

TheMennonite



Mennonite Church USA is losing eight conference ministers in a year's time

May 2016

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INSIDE:
• God's plan for justice

• Then and now
• Divine call

• Forget the poor?
• Leadership and love

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CONTENTS

- 12 8 leaders leaving
—Hannah Heinzekehr
- 18 Then and now
—Mennonite Church USA Archives
- 24 Divine call
—Nancy Kauffmann
- 28 A place called home
—J Ron Byler
- 32 Inmate finds home in Mennonite congregation
—Hannah Heinzekehr
- 33 Give up blind politics and follow Jesus' way
—Lynda Hollinger-Janzen

DEPARTMENTS

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 4 Letters | 31 Opinion |
| 6 News Briefs | 32 News |
| 8 Grace and Truth | 34 For the Record |
| 9 Global Anabaptism | 35 Mediaculture |
| 10 Miscellany | 36 Classifieds |
| 11 TheMennonite.org | 38 New Voices |
| 12 Features | 39 Mennonite Church USA |
| 30 Leadership | 40 Editorial |



24



28



7



6

ON THE COVER: Photos provided

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

STAFF

Executive director: Hannah Heinzekehr
hannahh@themennonite.org
Editor: Gordon Houser
gordonh@themennonite.org
Advertising, subscriptions: Rebecca Helmuth
rebecca@themennonite.org
Bookkeeper: Celina Romero
Editorial assistant: Nora Miller
Design: Mary Jo Veurink
Editor emeritus: Everett J. Thomas

WEBSITE

www.themennonite.org

OFFICES

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

718 N. Main St.
Newton, KS 67114-1703
phone: 316-281-4399 (Hannah)
phone: 316-281-4398 (Gordon)



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*

Alternative service to war

During the Korean War, the draft took many young men into new experiences. In Korea, 36,574 Americans died, and another 103,574 were wounded.

In the 1950s, some of us, rather than joining the military, went to serve under Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) as alternative service. For six men, a vanload went to Portland, Maine, to work in the surgical suite of Maine General Hospital. One of us came from Nampa, Idaho, another from Lushton, Neb. Some weeks later, one of us came from Lancaster, Pa., and two more came from Ohio and Kansas.

Hospital work was new to all of us. Nonmedically trained people working in surgery was a new idea. But the result of this experience was that the man from Nampa later became head of the American Respiratory Therapy Association. The man from Lancaster later earned his M.D. at Temple University and served in Vietnam under MCC. The man from Ohio grew “the best popcorn in the world.”

The contrast between becoming a war statistic and the contribution made by MCC’s volunteer opportunities in the 1950s is great.—*Bill Regehr, North Newton, Kan.*

Our taxes pay for war

Recently I read Perry B. Yoder’s review of Jurgen Moltmann’s political theology, *Following Jesus Christ in the World Today*. The author makes two points at the outset: (1) The church cannot be

apolitical. (2) A goal of political theology is not “to ‘politicize’ the church” but “to Christianize the political involvement of Christians.” Yoder notes that neither our congregations nor Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) have been willing to identify their relevance or necessity. “Boycotts, demonstrations, and civil disobedience seem unsightly, if not wrong, to many Mennonites.”

Yoder notes that in 1984, “practically every heavy Mennonite voting area went for Reagan—for a massive military buildup both of nuclear and conventional weapons and against aid to poor people, educating the underprivileged, teaching schoolchildren in their native language.” Yoder then asks, “What do you call a people who hold relief sales for MCC but elect officials who will use their tax money to do the opposite?”

If we are to be disciples who replicate the “act of God in Jesus” because we believe that “love for the enemy” is essential, how is it possible that we allow ourselves or the government to purchase the sophisticated weapons that destroy people? Will we ever recognize or admit the lack of love in our nuclear madness? Is this why we vote for “military action” despite our so-called loyalty to the redemptive power of the Cross?—*Donald D. Kaufman, North Newton, Kan.*

Gun deaths and accidental deaths

Regarding the comments of the New Zealand guide and the British man about Americans’ obsession with guns (Editorial, April): It is obvious that if they have fewer guns they’ll have fewer gun deaths.

When I was very young, I received a BB gun for Christmas. As I got older, I got other guns and enjoyed hunting. When I want to get outdoors and have fun, I take my guns out and do some shooting. Some enjoy putting a golf ball in a hole; I enjoy putting bullets in a target.

If they want to compare, they should compare all accidental deaths in their countries with gun deaths.—*Paul Gingerich, Pigeon, Mich.*

Correction of town names

In “Indonesian Churches to Host MWC Assembly in 2021” by John Roth (Global Anabaptism, April), two corrections are needed. In paragraph 5, line 5, the correct spelling for the second named town is “Pati.” It is the town my husband, Lawrence, and I lived in from 1970 to 1979 while serving under Mennonite Central Committee. Pati means “essence.”

Also, in paragraph 6, line 3, the correct spelling of the name of the town is “Kudus,” which means “holy.” Thanks for correcting these errors so that folks reading *The Mennonite* (as well as those attending MWC in 2021) will have accurate information regarding spelling. Hopefully, with a bit of coaching, they will subsequently be able to accurately pronounce these significant place names as well. Both Pati and Kudus continue to play an important role in the life of these Mennonite conferences.—*Shirlee K. Yoder, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Jesus called God Father

It is becoming more uncommon to hear prayers addressed to Father God. Does God really care?

Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Our Father in heaven...” (Matthew 6:9). Did Jesus really think that was

important? Apparently so, because he almost always addressed God by using the personal name Father. In the Gospel of John, Jesus called God Father over 100 times.

This was also true of the Apostles when writing to their churches. They usually began their letters, “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” The Apostle Paul reinforced this by saying the church was named after the Father. In Ephesians 3:14-15, Paul writes, “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name.”

Jesus in Matthew 28:18-19 commissioned the disciples and us to make disciples, “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

I’m not saying God hears only those prayers prayed using the name Father. I’m sure God is eager to hear all prayers prayed in sincerity and truth. But shouldn’t Jesus’ words mean something? Wouldn’t Jesus expect his followers to gladly do so?—*Eugene K. Souder, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Silence and secrecy

What will it take for Mennonite institutions to recognize the harm done by institutional cover ups (“Church

Acknowledges Reports of Abusive Relationship with Luke Hartman”)? Just as we saw in earlier church scandals, institutions silenced victims and their advocates who sought to bring these secrets into the open so as to prevent further abuse and harm.

Who benefits from the silence and lack of information? We have to respect the humanity of Luke and his family, but silence and secrecy comes at the expense of others in our community.

The strategy of silence and secrecy does not benefit church institutions. It is a short-term strategy bound to fail. It lacks integrity. Where is the institutional accountability? Will Mennonite Church USA investigate and hold institutions accountable for the safety of their communities? Why does MC USA punish churches who welcome same-sex couples in loving relationships but does not take action against institutional leaders who perpetrate a policy of secrecy?

Why after all these years are the advocates who push these stories out into the open still subjected to community condemnation? Why don’t more people stand up for truth telling?

I lament that some Mennonites hold such hateful views of women and advocates against sexual violence.—*Lisa Schirch, www.themennonite.org*

IN THIS ISSUE

This month’s cover story (page 12) looks at a significant shift in Mennonite Church USA as eight conference ministers move out of their positions. Hannah Heinzekehr, our executive director, asked each leader to reflect on the joys and challenges of conference ministry, emerging trends and shifting loyalties across the denomination, and their dreams for the future of their conferences and Mennonite Church USA.

On the subject of leadership, Nancy Kauffmann, denominational minister for Mennonite Church USA, reviews Larry Hauder’s book *Called*

to Be a Pastor: Why It Matters to Both Congregations and Clergy (page 24).

In a special section (page 18), the Mennonite Church USA Archives presents snapshots of historical youth movements and gatherings paired with the work of the denomination today.

In the context of the huge refugee crisis in our world today, J Ron Byler, executive director of Mennonite Central Committee U.S., reports that Church leaders in Eastern Europe and the Middle East want help to support refugees and displaced people until they can return home (page 28).

Among this month’s columnists, Cyneatha Millsaps looks at God’s plan for justice (page 8), John Roth

considers the meaning today of Anabaptism (page 9), Jenny Castro writes about the importance of leaders being vulnerable (page 30), John Kampen calls on the church to engage the Jewish community (page 31), Isabella Gomez reflects on the importance to her of “coritos” as a mix of culture and spirituality (page 38), and Ervin Stutzman encourages us to follow our assignments from God with joy (page 39).

In my editorial (page 40), I offer five insights from the Risen Jesus’ encounter with Peter in John 21.

The staff and board of The Mennonite, Inc., met April 15-16 to review our work and make plans. Exciting times are ahead.—*Editor*

Franklin Mennonite Conference votes to leave MC USA

At the annual spring delegate meeting of Franklin Mennonite Conference (FMC) on April 18, members voted to withdraw from Mennonite Church USA by a vote of 44 to 13. The 77 percent approval was beyond the necessary two-thirds. The action takes effect immediately, and the conference will remain without affiliation for one year.

Franklin is the third conference to withdraw from MC USA over the course of the past year. In July 2015, North Central Mennonite Conference voted to leave MC USA, followed by Lancaster Mennonite Conference in November.

The proposal to withdraw first came from an ad hoc committee that surveyed credentialed leaders last fall. The board of FMC adopted the recommendation, and congregations began processing it last November.

FMC includes 14 congregations. According to Lehman, two or three may want to remain with MC USA. —The Mennonite staff

Ohio Conference votes to stay in MC USA —with some changes

Ohio Conference chose to stay as a member of Mennonite Church USA by voting not to leave at its annual conference assembly March 11-12 at Central Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio.

The Ohio Conference Leadership Team, prompted by several congregations, brought a resolution before delegates asking the Leadership Team to explore leaving Mennonite Church USA. The motion was defeated 70-30 percent.

However, that didn't mean everything will remain as before. Leadership also brought a proposal that the conference's constitution be amended "to create two distinct forms of membership within Ohio Conference. Both forms of membership would be equal in all facets of internal conference workings." Further, the proposal would



Students live on \$2 a day to understand poverty

Facing high winds, hail storms and pounding rain, several Bluffton (Ohio) University students slept outside and under makeshift tents as part of the Two Dollar Challenge, April 4-8. The challenge is a global, grassroots movement in which participants limit their daily income to \$2 a day in order to get a glimpse into the complex economic lives of those in poverty. Students slept under tarp and pallet shelters they built on top of Shoker Science Center while still taking part in classes during the day. Each evening, the participants organized discussions based on provided readings about economics and poverty. By the end of the week, about 20 students participated in the challenge on various levels, and three students are using the challenge as experiential learning for an economic development class research paper.—Bluffton University

create two separate funding streams, one in which no donations would go to Mennonite Church USA, its member conferences or organizations.

A resolution proposing this two-tiered membership passed by an 80 percent vote. Those congregations that decide to remain members of Ohio Conference but remove themselves from MC USA will require Ohio Conference to keep the giving from those churches separate.

Seven Ohio Conference congregations have decided to leave the conference.—Gordon Houser

Church acknowledges reports of abusive relationship with Hartman

In a March 20 letter to congregants, the staff and board of elders of Lindale Mennonite Church, Linville, Va., acknowledged that staff have been aware of reports of an abusive relationship with Luke Hartman since August 2014.

On Jan. 8, Hartman was charged with solicitation of prostitution. A district court judge in Harrisonburg,

Va., dismissed the solicitation of prostitution charge against Luke Hartman on March 29, according to WHSV-TV reporter Katie Caler. The judge dismissed the case because the statutes for the charge were not met when a specific act was not discussed before money was allegedly exchanged.

The Lindale letter states that a member of the congregation responded to a Jan. 11 statement from the Anabaptist-Mennonite chapter of the Survivors Network of Abuse by Priests (SNAP Menno) inviting any individuals who may have experienced abusive behavior from Hartman or others within Mennonite Church USA to report the behavior to police, local crisis centers, civil attorneys or independent survivor groups like SNAP.

The letter states that pastors have been in contact with both the victim and Hartman and that "there were disciplinary measures set in place and professional counseling was provided." No further details about these measures were provided in the letter.—The Mennonite staff

A tribute to Steve Cheramie Risingsun

Steve Cheramie Risingsun died Feb. 20. He had a passion for helping Native Americans hear the gospel through Native American culture—bringing a decolonized version of the gospel that was life-giving and affirming of Native American people and their culture.

Steve served as a board member of Native American Indigenous Theological Studies. This group wanted new leaders to be able to present the gospel through an indigenous worldview, one that says God was not brought to indigenous people but was already here (Romans 1:20a) and was known as Creator and Great Spirit.

Steve was committed to a gospel that allowed Native people to embrace who they are and recognize the unique gifts they bring to the Christian family.

When Hurricane Katrina hit, Steve and his family were personally affected. Steve, a Houma-Biloxi Chitimacha

Indian, served five terms as a tribal chieftain.

In the 1980s, he started to re-search his tribal records with help from Mennonite Central Committee. When Katrina hit, all the records were destroyed, but that did not stop him from opening up his 50-member church to those with no place to go. He also helped Mennonite Disaster Service and MCC coordinate their efforts in the area.—*Iris de León-Hartshorn*

Robert Lee, educator and mission worker, leaves legacy in Japan

On Feb. 29, Robert Lee died at the Virginia Mennonite Retirement



Community after a long battle with cancer. He was 87. At his memorial service March 8 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, speakers from the Tokyo Biblical Seminary and the Japan Mennonite missionary community recognized his contributions there.

The son of Chinese immigrants in Portland, Ore., Lee was an electrical engineer, educator, mission worker and author of religious books. He helped develop Mennonite churches, particularly in Japan.

He served in Europe and Asia under Mennonite Central Committee from 1951 to 1956. After graduating from Goshen Biblical Seminary in 1959 and serving overseas again, he obtained a doctorate in religion from Harvard University in 1974.

Lee and his wife, Nancy Burkholder, served together in Hokkaido, Japan, with Mennonite Board of Missions (MBM) from 1959 to 1964 and again from 1986 to 2003. Lee pastored two Mennonite churches there and helped to develop a teaching program for lay leaders. Later, Lee taught in the Department of International Studies at Meiji Gakuin University. He went on to teach in the Asia Graduate School of Theology/Japan and at the Tokyo Biblical Seminary.

Lee authored *The Clash of Civilizations: An Intrusive Gospel in Japanese Civilization* and, with his wife, edited the first two books of memoirs of church and educational leaders: *Making Sense of the Journey: The Geography of Our Faith* and *Continuing the Journey: The Geography of Our Faith*.—*Mennonite Mission Network*

Fourth meeting of Catholic-Lutheran-Mennonite dialogue on baptism held

Representatives of the Catholic Church (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity), The Lutheran World Federation, and Mennonite World Conference met in Bogotá, Colombia, Feb. 29–March 4 for the fourth meeting of the International Trilateral Dialogue Commission. The commission developed the general topic of the dialogue, “Baptism and Incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church” through papers on “Living out our Baptism.”

Marie-Hélène Robert (Catholic), Alfred Neufeld (Mennonite) and Raj Patta (Lutheran) made major presentations reflecting on discipleship, participation in Christ and public witness. Members reviewed the work of the previous years and further developed the document prepared by the drafting group.

The fifth and final meeting of the commission is scheduled to take place Feb. 8–14, 2017, in Germany, where the commission is expected to finalize its report for submission to The Lutheran World Federation, Mennonite World Conference and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.—*MWC*

Mennonite housing completes \$14 million project

Mennonite Housing has completed its French Quarter \$14 million project in Wichita, Kan.

“The attractive new duplexes,” writes Phillip Brownlee in the *Wichita Eagle*, “are helping transform a neighborhood that has suffered in recent years from blight and high crime.”—*Wichita Eagle*



Kingdom builders

Ed Jackson prepares a door to be painted as part of Kingdom Builders Construction’s renovation of a North Philadelphia auto repair shop. Jackson is the construction manager for KBC, a Mennonite Central Committee East Coast partner that offers a chance for former prisoners to learn vocational skills while providing construction services to congregations, businesses and individuals in the greater Philadelphia area.—*MCC*

Justin and Bryant: God's plan for justice



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

In the early morning hours of Aug. 1, 2015, my 27-year-old nephew Justin Sharp was shot and killed by a 24-year-old man, Bryant Johnson. Bryant did not know Justin, and Justin was not his intended target. But on that fatal morning, their life and death would be sealed together.

After a four-day murder trial, Bryant was found guilty and weeks later sentenced to 85 years in prison. I wonder often about the cost of not only Justin's life but Bryant's as well. How did that one morning seriously alter the lives of so many people? How do we heal with so many moving parts to one event?

Justin was the father of seven children, Bryant the father of one newborn. Justin was a good father. He worked full-time and provided for his children. He spent quality time with them, making sure they were active in age-appropriate community activities. I'm not sure what kind of father Bryant would have been, given his age and the age of his child. Unfortunately, our justice system will not allow us to see the possibilities.

During the trial, I watched the mothers struggling over every spoken word, photo and piece of evidence presented. I watched emotional shifts from tears and heartache to anger and frustration. I heard the story of that fatal morning, when one bad decision changed everything for so many people. I'm left wondering how we restore anything from this mess.

Our justice system does not provide a chance for people to say, "I'm sorry." Our system says, "Anything you say (even an apology) will be used against you in a court of law." I wonder if Bryant would have offered an apology to the family if given a safe place? I know an apology and some kind of explanation from Bryant would have been helpful to Justin's mom.

For the next 60 years, at least, Bryant will not be able to make amends for his mistake. His life was taken from him because he took a life, but what about all the other lives affected? Would justice be better served if Bryant had to work every day of the rest of his life and not only take care of his child but also provide financially for Justin's children? Would justice be better served if Bryant

had to tour communities, churches and schools talking about his mindset that fatal morning, sparking conversation about consequences, anger and gun violence?

Three pillars of restorative justice are harm and need, obligations, and engagement. In short, justice comes when we acknowledge the harm done and needs of the victim(s), then set regulations to hold offenders accountable with the foresight of making sure everyone has an opportunity to be a part of the healing process. Restorative justice does not claim this will work in every case, but it provides an alternative to punishment.

God established a system for such work with the Israelites when they entered the promised land. In Joshua 20, part of God's jubilee system provided "cities of refuge" for offenders who had accidentally killed someone. These cities

provided for the offender until the victim and/or victim's family were ready to discuss the injury or harm done.

A tribal leader would then mediate the case and the restitution of the offender and their re-entry into the community.

"The slayer shall flee to one of these cities and shall stand at the entrance of the gate of the city, and explain

the case to the elders of that city; then the fugitive shall be taken into the city, and given a place, and shall remain with them" (Joshua 20:4).

The police picked Bryant up and escorted him to jail. He did not say a word about his crime, not even an apology. Bryant was given a trial, but not by his family/clan/tribe (not even a jury of his peers). No, far from it. The people who presided over Bryant's trial knew nothing about the man or the world in which he emerged.

God's plan for us was perfectly laid out. It considered all our human flaws and strengths. God's plan is one that provides redemption and second chances. God's plan considers the whole of the person and their family/tribe/community. God's plan requires that we acknowledge our mistakes and provides a community to help us make amends. With the levels of mass incarceration in our country, would it not serve us well to consider God's plan, a plan of restorative justice, a plan of hope? **TM**

God's plan is one that provides redemption and second chances.

What's in a name?

Several years ago, while we were engaged in ecumenical conversations with representatives of the Lutheran World Federation, a German historian turned to me, somewhat exasperated, and said, “Why do Mennonites in North America today still use the term Anabaptist?” For most contemporary German speakers, the word “Anabaptist” (*Wiedertäufer*) has negative connotations, thanks largely to its association in the public mind with the political anarchism of the Peasant’s War or the apocalyptic fanaticism of the so-called “Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster.” Both were violent events that seemed to confirm the worst fears of Luther and the other reformers that anyone who rejected infant baptism must be intent on destroying social and political order.

But my Lutheran colleague, who had come to respect Mennonite faith and practice, was also bewildered for another reason. “Anabaptism,” he noted correctly, means to “rebaptize.” Yet the radical reformers of the 16th century denied they were “re”-baptizing since they did not regard the ritual of their infancy as a true baptism. In their eyes, they were baptizing for the first time. For them, the term “Anabaptist,” invented by their enemies, was offensive and misleading.

So why would modern Mennonites now willingly identify themselves with a word that was both associated with violence and communicated a false understanding of their actual beliefs? It was a fair question, especially since Anabaptism has become such a widely used term in the English-speaking world.

It’s a question that Mennonite World Conference will likely need to face in the coming years.

Recently, leaders of the Brethren in Christ, a denomination that has been a strong partner in MWC for several decades, formally requested that MWC consider changing its name. For many in their tradition, a global church defined as “Mennonite” seems overly narrow and exclusive. Indeed, last summer, when the MWC assembly was held in Harrisburg, Pa., a Brethren in Christ stronghold, the news media reported on the event almost exclusively in terms of the “Mennonite” presence. So the question has emerged: Wouldn’t the term “Anabaptist” be more inclusive?

I’m ready to support such a change. But if that were to happen, our Lutheran friends—and others as well—deserve a clarification of what Anabaptist actually means.

In my experience, Anabaptist is used today in

at least three different ways.

First, the word continues to serve non-German speakers as a useful description for a distinctive movement of radical reform in the 16th century that gave rise to groups such as the Swiss Brethren, Dutch Mennonites, Moravian Hutterites and, over time, a host of other groups. Although the movement was far from unified—including people we would be hesitant to welcome into our churches today—Anabaptists generally shared a commitment to believer’s baptism, a view of the church as separated from the world, and an earnest desire to follow the teachings of Jesus in daily life. For most people today, the term does not have the negative connotations it has in German. Alternatives like “Baptist” (*Täufer*) or “baptism-minded” (*Taufgesinnte, Doopsgezinde*) are either too easily confused with contemporary Baptists or just sound awkward. Thus, Anabaptist has emerged in English as a useful historical label.

Second, Anabaptism has also served contemporary Mennonites and other Christians as an ideal or standard in the ongoing quest for church renewal. The classic expression of this was Harold S. Bender’s *Anabaptist Vision* of 1943. But since then many other historians and theologians have also appealed, albeit often in very general ways, to “the Anabaptists” as an authoritative lens for a particular understanding of Scripture or Christian faithfulness. Usually, the appeal is accompanied by a critique of the modern church and a desire to recover a more authentic faith. The current popularity of “neo-Anabaptism” or “naked Anabaptism” is one expression of this impulse.

Finally, Anabaptist has come to serve at least one more significant function, especially in the context of the global church. Today our global family includes, by one count, 227 different groups, each claiming some family resemblance to the Anabaptist reformers of the 16th century. For the global church, Anabaptism is a useful umbrella term that includes a broad spectrum of groups while avoiding specific denominational identity markers that are exclusive or parochial.

Has the time come for MWC to adopt a new name—perhaps Anabaptist World Conference? Or even, as some have suggested, Anabaptist World Communion? What are the gains? What are the losses?

In the coming year, MWC will begin a process of testing this idea. What is your perspective?

What’s in a name? **TM**



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*.

Today our global family includes, by one count, 227 different groups, each claiming some family resemblance to the Anabaptist reformers of the 16th century.

Items of interest from the broader church and world

“Most Latino and black men are not poor, will not be incarcerated and are gainfully employed.—*W. Bradford Wilcox, co-author with Nicholas H. Wolfinger of Soul Mates: Religion, Sex, Love and Marriage among African Americans and Latinos, in Christianity Today*”

Cut health-care costs by aiding the poor

More than 11 million Americans have joined the Medicaid rolls since the major provisions of the Affordable Care Act went into effect, and health officials are searching for ways to contain the costs of caring for them. A significant share of the most expensive patients rack up costs for avoidable reasons. Many are afflicted with some combination of poverty, homelessness, mental illness, addiction and past trauma.

Female U.S. college students with more than three tattoos reported higher self-esteem but more suicide attempts.—*Harper's*

A patchwork of experiments across the country is trying to better manage these cases. The Center for Health Care Strategies, a policy

center in New Jersey, has documented such efforts in 26 states.

Ross Owen, a county health official in Minneapolis, says, “We’d pay to amputate a diabetic’s foot, but not for a warm pair of winter boots.” Now health systems around the nation are trying to buy the boots, metaphorically speaking. In Portland, Ore., health outreach workers help patients get driver’s licenses and give them essentials, such as bus tickets, blankets, calendars and adult diapers. In New York, medical teams are trained to handle eviction notices like medical emergencies. In Philadelphia, community health workers shop for groceries with diabetic patients.

In Hennepin County, Minn., medical costs have fallen on average by 11 percent per year since 2012, when the pilot program began. Some of the biggest cost reductions were among the more than 250 patients who were placed into permanent housing.—*New York Times*

The cost of alcohol

According to the Center for Disease Control, excessive drinking cost the United States \$249 billion in 2010 from lost productivity, more crime, early death and emergency room visits—a significant increase from \$223.5 billion in 2006. About 77 percent of those costs stem from binge drinking—the consumption of four or more drinks for women and five or more for men.—*The Week*

Schooling for girls pays

Data suggest that if 10 percent more girls attend school, a country’s GDP increases by an average of 3 percent. Each extra year of a mother’s schooling cuts infant mortality by between 5 and 10 percent.—*The Marketplace*

Abortion rate falls

The U.S. abortion rate fell 35 percent between 1990 and 2010 and is now at the lowest rate since records began in 1976. Researchers credit the increased use of IUDs and other highly effective contraception as a major factor in the decline.—*The Week*

- Percentage of Earth’s land area that is environmentally protected: **12**
- Percentage of oceans and adjacent seas that is environmentally protected: **1**
- Estimated percentage of all life on Earth found under the ocean surface: **50 to 80**

—*Yes! Magazine*



LOAVES AND FISHSTICKS

BY STEVE EDWARDS



Quotable

“As a result of the revival, many of the students dedicated their lives to church work in the Mennonite denomination. Paul Swarr indicated that the majority of those students involved in the revival became pastors and missionaries.... Historians look for elements of continuity while observing the natural contours of change in church and society. The Upper Room prayer meetings of the students and teachers in 1948 reveals a continuity in the story of Christianity and the church that may help members of Mennonite Church USA find a way forward in the times of change now upon us.”—*Elwood Yoder blog, “Upper Room Revival”*



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Six things we learned when we gave up social media for Lent

Emily Kauffman and Morgan Leavy are both students at Hesston (Kan.) College



1. We became more aware of how social media affects our relationships.
2. We found more time for other activities.
3. We found that our self-conscious feelings changed.
4. We were reminded that we need to stop seeking validation from others.
5. We found ourselves feeling more connected to God.
6. We have the world in our hands, so we forget to look at the world around us.

Read all of Emily and Morgan’s reflections online.

Playlist of the month

Doug and Jude Krehbiel, musicians from Goessel, Kansas, share their top 10 songs



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8 leaders leaving

Eight conference ministers reflect on the past, present and future of Mennonite Church USA

by Hannah Heinzekehr

In 2015 and 2016, Mennonite Church USA conference ministers from eight area conferences will have transitioned out of their role. Together they represent 79 years of collective ministry. This is the largest leadership shift in the 15-year history of Mennonite Church USA. In the conversations that follow, each of these former conference ministers reflects on the joys and challenges of conference ministry, emerging trends and shifting loyalties across the denomination, and their dreams for the future of their conferences and Mennonite Church USA.



Lois Kaufmann

Conference: Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA

Term: 2008-2016

In hindsight, Lois Kaufmann can see the ways her life had been preparing her for conference ministry, although when the call came, it was a complete surprise. Being a part of Assembly Mennonite Church, a Goshen, Ind.,

congregation highly committed to good group process, and growing up with a father who was a conference minister and a history of family engaged with conference leadership equipped Kaufmann with “this sense of loving the church, not just as the people here in my congregation but the larger body of Christ.”



Tom Kauffman

Conference: Ohio Mennonite Conference

Term: 1995-2015

Kauffman spent 20 years living and ministering in Ohio Conference, a tenure that stretched through the formation of MC USA. Prior to serving as a conference minister, he spent 18 years in pastoral ministry at two different congregations, both dually affiliated,

General Conference Mennonite Church (GC) and Mennonite Church (MC).

Kauffman enjoyed participating in a conference structure that included three full-time regional pastors and emphasized supporting and equipping congregational leaders.

For him, CLC was also a hopeful space. “Part of the DNA of being Mennonite always has been relational rather than doctrinal,” he says. “CLC was a good way for all the area conferences, constituency groups and agencies to be in one place at the same time and engaged in face-to-face conversation.”

After 20 years in conference ministry, Kauffman has transitioned back to pastoring a local congregation, a role he says is his true calling. He is serving as the transitional minister for Albuquerque (N.M.) Mennonite Church. As he leaves, Ohio Conference faces shrinking resources, a reality many Mennonite conferences share.

“My resignation allowed the leadership team to decide what kind of conference structure they could have going forward,” says Kauffman. “I do think many of our conferences are struggling with diminished capacities.... This is a fertile time for rethinking what our connectedness and relatedness will look like. I don’t have a crystal ball to know what that’s going to look like, but going forward, it will look very different than it did in the past.”

To bear witness to God working in a variety of people and congregations—that’s heartening and so satisfying. —Lois Kaufmann



Highlights for Kaufmann were regular conversations with pastors, supporting pastoral candidates testing a call to ministry and walking alongside congregations in their search processes. “To bear witness to God working in a variety of people and congregations—that’s heartening and so satisfying,” she said in a March 31 interview.

And the hardest work? “It’s been working to build trust with the wider church, given Central District’s sense of the Spirit leading toward greater inclusion and wanting to test that,” she said, “but knowing it is perceived as a challenge for the larger church right now.” In July 2015, CDC licensed Mark Rupp, a pastor in a same-sex relationship, for ministry at Columbus (Ohio) Mennonite Church.

Kaufmann has found the Constituency Leaders Council an important space for conversation and says the group is at its best “when we are together, sitting across tables from those we might differ from, bearing witness to the life of Christ in each of our congregations and conferences.”

Although she’s not sure what life after her August retirement will hold, Kaufmann says her calling for this first year is to take a Sabbath and “tend to what my next, more relaxed calling will be.” And she prays that MC USA will “continue to be God’s people: faithful to the Jesus of the Gospels, faithful in our love for and interpretation of Scripture and faithful to God’s dream for this world, a dream full of goodness, hope and care for each other.”



In 2006, Tom Kauffman participated in a bike tour to raise funds for Sunshine Inc. of Northwest Ohio and Mennonite Central Committee. Photo provided



Warren Tyson

Conference: Atlantic Coast and Eastern District conferences
Term: 1998-2015

Tyson had practice bridging the GC and MC denominations before the groups decided to become Mennonite Church USA in 2001. In 1998, he was hired as the conference minister for both Atlantic Coast Conference, a former

MC conference, and Eastern District Conference, a former GCMC district conference. In 2007, Tyson's ministry title in ACC was changed to executive conference minister due to expanded responsibilities. Although their genesis was different, Tyson says the two conferences shared an emphasis on "congregational polity" that made his job easier.

A big focus of Tyson's ministry in its early years was walking with the two groups as they discerned whether or not to join MC USA. Tyson notes that early on, ACC made a decision to join, even though several congregations voted against the proposal and chose to leave. The discernment process was longer for Eastern District. During Tyson's tenure, the Alliance of Mennonite Evangelical Congregations was birthed, which included 12 EDC congregations that chose to leave the conference rather than join MC USA.

"The core issues were infallibility and inerrancy [of Scripture]," Tyson says.

Tyson has also been a member of the Constituency Leaders' Council, a gathering for area conference ministers, moderators and leaders, since its inception.

"It has been a really rich experience to see the CLC doing its work and persons reaching out to one another, making friendships and learning to know people from very different histories," he says.

Tyson says he draws inspiration from individuals he encountered outside MC USA who discovered Anabaptist peace theology and were drawn to it, sometimes at the same time as leaders who had been steeped in the Mennonite faith were moving away from a peace theology.



Warren Tyson worships at a meeting of the Atlantic Coast Conference. Photo provided



Donna Mast

Conference: Allegheny Mennonite Conference
Term: 2009-2015

Mast never expected to find herself in conference ministry or ministry of any sort, for that matter. When her family moved to Harrisonburg, Va., for her husband, Conrad, to attend Eastern Mennonite Seminary, she felt like God's call to Conrad was clear. When she first enrolled in classes at EMS, it was because "it seemed like a good idea for the wife of the pastor to take a few classes."



This potholder crocheted by Donna Mast in January, serves as a reminder of the ways God makes beautiful things, even out of remnants.
Photo provided

"I often described my call to ministry as being hit over the head. It was so far from my realm of possibility," said Mast in a Jan. 21 interview.

After co-pastoring with Conrad at Scottdale (Pa.) Mennonite Church, Allegheny Mennonite Conference approached Mast and asked whether she would be willing to serve as interim conference minister, a role she filled for two years before it became permanent.

Mast found herself surprised by the love she felt for every congregation in Allegheny.

"Some of them I hadn't even met with yet," she said, "but suddenly there was this love for the congregations themselves, and I cared deeply about them."

This love intensified the feelings of sadness and hurt when congregations made decisions to leave the conference and Mennonite Church USA over theological disagreements. Allegheny Conference today is roughly half the size it was when Mast began in her role.

Mast acknowledges that the conference has tough decisions to make about its future structure, including the conference minister role, a reality that contributed to the timing of her stepping down. After 18 ½ years of ministry, the Masts are not seeing this as a transition to retirement but as a time of sabbatical and healing.

When asked about her hopes for the future, Mast reflected on knitting thank-you gifts for conference members who hosted her in their homes. On the morning of our interview, Mast completed a project made from the remnants of yarn used to create these gifts. The result: a sturdy and bright potholder of many colors.

"I was thinking about how God our Creator takes these little pieces of things that we think are too small to do much of anything with but weaves it into something that is beautiful and useful," she said. "I believe God is not nearly as distressed about what has been happening as we are. My anticipation is to see what beautiful thing God is even now creating."



Herm Weaver

Conference: Mountain States Mennonite Conference

Term: 2006-2015

Weaver was surprised by a call into conference ministry. He had stepped back from a teaching role at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., and worked roofing jobs for a year.

“I basically decided to say no to everything for six months,” says Weaver. “After six months, we were planning on moving to Colorado.... And I was fostering some relationships with consultants and had planned to work with them.”

However, Weaver’s plans changed when Marilyn Miller, chair of the MSMC minister search committee, called him and invited him to apply for the job.

The job was full of life-giving relationships, says Weaver. “The high points all along the way were the countless relationships I was able to be part of and the way people let me into their lives,” he says.

Weaver also reflected on the conference’s decision to license Theda Good, a pastor at First Mennonite Church of Denver who is in a committed same-sex relationship. “From my perspective, it was the greatest privilege to try to walk with people who saw this differently and try to be who we’re called to be in the middle of that significant challenge.... We mostly only pay attention to the negative stuff, but as I traveled the country, there were so many people who were gracious and grateful and so many who didn’t understand but extended grace to us and still wanted to walk with us.”

Since his transition, Weaver has “felt invited to be quiet and stand still and see what comes.” He’s worked on some projects for Mennonite Disaster Service in response to flooding in Colorado. And he dreams of a conference and a denomination where “the light and love of God’s Spirit is so evident that it can’t help but attract people because they want to live in that light and love and in that grace.”

The light and love of God’s Spirit is so evident that it can’t help but attract people because they want to live in that light and love and in that grace.—Herm Weaver



Marco Guete

Conference: Southeast Mennonite Conference

Term: 2010-2017

Although he hasn’t retired yet, Guete is already reflective about his time as conference minister.

“This was a great opportunity to do ministry in a very racially diverse conference,” Guete said in a Feb. 25 phone interview. “Working with a conference where 60 percent of the constituency is people of color was something that really attracted me.”

Working with a conference where 60 percent of the constituency is people of color was something that really attracted me.—Marco Guete

Guete also was inspired by the conference’s willingness to reinvent and restructure itself to respond to new and changing needs. Right before he was hired, the conference suspended all its bylaws and structures that had been in place for more than 30 years. The only structure that wasn’t changed, he said, was the district minister role, where pastors volunteer to connect and support congregations in a district or region.

Through Guete’s leadership, the Southeast Conference Mennonite Women organization became a full partner with the conference, including calling the organization’s leader, Doris Diener, to serve as the first female district minister. Diener was ordained in this role.

As he prepares to leave, Guete is leading Southeast Conference through another time of discernment about conference structure. During the most recent annual conference assembly, conference delegates appointed a six-person task force that will connect with representatives from every conference congregation over the next eight months. Congregations will be invited to give feedback on the future of the conference and the conference’s relationship to MC USA.





Chuck Neufeld

Conference: Illinois Mennonite Conference

Term: 2009-2015

Neufeld describes conference ministry as “a job I absolutely loved.” As a pastor to pastors, Neufeld saw his role as giving “churches permission to be in fellowship” across theological and ideological differences.

“Because of our faith commitments, we so often feel obligated to somehow manage our surroundings or keep the church ordered as we feel it should be,” he said in a Feb. 5 interview. “This wreaks havoc. It’s us judging the other instead of realizing we’re a part of a church that can’t be managed and that it’s Christ who reconciles us to himself.”

To guide the conference’s ministry, Neufeld focused on four questions:

1. Is Christ Lord?
2. Is Scripture authoritative?
3. Is the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective ours?
4. Are we praying for the ongoing leadership of the Holy Spirit?

“If someone could answer yes to these four questions, then they are our Christian brother or sister,” said Neufeld. “These are remarkable questions if and when we can allow them to determine our relationships.”

These questions served as tools for counseling congregations in conflict with one another and the denomination. He sees it as a sign of hope and a gift of grace that upon retirement, he ended his work as conference minister “without being able to name an enemy.”

Chuck and Bonnie, his wife and partner in ministry, relocated to North Newton, Kan., in 2015 to be closer to family.

We’re part of a church that can’t be managed, and it’s Christ who reconciles us to himself.—Chuck Neufeld



Clarence Rempel

Conference: Western District Conference

Term: 2009-2015

For Rempel, conference ministry provided a powerful experience of God’s provision, especially as he worked with congregations seeking a new pastor.

“It’s just kind of the miracle of communication,” says Rempel. “There were times when I said, ‘Lord, I’ve worked

hard on this, but I’m just hitting dead ends. Who do you have for this congregation?’ And I’d get a call or get an email and things would fit together.”

Rempel recalls three pastors who gave him clear no’s when he called and invited them to consider a congregation in WDC but who later felt a call and are now serving WDC congregations. Rempel says that, given the concentration of Mennonites in the eastern United States, it was sometimes hard to convince candidates to give Kansas a try. “Sometimes I teased them a bit and said, You know, they’ve built a bridge over the Mississippi. It’s really safe,” he says.

Rempel also took joy in trying to “push out the missional spirit” of WDC, especially increasing the focus on church planting and hosting church planting events for leaders across the conference.

For Rempel, disagreements and changing perspectives about sexuality were the most difficult. He laments the loss of 10 congregations from WDC and “not being able to intervene in ways that would have kept us all together.” Out of that, though, he observed “excellent leadership from the broader WDC,” which worked together on a human sexuality discernment process.

“My hope for WDC and MC USA [is] that there would be continued intense initiative in making new disciples and developing new churches,” he says. “Those really interlink ...in that newer churches do the best job of making new disciples.”

Hannah Heinzekehr is executive director of The Mennonite, Inc.

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 ACCOUNTABLE GOODVILLE DEPENDABLE
 FRIENDLY LOCAL STRONG HONEST AFFORDABLE
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Archives

Then and now

Youth shaping our way forward

Then and now, the Mennonite church is a body nurturing connections among brothers and sisters in Christ and seeking the Holy Spirit that moves through generations. In this section of stories drawn from the Mennonite Church USA Archives, you'll find snapshots of historical youth movements and gatherings paired with the work of the denomination today.

While not representing a comprehensive history, these images and stories highlight how we have journeyed together as a church and the important role young adults have played and continue to play in shaping the church's work and witness in areas such as:

- Peace witness
- Worship and music
- Voluntary service
- Gatherings for people of color
- Denominational gatherings
- Women's roles in the church
- Ecumenical gatherings
- Global connections

Through the "Then" accounts, we remember how the body of Christ has come together throughout our

history and glimpse some of the ways young adults have challenged the church with their energy and fresh perspectives. Conventions, support groups, campouts and rallies provided opportunities for Mennonite youth to question and grow, develop leadership potential and dream of what the future of the Mennonite movement might look like.

The "Now" accounts share about work Mennonite Church USA is engaged in today. Each "Then and Now" pairing provides insight into how the youth gatherings featured in this section influenced the movement of the church's work and theological commitments. Whether it be ongoing initiatives or gatherings, issues raised that have become central to our shared identity, or investments in relationships across boundaries, young adults have shaped and continue to shape where the church is headed.

These rich stories and many others continue to be preserved in the Mennonite Church USA Archives, allowing us to reflect and make connections between them today.

Mennonite Church USA Archives

Collecting, sharing and preserving stories of Mennonite Christian discipleship

- The Mennonite Church USA Archives are located in North Newton, Kan., in the Bethel College library, and in Goshen, Ind., in Newcomer Center at Goshen College.
- Each year, the Archives host several hundred researchers in person and answer about 1,000 reference questions for in-person and remote researchers.
- The Archives' approximately 8,700 photographs available online have received more than 7 million views.
- Among the researchers are students, historians, theologians, pastors, documentary researchers, genealogists, former mission workers, and people whose lives have been touched by Mennonites.

See: mennoniteusa.org/what-we-do/archives



Singing at the Cross-Cultural Youth Convention in 1975.
Mennonite Church USA Archives

Then

Cross-Cultural Convention

Aug. 20–25, 1972

Epworth Forest Park, North Webster, Ind.

In the summer of 1972, Mennonite youth of color came to Indiana for the Cross-Cultural Youth Convention, an event focused on developing leaders, providing space for fellowship, exploring identity and empowering minority voices in the church to share their experience and culture. The goal was to “help young people be proud to stick with the church.”

Individuals at the conference were able to take part in the joys and challenges of intercultural exchange. When tensions did arise, youth were encouraged not to apologize for cultural differences but to find ways to witness to both the importance of their heritage and their shared identity in Christ.

One of the conference speakers was Lawrence Hart, a Mennonite Cheyenne leader who introduced the concept of revolutionary conformity — joining institutions and changing them from within. By the end of the week, the youth were unified in a successful convention-wide lettuce boycott, pledging their support to César Chavez and the United Farm Workers’ efforts. They called on the rest of the Mennonite Church to join them.

Now

Hope for the Future

Annual Hope for the Future (HFF) gatherings bring together leaders of color from across the church, sometimes with white allies, to explore how power, privilege and racism function in our denomination and to network and strategize with each other. Together, they aim to develop concrete ways to help the church adjust positively to its rapid growth among people of color compared with that of predominantly white congregations.

“Undoing racism and advancing intercultural transformation” is one of the seven priorities laid out in Mennonite Church USA’s Purposeful Plan, the document that guides the work of the Executive Board staff.

Each HFF gathering has had a different emphasis. At the fourth event, held in January 2015 at Iglesia Menonita Arca de Salvación in Fort Myers, Fla., more than 100 participants focused on understanding how power works across Mennonite institutions. They analyzed case studies about how power is used or misused based on racial, ethnic and gender stereotypes and perceptions. For the first time, the gathering included Latino, black, Native American and Asian young adults from Mennonite Church USA colleges and universities to empower them to be agents of positive change.

The fifth event—held in January at Calvary Community Church in Hampton, Va., with the theme “Equipping the Saints” (Ephesians 4:12-16)—focused on human resources to identify best practices to increase the flow of diverse candidates into the hiring pipeline. About 60 participants developed a list of policy solutions for positive change that is being refined by planning committee members.



Michelle Armster prays with Sue Park Hur at the Hope for the Future meeting in 2015. Mennonite Church USA Archives

A poster from the 1968 youth convention of the General Conference Mennonite Church. Mennonite Church USA Archives



Then

GCMC Youth at Estes Park

July 13–20, 1968

YMCA campgrounds, Estes Park, Colo.

Enticed by the wilderness location and hip taglines—“It’s the groovy way to witness!”—about 400 General Conference Mennonite Church (GCMC) high school youth and their sponsors gathered for the 1968 youth convention. The theme was “United in Power: Writing Our Own Theology.”

Discussions and seminars focused on important issues of the day, including the Vietnam War, Black Power and the Civil Rights Movement. In response to a particularly powerful workshop “Is Protest a Witness?” 150 youth wrote their own equal rights resolution and marched into the adult session in an orderly demonstration. The conference assembly voted in favor of the proposal and passed the resolution the youth created.

Creative expression of these emerging ideals was also encouraged. The first live coffeehouse at a convention—“the Hub”—was a space where youth could go in the evenings to discuss theology, reflect on the day and listen to live music and poetry performances. This was also where The Revelators, a group of eight black youth from Woodlawn Mennonite Church in Chicago, performed an original play, “The Blackness of Blackness,” which they hoped would “disturb us into action.”

Now

Peace and Justice Support Network

Created during the spring of 2002, the Peace and Justice Support Network (PJSN) encourages Mennonite Church USA to embody and communicate the reconciling way of Christ and to keep peace and justice central to the mission of the church in the world.

PJSN hosts gatherings, offers counsel to denominational agencies and the Executive Board, and publicizes resources for congregations to engage various peace and justice issues.

For example, PJSN staff members created a webinar covering the history of the Israel-Palestine conflict and why Mennonites should care about it. They also created worship resources to help congregations better understand the experiences of those in the region who are suffering.

PJSN is working with several congregations and partners to learn about ways to become places of healing for returning veterans. A six-week PJSN Sunday school curriculum entitled “Returning Veterans, Returning Hope: Seeking Peace Together” draws on biblical reflection, the latest understandings of trauma and moral injury, and the experiences of veterans themselves to equip churches to become part of their healing journey.

Other issues include immigration, health-care access, human trafficking and antiracism.



In April 2015, a delegation of 13 leaders from Pacific Northwest and Pacific Southwest Mennonite conferences and other leaders from across Mennonite Church USA participated in a Come and See learning tour to Israel-Palestine. From left are Mark Schildt, family physician and Mennonite Voluntary Service local coordinator, Shalom Mennonite Fellowship, Tucson, Ariz.; Femi Fatunmbi, pastor of Royal Dominion International Church in Los Angeles and moderator of Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference; and Juan Montes, pastor of First Mennonite Church of Reedley, Calif. Mennonite Church USA Archives



Mrs. Horch (right), CFAM, Altona, Manitoba, interviews Marion Keeney Preheim. Mennonite Church USA Archives

Then

Women in Church Vocations

Nov. 27–29, 1957

Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Chicago

The Women in Church Vocations (WCV) program was formed during a time when women were denied pastoral leadership roles and made up only 20 percent of students at the seminary. The requirements for membership in the group were four years of college—most women studied education, religious education or nursing—and one year of seminary in specially designed courses.

The WCV program trained and commissioned women for church leadership roles and mission, created a space for fellowship, encouraged women to pursue their passion for the church and hosted conferences where women were able to share their stories, experiences and challenges. Even though its membership quickly grew to 225, the WCV program disbanded in 1963, partly because the educational requirements were difficult for many women to meet and because few churches were ready to add positions the women were prepared to fill.

Now

Women in Leadership Project

When Mennonite Women USA called for an audit of Mennonite institutions in 2009, this created an opportunity for systemic change. After an examination of the numbers of women leaders in Mennonite institutions, it was clear that quantitative analysis was not enough. Thus the Women in Leadership Project (WLP) was born—an initiative to name and transform sexism in Mennonite Church USA.

Joanna Shenk and Hilary Scarsella provided leadership in the formative years of the project, and a steering committee was created in 2012 to help provide diverse guidance. In 2014, Jennifer Castro became the WLP coordinator.

Since 2011, four volunteer “focus groups”—Empowering Resources, Mennonite Monologues, Mentoring and Undoing Sexism—made up of women from across Mennonite Church USA have been working to respond to needs and goals of women leaders. For example, in 2013, the Empowering Resources group created “Do You See This Woman?”—a series of congregational worship services acknowledging the influence of patriarchy in our lives and seeking to nurture right relationships among people of all genders in the church. The Undoing Sexism group has worked at generating conversation about naming and transforming systemic sexism in Mennonite secondary educational institutions.

In February 2014, the WLP organized the Women Doing Theology Conference “All You Need is Love: Honoring the Diversity of Women’s Voices in Theology” in Leesburg, Va.—a powerful space where nearly 200 participants engaged the reality of intersecting oppressions in our world today. A second conference, “I’ve Got the Power! Naming and Reclaiming Power as a Force for Good,” is planned for November.



Joanna Shenk, Hilary Scarsella, Janie Beck Kreider and Libby Smith Schrock at a brainstorming meeting for the Women in Leadership Project. Mennonite Church USA Archives



World War I conscientious objectors with the American Friends Service Committee in France. Mennonite Church USA Archives

Then

Young People's Conference

June 20–22, 1919

Clermont, France

In 1917, Mennonites established a Relief Commission for War Sufferers to help reconstruct Europe after World War I. Due to financial and organizational constraints, they decided to send interested young men, often fresh out of military camps where they had refused to participate, to work for the American Friends Service Committee in France. Between 1918 and 1920, 54 Mennonite men participated and worked at reconstruction by rebuilding French houses.

This experience caused the men to question why Mennonites were not more involved in peace-making efforts and relief work around the globe and eventually led them to gather to share these concerns at the first Young People's Conference (YPC) in June 1919 in Clermont, France. By the end of the conference they had created a constitution to express their hopes for the future church, focusing on peace, service and relief programs.

The YPC men returned home in the winter of 1920 and began spreading their vision to Mennonite congregations in America—leaving controversy in their wake. The church was not yet ready for their outward-focused vision, and church leaders found the movement too liberal and radical for the current demands of the institutional church.

The YPC movement never gained official recognition within the Mennonite Church and eventually faded out when Goshen (Ind.) College was closed in 1923. The Young People's Problems Committee was formed, however, as a way to continue discussing the concerns that the first YPC raised in France.

Now

Christian Service

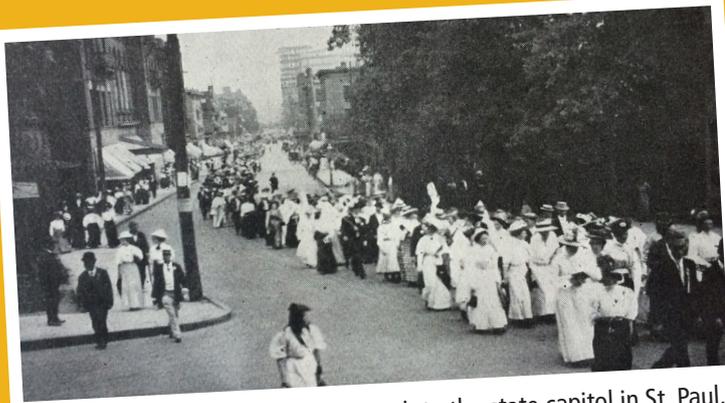
Today, Mennonite Mission Network, the mission agency of Mennonite Church USA, facilitates short- and long-term voluntary service assignments for more than 3,500 participants in more than 50 countries. The assignments range from one week to multiple years both in the United States and abroad. By helping develop and deepen global relationships, the agency helps share the Anabaptist-Mennonite understanding of Christ throughout the world.

Mennonite Mission Network programs create opportunities for cultural exchange. DOOR (Discovering Opportunities for Outreach and Reflection) invites young people to engage in short-term collaborative urban ministry projects in diverse cities, such as Atlanta and Denver, while Journey International offers a one-year experience in cross-cultural learning and service overseas. Youth Venture allows teens and young adults to join others for several weeks of service during the summer.

Mennonite Voluntary Service and Service Adventure offer young adults a space to engage deeply in a local church, integrate into a new neighborhood, live in an intentional community and gain meaningful work experience in a wide range of fields. Placement options range from home repair to public-health issues, youth ministry to immigration law, and environmental justice to education.



Mennonite Voluntary Service worker Katie Janzen. Mennonite Mission Network



Christian Endeavor participants march to the state capitol in St. Paul, Minn. Mennonite Church USA Archives

Then

Christian Endeavor

July 7–12, 1909

St. Paul, Minn.

In July 1909, 26 Mennonites from around the country gathered at the International Christian Endeavor Convention, an international evangelical movement focused on spreading an excitement for Christ, mission and the gospel to youth around the world. This event boldly proclaimed that participants would be “hearing speakers from every country in the world where Christian missions have made progress.” And while it’s unlikely there were representatives from every denomination and corner of the globe as touted, more than 15,000 people from various countries did gather. Disciples of Christ, Lutherans, Methodists, the Reformed Church in America and other denominations all met in separate rallies to discuss how their distinct theology fit into this larger ecumenical movement.

The group of 26 Mennonites met on July 9 to discuss how the Christian Endeavor movement could affect the church’s mission. Mennonites were beginning work in India and China at the time, and Christian Endeavor gatherings were considered a way to inspire the church to continue its global mission efforts, as well as a place where Mennonites could let go of denominational distinctions and raise their voices in worship with other Christians. In fact, singing together was a major focus of the week, both in worship services and during Oratorio Night, where participants gathered around a campfire and singers from each nation shared their music.

Now

Christian Churches Together

After a denomination-wide process of nearly three years, delegates at San José 2007 voted in favor of Mennonite Church USA joining Christian Churches Together (CCT) as a full participant. CCT brings together leaders from the various streams of the Christian church: Evangelical, historic Protestant, Pentecostal, Orthodox, historic black churches and Roman Catholic. Joining this group has been a significant way for Mennonites to find their place in the broader body of Christ. Two or three Mennonite Church USA leaders attend annual CCT meetings.

Members work together on issues such as hunger, racism and peacemaking. In 2014, CCT organized Black Lives Matter Day, encouraging churchgoers to wear black as an act of collective witness to the losses of black people at the hands of U.S. law enforcement. The Circle of Protection campaign used the collective CCT voice to raise up hunger and poverty as an election issue by challenging presidential candidates to appear in a video stating how they propose to help those suffering from hunger and poverty in the United States and abroad.

During the last two CCT annual sessions, together with representatives from the other historic peace churches, Mennonites have hosted a conversation on Jesus’ call to peacemaking for CCT participants.



Participants in Christian Churches Together. Mennonite Church USA Archives

Write the next chapter

At the GCMC Estes Park gathering, youth were invited to come together “united in power” to “write your own theology,” sparking energy that moved the church body into action.

- **How can the church continue to empower the voices of youth and young adults?**
- **What do youth and young adults have to say to Mennonite Church USA today?**

Divine call

A review of *Called to be a Pastor: Why It Matters to Both Congregations and Clergy*

by Nancy Kauffmann

Moses had the burning bush, Samuel had the voice in the night, and Mary had the visiting angel, while pastor Larry Hauder had a less-dramatic yet life-changing question. It was a question that caused him to move his family, change vocations and locations and set his path for the next 40-plus years. It was a simple question from an older lay leader in his church: "Larry, have you ever thought of attending seminary?" It stirred something within him and eventually led him to hear the call of God on his life to pastoral ministry. In his recently published book, *Called to be a Pastor: Why It Matters to Both Congregations and Clergy*, Hauder writes: "Yes, congregational ministry has given me great vocational satisfaction and a sense of life purpose and joy. I cannot imagine feeling more fulfilled or spiritually alive had I declined the divine call to enter pastoral ministry."



In his book, Hauder humbly, honestly and directly tells the story of his journey in ministry interweaving Scripture, journal entries, learnings and observations of what it means to receive a call to ministry and to grow in that call. Referring to his “divine call,” he lives within the biblical story and allows it to inform and shape his story and his ministry.

This is not a how-to book or a manual but a story that invites you in to reflect on your own story and glean some wisdom and learnings from it. Arthur Paul Boers says it well in the forward: “This...is not about a grandstanding superstar who singlehandedly launched massive enterprises and now bills himself as an ‘expert.’ Rather, as Larry makes sense of his own life and ministry, he invites us to take seriously our own ordinary lives and ministry possibilities.”

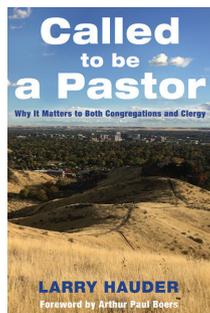
The telling of a positive and honest story is refreshing in light of recent stories about moral and ethical failures of leaders that have deeply hurt family, friends, themselves and the whole church, to say nothing of how it has hurt their victims. While the negative stories remind us of the cost of crossing boundaries, including betraying trust and causing great harm, we need to hear positive stories that challenge us and give us hope, insight and encouragement to make healthy and wise choices as pastors. We need to hear stories that go beyond the surface of what not to do and go deeper into the soul of what makes for a healthy pastor who helps build the body of Christ.

If it is a divine calling on our lives as pastors, then dare we treat it with disrespect through destructive behavior? Christ’s words should come to haunt us: “Just as you did it to one of the least of those who are members of my family, you did it me” (Matthew 25:40). Hauder talks about revisiting the story of his call to ministry as vitally important especially in times of stress or in times of lack of focus. He says it gave him encouragement and motivation to continue on in ministry.

I would add that it allowed him to reexamine his motives, his values and kept him focused on being faithful to that call with integrity. The revisiting of his story is also being true to the biblical story, where God constantly reminded the Israelites to remember all God had done for them and was calling them to. The revisiting of our story reminds us of who we are, whose we are and what we are to be about.

In revisiting his story, Larry shares a wealth of insight and wisdom about living out that call and life with a congregation. Even the choice of his chapter titles gives an intriguing glimpse of his understanding about ministry: “Family of Ori-

gin—Shaping the Pastoral Identity,” “The Weekly Sermon-Deepening the Pastoral Call,” “Community Involvement-Extending a Congregation’s Influence” and The Pastoral Review-Refining Ministry.”



The revisiting of our story reminds us of who we are, whose we are and what we are to be about.

After 40 years of ministry, including pastoring a congregation and serving as a conference minister, Hauder believes the call to be a pastor matters both to the congregation and clergy, as the book’s subtitle states. Pastors need to be self-aware, flexible and willing to grow in the ministry that will have a major impact on the congregation. One of the assumptions stated in the book is “that pastoral gifts can be of average grade.” Imagine a congregation looking for an average-gifted



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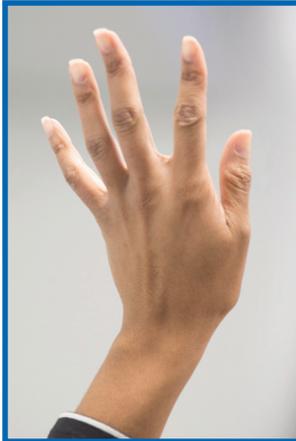


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Ministerial Leadership Information form completion

1.5 to 2 months

- Factors:
- How long the individual takes to fill out the form
 - Waiting for references to be returned

Congregational search process

6 to 12 months

- Factors:
- Location
 - FTE offered
 - Type of position
 - Health of the congregation
 - Theological fit
 - Discernment: Is this the right fit for both pastor and congregation?

person. Instead, congregations often look for dynamic preachers or other gifts/skills that will benefit their congregation, or they look either for someone better than their last pastor or as good as their last pastor. But Hauder sees the importance of something deeper—“a solid sense of self and an identity that is emotionally and spiritually secure.” He quotes 1 Samuel 16:7b: “for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” Hauder isn’t suggesting mediocrity in a pastor, but throughout his story he emphasizes various qualities that are important and beneficial to the pastor’s and the congregation’s well-being, such as relational intelligence—the ability to relate authentically to others.

Serving as a conference minister for a number of years, I learned that how a congregation entered into the search process for a new pastor signaled the level of health of the congregation and affected the outcome of the search. There can be almost nothing more devastating to the congregation and the new pastor than a poorly handled search process. It has caused some people to leave the ministry for good and has made future searches by the congregation much more challenging.

Hauder emphasizes that the act of discerning leadership is a biblical “ancient yet timeless ritual,” as recounted in the selection of David to be king. In that story, Samuel passed by other

possibilities until God made it clear who was to be chosen. In the search process, both pastor and congregation need to tend to the goal of finding a good fit. Hauder suggests that they need to ask the question of whether God is leading them to each other. He says that while a list of objective criteria to be checked off is helpful, there are more subjective questions in discernment: “Do those who have met the candidate feel engaged and emotionally connected to the candidate? Is there a sense of excitement and energy from both the candidate and the congregation? And is there a feeling of peace about calling this candidate to lead our congregation? This all requires prayer and waiting on God’s leading.”



The search for pastors

75

pastoral openings ranging from part-time to full-time

61

inquiries about possibly completing the Ministerial Leadership Information form

50

persons interested in a pastoral position

49

names on the National Registry of persons looking for pastoral positions

A congregational search process can be a highly anxious time for those in the congregation who either feel the urgency to find someone immediately or worry it is taking too long. A search committee will then feel pressure “to fill a slot” with someone who seems to have the best gifts rather than taking time to process thoroughly and carefully. Too many times, I have seen the anxiety or impatience of the congregation short circuit the search process, and a person who looked good on paper was hired but later proved not to be a good fit. The same goes for a candidate who, because of anxiety or sense of urgency to get a pastorate, accepts a position, only to realize the congregation was a misfit for him/her.

Discernment takes time. It requires waiting on God until a good fit is found. Such a fit can be a blessing and fertile ground for developing a partnership between the pastor and congregation in which purpose and growth can take place. I agree with Hauder that the pastoral call is a process of unraveling a kind of divine mystery and so believe that the search process deserves the reverence of waiting on the Holy Spirit as well.

Finally, Hauder puts a heavy emphasis throughout the book on the importance of both the congregation and the pastor understanding their relationship. So just as a pastor prepares for

ministry, so also should a congregation prepare to receive a pastor. A congregation that is self-aware, open to hearing the call of God on its life

There can be almost nothing more devastating to the congregation and the new pastor than a poorly handled search process.

and willing to grow can be a fertile ground for building a partnership with the right pastor to work together to accomplish God’s purpose. A healthy relationship can unleash the potential in each to “live up to their high calling and be a part of the ongoing biblical story as God intends.” The energy and spirit of such a relationship will be inviting to others to come join that story.

Hauder’s book is a much-needed resource for the church. I highly recommend it.



Nancy Kauffmann is denomination minister for Mennonite Church USA.

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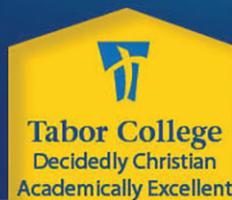


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A place called **home**

Church leaders in Eastern Europe and the Middle East want help to support refugees and displaced people until they can return home

by J Ron Byler

More than two years ago, their house in Aleppo, Syria, was completely destroyed. The family of six lived in another Syrian village for four months, then they walked six days to the Jordan border, sometimes needing to dodge sniper bullets.

They finally made it across the border to a refugee camp with nothing but the clothes they wore. They told me that they feel alone in their new country and want to go home to Syria.

They are among more than 60 million refugees or internally displaced people worldwide. Sixty million people, the highest number ever recorded, are not able, as we are, to live in their homes because of violence or disasters.

Earlier this year, I traveled to Ukraine, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine and Israel, where Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is providing help with refugees and displaced people.

A second family I met in Jordan fled from an area near Mosul, Iraq, and now lives in a small make-shift apartment on the fourth floor of another family's house, but they have no family of their own there. The wife has a sister in the United States, but she isn't able to provide any assistance. The husband told me they'd go anywhere that would have them.

I wondered what it would be like to spend my days primarily hoping and working for the safety of my children and to find a place to call home.

In eastern Ukraine, almost 2.5 million people fled their homes due to the conflict there. In Zaporizhzhia, I met Vadim (not his real name), a pastor in the conflict zone in eastern Ukraine, where bombing is an everyday occurrence.

Vadim told me he had to wait eight hours at a military checkpoint before he was permitted to drive to Zaporizhzhia for a meeting of MCC partners in the region. In his community, Vadim said, the tanks are constantly going up and down the avenues. Young people risk their lives to deliver food and blankets to people in need while shooting is going on. The violence has brought the churches together, Vadim told me, because they need to support each other.

During my sojourn with refugees, I found new power in the Psalms I read each day. Vadim told me the Psalms were important to him, too, because they were evidence of God's faithfulness and protection.

In Iraq, I met Father Douglas Bazi, who provides leadership to the Mar Elia displacement center, just one of 14 camps for displaced people operated by the Chaldean Catholic Archdiocese of Erbil, an MCC partner. He said the entire populations of five denominational dioceses were displaced overnight when the Islamic State group swept through the nearby Ninewa Plain in August 2014.

Over time, more than 11,000 Christian families have been displaced and found shelter in Erbil and the surrounding area. Christians are only a small part of the millions of Iraqis who suddenly found themselves homeless; members of many other minority groups and Sunni and Shia Muslims also have been displaced by the Islamic State group.

More than 5,000 Iraqi Christian families have emigrated from Erbil to Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. Others don't have the resources to leave, but they cannot go home either, Father Douglas told me. "If you cannot open your doors to my people, help my people stay here," he pled.

In Beirut, Lebanon, I met with several bishops of the Syrian Orthodox Church, one of MCC's primary partners in Syria. Archbishop Selwanos offered thanks on behalf of the families of Homs who have been assisted by MCC after their city was mostly destroyed by bombing. He said MCC's help during many years has made him view himself as partly Mennonite.

Archbishop Matta spoke of thousands of families who have moved into Damascus because of bombing in other parts of the country. Every day, he said, the church has to process more than 150 baptismal certificates before people can migrate out of the country. He said he wants his people to stay: "We love our country, and if you want to help us, please help our people stay in Syria."

Since the Syrian war began five years ago, MCC has spent about \$35 million to relieve the suffering of Syrians, Iraqis and people in neighboring countries who have suffered from trauma, homelessness and hunger. This is the largest financial response in MCC's almost 100 years.

U.S. Christians who care about displaced people in eastern Europe and the Middle East can support humanitarian efforts in the region and urge their lawmakers to increase aid, welcome refugees and stop sending weapons.

We can pray for our brothers and sisters and for a compassionate response from our government and churches. We can support MCC's immigration education work that equips people to provide legal assistance that families need to enter our country.

After a recent conference in Palestine, a Lutheran pastor told a group of us from Canada and the United States that we share a responsibility to help Christians in the midst of conflict find a way to stay in the land they call home. Christians want to stay in Palestine, but they are being pushed out.

The pastor added, "We are not Christians here because of your missionary work. You are Christians because of us. We were Christians long

before you were, and now we need your support. Not in money but in prayer, in moral support and in telling our story."

We are not Christians here because of your missionary work. You are Christians because of us.—Palestinian pastor

Christians in the Middle East and Ukraine need our support to stay in and return to their homes. If it is true for Christians, it is also true for Jews, Muslims and all other religious and ethnic groups in these countries.

For the 60 million people in the world without a home, I want to pray and work for a peace that allows people to stay in the place they call home. Will you join me?



J Ron Byler is executive director of MCC U.S.



Mennonite Church USA

All You Need Is Love
Honoring the Diversity of Women's Voices in Theology
Jennifer Castro, editor
Presentations from the Women Doing Theology Conference
Women in Leadership Project
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Dare to be vulnerable



Jenny Castro is communications associate and coordinator for the Women in Leadership Project for Mennonite Church USA.

We have lots of room to grow when it comes to understanding emotions and what we believe they reveal about us.

Why are you so worked up?”
 “Let’s not get so excited here.”
 “Don’t get all emotional, now.”
 “Her emotions are so unprofessional.”

These phrases are a sampling of reactions I’ve received at various points in my career—sometimes directly and sometimes in roundabout ways.

I’ve thought and read a great deal about the role of emotions in professional settings, and my research has been discouraging. Many workplace cultures and traditional styles of leadership leave no space for healthy expressions of emotion. My own experience reflects the literature claiming that these dynamics tend to be split down gender lines—that emotional responses tend to make the men in the room feel uncomfortable. If a woman cries, that’s perceived as a sign of weakness or lack of self-control, and as a result she is taken less seriously. If a woman reveals anger or assertiveness, she’s written off as the stereotypical angry woman (responses are even worse if she’s a person of color).

What if we considered the cultural messages we perpetuate through these norms?

Why do emotions tend to make men uncomfortable? What does this reveal about what it means to be a man in our culture?

Why do we associate crying with weakness? Is a woman who cries less intelligent or articulate?

Why are anger and assertiveness appropriate for a man to show and not a woman? Have you ever told a woman to calm down when she was expressing anger? Or accused a woman of being too “bossy”?

We have lots of room to grow when it comes to understanding emotions and what we believe they reveal about us. We must be mindful of how these understandings are connected with our beliefs about masculinity and femininity. We have a tendency in our culture to value logic and reason—traditionally more masculine traits—over feeling and emotion—traditionally more feminine traits. This value system—patriarchy—feeds into ingrained systems of oppression, such as racism and sexism, and devalues both women and men who don’t conform to traditional masculine and feminine norms.

How do we break out from these cultural expectations? Can we welcome those whose way of being is different from ours? Can we feel free to be who we are, bringing authenticity to our relationships and interactions—whether we cry

or laugh out loud or show some holy anger every now and again?

God created each of us—“fearfully and wonderfully” (Psalm 139:14). Each of us is a unique artistic expression of a creative God who desires that we be who we were created to be—embracing our gifts, celebrating our growth and living in healthy balance and relationship with each other.

I’m a firm believer in being who I am, showing up and offering what I’ve got. I’m grateful when I encounter others with the courage and the vulnerability to live and work in this manner also.

In her book *Daring Greatly*, bestselling author and shame and vulnerability researcher Brené Brown defines vulnerability as “uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure.” Taken at face value, vulnerability is terrifying. So terrifying, in fact, one might wonder who would actually wish it for anyone. Yet personal experience has shown me that the risk is worth putting myself out there and revealing who I am and what I’m passionate about because the results are deeper relationship, connection, energizing collaboration, challenge, growth and so much more. Brown says, “Vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity and change.” As we take chances and risk an authentic, messy, more whole way of being, we begin to shift the culture of our environment—creating space for more authentic interaction.

I’m not saying it’ll all be roses. On the contrary, this kind of living and working and being is probably more time consuming, less clear cut, and requires incredible energy. But imagine an environment where there’s grace for mistakes, where we believe in one another, where we set clear boundaries and ask for what we need, where we love generously and offer compassion while calling each other into wholeness. It’s an environment where we’re actively working out our faith together as authentic and imperfect people.

What would it look like for someone to respond to expressions of emotion with grace, support and a listening ear?

Maybe something along these lines:

“Gosh, that sounds awful. I’d be angry, too.”

“I really appreciate your honesty about this.”

“Tell me more about it. I’m not sure I understand, but I want to.”

Together, let’s throw off the constructs of our culture that simply do not work. Let’s offer others the freedom to bring who they are and have the courage to do the same ourselves. **TM**

We need to engage the Jewish community

As Mennonites we seem to continue to believe that we can speak in a meaningful way to the issues of Israel/Palestine without engaging the Jewish community in Israel and even North America. This failure calls into question our integrity as people of peace and hampers the potential effectiveness of our initiatives.

We have not laid the groundwork for a common conversation about the region in a meaningful way with the Jewish community. Many in our communities are confused about the importance of even bringing up the issue. Many regard Jewish-Christian relations and advocacy for the Palestinians as independent and unrelated issues. We do not even know how our stances are understood by the Jewish community or what the Jewish community has invested in its concerns about the welfare of Israel.

From our standpoint it is one more unjust government policy that must be challenged. Many Jews share some of our concerns about these policies but are deeply invested in the welfare of Israel. We don't know that because of our lack of communication. We have a vague understanding of how the Bible might be used to justify an occupation of the land and have limited knowledge of what the existence of the State of Israel actually means for many modern Jews.

Several issues require our attention in ways we may not find comfortable.

Holocaust: While the Roman Catholic Church and many of the major Protestant denominations have studied and issued statements about their complicity in the Holocaust, Mennonites have, for the most part, remained silent. Our European ancestors spoke German and considered themselves of German descent. In his account of service in the German army, the Canadian Siegfried Bartel noted the manner in which German Mennonites had lost almost entirely any stance of objection to military service and that conscientious objectors were the exception even in the Mennonite community. Support for Hitler continued in Mennonite communities in the Americas long after emigration from the German-speaking communities of Russia and Eastern Europe. Mennonites did not approach the governments of Canada and the United States when Jews fleeing the pogroms and concentration camps of Europe were seeking refuge. We have not addressed our own complicity in this effort at extermination, one of the issues we would need to address in a real conversation

with the Jewish communities of North America and/or Israel.

Anti-Judaism: We also have failed in significant ways to bring concerns about anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism into our discussions about our reading of the Bible and our theology. This is a remarkable omission for a "peace church." Following the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church developed a statement on the way Jews and Judaism should be presented in the teaching of the church, including specific guidelines for the treatment of biblical texts. Some Protestant denominations developed similar guidelines for educational and liturgical purposes. This issue has not been prominent in our Christian education materials or even in the guidelines used for their development. This is a crucial question for a "biblical" people. In our theology, we have tended toward a christological focus without recognizing the anti-Jewish presuppositions fundamental to its formulation in much of western theology.

Land: This is a complicated issue for us. Many of us were raised in rural communities with a deep attachment to land while being taught a pilgrim theology rooted in migration. We were taught that we should not become too attached to material things or geographical location, yet family life revolved around the farm and its well-being. Our experience is different from the theology that supported us. Denied access to their ancestral lands for almost two millennia, Jews were second-class citizens and often worse in most of the countries they were dispersed to. For example, they were not permitted to own property in many European countries. Now they have come to occupy a land that was often the property of another. The "settlement" stories of the late 19th and early 20th centuries are filled with accounts of how urban residents learned to be farmers, of how professionals and intellectuals learned to live lives centered in manual labor. A complex picture, made only more complicated by our ambivalent attachment to our own land.

The land of Israel, the Holocaust and anti-Semitism are intertwined for significant portions of the Jewish community. They share a set of hopes and fears for the area similar to our concerns, and more importantly, those of many Palestinians. But we have not engaged with the Jewish community to the extent that we understand their perspectives on this question or that they would trust our initiatives. We have work to do. 



John Kampen is a professor of Bible and a member of Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship.

We have limited knowledge of what the existence of the State of Israel actually means for many modern Jews.

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

Inmate finds home in Mennonite congregation

Yellow Creek Mennonite Church members welcome former prisoner

When Doug Flick landed in jail again at age 43, he knew he had hit rock bottom. After being introduced to drugs at a young age, Flick was addicted and had been arrested several times for drug-related activity.

“I should be thinking about retirement and vacations, and here I was,” says Flick. I realized something was seriously wrong.”

In desperation, Flick opened his Bible and, for some reason, felt that reading it was “different and more real. I was hungering for it.”

Flick's newfound interest in the Bible led him to a 15-week class focusing on the basics of Christianity held every Thursday afternoon for inmates at the Elkhart County (Ind.) jail.

Truman Weaver, a member of Yellow Creek Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., taught the class, and over the course of 15 weeks, he built a relationship with Flick. After learning more about Scripture and the life of Jesus, Flick chose to be baptized. Prison guards provided a horse tank filled with water for the occasion and members of the class celebrated with Flick.

“At the end of our time together, I asked the class what a

difference Jesus makes in your life,” says Weaver. “And Doug said, ‘Joy and peace.’ Something he had never experienced before was joy and peace.

Flick's trial was held on Sept. 16, and he was released to live with the Weavers on Sept. 17. The judge agreed to release Flick from jail if he had a home to live in and a job to go to.



Having people to walk with you makes all the difference in the world.
—Doug Flick

Flick and the Weavers have been surprised at the ways their lives have been enriched by this living situation.

For many former prisoners, finding a stable place to live and a job can be difficult. Many end up back in prison when they are unable to find a steady source of income or safe community and return to old patterns of behavior.

After much prayer and discernment, Truman and Elnora, his wife, agreed to offer their home to Flick while he worked to get back on his feet.

“I prayed and searched Scripture all summer,” says Elnora. “It wasn't easy. I had to get myself ready for this. A few days before the trial, I asked Truman, Are you sure we should be doing this? I'm too old. I'm 80. And Truman said, ‘Well, God called Moses at age 80.’”

“The Weavers took me in and have really walked with me,” says Flick. “I've been in and out [of jail] a lot of times, and I've never had anybody there to help me. No family... There are lots of barriers. They throw you on the street, with responsibilities and bills you have to pay. Having people to walk with you makes all the difference in the world.”

Flick and several other former inmates have begun attending Yellow Creek Mennonite Church and have enriched the life of the congregation with their testimonies.

“When you hear the testimonies, it does a lot for our congregation to realize that we're a sheltered group,” says Truman. “We have very little knowledge of how the rest of the world lives. It opens up people's eyes about some of the needs we don't face every day and some of the ways we've taken the importance of Christianity for granted.”

Other members of the congregation are also involved in prison ministry and are hosting former inmates in their homes while they work to get back on their feet.—*Hannah Heinzekehr*

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Give up blind politics and follow Jesus' way

Théophane Boko uses fables learned from ancestors in sharing Jesus' good news

Not an eyelid droops when Théophane Boko preaches. Congregations become still as they wait to hear what happens to a deceitful bat. And then in the hush, they learn it is better to follow Jesus' example rather than copying the bat who sleeps through the day, and, in a Beninese fable, illustrates the ultimate outcome of selfishness.

Boko's dedication to Jesus permeates all that he does. Every encounter is an opportunity to share the good news that God's love and redemption extends to all people. Boko is also rooted in his Goun heritage. Like the Jewish culture Jesus was born into, Boko's culture is rich in the oral tradition of storytelling. Nearly two decades ago, Boko had a vision of combining these two passions in a dynamic approach to sharing the biblical message with the people of Benin. It changed his preaching style and enlivened his evangelism.

"It responds to a need to be Christian while remaining true to who we are," Boko says. "Our stories and proverbs show that it is within our own culture and our ancestral traditions that Christ touches us and speaks to us."

When Nancy Frey, who served in Benin through Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Church Canada from 2000 to 2010, taught a homiletics course at Benin Bible Institute, she invited Boko to demonstrate his preaching method. She was impressed with how Boko's combination of traditional educational techniques with the biblical message enthralled those with and without formal schooling, children as well as adults.

So Boko, who also worked at Benin Bible Institute, and Frey typed and edited the fables and proverbs of the Goun people of southeastern Benin. The resulting book, *Contes et histoires commentés à la lumière de la Bible (Fables and Stories Told in the Light of the Bible)*, was published in 2008. Here is a chapter from the book:

Once upon a time, the birds would gather for community meetings. At the end of sessions, each bird would pay taxes for improvements to their society. The king of the birds, none other than the eagle, noticed something: The bat never attended meetings and, thus, never paid taxes.

King Eagle sent messengers to the bat asking her to pay her taxes, but the bat replied, "Go tell your king that I am not a bird. I am a mammal. I have teeth, I give birth to living babies, and I nurse them."

When King Eagle's messengers reported what the bat had said, he sent them to see the animals' monarch, King Lion, to ascertain whether the bat had told the truth. As soon as King Lion heard what the bat had said, he sent his own agents to collect the bat's back taxes.

"I am not a mammal. I am a bird," the bat said. She spread her wings and flew off to prove her point.

When the bat's words were reported to King Lion, he called King Eagle. Together, they ordered the bat to appear before the

two of them. They beat her severely for trying to deceive them and for refusing to contribute to the good of society.

Since that day, the bat has been a loner and only comes out at night.

In his commentary on this story, Boko says we are called upon to make choices every day, such as what our occupation will be or what kind of house we will build.

"To live is to choose," Boko says. "It is impossible to attempt neutrality. We cannot play a political game [like the bat in the story]. That is why God tells us in Deuteronomy 30:19-20: 'I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him.'"

We should follow Jesus' mother, Mary, in making good and courageous choices, Boko says.

"The only good choice that God sets in front of humanity is Jesus," Boko says. "God, Creator of heaven and earth, could have programmed us to choose Jesus. But he didn't create robots or machines; God respects the choices we make."—*Lynda Hollinger-Janzen of Mennonite Mission Network*

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OBITUARIES

Babin, Sharon K. Schmucker, 68, Goshen, Ind., died March 19. Parents: Willard and Dorothy Sumpter Schmucker. Children: Michael Babin, Marc Babin; six grandchildren. Funeral: March 25 at Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind.

Bauman, Harold E., 93, Goshen, Ind., died March 28. Spouse: Carolyn W. Hertzler. Spouse: Elizabeth Hershberger Bauman (deceased). Parents: Norman and Ella Shoup Bauman. Children: Philip Bauman, John Bauman, David Bauman, Rebecca Bauman; seven grandchildren. Funeral: April 9 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Bucher, Kathryn Ellen Hostetter, 91, Harman, W.V., died March 16. Spouse: Samuel J. Bucher (deceased). Parents: D. Ralph and Kathryn E. Hostetter. Step-children: Sarah Ellen Myers, S. Jonathan Bucher, Mary Beth Lind, J. Daniel Bucher; seven step-grandchildren; 14 step-great-grandchildren. Memorial service: March 19 at Harman Church of the Brethren.

Ebersole, Charles Edward, 94, Sterling, Ill., died April 1. Spouse: Joyce Helen VanHorne Ebersole (deceased). Parents: Roy Henry Ebersole and Ruth Nice Ebersole. Step-children: Kenneth Ebersole, Donna Beard, Christine Kuntz, Dorrine Evitt, Kathy Bildersback. Funeral: April 9 at Schilling Funeral Home, Sterling.

Friesen, Menno M., 83, Goshen, Ind., died March 23. Spouse: Shirley Penner Friesen. Parents: Henry A. and Margaret L Loewen Friesen. Children: Paul S. Friesen, Laura J. Friesen Strain, Julia Y. Friesen Morency; eight grandchildren. Funeral: April 3 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Geiser, Clayton Daniel, 91, Kidron, Ohio, died March 6. Spouse: Anna Jean Amstutz Gerber Geiser (deceased). Spouse: Della Nussbaum Geiser (deceased). Parents: Benjamin F. and Anna Lehman Geiser. Children: Thomas Geiser, Keith Geiser, Sharon Gerber Amstutz, Norm Geiser, Norm Geiser, Bill Geiser, Anita Weaver, Les Geiser; 12 grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 10 at Sonnenberg Mennonite Church, Kidron.

Goshow, Ezra M., 96, Souderton, Pa., died March 1. Spouse: Ruth A. Moyer Goshow (deceased). Parents: Henry N. and Katie Moyer Goshow. Children: John M. Goshow, Ronald M. Goshow, Ruthanne Goshow, Mary Jane Yoder, Linda Sue Derstine, Laurel Marie Moyer; 16 grandchildren; 37 great-grandchildren; five great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 5 at Souderton Mennonite Homes Summit Auditorium.

Graber, Fredrick John, 64, Marion, S.D., died March 18. Spouse: Lucille Glanzer Graber. Parents: John P. and Velda Schrag Graber. Children: Charles Graber, Richard Graber. Funeral: March 25 at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

Gunden, Opal Elizabeth Barkey, 92, Goshen, Ind., died March 23. Spouse: Ralph Jason Gunden (deceased). Parents: Elmer Hunsberger Barkey and Dola Mast Barkey. Children: Elizabeth Gunden Landis, Mary Jean Gunden, James Gunden; four grandchildren. Funeral: March 31 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Harder, Estella C. Loewen, 93, Mountain Lake, Minn., died April 11. Spouse: Jacob W. Harder (deceased). Parents: Nicolai F. and Katharina Dick Loewen. Children: Karen Barkman, Jane Goering, Jacob S. Harder, Grace Kratovil; 13 grandchildren; 32 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 14 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake.

Hostetler, Sarah Jeanette Plank Miller, 89, West Liberty, Ohio, died Jan. 19. Spouse: David H. Hostetler. Spouse: Leonard Miller (deceased). Parents: Samuel C. and Golda Ellen Yoder Plank. Children: Linda Kulp, Keith Hostetler, Enid Schloneger, Kathy Schmucker, Amy Sharp, Bob Miller, Rex Miller, Don Miller. Funeral: Jan. 23 at Bethel Mennonite Church, West Liberty.

Hughes, Lina S. Yoder, 82, Souderton, Pa., died Oct. 7, 2015, of a heart attack. Spouse: Theodore G. Hughes. Parents: Levi A. and Cora E. Yoder Yoder. Children: Nancy D. Lenhardt, Curtis G. Hughes, Mary E. Bauer, B. David Hughes; nine grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Oct. 10 at Souderton Mennonite Church.

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FILM REVIEW

Midnight Special (PG-13) is a sci-fi story about a father (Michael Shannon) on the run with his 8-year-old son, who has mysterious, otherworldly powers. It creates an intimate portrayal of family love in tension with religious belief. Director Jeff Nichols masterfully builds suspense as he reveals information incrementally about what is happening. While the Spielbergian climax does not work, the journey there draws viewers into the story powerfully. And the acting, particularly by Shannon, is terrific.—*Gordon Houser*

DVD REVIEW

Noble (PG-13) tells the dramatic true story of Christina Noble, who overcomes a harsh childhood in Ireland to give her life to helping abandoned children. After a dream about Vietnam, she believes God is calling her there. Many years later, she arrives and begins caring for children on the street. Eventually she creates a ministry that has reached hundreds of thousands of children. Tamer than it could have been, this is, nevertheless, an inspiring story.—*gh*

BOOK REVIEWS

Night Comes: Death, Imagination and the Last Things by Dale C. Allison Jr. (Eerdmans, 2016, \$18) is a personal reflection on death and the afterlife by a renowned New Testament scholar. Allison acknowledges that for him, "Christianity without hope beyond death is of reduced relevance and of diminished interest." He draws on sources from across the centuries and includes many helpful insights, such as that bodily resurrection is "a public and communal event at one point in time." He points out that "Scripture offers no consistent teaching about life after death or the world to come," while "our eschatological ideas owe something ... to relatively common visionary experiences." This accessible book addresses a topic often ignored by scholars and sensationalized by others.—*gh*

Forget the poor?

Happy are those who consider the poor.
—Psalm 41:1

The Bible is pretty clear about where the poor stand in God's eyes. God "delivers...the poor and those who have no helper" (Psalm 72:12). God "raises the poor from the dust" (Psalm 113:7) and "executes justice for the poor" (Psalm 140:12).

If you look at our mediaculture, however, you get a different picture. Really, you don't get much picture at all. The poor are largely invisible.

While the Apostle Paul is eager to "remember the poor" (Galatians 2:10), our culture tends to forget them. Or if they're mentioned, it may be in some derogatory manner of being "takers" instead of "makers," as Senator Paul Ryan stated in 2010.

Rana Foroohar's book *Makers and Takers* uses Ryan's terms to make the opposite point. He and other politicians regularly complain about the poor not pulling their weight and taking more in federal benefits than they pay in taxes.

Foroohar, an economics columnist for *Time*, shows who the real takers are. In a review of her book by Chris Lehmann in *In These Times* (May), he calls it "a closely argued, richly reported anatomy of the sluggish, unequal and crisis-prone state of the U.S. economy under the dictates of financialization—the tax giveaways, financial-sector deregulations, secularized debt, etc., that are celebrated by figures such as Ryan."

While many politicians argue that increasing regulations or taxes would hurt would-be job creators, Foroohar notes, "there isn't a shred of evidence to suggest that lowering taxes on the rich makes them any more or less likely to invest or start businesses."

In fact, according to the Office of Financial Research, since the 2008 meltdown, corporate earnings "are rising" even as "sales growth for most public U.S. companies is not."

Corporate debt has grown from \$5.7

trillion in 2006 to \$7.4 trillion today. "In the 1970s," Lehmann writes, "American companies invested more than 15 times what they paid out to shareholders; now that ratio is below 2 to 1."

Foroohar concludes that the "oligopolistic interests" of Wall Street are "re-making our unique brand of American capitalism into a crony capitalism more suited to a third-world autocracy than a supposedly free-market democracy."

Meanwhile, "America has a higher rate of childhood poverty than all but a few developed nations," writes Jeff Madrick in the *New York Times* (April 7). Yet we hear little or nothing about childhood poverty.

Madrick points out that "in 2013, more than 12 million children lived below the poverty line, which for a family of four is slightly more than \$24,000 a year." That's about 17 percent of American children.

Madrick writes, "Recent research has made it clear that just the stress of growing up in a poor family can be toxic to the growing brain." These children often have lower IQ scores.

This has consequences, including a severe cost to the U.S. economy, Madrick writes. What's to be done?

He recommends "cash allowances, ideally paid to a child's parents on a monthly basis," which he calls "a clean, direct way to raise a high proportion of children out of poverty."

This has been tried. In Britain, the program has helped cut child poverty sharply. For a Cherokee tribe in North Carolina, the cash "raised families around the federal poverty line over it, increased school attendance and graduation rates, and decreased criminal behavior among teenagers."

If we choose to remember, not forget, the poor, we'll do something. 



Gordon Houser is editor of The Mennonite.

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

Beth-El Mennonite, Colorado Springs, Colo., seeks a **full-time lead-pastor** who is relationship-oriented, comfortable with theological diversity and is experienced in preaching and living Anabaptist values. For information about our congregation and application procedures, email Jerry Martin, jerry@jmseating.com.

You are invited! **150th Anniversary Celebration of Sycamore Grove Mennonite Church**, Garden City, Mo., June 11-12, 2016. Information: www.sycamoregrovemennonite.com; 816-773-6120; 816-223-1859

Alaska called us. Does it call you? We are a small, vibrant congregation in Anchorage, seeking a **half-time pastor** to join us living and working in Alaska's biggest city. Together with a Mennonite house church in Fairbanks, we are the Anabaptist voice in Alaska. Our Service Adventure unit is at the heart of our common life. Each year we support four to six bridge-year teens and a leader in all aspects of their year in Anchorage. Volunteering with Children's Lunchbox, Downtown Soup Kitchen, Habitat for Humanity, the Bureau of Land Management and similar organizations, SA helps anchor us in our community. We embrace our role as an Alaskan Roadhouse church for Mennonites and other believers passing through for a season or longer, and for those who decide to make Alaska home. We look forward to telling you more about why we love it here, what God is teaching us about life together, what pastors have done as their other half-time employment and the joys and challenges of living in this far and majestic corner of the United States.

Christ's peace to you. Contact: Betsy Baker, baker3b@mac.com. **Sunnyside Mennonite Church**, Lancaster, Pa., seeks a **full-time lead pastor**. Candidates need to embrace Anabaptist values and theology and have strong interpersonal skills and a leadership style that develops and draws upon the diverse gifts of others in the congregation. Contact Chris Landes, clandes606@gmail.com. Website: <http://sunnysidemc.org>.

Christopher Dock Mennonite High School/PVCS has an immediate opening for a **full-time director of finance and operations**. Applicants should submit their letter of introduction, resumé and application for a staff position, to Dr. Conrad J. Swartzentruber, Superintendent, 1000 Forty Foot Road, Lansdale, PA 19446, or cswartzentruber@dockhs.org.

The Mennonite Children's Choir of Lancaster, Lancaster, Pa., is seeking a dynamic, experienced **part-time executive director** to guide future growth and development, beginning summer or fall 2016. The executive director will work alongside the artistic director, report to the advisory board, be responsible for the organization's consistent achievement of its mission and financial objectives, and embrace Anabaptist Christian values. For more information please email mccl@lancastermennonite.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

Hesston College seeks candidates for president.

The ideal candidate for Hesston College's next president will be an Anabaptist Christian committed to joining a local MC USA congregation upon appointment. He/she will also hold a terminal degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., J.D., D.Min., etc.) and have leadership experience at a higher education institution.

Strengths: The president must be an imaginative innovator in higher education who seeks solutions from unusual places and voices, positioning Hesston as an attractive option for prospective students and potential faculty and staff. The president must be a collaborative leader who supports, inspires and empowers administrators, faculty and staff through thoughtful decision-making processes. The president must possess an astute financial mindset, generating resources including fund-raising for Hesston's fiscal future while making tough decisions within the complex economic terrain of higher education.

Fit: The president must authentically engage a diverse body of communities with skillful, culturally aware communication, increasing financial support, developing new partnerships and discovering new opportunities for campus engagement. The president must come to understand the challenges faced by a Midwestern Christian two-year college in order to guide Hesston through difficult economic, social and political terrain. The president must be an accessible "pastoral presence" as a committed Anabaptist Christian for students, faculty and staff.

Motivation: The president feels called by God and a sense of purpose to fulfill this position. The president is energized by the relational, Christ-centered community of Hesston College and is inspired to further its mission and values. The president prioritizes student learning and development, nurturing interpersonal relationships in order to strengthen the Hesston College experience.

Search process: Nominations and/or letters of application with CV or resumé may be submitted to Hesston College Presidential Search Committee at HC_SearchCom@MennoniteEducation.org; or through postal mail to: Hesston College Presidential Search Committee, Mennonite Education Agency, 3145 Benham Avenue, Suite #2, Elkhart, IN 46517. Candidates from diverse backgrounds are encouraged to apply. Hesston College is an equal opportunity employer. For additional details, visit www.hesston.edu/presidential-search/.

Upper Peninsula Mennonite congregations seek joint pastor. Cedar Grove Mennonite Church and Wildwood Mennonite Church are seeking a dynamic leader to pastor two small churches. Combined duties would not be considered full-time, but it is a unique opportunity to lead two congregations in spiritual guidance, teaching and community outreach in Michigan's beautiful Upper Peninsula. Email suetta@lighthouse.net for more information on this opportunity to minister in our scenic northern environment.

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary located in Elkhart, Ind., seeks a **full-time executive assistant to CFO** to support the business administrator and the Business Office in the areas of accounts payable, accounts receivable, student billing, general ledger journal entries, year-end preparation of certain U.S. and Canadian forms for individuals' income-tax reporting. Minimum three years bookkeeping/accounting and BA in accounting/business management preferred. Full description at www.amb.edu/jobs. To apply, send letter of application and resumé to: rringenberg@amb.edu.

Business opportunity: Needed honest, hardworking individuals that would like to increase their profits/start their own business with a waterproofing application on low slope and flat commercial and industrial roofs. Company has 40-plus-year record. Potential six-figure income in 7-8 months. We train. Contact Wayne at 330-473-5902.

North Newton Guest Housing: Serenity Silo, Barnview Cottage, Woodland Hideaway. Email or call for brochures: vadasnider@cox.net, 316-283-5231.

Director of environmental education outreach Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College is seeking a full-time director for its environmental education outreach programs to begin by July 1, 2016. Responsibilities include leading a team that delivers programs with PreK-12 students and the general public. This includes oversight of program and curriculum development, program delivery, modeling PreK-12 teaching and overseeing the graduate student practicum. Master's degree in environmental education, pedagogy or related field is required. For further details and to apply, see the job posting at www.goshen.edu/employment.

Director of spiritual care (FT): Menno Haven Retirement Communities, 2075 Scotland Ave., Chambersburg, PA 17201, is currently recruiting a full-time director of spiritual care. The director will coordinate and manage the work of staff chaplains in providing spiritual, religious and personal counseling or guidance to residents, employees and their family members to assure the highest degree of quality resident care. Candidates will have successfully graduated from a seminary with a major in pastoral ministry, preferably with ordination in an Anabaptist denomination, have a minimum of five years ministry experience and one or more units of Clinical Pastoral Education for the July 1, 2016, opening. Please submit resumé to Rev. Bob Keener, 2075 Scotland Ave., Chambersburg, PA 17201, or apply online at mennohaven.org EOE M/F

RESOURCES

Wholeheartedness: Busyness, Exhaustion and Healing the Divided Self by Chuck DeGroat (Eerdmans, 2016, \$15) argues that the real solution to what pulls us apart is wholeheartedness, a way of living and being that can transform us from the inside out.

Overplayed: A Parent's Guide to Sanity in the World of Youth Sports by David King and Margot Starbuck (Herald Press, 2016, \$15.99) offers practical tips for parents who long to balance their children's athletic activities with family life and faith.

The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire by Alan Kreider (BakerAcademic, 2016, \$26.99) tells the amazing story of the spread of Christianity in the Roman Empire. It contends that the church grew because the virtue of patience was of central importance in the life and witness of the early Christians.

Bearing Witness: Stories of Martyrdom and Costly Discipleship, edited by Charles E. Moore and Timothy Keiderling (Plough Publishing House, 2016, \$14) presents stories of people through the centuries who gave everything to follow Jesus. From the stoning of Stephen in first-century Jerusalem to Nigerian Christians persecuted by Boko Haram today, the 36 stories inspire faithfulness to the way of Jesus.

God After Christendom? by Brian Haymes and Kyle Gengerich Hiebert (Paternoster, 2016, \$14.99) argues that in the Bible humankind has a God-given responsibility, a partnership for the well-being not only of the church but of the whole world in the purposes of God.

The Woman, the Hour and the Garden: A Study of Imagery in the Gospel of John by Addison Hodges Hart (Eerdmans, 2016, \$15) explores John's rich, poetic imagery, particularly the metaphorical significance of "the Woman," embodied and imaged by Mary the mother of Jesus, the Samaritan woman and Mary Magdalene.

Coritos: a story of roots, strength, spirituality



Isabella Gomez is a student at MIT in Cambridge, Mass.

Coritos are a beautiful mix of culture and spirituality that are especially comforting now that I am so far from home.

This spring is my second semester at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), a university that specializes almost exclusively in science and engineering. I am originally from the hot, Spanglish-speaking, predominantly Mexican-American town of Los Fresnos, Texas, near the U.S.-Mexico border. Now at MIT in Boston, I couldn't be farther from home. I have to take three trains to get decent tacos de bistec, and I am 2,190 miles away from the one place I have lived my entire life. Most of the time, work keeps me too busy to really miss home, but the day that is always the hardest for me is Sunday.

Last September, I joined the Mennonite Congregation of Boston (MCOB), a lovely community of welcoming people who have truly become a support system for me. The travel to MCOB is particularly emotional for me. Most of the time, I have at least five assignments pending, it's cold, the bus is crowded, and I miss my family. However, as I walk, I sing a "corito," a short Spanish hymn. Most people on the public transit probably think I'm crazy by now, but it is the music, la música, that keeps me sane. I look up to the sky and think of how blessed I am to be here, in this place far from home, representing my roots.

We sing coritos to celebrate worship at church, baptisms, during holiday celebrations and even when we are sitting on the porch enjoying the breeze. As beautiful as these short, rhythmic hymns are, I always smile when I hear the stories from my parents about the moments when coritos might not be a good idea. Like the time my beautiful and beloved grandmother broke out singing coritos on a flatbed trailer with a group of well-meaning hermanos during my parents' wedding reception. I laugh every time I hear that story. As someone who was not there to witness it, that seems to me to be a hilarious, beautiful, and sacred moment.

Coritos have a long tradition in Mexican-American Protestant and Pentecostal communities. They served as expressions of faith for my people's long tradition of crossing borders, building community and engaging in struggle for dignity. It is exactly that history that makes me feel connected to those who've struggled so that today a young Mexican-American woman like me could have the chance to study at MIT. Coritos are a beautiful mix of culture and spirituality that are especially comforting now that I am so far from home.

Ever since I was a little girl, my mother would sing me coritos in the car as she drove me to school or church. I loved choosing my favorite ones and leading the singing. In high school, I was always on the stage singing at church. The corito brings people together, and I feel that even though Latinas didn't generally have the opportunity to become leaders in the church, when they sang they brought the church together.

A corito is something everyone can understand and memorize because the style is short, repetitive and rhythmic. When I sang with the worship team at my church in South Texas, I could feel myself giving everything I had to God. A lot of what I understand about my spirituality is grounded in the corito. It is a meditation to stop and connect with God, both for myself and in community with others.

Along this faith journey we are all on, it is important to understand what form is best for us to connect with God, whether it be prayer, reading the Bible or singing. That personal form of connection is as important as the community we find in the church. Finding how we will remind ourselves that God is always with us is part of living as followers of Jesus. The only way we are going to live by the Bible is if we are constantly making decisions based on what Jesus would do. Part of that understanding comes from our church community. We learn by example, and we find those around us we can share our journey with. Another part of this journey is finding how we will personally connect with God. Finding that small ritual that will ground me is something I have found important in my daily life.

I think of all of the strong women before me who have sung coritos to get them through the hardest of times. I imagine my great-grandmother singing in the fields as she picked cherries in northern Michigan, my grandmother singing as she stirred los frijoles in the kitchen, and my mother singing as she became the first in her family to go to college. My grandmother tells stories time and time again about when coritos helped her get through difficult moments in life. Latinas in my family sing for strength, and I will continue to use coritos to remind myself of the strength God can give me. **TM**

Pursuing God's assignment

I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.—Jesus (John 17:4 TNIV)

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to..." To devotees of *Mission Impossible*, a dramatic television series, these familiar words frame the impossible assignments presented to members of the team. To accept the assignment is to risk life and limb in pursuit of a notable goal, not knowing whether the outcome will be celebrative public acclaim or ignominious defeat.

God sometimes assigns tasks in similar ways. Moses, Joshua, Mary the mother of Jesus—all stand tall because they accepted a mission that was impossible to carry out by human strength alone. After a life-changing encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, Saul of Tarsus asked, "What shall I do, Lord?" The Lord replied, "Get up and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do" (Acts 22:10).

Most of us chafe at being told what to do, especially if the assignment is odious or frightening. But depending who asks, and in what spirit, we may be delighted to take on a daunting task. We consider it an honor to serve in a way that stretches our capacity. Even if the assignment demands every ounce of our strength, it gives us joy to participate in a mission larger than ourselves. At the end of his earthly life, Jesus expressed joy in knowing that he had completed the work his heavenly father had given him to do.

To be Christian is to live under God's direction, as led by the Holy Spirit. We live joyfully with a sense of God's mission, God's calling and God's grace. We show love for God and others by pursuing these assignments—whether large or small.

In early April, I participated in Sent 2016, a church-planting summit for Mennonite Church USA held in New Orleans. It was a time of great

encouragement for many of the attendees, who labor under the call of God to form new faith communities. These are servants of God, "as the Lord has assigned to each his task" (1 Corinthians 3:5). By God's grace, some plant the seeds of God's good news while others water, knowing that God gives the growth. I commend these workers on the loving, growing edge of our church and pray for a bountiful harvest.

Have you ever considered your life situation or work as an assignment from God? It is a gift when we sense that God's appointment aligns with our unique gifts and abilities and earns our community's affirmation. This is true not only for church workers or for those who are gainfully employed but for all who approach their daily life and work as a vocation—a calling—from God. As Frederick Buechner said, "Your vocation in life is where your greatest joy meets the world's greatest need."

Especially during these difficult days of fragmentation in the church, I take courage in knowing that God has called me to my assignment as executive director for Mennonite Church USA. Yes, many people have told me they wouldn't want my job; one person said he wouldn't do it for "all the tea in China." Daunting as it is, I sense God's grace for this assignment, just as others testify of God's grace and empowerment for theirs.

During this season when we affirm that "love is a verb," I commend every member of our church to approach their "assignment" from God as an opportunity to love. Let us take courage to carry out that assignment with our whole being—whether it be paid or unpaid, at work or play, at home or away—so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world. 

We live joyfully with a sense of God's mission, God's calling and God's grace.



Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.



FROM THE EDITOR

Leadership and love



Gordon Houser

Leadership transition in the church is rarely easy. And how we handle it can make a difference in how well the church lives out its mission faithfully.

Just ask Jesus.

In John 21, the resurrected Jesus appears to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. After breakfast, he asks Simon Peter three times, “Do you love me?”

These questions seem to serve as a means of forgiving Peter for denying Jesus three times. But this scene also represents an important transition in leadership.

Jesus is leaving. What will happen to this band of followers who have displayed their share of screwing up and misunderstanding what Jesus was about?

Jesus’ encounter with Peter expresses at least five insights into leadership.

The function of leaders is to build up, not to dominate or use others for selfish reasons.

1. Love: If Peter is going to carry on as a leader of this group, the basis of that leadership is love of Jesus. He didn’t ask him about his qualifications, his knowledge of the Bible or his psychological acuity. He asked, Do you love me? The basis for church leadership is love of Jesus.

2. Forgiveness: The knowledge that Peter had betrayed Jesus was in the air, thick as the smoke from the charcoal fire used to cook the fish. Jesus was saying, I forgive you.

Leaders will mess up. Forgiveness is needed.

3. Faith: Jesus showed he had faith in Peter

carrying on the work of proclaiming God’s rule. When Peter responded with, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you,” that seemed enough for Jesus (though he did ask three times).

For a person to lead, others need to believe they can lead.

4. Nurture: Jesus gave three instructions: “Feed my lambs.” “Tend my sheep.” “Feed my sheep.” All these amount to the same thing: Nurture those you are leading.

The function of leaders is to build up, not to dominate or use others for selfish reasons.

5. Cost: Finally, Jesus tells Peter he’s going to be killed. (“Stretch out your hands” probably refers to Peter’s death by crucifixion.)

Leadership is costly. It may even require giving up one’s life.

Earlier in his ministry, Jesus made the point that he “came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). This is where we get the term “servant leadership” that is often used as the ideal for church leaders. That is a high standard.

In our cover story, Hannah Heinzekehr interviews eight conference ministers who have transitioned or will transition out of their leadership roles. She calls this “the largest leadership shift in the 15-year history of Mennonite Church USA.”

This is a significant loss for the church. But it is not insurmountable. There are many excellent leaders in the church and more being formed.

How we handle this transition is important. Will we call new leaders—whether in conference roles or in our congregations—to love Jesus, to receive forgiveness as they confess their failings, to believe they can lead, to nurture those they lead, to understand the cost of following Jesus?

These are questions we may want to ask ourselves as well, for we are all called to love Jesus, receive forgiveness, act with confidence, nurture one another and follow Jesus faithfully.—*gh*