. I have been thinking about many African-American women, as well as myself, who have lost someone in recent years, and I am sure we have skipped mourning. It's not that we don't mourn, but we mourn in silence and don't give ourselves permission to stop and grieve. Our community says, "She is so strong," and we carry that weight of being strong like a millstone around our necks.

God never meant for us to grieve and mourn this way. When Mary wept, Jesus came alongside and simply wept with her. When Job lost everything, his friends came and sat with him. We have to learn and encourage true mourning. We have to remind one another that strength is not required for a time. I realize I could have used a Shivah. I wish it were a part of our culture. Shivah allows communities to be community and the bereaved the space needed to pause. Shivah

forces the uncomfortable and vulnerable realities we try to escape during loss, like trying to look as if you have everything together or not letting people see you cry.

Maybe the church should adopt Shivah. The act of humbling ourselves in such a way allows others to care for us. It helps us pause long enough to process the life and death of our loved one. It helps us tell stories and recount the good and bad times in our loved one's life. It helps us talk through the pain and suffering of an extended illness and the choices we made along the way. It helps us consider life without this person and what it is going to take to move forward. It helps us offer communal prayers daily during the mourning period. All these important and difficult things must be dealt with at some point. Shivah gives us a platform in which our community can help us through the mourning process. **TM**

Shivah forces the uncomfortable and vulnerable realities we try to escape during loss, like trying to look as if you have everything together or not letting people see you cry.

How do we respond to terrorism?

On the evening of Nov. 13, 2015, a series of violent attacks in Paris and the northern suburb of Saint-Denis killed 130 people and injured nearly 400. The attacks, the deadliest in France since World War II, prompted a renewed sense of outrage against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which claimed responsibility. But it also triggered a wave of fear and fierce reprisals. François Hollande, the French president, immediately declared a state of emergency, soon followed by dozens of police raids, new restrictions on civil rights, the cancellation of many public events, and a massive anti-ISIL bombing campaign that struck targets in Al-Raqqah and other cities in northern Syria.

In the United States, the attacks in Paris—played out against the backdrop of the contentious presidential primaries and a simmering national debate over the status of undocumented immigrants—sparked renewed debate among Mennonites about how we should respond to such events. Those who expressed their solidarity with the people of France on social media were quickly—and often sternly—reminded that U.S.-led drone attacks in Pakistan, Syria and Yemen have resulted in the deaths of hundreds of innocent people who have often gone unlamented. Some sought to frame ISIL's goal of establishing a caliphate within the historical context of the Crusades and the humiliating legacy of western imperialism; others insisted that Islam is a religion of peace. But many Mennonites, no doubt, were fully supportive of the renewed wave of anti-Muslim suspicions that has prompted 31 U.S. governors to oppose settling any Syrian refugees in their states, including orphaned children.

Attitudes within the broader global family of Anabaptist-Mennonite churches are equally varied. In some contexts, such as the GKMI church in Indonesia, Mennonites have been leaders in promoting interfaith dialogue and collaborative projects. Elsewhere, particularly in Nigeria and East Africa, relationships are more fraught.

As I have followed the news in recent weeks, talked with friends abroad and listened to the conversations on social media, I was reminded again of the powerful movie *Of Gods and Men* (*Des hommes et des dieux*), which recounts the true story of seven Trappist monks living in a monastery in Algeria who found themselves caught in the crossfire of violence between radical Islamist groups and the repressive Algerian army in the

early 1990s. In the face of threats, and then a bloody massacre, most Europeans fled the region. For the monks who had long worked among the villagers—bearing witness to Christ's love by sharing fully in their lives—finding an appropriate response to the political crisis became a central question. Should they, too, leave? Should they openly declare their allegiance with the Algerian army? Or should they simply continue in their long-established disciplines of prayer, offering compassionate aid to all who asked and seeking to promote understanding and reconciliation wherever possible?

Here we return to the ancient question, focused anew by the threat of terrorism and the desire for security, as to whether Christians are obliged to provide a political narrative for those in power—a narrative that will justify the righteousness of one side of a conflict and that, presumably, will “redeem” the inevitable violence that follows by blessing it with the sanctity of God's name. As history has shown, responses to this question are never simple, especially in the face of innocent suffering.

In the end, the monks of Notre-Dame de l'Atlas refused either to flee or to submit to the logic of redemptive violence. Instead they opted simply to continue living among the villagers, pursuing their practices of prayer and compassion. That decision sealed their earthly fate.

For Christians committed to the gospel of peace, *Of Gods and Men* is both inspiring and unsettling. It reminds us that Christian pacifism is never passive; nor does it come with any claims regarding short-term “effectiveness.” Clearly, there were moments when the monks, despite a lifetime of disciplined prayer, were deeply afraid. They had no desire for martyrdom. But once their decision to remain in the village became clear, fear simply lost its hold on their lives.

Amid the familiar Christmas scenes of the saintly Mary, adoring shepherds and angelic choirs, bathed in the glow of a gentle star, it is easy to forget that the Nativity story is really an account of refugees, living in the context of empire and terror that will soon force Mary and Joseph to flee with their newborn baby to a foreign country.

Yet the steady refrain of the Christmas narrative echoes still today: Do not be afraid. **T.M.**



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 Nativity story is really an account of refugees, living in the context of empire and terror that will soon force Mary and Joseph to flee with their newborn baby to a foreign country.

Taking polls with a grain of salt

Every day in the paper or online we read the results of some poll. Do we believe those results? If so, why? Polls, it turns out, are not very scientific at all, and are mostly unreliable. At least, that's what 74 percent of experts believe. (Just kidding.)

In her article "Politics and the New Machine" (*The New Yorker*, Nov. 16, 2015), Jill Lepore writes not only about the unreliability of political polls but what that means for democracy.

Political polls are ubiquitous. From the late 1990s to 2012, 1,200 polling organizations conducted nearly 37,000 polls by making more than 3 billion phone calls. The problem was—and is—most Americans refused to speak to them. And three-fourths of Americans, according to a 2013 poll, suspect polls of bias.

Lepore points out that "the modern public-opinion poll has been around since the Great Depression, when the response rate" was over 90 percent. Today, the typical response rate is in the single digits. Opinion polls often rely on phone calls, yet more than 40 percent of U.S. adults no longer have landlines, and a 1991 law bans autodialing cell phones.

Internet pollsters, on the other hand, must rely on people coming to them with their opinions. This also skews results, writes Lepore, because people "who complete online surveys are younger and lieter than people who don't, while people who have landlines, and who answer the phone, are older and more conservative than people who don't."

If it's so unreliable, why is polling so ubiquitous? Pollsters came to prominence, writes Lepore, "by claiming that measuring public opinion is good for democracy. But what if it's bad?"

Polls are wielding greater influence over American elections than ever, she writes. Last August, Fox News used polls to decide who could participate in the G.O.P. debate. This was 460 days before the general election.

If polls are so unscientific and wield such influence, can we not regulate them more—or at all? We have laws that govern who can run for office and who can vote. "But polls are largely free from government regulation or even scrutiny," Lepore writes. "(This is not true

in other countries; Canadian election law, for instance, regulates the disclosure of election polls.)"

So how does this hurt democracy? Lepore writes: "The United States has a representative government for many reasons, among them that it protects the rights of minorities against the tyranny of a majority." But if our elected officials rely solely on polls, the majority rules, even if the polls are inaccurate.

The pretense that polls reflect reality is used by politicians to determine not only how they vote but to drive opinion.

Last August, before the first G.O.P. presidential debate, Trump claimed he had no pollster on his staff. By September, he was using polls to say "people like the way I talk."

Lepore calls Trump a sign of the times. She writes: "Turning the press into pollsters has made American political culture Trumpian: frantic, volatile, shortsighted, sales-driven, and anti-democratic."

People's mistrust of polls has also had a negative effect on more reliable polling from academia and the press. People's response rate to these more legitimate polls are low.

It helps to know how the poll was conducted. As E. B. White wrote after the 1948 election, when Truman's win over Dewey went against every poll result, "Although you can take a nation's pulse, you can't be sure that the nation hasn't just run up a flight of stairs."

Rather than rely on political opinion polls, perhaps we should actually think about the issues and the candidates.—Gordon Houser

LOAVES AND FISHSTICKS

BY STEVE EDWARDS



“The Jesus I worship did not carry a gun. He carried a cross. Jesus did not tell us to kill our enemies. He told us to love them.—Shane Claiborne in response to Jerry Falwell Jr., president of Liberty University, encouraging students to obtain open-carry permits”

Making a killing

Martin Shkreli, CEO of Turing Pharmaceuticals, earned the disdain of many when he hiked the price of a drug used to treat a life-threatening parasite from \$13.50 a tablet to \$750—an increase of 5,500 percent. Legally, pharmaceuticals can charge any price they like in the United States, where clients pay on average double the amount for drugs compared with other developed countries. Pharmaceutical companies claim that developing new drugs is

Police misconduct

The 10 U.S. cities with the largest police departments paid out nearly \$249 million last year in settlements and judgments in police misconduct cases, up 48 percent from 2010.
—*The Wall Street Journal*

expensive. However, nine of the 10 top drug makers spend more money on marketing their drugs than developing new ones. Big Pharma has an unusually high markup for its products. —*Christian Century*

Womb for improvement

Many studies show the importance of a pregnant woman’s well-being for the health of the baby even decades later. This should be taken into account when evaluating public programs. The economic benefits of building a road, for example, should take into account the impact of pollution on prenatal health. “Likewise, the long-term damage to children caused by stress during pregnancy is an extra argument for offering paid maternity leave and for tackling domestic violence, which often starts or worsens during pregnancy.”

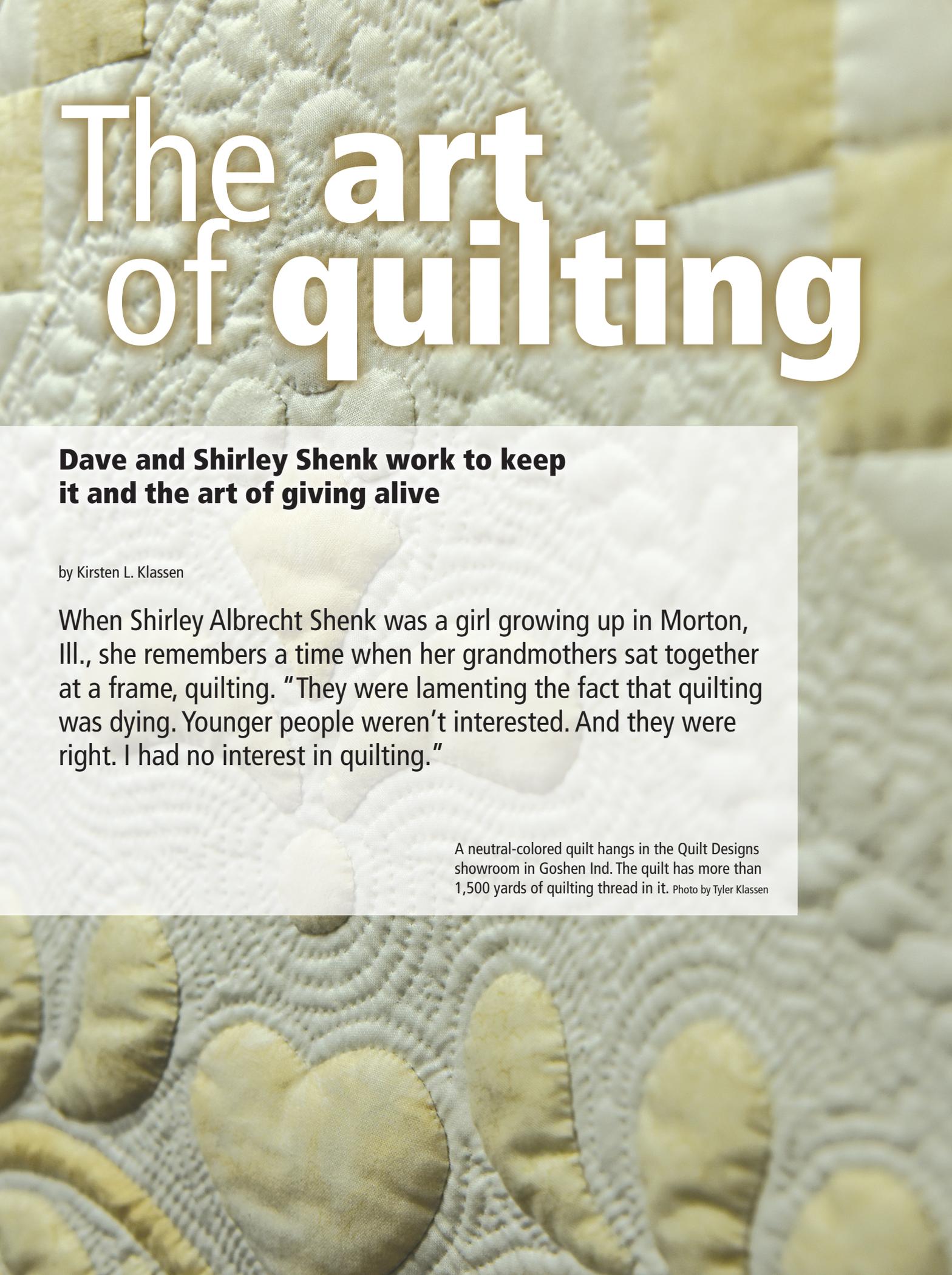
Other lessons: “Governments need to rethink their efforts to promote equality of opportunity.” Since disadvantage is entrenched early in life, “health workers who visit teenage mothers ... ought to start as soon as pregnancy is confirmed.” The article concludes: “Attempts to improve fetal health could realize big gains without breaking the bank. To give more children the best chance in life, pay more attention to what happens to them in the womb.”—*The Economist*

The power of the wealthy

A recent study conducted by researchers at Princeton and Northwestern universities compared the public’s influence on nearly 1,800 public policy issues between 1981 and 2002 and found that when 80 percent of the public asked for change of some sort, they got it only 43 percent of the time. A few elites and interest groups representing businesses are setting the direction of the country, according to the study. The authors call for campaign reforms that limit the amount of money the wealthy can contribute and a lessening of the inequality between the super rich and the rest of the population.—*The Christian Century*

Numbers to ponder

- Portion of physicians entering U.S. medical internships who suffer from depression: **1/30**
- Portion who suffer from depression at some point during their internship: **1/2**
- Percentage of U.S. boys aged 15-19 who were sexually active in 1988: **60**
- Who are today: **47**
- Percentage of U.S. mothers who have stopped working or switched to less challenging jobs in order to care for children: **62**
- Of U.S. fathers: **36**
- Portion of U.S. households with children in which a woman is the primary earner: **2/5**
- Percentage of U.S. adults with disabilities who lived in poverty when the Americans with Disabilities Act became law: **27**
- Who do today: **32**
- Amount the average worker without a bank account will pay in unnecessary fees over a lifetime: **\$40,000**
- Percentage of married U.S. women who live in poverty: **7**
- Of unmarried U.S. women who do: **23**
- Chance a breakup of an unmarried heterosexual U.S. couple is initiated by the woman: **1 in 2**
- Chances a breakup of a married heterosexual U.S. couple is: **2 in 3**
- Estimated number of deaths each day in China attributable to air pollution: **4,400**
- Tons of food destroyed by Russian authorities on Aug. 6, 2015, for violating a ban on European imports: **319**
- Rate of inflation of Russian food prices in the past year: **18**
- Amount that Carly Fiorina’s tenure as CEO of Hewlett-Packard cost the company’s shareholders: **\$55,200,000,000**—*Harper’s*



The art of quilting

Dave and Shirley Shenk work to keep it and the art of giving alive

by Kirsten L. Klassen

When Shirley Albrecht Shenk was a girl growing up in Morton, Ill., she remembers a time when her grandmothers sat together at a frame, quilting. "They were lamenting the fact that quilting was dying. Younger people weren't interested. And they were right. I had no interest in quilting."

A neutral-colored quilt hangs in the Quilt Designs showroom in Goshen Ind. The quilt has more than 1,500 yards of quilting thread in it. Photo by Tyler Klassen

She didn't know then that quilt making would become her life's work.

Shirley attended Goshen (Ind.) College, where she met her husband, Dave, who was from Souderton, Pa. The two majored in education, graduating in 1971. From there they moved to Chicago, where Shirley was an elementary school teacher for two years. Dave, who wasn't quite ready for the classroom, worked as a bus and taxi driver.

Expecting their first child, they moved to Elkhart, Ind. "In 1976, I made my first quilt," Shirley says. "I was married, had a 2-year-old and was making a quilt for our bed. When I was out of the room, our son decided to help—with scissors. You can imagine how that went."

In 1981, while planning a family vacation to the West Coast, Shirley had the idea of pulling a trailer with antique furniture to sell, since the price of gas had just tripled. She knew the prices of antiques there were higher than in Indiana. "It was quite an adventure," Dave says, "but we sold everything and paid for our trip."

The next year, the Shenks repeated the strategy on a six-week trip to Texas. This time they included quilts in their inventory. The quilts were a hit, and people placed orders for more.

Shirley began organizing quilts in their basement. Local Amish and Mennonite women did the construction. She started with the traditional Lone Star and Double Wedding Ring patterns but soon tired of them and began designing her own quilts. Quilt Designs was born and later moved into an 1837 two-story log cabin at the Old Bag Factory in Goshen.

By this time, Dave was working at Oaklawn Mental Health Center as director of the Adolescent Day Treatment Program. He didn't quit his job for six years after the business began.

"We tend to make vocational and business decisions much like an inchworm that keeps its hind end firmly attached while reaching out to be sure there's something secure ahead to hold its weight," Dave says.

The Shenks have worked together full time since 1986. "To make it work, we needed to divide responsibilities. I do the designs and the color coordination," Shirley says. "Dave handles marketing, sales and business responsibilities."

Although the couple does not have a business background, they did what made sense to them. One of the practices that made sense is something they call 'selfish generosity.' Simply put, they allow people to buy on a payment plan, and they don't charge interest.

"We always tell our customers that if unforeseen expenses arise, simply skip your monthly

payment. Groceries, rent and electricity are much more important than a quilt," says Dave. This policy created loyalty, and many families ordered additional quilts, also with payment plans. The practice benefited both parties.

The day I spoke to the Shenks, a neutral quilt with more than 1,500 yards of hand-quilting hung in the shop. "Late in 2010, a woman was visiting from Hawaii. She saw this quilt and loved it. She felt it was the most beautiful she had ever seen," Dave said.

When the woman asked if the shop did lay-away, Dave suggested paying \$600 a month so she would have it paid off in seven months. She said, "Oh, I can't possibly do that. I could only pay \$100 a month."

They allow people to buy on a payment plan, and they don't charge interest.

Dave agreed to her terms. Because the Shenks intermittently displayed the quilt, they took several additional orders.

Although the woman had to miss a few payments along the way, she recently made the final payment of \$12.50 for the quilt she loves. The Shenks were ready to ship the quilt to her, but the woman asked them to wait until after the hurricane season. She doesn't want to take the chance that something will happen to her quilt.

Other clients who have fallen in love with



Shirley Shenk works in her design studio in Goshen, Ind. Photo by Tyler Klassen



Dave Shenk (right) shows a wall hanging to Mike Scobey in the Quilt Designs showroom in Goshen, Ind. Photo by Tyler Klassen

Shirley's quilts have shared different struggles with making a purchase. One woman who wanted to buy a \$2,000 quilt told Dave, "I can certainly afford it. I just have a problem with spending that much money on myself when there are so many needs in the world."

Dave had an idea. "I asked her to think of the charity she was most passionate about, and I would think of mine. I said we would write a check for \$500 to her charity and another check for \$500 to ours. Her face just lit up. She bought the quilt immediately." Quilt Designs' checks went to Mennonite Central Committee and a charity dedicated to helping Native Americans.

There are jobs that are visible and jobs that are invisible. We tend to be the invisible. That's where our gifts lie.—Shirley Albrecht Shenk

"We did this a few more times over the years," he said. "We didn't make any money on these sales, but that wasn't the point."

Another customer is a man who has been collecting Manzanita and Buckeye burls (large

wooden discs or vases sanded to perfection but with natural imperfections from the way the wood has grown). He always pays for his quilts on lay-away, paying small amounts each month. When he paid the final \$45 on three burls, Dave said, "You have a wonderful collection."

"I love my burls. They're in all different rooms of my house," the man said. Then he became teary yet smiled. "With all the national and international disasters recently and with all the local needs, I think I should donate one of my pieces to help out in a small way," he said.

Dave asked him if he had a cause. "He wasn't sure, so I mentioned our church had just delivered an entire vanload of diapers to Church Community Services in Elkhart and viewed this as a strong organization. He liked the idea."

To ensure the charity received full market value for the burl, Dave offered to sell the burl for him at the shop. The man went home and returned two hours later with his prize piece, a \$400 burl. "It's my favorite," he said. When the piece sold, Dave sent the check and a note to the charity, explaining the origin of the gift.

Dave and Shirley are deliberate about their charitable giving. "When you're in business, you get requests for charitable contributions all the time," he said. They like Mennonite Central Committee because a high percentage of dollars donated go to the intended recipients.

When the Shenk's congregation, Belmont Mennonite Church in Elkhart, embarked on a building project a few years ago, Dave struggled. He went to Pastor Duane Beck and asked, "Is this the best use of our charitable gifts when there are so many valid needs? How do you know where is the greatest need? How do you know what is most important?"

The pastor felt strongly about keeping Belmont in the community and that the building project would help achieve that. But he told Dave, "I wouldn't say this is the best cause, but if we don't get involved in some cause, nothing much happens. When a person gets excited about a specific cause, a lot of good things can happen."

Belmont had also invited their members to sign up to help with drywalling, painting and shingling the roof. "Those aren't our gifts," Shirley said. "There are jobs that are visible and jobs that are invisible. We tend to be the invisible. That's where our gifts lie."

The Shenks also tried to teach their sons, Jon and Jeff, about charitable giving and being responsible with money. While the boys were still in high school, Dave and Shirley offered to pay for the first two years of their college and provide

the last two years as a loan. But instead of paying back their parents, the boys were encouraged to pay it forward.

“We wanted them, if they could, to give it to others who needed it more than we did,” Dave said. “That would be the repayment, and we would not check back with them regarding the outcome.”

When Jeff was in his third year at Goshen College, he went to Costa Rica to study for a semester. While there, he called home. Dave answered the phone and was worried, wondering if everything was OK. “What do all college students want? ... I need money,” Jeff said.

Then he went on. “I want you to take half the money out of my savings account, which should be around \$1,000, and wire it to me. My host father hasn’t been able to finish his law degree because he ran out of money. I want to help him. This will be my first payment from your college loan.” Jeff had earned that money mowing lawns and doing other odd jobs. It was a teary moment for both parents.

Jeff and Jon both settled in Northern Indiana with their families. Jon is an emergency room physician at St. Joseph Hospital in Mishawaka and volunteers at the Center for Healing and Hope (which helps provide affordable medical care for the underinsured). Jeff works in sales and is a part owner of ATC Trailers in Nappanee. One of the daughters-in-law, Kris, also works at the store, creating original quilt designs.

Spending more time with family and friends is one thing Dave and Shirley are looking forward to when they retire in 2016 and close Quilt Designs. At that time, they will also retire the original quilt designs to protect their clients’ investments.

“We’ll miss the business and the log cabin and especially the friendships. I’m sure I’ll need a big box of tissue when I walk out the door for the last time. But I’d love to see a quilt shop here, one that does its own designs and sells fabric and maybe offers classes,” Shirley said.

More remarkable perhaps than the fact that neither of the Shenks ever studied business is that Shirley never took an art course. This is a woman who has devoted her life to designing quilts for her customers in the field of fiber art. She has often been inspired by her customers’ color combinations or designs. A few quilts she’ll always remember; one was a Celtic Thistle quilt.

“The colors were hard to find, and the quilt was a unique piece. I couldn’t wait to see it,” Shirley said. “When the quilt came back, we hung it in the shop for a few weeks. Then it sold. That quilt

is always going to have a special place in my heart because I can’t redo it.”

Quilting, even after retirement, will continue to have a special place in Shirley’s heart and her life.

Quilting, even after retirement, will continue to have a special place in Shirley’s heart and her life.

“I’ll always make quilts,” Shirley said. “But they will have a different purpose. I would expect to make quilts for women’s shelters or cancer patients or Syrian refugees. While they won’t be a Quilt Designs quilt, I hope they will still be artistic.”



Kirsten L. Klassen is a writer in Elkhart, Ind., and an admirer of her own mother’s quilts.



Kathy Scobey (left) looks over the wall hanging she and Mike, her husband, purchased from Dave and Shirley Shenk. The wall hanging, Winter Silhouette, appealed to Scobey because of the maple leaves in the design. Photo by Tyler Klassen



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A **peace-seeking** education

Mennonite Schools Council schools commit to teaching right relationships

by Kelli Yoder

The third graders in Warden Neuenschwander's homeroom class at Sarasota (Fla.) Christian School were having a little trouble getting along last September. They also happened to be studying Judges, learning how when the Israelites needed help getting along, God appointed judges from within their tribes.

Wanting to incorporate the Scripture as well as help them manage their own disagreements, Neuenschwander created a “judge” or mediator position in the classroom, adding it to other rotating classroom jobs, such as technology specialist, photographer or line leaders.

The first “judge,” chosen at random, set a high bar for how the classroom would mediate conflicts for the next few months.

If any students were upset, she prioritized calming them down. Then she ensured everyone involved had a chance to tell their side uninterrupted. She asked how they might solve the issue, helping them decide a way to work things out.

“She was so unbiased and so calm,” Neuenschwander said. “So many of the strategies she used hadn’t been covered in our curriculum at that time.”

The impact of this peer-to-peer problem solving has been tangible, he said.

“They’re going to this judge of the classroom a lot less now that they’re understanding how they can break conflict down themselves,” he said. “It’s exciting to see how they are taking ownership. It changed from them wanting me to solve all their problems to finding someone at their level to help them work things out.”

He sees the result as a strong reflection of one of the six distinctives shared by Mennonite Schools Council member schools: to create students who are peace seekers. MSC is the early childhood through 12th grade network of schools within Mennonite Church USA’s Mennonite Education Agency.

These distinctives—which also include creating Christ followers, community builders, rigorous learners, service givers and difference embracers—are things MEA believes make its students separate or distinct from those at other schools, says senior director Elaine Moyer.

“The MEA identity markers seek to express the particularity of our Mennonite schools, early childhood through seminary,” she says. “As Anabaptist-Mennonite institutions, we desire to live fully into the reign of God—on earth as in heaven.”

She thinks it is fitting that “peace seekers” comes right after “Christ followers” in the list of distinctives.

“Because to follow Christ means to engage with how we treat others, how we see others through the lens of Christ, of Jesus’ life, of Jesus’ teachings,” she says. “That’s the real reason our schools are there.”

Efforts like Neuenschwander’s experiment, or the way Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Schools



have used restorative discipline for 15 years in place of the punitive discipline widely used in U.S. schools, demonstrate this unique commitment to creating peace-seeking students that is an essential part of all MEA schools’ as they strive to offer an Anabaptist education.

A student at Sarasota (Fla.) Christian School.
Photo by Kelli Yoder

To follow Christ means to engage with how we treat others, how we see others through the lens of Christ.—Elaine Moyer

Common commitments

One way MEA ensures its schools are instilling Anabaptist faith values like peace seeking is through the use of MEA indicators in an accreditation process, Moyer said.



Students at Sarasota (Fla.) Christian School. Photo by Kelli Yoder

MSC includes 27 member schools. MEA partners with AdvancED and other accrediting bodies for K-12 schools. The accreditation protocol includes Anabaptist-Mennonite faith practices.

Modeling peacebuilding, including the use of restorative discipline, is second on the list of faith practices. MEA offers MSC teachers and administrators professional development conferences, and courses that provide 10 hours of graduate credit through its Anabaptist Learning Institute program that help to instill these values.

“That’s all based on helping teachers to strengthen pedagogy and intentionally work at all of our distinctives,” Moyer says. So, while not all educators or administrators come from a Mennonite background, they share a common understanding of how to create students with these distinctives.

Moyer believes all six of MEA’s distinctives must work together, but she admits the peace-seeking one especially sets Anabaptist schools apart.

“It’s a real difference in how we read Scripture, just as Anabaptists read Scripture histor-

ically and discerned faith practices together in prayer,” she said.

Changing behavior, hearts

Restorative discipline is something Miles Yoder is passionate about. Yoder is the assistant superintendent of Lancaster Mennonite Schools, a K-12 school system with five campuses in the Lancaster area.

Fifteen years ago he and several other LMS educators attended a training on using a restorative approach to discipline in schools offered by Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va. They knew immediately they wanted to try it out at LMS, and have been using it ever since.

“It kind of sold itself. The old way of doing suspensions and detentions wasn’t working,” he says. “It doesn’t change their behavior. It doesn’t change their hearts.”

Now, if a student presents a discipline problem, administrators or teachers arrange a meeting for relevant parties to sit down together. Both the victim and the offender have to agree to the meeting before this method can be used.

At least one of the school’s trained mediators

is present, along with others who were impacted or may be able to contribute. They discuss what happened, both sides explain the reasons for their actions or reaction, and at the end they write up a contract for some kind of action or agreement that victim and offender and all members who are part of the restorative circle feel comfortable signing.

“It puts together a plan that keeps whatever happened from occurring again,” Yoder says. In his years as an administrator and also as one of the school’s mediators, he’s been able to witness the transformation that can come from the process.

“There’ve been times where we’ve had people that have had some pretty major conflicts with each other, but I have seen them become friends,” Yoder says. “That’s pretty exciting when that happens.”

He also remembered a time when a student and several lunchroom staff had a conflict. The staff members sat in on the meeting and after they resolved the conflict, the student wanted to maintain regular contact with the staff as part of the contract. This ended up having a significant impact, and the staff attended the student’s graduation celebration.

He says some students or teachers don’t see how useful the restorative process is if they haven’t experienced it.

“When people don’t understand it, they think it might be weak,” he says. It can be a challenge to keep everyone informed about it and on the same page.

But students and teachers who have participated in it and experience or witness transformation become avid supporters.

“I’m convinced it’s a lot better than the punitive method,” he says.

He said being involved with it has also blessed his life.

“I think it helped me appreciate how, when people have the opportunity to talk and work at things together, to be part of that process changes who they are,” he says. “Seeing the potential and the hope in every situation. ... I think that’s how it changed me.”

In the last few years, LMS has begun working restorative justice principles into the curriculum. Students now begin learning about restorative justice and discipline in middle school.

Restorative discipline is a part of the culture of the school now, Yoder says.

“It’s an essential part of our identity in the broader community of MSC schools,” he says.

“Restoring relationships is what Jesus teaches. It very much fits the theology of the school and our

Mennonite church.”

He sees it reaching beyond the classroom into the future as students leave LMS.

“If they’ve experienced restoration, that’s a skill that can stick with them for life,” he says.

Moyer adds that MEA also creates peace-seeking students in a wide variety of other ways, such as by teaching creation care and simply by teaching about God’s love.

“Our schools emphasize teaching that transforms,” she says. “Seeking peace first comes from knowing God loves you as a person, then extending that love to our neighbor and also creation. That’s where we work at our peace-seeking and peace-building practices.”

Restorative discipline is a part of the culture of the school now.—Miles Yoder

Building a solid foundation

Neuenschwander’s classroom judge is just a small way he sees an emphasis on peace entering the classroom. But he also believes it is part of a larger effort to demonstrate how behavior can be framed in a biblical peacemaking context.

He says the “judge” was just one of many experiments he tries regularly with his classes, because depending on the year and the students, some strategies work better than others.

He may or may not try the same thing with his next group of students, but the larger goal will remain the same. Students will continue to consider alternative and peaceful ways of resolving conflicts as part of the school’s curriculum, and he will find ways to connect those lessons to how the students build relationships in his class.

“This paired with biblical study, conflict resolution steps learned through our Olweus [anti-bullying] program and more practice can help each student build a solid foundation of a peace seeker and problem solver,” he says.

“Peace seekers who value right relationship with people and who care for creation offer hope to the world,” Moyer says.



Kelli Yoder is a freelance writer in Fredericksburg, Va.



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A service-giving education

Students at Goshen College and Bluffton University learn to put others first

by Kelli Yoder

Mixing teaching with service is an essential part of Jerrell Ross Richer's economics classes at Goshen (Ind.) College. "Arguably, you can learn a whole lot better by actually doing something for someone than you can theorizing about it," he says.



In fact, learning through service is so important to Ross Richer—and his family—that in 2015 they began their own “two-way” service commitment with Mennonite Mission Network. For three years they will serve indigenous churches in Ecuador for half the year and return to Goshen for the other half.

Like Goshen, all Mennonite colleges, as part of Mennonite Education Agency, commit to instilling students to be “service givers” along with five other “distinctives of Mennonite education.”

Through this common commitment to give service, MEA students are learning a countercultural approach to their role in the world—away from society’s me-first ideology and toward Jesus’ example of putting others first.

This service is taught in the classroom through professors such as Ross Richer as well as outside the classroom, in student-led service projects like an organization called SERVE arranged at Bluffton (Ohio) University.

Eco-tourism and service

Richer, his wife and their four kids began their service term in January in Atacapi, Ecuador. They returned to live in Goshen from July through December, a schedule they will keep for the next two years.

Their assignment is to support indigenous Christian churches however they can, but it involves a wide variety of work in surrounding communities and schools around themes of environmental action, creation care, economic justice, social structure and the rights of women and children.

“We are not telling them what to do but really walking alongside them as they voice their needs,” Richer says.

In May, he had his first opportunity to bring the classroom into his service assignment—hosting a three-week May term course, Ecological Economics in Ecuador. Students traveled around Ecuador with his family, witnessing things like the

impacts of capitalism on the Amazon rainforest and discussing ecotourism as a way to support Ecuador’s development while also protecting its indigenous people.

Now, two students in his business capstone class are working with an organization the May term class visited, the Cofan Survival Fund. The organization supports the Cofan, an indigenous group with land but not enough resources for rangers to protect it. Ross Richer’s students are finding ways to communicate their mission and help them raise funds, partly through eco-tourism.

“I’m hoping this can be a longtime relationship between Goshen and some indigenous groups like the Cofan that are protecting the rainforest,” Richer says.

Along with Richer’s intentional use of his connections in Ecuador in the classroom, he is certain the experience will also shape him as a servant and teacher in ways he has yet to see.

One impact might be through his style of leadership.



We are not telling them what to do but really walking alongside them as they voice their needs.—Ross Richer

“Our approach with the indigenous churches is very much servant leadership,” he says.

One day he sat with a group of leaders at a local indigenous church and walked them through the practice of *lectio devina*, whereby Scripture is read as a group, and each participant shares his or her own interpretation of its meaning.

He says the experience was wonderful.

Ross Richer (center in light blue shirt) with students in Ecuador. Photo provided by Ross Richer

Rachel Keske plays with children at the Highlands International School in La Paz, Bolivia, in May 2015. Photo by Tig Intagliata



“We went to go and teach them that method, and by teaching them we also learn some things ourselves,” he says.

While early missionaries were focused primarily on conversion, now, he says, indigenous pastors are already spreading the gospel.

“Instead we are working with people who have already made that commitment but are wondering, What’s next?” he says.

They hope to assist them in discerning that but will be intentional not to offer North American answers.

“I think it would work a lot better if they figure out how to be a Christian in a way that has integrity in their own culture,” he says.

In the same way, Richer teaches students in his economics classes how to consider the impact of North American culture, as well as the Christian church, has had on Ecuadorian culture.

I just love helping people and spending my time with people who put others before themselves.
—Rachel Keske

Very few institutions in Ecuador protect indigenous culture.

“In business, people are encouraged to give up their native ways,” he says. “Church can be a place where indigenous culture can be preserved.”

“So one of the things we try to have our students understand is the different roles that we as North Americans play in these,” he says.

By buying gas, we are unknowingly helping transform the rainforest into an oil field, he says. Through North American media, we are exposing other cultures to things like violence, materialism and pornography.

Ecotourism, like through the Cofan fund, is one way to counteract the impact we have had, he says.

“Whether we realize it or not, we are destroying these cultures now,” he says. “We can be intentional about helping to protect them.”

Putting others first

Like Goshen, Bluffton University is committed to educating students with an emphasis on service. Nearly every student completes service through the school’s study abroad requirement, and they hear about it in the classroom regularly.

It only makes sense to Stephen Intagliata, Bluffton’s campus minister, because the school is affiliated with Mennonite Church USA.

“As Christians we are called to be imitators of Jesus, and Jesus modeled a life of servanthood throughout his ministry,” he says. “He washed the feet of his disciples as an act of humble service, and he called them to a life of serving others.”

He quotes Mark 10:43-44: “Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.”

But service also goes beyond the classroom at Bluffton: Students seek out service or take part in it with their club or sports team. Intagliata is the faculty advisor for a group committed to service, SERVE.

“We can’t just talk about service and what a nice idea it is; we need to practice what we preach and roll up our sleeves to lend a helping hand to

others in need,” he says. “SERVE provides an avenue for that to take place.”

Rachel Keske, a junior from Lima, Ohio, got involved with the program her first year at Bluffton and now serves as the president.

“I just love helping people and spending my time with people who put others before themselves,” she says.

She’s participated in or led events at Bluffton, such as a campus cleanup, a Special Olympics basketball tournament and the Riley Creek Festival, an annual community-wide event, as well as events in the community, such as decorating the retirement center for Christmas, raking leaves or spending time with homeless families at a local church.

But some of the most memorable projects have been multiday trips over spring or fall break, most recently to help with Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) projects.

The spring break trip this year stuck with Keske particularly. A group of students headed to rebuild a house with MDS in Far Rockaway, N.Y.

“Not only did I learn how to master the art of mudding but I learned quite a bit about the family whose home we were working in, the other students on the trip and myself,” she says. The family had been political refugees from the Caribbean who lost their longtime home in New York to Hurricane Sandy.

Like so many others, they fell victim to scammers they paid to rebuild but never heard from again.

“The couple was so positive and kept their eyes on God’s blessings through the whole situation,” Keske says. “This couple taught me that I have quite a lot to be thankful for and really put me in the situation of ‘people have it a lot worse than you do.’”

She says SERVE has organized trips to MDS in Detroit four times since the site opened after a historic and damaging flood hit on Aug. 11, 2014.

Part of her job is to get students interested in service, which can be a challenge initially.

“I don’t think students understand how important service is until they get involved. Somehow that three-hour nap seems more appealing than a service project, and I haven’t figured out a good way to pull everyone off the couch,” she says. “Once they get off the couch, though, they are hooked.”

And its appeal is evident from a growing list Keske keeps, currently about 230 students, faculty and staff, to contact with requests for volunteers for service needs.

“Typically, we have a request for x number of



people, and we never have trouble filling those spots,” she says. “It’s never the same people, which just shows how wonderful and broad the serving hearts are here on campus.”

Intagliata sees it, too. And he says it’s visible in the growing popularity among Bluffton students in yearlong voluntary programs such as SALT or Mennonite Voluntary Service.

Helping with an MDS project in Detroit in the fall of 2014. Photo by Rachel Keske

Integrating service learning into our education allows us to open pathways for service in our future and opportunities beyond Bluffton.

—Rachel Keske

“The emphasis on service in the Mennonite church was what led me to join Mennonite Voluntary Service out of college, and here at Bluffton it brings me joy to see students who capture a vision for living a life of service,” he says.

Keske says: “Integrating service learning into our education allows us to open pathways for service in our future and opportunities beyond Bluffton.”

She thinks the emphasis on service is clear all over campus. “We encounter everyday service, such as having the door held open for you or having your professor answer your last-minute question as you pass them on the sidewalk,” she says.

Kelli Yoder is a freelance writer in Fredericksburg, Va.



Anabaptist schools, Scripture and spiritual awakening

**A call for schools to follow a biblical
vision of love and justice and guide
students in professional development**

by Sara Wenger Shenk

Late last September, many of us were enthralled by a rare celestial display: a super moon in total eclipse, also known as a blood moon because of its reddish glow—clearly a reference to the apocalyptic vision from Revelation 6.

I talked about the blood moon on the phone with my 93-year-old mother, who said, “Oh Sara, I remember a night in Ethiopia, when you were a little girl. The night watchman woke us all in a panic, banging on our bedroom window, crying: “The moon burned up! The moon burned up!”

Imagine the panic of someone with a prescientific worldview; someone with no concept of eclipses, watching the moon devoured, engulfed in a red haze of flames.

In early October, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind., hosted its second Rooted and Grounded conference on land and Christian discipleship. There was graphic apocalyptic talk there, and this wasn't among preliterate night watchmen but among scholars, theologians and scientists. Ched Myers, an activist theologian, biblical scholar and leading voice in an ecological movement for watershed discipleship, spoke of the four horsemen of the apocalypse. The white, red and black horses and their riders appear in Revelation, bringing war and economic disaster upon the earth. And then there is a pale green horse—whose rider is named Death. What follows in his wake is ecological catastrophe.

Rapacious greed is bringing today's world to the brink of unprecedented catastrophe. Ecological stresses exacerbate violent conflicts, unprecedented migration, religious extremism, racist bigotry and poverty. There are reasons to be alarmed.

I use this pairing of biblical mystical images with a scientifically informed worldview to suggest where I think the most urgent work lies for Anabaptist Mennonite schools.

What I want more than anything for our schools is that as communities of learners, we come alive to the wondrous love that vitalized this world into being; that we with Gerard Manley Hopkins ask, “What is all this juice and all this joy?”

It is only out of a wellspring of vitalized love that our graduates can unflinchingly face the brutal facts and go toward the devastation. It is only out of a wellspring of vitalized love that our graduates will become beautiful messengers who announce peace and salvation.

What most animated the Anabaptist movement was its rediscovery of God's down-to-earth salvation story, especially the stories of Jesus. This rediscovery galvanized them to break with the worn out status quo of their time. This rediscovery alerted them to see how the dominant culture had domesticated the gospel. The rediscovery of the world-transforming visions of the Bible awakened them to the joy of God's Jubilee gospel, and they became part of a spirited movement to awaken hope in their anguished communities.

How might our Anabaptist Mennonite schools inseparably hold together an immersion in the gospel of our resurrected Lord with an immersion in communities of people who are victimized by the ruling powers? How might we hold together an immersion in the world-transforming visions of the Bible with an immersion in the natural world, the sciences, humanities and professional studies? How might a new awakening to the mystical biblical visions of the world-as-it-should-be ignite fierce love to save the real world right under our feet?

I set up a horrific pairing of the images of the four horsemen with current scientific projections of cataclysm on the earth. A beautiful contrast image is the prophet Ezekiel's vision in 47:1-12 of water rehydrating the land and fruitful trees whose leaves are for the heal-



How might a new awakening to the mystical biblical visions of the world-as-it-should-be ignite fierce love to save the real world right under our feet?

ing of the nations, an image that reappears some 700 years later to John the Revelator—recorded in the final chapter of Revelation.

O Lord, what an image! What a beautiful, verdant image. Ezekiel was a prophet among a people in exile, a people of the land who had seen its devastation, a traumatized people who had been forced violently to migrate.

What is remarkable about Ezekiel's vision is that the life-giving water flows not from the king's palace but from the Lord's temple. The cleansing river flows not from the conqueror's throne but from the sanctuary of a worshiping community in touch with the "juice and joy" of God's reign.

Our church is being pulled apart because of wrongheaded ways of reading and interpreting the Bible.

The water begins with a trickle and grows into a vast river that restores fertility to the dry lands.

Stagnant waters become fresh, and everything lives where the river goes—every living creature, swarms of fish and all kinds of trees for food that bear fresh fruit every month, because the water flows from the sanctuary. The leaves of the trees are for healing.

What might exemplify this life-giving water flowing from the sanctuary in our day? How might immersion in biblical mystical visions of God's love for the world vitalize our graduates to be about God's saving mission in the world?

A lot of us have become deeply ambivalent about the Bible. The Bible is a battleground on which the culture wars are fought. Our church is being pulled apart because of wrongheaded ways of reading and interpreting the Bible. The revitalizing potency of the Scriptures that so transformed our Anabaptist forebears and so many other courageous folks is lost on us because we've formed oppositional defensive positions in the culture wars.

On the one hand, there's a resurgence of science denial and anti-intellectualism that claims biblical justification. People attack our schools because we invite our students to ask tough questions, and we encourage faculty to discern more

honest ways to interpret the Bible. An idolatry of the Bible, dressed up in bogus theology and self-righteous bigotry is driving scores of gifted, bright young people from the church.

On the other hand, closer to home, those of us in higher education in particular, may exude an intellectual sophistication and ethical superiority, with a near disdain for the Bible and expressions of heartfelt faith.

Rather than turning the Bible into a battleground to be used severely by some and belittled by others, how might we help our students comprehend the goodness of the gospel precisely because we take them to uncomfortable places of fracture, oppression and devastation?

How might our schools prepare students to become resilient social scientists, church planters, physicians, historians, peacemakers, literary artists and teachers by becoming centers of revitalizing meditation on the Scriptures in worship, creative visualization, prayer and study?

How might our schools lead with a faith orientation that is conservative in that we unapologetically root our faith in an ancient, wise tradition? And progressive in that we lead with an innovative, justice seeking theological vision like Jesus and the Anabaptists?

The reality on the ground is brutal; yes, frightening in the extreme. The apocalyptic horsemen are out and about with a vengeance. There is every reason to believe that the children, youth and young adults in our schools will face the most daunting challenges of any generation—particularly if they walk toward the trouble.

We need nothing less than another great awakening, a spiritual awakening to fortify the leaders of the new generation with the strongest brew of wondrous, strong, vitalizing love imaginable.

May our Anabaptist Mennonite schools be in the vanguard of that spiritual awakening:

- An awakening to the earthy, mystical visions of the Bible that take us with new fervor into the science lab and local watershed.
- An awakening to the potency of biblical cries for justice that put moral verve in our professional practice and leadership.
- An awakening to the irrepressible Spirit still vitalizing God's people to go into all the world with Jesus' down-to-earth salvation story.

The leaves of the trees healing the nations. May it be so with our schools.



Sara Wenger Shenk is president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.

Jesus was a Jew

A challenge to anti-Judaism in our churches

by James Hamrick

As Mennonite Church USA congregations reflect on the abbreviated Israel-Palestine resolution that was passed by our delegates in Kansas City, Mo., last summer and the more extensive Israel-Palestine resolution that was tabled, I hope we can give some attention to the issue of anti-Judaism in the Mennonite church.



In speaking and acting against some of the oppressive and violent actions of the state of Israel, how do we also express solidarity with the global Jewish people? We can start by critically reflecting on the ways our sermons and other public interpretations of the Bible often unintentionally assume and perpetuate anti-Jewish stereotypes.

In a sad irony, our portrayal of this liberating, nonviolent Jesus actually does harm to our Jewish neighbors by mischaracterizing their faith and history.

We may see anti-Judaism most clearly in interpretations of the New Testament, particularly the Gospels. Think for a moment about the picture you have of Judaism in the time of Jesus. What are some images that come to mind? Some key words? What do you think of when you hear the word “Pharisee”? Or “Judaizer”?

Legalistic. Exclusivist. Patriarchal. Purity-obsessed. Hypocritical.

These are some of the words commonly used by Christians when we talk about first-century Judaism. Jesus and the early Christians, on the other hand, advocated grace, inclusiveness and equality. In our sermons and devotional resources we have often heard this said:

- Jesus liberated women from an oppressive, Jewish, patriarchal culture.
- Jesus crossed the boundaries created by Jewish purity laws and welcomed those Jewish law made into untouchable outcasts.
- Jesus violated oppressive Sabbath laws that were enforced by Jews who cared more about rules than loving their neighbor.
- Jews excluded Gentiles, but Jesus welcomed everyone.
- All the Jews of Jesus’ day were expecting a military Messiah and planning violent revolts, and Jesus upset all their values and expectations by preaching and practicing the way of peace.

In short, Jesus was the good guy, the lone ranger who reflects our highest values, and the

Jews were the bad guys who Jesus struggled against and was opposed by.

Jewish New Testament scholar Amy-Jill Levine identifies some of these and several other common stereotypes and argues that in such cases Judaism serves as a “negative foil” for Christian portrayals of Jesus (*The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus*). The worse Judaism looks, the better, more unique and revolutionary Jesus looks.

In a sad irony, our portrayal of this liberating, nonviolent Jesus actually does harm to our Jewish neighbors by mischaracterizing their faith and history. Such stereotypes are part of a long history of Christian hatred toward and persecution of our Jewish neighbors, and they continue to be hurtful, offensive and dangerous. Not only are they harmful to our neighbors, they are also bad history, since they do not do justice to the wealth of evidence we have about the ancient Jewish world.

Here are some practical things we can do to challenge this anti-Judaism in our churches:

We can remember that Jesus was a Jew.

This may seem obvious, but there is a long history of Christians minimizing or even outright denying the Jewishness of Jesus. Jesus and his followers were first-century Jews. Judaism was the world in which they lived and moved and had their being, and when we study ancient Judaism we quickly see how thoroughly Jewish Jesus was.

The “Our Father” or “Lord’s Prayer” we have prayed in our churches for 2,000 years is similar to a traditional Jewish prayer. Jesus’ teachings have strong parallels in other Jewish texts. For example, other Jews also believed love of neighbor was at the heart of the law and allowed for violation of the Sabbath to save human life. There are texts that parallel Jesus’ call to love enemies. One of our most cherished Christian beliefs—that “God so loved the world”—is not unique to Jesus and his followers. Wisdom of Solomon, a Jewish writing that may have been read by Paul and the author of Hebrews, also professes God’s universal love: “For you [God] love all things that exist, and detest none of the things that you have made, for you would not have made anything if you had hated it” (Wisdom 11:24; NRSV).

Jesus was not the only Jew to proclaim God’s love or to be passionate about peace and social justice. Instead of seeing Jesus’ ministry of liberation as opposed to Judaism or liberating people from Judaism, we should see Jesus’ ministry as

growing out of and participating in early Jewish liberation movements. God was at work in Jesus' Jewish world.

We can recognize that first-century Judaism was diverse. Think of how challenging it can be to succinctly characterize what a Mennonite is. Our little 500-year-old tradition is diverse enough to make sweeping generalizations challenging. Now think of how challenging it can be to succinctly characterize what a Christian is. Our faith tradition is incredibly diverse in belief and practice, and early Judaism was no different. When we speak about the Jewish world of the New Testament, we need to remember that few statements can describe all Jews of that time. Most of our statements should begin with the word "some."

We should also remember that contemporary Judaism is very diverse, and we cannot assume Judaism in the first century and Judaism in the 21st century are the same. The Jewish tradition has a rich history that is just as varied and complicated as the Christian tradition.

We can acknowledge that Jesus and his followers were debating *within* Judaism.

Acknowledging that Jesus and his followers were Jews and that Judaism was very diverse, we can begin to see the debates and conflicts they had with other Jews as debates within Judaism, rather than against it. Mennonites are quite familiar with internal debate and conflict over what it means to be Mennonite and to faithfully follow Jesus. Jesus and his followers entered similar debates within the Jewish tradition. When Jesus talked about things like the law, divorce, resurrection or who counts as a "neighbor," he was engaging with contentious questions of his day, and his answers often overlapped with the answers some of his contemporaries were giving.

We can read Jewish texts outside the New Testament. The New Testament is an anthology of Jewish texts, so in reading and studying the New Testament we are in fact studying first-century Judaism. However, it can be helpful to engage ancient Jewish texts outside the New Testament. There are many translations of such texts and many good resources for learning more about them. An accessible place to start is by reading the Old Testament Apocrypha, those Jewish writings considered scriptural by Catholic and Orthodox churches (and early Anabaptists). These writings can be found in some editions of the New Revised Standard Version.

We can struggle with anti-Judaism in

the New Testament. There is lively discussion among biblical scholars over whether or not parts of the New Testament are anti-Jewish. Is the New Testament anti-Jewish, or have we just interpreted it in anti-Jewish ways? These are good questions for us to struggle with in the church. How do we understand a passage like 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16, which speaks of Jews as the ones who "killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out; they displease God and oppose everyone"? As we struggle with these texts, it is important to recognize that words like these have been invoked by Christians committing horrifying acts of violence against Jews throughout history. Mennonites are not innocent in this history.

When we speak about the Jewish world of the New Testament, we need to remember that few statements can describe all Jews of that time.

We can engage in studies on anti-Judaism in our churches. Let's study and talk about anti-Judaism in our churches. Maybe one of the best ways we can do this is to study the Bible together with our Jewish neighbors, a process that will not only help us recognize our unintended anti-Jewish assumptions but also enrich our understanding of the Scriptures. There are many resources on anti-Judaism, but one of the best and most accessible books for individual or group study is Amy-Jill Levine's *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus*. I close with a helpful challenge from her work: "The proclamation of the church can, and should, stand on its own; it does not require an artificial foil, an anti-Jewish basis or an overstated distinction."



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It begins with design



Carlos Romero is executive director of Mennonite Education Agency.

Each educational experience helps prepare students to become Christ followers, service givers, peace seekers, rigorous learners, interculturally competent and community builders.

Do you know how frequently God is identified as a teacher in Scripture? Many verses point us to the important ministry of teaching. God is deeply interested in offering mentoring and instruction. God offers guidance for our choices, our actions and our acquisition of wisdom.

The Psalmists repeatedly state that they will proclaim their faith and worldview to their children, to their children's children and to generations not yet born. They want all subsequent generations to embrace lifelong acquisition of wisdom with God serving as chief instructor.

Scripture also tells us of the appearance of Jesus the Messiah, who teaches the kingdom way and is referred to as Rabbi. In the Gospels, Jesus invests in his disciples and prepares them to teach the disciples after them so that another generation of disciples will be raised up.

Education of God's people is something God is heavily invested in and expectant about. Mennonite education grows from this tradition of bringing our children up to choose to be Christian disciples "on the way." Mennonite education provides points along this way through life, beginning with faith formation and moving outward to development of knowledge to use wisely and for the love of God and neighbor.

In service to Mennonite congregations, their households and the schools that serve them, we've identified six distinctives that define our work as Anabaptist faith institutions. Each educational experience helps prepare students to become Christ followers, service givers, peace seekers, rigorous learners, interculturally competent and community builders.

Christ followers strive to know Jesus and mirror Jesus' life. Mennonite-related institutions see Christ as central to all they do. They help students grow into Christ followers through formal Bible classes and informal actions.

Peace seekers seek to be in right relationship with all those they encounter because they have received God's grace to be in right relationship with God. Peace seekers understand that violence is not the answer. They are equipped with tools to approach conflict in healthy ways. They strive to treat others with love, kindness and respect—even those with whom they disagree.

Community builders engage others. They have a deep understanding of the body of Christ, with each part uniquely gifted and essential to the whole. Step into a Mennonite school and you will

see community on display. This is especially true of schools connected to Mennonite Schools Council, which provide education from early childhood through grade 12, fostering community among students, faculty and staff.

Rigorous learners are equipped with tools to succeed in all areas of life. They approach subjects through multiple lenses and new ways, exploring further and cementing knowledge as their own. Strong academics are a key to Mennonite schools in part because continued learning is valued at the faculty and leadership level. MEA provides professional development and continuing education opportunities, including certification to teach in an Anabaptist institution. Participants in the courses offered to achieve this certification, share how taking the courses helped them better understand what it means to be Anabaptist and how to incorporate Anabaptist principles in their teaching.

Service givers are taught what it means to wash others' feet. They are instilled with values that emphasize giving back through hands-on opportunities to serve others and connect with service organizations. They also understand service as a lifelong value in which we learn that when we serve we usually learn and receive more than we give. Service is integrated into the curriculum of Mennonite schools.

Intercultural competence and a holistic worldview form an integral part of our vision and commitment. Students understand they do not live in a vacuum. They are taught about diversity and the importance of being intercultural in today's world. They are given opportunities to interact in settings different from their own. They learn that the world is bigger than their communities. Instead of it being a cause for fear, they are given tools to count it a blessing and step into its embrace. For example, Mennonite schools provide students with study service terms and other immersion programs.

We live and work in a polarized culture in which complex situations are seen as either or. People have lost respect for each other, and it seems easier to talk *at* each other rather than *to* each other. We are called to a higher way of behaving and modeling what it means to live with tension but with a commitment to 1 Corinthians 3:11: "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ."

As we journey on this way may God be our Provider, our Sustainer, and our Teacher. **TM**

Lessons from the Laquan McDonald killing

The news of protests in Chicago on Black Friday (see story on page 34) feels close to home. I ask myself, Is this a new issue or an old one being exposed in a city segregated along socioeconomic and racial lines?

As a Chicago native, I think about my own experiences with law enforcement. I was young, dressed in a Timberland baseball jersey (of course the White Sox). This was typical for a young Latino in my neighborhood.

This did not mean I was a thug. Several times, however, I was stereotyped as a statistic.

My seventh-grade teacher used to point east (toward Cook County jail) and say that was our future. My experience as a Latino in Little Village (two miles from where Laquan McDonald was shot) was daily fear of being stopped by the police. The metal detectors in my high school were another sign that we had a predetermined future with gangs and violence. At first, I believed police aggression and metal detectors were essential

for my neighborhood. But I was naïve, until the moment when I saw the abuse of power.

One summer afternoon, my friends and I were on my porch listening to music and talking to people in the neighborhood. Then four police vehicles drove up, and an officer jumped out of his car. He drew his firearm and pointed it at a local gang member and his family. The man's mother reacted like any mother would and protected her son. The gang member placed himself in front of his family to make sure a bullet didn't hit them. The police grabbed him and threw him onto the ground, bursting his lip and pinning him down with a billy club.

I was speechless but not surprised. Aggressive force was a common part of how we were treated. We knew that security from the police did not exist. If anything, they were preparing us for a system that did not give us any hope.

I look back and try to count the many times I was stopped by the police. I ask myself, If I lived in the suburbs, would I have to go through a metal

detector every morning? Could I walk with a group of friends and not be treated like a criminal? The answer is no. When I visited my friends in Cicero and Melrose Park (surrounding suburbs), this became evident.

Among my suburban church friends, my experiences were the topic of conversation. They looked at me as different, an outcast, as the ghetto guy. My experience was different. Teenagers

from the suburbs were not obligated to walk through a metal detector daily. They did not have to worry about a police officer planting a bag of marijuana, then arresting them. These were challenges that came with living in an area that overcame violence with violence.

Living in the inner city

left me with a challenge to overcome many obstacles. Growing up, I did not have many resources, but one thing I had was hope, hope that one day violence would end. Laquan McDonald has become another victim of violence. Fighting violence with violence has left us with

several brothers and sisters in cemeteries. They are remembered through the advocacy and spark their tragedy created.

Is this an opportunity to unveil the powers of a corrupt system? I say yes, this is a time when peace should be the center of our witness. This is the time when churches (regardless of race and creed) should speak against these police practices.

I consider myself an optimist. I hope that one day my Latino and African-American brothers and sisters could work together to change the social oppression in Chicago neighborhoods. No one knows what goes on in these neighborhoods but us. We experience drugs, violence, poor education and police brutality. I hope we are living in a time when we reject the concept that we are a statistic. Let us cry out, "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). 

We knew that security from the police did not exist. If anything, they were preparing us for a system that did not give us any hope.



Martin Navarro is a church relations representative at Everence.

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

Mennonite colleges update nondiscrimination policies

Bluffton University latest to update hiring policies, withdraws from CCCU

Four Mennonite Church USA colleges have made changes to their nondiscrimination statements in the last two years. The most recent is Bluffton (Ohio) University, whose board of directors voted unanimously on Oct. 10, 2015, to add sexual identity and gender orientation to its nondiscrimination statement.

Bluffton's employment statement reads: "Employment decisions are based on merit and university needs and not on race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or any other status protected by law. As a religious institution, Bluffton University expressly reserves its rights to appoint faculty and staff who share a commitment to the Christian faith [that] is consistent with the Mennonite/Anabaptist beliefs of the university's founding and supporting church."

Bluffton president James Harder noted via a Nov. 30, 2015, email that the change responds to direct questions about employment discrimination that the university has received since the Supreme Court's July ruling for marriage equality. Harder also noted that some academic and professional organizations require nondiscrimination statements, including reference to gender identity and sexual orientation, before accepting position advertisements for faculty appointments.

"The board believes this is the right course of action for Bluffton at this time, while acknowledging that this decision will not be embraced equally by everyone," said Harder. "But at Bluffton, by intention, we strive to be a 'community of respect' where all people are valued and assumed to be people of goodwill, even amid times of significant disagreement."

Kent Yoder, Bluffton board chair from Middlebury, Ind., emphasized last month that the statement does not represent a significant shift for Bluffton.

"We [at Bluffton] have always hired the best qualified person as long as they demonstrate the desire and willingness to work with our unique Anabaptist faith-based educational principles and mission," said Yoder. "Basically the intent of our previous employment statement was the same, but organizations we work with were asking for different terminology."

Because of this change, Bluffton will also withdraw from the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities.

"The CCCU made it clear that schools with nondiscrimination statements are ineligible for membership," said Robin Bowlus, director of public relations for Bluffton, last month. "Therefore, Bluffton is withdrawing from the CCCU."

Bluffton joins three other Mennonite Church USA colleges and universities who have updated their nondiscrimination policies to include sexual orientation. In July 2015, Goshen (Ind.) College and Eastern Mennonite University

(EMU) in Harrisonburg, Va., simultaneously announced changes to their policies as well as the expansion of hiring practices and benefits to include couples in same-sex marriages.

On Sept. 14, 2015, both Goshen and EMU voluntarily withdrew from CCCU in response to several CCCU institutions' concerns following the July decisions.

In April 2014, the board of directors of Bethel College in North Newton, Kan., voted to add language to its nondiscrimination statement that included sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. The decision by the board followed a recommendation voted on by faculty to update the statement.

"It has always been Bethel's policy to hire the best person for the job who can support the Bethel College mission statement, which is shaped by our Anabaptist Mennonite heritage and values," said Lori Livengood, vice president for marketing and communication at Bethel, last month. "The faculty's vote in 2014 signaled support for more precision within the institution's human rights and affirmative action statements and an attempt to more closely align that language with existing nondiscriminatory practices in hiring."

"This summer, the delegate body called all of us in Mennonite Church USA, institutions and individuals, to live with the tension of the Membership and Forbearance Resolutions," said Carlos Romero, executive director of Mennonite Education Agency (MEA) in a Dec. 4 statement. "These decisions also happen in a rapidly changing cultural and legal environment and in a denomination in which there is a continuum of beliefs and theological understandings that represent significantly different ways of discerning Scripture."

In his statement, Romero recognizes that when educational institutions make decisions that do not align with denominational teaching positions, they are considered at variance with MEA and Mennonite Church USA. However, "MEA will show forbearance and extend grace" and will remain committed to conversation.

"As Mennonites, we have traditionally described our intent to be a reflection of a third way. If there has ever been a time to live into this reality, it's in today's environment," said Romero. "Mennonite Education Agency continues to support and work with all our educational institution as each one responds to their local context and history in the midst of significant challenges. I hope that as people of faith we are all committed to hold our institutions, leaders and denomination in our prayers as we continue to understand what it means to be and live as a community 'of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.'" —*Hannah Heinzekehr* for The Mennonite

Iglesia Menonita Hispana considers future with MC USA

Members from Lancaster Conference withdraw; others stay for now

One hundred and twenty leaders of Iglesia Menonita Hispana (IMH) gathered Nov. 20-21, 2015, at Iglesia Menonita Jesucristo es el Señor in New Holland, Pa., for a special assembly to discern their future connection to Mennonite Church USA.

Thirty congregations of the “Concilio Hispano,” the Spanish Mennonite Council of Churches (SMCC) of Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference (LMC), including 22 congregations from Pennsylvania and eight from the New York region, announced they will leave IMH and Mennonite Church USA, in keeping with LMC’s decision earlier this week to withdraw from the denomination.

Other congregations that are members of IMH will remain connected to Mennonite Church USA. IMH is a constituency group of Mennonite Church USA and as such has representation on Mennonite Church USA’s Executive Board and on the Constituency Leaders Council.

This special assembly was planned last July in order to process concerns that IMH members have about the direction of Mennonite Church USA regarding the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) individuals in the church.

The meeting was originally planned as a time to discern whether or not IMH member congregations would remain connected to Mennonite Church USA. However, according to Iris de Leon-Hartshorn, director of transformative peacemaking for Mennonite Church USA, after LMC’s decision to withdraw from Mennonite Church USA was announced, it became clear that the majority of congregations leaving IMH would be from the LMC. At this point, the purpose of the meeting shifted to an informative, fraternal time for discussing the future of IMH and receiving counsel that will inform the next scheduled IMH assembly in August.

The special assembly followed two days of meetings of the “junta general,” the executive board of IMH, with members representing its nine regions across the country.

The withdrawal of these 30 congregations represents a loss of one-third of all Hispanic Mennonite congregations. Five members of the IMH executive board will leave: López, moderator; Nicolas Angustia, moderator-elect; Lilian Flores, coordinator of the Hispanic Women’s Conference; Moisés Angustia, New York representative, and Adalberto Santiago, Pennsylvania representative.

“It’s sad that part of us, our body, is separating. It’s like a divorce,” said Guadalupe Aguilar, pastor of Iglesia Menonita Rey de Gloria in Brownsville, Texas. “We’re trying to find ways to somehow continue that relationship, maybe doing pulpit exchanges or pastors’ retreats together.”

In its public statement, the IMH executive board mourned the loss of dedicated leadership: “We want to communicate that we lament very deeply the decision of Lancaster

Conference to separate from Mennonite Church USA. This decision has deep repercussions on the leadership of the Hispanic Mennonite Church.”

The IMH executive board received the news of LMC’s decision during its meetings on Nov. 19. “[When LMC’s news was received] we [didn’t] know how to manage all the emotions that we feel,” said López. “But grace has reached us. God is with us, and we do not walk alone. The name above all names is Jesus, not Mennonite. There is pain and sadness, but God is doing new things.”

The other two-thirds of IMH will plan to stay connected to Mennonite Church USA as long as the 1995 Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, which states that marriage is “between one man and one woman for life,” is not changed.

The IMH executive board announcement states, “The Executive Board will ... be alert to how Mennonite Church USA moves in relation to the LGBTQ agenda and will make appropriate corresponding decisions.” IMH leaders also encouraged members of IMH to plan to attend their area conference and denominational delegate assemblies in order to make their voices and opinions known.

Juan Montes, pastor of Primera Iglesia Menonita in Reedley, Calif., and a member of the IMH executive board, moderated the meeting, opening it with an opportunity to pray in small groups for “our beloved mother church.”

Ervin Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, addressed the congregations leaving Mennonite Church USA: “I lament your leaving, but I have great joy to see you established in the Word of God; how you express yourselves and worship together, how you reach out, and to see you working together today. Although you will be outside the circle of our organization, you will never be outside the circle of my love.”

The next IMH meeting will be held in Florida in August. Remaining leaders on IMH’s executive board include Juan Montes, California region; Martha Hernandez, Iowa region; Madeline Maldonado, Florida region; Nelly Ascensio, Oregon region; Guadalupe Aguilar, South Texas region; and Sandra Martinez, Mid-Texas region. Yvonne Diaz is the IMH representative to Mennonite Church USA’s Executive Board. IMH will choose members to fill the leadership gaps left.

Immediately after the IMH assembly concluded, the 30 congregations from the Pennsylvania and New York regions met. They agreed to initiate a new fraternal Hispanic organization to maintain relationships and strengthen Hispanic congregations in both regions and appointed a group to develop the new vision for Hispanic churches in these regions, exploring ways to organize so that others can join them.

—Rosalyn Groff for *The Mennonite*

16 shots. 13 months. 16 shots. 13 months.

Chicago Mennonites join movements calling for racial justice

Photo provided



Alice and Leah Kabira of Lombard (Ill.) Mennonite Church attended the Nov. 27, 2015, protest on Michigan Avenue in Chicago.

“16 shots. 13 months. 16 shots. 13 months.” When protesters shut down Michigan Avenue in Chicago on one of the biggest shopping days of the year, several Chicago-area Mennonites were among those chanting these words. On Nov. 27, 2015, a day popularly known as Black Friday, members of Chicago Community Mennonite Church, Lombard (Ill.) Mennonite Church and Living Water Community Church joined nearly 1,000 marchers protesting the police shooting of African-American teenager Laquan McDonald (McDonald’s autopsy revealed that he had been shot 16 times), and the 13-month delay in bringing charges against the police officer who shot him.

“I just felt like I had to have my body in that place,” says Nathaniel Grimes, a seminary student at Northern Seminary and a member of Lombard Mennonite Church. “I realized I just needed to follow the lead of these individuals who are targets for the cops and be with them. I’m out there because that’s where I feel like I’m trying to follow Christ.”

This was not the first protest for Grimes, who traveled to Ferguson, Mo., in 2014 to be present after the shooting of Michael Brown, an unarmed African-American teen.

Hilary Watson, pastor at Lombard (Ill.) Mennonite Church, blogged about her experience at the Friday protest: “If we call ourselves Christians, if we feel the force of the biblical call to protect the orphan, widow and foreigner, then we do not just condemn injustice, we interrupt it.”

Joe Klein, a member at Living Water Community Church, says he was struck by the unity that existed among diverse participants at the protest. “There were senior citizens and teenagers; white, black, Asian and Hispanic people; there were people that protest a lot and people who came out for maybe their first protest; there were radical Marxists and people from faith communities,” says Klein. “It couldn’t be characterized as one thing. A diverse group of people caught a vision for creating a real interruption on that day to say

that the city needs to focus on something a lot more important than shopping.”

Spencer Foon, a member of Chicago Community Mennonite, found the protest an apt time to reflect and grieve. “As I was marching, it was also a time to mourn for Laquan and the string of other people in Chicago and other cities that have died,” he says.

The work continues

For many Chicago-area Mennonite congregations, working for racial reconciliation began long before the Black Friday protest. In 2014, in response to a call from a number of congregations in Chicago, members of Chicago Community Mennonite partnered with their sister congregation, First Church of the Brethren, to hang a large Black Lives Matter banner above the 290 Expressway that runs past their shared church building.

In December 2014, members of Living Water joined several African American congregations in Chicago in walking out of their Sunday service and into the street for a song and short liturgical reflection, all while holding Black Lives Matter placards.

Cyneatha Millsaps, pastor at Community Mennonite Church in Markham, Ill., says the Black Lives Matter movement has been a part of worship services and prayers.

On Sunday, Nov. 29, many congregations held a special time of prayer for racial justice and reconciliation in Chicago.

At Reba Place Church in Evanston, Ill., pastor Charlotte Lehman used McDonald’s death as part of her sermon examining the contrasts between “the now and the not-yet quality of the kingdom of God among us—a world in which individuals can be wonderfully transformed by the power of Jesus in their lives and a world in which our system of justice regularly perpetrates injustice.”

Reba Place also has a racial justice group that works to educate the congregation about antiracism. Members of the group have met with local leaders of the Black Lives Matter movement in the Chicago area.

Chicago Community Mennonite heard from people who attended the protest during their Sunday morning worship service; a service that also included prayers and a sermon that explicitly named recent incidents of police violence and support for the Black Lives Matter movement.

At Living Water, Rebecca Larsen, who also attended the Friday protest, led the congregation in a time of prayer and offered a report of the event.

“My prayer is that this would not be the case in our time or generation,” says Larsen, “that God would see no one to intervene on behalf of justice. Being at the protest on Friday was a hopeful time of seeing so many people intervening by showing up, interrupting business as usual and calling for justice.” — *Hannah Heinzekehr* for The Mennonite

Archbishop of Canterbury invites Mennonite to program

Neal Blough helps orient a new community of young adults in Lambeth Palace



Amy Schmid

Neal Blough, based in Paris, France, serves in a variety of pastoral and teaching capacities.

When Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, moved his family into the top floor of the 800-year-old Lambeth Palace in London, he fielded a question about what he was going to do with the rest of the building. “We’ll fill it with young people,” was his reported response, and Neal Blough received an invitation to help with this initiative.

Janie and Neal Blough of Mennonite Mission Network have served in Paris, France, in a variety of pastoral and teaching capacities since 1975. Neal Blough is a foremost authority on Anabaptism in France and often lectures about Reformation history in seminaries and conferences.

Last September, as part of the preparation for the Archbishop’s launch of the Community of St. Anselm, Blough was asked to teach about 16th-century reform, including the major Protestant movements and changes that occurred within the Catholic Church without schism.

The St. Anselm community began with 36 Christians between 20 and 35 years of age from all over the world who have committed to spend a Jesus-centered year of prayer, theological reflection and service in local communities.

Saint Anselm, a Benedictine monk, was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1093-1114. He is known for a teaching that is shared by Anabaptists—knowledge of God follows the practice of worship and active love of God.

“Since members of the St. Anselm community come from Europe, North America, Africa and Australia, as well as from various Christian ecclesial traditions, the goal was to take into consideration the reasons for the breakup of Western Christianity in the 16th century onward and reflect on current efforts to heal the many breaches,” Blough says.

In addition to his academic expertise, Blough attributes his invitation to Lambeth Palace to the long relationship between Paris Mennonite Center, where he and Janie are staff

persons, and Communauté du Chemin Neuf (Community of the New Way).

Blough occasionally teaches in Chemin Neuf’s theological training programs. Anne-Cathy Graber, a French Mennonite who is a member of the Chemin Neuf community, has reinforced the bond as she has served as an associate staff member at Paris Mennonite Center since 2009.

Chemin Neuf began in 1973, growing out of a Catholic charismatic prayer group. This community of about 2,000 members from 30 countries welcomes Christians from many denominations. Four Chemin Neuf community members live at Lambeth Palace. Chemin Neuf and the newly founded St. Anselm community share a passion for Christian unity and a desire for Christ-centered integration of all of life. Their worship includes a commitment to work for justice that breaks down barriers that divide people.

A highlight of Blough’s experience was sharing a meal with the archbishop, but he said each of the three days was “invigorating and rich.” He appreciated the opportunity to share in the prayer life of the Lambeth community. There were morning and evening prayers, with Eucharist at noon.

“I was impressed with the leadership Justin Welby gives in this respect,” Blough says. “Staff and community live

Staff and community live in an atmosphere of prayer and concern for the universal church and the suffering of our world.—Neal Blough

in an atmosphere of prayer and concern for the universal church and the suffering of our world.”

Blough says he had meaningful discussion with members of the community in which they shared their pain over divisions among Christians and the tension of working for unity, while at the same time trying to hold to the basic theological convictions that define denominational identities.

“I attempt to remain clearly Mennonite [while] at the same time realizing that division among Christians is a scandal and that the Mennonite concern for peace should be applied to the situation in the larger church,” Blough says.

He credits the benefits of a long-term presence and the relationships built up over the years to the opportunities he is given to speak and teach in varied settings. He hopes September’s lectures and conversations “contribute in one small way to building bridges of understanding and reconciliation within the body of Christ splintered into many, sometimes mutually excluding, groups.”—*Lynda Hollinger-Janzen of Mennonite Mission Network*

The Mennonite, Inc. Year in review

Timeline of 2015's top stories

Dates based on first article publication in *The Mennonite* magazine.

Top five posts online at www.TheMennonite.org

1. The failure to bind and loose: Responses to Yoder's sexual abuse, By Rachel Waltner Goossen, Read 27,633 times
2. The children are listening, by Addie Liechty, Read 18,763 times
3. A letter from Theda Good, Read 8,896 times
4. A letter to Theda Good, by Isaac Villegas, Read 8,288 times
5. John Troyer to lead new network, by Anna Groff, Read 8,059 times

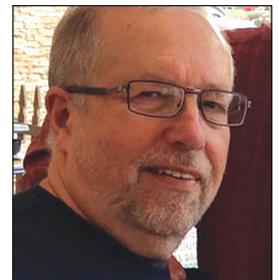


Services of Lament acknowledge harm from John Howard Yoder's actions



Evana begins and appoints John Troyer

Mennonites rally in support of Pastor Max Villatoro



Death of Joel Kauffmann

The Mennonite, Inc. online followers

- ▶ TMail subscribers: **3,435**
- ▶ Meno Acontecer subscribers (Spanish-language monthly e-zine): **678**
- ▶ Facebook: **4,039**
- ▶ Twitter (@TheMennonite): **2,450**
- ▶ Instagram (@TheMennoniteInc, Launched in July 2015): **211**



Most shared post
"The Children are Listening" by Addie Liechty, 131 shares

January

February

March

April

May

June



MC USA delegates pass resolutions on forbearance and Membership Guidelines

The Mennonite, Inc. on #GivingTuesday (Dec. 1)

40 gifts • \$1,635 raised
Thank you!

Lancaster and North Central conferences vote to leave MC USA



Transition at The Mennonite, Inc.: Groff leaves, Heinzekehr hired



Anabaptists gather for Mennonite World Conference

Top three Facebook posts from The Mennonite in December

1. Four Mennonite colleges update nondiscrimination policies, Post reach: 19,500
2. Christian Peacemaker Teams Facebook post goes viral, Post reach: 8,100
3. EMU President Loren Swartzendruber issues call to action regarding extremism in all forms, Post reach: 6,600



WDC passes 'Rainbow resolution'

Colleges update nondiscrimination policies

Top 4 cities of subscribers to The Mennonite

1. Goshen, Ind.
2. Harrisonburg, Va.
3. Lancaster, Pa.
4. Newton, Kan.

2015's top 10 news stories

Disagreements over LGBTQ inclusion dominate year's news

1. Mennonite Church USA delegates pass resolutions on forbearance and Membership Guidelines

In July, delegates to the Mennonite Church USA Assembly in Kansas City, Mo., passed a resolution on forbearance, which “[calls] on all those in Mennonite Church USA to offer grace, love and forbearance toward conferences, congregations and pastors in our body who, in different ways, seek to be faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ on matters related to same-sex covenanted unions.

Delegates also passed a resolution on Membership Guidelines that states that “the delegate assembly will not entertain changes to the Membership Guidelines for the next four years.” (August, pages 14-15)

2. Lancaster and North Central conferences vote to leave Mennonite Church USA

In July, North Central Conference delegates passed a motion to begin a yearlong process of withdrawing from Mennonite Church USA. In November, Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference leaders voted to withdraw from MC USA over a two-year period. (December, pages 36, 33)

3. Anabaptists gather for Mennonite World Conference

More than 7,500 people from 65 countries came to the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex July 21-26 for the 16th Mennonite World Conference Assembly. It was the first time since 1978 that U.S. churches hosted the global assembly, which meets every six years. (September, pages 12-34)

4. Western District Conference approves ‘Rainbow resolution’

In October, Western District Conference delegates voted by a 72-percent majority to approve a resolution that “pastors, with the affirmation of their congregations, consistent with Mennonite polity, and without fear of censure, may officiate or refuse to officiate ceremonies that consecrate before God monogamous, lifelong unions, regardless of the sexual orientation of those being united.” (December, page 32)

5. Mennonite colleges update nondiscrimination hiring policies

In July, the boards of Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., and Goshen (Ind.) College, in separate actions, updated their nondiscrimination hiring policies. The hiring practices and benefits of both institutions now expand to include employees in same-sex marriages. Later, Goshen and EMU voluntarily withdrew from the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities in response to several CCCU institutions’ concerns following the July decisions.

Since then, in October, the board of Bluffton (Ohio) University voted to add sexual identity and gender orientation to its nondiscrimination statement (see page 32). The board of Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., had taken similar action in April 2014. (September, page 39)

6. Evana launches, appoints John Troyer director

In October, 250 people from 60 congregations attended the launch of Evana, a network of churches and individuals that believe in combining Anabaptist and evangelical principles. The network began in January as a result of a conference in Hartsville, Ohio, responding to the allowance of LGBTQ leaders in Mennonite Church USA congregations. In April, John Troyer was appointed transitional administrator. In October, he was chosen as executive director. (May, page 37, November, page 41)

7. Mennonites rally in support of Pastor Max Villatoro

Max Villatoro, a Mennonite pastor in Iowa City, was deported by Immigration and Customs Enforcement in March. On the same day, Central Plains Mennonite Conference launched a fund-raising campaign for Villatoro’s legal fees and to help his wife and four children. More than 42,000 people wrote to call for his release. (April, page 39)

8. Rachel Waltner Goossen’s article on John Howard Yoder, two lament services held

The Mennonite published “The Failure to Bind and Loose” in our January 2015 issue, an excerpt from a longer article in *Mennonite Quarterly Review* that detailed Mennonite responses to John Howard Yoder’s sexual abuse.

In March, in a “Service of Lament, Confession and Commitment,” Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., publicly apologized for long ignoring the cries for justice from women who had been sexually violated by Yoder.

In July, at the Mennonite Church USA convention in Kansas City, Mo., over 300 people attended a service of lament and hope for sexual abuse. (January, page 26, April, page 32, August, page 33)

9. Joel Kauffmann dies

In May, Joel Kauffmann, a cartoonist and screenwriter whose cartoons appeared in this magazine, died. (June, page 6)

10. Transition at The Mennonite, Inc.

Anna Groff, executive director of The Mennonite, Inc., announced her resignation in May. In August, Hannah Heinzekehr was named executive director. She began work in October. (July, page 34, September, page 36)—*Gordon Houser*

Mennonite Church Canada scales back

Donation shortfall leads to five national home office staff being released

Mennonite Church Canada has begun to implement changes proposed by its Future Directions Task Force (FDTF) as a result of pressing financial necessity.

Although the recommendations require final approval from area and national church delegates, a significant donation revenue shortfall has required Mennonite Church Canada to already begin implementation of the plan, which involves reductions in ministry programs as well as home office staff.

As of Oct. 31, 2015, Mennonite Church Canada had experienced a donation shortfall approaching \$300,000. It had planned on projected donation income of almost \$3.4 million for the current fiscal year.

“Although a reduction of ministry and staff is always painful, our financial reality necessitated immediate action,” says Willard Metzger, executive director.

As of Dec. 1, 2015, five national home office staff have been released, with corresponding reductions in programming that relate to Christian formation, human resources and the finance department, Metzger says. Staff being released will receive severances as per personnel policies already in place. Additional changes and adjustments to program and staff are anticipated in 2016, he says, as more details become clearer.

In a Dec. 1, 2015, letter to Mennonite Church Canada, Metzger wrote, “I feel good about the direction for our national and area churches proposed by the [FDTF]. I think the new envisioned system will serve our congregations well and provide a solid platform to live into our growing secularizing society. However, the transition to a much smaller system will be painful. Please pray for our entire staff team as some begin the task of finding new employment and others find the strength to help transition to the new reality.”

In a Facebook post Dec. 2, 2015, Kirsten Schroeder, former director of human resources for Mennonite Church Canada, wrote about the painful cuts, including the loss of her own position: “For one-and-a-half years my colleagues and I have been kept informed of the need for a radical transformation of the Mennonite Church Canada offices. Nonetheless, it was a shock to us all when we were told that announcements about job cuts would happen within the week. ... So many people have expressed their love and support for me by being angry at my employer. How lovely it is to be so loved and unconditionally supported. Thank you. But your anger is hurting me. This is not just an employer, this is the church, and we are called to be a contrast community. We don’t need to find someone to blame, we need to seek justice and love.”

When created, the FDTF was given the mandate of

responding to two questions: What is God’s spirit calling us to in the 21st century? and What are the best ways to thrive and grow? At its meetings on Nov. 14, the General Board received the FDTF’s report.

The General Board approved in principle the FDTF’s recommended direction. The new structure envisions a newly constituted national entity that will function under a mandate led by the area churches in a collective covenant to collaborate with each other in engaging God’s mission in their respective regions. The five covenanting area churches are Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia.

The new national entity will focus more strongly on supporting, resourcing and equipping area church leaders to empower and enable the mission of local congregations in local, regional and global contexts. A key principle in the FDTF’s findings is that congregations are increasingly becoming the locus of missional activity in their communities and beyond.

National church ministries are almost entirely funded by congregational giving and individual donations.—*Mennonite Church Canada staff and The Mennonite*

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Supportive Communities Network reaches 100

Shalom Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan., is latest to join the network

The Supportive Communities Network (SCN), a group of communities supported by Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests (BMC), has grown to include 100 Mennonite and Church of the Brethren Communities.

In order to hold the SCN designation, a congregation must undertake a deliberate process of education and discernment, develop a welcoming statement that includes sexual orientation and gender identity and be public about its affirmation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer church members.

“The thing that’s really important to remember is that the decision to join SCN is the result usually of several years of discernment and work,” says Carol Wise, BMC executive director and coordinator of SCN. “We insist on some process of discernment that leads to the development of a welcoming statement that includes sexual orientation and gender identity and is voted upon by the congregation. We have found that if you can’t say it publicly, then you really can’t do it fully. There is a whole intentional process that is often overlooked and underappreciated.”

Since last July’s Mennonite Church USA convention in Kansas City, Mo., SCN has added several Mennonite congregations to its ranks. In Kansas City, delegates passed

a resolution reaffirming Mennonite Church USA’s current Membership Guidelines for four years. The Membership Guidelines include a statement prohibiting pastors from performing same-sex marriage ceremonies.

“Oftentimes what happens after events like KC is that a congregation who had been plodding along with the process is pushed. They either decide to make a decision now or to begin a more intentional conversation,” says Wise.

We wanted to be in league with the Samaritan, not the priest or the Levite.—Laurie Hesed

Shalom Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan., made the decision to join SCN in August after a year-long process of congregational discernment.

“For me, joining SCN gave clarity,” says Jason Miller, a Shalom attendee who helped initiate the conversation about joining SCN. “It solidified what had been a sort of ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ policy. I wanted to be able to say definitively to LGBTQ people when they asked, Yes, you will be welcome at Shalom.”

In August 2014, a small group Miller was a part of sent a letter to the entire congregation, asking for three things: that the congregation draft a welcoming statement, that they demonstrate a full commitment to inclusion for LGBTQ individuals and that they identify as an inclusive congregation before calling a new pastor (the letter was sent during a pastoral transition).

This letter set in motion a year of discernment that included committee work, congregational meetings and listening sessions, worship services and Scripture study. Wise also came to speak to the congregation during a weekend in March that Miller described as an important event for broadening people’s understanding and moving the conversation forward. The convention in Kansas City came near the end of their discernment process.

“Kansas City was an eye-opener for our congregation,” says Tom Szambecki, a congregational delegate for Shalom. “We had 16 youth in the delegate hall for the forbearance [resolution] vote and participation in Pink Menno hymn sings also made a big impact on them.”

In August, the congregation affirmed the proposal to join SCN by 85 percent.

“When you recognize that you’re on one side and Jesus is on the other, then you have to move,” says Laurie Hesed, who helped lead the process of drafting Shalom’s welcoming statement. “We wanted to be in league with the Samaritan, not the priest or the Levite, and this was one way of moving toward that.”—*Hannah Heinzekehr*

2016 Visit Days: Monday, **Jan. 18** | Monday, **Feb. 15**
| Friday, **April 1** | Saturday, **July 2** | Saturday, **July 30**

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Sexual abuse prevention panel formed

The panel will work over the next two years to develop resources

In response to the Churchwide Statement on Sexual Abuse, which was passed by the Delegate Assembly of Mennonite Church USA at its biennial convention in Kansas City, Mo., last July, the Executive Board staff cabinet has called together a panel to continue the work of healing and prevention of sexual abuse within the denomination. The cabinet includes Ervin Stutzman, executive director; Glen Guyton, chief operating officer; Shelley Buller, executive assistant; Janie Beck Kreider, communications project director; Iris de Leon-Hartshorn, director of transformative peacemaking; and Terry Shue, director of leadership development.

The panel will work together over the next two years to carry out the commitments described in the churchwide statement.

The panel will work to carry out the commitments described in the churchwide statement.

Their tasks include the following:

- developing a monitoring tool for agency reviews that would evaluate for clear, accessible and public policies on sexual harassment and abuse;
- developing educational tools and resources for raising awareness about religious teachings that make it difficult for victims to protect themselves or speak up when they have been violated and hurt;
- developing a tool for agencies on how to interview victims when they lodge a complaint;
- meeting with leaders of Mennonite Education Agency and Mennonite colleges/universities specifically regarding their sexual abuse prevention and response policies and practices, and establishing processes for ongoing monitoring;
- developing educational materials and/or providing re-

sources to help congregations better understand the realities of sexualized violence by church leaders and other trusted individuals;

- developing guidelines for preaching and worship practices that are sensitive to the needs of victims and survivors.

Members of the panel:

- Anna Groff, Tucson, Ariz., executive director of Dove's Nest;
- Maribel Hinojosa, College Station, Texas, clinical psychologist in private practice;
- Regina Shands Stoltzfus, Goshen, Ind., assistant professor of peace, justice and conflict studies at Goshen College;
- Ross Erb, Harrisonburg, Va., social worker at the Collins Center;
- Nancy Kauffmann, Elkhart, Ind., denominational minister for Mennonite Church USA;
- David Miller, Elkhart, Ind., associate professor of missional leadership development at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary;
- Jennifer Castro, San Antonio, Texas, coordinator of the Women in Leadership Project for Mennonite Church USA and staff support for the panel.—*Mennonite Church USA*

Preparing leaders for church and world

Thanks for serving the Mennonite church

Hannah Heinzekehr

executive director of *The Mennonite*
2003 Bethany Christian alumna



Fast Fact

More than 15
Bethany alumni
entered service
roles in 2015



www.bethanycs.net

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The Mennonite and Gospel Herald now online

Online access makes important material available to researchers worldwide

AMBS



As part of the project to digitize volumes of The Mennonite and Gospel Herald, Lois Longenecker, a volunteer for Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, snips threads of tightly-bound volumes so that pages could be scanned in their entirety.

The denominational magazines of Mennonite Church USA's two predecessor organizations, the Mennonite Church (MC) and the General Conference Mennonite Church (GCMC), are now available digitally for free online

searching. (http://libraryguides.ambs.edu/digital_mennonite_periodicals).

Within each volume of the MC's *Gospel Herald* (1908–1998) and the GCMC's *The Mennonite* (1885–1998), researchers may conduct a full-text search to quickly locate topics and articles.

According to Eileen Saner, director of library services for Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), these publications are essential primary sources for historical study.

“They trace the history of these two denominations during the decades before they merged [to form Mennonite Church USA],” she says. “The articles, news releases and letters document the challenges they faced, such as increasing engagement with society, civil rights, the Vietnam War, changing peace witness, and worldwide relief and mission activity.”

Only about 10 libraries in North America have print issues of these publications, she notes, adding that the only search tool has been brief indexes published at the end of each annual print volume.

“Online access makes this important material available to researchers worldwide with the convenience of computer-based searching,” she says.

The digitization project is a joint effort of the Anabaptist Mennonite Digital Collaborative, which includes the AMBS Library in Elkhart (Ind.), the Good Library and the Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen (Ind.) College and the Mennonite Church USA Archives, also in Goshen. The Schowalter Foundation, Newton, Kan., contributed \$16,000. Additional funding was provided by all of the Mennonite college and university libraries and by Anabaptist historical organizations in Pennsylvania, Iowa and Indiana.

“**Communities of faith tell stories** to know who we are,” says Marci Frederick, director of one of the organizations contributing funding to the project—Hartzler Library at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va. “Having *Gospel Herald* and *The Mennonite* available online enables more researchers, genealogists and other interested people to trace 20th-century U.S. Mennonite history, theology, practices and conversations. Thus these words can continue to shape the present church and deepen the stories we tell one another about who we are and hope to be.”

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View the online archive at http://libraryguides.ambs.edu/digital_mennonite_periodicals—AMBS

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MEDA convention attendees raise over \$100,000

Money will support MEDA's work with women entrepreneurs

On Saturday evening at the Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) annual convention, Nov. 5-8, 2015, in Richmond, Va., supporters rallied to raise over \$100,000 for Bike to GROW, a fund-raising initiative to support MEDA's work with women entrepreneurs.

Bike to GROW, headed by two young women who cycled across Canada to raise money for MEDA's GROW (Greater Rural Opportunities for Women) project in Ghana, raised over \$200,000 from May through September 2015. Even though they surpassed their original fund-raising goal of \$150,000, cyclists Mary Fehr and Sarah French wanted to outdo a fund-raising initiative from the previous summer, which featured a climb of Mt. Kilimanjaro with MEDA president Allan Sauder. In order to exceed the climber's achievements, Fehr and French spontaneously asked if 60 convention attendees would support Bike to GROW with \$1,000 pledges. Over the course of dinner that evening, several pledges were made totaling over \$100,000.

The MEDA convention commenced Nov. 5 with a keynote address from race relations expert James Loewen. The Nov. 6 plenary session took the form of a lunchtime panel discussion, featuring family business owners from three North American companies. David Greene, host of National Public Radio's Morning Edition, shared stories from his travels during the Nov. 6 evening address. International economic development expert Joyce Bontrager Lehman provided a compelling finale to the convention on Sunday morning during her talk about the world's poor. MEDA also introduced its second class of "20 Under 35: Young Professionals Changing the World" award winners.

At the annual general meeting, MEDA president Allan Sauder talked about how MEDA leverages its resources to make the most of its efforts to create business solutions to poverty.

"A few years ago, after the Lehman Brothers fiasco and the worldwide financial meltdown, the term leveraging fell out of favor," said Sauder. "Well, that is not the kind of leveraging we are talking about: Ours is a responsible business approach that begins with good stewardship of resources and allows us to achieve the greatest impact for the maximum number of families."

"The 2015 MEDA Convention was a huge success. The passion for MEDA's mission is alive and well, and it was evident in everything that happened at convention," says Dave Warren, MEDA's chief engagement officer. "The unexpected \$100,000 fund-raising rally for Bike to GROW was incredible. We are blessed with an energetic and passionate group of supporters that never cease to amaze us."

MEDA's 2016 Convention, "Business as a Calling: Women Changing the World," will be held in San Antonio, Texas, Oct. 27-30.—MEDA



Mary Fehr (left) and Sarah French have raised over \$300,000 for MEDA's GROW (Greater Rural Opportunities for Women) project in Ghana through their Bike to GROW initiative.

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Marriage practice, biblical interpretation and discernment

An analysis of the biblical views on marriage and a call for discernment

In a time when Western society is rapidly altering its image of marriage and government institutions have legally recognized same-sex marriage, the church is pressed to decide, Shall we follow suit?

The church is to discern between the fading form of this passing age and what is “good” and “acceptable” according to God’s will (Romans 12:2). Historically, the church has relied upon scriptural revelation, doctrinal tradition, rational wisdom and communal experience to guide discernment. The *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (1995) acknowledges Scripture as “authoritative source” for the church’s discernment, the “standard” against which all other claims must be “tested and corrected” (Article 4).

Here, I venture to sketch the path that my thinking has taken thus far on the question of interpreting Scripture concerning marriage practice, in the hope that this might contribute constructively to the church’s discernment.

I do so cautiously, aware that this may elicit passionate reactions or touch pained places. I do so honestly, not pretending neutrality. I do so modestly, cognizant of necessary brevity and limited scope. I do so humbly, not presuming to understand perfectly or settle everything. I do so fraternally, as a fellow laborer in the Lord’s vineyard, inviting thoughtful consideration and faithful correction.

1. Marriage and Scripture: Analogies to slaves and women

Just as the church yesterday was wrong on slavery and women, some argue, so the church today is wrong on marriage. The church today denying blessing to same-sex union for biblical reasons is akin to the church yesterday giving sanction to slavery and patriarchy for biblical reasons.

This argument requires careful scrutiny. Are the cases actually parallel? How should we evaluate the comparisons?

Concerning slaves and women, there are texts in the Old Testament (OT) that legalize and legitimate slavery or patriarchy and even some texts in the New Testament (NT) that might be interpreted to reinforce oppressive or patriarchal practices. At the same time, there are textual strands running through the biblical canon that counter and thus point the church toward overturning previous practices of oppression and patriarchy.

Regarding slaves: We can trace an arc of liberation from the Exodus narrative to Sabbath and Jubilee law (Leviticus 25; Deuteronomy 15) to prophetic critique (Isaiah 58; Jeremiah 34:8-22) to gospel proclamation (Luke 4:16-21) to apostolic teaching (1 Corinthians 7:21; 12:13; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:11; 4:1; 1 Timothy 1:8-11; Philemon 15-17). Cumulatively, this canonical arc points toward abolition of slavery.

Regarding women: We can trace an arc of OT texts that teach “male and female” as made in God’s image and sharing

“dominion” over creation (Genesis 1:26-28), that honor women leaders in Israel (Miriam, Deborah, Huldah and Judith) and that portray women as exemplars of covenant righteousness (Ruth and Naomi). This arc continues through NT texts that highlight women’s roles in Israel’s history (Matthew 1:1-16), that honor women’s participation in Jesus’ ministry and leadership in the early church (Mary, Martha, Joanna, Tabitha, Lydia, Prisca, Junia, Phoebe and others), that affirm unity of “male and female” in Christ (Galatians 3:28), and that call for mutuality between husbands and wives (1 Corinthians 7:3-5; 11:11-12; Ephesians 5:21-33). Cumulatively, this canonical arc points toward egalitarian practices.

The implicit norm across the biblical canon is that marital union is predicated on the created difference and sexed correspondence of male-and-female.

In each case, there are voices (for slavery and patriarchy) and countervoices (for liberation and equality) in the biblical canon. Comparing the countervoices to their canonical contexts and cultural backgrounds and connecting them into a canonical arc reveals a Spirit-guided redemptive movement that can guide the church’s discernment. We ask: How does that redemptive movement bear upon our situation? How can we act faithfully along that arc’s direction?

Taking the same approach in the case of marriage, we find that marriage practice throughout the biblical canon is neither simple nor static. Here, too, there are voices and countervoices (mono/poly-gamy, for/against intermarriage, hierarchy/mutuality, etc.).

Yet the intracanonical dynamic is constrained within the boundary of male-female union. The implicit norm across the biblical canon—evident in origins narrative (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18-24); presumed in legal code (Leviticus 18), wisdom instruction (Proverbs 5-7), and pastoral counsel (1 Corinthians 7); apparent in poetic expression of erotic love (Song of Songs) and symbolic depiction of divine covenant (Isaiah 62:4-5; Hosea; Ephesians 5:22-32; Revelation 21-22)—is that marital union is predicated on the created difference and sexed correspondence of male-and-female.

Some today argue that the canonical pattern of male-female union is *normal* but not *normative*—and thus not re-

restrictive of marriage practice in the church. Such arguments reinterpret key texts in Genesis.

Some argue that the Genesis story only describes what is and does not prescribe what should be: “male and female” becoming “one flesh” reflects common cultural custom but does not present a normative model for marital union. Jesus, however, read the Genesis story as having prescriptive import with respect to marriage practice. That “from the beginning of creation” God “made them male and female” and joined them in “one flesh” (Genesis 1:27; 2:24), as Jesus interpreted, indicates God’s intention for marriage, according to which Jesus judged the human practice of marriage (Mark 10:6-9; cf. Matthew 19:4-6).

Others argue that the biblical emphasis in marital union is on similarity not difference: the man’s becoming “one flesh” with the woman (Genesis 2:24) signifies the man’s union with a creature like in kind to himself (a human) not a human different in sex from himself (a woman). The Genesis text, however, equally emphasizes similarity and difference. The paired lines of poetic lyric highlight both human kinship (“This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh”) and sexed correspondence (“this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken”) in becoming “one flesh” (Genesis 2:23).

Concerning marriage and sex, moreover, Jesus and Paul dispensed teachings that are as restrictive as—or even more restrictive than—the OT.

The OT prohibited adultery (Exodus 20:14) but permitted divorce-and-remarriage (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). Jesus intensified the commandment, judging that coveting a neighbor’s wife (Exodus 20:17) is adultery (Matthew 5:27-28). Similarly, Jesus subordinated the human accommodation reflected in the divorce law to the divine intention revealed in the creation story, ruling that God meant marriage to be permanent such that divorce-and-remarriage is adultery (Mark 10:2-12; cf. Malachi 2:13-16). Adhering to Jesus’ teaching, Paul prohibited divorce by believers and required divorcées to reconcile or not remarry (1 Corinthians 7:10-16).

Jesus allowed divorce-and-remarriage in cases of unchastity (Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-9). Also, Paul permitted remarriage in the church in cases of abandonment by an unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:15; cf. v. 39). Yet exceptions for divorce were not exceptions to the male-female pattern of marital union.

While the OT prohibited incest (Leviticus 18:6-16), a prohibition reinforced by Paul (1 Corinthians 5:1-2), it accommodated but regulated polygamy (Leviticus 18:17-18; Deuteronomy 21:15-17). Jesus’ teaching pictures marriage as an inseparable “two-become-one” (Mark 10:2-12; cf. 1 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 5:31); and Paul’s instructions restrict marriage to “one wife” or “one husband” (1 Corinthians 7:2; 1 Timothy 3:2, 12; 5:9; Titus 1:5-6). These together arguably prohibit polygamy.

The major NT innovation concerns whether marrying and begetting are duties or even priorities. Apart from nazirite vows or prophetic vocations, celibacy was not a

general option: marrying-and-begetting was considered both duty and blessing (cf. Genesis 1:28; 9:1; Psalms 127, 128). Jesus and Paul, celibate themselves, neither mandated marrying nor prioritized begetting. Jesus offered celibacy for the kingdom as an alternative to fidelity in marriage (Matthew 19:10-12) and deemed celibates worthy of the marriage-less coming age (Luke 20:34-36; cf. Revelation 14:1-5). Paul, anticipating the coming age and prioritizing the Lord’s service, commended celibacy over marrying (1 Corinthians 7:7-8, 25-40). Yet the celibacy option did not alter the male-female pattern of marital union.

The NT thus presents four countervoices concerning marriage practice: permanency, monogamy, mutuality and celibacy. Concerning same-sex practices, however, the biblical canon speaks with a single voice.

The biblical attitude concerning same-sex practices is sustained consistently: across both OT (Leviticus 18:2-30; 20:13) and NT (Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:8-11) canonical contexts; against both ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman cultural backgrounds, each of which tolerated same-sex practices; regarding both male-male (Leviticus; Romans) and female-female (Romans) relations; and regarding both possibly exploitive (Corinthians; Timothy) and likely mutual (Leviticus; Romans) relations. The canonical assessment is univocally negative.

Even were disputed texts concerning same-sex practices discounted, there would be no positive voice in the biblical canon that counters the male-female pattern of marital union.

The redemptive movement throughout the biblical canon is thus always away from same-sex practices. Even were disputed texts concerning same-sex practices discounted, there would be no positive voice in the biblical canon that counters the male-female pattern of marital union. No law permits or counsel commends or story favors same-sex union—unless one twists the text to turn David and Jonathan or Ruth and Naomi into erotic lovers. Still, some appeal to God’s working the divine purpose through marriages in non-normal ways—Abraham and Sarah or Mary and Joseph—as evidence that God would bless non-normative unions. Yet these instances themselves exhibit the normative pattern of male-female union.

Amid diverse voices across the biblical canon, the marriage arc consistently evidences that marital union in the present age is predicated on the created order of male-and-female. Insofar as the church anticipates the coming age of

renewed creation, the NT points beyond marrying-and-begetting toward celibacy, not same-sex union.

The case of same-sex union, therefore, is not analogous to the cases of slaves and women. While canonical arcs reveal redemptive movements pointing toward liberation of slaves and equality for women, no parallel arc points toward sanctioning same-sex union.

2. Marriage and membership: Analogy to Gentiles

If the church is to discern an affirmation of same-sex union, then we must derive from the biblical canon a clear reason that compellingly warrants diverging from the canonical marriage arc. That reason must answer this question: Why should the church follow the counter directions of the liberationist and egalitarian arcs but then diverge from the consistent direction of the marriage arc? We next consider a prominent argument for divergence.

There are various texts throughout the biblical canon that augur for reception of Gentiles, Samaritans, eunuchs and others who were formerly considered “outsiders” to Israel as members-by-faith of God’s people. We can trace this canonical arc from exodus narrative (Exodus 12:38) to

The Jerusalem council, in redrawing membership boundaries to include Gentiles, did not redraw moral boundaries in any way that deviated from the canonical arc concerning marital union and sexual practice.

covenant code (Exodus 22:21; 23:9) to holiness code (Leviticus 19:33-34) to festal law (Deuteronomy 16) to prophetic witness (Isaiah 56:3-8) to Jesus’ genealogy (Matthew 1:1-16) to Jesus’ ministry (Matthew 19:12; Luke 5:27-39; 14:12-24; John 4:1-42) to early church (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 8:4-40) to apostolic teaching (Galatians 3:27-28; Ephesians 2:11-22; Col 3:11; 1 Peter 2:9-10) to apocalyptic vision (Revelation 5:9-10). This inclusionary arc reveals a Spirit-guided redemptive movement that should shape a receptive posture in the church today toward various “outsiders,” including sexual minorities.

Some today invoke the inclusionary arc concerning marriage practice. Might “outsider” inclusion in membership be a precedent for same-sex inclusion in marriage? Might the church thus judge that the inclusionary arc supercedes the marriage arc? Some argue that the church today should redefine marriage as sex-undifferentiated to sanction same-sex union in analogy to how the early church redefined membership as ethnicity-neutral to receive Gentiles. This argument requires careful scrutiny.

“Outsider” inclusion did have an immediate implication for marriage practice: Gentile membership shifted the intermarriage boundary from Jew/Gentile (never addressed in the NT) to believer/nonbeliever (1 Corinthians 7:12-16; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1). Yet Jew-Gentile union was no exception to the male-female pattern.

To redefine marriage in analogy to membership, moreover, would blur the distinction between belonging (who is “in” and on what terms) and behaving (acting as befits belonging). That distinction in the church’s discernment is evidenced in a key text along the inclusionary arc: Acts 15.

At the Jerusalem council, the apostles and elders discerned that the church should receive Gentiles on the same terms as Jews. Peter testified: “In giving [Gentiles] the Holy Spirit ... and in cleansing their hearts by faith [God] has made no distinction between [Gentiles] and [Jews]” (15:8-9; cf. 10:34-35, 44-47). Nonetheless, the council made a distinction between Gentile members, who were received on faith by grace (15:11), and certain practices, from which believers were required to abstain (15:19-21).

Still, some argue that waiving the OT requirement of circumcision for Gentile believers is precedent for waiving OT restrictions on sexual practice for today’s church.

Let’s hear the apostolic decree: “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality” (15:28-29). The generic term “sexual immorality” (*porneia*) covered various forms of illicit sex (e.g., prostitution, fornication, incest, adultery).

Intended to facilitate Gentile-Jew fellowship, these “requirements” were likely derived from holiness laws pertaining to aliens residing within Israel. Those laws forbade idolatry, eating blood or carrion, and various forms of illicit sex, including same-sex acts (Leviticus 17:8-18:30). Or, possibly, these “requirements” reflected the common ethic of Hellenistic Judaism, which was derived from the Mosaic Law and transmitted through synagogue teaching. Adapting and selecting biblical law for Jewish life in Hellenistic culture, this common ethic prohibited idolatry and various forms of illicit sex, including same-sex acts. Either way, rather than simply abrogating OT law, the council discerned by the Holy Spirit how to appropriate OT law for the church.

The Jerusalem council reinforced canonical norms concerning sexual practice at the same time that it received Gentiles as members. The NT continued teaching consistently against “sexual immorality” across various contexts (Romans 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 5:1-2, 9-13; 6:9-20; 7:2; 2 Corinthians 12:19-21; Galatians 5:16-24; Ephesians 5:3-5; Colossians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Revelation 19:2; 22:15). The early church taught likewise (Didache 2:2; 3:3; 5:1; Hermas Mand. 4; Ep. Barnabas 19:4).

Marriage, therefore, is not analogous to membership. The Jerusalem council, in redrawing membership boundaries to include Gentiles, did not redraw moral boundaries in any way that deviated from the canonical arc concerning marital

union and sexual practice.

3. Marriage practice and church discernment

The apostolic decision at the Jerusalem council, which “seemed good to the Holy Spirit,” set an enduring precedent for the church’s discernment of what is “acceptable” to God. The council’s discernment worked along the inclusionary arc but without letting membership inclusion override moral norms or redefine marital union. Therefore, for the church today to honor the canonical precedent of the Jerusalem council, we must hold both arcs together in our discernment.

Two important implications follow. The inclusionary arc is not optional for church practice, contrary to the inclinations of some traditionalists. At the same time, the inclusionary arc cannot be pitted against or privileged over the marriage arc, contrary to the claims of some innovationists.

This canonical-arc approach to biblical interpretation thus yields these questions to guide the church’s discernment: How do the marriage and inclusionary arcs together bear on our situation with respect to membership inclusion, marriage practice and sexual minorities? How might the church act faithfully along both arcs?

Let us prayerfully seek the instruction and guidance of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 16:13) as we forbear patiently with one another in love and “the unity of the Spirit” (Ephesians 4:2-3).—*Darrin W. Snyder Belousek, a member of Salem Mennonite Church in Elida, Ohio*

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WORKERS

Gerber, Sherah-Leigh Zehr, was installed on Aug. 30, 2015, and ordained as associate pastor of worship, discipleship, and care, at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va., on Nov. 8.

Martin, David, was installed as lead pastor at Krall's Mennonite Church, Lebanon, Pa., on Oct. 25.

Philpot, Thomas, was ordained as associate pastor at The Village Chapel, New Holland, Pa., on Dec. 6, 2015.

Schlabaugh, Randall, was ordained at Thomas Mennonite Church, Hollsopple, Pa., Sept. 27, 2015.

OBITUARIES

Alderfer, Clarence, 77, Souderton, Pa., died Nov. 18, 2015. Spouse: Mary C. Derstine Alderfer. Parents: Mahlon and Ada Moyer Alderfer. Children: Don Alderfer, Linda Jaendl, Rodney Alderfer; seven grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 21 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville, Pa.

Brunk, Dr. James Robert Sr., 89, Harrisonburg, Va., died Dec. 3, 2015. Spouse: Thelma Ketterman Brunk. Parents: Harry Anthony Brunk, Sr., and Lena Gertrude Burkholder Brunk. Children: Bob Brunk, Beth Bergey, John Brunk, Don Brunk; 13 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 8 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

Brunk, Susan Leatherman, 79, Harrisonburg, Va., died Nov. 10, 2015. Spouse: David J. Brunk. Parents: Jacob L. and Mary Jones Leatherman. Children: Grace Mattson, Kenneth D. Brunk, Carol J. Brunk; five grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 17 at Lindale Mennonite Church, Linville, Va.

Christophel, Paul L., 88, Elkhart, Ind., died Nov. 17, 2015. Spouse: Flora Jane Lechlitner Christophel. Parents: John B. and Cora Nice Christophel. Children: Steve Christophel, Tom Christophel, Randy Christophel; eight grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 21 at Olive Mennonite Church, Elkhart.

Croyle, Mary Lucile Schnell, 91, Wadsworth, Ohio, died Nov. 13, 2015. Spouse: Denton E. Croyle (deceased). Parents: Hervey A. and Emma Yoder Schnell. Children: Philip J., Ann L. Weldy, J. Marshall, Warren L.; 12 grandchildren, five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 5 at First Mennonite Church, Wadsworth, Ohio.

Friesen, Justina Kroeker, 95, Altona, Manitoba, died Nov. 30, 2015. Spouse: Abram A. Friesen (deceased). Parents: Peter P. Kroeker and Justina Zacharias. Children: Jake Friesen, Willie Friesen, Raymond Friesen, Leroy Friesen, Shirley Hildebrand. Funeral: Dec. 6 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

Isaak, Marjorie L. Linscheid, 88, Sellersville, Pa. Died Nov. 15, 2015. Spouse: Arthur C. Isaak (deceased). Parents: John E. and Anna Claassen Linscheid. Children: Kristin Neufeld, Gretchen Isaak, Garth Isaak; four grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 21 at West Swamp Mennonite Church, Quakertown, Pa.

Lehman, Everett A., 84, Croghan, N.Y., died Oct. 7, 2015. Spouse: Doris R. VanNess Lehman. Parents: Benjamin and Emma Martin Lehman. Children: Kathleen Chartrand, Marilyn Shaw, Valerie Mohran, Melanie Stanisc, Colleen Farney, Lyndon Lehman, Marcia Ashline; 17 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 12 at First Mennonite Church, New Bremen, N.Y.

Loewen, Jacob Gerard, 64, Goshen, Ind., died Nov. 15, 2015. Spouse: Nancy Liechty Loewen. Parents: Melvin and Elfrieda Regier Loewen. Children: Emma Dugger, Nick Loewen, Jesse Loewen; two grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 21 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Miller, Mildred Elizabeth, 83, Harrisonburg, Va., died Oct. 29, 2015. Parents: Marvin Elias and Katie Elizabeth Wenger Miller. Funeral: Nov. 28 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Oyer, Joyce A. Cender, 85, Goshen, Ind., died Nov. 12, 2015. Spouse: Franklin D. Oyer (deceased). Parents: Roy and Mamie Park Cender. Children: Stephen Oyer, Stanley Oyer, Kent Oyer; 11 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 15 at Yoder-Culp Funeral Home, Goshen.

Regehr, Gail Diane Schroeder, 57, Inman, Kan., died Nov. 13, 2015, of cancer. Spouse: Royce David Regehr. Parents: Milo H. and Leatrice Peters Schroeder. Children: Justin Regehr, Troy Regehr. Funeral: Nov. 17 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman.

Reschly, Marion C. "Tink," 93, Crawfordsville, Iowa, died Nov. 15, 2015. Spouse: Opal M. Burkholder Reschly. Parents: Harry and Fanny Conrad Reschly. Children: Rodney Reschly, Cynthia Butcher; nine grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 21 at Sugar Creek Mennonite Church, Wayland, Iowa.

Roes, Raymond David, 82, Beaver Falls, N.Y., died Dec. 10, 2015. Spouse: Wilma Watkins Roes. Spouse: Anna Mae Widrick Roes (deceased). Parents: Samuel S. and Lena Nafziger Roes. Children: Kevin Roes, Sandra Oblick, Merle Roes, Sharon Lehman, Donald Roes; stepson: Richard Watkins; 19 grandchildren; 19 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 14 at Lowville Mennonite Church, Lowville, N.Y.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. 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.

Rychener, Evelyn M. Kauffman, 75, Wauseon, Ohio, died Nov. 19, 2015. Spouse: Larry Rychener. Parents: Orval and Cora Short Kauffman. Children: Jeffrey Rychener, Kimberly Turczyn, Jon Rychener, Jason Rychener; eight grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 25 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio.

Scholl, Maurice C., 96, Sterling, Ill., died Nov. 29, 2015. Spouse: Marcella Liechty Scholl (deceased). Parents: Clark and Ethel Palmer Scholl. Children: Beth Ann Ujiri, Harvey Scholl, Duane Scholl, David Scholl; 13 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 2 at Harvest Time Bible Church, Rock Falls, Ill.

Shenk, Calvin Earl, 79, Harrisonburg, Va., died Sept. 18, 2015, of dementia. Spouse: Marie Hershey Leaman Shenk (deceased). Parents: C. Mylin and Stella Harnish Shenk. Children: Douglas L. Shenk, Duane L. Shenk, Donna Shenk Sensenig; nine grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 21 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Shenk, J. Donald, 84, Newport News, Va., died Sept. 14, 2015. Spouse: Jewell Yoder Shenk. Parents: Dan and Nancy Boyer Shenk. Children: Tammy Shenk Driver, Dale Shenk, Mel Shenk, Jay Shenk and Jenny Shenk Mahone.; 12 grandchildren. Celebration and Music service: Sept. 20 at Warwick River Mennonite Church, Newport News.

Snyder, Celesta Gascho, 88, Goshen, Ind., died Dec. 8, 2015. Spouse: Kenneth E. Snyder (deceased). Parents: Nicholas J. and Melinda Brenneman Gascho. Children: Merle Snyder, Miriam Snyder, Lester Snyder, Dale Snyder, Keith Snyder; seven grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 12 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Springer, Edna Mae Sutter, 98, Fisher, Ill., died Oct. 13, 2015. Spouse: Roy Springer (deceased). Parents: Lee and Alma Nafziger Sutter. Children: Carol Rhodes, Royal Springer, Keith Springer; foster son: Mark Bodenhamer; eight grandchildren; two foster grandchildren; 23 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 17 at East Bend Mennonite Church, Fisher.

Troyer, Frances R. Mumaw, 83, Goshen, Ind., died Dec. 2, 2015. Spouse: G. Weldon Troyer. Parents: Enos and Ruth Lehman Mumaw. Children: Michael Troyer, Richard Troyer, Rebecca Fontaine, Jerold Troyer; six grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 8 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Wagler, Myrtie Marie Lugbill, 92, Archbold, Ohio, died Aug. 25, 2015. Spouse: Earles Wagler (deceased). Parents: Eli and Jennie Burkholder Lugbill. Children: Richard Wagler, Gloria Johnson, Bob Wagler, John Wagler, Tom Wagler, Curtis Wagler, Tim Wagler, Christ Wagler, Daniel Wagler, Mary Beth Schumm; 16 grandchildren; 30 great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral: Sept. 5 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Yoder, Carl Edward, 83, Goshen, Ind., died Nov. 19, 2015, of cancer. Spouse: Ruth Martin Yoder. Parents: Harvey N. and Eliza Newcomer Yoder. Children: Bonnie Gerber, Charlotte Neumann, Rebecca Stichter; four grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 23 at Olive Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind.

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The Beatitudes by George Hunsinger (Paulist Press, 2015, \$19.95) presents the Beatitudes in Matthew as the self-interpretation of Jesus. It demonstrates how they apply to his disciples and to all others, as well as presenting a wide and vivid range of contemporary practical implications.

Global Gospel: An Introduction to Christianity on Five Continents by Douglas Jacobsen (Baker Academic, 2015, \$21.99) describes global Christianity and provides a framework for understanding the varied experiences of Christians around the world. It sets the stage for Christians worldwide to engage the gospel—and each other—more deeply.

The Multitude: Poems by Hannah Faith Notess (Southern Indiana Review Press, 2015, \$14.95) explores spaces of everyday life that intersect with both sacred places and fantastical realms. The poems invite us to dwell in uncertain spaces between worlds, between the possible and the impossible. One of the poems originally appeared in *The Mennonite*.

Two Dogs and a Parrot: What Our Animal Friends Can Teach Us About Life by Joan Chittister (Blue Bridge Books, 2015, \$18.95) offers stories and thought-provoking reflections

about sharing life with an animal companion. It illuminates the significance of the bond between humans and animals and invites us to embrace and celebrate our animal friends.

Living the Anabaptist Story: A Guide to Early Beginnings with Questions for Today by Lisa D. Weaver and J. Denny Weaver (Cascadia Publishing House, 2015, \$19.95) tells the story of how adult Christians of the 1500s first shaped the Anabaptist believers church tradition and of how it lives on today and can be joined by any who identify with Anabaptist understandings of following Christ.

What the Body Knows: Poems by Jean Janzen (Cascadia Publishing House, 2015, \$12.95) seeks the language of what lies deeply within the body, to listen to and name the longings, losses and gains of a long life.

Momentary Stay: Poems by Barbara Esch Shisler (Cascadia Publishing House, 2015, \$12.95) worries the riddles of getting old, family dynamics, dreams, prayer, the evening news, bees—not to mention love, death and God.

Cadabra: Poems by Jen Kindbom (Cascadia Publishing House, 2015, \$12.95) invokes creating through speaking what is magical and ordinary, what potential lies in what's waiting.

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Director of agroecology program and agroecology professor Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College seeks applications for a full-time, 12-month director for its agroecology program to begin between March 1 and July 1, 2016. Responsibilities include overseeing the program, teaching agroecology-related courses, assessment of the program, participating in program development, student recruitment, field research and grant writing. Ph.D. required. Teaching experience and program administration required. For further details and to apply, see the job posting at www.goshen.edu/employment.

Graduate students in health-care professions: Mennonite Health-care Fellowship (MHF) offers **scholarship funding for Anabaptist students** to learn and serve in cross-cultural mission/service settings in developing countries. Deadline for 2016-17 academic year is May 15, 2016. For details and application form, see <http://mennohealth.org/SET>, email info@mennohealth.org, or call 1-888-406-3643.

Associate pastor (32-40 hours) **Forest Hills Mennonite Church** in Leola, Pa., is seeking an **associate pastor of community life** to support the Pastoral Leadership Team. Role includes providing oversight and direction to Sunday school leaders and serves as the community outreach person for the church. Interested candidates should uphold Christ-centered Anabaptist theology. Send cover letter and resumé to Forest Hills Mennonite Church, Attn: Search Committee, 100 Quarry Road, Leola, PA 17540, or email fhmc@foresthillschurch.org.

Visit Europe the Mennonite Way! Faith-based hotel tours to Holland, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Poland and Ukraine, focussing on the Mennonite-Anabaptist heritage. www.mennonite-heritagetours.eu

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



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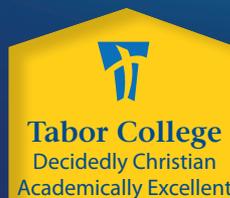
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Living proof



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

The temptation when we're wounded ourselves, or weighed down with the worries of the world, is to isolate ourselves from the community of faith.

I don't believe in God," an 8-year-old neighbor girl told me one morning. "I've been above the clouds, and I didn't see him."

These comments from one so young took my breath away.

If I'm honest, however, sometimes I, too, find it hard to believe. For me, it's not the absence of God in nature. I can't help but join the Psalmist in proclaiming, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" (Psalm 19:1, all quotes NIV).

I find it hardest to believe when I open my eyes to the suffering in the world around me—the millions of refugees fleeing civil war in Syria, the 16,000 children who perish every day from hunger, the alarming number of shooting deaths in our country, the fellow member at church who just lost a battle with cancer. When so much is wrong with the world, can I really believe that God is in charge?

I'm not alone in the struggle to believe. In fact, an increasing number of Americans claim no faith. Among Generation X (my generation), one in six people is religiously unaffiliated. That jumps to one in four among Millennials.

Thankfully, Scripture is not bereft of doubt. The Psalmist also laments, "Why, LORD, do you reject me and hide your face from me? ... You have taken from me friend and neighbor—darkness is my closest friend" (Psalm 88:14, 18).

And, of course, there is Thomas, that doubting disciple of Jesus. When the other disciples report to him that they've seen Jesus alive, he retorts, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe!" (John 20:25).

Thomas' bold doubt used to frighten me, but I've grown to appreciate him more in recent years. I don't think of him as a hardened cynic. He didn't doubt the resurrection because he was rebellious or because it didn't make sense intellectually. He was just deeply disappointed.

It had been only days since he witnessed the gruesome murder of his teacher and master. He was traumatized. How could God let this happen? And then to think the other disciples had seen Jesus, now risen from the dead, and he had not? This was simply too much for Thomas to take. "I will not believe!"—these are the words of a wounded soul.

The temptation when we're wounded ourselves, or weighed down with the worries of the

world, is to isolate ourselves from the community of faith. But notice what Thomas does. "A week later, his disciples were in the house again, *and Thomas was with them*" (John 20:26, emphasis mine). Despite his doubt, he has not left the company of believers, nor have they rejected him. Among the faithful and faithless gathered together, Jesus appears and says, "Stop doubting and believe" (John 20:27). Thomas is undone. He becomes the first to recognize Jesus for who he is, exclaiming, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

One of the most challenging assignments I ever had in school came from Mr. Yoder, my 10th grade Bible teacher. It wasn't that the assignment was complicated or required a great deal of research. It was really simple. Mr. Yoder asked us to write an essay about why we believed in God. But this simple question threw me into a crisis. I didn't know the answer.

I realized I had never really entertained that question seriously. Growing up in a Christian family that regularly attended church, I had taken God's existence for granted.

Not content to make something up to get an easy A, I took up the matter with my dad. I confessed to him that I didn't know how to answer the question, Why do I believe in God? He responded with a gentle yet pointed question: "Well, do you?"

Like Thomas, I found faith in the context of a believing community. No, Jesus didn't appear to me. Not exactly. I reflected on the lives of the faithful people in my congregation. David and Grace. Lois. Bob and Darlene. Mom and Dad. And then it hit me.

These everyday saints were living signs pointing to the reality of God. They weren't perfect. But their lives of kindness, generosity, sacrifice and joy made belief in God look not only plausible but exciting. I decided that if people like them exist in the world, there's a pretty good chance God does, too.

As followers of Jesus, it is our job to give witness to the truth of the gospel. But it takes more than mere words. Our most convincing proof for God is a community that looks like Jesus, making space for doubters to meet him. **TM**

FILM REVIEW

Brooklyn (PG-13) tells the engaging story of a young woman who leaves her village in Ireland and goes to America in 1952. She meets an Italian plumber and falls in love. But her sister's death draws her back to Ireland to visit. There she encounters another man and is tempted to stay. The period details are well done, and Saoirse Ronan in the lead role is outstanding. The film is emotionally and intellectually satisfying.—*Gordon Houser*

Unmanned: America's Drone Wars is a documentary that shows the horrific effects of U.S. drone attacks, particularly in Pakistan. Interviews with victims of drone attacks and with a repentant drone operator are powerful. Over 98 percent of victims are civilians, many of them children, and the attacks create more anti-U.S. terrorists.—*gh*

BOOK REVIEWS

Kingdom Conspiracy: Returning to the Radical Mission of the Local Church by Scot McKnight (Brazos Press, 2015, \$21.99) deals with people's misconceptions of the kingdom of God. McKnight writes: "The only place kingdom work is and can be done is in and through the local church when disciples (kingdom citizens, church people) are doing kingdom mission." Further: "Christ came to build the church/kingdom, not to make the world a better place and not for the 'common good.'"—*gh*

The Bible in the Contemporary World: Hermeneutical Ventures by Richard Bauckham (Eerdmans, 2015, \$22) engages critical issues in today's world from the perspective of a Bible scholar. This collection of essays is uneven but worthwhile. Best is Bauckham's biblical-Christian critique of contemporary western culture. In one essay he writes: "God's truth is not what works for us, not what we find useful, but what claims us and impels us always beyond our own concerns."—*gh*

Film shines light on sexual abuse

Films generally rely on drama to attract the attention of viewers. And with viewers' attention spans becoming shorter and shorter, a drama like *Spotlight* is a rarity.

The film tells the story of the investigation by a team at the *Boston Globe* newspaper, beginning in 2001, of cases of sexual abuse by Roman Catholic priests in the Boston diocese.

That investigation took many months of sustained, difficult work. And the film is faithful in showing the careful, persistent work that journalism requires, especially in uncovering a story of such magnitude.

Marty Baron, an outsider—"an unmarried man of the Jewish faith who hates baseball"—arrives from Miami as the new editor of the *Globe* and assigns a team of journalists to investigate allegations against John Geoghan, an unfrocked priest accused of molesting more than 80 boys.

The paper's "spotlight" team, the oldest continuously operating newspaper investigative unit in the United States, is led by editor Walter "Robby" Robinson and includes reporters Michael Rezendes, Matt Carroll and Sacha Pfeiffer. They interview victims and try to unseal sensitive documents.

They run into many roadblocks. The cases brought against various priests were settled in mediation, and the information about those cases is sealed and unavailable.

The culture of Boston is infused with the sense that the Catholic Church is an important and necessary player in the city's life. Robinson keeps hearing warnings to back off. The church does many good things; you don't want to spoil that.

As part of their investigation, they interview some victims who are now adults. These are the most moving scenes in the film. While the abuse happened when they were young boys and they are now grown men, it's clear their souls are broken. We get a glimpse of track marks on one man's

arm. Another man explains that he's now sober but struggled for years with addiction.

A greater damage to these victims, however, is that the abuse helped destroy their faith in God. Even Rezendes, the reporter, who, like most of the others, grew up Catholic, says that while he hasn't gone to church in years, he always thought he would return. Now, it's clear, he won't.

Pfeiffer, while going door to door, encounters the retired priest who had molested one of the men she had talked to earlier. He admits what he did, then adds, "but I never felt gratified myself," as if that made it OK.

The film is especially good in its attention to detail. It gets so much right about journalism—how diligent reporters must be to obtain multiple sources, how they have to write everything down, how every piece of information is important.

In one scene, Rezendes is talking with a lawyer named Mitchell Garabedian (Stanley Tucci) about addenda to court documents. Garabedian says, "You don't know the half of it." Like a good reporter, Rezendes says, "Tell me the half of it." And that leads to a key piece of evidence in breaking the story.

When they've turned in their initial story (they end up publishing over 600), Baron, the editor-in-chief, is copyediting the piece and says, "Too many adjectives."

The film also shows that Robinson had a chance to break this story five years earlier but buried it and didn't pursue the information he received.

Spotlight is an outstanding film that shows the power of the press in exposing the injustices of powers, like the Catholic Church, that try to hide their sins "for the greater good." 



Gordon Houser is editor of The Mennonite.

(Continued from page 5)

The world's governments and the weapons manufacturers that benefit from ongoing tragedies are retaliating for the Paris, San Bernardino and other despicable attacks, which were in retaliation for indiscriminant drone strikes and haphazard bombings. More civilians are being killed and more hatred is being created—the cycle of violence spirals on and on.

How about responding to violence with something other than violence? Sooner or later, we'll have to have peace talks. Why not initiate them now before more of God's creatures are killed, more families lose loved ones to mass shootings, out-of-control military budgets impoverish us all and even more refugees are created?

War, whether international or domestic, is a crime against humanity. Why kill family members at random or create millions of refugees by bombing their homeland only to have to meet their basic human needs through welfare and resettlement programs? Let's forgo the obscene costs of militarism and use those funds that now buy weapons to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, educate the displaced in their homelands and provide jobs?

Pursuing the words of Jesus—"Do to others what you would have them do to you"—one way to helpfully address terrorism is to encourage passage of the Religious Freedom Peace Tax legislation (H.R. 2377) in the U.S. Congress. When enacted, this bill promises to be a significant purveyor of nonviolence in our troubled world, not only overseas but here at home as well. This would help the United States become the most loved country rather than the most hated, and communities around the globe could experience more peace.—*Harold A. Penner, Akron, Pa.*

Called to love, even if in hell

I have had Evangelical Christians tell me that I'm going to hell. In the tradition I grew up in, Evangelicals believed that Jesus would return and take Christians with him leaving all others to the great tribulation. I have been told I would be left behind.

If that is true, if I am left behind, if when I die I go to hell, I know my purpose is the same. I know if I am left behind, if I am in hell, it will be my calling to love. I will be there to care for the widow and the orphan, to feed the hungry, to shelter the homeless, to heal the brokenhearted and the bereaved. I live my life now attempting to be what Jesus called me to be. That call will not change if I am in heaven or hell. I live every day working to love God, to love myself, and to love others in a way that heals those who feel alone, wounded or abandoned, those who are hungry in their soul. My calling will not change.

I know that wherever I am, there God will be. If I am called to love in impossible circumstances, then it will be the highest calling possible. My calling is to love my enemies, and when I love them they become my friends.

I am a woman who is automatically attracted to women. And though the love of my life has died, I will never repent that great love because she taught me this: to love like my life depends on it. And my life does depend on it. My life will depend on it even if I am in hell. And if I see other Christians there, I will love them. And I will love the outcasts, the unwanted, the hated, the sinners with all the strength I have because this is what God has called me to do. This is what Jesus did. Where there is love, there is God.

If Mennonite Christians have the keys to the kingdom and they lock me out, my calling is the same. I am grateful my congregation welcomed me. They loved me and loved my wife. Their love for us strengthened ours so that we can live God's calling: to live as if our lives depend on it because our lives do, and so does the church's. This is our high calling: to love our Mennonite neighbor and to love our Mennonite enemy so the church can be a beacon on a hill in a world darkened by hate.—*Jean Clark, Chicago*

WDC approves 'Rainbow resolution'

Let me be the first to say, "There, now, that wasn't so hard now, was it?" Now if I could figure out what exactly it is that WDC did and what their "polity"

actually is. I reread the article a couple times and still don't know.

Here's a thought: Maybe gay Mennonite folks who want to get married should just do what Cliff and I did many years ago: go and see a judge. Took 40 minutes and cost \$20. We accomplished what needed to be done, and our marriage is as legal as anyone else's. We saved a lot of time and money and are still together all these years later.—*Debra Bender, www.themennonite.org*

This is not likely to be faithful to (the God of) Scripture because it is not possible to justify it in relation to the historical reality of Old Covenant Scripture sexual moral teaching being upheld by New Covenant authors' witness including the teaching of Jesus on marriage being heterosexual. If you think this is being faithful to Jesus, you are at least creating a Jesus that didn't exist on earth as described by Scripture. There are many things one may dispute about scriptural teaching, but this isn't one of them.—*Richard Worden Wilson, www.themennonite.org*

Lancaster Conference to leave

"Could we with ink, the ocean fill,
And were the sky of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade,
To write the love, of God above,
Would drain the ocean dry,
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky."

Clearly 82.3 percent of the Lancaster Mennonite Conference credentialed leaders do not trust the words of this well-loved hymn.

I remain thankful for the 17.7 percent who do believe. I was taught at Lancaster Mennonite High School as well as Goshen College that the faithful remnant will often be in the minority.—*Merv Horst, www.themennonite.org*

It doesn't matter whether I hold a traditional or progressive view on this issue of sexuality. When a relationship has been valued, a parting of the ways brings sadness. I trust that God is still at work among us.—*Phil Martin, www.themennonite.org*

The Word-centered life

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

—Matthew 28:19-20 TNIV

In this column, I continue my series with a focus on the Evangelical Tradition. This historic spiritual stream emphasizes the faithful proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the centrality of Scripture for faith and practice, and the confessional witness of the early Christian community as the most faithful interpretation of the gospel. In this vein, the Christian Scriptures (both Old and New Testaments) have primacy over culture, church tradition, individual religious experience, individual revelations or dreams and visions.

The long evangelical tradition of the church emphasizes the saving nature of God's grace, which brings about conversion, or the new birth, in those who confess faith in Jesus Christ. Theologians debate the role of human faith or action versus the role of God in bringing about this conversion. As an Anabaptist, I see a dynamic interplay between God's action and human action, both for salvation and faithful Christian living. Therefore, I agree with Augustine, who contended that "without God we cannot; without us, God will not."

Perhaps the most well-known spokesperson for the evangelical stream in modern times is Billy Graham, who reached an unprecedented number of people with his preaching of the gospel. On one occasion in Puerto Rico in 1995, his messages were transmitted to thousands of other venues in 185 countries and territories and were simultaneously translated into 48 languages. Further, with the establishment of his evangelistic association, he enabled thousands of other evangelists to reach hundreds of thousands more. In contrast to many celebrated televangelists of his time, Graham maintained both moral and financial integrity.

The evangelical stream of spirituality has deeply influenced the Anabaptist witness around the world, both in its missionary fervor and in its

focus on the preaching of the gospel. Although we must reject the political nationalism of the current Evangelical Right, we can identify deeply with the evangelical desire to make faithful disciples for Jesus Christ.

As with the other four traditions I have discussed in past columns, Richard Foster suggests several strengths of the Evangelical Tradition. The greatest is the call for us to make disciples in obedience to the Great Commission, with the emphasis on biblical fidelity, both in sound teaching and obedient Christian living.

On the negative side, this stream sometimes leads toward a sectarian or separatist mentality, even invoking guilt by association. Again, it may present an unduly limited view of salvation—primarily as preparation for heaven—and neglect the social aspects of the gospel. Or it may tend toward worship of the Bible itself rather than the God to whom it points.

I appreciate the evangelical fervor, focus and balance in the following quotation from Menno Simons: "**True evangelical faith** is of such a nature it **cannot lie dormant** but spreads itself out in all kinds of righteousness and fruits of love; it dies to flesh and blood; it destroys all lusts and forbidden desires; it seeks, serves and fears God in its inmost soul; **it clothes the naked; it feeds the hungry; it comforts the sorrowful; it shelters the destitute; it aids and consoles the sad;** it does good to those who do it harm; it serves those that harm it; it prays for those who persecute it; it teaches, admonishes and judges us with the Word of the Lord; it seeks those who are lost; **it binds up what is wounded;** it heals the sick; it saves what is strong [sound]; **it becomes all things to all people.**"

By the whole of his paragraph, and not just the commonly quoted words in bold, this 17th-century faith forbearer paints a holistic vision of dynamic Christian living. May God enable us to demonstrate a similar vision of God's good news for our day. **TM**



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deeply
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FROM THE EDITOR

Don't be afraid to learn



Gordon Houser

Be transformed by the renewing of your minds.
—Romans 12:2

Watching my 7-month-old granddaughter at Thanksgiving, I marveled at how much she is learning each day. She showed great concentration as she explored with her fingers the tassels on her blanket.

Young children grow so quickly—physically, mentally, emotionally—that we notice the changes in them if we don't see them for several months.

Noticing Ellery and how much she is changing, I had to wonder, Am I growing? How much am I changing? Probing further, I have to ask myself, Do I even want to change?

The Bible calls us to be transformed. Jesus spoke of the need to repent (Mark 1:15), which means, literally, to change one's mind, though it has a stronger sense of changing one's direction.

As disciples (learners) of Jesus, we are to be about learning what it means to follow Jesus in

said, this scared me. Did I want to change that much? Even though I knew I needed to grow, was I willing to change?

Learning and change are not just for children or young people. We all, no matter our age, are called to be transformed.

In the past, churches have focused their learning ministry on Sunday school for all ages and catechism classes particularly for youth interested in being baptized and joining the church.

These are important activities, but our learning needs to be part of every aspect of our lives. "Faith formation" is a more recent concept that emphasizes being formed in our faith in many different ways.

At an Anabaptist faith formation launch last June, Andy Brubcher Kaethler, who teaches at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., noted that faith formation goes beyond earlier movements of Christian education and discipleship. He named "five sensitivities" of Anabaptist faith formation:

- knowing and doing must be connected;
- knowing and doing must be accompanied by the human dimension of being;
- faith formation is for all ages;
- faith formation is about daily practices;
- faith formation happens communally.

Whatever we do—whether eating, working, playing or worshiping—is to be done in the context of our faith. To be transformed, we are to be renewing our minds regularly.

To commit ourselves to such faith formation requires the willingness to be transformed, to change. Change may mean giving up certain ideas and perspectives as we grow in the knowledge of the love of God.

Such change happens best in community, as we rub shoulders with other disciples and learn to love those who may challenge us.

Let's not be afraid to change.—*gh*

Change may mean giving up certain ideas and perspectives as we grow in the knowledge of the love of God.

whatever circumstances we find ourselves. Are we willing to do this? Or are we afraid to change?

In my last year of college, I was considering moving to an intentional Christian community after I graduated. This community, following the example of the believers in Acts 2, shared "all things in common." One day, I spoke with someone who had a friend who joined a similar community. He told me, "I hardly recognized her after a year or so there, she had changed so much."

Even though the change had been good, he