

TheMennonite



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to help
each other

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August 2016

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INSIDE:

- In memory of Glen Lapp
- Get up and go
- One family's season
- The perils of social media
- A new reality

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CONTENTS

- 12 We need to help each other
—Rhoda Keener with Carolyn Holderread Heggen
- 16 Get up and go
—Andrea Yoder
- 19 One family's season
—Cynthia Hockman-Chupp
- 23 Turning away from despair
—Jennifer Halteman Schrock
- 27 What's on your invisible shopping list?
—Rachel Thomas
- 32 Training tomorrow's Mandelas and Tutus
—Oscar Siwali

DEPARTMENTS

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 4 Letters | 31 Opinion |
| 6 News Briefs | 32 News |
| 8 Grace and Truth | 34 Obituaries |
| 9 Global Anabaptism | 36 Classifieds |
| 10 Miscellany | 37 Mediaculture |
| 11 TheMennonite.org | 38 New Voices |
| 12 Features | 39 Mennonite Church USA |
| 30 Leadership | 40 Editorial |



ON THE COVER: Photo by Rhoda Keener

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

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LETTERS

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

Thanks for Orlando coverage

I just wanted to thank you for your coverage of the shooting in Orlando, Fla. (See www.themennonite.org.) I'm a gay man, and the past week [after the shooting] has been really hard, and it's the sympathy and support from places it's least expected that have been so moving.

I'm not religious, at least not in any conventional sense, but I grew up surrounded by a large Mennonite community in Virginia. I don't think they always understood me, but they were the ones who never judged me.

So few friends from back home have said much about the attack, and when they have, it's been vague. Those who have reached out to me have been those in the Mennonite community—old friends from high school—and they've done so with more than just prayers but also with a genuine concern for where I am with all this.

There is too much hate in this world, and I wish so many more religions were as open and honest as yours. From someone who's been out for more than 20 years and knows many people in the LGBT community, know that we do not fear or hate religion. The vast majority of us do not blame this attack on Islam, and we don't fear Christianity. All we want is love and the freedom to share that love in our own way.

I'll leave you with that. But thank you so much, from the bottom of my big gay heart.—*Wes Niarhos*

Boarding schools

I just finished the excellent, thought provoking article "Boarding Schools and the Indian Child Welfare Act" (Opinion, July).

What do you mean, at the end, when you say this does not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA and The Mennonite, Inc.?

Do you not agree that Indian boarding schools have treated Indian children badly in the last 150 years? I hope we can agree they have been mistreated in a terrible way and do something to help correct the resulting behaviors that are in part due to this mistreatment.—*Milton Claassen, Newton, Kan.*

Editor's note: *We publish that box with every Opinion column to remind readers that The Mennonite publishes a variety of voices from members of Mennonite Church USA. Sometimes, those may not represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA. Other times they may.*

Where is the Holy Spirit leading?

Where is the Holy Spirit leading Mennonite Church USA in its teaching about sexuality? Maybe all sides have it wrong. In 1 Kings 18, God led Elijah to butcher 400 prophets of Baal. Jezebel, the immigrant who had come to live in King Ahab's palace, was bitterly humiliated. This caused her father, King Ethbaal in Sidon, to cancel the mutual defense treaty he had arranged with Ahab. In a few short years, Syrian raiding parties were crossing the border and taking slaves. King Ahab took exception to this and called out his army, and the majority of prophets proclaimed the justice of his cause. In 1 Kings 22, Micaiah, an opposition prophet, took exception to this plan, claiming God's authority. One of the majority prophets, Zedekiah, slapped him in the face with this question, "How did the Spirit of God travel from me over to you?"

We can all ask the same question, What makes you think you have the Holy Spirit for your idea instead of mine? As a young man, many of my spiritual mentors were military people, while my parents and church opposed military participation. I asked myself,

When will the Spirit of God make up his mind? Is not this argument among ourselves also an argument with God? Perhaps the line between truth and error passes through the middle of all camps. Does God lead some to go to prison and others to join the military? Might not God lead people in opposite directions based upon the partial truth each knows about sexuality? The peace of God is incompatible with war, but many who go to war still have the peace of God within them. Sexual chastity before marriage, marriage of two genders and an irrevocable commitment for life are God's design, but many who have a different experience can still find and enjoy fellowship with God. The well of the water of life is deep. Would someone hand me a longer rope?—*Philip E. Friesen, Minneapolis, Minn.*

Democracy and the way of Jesus

Ryan Ahlgrim's "Democracy and the Way of Jesus" (www.themennonite.org) lauds democracy as "a better form of national government than any that we see in the Bible," but then goes on to describe a politics of Jesus in which leaders are servants, exercise no coercive power and enjoy no special standing. By following Ahlgrim's neat dichotomy, we can remain steadfast-

ly loyal to the U.S.-led empire (after all, it regularly holds elections) while piously pretending we really "believe in" another kind of politics altogether. The Bible I read does not support such compartmentalization.

First, Ahlgrim is wrong to suggest that the "decentralized theocracy" we see in Exodus and the Law of Moses became a dead letter when Israel decided to have a king. Instead, it was kept alive by the prophets, reiterated in the stories of Genesis, renewed by Jesus' teaching of the "kingdom of God" and finally implemented by Paul's congregations.

Let's remember that the first Christian congregations were called "assemblies." In their first-century context, "assemblies" referred to open civic gatherings to discuss public business. The use of the term signifies that the first Jesus-followers understood themselves to be a political movement whose purpose was to bring into the world a new way of organizing and exercising power.

Every Jesus-following congregation today should think of itself in similar terms; we are meant to be that "decentralized theocracy" Ahlgrim wants to sweep into the dustbin of history. When we assume instead that the nation-state is fundamental and then

proceed to ask how it should be operated, we have detoured from the biblical vision of the people of YHWH, which is statelessness.

Second, Ahlgrim implies that biblical writers were ignorant of the fact that "far away in Greece, in the city of Athens, people were creating a new form of government called democracy." Yet "far away Greece" ruled the Jewish people during the time that a substantial part of the First Testament was written. The entire Second Testament was written in a time and place infused by Greek culture.

Within our denomination is a scholar (Wes Howard-Brook, Seattle Mennonite Church) who has written volumes about these matters. I suggest *The Mennonite* commission him to write his version of "Democracy and the Way of Jesus."—*Berry Friesen, Lancaster, Pa.*

Living with mental illness

I want to shout yes in response to the courageous testimony of Michael King, Beverly Miller and Jill Stemple about living with the challenges of mental illness (July). They show that mental illness can cause some dark days. It has for me. I've experienced serious and persistent symptoms of sadness, numbness, confusion, hearing tormenting
Continued on page 33

IN THIS ISSUE

Most of this issue's articles are by women, and the cover story (page 12) describes Sister Care, a ministry of Mennonite Women USA that began in 2007. Today, Rhoda Keener points out, "this healing seminar has been shared with more than 3,700 women in 15 countries, and these participants have taught the material to more than 3,000 additional women."

Andrea Yoder (page 16) reflects on the call in Luke and Acts to "get up and go."

In "One Family's Season" (page 19), Cynthia Hockman-Chupp tells about her family's experiment of

opting out of organized sports for one soccer season last fall.

In "Turning Away from Despair" (page 23), Jennifer Halteman Schrock tells about the work of NASA scientist Russell De Young in helping Mennonite congregations do something about climate change.

Rachel Thomas asks, "What's on Your Invisible Shopping List?" (page 27). Read her article to learn what she's referring to.

Our news story (page 32) describes how Mennonite Mission Network is supporting the work of Oscar Siwali, who trains secondary school students in southern Africa in peer mediation.

This month's issue has an abun-

dance of letters (pages 4-5, 33) on a variety of topics, from our Orlando coverage to boarding schools to democracy to mental illness.

Among our engaging columns, Kelly Bates Oglesby (Opinion, page 31) echoes Sojourner Truth in asking, "Ain't I a Mennonite?"

Speaking of women, my editorial (page 40) asks us to consider some "foundational texts" from the Bible that tell us women as well as men are created in God's image and are not to be treated as inferior to men.

Please note the ad on page 34 about student subscriptions. Sign up students from your church to get *The Mennonite* from September through March at a special rate.—*Editor*

Mennonite Church Canada embraces unity at Assembly 2016

Delegates at Mennonite Church Canada's 2016 Assembly found unity in surprising places, making four large decisions, with each resolution passing by a large majority. The decisions included votes on recommendations from two long-term task forces: the Being a Faithful Church (BFC) Task Force, which led a nine-year process of discernment around human sexuality and same-sex relationships, and the Future Directions Task Force (FDTF), a group commissioned in 2012 by MC Canada and its area churches to discern new denominational structures.

Three hundred forty-three registered delegates from across Canada met July 6-10 at TCU Place in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. For the first time, congregations were encouraged to appoint youth delegates.

On July 9, the FDTF recommendation, which was affirmed by 94 percent of delegates (318 yes, 21 no and four ballots "spoiled"), calls for a pared-down structure (including a smaller national staff) that more fully integrates national and regional area church work, moving more decision-making to the local level. Delegates will vote on the final proposal before it is implemented.

Also on July 9, 85 percent of delegates (277 yes, 50 no, 23 abstained) voted in favor of the BFC recommendation to allow congregations to differ from one another in their understandings of same-sex relationships. The recommendation affirms the 1995 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, a document shared by MC Canada and Mennonite Church USA; it acknowledges that some congregations have reached different understandings of marriage as defined by the CoF as "one man and one woman for life" and recommends that "we create space/leave room within our Body to test alternative understandings from that of the larger Body to see if they are a nudging of the Spirit of God." The recommendation also specifies that na-



Church plants new peace pole

The old peace pole was faded and, although in full view, often unseen. So, on July 3, the faith community of Summit Mennonite Church, Barberton, Ohio, planted a new peace pole immediately adjacent to the main entrance of the church. "This pole is a visual representation of our desire to follow the way of peacemaking modeled by Jesus Christ," said pastor Marilyn Rossiter, "and of our commitment to peace and nonviolent action in a world often overtaken by fear and violence." Languages on the pole include English, Spanish, Arabic and Mohawk.—*Hank Rossiter*

tional and area church bodies will work on a way to monitor implementation among congregations.

On July 7, delegates collectively repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery, a 15th-century framework that gives "Christian governments" moral and legal authority to dominate Indigenous peoples and take Indigenous lands.

On July 9, delegates also affirmed a resolution calling for nonviolent solutions to injustice in the Israel-Palestine region.—*Hannah Heinzekehr*

Conference explores Faithful Witness Amid Endless War, Stutzman visits White House

About 100 participants gathered June 24-25 at Christopher Dock Mennonite High School, Lansdale, Pa., to focus on the theme "Faithful Witness in a Time of Endless War: Drone Warfare and God's Call to Peacemaking." The conference grew out of a resolution of the same name passed by delegates at the

2015 Mennonite Church USA assembly in Kansas City, Mo. The conference featured presentations by religious leaders, activists, academics, a former chaplain and a former CIA operative, culminating in a public witness at the nearby Horsham (Pa.) Air Guard Station. The base is the site of an armed drone command center which recently became operational.

Several local Mennonite congregations supported the conference through planning and financial contributions. Lynelle Bush, conference attendee from Salford Mennonite Church in Harleysville, Pa., said, "Mennonites in our area need to have their eyes opened to the reality and true impact of drone warfare, to repent of silence and apathy and to seek guidance of the Holy Spirit as to our role in speaking truth to power."

Author and activist Medea Benjamin, who has traveled to Pakistan, Afghanistan and Gaza to meet with family members of drone attack victims, noted that drones kill many innocent people

and turn terrorists into martyrs. She urged faith communities to speak to the issue of drone warfare or lose their moral voice.

On July 14, Ervin Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, was among several faith leaders who visited the White House to express concerns over the lethal drones program that the federal government has run for 15 years. The program is thought by many human rights groups to have been responsible for hundreds if not thousands of civilian deaths and has shown few signs of abating.

Stutzman and others met with White House officials to question the program, express their dismay at the disregard for life, and ask for limits upon it. While not all participants in the meeting were from peace churches, every denomination represented had numerous moral concerns. Chief among these concerns was the way drones proliferate war, which was furthered by the Obama administration's decision to begin selling armed drones to other

countries last year.—*Titus Peachey for The Mennonite and Mennonite Central Committee U.S.*

Hispanic Ministries gathering exceed expectations

Fifty Hispanic Mennonite pastors and spouses gathered June 10-12 at Goshen (Ind.) College for a continuing education weekend full of Bible study, conversation, fellowship and fun. This was the first meeting for Hispanic leaders since the November 2015 assembly of Iglesia Menonita Hispana, when 30 congregations of the “Concilio Hispano,” the Spanish Mennonite Council of Churches (SMCC) of Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference (LMC), announced they would leave IMH and Mennonite Church USA.

“It’s a kind of new beginning...for the Hispanic Mennonite churches,” says Marco Gueté, director of Mennonite Education Agency’s Hispanic Ministries program, who planned the event. “We have about 70 churches that are part of Mennonite Church USA, and this event was...a new beginning for the Latino churches in relation to the spirit of the unity with Mennonite Church USA.”—*Hannah Heinzekehr*

Breakaway Amish book goes back for reprint on day of publication

Preorders and early sales of *Breakaway Amish: Growing Up with the Bergholz Beard Cutters* by Johnny Mast and Shawn Smucker were so strong that Herald Press ordered a reprint on the day the book was released.

The beard-cutting crimes and subsequent legal case against bishop Sam Mullet and 15 others drew national headlines in 2011 and years after. *Publishers Weekly* calls *Breakaway Amish* “a cautionary tale about religious and familial authority run amok.”

One store manager called July 15, “desperate to get an account set up because she wanted to get this book in her store before the market was saturated in her area,” says Alma Unrau,

head of customer service for Herald Press. Faith View Books, a distributor in Fredericksburg, Ohio, purchased three shipments of 500 books each to meet the demand of stores and vendors.—*MennoMedia*

Pacific Northwest Conference shares stories

The annual meeting of Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference (PNMC), held June 23-25 at Zion Mennonite Church, Hubbard, Ore., the oldest Mennonite church in the conference, included opportunities for delegates to share stories at their table groups, which were integrated to include members from English and Spanish-speaking congregations at each table.

“We came out of last year really aware of the deep polarization around issues of gay and lesbian inclusion in the church,” says conference minister Katherine Pitts. “We know we’re a diverse conference and we’re committed to staying in Mennonite Church USA.”

As they wrestled with how best to be the church together, conference leaders invited delegates to offer feedback on ways to build connection. Their number one suggestion? Taking time to hear each other’s stories.

Delegates also discussed ideas for annual meetings, lay leader equipping, funding for outreach and ministry, and where the conference could be in 10 years.—*Hannah Heinzekehr*

Evana Network hosts first convention

The Evana Network held its first national convention July 5-9 in Upland, Ind., for 257 participants. Seventeen Evana member/partner congregations attended the conference with an additional 10 “searching” congregations/conferences exploring what Evana might have to offer. According to John Troyer, executive director for Evana Network, two representatives from Lancaster Mennonite Conference also attended the convention. Last November, LMC leaders voted to leave Mennonite Church USA.—*Rebecca Helmuth*

EMM photo



Serving samboosas

Fowzia Musse Abdullahi, representing a nonprofit called “Every Woman Counts,” which helps refugee families adjust to life in America, sold home-made samboosas at the Eastern Mennonite Missions Global Fair on July 9 in Willow Street, Pa.—*EMM*

You are David, I am Jonathan



Isaac Villegas
is pastor of
Chapel Hill (N.C.)
Mennonite Church.

Our story begins with delight—visceral and ecstatic delight that draws lives together. Each is an occasion for delight, one for the other. “Jonathan took great delight in David” (1 Samuel 19:1). Jonathan is pregnant with delight, and his soul can’t help but rejoice at the presence of David, one life stretching to the other, reaching into one another. “The soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul” (18:1). Souls knit together. The two as one, a heartbeat pulses one life into the other.

“He loved him as his own soul” (18:3).

“He loved him as he loved his own life” (20:17).

This is our story, of you and me and the life we share. The gospel’s delight has brought us together—a delight that joins us, stretching us, the ecstasy of a shared soul, fellowship in the Spirit who breathes the same life into our bodies.

You are David, and

I am Jonathan. You, like David, know how to survive, how to struggle, how to fight for your people, for our people, for God’s people. You, like David, are chosen to lead God’s people. You, like David, are full of beauty: “Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was lovely.” Like David, the Spirit of the Lord has come mightily upon you (16:12-13).

And I, like Jonathan, will give you what I have. What has been given to me I share with you. This life with you will mean my dispossession: giving without request, sharing without behest, word without reply, desire without demand. Like Jonathan: “He stripped himself of the robe that he was wearing and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt.” All for you: “David went out and was successful” (18:4-5).

“Then Jonathan said to David, ‘Whatever you say, I will do for you’ ” (20:4). I am for you, at your side as we face this world together, as we cross over year after year. In my bag I have a button—a rainbow with the words, “With you, for you.” Sometimes I pin it to my shirt or put it in my pocket, thinking of you, like when I met with a tribunal of church leaders who ruled against my ministry. You were there, in my palm.

You are there, between the lines, as I preach and write and reread our favorite passages—the

pages about what it’s like to be “the causeless loving delight of God,” to “trust in the generous delight of God whose whole life is a movement of gift,” to “receive ourselves through the eyes of another.”

Yesterday I read in the Mishnah about this “causeless love” in the lives of Jonathan and David. “If love depends on some material cause and the cause goes away, the love goes away, too; but if it does not depend on a thing, it will never go away,” the rabbis say. “What love was not dependent on something? The love of David and Jonathan.”

You are David, and I am Jonathan, a communion of grace, of gratitude. I always welcome your presence with a thank you because of the delight “of believing that someone might be addressing me as ‘you’ without that dreaded ‘but.’ ” James Alison says this unbounded reception—without reservations, with-

This is our story, of you and me and the life we share.

out “buts”—is what it means to find each other in communion, “naked before the Spirit.” To be naked and undone by the affirmation of a yes without the caveat of a but is the beginning of communion’s long embrace. “Los cuerpos se funden en un abrazo de amor,” the Brazilian theologian Rubem Alves wrote—our lives held by God’s love as we receive ourselves from one another.

Naked and undone, like David and Jonathan: “David bowed three times, and they kissed each other, and wept with each other; David wept the more” (1 Samuel 20:41). With their tears, through their eyes, one soul reaches out to the other. Weeping in each other’s arms, their lives merge. “Los cuerpos se funden.”

In the 12th century, Peter Abelard rewrote David’s song to Jonathan, as I am rewriting it to you. “One in soul with me,” Abelard wrote as if David, “I can still my lute, but not my tears.”

God is in the story of Jonathan and David, which is our story—the God who waits for us and with us, whose love is always there, always available but never coercive, never possessive. Causeless love, dependent on nothing. Dispossession of what cannot be possessed. Yet love that lasts until the end, when one of us will have to imagine this: “Greatly beloved were you to me; your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of wives” (2 Samuel 1:26). **TM**

In memory of Glen Lapp

On June 30, airstrikes by Afghan and U.S. military forces killed at least 73 Taliban insurgents in an eastern province of Afghanistan known as Nuristan. Ordinarily, my eyes would have momentarily lingered on the headline and then moved on in search of a news story closer to home. Even though my country has been at war in that region for 15 long years—a war that has cost our nation more than \$750 billion, plunged an already impoverished country into economic chaos and led to the deaths of some 2,400 U.S. soldiers and at least 26,000 Afghan civilians—Afghanistan still has the feel of a mythical planet in a distant corner of the solar system. According to a *National Geographic* survey, more than 90 percent of Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 could not locate Afghanistan on a map. I could easily be one of them.

But in this instance I stopped to read the article, my attention snagged by the reference to the province of Nuristan. Six years ago, Glen Lapp, a 41-year-old Mennonite Central Committee volunteer from Lancaster, Pa., was working in the rural villages of Nuristan as part of a mobile international medical team that specialized in the treatment of eye diseases. The team was sponsored by International Assistance Mission (IAM), a highly regarded partner organization of MCC, which has provided medical assistance in remote regions of Afghanistan for nearly 50 years.

On Aug. 5, 2010, Lapp and nine other colleagues were passing through the northeastern province of Badakhshan, returning to the capital city of Kabul. The exact details of what happened on that Thursday afternoon remain unclear, but in the end, 10 civilians, including Lapp, were shot and killed. He was three months from completing his term with MCC. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the massacre.

When I think about the life and witness of Glen Lapp, my first inclination is to frame his death within the long tradition of the *Martyrs Mirror*. Like most MCC volunteers, Lapp was a Christian who regarded his work in Afghanistan as an expression of his faith. Like MCC, IAM does not use weapons for security. In a report filed with his supervisors, Lapp described his motivation as one of “treating people with respect and love and trying to be a little bit of Christ in this part of the

world.” His story is an inspiring reminder that the commitment to follow Christ can still exact a cost today.

But that, of course, is not the only way to think about what happened on Aug. 5, 2010.

Every event has a context. Whether we are aware of it or not, our identity always extends beyond our personal commitments, intentions and decisions, particularly when we enter new cultures. Another part of Lapp’s story is the country of Afghanistan—its natural beauty, cultural richness and renowned hospitality, as well as its complex history of internal ethnic rivalries, immense poverty and a legacy of tenacious resistance to outside powers such as the British and the Soviet Union. In addition to being a nonresistant Christian, Lapp was also a U.S. citizen—inextricably associated with the global political tensions that brought the United States into Afghanistan in 2001 to retaliate against

Osama bin Laden for the attacks on 9/11. And then there is the bitter rage of men and women, driven by a sense of powerlessness and extremist ideologies to commit lethal acts of violence and terror. Or perhaps merely the petty viciousness of local people seeking status through a dramatic gesture of violence against foreigners.

Our lives are interconnected in so many layers—the gifts and burdens of multiple identities and historical memory.

In the end, though, we are left with the individual and a thousand decisions that shape the contours of an individual life. By all accounts Lapp was a kind, thoroughly decent person, whose ordinary life was made extraordinary by his love of travel and a deep desire to serve others. In addition to hiking in Nepal, Lapp volunteered for relief efforts following hurricanes Katrina and Rita; he served as a nurse on a reservation in Arizona, and he had come to deeply love the languages, cultures and people of Afghanistan.

On this anniversary of Lapp’s death, pause a moment to ponder the marvelous complexity of our world. Offer a prayer of lament for the families of the 73 Taliban fighters killed on June 30; pray for peace in a war-torn country, and lift high the memory of Glen Lapp, whose life and death bear witness to the power of love in a hate-filled world. **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*.

Our lives are interconnected in so many layers.

MISCELLANY

Items of interest from the broader church and world

“Because we’re Latino, people think we’re Democrats; because we’re evangelical, people think we’re Republicans.—Rev. Dr. Gabriel Salguero in *Pacific Standard*”

Poor are getting poorer

American households in extreme poverty increased between 1996 and 2011. One reason is that jobs were harder to find in 2011. Another reason is that Congress replaced the welfare program with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Benefits under TANF are harder to get, and parents without a job can find themselves penniless. States still receive federal funds to help pay the TANF benefits, but they are free to set their own eligibility requirements and shorten the length of

Of the more than 1 billion ballots cast from 2000 through 2014, there were only 31 documented incidents of voter fraud. You’re at least 15 times more likely to die of constipation than commit voter fraud.—*Mother Jones*

time recipients can receive assistance. States can also divert TANF aid to other causes, such as financial aid for college students or pre-kindergarten programs, incentivizing them to be stingy with people in poverty.—*Christian Century*

Southern Baptists say no to Confederate flag

The Southern Baptist Convention, born in 1845 in a split over its support for slavery, passed a resolution June 14 calling for Christians to quit using the Confederate flag. “We call our brothers and sisters in Christ to discontinue the display of the Confederate battle flag as a sign of solidarity of the whole Body of Christ, including our African-American brothers and sisters,” reads the resolution adopted at the convention’s annual meeting in St. Louis.—*Religion News Service*

1,195

journalists have been killed because of their work since 1992. In those identified as murders, prosecutions have occurred in only 13 percent of the cases.—*New York Times*

More racially diverse=decline in attendance

The more mixed the Sunday morning pews are, the fewer people are likely to be in them. That’s the primary finding of a new study from Baylor University published in the current *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. Researchers studied the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, where racial diversity doubled from 1993 to 2012, and found that, at the same time, churches with the greatest diversity growth also had the steepest declines in attendance.—*Religion News Service*

- Number of U.S. babies born prematurely each year due to air pollution: **16,000**
- Annual economic cost of U.S. traffic congestion: **\$160 billion**
- Portion of U.S. workers who commute alone in a car: **3/4**—*Harper’s*



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LOAVES AND FISHSTICKS BY STEVE EDWARDS



Quotable

“So you see, well-meaning friends of all colors—it’s going to take more than love to change this. Those of you who love me and mine—I see you. I appreciate you. And I love you back.

Those of you who don’t yet love me or just don’t—you don’t have to. But you can still co-create a world with me that reeks of justice instead of despair. And frankly, I’d rather have you pay attention to that.”—*Regina Shands Stoltzfus, “I cannot speak of love to you today,” a response following the fatal police shootings of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile*



Most-read online-only posts



5. Where is the Holy Spirit leading MC USA? by Philip Friesen
1.1K

4. Five reasons I get out of bed in the morning by Del Hershberger
1.2K

3. Evana Network hosts first convention by Rebecca Helmuth
1.4K

2. Mennonite Church Canada embraces unity in diversity by Hannah Heinzekehr
1.4K

1. I cannot speak of love to you today by Regina Shands Stoltzfus
13.2K

Confession of Faith roundtables

The *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* was developed in 1995 and is the most recent systematic statement of belief for Mennonite Church USA. In its introduction, the writers identify six ways confessions of faith serve the church, including: providing guidelines for interpretation of Scripture; providing guidance for belief and practice; building a foundation for unity within and among churches; offering outlines for instructing new church members or faith “inquirers”; giving an updated interpretation of belief and practice “in the midst of changing times”; and helping with discussing Mennonite belief and practice with other Christians or people from other faith traditions.

Over the course of the next several months, we will be releasing “roundtable posts” on our website, featuring three members of Mennonite Church USA congregations reflecting on an article from the Confession of Faith. We’ll move through the articles in numerical order.

Recipe of the month

Potato Beet Salad



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We need to help each other



Eva Mangana anoints Frida Magaai with water representing Jesus' living water during a closing blessing ritual. Photo provided

by Rhoda Keener with Carolyn Holderread Heggen

As I boarded a plane to fly to Nairobi, I knew my home conference, Franklin, was close to voting whether to stay with or leave Mennonite Church USA. Most anticipated the conference would leave and join Lancaster and North Central conferences. Yet the Sister Care seminar I and Carolyn Holderread Heggen, a psychotherapist specializing in trauma healing, were prepared to teach in Kenya and Tanzania had been birthed in Franklin Conference (see box on page 15).

While the church at home was in danger of fracturing, these two three-day seminars in early April for 90 women in Kisumu, Kenya, and Dodoma, Tanzania, embodied the Sister Care teaching “We Need to Work Together.” Many organizations and individuals made these seminars possible.

Eastern Mennonite Missions worker Debbi DiGennero helped host; EMM and Mennonite Central Committee East Africa funded hotel costs for participants in Kenya. Esther Muhagachi translated the manual into Swahili and hosted in Tanzania, and Eliver Omondi in Kenya. Mennonite Mission Network sent four women from Congo and Burkina Faso with MMN worker Nancy Frey, who coordinated the French translation of the manual, then translated throughout the seminar. United Service Foundation provided the initial grant for Mennonite Women USA’s expenses; Mennonite Church USA’s Care and Prevention Fund and individual donors assisted. The Schowalter Foundation funded hotel costs for participants in Tanzania and Swahili translation.

Teaching Sister Care concepts in East Africa, as in many international settings, brought unique challenges. In each cross-cultural seminar, Heggen and I ask women to work together to identify the problems women face in their community. As in many international settings, the list they compiled included poverty, domestic violence and sexual abuse, the disgrace and rejection of infertility or not having a son, lack of education and related lack of power and options, and the heavy burden of working long and hard. However, this was the first time women named female genital mutilation and the fear of witch doctor spells as problems they face.

Another exercise talks about the importance of setting limits and having clear boundaries as an important component of self-care. At first, the women were confused by the idea. Then it became clear that these women work so hard and have so many responsibilities that the concept of saying “No” or, “I’m sorry, but I won’t be able to help at this time” was unimaginable to them. After conferring with several of the mission workers, Keener revised the question and asked, “How can women in your community find rest?”

It was sobering to realize that none of their suggestions for how they might find rest included directly asking for a break from their heavy workloads and responsibilities or saying they are unable to do any more. Their ideas included the following: “If someone asks me to do something I could say that I am sick.” Or, “If I see a family member or a neighbor coming to ask me for

something, I could hide in my garden.”

In spite of the heat and the need to use four different languages in Kenya (English, Luo, Swahili and French) to communicate, the women in both countries responded enthusiastically and positively to the teaching and the materials. Pamela Obonde, a vegetable gardener, particularly connected with Heggen’s teaching about God “the Divine Composter,” who takes the scraps and pain

This was the first time women named female genital mutilation and the fear of witch doctor spells as problems they face.

of our lives and makes rich fertile soil. Obonde shared how the wounds of her life have been used by God to help others.

A particularly poignant moment occurred on the last day of the seminar in Tanzania. After women looked at different causes of grief in the Bible and identified their own losses, EMM worker Gloria Bontrager suggested that Eva Mangana, a respected older woman and bishop’s wife, lead



Women at prayer. Photo provided



In Tanzania (from left: Carolyn Holderread Heggen, Patiencey Tumuramye, Rhoda Keener, Alberta Isack, Happy Kimonge, Esther Mu-hagachi, Hellen Bradburn. Photo provided

the women in a time of prayer for healing of their wounds.

With three women assisting, Mangana invited those who wanted prayer to come forward. She and two assistants stayed at the front while the fourth woman walked behind the group, “guarding their backs” as everyone offered their own prayers out loud together.

After the seminar, many women expressed gratitude for inner healing. One woman said, “I have personally received healing from wounds that I have carried from a long time ago.”

For Heggen and me, the irony and pain of this challenging time of teaching healing concepts to these receptive, honest and vulnerable women

was to then return to our own divided church in the United States. A week after our return, Franklin Conference voted to leave MC USA.

Many agencies and people worked together to bring Sister Care to East Africa. Can we trust that God the Divine Composter will also take our denominational pain and transform it into fertile soil so we can work together in ministries of healing and reconciliation for our hurting and broken world?

Rhoda Keener is attending Hebron Mennonite Church, Hagerstown, Md. Carolyn Holderread Heggen is a member of Albany (Ore.) Mennonite Church.

‘I’ve Got the Power!’ conference will explore power dynamics

Power is invisible but ubiquitous. Power can silence or amplify. It can be hoarded or shared. It can entrap or liberate.

Power dynamics can be scary to talk about, because power is sometimes difficult to understand. It can be painful to face the times we’ve misused and abused power, and difficult to admit that we’ve neglected to use our power for the good of others. It can be devastating to be the victim of power abuse. It is life-sucking to stand silently by when we could be living into our power.

Living in power requires courage and humility. It requires strength and determination. It requires love for oneself and for others.

At the upcoming Women Doing Theology conference, “I’ve Got the Power! Naming and Reclaiming Power as a Force for Good,” we’re going to break long-held silences and speak frankly and vulnerably about the power we possess and aspire to hold. With the support, encouragement and accountability of other women, we will tap into the never-before-recognized power that’s been dormant inside us for far too long.

The conference is hosted by the Women in Leadership Project of Mennonite Church USA.

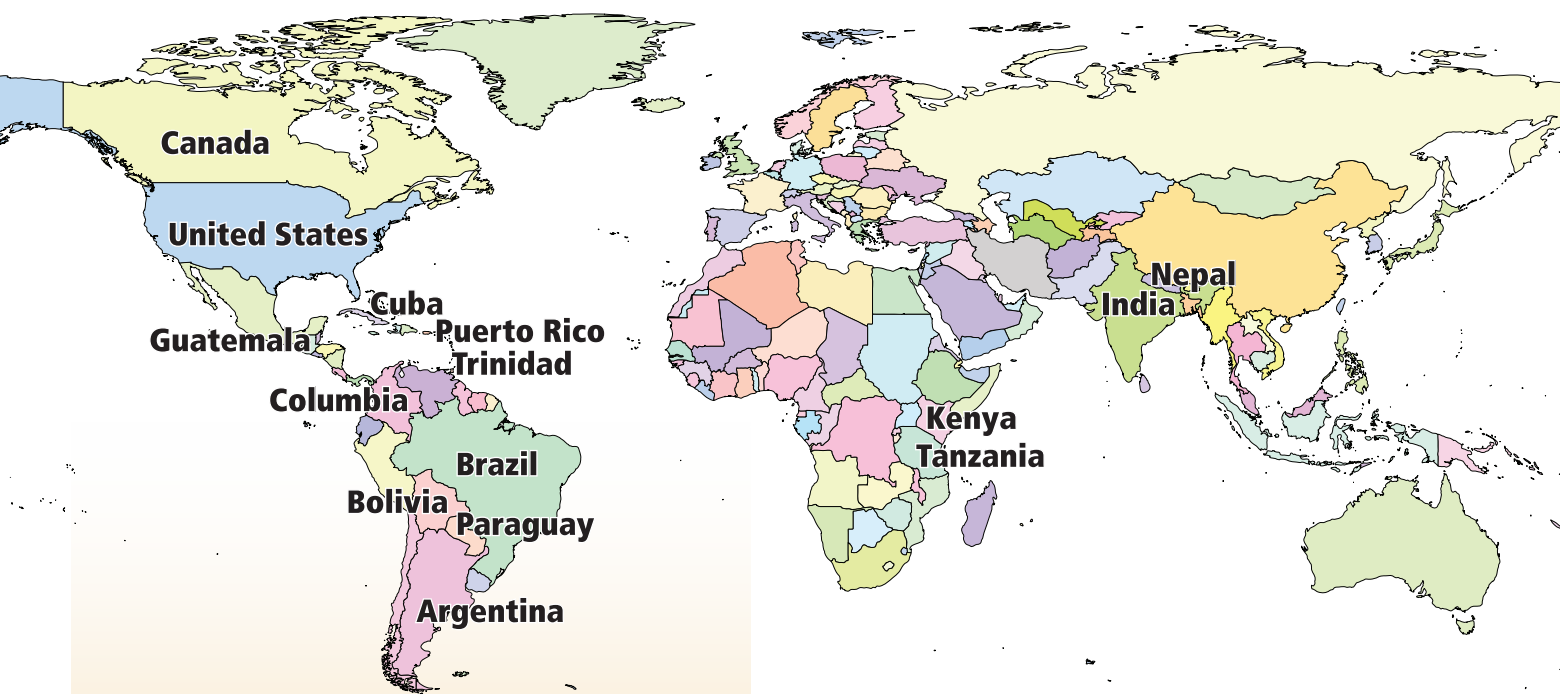
Together we will explore power dynamics in our relationships and interactions, in our work, in our church and in our world. When have you recognized your power and used it to change a situation for the better? When have you felt powerless? Bring your stories and reflections, your questions and theological insights. Let’s be transformed by one another and by the inspiration and movement of the Spirit of God among us.

Join women from across Mennonite Church USA Nov. 4-6 at the National Conference Center in Leesburg, Va.

For more information about the conference contact Jenny Castro at JenniferC@MennoniteUSA.org or visit the conference webpage: www.MennoniteUSA.org/wlp-conference.



Where Sister Care has been ...



A short history of Sister Care

The Sister Care ministry began in 2007, when I met with 12 women from Franklin Mennonite Conference to explore how women can more effectively care for themselves and others. Today, this healing seminar has been shared with more than 3,700 women in 15 countries, and these participants have taught the material to more than 3,000 additional women.

The original seminar was re-envisioned in 2010 by me, Carolyn Holderread Heggen and Ruth Lapp Guengerich. Heggen took the lead in writing a manual with four units: Claiming Our Identity as God's Beloved, Caring for Self and Others, Compassionate Listening, and Transforming Loss and Grief.

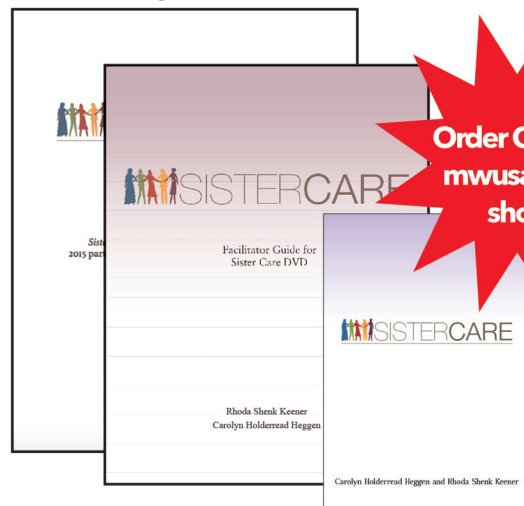
Heggen joined me as co-presenter in 2010, and we shared the seminar with all 21 (at that time) conferences of Mennonite Church USA. In 2012, an international ministry began, with seminars in India and Nepal, then Central and South America, the Caribbean, Canada and East Africa.

The ministry expanded to include men in three co-ed Compassionate Care seminars, with one geared to pastoral care leaders. In 2015, Sister Care for College Women piloted at Goshen (Ind.) College and is now led by Marlene Bogard, Mennonite Women USA executive director.

Heggen and I have rewritten the Sister Care manual into an international version, with global rather than North American illustrations and language that is easier to translate. The manual has been translated into Spanish, K'ek'chi, Portuguese, French and Swahili and is being translated into Hindi, Hmong and Indonesian.—*Rhoda Keener*


Join an international circle of women!

Participate in a 12-session Sister Care women's group or Sunday school class.



Sister Care teachings by Carolyn Heggen and Rhoda Keener. Easy-to-use facilitator guide with group activities and discussion questions.





Get up and go

**Reflecting on the call
in Luke and Acts to
'get up and go'**

by Andrea Yoder

When God addresses us, whether bringing us healing or revelation, we are not expected to sit around. "Get up and go" is a theme that we see throughout the books of Luke and Acts. There is even a focused section in the book of Acts where we read "Get up and go" or its variations several times.

God commands Saul in Acts 9:6, while appearing to him on the way to Damascus, to “get up and enter the city” in order to receive his next instructions. Saul has just been accused by God of persecuting Jesus and has been stricken blind, yet he gets up and goes into the city. Only a few verses later, in 9:11, the Lord says to Ananias, “Get up and go” look for and meet with Saul. Ananias is understandably reluctant to make the acquaintance of a man who has done “much evil” to “your saints in Jerusalem” (9:13) and who “has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke [God’s] name” (9:14). So the Lord commands him again to go (9:15), and Ananias gets up and goes. Not long after, in Luke’s narrative, the Spirit commands Peter in a vision to “get up, go down and go with” (10:20) the men sent from Cornelius. “So Peter went down” (10:21), and “the next day he got up and went with them” (10:23b). As a result of Peter’s obedience, the Spirit was poured out on the Gentiles who had gathered in Cornelius’ household, and many of them were “baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (10:48).

These are only a few examples of the command of God to “Get up and go.” In a pericope in this same section of Acts, 9:32-35, Peter says to Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years, “Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed.”

This is reminiscent of the many healing narratives in the Gospel of Luke. How many times did Jesus utter some variation of the theme, “Get up and go, for your sins, which were many, are forgiven”? When he heals the paralytic in Luke 5:17-26, he says, “Stand up and take your bed and go to your home” (24). When he calls Levi, he says, “Follow me” (5:27). When he raises the widow’s son at Nain, he says, “Young man, I say to you, rise” (7:14). When he heals the Gerasene demoniac, he says, “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you” (8:39). When the woman who was bleeding touches the hem of his cloak and is healed, he says, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace” (8:48). When he raises a little girl, he says, “Child, get up” (8:54b). Jesus’ commission of the Twelve in 9:1-6 is essentially a “Get up and go.” I could go on and on. Throughout Jesus’ travels, almost anyone he approaches, at least the way Luke tells it, receives some sort of “Get up and go” command. And everyone who receives it obeys it.

Perhaps my favorite example is in the story of the prodigal son, where we don’t hear a “Get up and go” from Jesus per se, but it is Jesus who’s telling the story, so I think we can assume that the “Get up and go” comes from him. When the

younger son has squandered his inheritance and finds himself wallowing with the pigs, so hungry and alone that he’s tempted to eat the pigs’ food, he says, “How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger. I will get up and go to my father” (15:17b-18a). So he gets up and goes, knowing that he will most likely face a barrage of hateful shaming from the community and that his father may turn him away entirely. He hopes against hope that he might be able to convince his father to take him on as a hired hand. We see, Jesus shows us, that when the younger son humbles himself and gets up and goes, he doesn’t have to run the gauntlet because his father, who has been watching for his return perhaps since the moment he left, runs the gauntlet for him, embraces him, kisses him and welcomes him home, not as a hired hand but as a restored son. “Get the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found” (15:23-24).

All ‘Get up and go’ statements in Luke and in Acts are delivered to folks who are complacent or passive or trapped in sin.

While this “Get up and go” may initially seem different from all the other “Get up and go” statements Jesus delivers, it is in fact similar. All such statements in Luke and in Acts are delivered to folks who are complacent or passive or trapped in sin. Either they’re paralyzed, demoralized, possessed, persecuting, praying or dead. Yet the command is always, “Get up and go,” and while the specifics of where and why are different for each case, the overarching hope of God is illustrated in the story of the lost sons. Similar to all the others who hear, “Get up and go,” the younger son is feeling the weight of sin and shame and perhaps even feels trapped by it. And when he has reached the low of wallowing with unclean swine, a still, small voice within him whispers, “I will get up and go to my father” (15:18a).

Throughout Luke and Acts, all who receive a “Get up and go” command are called to come to the Father. Whether “Get up and go” is followed with “home” or “tell what God has done for you” or “stop persecuting” or “meet this man who’s been persecuting your people,” it is always unto the Father; it is always a call to turn or return to obedience to God. And, amazingly, it is almost



always immediately followed by some variation of, “And so-and-so got up and went.”

Luke, throughout his Gospel and the narrative of Acts, shows us what it looks like to obey the King. When we receive an order to “get up and go,” though it may not make sense immediately (particularly in the case of Ananias being told to

of converting Saul from persecutor of God’s people to prosecutor of God’s Word.

When we come to church on Sunday mornings, we are like the woman with the bleeding problem or the friends who brought their paralytic friend to Jesus, or perhaps we’re the paralytic, or we are the sinful woman who shows up at Simon the Pharisee’s house, or we are the prodigal son. We know, on some level, that we are lost or paralyzed or trapped; some of us even know we are spiritually dead, but I’m not sure we have a clear concept of what it is that we come to church looking for. We come for the refreshments or for social hour or for a dynamic preacher who brings the Word and can evoke all sorts of emotion in us. However, I fear we come looking simply for someone who will dab our wounds—who will tell us that it’s OK we’re hurting (whether our hurt is of external origin or self-inflicted), who will empathize with us and feel sympathy for us. I fear we come looking for permission to continue to wallow in sin, guilt, shame, paralysis, bleeding and death.

But it is clear in Luke and Acts that when we come to Jesus with our ailments or our lostness, the result is not continued ailment or continued bewilderment. The result is a command.

So many times when Jesus heals or forgives, he says, “Your faith has saved you, now go.” In essence, he says, “I see that you made the trek. You stepped out in faith, and you were willing to do whatever you had to do in order to get to me, knowing that I could heal you, hoping I would. You have been healed. Now go.”

When we’ve experienced healing or revelation, we are not invited simply to continue along the same path or to wallow in whatever has brought us to this point. In Luke 5:17-26, Jesus does not say to the paralytic man, “Your sins are forgiven, but I think you better just stay on that mat.” No. Jesus says to him, “Stand up and take your bed and go” (24b).

We are invited to get up and walk out whatever God has spoken over us—whether it is to tell the story of how God has miraculously healed us or brought us back to life or to tell of the ways God has run the gauntlet for us in order to welcome us in as children or to go and tell someone else, “God has big plans for you, so get up and go.”

We are invited to come into the presence of God, at church and also daily, and then we are invited to get up and go.

Andrea Yoder is a student at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va.



When we come to Jesus with our ailments or our lostness, the result is not continued ailment or continued bewilderment. The result is a command.

go to Saul), our response should be to go. Essentially, “Get up and go,” while also a command that asks for obedience, is an invitation to be part of God’s work. Again, I’m thinking particularly of Ananias and Saul. God wants to do something with Saul, “for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel” (Acts 9:15), and God is inviting Ananias to be part of the work



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One family's season

Opting out of organized sports

by Cynthia Hockman-Chupp

For the past 18 years, fall Saturdays have been predictable in our family. From the time our oldest was 7 years old, on most weekends we could be found on or near the soccer field. With multiple kids playing, our family was often split—with one adult taking a child to a game while the other parent took another child in a different direction. Some days we needed grandparents to help us make all the connections. Although I hesitate to even guess, with five kids, it's likely we've attended a couple hundred games over the years and transported kids to three times that many weeknight practices. ►



The author's sons hiking in the Columbia River Gorge.
Photo provided



Playing games with the boys' uncle and aunt, Dave and Cathleen Hockman-Wert. Photo provided

Last fall, with only two children left at home, we contemplated what to do. Both boys had always played soccer, but we knew another year's commitment would mean yet another season of our family split in opposite directions. After much thought, we decided to opt out of organized sports. All four of us agreed it's one of the best family decisions we ever made. My only regret? That we didn't do it sooner.

We found the numerous benefits both rewarding and surprising.

Instead of going to practices and games after school, the boys invited neighborhood kids to play.

Free play

Instead of going to practices and games after school, the boys invited neighborhood kids to play. Our backyard often filled with as many as eight or nine kids running, climbing, yelling, inventing and imagining. No adults managed the play; instead, kids negotiated the agenda and, more often than not, the rules. On the nights when neighbors were unavailable, the brothers played, helped make dinner, practiced instruments or enjoyed family time. We read aloud from *Anne of*

Green Gables, watched episodes of *Little House on the Prairie* and played games such as Dominion, Ticket to Ride and Settlers, activities that would have suffered from time crunch had the boys been committed to fall sports. One night, one child's prayer began, "Dear God. Thank you that we get to start *Anne of Avonlea* tomorrow."

Culture for service

Sports—often fairly rigid in participation requirements and obligations—create schedule conflicts when it comes to family service. We haven't always done a good job instilling the motto of my alma mater, Goshen (Ind.) College: "Culture for Service." It's been more like a culture of kids and teams and competition. And trash. Team soccer requirements for little kids include juice boxes and snack packs.

This fall, without a team commitment, we've been free to participate in other endeavors. For the first time, we attended a Bridging Cultures picnic in our community, eating beans, rice and hamburgers, with a Mariachi band playing in the background as we sipped Horchata and chatted with new friends and old, sometimes with rusty Spanish.

And although we've always made it a priority—skipping soccer to do so—this year we could attend the Mennonite Central Committee Festival guilt-free. The boys enjoyed helping their aunt and uncle sort dozens of boxes of reading material for the book sale the day before the auction. That night, they relished a special time of Chinese food, games and a sleepover, before waking up early to partake in the MCC French toast breakfast and get first dibs on the baked goods, apple cider and peppernuts. One boy gained experience in customer service, making change at the sausage booth.

And finally, rather than stressing about missing the last game of the season, we enjoyed Drift Creek Camp's annual meeting, complete with rounds of Ping-Pong, carpet ball and treks through the old growth forest. The fall was rich. I think the boys would agree with the words of Francis of Assisi, "For it is in giving that we receive." How fortunate our family has been.

Balance in family life

I sometimes wonder how things can change so much in such a short period of time. When my husband and I were kids, we played a handful of sports, but they didn't begin until upper elementary or early middle school (in contrast to how our kids started in primary school), and they did not take a commitment on the part of the whole family. I don't remember my parents ever coming to watch one of my tennis matches; neither



Old growth at Drift Creek Camp. Photo provided

do I remember caring. Yet in our family, with 16 years between siblings, on any given evening or weekend, all our attention would turn to just a small percentage of our family: those playing sports. We'd drop everything else and focus on the individual. Inevitably, that meant dragging along an uninterested party. Although it was a last resort, I confess to occasionally handing a child an electronic device so I could focus on the game.

Last fall, we rediscovered balance. Suddenly, family life—our ability to do something together—did not revolve around weeknight practices or depend on one small child's middle-of-a-Saturday game. Our evenings and weekends, once committed to exercise for only a kid or two, included exercise for the entire family as we hiked or biked. We've explored new trails, even adding an enthusiastic dog on occasion. On one bike trek, we explored the outer reaches of bravery, confronting a large crawdad on the path that, although snapping, needed to be returned to his watery home. Mom did the deed.

Rest (aka time to 'be')

Throughout our children's years in sports, we tried hard to minimize or eliminate Sunday games. Thankfully, we weren't alone in our pursuit. One year, my daughter's soccer team signed up for spring competition, only to learn that half

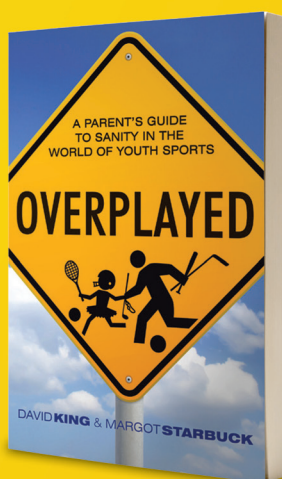
the games would take place on Sunday. Half the families said, "No thanks," and the team withdrew. But we aren't guilt-free when it comes to occasional Sunday games. Sometimes one parent transported a child to an early morning or midday game, leaving the rest of the family at church. We also ran out with the Doxology barely dry on our

Our evenings and weekends, once committed to exercise for only a kid or two, included exercise for the entire family as we hiked or biked.

lips, hoping to make it to an afternoon tournament. This year, we were free to rest and take time to be.

Years ago, I wrote about something I observed when my older children began homeschooling, the "boredom blessing" (*Home Education Magazine*, "The Boredom Blessing," July/August 2011). Last fall, the boys benefited from an unscheduled environment in which they were sometimes bored.

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Family corn harvest.
Photo provided

But it's through those moments of boredom that children learn to be. In the quiet, they take time to pursue interests and talents that time may not have previously allowed. One child tried his hand at sewing; another built elaborate Lego constructions. I've come to see times of rest and quiet,

sometimes containing moments of boredom, as important work in the lives of children. And adults.

Life skills

Although we didn't take this into consideration early on, a definite side benefit has been an emphasis on life skills. Not every Saturday included an inspirational hike. Instead, there were many days that we cooked, cleaned house, raked leaves, gardened, preserved food, washed windows or worked together toward other family goals. As the last two kids in a family with three older siblings, our boys hadn't had as many opportunities to learn to scrub toilets, vacuum rugs and take out the garbage. Last fall, with everyone else out of the house, we instituted "Clean the House 101." The boys were able to earn money and learn more about creating accounts for saving, spending and giving.

Surprises along the way

The biggest surprise in our great sports experiment: how little the boys cared about missing organized sports. We thought they valued the whole team experience a lot more than they actually did. By all appearances, and based on their reflections, they actually preferred to opt out. While writing this article—and during a time when sports practices traditionally took place—one child busy conducting his own science experiment piped up, "I like science better than soccer." Considering their enthusiastic participation in the past, I could not have predicted this outcome.

Final thoughts

Don't get me wrong. Eighteen years of fall sports had highlights. Our kids enjoyed coaches, teammates, exercise and competition. But like REI's campaign to #OptOutside on Black Friday, the biggest shopping day of the year, we see the value in an alternative to what many North Americans have come to see as normal family life. We invite other families to consider opting out of organized sports—for a day, a week, a season or more. Maybe, like us, you'll discover a fabulous alternative to your family's former goals.



Cynthia Hockman-Chupp is a member of Pacific Covenant Mennonite Church in Canby, Ore.

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Turning away from despair

A NASA scientist calls Mennonite churches to pursue renewable energy

by Jennifer Halteman Schrock



Russell and Pam De Young. Photo provided

As a NASA scientist whose job includes readying his institution to face a future shaped by climate change, Russell De Young should be at high risk for a case of despair. Every week at work, the emails roll in describing drought, crop failure, hurricanes, vector-borne diseases and other climate change impacts around the world. As a resident of Newport News, Va., De Young lives in an area second only to New Orleans in its vulnerability to sea-level rise. Flooding frequently comes up in local newspapers. Yet De Young is upbeat, practical and oddly hopeful about the whole matter.





Kern Road Mennonite Church, South Bend, Ind., invited the community to a solar open house soon after their array was installed. Photo by Mike Oles, Hoosier Interfaith Power and Light

“I believe climate change is the dominant issue facing us in the future, and I also believe we have the capacity to do something about it,” he says. Even more striking, De Young is convinced that Mennonite Church USA has an important role to play in turning helplessness into constructive action.

“Mennonites have a peacemaking theology in place that enables them to be a witness to the greater church, and if you are going to take peacemaking seriously, you need to make peace with creation,” De Young says. His vision for making peace with creation focuses on renewable energy. He imagines Mennonite churches scattered all over the country, their roofs covered with solar panels and their parking lots filled with electric cars.

It’s an idea De Young is ready to put money behind. He has issued a challenge to Mennonite churches in the form of grants administered by

De Young imagines Mennonite churches scattered all over the country, their roofs covered with solar panels and their parking lots filled with electric cars.

the Mennonite Creation Care Network (MCCN). The Pam De Young Net Zero Energy Fund will make up to \$12,000 per year available to assist congregations eager to move beyond fossil fuels. A building or community that is net zero energy produces enough energy for its own needs through wind, solar or other renewable means.

De Young’s decision to offer net zero energy grants braids together several threads in his life: his work at NASA, his long history as a peace advocate and his love for his wife, Pam, who died in 2015. Professionally, De Young is a climate adaptation science investigator for NASA, working out of the Langley Research Center in Hampton, Va. Using supercomputers that can generate complex models of the climate as far out as 2100, he advises his center on potential climate change impacts.

The best models show that Earth is in for substantial changes. “Climate change is going to affect all of us—especially the poor,” De Young says. Because carbon dioxide molecules persist in the atmosphere for about 100 years, there is no way to avoid getting warmer, but swift action may avert the more drastic scenarios the models predict. Thankfully, several tipping points—events that lead to irreversible change—may still be avoided. The melting of permafrost in northern Canada is one example. If this happened, it would release enormous amounts of methane, a potent greenhouse gas that would heat the planet even further.

NASA has responded to the models its scientists generate with a plan to reach net zero energy between 2030 and 2040. Already, its new buildings are LEED® certified. In De Young’s mind, what NASA can do, Mennonite Church USA can do, too. And if Mennonite churches can reach net zero energy, so can the rest of society.

Peacemaking and public witness form a second thread running through De Young’s life. He and Pam joined a Mennonite church following the first Gulf War in order to become part of a denomination that could support their opposition to the war. De Young’s peacemaking entails forms of public witness that have sometimes gotten him into trouble. He’s crossed lines at the Pentagon and at Fort Benning, Columbus, Ga.

De Young’s more recent activities still have a radical edge. He is an active member of Huntington Mennonite Church, Newport News, Va.—a theologically diverse congregation that both welcomes its military neighbors and holds a monthly peace witness. De Young and a dozen or so others who share concerns about issues such as drone warfare meet on street corners or outside military bases to offer an alternative perspective to whoever will listen. He also teaches computer classes for veterans at the local VA hospital.

When De Young talks about solar panels, he speaks of witness as well. Do the neighbors know they are welcome at the electric car charging station his congregation is installing? How can

having a roof full of solar panels call the whole community to peace with creation? These things matter to him.

On a more personal level, the Pam De Young Net Zero Energy Fund is a memorial to someone deeply loved. “Pam was a wonderful example of what creation care looked like on a daily basis,” De Young says. She conserved resources in many small ways and took delight in nature—walking in a nearby forest preserve, feeding the birds and caring for other backyard animal life. In human settings, she spent the last 12 years of her life training caregivers of Alzheimer’s patients. Her patience and knowledge of Alzheimer’s disease helped many people.

Part of a larger vision

Congregations can apply to the Pam De Young Net Zero Energy Fund for up to \$10,000 toward solar panels. About \$1,800 is earmarked for electric car charging stations. Churches with other creative ideas related to renewable energy may apply as well. A subcommittee of MCCN’s Creation Care Council will administer the fund and select recipients.

Applicants are asked to show that their request for solar panels is part of a larger movement toward net zero energy. De Young’s congregation is an example of the kind of thinking the application process is intended to inspire. Last fall, Huntington put in place a plan they hope will get them to net zero energy within 10 years. One of the first steps was to replace the heating and air conditioning system with an electric heat pump that cut energy consumption by about 30 percent.

Next, they installed four charging stations for electric cars in the front parking lot where they would be visible to the community. Guests are welcome to charge their cars during daylight hours. “We are able to offer this free service without breaking the bank, since a charge only costs about a dollar,” Pastor David Mishler reports. Another step involved purchasing a year’s worth of solar and wind energy credits from their local power company. The church is now working up cost estimates on solar panels.

MCCN also asks applicants to work through its Greener Congregation Stewardship Score Sheet. The worksheet pushes groups to consider the ways creation care plays out in their overall vision, worship, ecological setting, commitment to justice and daily living. Ideally, this process will involve a broad range of people, not just the congregation’s building geeks.

“A church is not just any nonprofit making a business decision. Our practice should be informed by our faith commitments. This is the

foundation for our choices and the kind of thinking that enables us to make green energy a point of holistic witness in our communities,” says Luke Gascho, Goshen, Ind., who helped found MCCN and drafted the score sheet some years ago.

A church is not just any nonprofit making a business decision. Our practice should be informed by our faith commitments.

—Luke Gascho

Is renewable energy affordable?

Favorable economics is making net zero energy plans more than just pipe dreams. Mark Horst, a part-time pastor at the Yoder campus of Journey Mennonite Church, South Hutchinson, Kan., and owner of King Solar, a solar installation company, says the cost of solar panels has dropped more than 50 percent in the last five years. When Horst started in the business in 2011, the price for a residential system was about \$7 per watt, and a

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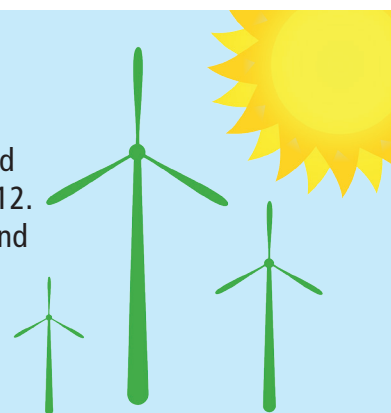


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Renewable energy is growing rapidly and is already a significant source of electricity in many states and countries.

- The amount of electricity generated from renewable sources such as wind and solar power increased nearly four-fold in the United States from 2007 to 2012.
- Nine states currently generate 10 percent or more of their electricity from wind and solar power: Iowa (24%), South Dakota (24%), North Dakota (15%), Minnesota (14%), Colorado (12%), Kansas (11%), Idaho (11%), Oklahoma (11%), and Oregon (10%).

www.ucsusa.org/clean_energy/smart-energy-solutions/increase-renewables/infographic-ramping-up-renewable-energy.html#learn



typical 5,000-watt system cost \$35,000. Today, the price for the same system is \$15-16,000.

Payback depends on the local utility's price per kilowatt-hour and the policies regarding connecting to the grid. It is a bit longer for churches than for homeowners and businesses because churches are tax exempt and cannot take advantage of the 30 percent Solar Investment Tax Credit. Horst says there is a legal workaround: A business can buy the solar panels, own them for at least a year, take the tax credit and then donate them to a church.

Benton Mennonite Church installed a 10-kilowatt system in 2013. The 42 panels produce 75 percent of the electricity they consume.

Many Mennonite churches already use solar panels. Benton (Ind.) Mennonite Church, Kern Road Mennonite Church in South Bend, Ind., Park View Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va., and First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana, Ill., are a few examples. Blessed with a south-facing roof, Benton installed a 10-kilowatt system in 2013. The 42 panels produce 75 percent of the electricity they consume.

Thanks to the expertise of a member, the congregation's timing couldn't have been better.

They were able to take advantage of a favorable deal their local power company offered at the time, which should enable them to reach payback in seven years.

Pastor Brenda Meyer says the decision was not controversial. "Those who weren't convinced by the creation-care angle were convinced by the numbers," she says. Having members with the skills needed to install the system also helped. She encourages congregations considering solar to research a variety of options for purchasing the panels, for attaching them to the roof and for labor.

Kern Road Mennonite Church invited the public to a solar open house May 21. The event celebrated the beefy array of solar panels the congregation installed last fall and included workshops for homeowners interested in solar power. Kern Road purchased its panels with assistance from Hoosier Interfaith Power and Light, Indiana's branch of the national nonprofit whose tag line is "a religious response to global warming."

Climate change is a different kind of issue for the Mennonite church. It is less visible than the loss of young people, less explosive than arguments over same-sex marriage but in some ways grimmer than all these. Amid the causes for despair, a persistent, prophetic voice from a Southern Baptist transplant demands a hearing. De Young insists the Jesus way is still there underneath the rubble and still relevant. He points a way forward, determined to trigger a rush on renewable energy and a cascade of hope.



Jennifer Halteman Schrock is employed by Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen (Ind.) College. Her role includes leading Mennonite Creation Care Network. She attends Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship in Goshen.

To request application materials for a grant from the Pam De Young Net Zero Energy Fund, email mccn@goshen.edu or call Jennifer at 260-799-5869. Apply between Aug. 1 and Oct. 31.

What's on your invisible shopping list?

by Rachel Thomas

It's that time of year again. I walked unsuspectingly into the discount store to have my senses bombarded with displays of back-to-school supplies. I see crisp, clean backpacks, folders and notebooks in every color and style imaginable, lunch boxes emblazoned with pop culture characters I didn't even know were there. They stare me down, beckoning me to abandon the simple list of everyday necessities in my hand and assemble the massive reserve of school provisions required to alleviate my perceived parental need to send my children into the new school year more well-prepared than an explorer on an Antarctic expedition.

Mennonite education fosters a culture of worship, attentiveness to tradition and negotiating community



I envisioned the school-ready versions of my children, clothed in khakis and smartly colored polos, carrying professional backpacks filled with the latest trends in organization, note taking and technology, and I was instantly motivated to purchase everything in sight. Heaven forbid that one of my own would find himself in any way lacking among the ranks of similarly clad, over-equipped pupils traipsing reluctantly to their classes. This is the birth of a new year, the foundation of a new era. I cannot allow any inadequacy at this critical instant.

For the moment, reality called me back to the task at hand, and I marched off to find paper plates and trash bags, temporarily forgoing the temptation to stockpile academic provisions. However, the switch has been activated. I will now be anxiously awaiting the official supply list from school in the mail. I'll be on alert, checking prices and reading online reviews. Assembling the materials that will attend my children's needs this year will be a priority. After all, that is what good parents do, right? They make sure their children are prepared beyond any doubt for whatever will come their way.



If our children graduate with techniques in reconciliation, they will be well-prepared for life.

But here's the dilemma: in my quest to satisfy the needs teachers and administrators tell me I should anticipate for my children, have I overlooked my responsibility to anticipate unseen needs? Clearly, what determines student success in school cannot be completely catalogued on a list of materials. Two children wearing the exact same clothes and equipped with the exact same resources can enter the school year apparently identical but leave with vastly different outcomes. Achievement cannot be boiled down to a prescription of purchased items.

So what then are the intangible, unpurchasable necessities? Schools have been wrestling with this question for decades. It is doubtful educational professionals will ever agree on a concise inventory of the immaterial requirements for success. However, all will concur that each school environment presents a unique ethos, what John D. Roth calls the "invisible curriculum" in his

Anabaptist-Mennonite educational text *Teaching That Transforms*. Roth asserts: "Frequently the most powerful forces that shape our teaching are those that are least explicit—the unspoken assumptions woven into the the institutional culture of our schools."

Often these implicit forces occur accidentally. The influence of peers, the character traits of teachers and the personality of staff and administrators all impact the educational experience of our children in unseen and sometimes unexpected ways. No textbook, state or national standard, or course scope and sequence can control these factors. Part of the difference between the end-of-year results of two first-day-of-school identical children lies in these invisible influences.

One may argue that this invisible curriculum is far more important even than the subject content of our classes. Think back to your own educational experiences. What do you remember most about your favorite teachers? What do you remember most about your least favorite classes? Chances are, these features you remember have little to do with the traditionally curricular goals of the class or teacher. I loved my sixth grade math teacher but couldn't for the life of me tell you what topics we covered or what textbook we used. What I do remember is the feeling of safety to take risks and recover from my mistakes, the challenge of high standards, and the nurturing connection she made with me personally. These qualities have shaped my life and influence my behaviors in the present; whether I can solve for x at this moment is irrelevant, regardless of how important it was to curriculum at the time.

In the particular case of Mennonite and Christian schools across our nation, these items are addressed intentionally, so that the invisible curriculum in which we educate our children is deliberately God-honoring. Parents invest in Mennonite and Christian education to contribute positively to the immaterial forces acting on their children's lives. We devote time to individual and corporate devotions as a faculty and staff body. We endeavor to make biblically based character traits a noticeable quality among our school community—students, staff and parents alike. We respond to behavioral and academic difficulty in a restorative way, aiming to correct heart attitudes in our students instead of punitively motivating temporary behavioral change.

The distinctively Mennonite ethos that purposely pervades our school campuses is based on centuries of faith traditions. Roth suggests three basic features fostered intentionally in Mennonite education: a culture of worship, attentiveness

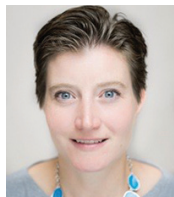
to tradition and negotiating community—diversity, conflict and reconciliation. How wonderful! Imagine a present world in which each adult could remember the invisible influences of their educational experience as these. Surely we desire our children to not only be surrounded by but also to participate in a culture of worship. We long for them to appreciate the collective identity of our community, past and present, and to uphold longstanding traditions. We recognize the desperate need for skills in negotiating community in our present world. If our children graduate with techniques in reconciliation, they will be well-prepared for life, regardless of the textbooks they used or the math skills they acquired in school.

Therefore, we should prepare our children for this invisible curriculum as much as (if not more than) we do for the scholarly one. I suppose it is a bit unfair for schools to provide such detailed descriptions of the tools required for success in academia without so much as a nod to the shrouded skills and foundational aptitude we expect of them in order to participate meaningfully in our invisible curriculum of community and faith traditions. Nonetheless, nurturing the character traits that will attend my children's needs this year will be a priority. After all, that is what good parents do, right? They make sure their children

are prepared beyond any doubt for whatever will come their way.

It's time for me to log off Amazon, stop checking prices and reading reviews and turn my attention to the youngsters in the next room. What teachable moments have I lost while I was trying so hard to purchase their preparedness? Is it too late for me to develop their virtues of love, integrity and patience before another school year gets underway? If only I could walk into the local discount club to buy honesty in bulk or a year's supply of righteousness. Alas, these things are far more valuable than that. They cost our time and attention, our very selves.

As we look ahead to the new school year, let us devote ourselves to this endeavor. As we seek to prepare the next generation for the tasks before them, may we pursue the invisible character traits needed for success with the fervor of a dedicated discount-club mom looking for the best deal on backpacks.



Rachel Thomas teaches math at Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite School, Hershey campus. For back-to-school resources from Mennonite colleges, go to www.themennonite.org.



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Seven questions with Alma Perez Ovalle



Alma Perez Ovalle is a high school Spanish teacher at Sarasota (Fla.) Christian School and attends Bahia Vista Mennonite Church in Sarasota.

I'm passionate about working with women because we can encourage each other. We can find hope and healing in each other's stories.

1 Tell me your earliest memories of church.

When I was born, my parents participated in the Rio Grande Valley Bible Institute in Edinburg, Texas. I remember clapping my hands at church, singing in Spanish, being around people all the time, and hearing my dad preach in Spanish. I loved church. I remember running around with all these little Hispanic kids like myself.

2. What is one lesson that your parents taught you about faith and Christianity?

My parents lived out their faith and love of Jesus in practical ways by opening their homes to strangers: troubled teens, Mennonite Voluntary Service workers, musicians, Mennonite Central Committee workers and refugees that were coming through. It felt like there was an open door.

My parents entered into relationships with people, with church people, our family and our neighbors, but even more with the community. I remember my dad going to see the local baker every Sunday morning to get Spanish bread. And my dad would visit the guy that sold us our cars over the time we lived in Texas, just to talk to him.

As a child, I'm confident I soaked it all in. I embody those same principles and that same compassion and care for those around me, by loving people through the eyes of Jesus.

3. You are a parent of three teenagers (19, 17 and 14) and teach high school. What advice or words of wisdom do you have to offer others who are raising or working with teenagers?

Take it one day at a time. Have a big plan; an overarching plan for your kids. We take them to church, we read the Word, we pray together, we sing and volunteer. We do all sorts of things that build their faith up and encourage them.

My husband and I talk with our 19-year-old about how his freshman year of college went. And we ask him about his finances. We have tough conversations, knowing he trusts in the Lord.

Don't be afraid to be strong and let your children know what you expect of them, what you hope for them and what you pray for them. Ultimately it is their life and their path with the Lord they've got to walk.

4. You've written about the movement of the Spirit during simultaneous interpretation/translation. Why does this feel like such a holy time?

It's like a river flowing. When I interpret simultaneously, it's like there is this washing in

a circular motion where the person is speaking, I hear it and then have to say it to the person at the other end of my headset.

For me, that's what I feel is so powerful: that movement of the Holy Spirit, where it feels like what's happening is beyond me. Interpretation is one of the things the Lord developed in me from a young age. I was 19 when I started doing it.

And now, fast forward, it's time for me to train a new group of people to do this. It's time to pass the baton. Not that I don't want to do it anymore, but I feel younger people need to be more involved in conference work and have a commitment to their church if that's a ministry their church would have.

5. You are a member of the Mennonite Women USA board. Why are you passionate about this organization?

When I was 24, I moved to Florida, and at 25 the Southeast Mennonite Conference women's group asked if I would be on their board as the Hispanic representative. Their vision to have a young single woman on that board impacted me.


I'm passionate about working with women because we can encourage each other. We can find hope and healing in each other's stories. We can connect on that base level, [regardless of] race, background and culture. Being on these leadership boards is a way for me to connect to women and build relationships and have the Lord be glorified through the building up of women.

6. What's the craziest question someone has asked you about being a Mennonite?

Someone once told me I was not a Mennonite because I didn't look like a Mennonite. One of my co-workers said, "A student said a person is only a Mennonite if they can trace their roots back to Europe and back to Germany or somewhere back over there." That was fun helping that person understand that I choose to walk my faith through the Anabaptist lens and through my own viewpoint of Anabaptist core values. For me, living in community is super important.

7. What's your favorite thing to do on the weekend in Sarasota?

I like going to the beach in the early morning and taking pictures of the water, the sand, weeds and other foliage. Sometimes I go to the beach with the kids, sometimes by myself.

I love being with my husband and hanging out with the family, having some down time, going to church. 

Ain't I a Mennonite?

In the midst of advocating for social justice, Sojourner Truth inquired publicly in an 1851 speech, “Ain’t I a woman?” Her womanly worth seemed diminished because she was black.

Today, I ask Mennonite Church USA, “Ain’t I a Mennonite?”

I came to MC USA through a student internship from seminary. Anabaptist beliefs are part of my faith experience and are integral to my ministry. Living Anabaptist faith as a Mennonite was new to me. To prepare to learn, live and serve in the Mennonite community, I reviewed statements on the MC USA website. I read Mennonite publications. I immersed myself in the community. The Purposeful Plan resonated with me, and I discussed it with Mennonites and others.

As I settled into my internship, I sensed a call from God to serve and live among these believers. The peace, simple living, abundant serving and community care I found in that place called me to spiritually abide in MC USA.

There were moments that were unsettling and even painful. But I continued, because in community we connect beyond, around and through our differences. Yet there were moments I wondered and outright asked, “Ain’t I a Mennonite?”

Both those who drew me in and those who distanced me remarked on my passionate faith. My background draws from the wells of Free Will Baptist and Pentecostalism. I am a believer in Jesus Christ, and I am compelled to live in community with believers and as a witness to the world.

Occasionally, people asked if I understood Mennonite faith because I welcomed, encouraged and believed in innovation and inclusion. I persevered and great relationships developed in local congregations and conferences and especially at the the Women Doing Theology conference and Mennonite Women USA events.

Despite these connections, the unspoken boundaries and expectations arose intermittently, and I asked, “Ain’t I a Mennonite?”

Does my praying extemporaneously and energetically keep me from full acceptance? Is it my use of technology? If I read Holy Scripture from my phone, ain’t I a Mennonite?

Shouldn’t kindness and hospitality be extended to black lives extinguished by a system supposed to maintain safety and justice? Is there a question where the “peace church” must be when our Muslim neighbors are threatened at their worship space? Ain’t I a Mennonite when I ask others to

come work and witness for peace and love to the afflicted and threatened?

I encouraged others to share their gifts and questions. I challenged congregations to look for the gifts and graces of God in unexpected ways. Ain’t I a Mennonite if I worship with my hands lifted up? Ain’t I a Mennonite when I preach energetically and prophetically?

I know community, context and culture are not static. From my serving in the leadership of predominantly and traditionally white churches, predominantly and traditionally black churches, across ecumenical positions and in rural and urban settings, I know there is strength in diversity.


But I have been asking other questions lately. Why do I need to be Mennonite? Do Mennonites want and welcome me? Is welcome an invitation to assimilate or an opportunity to create a stronger community by treasuring our commonalities and sharpening each other with our uniqueness?

I’m a believer in Christ Jesus and a black woman from a poor urban background. I found much in Mennonite experience and community that can be used to advance peace. I also found fear that creating new traditions erodes the truth of Mennonite identity. I found among the “quiet in the land” an unwillingness to hear the truth of God expressed in different ways. I found discernment is often code for dismissal of innovation, questions or strangers—those unlike cradle, traditional or ethnic Mennonites.

I have questions, and I pray we all ask these questions and listen for other questions from the margins. Ain’t it time to welcome others so that we might be stronger, better and healthier in spirit, mind and body?

The question I’m asking is not mine to answer. It must be addressed by each person in MC USA. Who is wanted and welcomed to be a Mennonite? Is there room in Mennonite community for both growth and history?

I have loved and learned much through my Mennonite experience. I’ve found great relationships that are not bound by denomination or tradition. Yet I stay hopeful that change will come expediently and exponentially, because what the world needs now is the work and witness of the “peace church” in this time.

My vision is standing with others and saying, “Come, let us show you a peaceful way. Won’t you be a Mennonite?” 



Kelly Bates Oglesby

lives in Indianapolis and provides supply preaching and teaching service as called.

I found discernment is often code for dismissal of innovation, questions or strangers.

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

Training tomorrow's Mandelas and Tutus

Southern Africa group trains secondary school students in peer mediation



Nathan Detweiler (front left), Mennonite Mission Network intern, and Oscar Siwali (third from right), director of Southern African Development and Reconstruction Agency, listen as students of Nomzamo High School discuss what they are learning about peer mediation in conflict situations. Photo by Kathryn Smith Derksen

Students trained by Southern African Development and Reconstruction Agency (SADRA) are the new breed of Desmond Tutus, and follow in the footsteps of giants like Nelson Rholihlahla Mandela. They have become peace ambassadors in their homes and in their communities.

Three years ago, I launched SADRA with the goal of building a society that embraces nonviolence. Our nonprofit organization provides knowledge and skills to Southern Africans through research and training in peaceful methods of resolving conflict.

In a violent South Africa, the significance of training young people to resolve conflicts in their communities cannot be overstated. South African schools are ranked among the most violent in the world, with more than 50 stabbings per year in our Western Cape Province alone.

We work through church renewal and leadership development, peace education in schools, active conflict transformation in communities, and election monitoring. While we work to acknowledge the importance of women's contributions in all these areas, we pay special attention to women's roles in peacebuilding and HIV prevention.

Secondary school students trained in peer mediation last year reported instances of using their skills to solve conflicts in their communities. One told of how he helped younger children talk through a problem with a bully. Another conducted lessons with other learners on how to peacefully defuse mounting tensions.

Part of our success is due to Mennonite Mission Network interns: Mikhail Fernandes in 2015 and Nathan Detweiler during January. [Nathan's parents, Christine and Phil Lindell Detweiler, served with Mission Network in Liberia, Benin and South Africa.] They made an immense contribution to SADRA's work.

Now, SADRA is pleased with the arrival of Dan and Kathryn Smith Derksen and their two sons. Their presence moves us from one full-time staff member to three. Kathryn Smith Derksen is a peacebuilding specialist with experience in coalition building, situation analysis, and social justice advocacy work. Some of the Smith Derksens' main responsibilities include contributing to the strategic leadership of SADRA as a whole and in particular to lead the Conflict Transformation in Communities Programme by ensuring financial viability through fund-raising and effective management. They will also conduct research and develop and conduct training interventions.—Oscar Siwali for Mennonite Mission Network

Before founding SADRA in 2013, Oscar Siwali worked at the Quaker Peace Centre in Cape Town and for the Centre for Conflict Resolution, conducting workshops for audiences across Africa. He also provided technical assistance to partners and clients of these agencies. Oscar and Zandi, his wife, have three sons. Zandi worked at Rape Crisis for many years before beginning a bachelor of commerce degree at University of Western Cape, which she plans to complete this year.

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Letters *continued from page 5*

voices, yearning to die and times I attempted to take my life. Things got so difficult I had trouble keeping faith.

Throughout this decades-long battle I have been blessed by pastors and members of my congregation at First Mennonite Church of Iowa City who were sensitive, compassionate and practical in their loving nurture. They encouraged me to take my prescribed medications and at the same time helped me bring my concerns about side effects to the attention of my psychiatric professionals. They drove me to the emergency room when I was in need of urgent care. They wove a net of support that included phone calls checking in daily in times of crisis. They also evoked my gifts and commissioned poems for use in worship and called me to be church correspondent. They recognized the creative gift in the pain of mental anguish.

I came to accept my symptoms as expressions of broken connections in my brain. I opened my mind to receiving treatment. Beyond medical treatment, I developed coping skills that include tai chi and mindfulness.

I have a good quality of life now. I've worked as a hospital secretary for 31 years. Over the past 21 years, as my mental health grew strong and joyful, I've had the privilege of giving back to my church family and my peers. Praise be to God.

I haven't completely conquered the illness, but I continue on a journey of recovery. Thanks to the three writers for shining the light of hope and acceptance on the stigma of mental illness.
—Margalea Warner, Coralville, Iowa

How we speak of mental illness

As a pastoral counselor, I read with interest the articles on mental and emotional disorders by King and Miller (July). I have seen many people struggle with long-term mental illness and the stigma it carries. One small thing we can all do to decrease the stigma is to pay attention to the way we speak of people with mental illness. We would never say of someone, "He is heart dis-

ease" or, "She is cancer," as if the disease defined the person. Yet we easily say, "She is bipolar" or, "He is autistic." By doing so we unconsciously equate the person with their disorder. When we speak of "a person with bipolar disorder" or "a person with autism," we acknowledge that the person is more than their sickness. This isn't a matter of political correctness to be written off as unimportant but a way of honoring the humanity of those who struggle and are not all that different from us.

—Kathie Kurtz, Manassas Va.

An open letter to Ervin Stutzman

After six months of investigation into the allegations against Luke Hartman, does anyone still need more information? To plan a "probe" for more details seems to question the integrity of the administration of Eastern Mennonite University, the pastoral staff of Lindale Mennonite Church and the leadership of Virginia Mennonite Conference.

In the account of Jesus being confronted by angry religious leaders with a "woman taken in adultery," he simply said, "Let him who is without sin among you be first to cast a stone." And to the woman he said, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." The sin of adultery and fornication is not the "unforgiveable sin." Has there been any move toward restoration and forgiveness for Luke?

Is there not a better way to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus than spending thousands of dollars on the probe? May the Holy Spirit grant you wisdom and guidance in managing the church's activities and limited resources.—Peter Hartman, Hesston, Kan., Luke Hartman's father

Ervin Stutzman responds

Peter, you have written a thoughtful letter, which merits a thoughtful response.

You mention "six months of investigation" regarding allegations against Luke Hartman. I am not aware of any such "investigation" but rather a surfeit of accusations, conjecture and rumors regarding events that transpired while Luke was a member at Lindale

Mennonite Church or an employee of EMU. I understand that Luke has been legally cleared of the charge of soliciting prostitution that first brought these matters into the public light. However, the public posting by Lauren Shifflett and her sister, Marissa Buck, regarding Lauren's relationship with Luke revealed the need for further investigation on several fronts.

The "probe" you mentioned is our plan to have an outside organization conduct interviews with a number of people to bring the truth to bear against subterfuge or rumor, whatever its origin. This external review will seek to clarify facts and provide insight into what went well in this process and where we as individuals and institutions need to do better in responding to allegations of sexual abuse or misconduct. The investigation will assure that the individuals and entities who have a stake in this painful affair (including EMU, Virginia Mennonite Conference and Lindale Mennonite Church) are treated with fairness and respect and that those who have been wronged will be vindicated. As a church, we will seek to hold people accountable for any indiscretions or wrongs but also to extend forgiveness and facilitate restoration, where appropriate, for all who seek it.

With you, I regret the high costs associated with an outside review. But it is even more expensive to allow abuse to go unchecked or to miss the opportunity to establish better practices of transparency in reporting and responding wherever complaints about abuse arise.

Again, with you, I recognize the need for personal and corporate wisdom and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the midst of these circumstances. I pray the same for you in the difficult place you find yourself as a parent. May God's abundant grace uphold us all.
—Ervin R. Stutzman, Executive Director, Mennonite Church USA

Editor's note: You can find more letters to the editor at www.themennonite.org.

OBITUARIES

Abrahams, Ethel Grace Ewert, 92, Hillsboro, Kan., died July 5. Spouse: Norman E. Abrahams. Parents: Gerhard and Helena Peters Ewert. Children: Nan Graber, David Abrahams, Dwayne Abrahams, Nadine Abrahams; six grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Celebration of life service: July 8 at Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton, Kan.

Covington, Ruth Hainline Bertsche, 90, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 8. Spouse: Robert Jean Covington (deceased). Spouse: Frank Hainline (deceased). Parents: Harry and Emma Steiner Bertsche. Funeral: June 24 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Detweiler, Emma Kathryn Yoder, 86, Boyertown, Pa., died July 13, of congestive heart failure. Spouse: Alvin Detweiler (deceased). Ten children; 36 grandchildren; 26 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 18 at Boyertown Mennonite Church.

Fehlberg, Nettie Ada Troyer, 96, Wellman, Iowa, died July 9. Spouse: William Fehlberg (deceased). Parents: Lloyd and Emma Kennel Troyer. Children: Connie Beachy, Charlene Roth, Patricia Finknew, Randall Fehlberg, Sandra Fehlberg. Funeral: July 15 at Wellman Mennonite Church.

Herschberger, Melvin J., 78, and **Herschberger, Veva Aleene Miller**, 78, both of Kalona, Iowa, died June 27, from injuries sustained in an automobile accident. Parents: John E. and Christena Eash Herschberger, C. Jay and Dinah Miller. Children: Darrel Herschberger, Wade Herschberger, Brian Herschberger, Kathy Herschberger, Marcia Watkins; 11 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 1 at Kalona Mennonite Church.

Hershberger, Herman Luke, 93, Moundridge, Kan., died July 8. Spouse: Velma Hershberger (deceased). Parents: S.S. and Mabel Hartzler Hershberger. Children: Mary Lou Hershberger, Kermit Dee Hershberger, Vietta Krehbiel; seven grandchildren, 15 great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 11 at Hesston (Kan.) Mennonite Church.

Hess, Herbert Snavelly, 95, Landisville, Pa., formerly of Quarryville and Millersville, Pa., died May 22. Spouse: Sara Burkholder Hess. Parents: Norman and Helen Snavelly Hess. Children: Judith Nord, Carol Mylin, Linda Musser, Herbert L. Hess, Debra Detwiler, Marcia Harnish, and Brent Hess; 15 grandchildren; 28 great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 27 at Refton Brethren in Christ Church, Refton, Pa.

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To submit an obituary, log on to www.themennonite.org, use the "About Us" tab and select "Contact Us" from the drop-down menu. You may also submit information by email or mail editor@themennonite.org; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Horst, Erma Snyder, 92, Waterloo, Ontario, died July 14. Spouse: Cleason Horst (deceased). Parents: Edwin and Leah Snyder. Children: Roger Horst, Richard Horst, Darrell Horst, Marlin Horst, Marcia Jean Horst; two grandchildren. Funeral: July 20 at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, St. Jacobs, Ontario.

Lahman, Evelyn May Miller, 98, Harrisonburg, Va., died June 23. Spouse: Harold H. Lahman (deceased). Parents: Leonard W. and Lucy Yates Miller. Children: Richard A. Lahman, Milford G. Lahman, Floyd E. Lahman; eight grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral: June 27 at Weavers Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Landis, Grace H., 93, Souderton, Pa., died July 1. Parents: John M. and Sallie H. Halteman Landis. Funeral: July 6 at Souder-ton Mennonite Homes.

Musselman, Glenn Earl, 89, Goshen, Ind., died May 13. Spouse: Lois C. Shank Musselman. Parents: Samuel Z. and Ruth Batterman Musselman. Children: Crissie Graber, Sonia Chaves, Regina Perez, Cecilia Musselman Rocha, Anita Eisenbeis; 12 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 3 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Nafziger, E. Wayne, 77, Manhattan, Kan., died April 25. Spouse: Elfrieda Toews Nafziger. Parents: Orrin and Beatrice Slabaugh Nafziger. Children: Brian Nafziger, Kevin Nafziger. Memorial service: April 30 at All Faiths Chapel at Kansas State University, Manhattan.

North, Wayne Gerald, 86, Harrisonburg, Va., died July 8, of leukemia. Spouse: Doris Amstutz North. Children: Rod North, Brenda Martin, Emily Sandel, David North, Janet Schlabach, Jennifer Bauman; 12 grandchildren. Funeral: July 12 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church. Read full obituary at www.themennonite.org.

Ortman, Alvin C., 89, Marion, S.D., died June 22. Spouse: Arlyss Ortman. Parents: Andrew and Rose Dick Ortman. Children: Wayne Ortman, Jerry Ortman; seven grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 25 at Salem-Zion Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

Peachey, Mildred L. Brenneman, 88, Wellman, Iowa, died May 30. Spouse: John Peachey (deceased). Parents: Alvin and Sadie Huntsberger Brenneman. Children: Beth Miller, Bob Peachey; five grandchildren. Funeral: June 11 at Yoder-Powell Funeral Home, Kalona, Iowa.

Saner, Verda Graber, Freeman, S.D., died May 8. Spouse: Delmer "Bud" Saner (deceased). Spouse: Ruben Kleinsasser (deceased). Parents: Jonath F. and Kathryn Graber. Children: Sharon Wollmann, Bryan Saner, Loren Saner, Marlin Saner. Funeral: June 15 at Salem-Zion Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Selman, Paul Raymond, 80, Elkhart, Ind., died June 9. Spouse: Carol Whirlledge Selman. Parents: Carl and Eliza Selman. Children: Ted Selman, David Selman, Karen Selman; nine grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 18 at Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, Elkhart.

Weaver, Vera Mae Troyer, 94, Goshen, Ind., died June 23. Spouse: James O. Weaver (deceased). Parents: Manley Miles Troyer and Mary Edna Reiff Troyer. Children: Larry Weaver, Jon Weaver, Roger Weaver; seven grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 26 at Olive Mennonite Church, Wakarusa, Ind.

Zehr, Henry "Hank" A., 95, Lowville, N.Y., died June 24. Spouse: Mable Steria Zehr (deceased). Parents: David H. and Veronica Widrick Zehr. Child: Albert Earl Zehr. Funeral: June 28 at Croghan Mennonite Church, Croghan, N.Y.



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Mennonite Men, a binational organization working with Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada, is seeking a **half-time coordinator** to begin Aug. 1. Primary responsibilities include oversight of office tasks, managing an annual budget, relating to volunteers and a binational board of directors, planning for churchwide and area conference events, resourcing congregational men's groups and overseeing the work of the JoinHands Church Grant program. Computer skills, experience in fund-raising and a willingness to travel are a plus. A detailed job description may be found at <http://www.mennonitemen.org/news/Pages/Coordinator-Job-Description.aspx>. Interested parties should send a cover letter and resumé to Lonnie Bartel at lonnie.bartel@gmail.com.

Mt. Clare Christian School in Baltimore City (<https://mount-clarechristian.org/>) is seeking **teachers** for the 2016-2017 school year. Applicant should be a devoted follower of Jesus and an active member of a church, with experience working with children and youth in a ministry setting. If interested, please send a resumé to mtclarecs@gmail.com.

Seeking **family practice physicians** to join **Southern Indiana Community Health Care** (SICH) in Paoli, Ind. Obstetric/C-section skills helpful but not required. Beautiful setting in Hoosier National Forest area. Local Mennonite fellowship. www.sichc.org. Contact yoderyolanda@gmail.com.

For sale: Northern Wayne County, N.Y: 18-acre farm, mature black walnuts, maple grove. Established grapes, berries, apples and asparagus. 100-year-old house, 5 bedrooms, large kitchen, 2 baths, attached 28-by-32 garage, steel siding, 15 amp generator. Separate two-bedroom dwelling above 2-car garage. Huge yard with gardens. Text 315-594-8383.


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

Eastern Mennonite University is seeking applicants for a **pursuit recruiter** for EMU at Lancaster, Pa. Responsible to recruit new and/or returning students for EMU at Lancaster. Identify and participate in lead-producing activities. Identify and employ best practices for recruiting adult students. Staff on- and off-site recruitment events. Bachelor's degree required. Part time. Submit letter of application, cover letter, resumé and the contact information for three references to: Human Resources, 1200 Park Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22802, hr@emu.edu. For more information, visit our website at www.emu.edu/humanresources. Eastern Mennonite University is an equal opportunity employer, committed to enhancing diversity across the institution. EMU conducts criminal background investigations as part of the hiring process.

Akron Mennonite Church, Akron, Pa., seeks a **full-time pastor** with a focus on engaging, equipping and empowering the church body to teach and share our faith across generations through connections with one another. Candidate should have a warm and welcoming personality to help strengthen the life and ministry of the church and must be rooted in Anabaptist/Mennonite faith. Please send cover letter and resumé to hr@akronmench.org or 1311 Diamond St., Akron, PA 17501.

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FILM REVIEW

Free State of Jones (R) tells the story of Newton Knight, a native of Mississippi who deserted the Confederate army with others from Jones County and led a guerrilla war against the Confederates with an army of up to 500 people that included runaway slaves. The film raises several questions, one being how we view it. We easily decry the evil of “those people,” whose racism is so blatant and so violent, but this doesn’t necessarily challenge our more subtle or hidden racism today.—*Gordon Houser*

BOOK REVIEWS

America’s Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege and the Bridge to a New America by Jim Wallis (Brazos Press, 2016, \$21.99) addresses a key topic for our time. Wallis uses stories and statistics and calls whites to address the issue: “We need to get personal about all of this, to regard the children in these statistics as *our* children.” He offers a helpful overview of white privilege, noting that whiteness has become an idol. Wallis seeks to take a “forward-looking approach” and claims that “the next bridge to cross is America’s transition from a majority white nation to a majority of racial minorities.”—*gh*

Lord Willing? Wrestling with God’s Role in My Child’s Death by Jessica Kelley (Herald Press, 2016, \$16.99) is a deft combination of a heart-wrenching memoir about Kelley watching her 4-year-old son die of cancer and a theological reflection driven by that experience. She explores harmful explanations that Christian culture offers the brokenhearted, such as that Henry’s tumor was a blessing in disguise or God’s discipline or part of God’s plan. She offers an alternative to the traditional view of the book of Job and concludes that “God is battling, always battling, to bring good out of evil.” She encourages readers to wrestle with their picture of God, as she has done so well.—*gh*

The perils of social media

Much has been written about our polarized mediaculture, including by me. Nowhere does that play out more, perhaps, than in social media. (Or should it be called unsocial media?)

According to our stated beliefs, we Mennonites should be more exemplary in being able to talk peaceably with one another, but apparently we’re not much better than anyone else.

In fact, as Hannah Heinzekehr, executive director of The Mennonite, Inc., wrote in our July issue, we implemented a 30-day sabbatical from comments on our website.

We’re not alone in this, as other media outlets, such as *Christianity Today*, have begun to remove comments from their websites.

Some writers are hesitant to post blogs because of the sometimes vicious comments they receive. This is particularly true for women, who often receive the vilest communications, including death threats.

I wrote about this in a February 2014 column (“Is the Internet Unsafe for Women?”). I concluded that piece by appealing to readers to “look for ways to make every part of our world, including the Internet, safe for everyone, particularly women.”

This seems to be a situation where a few individuals ruin what can be a helpful communication tool. Kate Shellnutt, online associate editor for *Christianity Today*, says there are comments that make conversation worthwhile.

“The great thing about having such a huge reach, even though you might need to wade through some haters or some negativity, is that we reach people who are directly affected by what we’re talking about and are represented in our coverage,” she says.

And Dilshad Ali, who is managing editor of Patheos’ Muslim channel online and editor-in-chief of its Altmuslim blog, says that being hateful or negative isn’t how her religion teaches her to be or to interact with people, and that

informs her interactions online, too.

She says most of the comments she receives are “pretty pleasant,” but when she wrote a post online about the Council on American-Islamic Relations’ satirical “Islamophobin” campaign, advertising a spoof medication to treat “chronic Islamophobia,” the responses weren’t just comments, but “near-pornographic photos and beheadings.”


She says that a conservative Christian blogger she knows, who also is hosted on Patheos, has received threats aimed at her children.

It’s not only women who receive nasty comments. David Gushee, an evangelical biblical scholar who writes a column for Religion News Service, wrote that on July 8, he deactivated his personal Facebook page.

Earlier that week, he wrote an article for RNS on the killings in Baton Rouge and St. Paul and included a link to his Facebook page. While most posts were civil and constructive, some he found “inflammatory and hurtful,” which is not the same as being threatened with death.

He offered 10 reasons for abandoning Facebook. Though they aren’t especially original, they’re worth mentioning. Here are five: (1) It is impossible to manage one’s Facebook page so as to maintain civility. (2) Virtual communications are more likely than face-to-face communications to create and inflame conflict. (3) Facebook creates the illusion of a community of friends. (4) Facebook consumes time and emotional energy better spent elsewhere. (5) Facebook is often a substitute for real action in the world.

Most users of Facebook are not in as public a role as these writers, but their experience offers some cautions.

It’s better, if possible, to talk face to face. 

Gordon Houser is editor of The Mennonite.



Transition cultivates growth



Emily Kauffman is a member of Zion Mennonite Church in Archbold, Ohio.

I recently left one home to return to another. The transition home after graduating from Hesston (Kan.) College was filled with grief. I had found myself at Hesston. I began my time there self-conscious, timid and semiconfused, and I left confident, motivated and at peace. I entered as a psychology major and left as a communications major. I entered a Christian and left an Anabaptist.

I will always count my time at Hesston as the most formative two years of my life. What's weird is that they almost didn't happen.

Not many people know this, but for a short time during Christmas break my first year there I was considering not going back for a second year.

My transition from home life to college life was disorienting. I was grieving the loss of my family, those who knew me best. Although I was still staying true to who I knew I wanted to be, I didn't feel like I belonged my first semester at Hesston. But I found the courage to return for second semester and am grateful I did.

As I have reflected on my transition to Hesston, I can identify three discoveries I found were needed for a healthy transition: **(1) I found a safe space, (2) I found myself, and (3) I found courage to do hard things.**

It was in that second semester that I found my safe space. I began meeting with the campus counselor. After the first few times of meeting with Julie, I realized what I had been ultimately grieving. I was fortunate to grow up in a family where vulnerability and authenticity were practiced daily. I grew up coming home from school and being able to process my day with my mother. She was my safe space. At college, I found you have to search and find those safe spaces. My counseling sessions became my safe space. I learned to identify what I needed to stay healthy in one of the most difficult transitions of my life.

As I adapted, I became more emotionally stable and gained the confidence I needed to branch out. My courage and strength grew, and I found

myself opening to others and to deeper conversations. I was also identifying what I was passionate about because I was taking classes that were pushing me to ask questions and explore my beliefs. I grew up with parents who were passionate about living sustainably, but it wasn't until I took environmental science at Hesston that I realized the significance of this life choice. I am now more appreciative of my mother's love of gardening and canning and my father's love of raising grass-fed cattle. I became more aware of how my life up until college allowed me to explore and identify who I am and where my passions lie.

My second year at Hesston rolled around, and I noticed within the first month that I was going to have to do some hard things. I was a resident assistant, a writing assistant and a student worker in the Marketing and Communications department. I was the busiest and most involved I had been in my entire life. Within the first few months, I was connecting with the girls in my mod and speaking during chapel and forum. Amid the busyness, I was also learning how to set boundaries to take care of myself. By the end of my time at Hesston, I was just as sad, if not more, to leave my Hesston family

as I had been to leave my biological one two years earlier.

I am forever grateful I took the risk to go 14 hours away from home because I found a new home. I am grateful for the safe spaces I found and the leadership roles I filled that not only helped me discover who I am but what I can and cannot do. But the journey has only begun. I hope to remember the importance of safe spaces, finding myself and finding the courage to do hard things as I continue to experience transition.

May we each choose to be in tune with what our hearts and souls need to grow. Because it is in the depths of our hearts, the core of who we are, that God lives. May we open our minds to how the Spirit is leading and calling each of us. May we follow. **TM**

I am grateful for the safe spaces I found and the leadership roles I filled that not only helped me discover who I am but what I can and cannot do.

Loving our enemies

You have heard that it was said, “Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.”
—Jesus (Matthew 5:43-44)

There’s no way to live without enemies. That’s the clear message of the Bible, no matter at what depth you read it. Enemies loom large in the story of God’s people, not only in the narratives of conquest or captivity but also in the Psalter, the heart of Jewish worship. The imprecatory Psalms are the most extreme, calling on God to wreak vengeance on enemies to the point of annihilation.

Since I’m a follower of Jesus, I’m intrigued by his freedom to reinterpret the Jewish tradition—to call for a different approach to enemies than is set forth in much of the Jewish Bible. That’s why I’m a pacifist by conviction, if not always in practice.

In the light of the recent acts of terrorism in the United States and around the world, I cling to Jesus’ call to be a peacemaker in a violent world. I’m thinking particularly of the need for greater love of enemies. However, in this column, I’m not focusing on self-proclaimed national enemies like ISIS or Al-Qaeda. And I am not speaking of heavily armed shooters or suicide bombers who attack innocent and unsuspecting people in public places. I’m thinking of fellow Christians—perhaps Mennonites—who would shun the label of “enemy” but nevertheless play that role in our lives.

“Hold it,” you may say. “It’s completely unfair to label fellow Christians—especially those who claim to be pacifists—as enemies.” Let me explain. I believe enemies exist on a spectrum. Terrorists may occupy the most radical end, but neighbors and fellow church members can easily occupy the other. Sometimes our most troublesome enemies live in our own household. Think of Judas, who ate out of the same bowl as Jesus yet plotted with his executioners. George Bach and Peter Wyden popularized the idea of a spousal enemy with their book *The Intimate Enemy: How to Fight Fair in Love and Marriage*.

Thus, my definition of enemy includes people who openly (perhaps passive-aggressively) oppose you. Think, for example, of the member of your Sunday school class who consistently undermines your comments or suggestions with a counterstatement. Or the competitor on the soccer field who cheats or seeks to injure you. Or a neighbor who spreads unfounded but damaging rumors about you in the community. Even the critic who posts unkind comments on social media.

This kind of enemy can be the overbearing camel in your mental tent or the gas hog that sucks all the reserves out of your emotional tank. This is likely the kind of enemy about whom Jesus said, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” Perhaps an adaptation of 1 John 4:20 is appropriate here: “If you cannot love the close-up enemy you have seen, how can you love the faraway foreign enemy you have not seen?”

One further thought. We may well be the enemy that others are struggling to love. Perhaps our name is being mouthed before God in someone else’s anxious prayer, calling on God’s deliverance from our obstinate wrongheadedness.

So, even as we pray for God’s help to deal with our enemies, we will do well to remember that loving and forgiving those who have done us wrong is a journey of faith, not a simplistic act. Further, if we have been abused, staying out of harm’s way with the support of others may be our most immediate task.

There’s no way to follow Jesus without a daily supply of grace for the journey. May God grant us all the grace that we need so that we may be enabled to love as God loves, reaching even to our enemies. **TM**



Ervin Stutzman
is executive
director of
Mennonite Church
USA.

Even as we
pray for
God’s help
to deal with
our enemies,
we might
toss in an
occasional
plea for the
grace to see
ourselves as
others see
us.



FROM THE EDITOR

A new reality



Gordon Houser

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.—Genesis 1:27

There is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.—Galatians 3:28b

In the Bible there are foundational texts, passages that speak to the heart of who we are and what we are to be about. Every so often we should revisit these texts.

The Galatians text above echoes the Genesis text but points to a new reality. It was likely a baptismal formula that Paul is quoting, and it emphasizes the unity that exists “in Christ,” another formula with huge implications.

Since God’s image is reflected by both male and female, our behavior as God’s people should reflect that. That is, in God’s reign, women should not be seen or treated as less important or valuable than men.

In God’s reign, women should not be seen or treated as less important or valuable than men.

However, that’s the world we live in. Throughout the world, often with the support of religion—including Christianity—women are treated as subservient to men.

In an essay from 2009, Jimmy Carter summed it up well: “At its most repugnant, the belief that women must be subjugated to the wishes of men excuses slavery, violence, forced prostitution, genital mutilation and national laws that omit rape as a crime. But it also costs many millions

of girls and women control over their own bodies and lives, and continues to deny them fair access to education, health, employment and influence within their own communities.”

Creating communities where women have more power than they currently do is behavior that reflects the Genesis text. But beyond that, it helps create stronger, healthier communities.

Mennonite Economic Development Associates has learned that one of the best uses of development funds in poorer countries is providing low-interest loans to women so they can start businesses. Women, much more than men, invest in their local communities and are more likely to pay off the loans.

Women are also less violent. In the wake of numerous killings in early July—in Baton Rouge, La., St. Paul, Minn., and Dallas, Texas—Melissa Batchelor Warnke wrote in an op-ed piece in the *Los Angeles Times* that the group most responsible for the culture of violence in America is men.

“In the United States,” she writes, “98% of those who commit mass shootings are male; 98% of the officers who have shot and killed civilians are male; 90% of those who commit homicide by any means are male; and 80% of those arrested for all violent crimes—murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery and aggravated assault—are male.”

I’m not proposing a panacea that putting women in power will solve all problems (though it might be worth a try). I’m saying that a world in which men dominate women is not producing healthy communities.

More importantly, such a world does not correspond with the reality that men *and* women reflect God’s image.

We are called to live out the reality that in Christ we are all one, and no one is to dominate anyone else.—*gh*