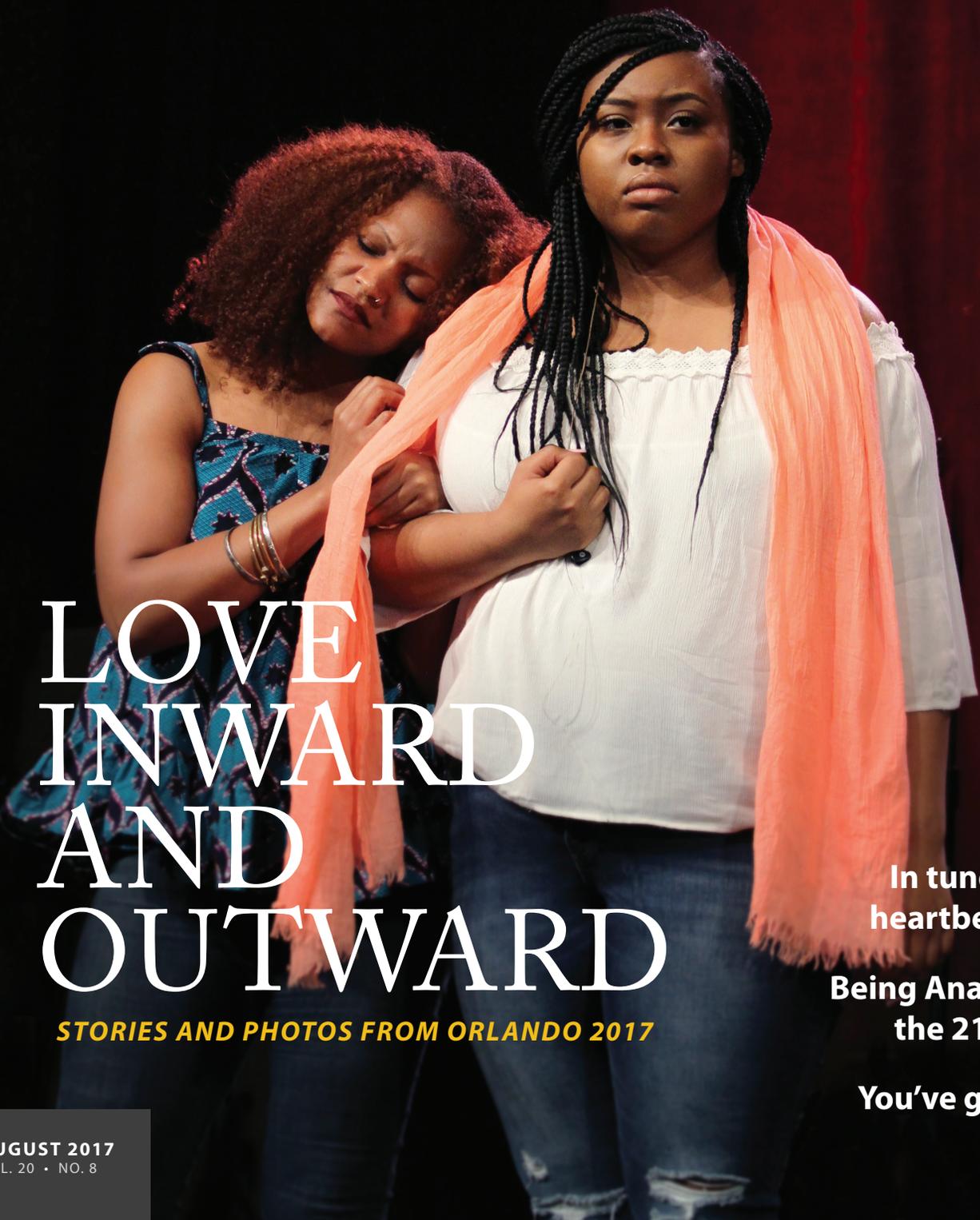


A FORUM FOR MENNONITE VOICES

TheMennonite

A photograph of two women on a stage. The woman on the left has curly hair and is wearing a blue patterned top. The woman on the right has long braids and is wearing a white top with a bright orange scarf. They are embracing each other. The background is a dark red curtain.

LOVE INWARD AND OUTWARD

STORIES AND PHOTOS FROM ORLANDO 2017

INSIDE

In tune with the
heartbeat of God

Being Anabaptist in
the 21st century

You've got a place

AUGUST 2017
VOL. 20 • NO. 8



Mennonite
COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

Lead *your* way



3.4

Average **GPA** of 2016-17
first-year class



97%

Average percentage of
job-seeking graduates
who were **employed**
within one year after
graduation



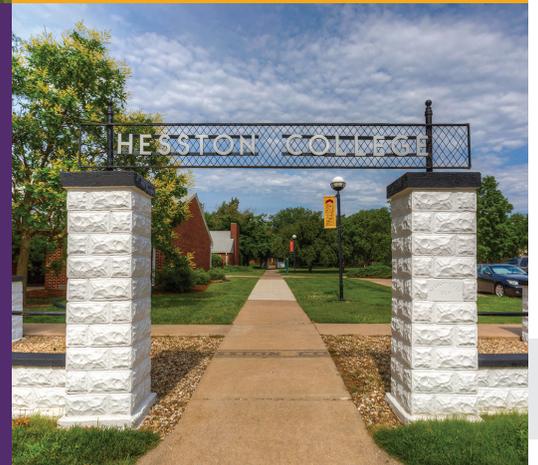
\$25,928

Average **financial aid**
package of first-year,
full-time students



34

Average number of
faith traditions
represented among
undergraduates



mennonitecolleges.org

TheMennonite

AUGUST 2017
VOL. 20 • NO. 8



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ON THE COVER: Talibah Atiya and Madison Banks of King of Glory Tabernacle in Bronx, N.Y., perform in worship at Orlando 2017. Photo by Vada Snider

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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. All letters are subject to our comments policy, found at www.themennonite.org. Publication is subject to space limitations. Email letters@themennonite.org. Please include your name, city and state. We will not print letters that contain hate speech against any person or group. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.

Iniquitous decrees

The ancient prophet Isaiah has a few words to all U.S. senators who support the health-care bill currently proposed: “Ah, you who make iniquitous decrees, who write oppressive statutes, to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be your spoil, and that you may make the orphans your prey! What will you do on the day of punishment, in the calamity that will come from far away? To whom will you flee for help, and where will you leave your wealth, so as not to crouch among the prisoners or fall among the slain?” (Isaiah 10:1-4).

—John W. Weaver, Harrisonburg, Va.

Thanks for no ‘hate’ letters

I generally start reading *The Mennonite* at Letters, and I judge what I am reading as I continue through that pair of glasses. I want to thank you for not including a single “hate” letter against those of us who chose to live in the 21st century. I wonder if part of that has to do with the fact that much of our “right wing” has moved to organizations that are further right than we appear to be just now. Thanks for not printing letters that judge.

—Jim Compton-Schmidt, Reedley, Calif.

Do not quench the Spirit

“Do Not Quench the Spirit” (Editorial, July) is a good warning. In your reference to Palmer Becker you seem to have in mind his earlier booklet “What Is An Anabaptist Christian?” Palmer recently published an expanded edition, *Anabaptist Essentials* (Herald Press, 2017). Chapter 10 is “The Holy Spirit’s Work Is Essential.”

—Daniel Hertzler, Scottsdale, Pa.

What merits news?

I was moved by the tragic account in your July issue of a Congolese Mennonite lay leader who was recently decapitated, along with the story of a fellow pastor who was brutally beaten, both members of the Mennonite church in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has some 240,000 members. I was equally impressed by your three-page story highlighting the heroic life and death of Michael Sharp, who worked in the same Kasai area.

But what does it say when events like the former merit only a five-paragraph account in News Briefs, while the latter is part of a three-page feature article? What might the coverage have been if these events had occurred in a western country such as Germany, with some 47,000 Mennonites, or Russia, with 3,000 members, or even Australia, with only 300 Mennonites?

In other words, what roles do race, ethnicity, social class or economic privilege play in what we consider headline Mennonite news?

Also, the unnamed Congolese martyr was referred to only as “the husband of the regional president of the Mennonite women’s association” and the person tortured as simply “a Mennonite pastor in Lubami.”

Perhaps this was for security reasons, but they, like Michael Sharp, have names, and they are an integral part of our faith family.

—Harvey Yoder, Harrisonburg, Va.

The Congolese were unnamed for security reasons.

—Editor

Israeli injustice

I just returned home after being part of a Christian Peacemaker Teams delegation in Israel/Palestine. While there we visited the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem. It is difficult to see the horrible acts human beings can do to other human beings. A reason given for why this happened is the silent majority. People who saw the discrimination against the Jewish population but said nothing.

We as a delegation also stood by a Palestinian widow whose husband was just killed by Israeli soldiers while they destroyed the family's home. He was the principal of the school in that village. The home was destroyed so that an Israeli settlement could be expanded. According to international law, these settlements are illegal. The widow now lives with her six children in a tent and is responsible for their well-being. We Mennonites, as part of the international community, must not be the silent majority. We must become knowledgeable, monitor and put pressure on Israel to end its illegal occupation. Support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction of Israel.

—Don Linscheid, Fresno, Calif.

Pointing the polity finger

The various voices in the May issue give me hope, but I also grieve that we continue to blame our current struggles on the “other denomination.”

Pointing the polity finger only fuels the historical fires of fear and distrust: smaller being eaten up by larger; too liberal poisoning the purity of the body, etc. We should be above the rhetoric and tactics of politics.

Glen Guyton challenges us to build on the strengths of what we do well together through our agencies, congregations, schools, boards and camps that equip us so that together we can witness and serve God's work in this world. Let's listen and employ the multiplicity of voices and gifts like Dorothy Nickel Friesen, Dominique Chew and others who encourage us.

I pray the Spirit may breathe new life in our midst, our eyes may see the

other, our hearts embrace one another and our hands join in reaching out to our troubled world. May love bind us together in Christ Jesus.

—Elizabeth Raid, Newton, Kan.

Integration a long process

I'm surprised that leaders are so surprised that the agglomeration of the Mennonite Church (MC) and the General Conference Mennonite Church is not seamless. Integration to the extent envisioned by its enthusiasts will be a longer process, measured in generations, not decades, if at all.

The perceptive letter of Rich Preheim (July) on an incipient continuation of the old MC under a different name is reflected in *The Mennonite* obituaries, where the overwhelming number of listings are of traditional old MC names and locations.

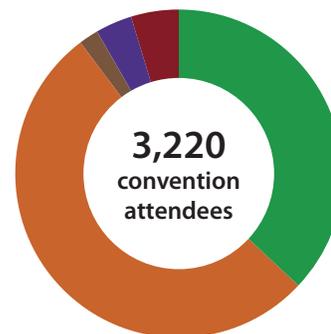
—Duane D. Schroeder, Orinda, Calif.

Clarification

“Peace in the Philippines” by Joji Pantoja (July) was adapted from an article at the Mennonite World Conference Renewal 2027 event “Transformed by the Word: Reading the Bible in Anabaptist Perspectives” in Augsburg, Germany, on Feb. 12.

—Editor

BY THE NUMBERS



3,220
convention
attendees

Adults: **1,193**

Youth & Sponsors: **1,699**

Junior Youth & Sponsors: **65**

Children: **113**

Volunteers: **150**

**Look for the next
poll question on
The Mennonite's
Facebook and
Twitter pages.**

IN THIS ISSUE

This month's issue focuses on the Mennonite Church USA convention held July 4-8 in Orlando, Fla. You can get a good overview of much of what took place there, including the Future Church Summit, which asked participants, What does it mean to follow Jesus as Anabaptists in the 21st century?

At the convention, we also created a special edition of *The Mennonite* just for youth, which was produced, created and printed onsite by our staff along with four interns: Katie Hurst and Emma Koop Liechty of Goshen (Ind.) College and Erika Byler and Jena O'Brien of Bluffton (Ohio) University. Marathana Prothro, assistant professor of communications at Bluffton, served as guest editor for the issue. The issue was made possible by a grant from the Schowalter Foundation. You may view this special edition online at www.themennonite.org.

You may read more reflections on the convention online.—Editor

News Briefs

COMPILED BY
GORDON HOUSER

Young adults engage church leadership

Young adults at Orlando 2017 had an open discussion July 7 with church leaders about their concerns and hopes looking toward Mennonite Church USA's future.

Participants divided into six groups of their choosing, under the categories "diversity, inclusion and racism," "peacemaking and education," "creation care and sustainability," "young adult engagement," "church agencies and institutions" and "sexual health and identity."

Small group discussion focused around these questions: Where is the church now? What are your hopes for the direction of the church? and What do

you need from church leadership? A denominational leader joined each group.

The diversity, inclusion and racism group brought forward concerns of separation of white-populated Mennonite churches and minority-populated Mennonite churches, and a hope for more interaction and fellowship between groups.

The sexual health and identity group discussed sexual violence and shared that the church is currently at a turning point and that we need to continue to gain knowledge and create concrete processes when it comes to inclusion of LGBTQ individuals.

The peacemaking and education group discussed the need for more education and more resources for people to actually engage in the faith that they claim to have.

The creation care group shared that they felt the church needed to bring more discussion about sustainability into congregations and encourage every individual within the church

to be conscious of the way they are treating the earth.

The group focusing on young adult engagement expressed their concerns about the gap between youth and adults within the church and hoped that we might work towards creating community and a welcoming space for young adults to bridge that gap.

The church agencies and institutions group brought concerns about making sure that church resources, especially websites, are kept up to date to allow young adults to find Anabaptist resources more easily.

—Emma Koop Liechty for The Mennonite

Inclusive worship service remembers victims of Pulse Nightclub attack

An inclusive worship service held July 5 at the Orlando 2017 convention served as a time of worship and a way to honor and remember those who lost their lives during the attack on the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando one year earlier. Forty-eight were killed and 58 wounded, the majority of them Latinx and LGBTQ individuals.

Mark Rupp, pastor of Columbus (Ohio) Mennonite Church, introduced a naming ritual by saying that while the Pulse shooting was a wakeup call for many, "It came after decades of hitting Snooze." He said the church must consider its practices that contribute to the kinds of ideas and hate that lead to such attacks.

Joanna Harader, Jason Frey and Luke Miller read the names of the victims in groups of seven. As each name was read, it was written on a posterboard bearing the words "Love is Love is Love" and "We Remember" by individuals attending the service. Between the reading of each set of names, those gathered sang a verse of the hymn "There Is More Love Somewhere."

Dr. Regina Shands Stoltzfus, assistant professor of peace, justice and conflict studies at Goshen (Ind.) College, spoke on the importance of remembering those who died in the Pulse shooting, in the attack at the Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in



Vada Snider

Magician spreads God's 'incredible gospel'

Narya Howard helps out magician John Michael Hinton on July 6. "You know what kind of magic tricks I do? The fake kind. No real magic here." This is what Hinton told his audience at his magic show for families as part of the Orlando 2017 convention children's program. Hinton says his goal is "to be a tool that God can use to spread his incredible gospel." —TMail

Charleston, S.C. (which claimed the lives of nine church members), and all the other victims of violence and hate in the world. She told the gathering, "We are created in the image of the one who created us and the one who created the universe," yet we live in a society that tries to exclude people from that image.

Stoltzfus said this means it is the church's sacred responsibility and trust to speak the names of those who are victims of hate and violence.

She also urged the gathering to let God's light burn and said, "Anger burns, but love burns, too."

The service was planned by Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests, Pink Menno and the Inclusive Mennonite Pastors group.

—Erika Byler for The Mennonite

Executive Board suspends LGBTQ person's appointment to LDC

During a June 19 video conference, Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board voted to suspend the appointment of Doug Basinger, a man in a same-sex marriage, to the denomination's Leadership Discernment Committee (LDC). Basinger's appointment was originally approved by the EB as part of its consent agenda during its March 30-April 1 meeting in Kansas City, Mo.

According to a June 23 statement from the EB, most board members learned of Basinger's sexual orientation after his approval. "Board members determined that they need more time to discuss and clarify policies on appointments that the EB makes of LGBTQ persons to denominational boards and committees," it said.

The EB vote was 8-6 in favor of suspension, with one abstention. One board member was absent and did not vote. Basinger's appointment will remain suspended until the EB's Sept. 28-30 meeting in Kansas City.

"This decision doesn't mean the appointment is rescinded or revoked," said Patricia Shelly, MC USA moderator and EB chair, in a June 23 phone interview.



Prayer walk draws 50

Maribel Hinojosa and Malakai and Marty Troyer are among about 50 people who joined a prayer walk led by Mennonite Women USA and Mennonite Men on July 4 at Orlando 2017. Marlene Bogard, executive director of Mennonite Women USA, who participated in the walk, said that this was "a time to be in the presence of God together and to hold others up in prayer." —Gordon Houser

The LDC is the committee responsible for preparing slates of nominees for EB and MC USA agency board appointments. The committee has eight members: four appointed by the EB and four nominated by the Constituency Leaders Council and affirmed by MC USA delegates. Basinger was initially approved as one of the EB's appointees.

Basinger attends Seattle Mennonite Church and is a member of Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference.

—Hannah Heinzekehr

Evana Network holds second annual conference

Evana Network held its second annual conference, ReGen 2017, July 1-4 at Taylor University in Upland, Ind. The second of three annual meetings, Evana will switch to a biennial schedule following 2018 to give space for youth groups to participate in mission trips.

This year's meeting was larger than 2016's, with 485 registrants from 17 states and 65 churches. Evana currently has 34 partner churches and held

informational meetings for those with organizational mission questions as well as an open session intended for listening to what the Spirit is saying to congregations. Though no official voting took place, participants agreed to rephrase the definition of voting delegates and pastors to provide more clarity. Updated language will be voted on in August. During the open session, there was a time to listen for God's voice, followed by a time to share.

The organization GRACE (Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment) was present throughout the conference and gave a presentation to the adult participants about abuse prevention in congregations.

The theme of the conference, "Start with Amen," came from author Beth Guckenberger, who started an international nonprofit organization that supports orphaned children. The theme focused on praying and living out "so be it" as a starting posture before God, even before stories are known and before petitions are presented to the Lord.

—Anne Love for The Mennonite

Miscellany

COMPILED BY
GORDON HOUSER

Just as not having a connection to the poor can justify middle-income ideas on why people are poor, not having a connection to organized poor people can justify a charity approach.

—Liz Theoharis in *Always with Us? What Jesus Really Said about the Poor*

1 million

Number of members lost by the Southern Baptist Convention in the last 10 years.

—Religion News Service



Spiders have been found to be the world's top predators. They eat between 400 million and 800 million metric tons of other creatures—predominantly insects—each year.

—Sierra

90%

The Drone Papers, leaked by an internal military whistleblower, says that during a five-month period in 2015, 90 percent of all drone warfare victims were bystanders, including children.

—Peace in Our Times

Clergy more partisan than their parishioners

A new paper by two political scientists adds a new layer to these long-standing stereotypes: Clergy tend to be even more partisan than their parishioners. Eitan Hersh and Gabrielle Malina were able to match 130,000 pastors, priests and rabbis with their voter-registration records, and used that to figure out each clergy member's political affiliation. From there, they compared religious leaders to the congregants in their denominations. They discovered that religious leaders generally tend to be more partisan than their congregants, including those on either end of the ideological spectrum. Not only that: Religious leaders' denominational affiliations seem to shape their political leanings in a way that's not the case for their congregants. By the way, the list of denominations studied did not include any Mennonite groups.

—The Atlantic

Congregations can't make up for proposed cuts

A nonprofit has calculated that every U.S. religious congregation—Christian or otherwise—would have to raise an additional \$714,000 every year for the next 10 years to make up for the 2018 budget cuts President Trump has proposed. Officials at Bread for the World, a nonpartisan Christian anti-hunger group, did the math because, they say, lawmakers and conservative Christians often believe it's chiefly up to individuals through charitable contributions, as opposed to the government through taxes, to decide how to help the needy.

—Religion News Service



Portion of U.S. transgender adults who have refrained from eating and drinking to avoid using the restroom:

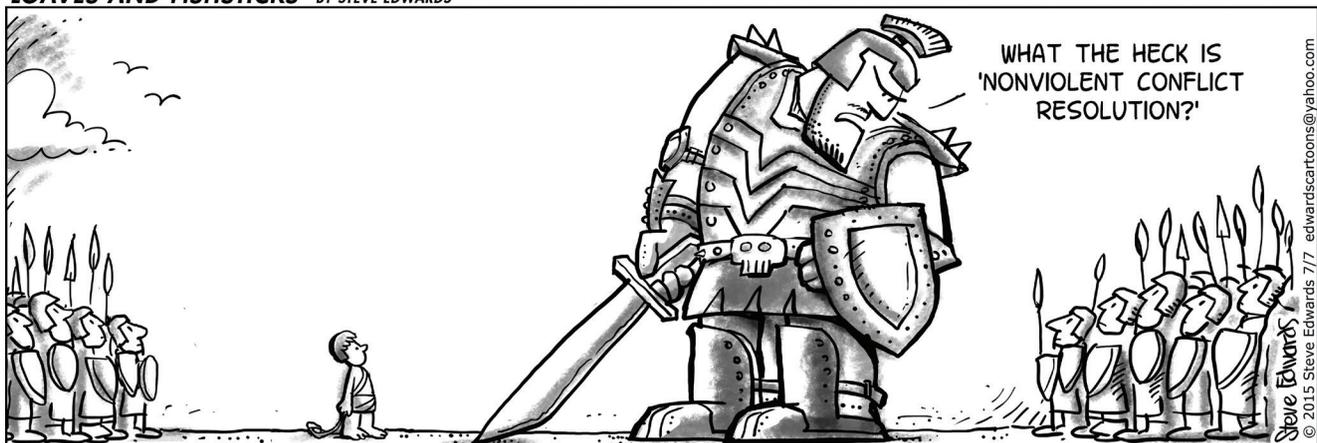
1/3

Average percentage change in suicide rates among gay and bisexual teens after their states legalized same-sex marriage:

-14%

—Harper's

LOAVES AND FISHSTICKS BY STEVE EDWARDS



Scenes from the Orlando 2017 convention

1. Eric Alston of First Mennonite Church of Denver works at a service project at the Nehrling Gardens in Orlando during the convention. For the first time, registrants were assigned to a service project unless they opted out.
2. Adalyn Carlson goes after a bubble at the Bubbles and Balloons Party at the children's convention.
3. Youth from Lee Heights Community Church in Cleveland gather to eat and talk during the convention with their sponsors Kimberly Mack (standing at back) and Hardaye Ramjit (bottom right).
4. Jill Schlabach of Hesston, Kan., leads convention-goers in early morning Zumba exercises.

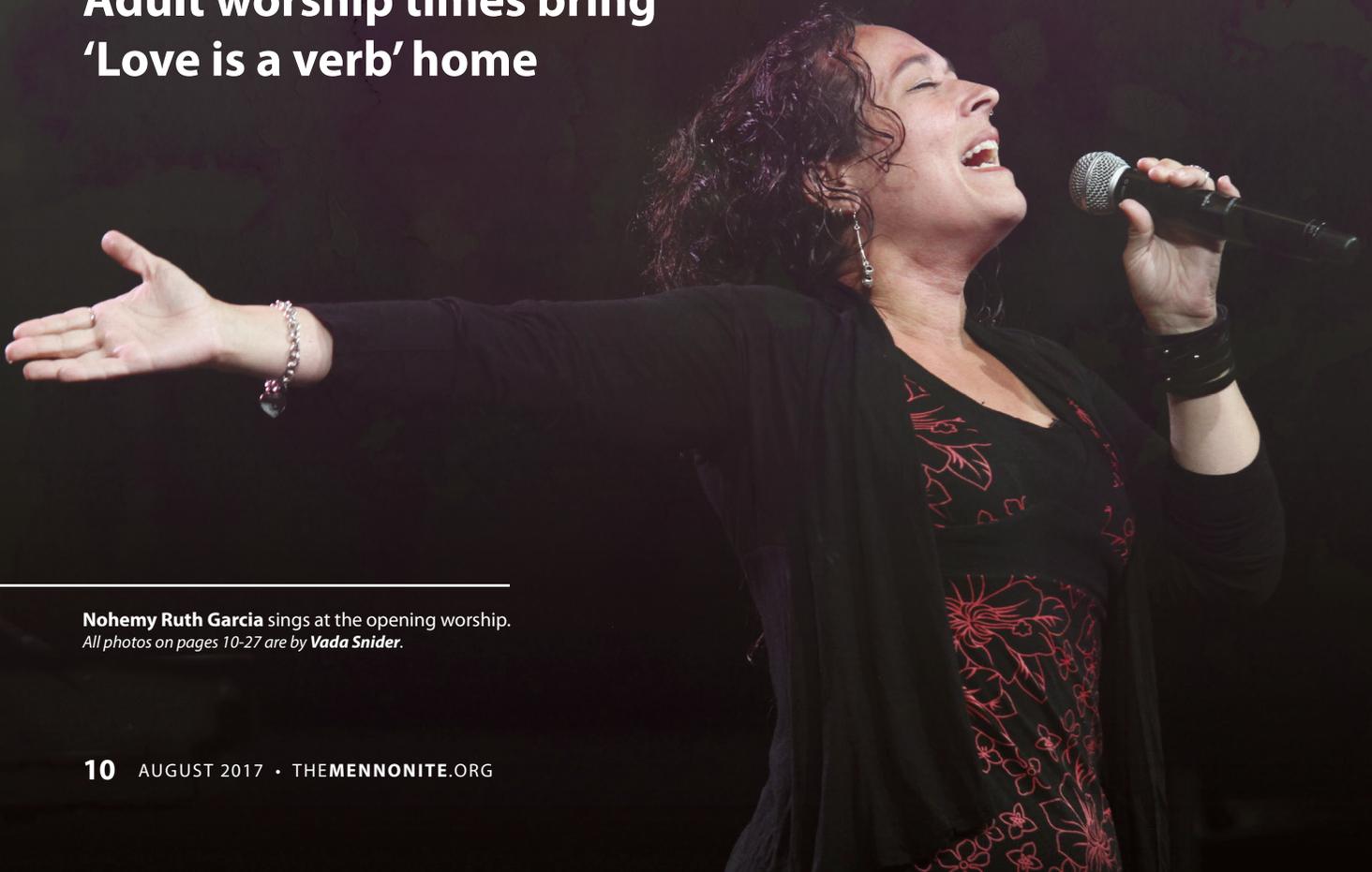
Photos by Vada Snider



BY HANNAH HEINZEKEHR

LOVE INWARD AND OUTWARD

Adult worship times bring
'Love is a verb' home



Nohemy Ruth Garcia sings at the opening worship.
All photos on pages 10-27 are by Vada Snider.

Throughout the week of convention, adults gathered for worship together once each day.

There were 1,193 adults registered for convention, including participants in the Delegate Assembly and Future Church Summit.

Worship services, held each morning, dug into various angles of the convention-wide theme, “Love is a Verb,” starting inward, with a focus on individuals/the self and then moving outward.

TUESDAY: A celebration of God’s love

During the opening adult worship session on July 4, attendees received anointing, blessing and reminders that God’s love is present.

“God is love,” said Sarah Bixler, co-worship leader, from Princeton, N.J. “Love exists before we see what it does. This is a love we cannot be separated from.”

Love exists before we see what it does. This is a love we cannot be separated from.

—Sarah Bixler

After leading a dramatic reading of Psalm 139, co-worship leader Shannon Dycus, pastor of First Mennonite Church of Indianapolis, invited attendees to come forward for anointing as a reminder that they were “known down deep and loved by God.”

Welcome and remembrance :

As they welcomed adult attendees to Orlando, Bixler and Dycus

acknowledged that the convention meetings were taking place on land that was originally inhabited by “unconquered people who were given the name Seminole by their conquerors.” They acknowledged the history of displacement and extermination that the Seminole tribes (over 100) in this area faced at the hands of the U.S. government, and they honored the indigenous people still living in Orlando today.

Dycus also noted that “Orlando is a place of complexity,” holding together both excitement as well as deep pain and violence.

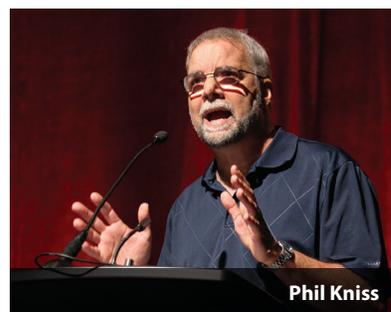
“We, too, enter this place holding a complex mix of feelings about our world and our church,” she said. “What does it mean to be a peace church gathering in Orlando?”

Juanita Nuñez, pastor of Iglesia Cristiana Ebenezer in Apopka, Fla., brought greetings from Southeast Mennonite Conference, the area conference of Mennonite Church USA that includes congregations in Florida and Georgia.

Nohemy Ruth Garcia, a member of the worship team, brought greetings from the Mennonite church in Burgos, Spain. Garcia provided special music, singing a song she wrote in 2014 as part of an event commemorating a 2004 terrorist attack in Spain and calling for peace and hope across the country.

She talked about her experience of having writer’s block and hearing God tell her, “Finish the song.” Garcia did, and her song, “Awakening,” was chosen out of many submissions to be sung at the event.

“That was the moment God awoke this call in me,” she said. “You’ve been sending missionaries and support to Europe for many years, and I really feel that this is our time to bless you.”



Phil Kniss

WEDNESDAY: Love in three movements

“Sawubona.” (“I see you.”)
“Ngikhona.” (“I am here.”)

To open the second adult worship session on July 5, Dycus invited attendees to welcome one another with this Zulu greeting as a reminder that building community involves acts of being seen and being present.

The service moved the focus of the “Love is a Verb” theme to the practice of extending love and welcome to others. Dycus and Bixler modeled this welcome as they set a table for one another, setting plates, silverware and pouring a glass of water for each other.

Dycus invited attendees to think of people they found difficult to love. “To each of these people we are called to speak the words, ‘You are loved by God,’” she said.

Phil Kniss, pastor of Park View Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va., was the featured speaker.

In reference to the convention theme, Kniss said, “Convention planners aren’t giving us a slogan; they are giving us hard work.”

Kniss started out by owning his social location within the church. “We are having a Future Church Summit here, and I’m smack dab in the middle of the church of the past,” he said. “I’m not apologizing for who I am. But we who have the privilege and power must stop and listen longer, deeper and with more vulnerability.”



Devonne LiLa with the Springs of Water drama troupe performs at Friday's worship.

Kniss said that those who have traditionally held positions of power will need to “become OK having less of a voice and fewer votes in a [church] board room,” and he noted that “we are all healthier when we own up to the power we have and give account to others for how we exercise it.”

Pointing to John 3:16, Kniss emphasized that the work of love and transformation “begins by asking how God loves” and that our identity as Christians is one of a people “bound in relationship covenant with the God of the universe, who is love.”

Citing Bible scholar Scot McKnight, Kniss described the process of loving one another as “love in three movements”: God is *with* God’s people, God is *for* us and God is inviting us *toward* a transformed life.

Kniss emphasized that this movement, also described as presence, advocacy and direction, has an order. “Our temptation is to jump straight to giving direction without establishing with-ness and for-ness,” he said. “It takes the most rugged of commitments to invite someone to consider transformation of their beliefs while maintaining relationship integrity.”

Kniss also mentioned that the movement of love is mutual. “The call is not to fix the other. We are called to love each other into Christ-likeness.”



Rachel Held Evans

THURSDAY: Doing right over being right

“Death is something empires worry about; it’s not something resurrection people worry about.”

With these words, spoken during the July 6 adult worship, **Rachel Held Evans**, *New York Times* bestselling author and popular Episcopal blogger, began a process of challenging those gathered in the packed worship hall not to fear shifts in the church.

“Maybe God is just doing what God does,” she said. “Let the church die to the old ways of power, dominance and control and be raised up like Jesus Christ. If the white, powerful church is dying, let us look to the margins, where the Spirit has always been active, and look for leadership from there.”

She followed this advice with an adapted version of 1 John 4, substituting the word “right” for the word “love.” “Dear friends, let us be right,” she read, “whoever is not right does not know God, for God is right.”

Evans emphasized that too often in the church, this is how we work. “That instinct to be right at all costs remains pretty intense,” she said.

Evans noted that winning an argument is often not a way to change someone’s mind or transform beliefs. People are more likely to be persuaded when they feel “seen and heard and confronted with a story.”

Evans noted that sometimes loving like Jesus may actually look like losing.

“You have to be willing to lose some ground, which Jesus took as far as death on a Roman cross,” she said. “The powers and principalities are doing everything they can to bring us down to our ugliest selves.”

She encouraged those gathered to meet fear, capitalism, racism and other oppressive forces with love, which she distinguished from simply being nice.

“I’m not talking about being nice,” she said. “Love turns over tables. Love marches with Black Lives Matter. Love tells the truth, especially when the truth is treated as irrelevant. And to do these things with such compelling creativity that it draws people in.”

“Own doing right over being right,” she said. “And keep on loving even when it looks like losing.”

Pastoral recognition: Terry Shue, director of leadership development for Mennonite Church USA, and Nancy Kauffmann, MC USA denominational minister, led the group in a time of honoring pastors.

Kauffmann led a litany of lament and hope, naming the losses of three area conferences since the previous convention, denominational mishandling of sexual abuse and other issues the church wrestles with. Attendees responded with the words, “We are God’s beloved church. You are our beloved God.”



Dr. Maribel Hinojosa

FRIDAY: Love is a choice

Worship on July 7 continued to explore the reach of “Love Is a Verb,” emphasizing love for neighbors and strangers.

Springs of Water, a drama troupe from King of Glory Tabernacle in Bronx, N.Y., performed a spoken word play focused on the many meanings of love: what love is, what love is not and how love is shared with neighbors.

“Neighbor, I won’t let you burn, especially if I have water. I will run into your inferno, stare down flames. My purpose is wrapped up in your purpose,” they read.

Referencing the story of the Good Samaritan, the group named times Mennonites have helped provide aid in situations around the world, after genocide in Rwanda and an earthquake in Haiti.

“But when a hoodie-wearing boy next door got shot by police, we were looking for our neighbors. Where were they?” asked Devonne Lila.

The group ended the reading by listing various identities: the neighbor who lives next door and for whom English is not their first language, someone who’s done time in prison, someone who receives food assistance funded by tax dollars and someone who “prays to a God whose name is different.” They asked the question, “Do you love me now?”

They also listed a variety of offensive actions: “You spat in my

face. You called me the ‘N word.’”

“I decided to get back up. Love means I got back up for you,” they said. “Christ’s love means he got back up for me.”

Dr. Maribel Hinojosa, a clinical psychologist in College Station, Texas, expanded on the theme of loving your neighbor. Hinojosa attended her first Mennonite convention 20 years ago in Orlando and said that “being on this stage and talking about this topic is an answer to prayer.”

Sharing stories from her years growing up as part of a Mennonite church in central California, Hinojosa talked about the ways “immigrants get the job done” (a reference to the popular musical *Hamilton*). She gave examples of how people in her California community loved their neighbors in tangible ways, such as providing transportation, food and other support. She compared this tangible support to the care shown by the Good Samaritan.

Are you going to limit your experience of God by limiting your interactions with your neighbor out of fear?

—Maribel Hinojosa

“The one demonstrating love wasn’t the one who had political responsibilities or was concerned with re-election. The one demonstrating love was the one who felt moved into action,” she said.

Hinojosa talked about the current political climate in the United States, where news and media coverage often contribute

to the perception that strangers or communities different from our own are a threat. She encouraged those gathered to find ways to move past their fear of the other.

“Are you going to limit your experience of God by limiting your interactions with your neighbor out of fear?” she said.

Hinojosa emphasized that we can substitute the word “neighbor” to stand in for anyone who is downtrodden. She quoted Dr. Cornel West’s popular exhortation that “justice is what love looks like in public.”

In the 1990s, Hinojosa chose to become a U.S. citizen, a choice that meant she had to relinquish her Mexican citizenship. This was not a decision she took lightly or found easy to make, but she did it in order to “express God’s love by voting for just laws.”

Hinojosa said that since she has become a citizen, she has never missed an opportunity to express her care for her neighbor through voting, even driving home from college one year when she forgot to request an absentee ballot.

“I was raised in a Mennonite church that taught me that being a Christian meant advocating for peace and justice,” she said. “Are you loving your neighbor? Are you advocating for peace and justice on our planet?”



Shannon Dycus anoints a participant at Tuesday evening's worship service.



Dr. Drew G.I. Hart

SATURDAY: As you go

In the final adult worship service on July 8, **Dr. Drew G.I. Hart**, assistant professor of theology at Messiah College in Mechanicsburg, Pa., reminded those gathered that the week's theme, "Love is a verb," does not just call Mennonite Church USA to work beyond the church, but within as well.

Hart discussed his own discovery of Anabaptist theology and the ways he realized, as he has traveled to speak in communities across the church, that what Anabaptists preach isn't always the same as the behaviors that get practiced in Mennonite communities.

"I've been able to see the concrete ways love failed to be lived out," he said.

Hart talked about a "diseased and disordered love" in the church, love that is limited so that "certain folks can be properly loved and others are partially loved, often around lines of Mennonite identity."

"There is a long history of Mennonite Church USA putting an asterisk by our love," he said. "So that some belong and some can find intimacy and others cannot."

Hart named some concrete examples. For instance, Florida is home to a number of large Latino/a Mennonite communities, but these

congregations and individuals were not as visible in worship, the Delegate Assembly or the Future Church Summit historical process. "In this lack of representation, were there obstacles that had not been overcome? Was there some kind of diseased and disordered love?"

Hart referenced a story told by Erica Littlewolf, a member of the Northern Cheyenne tribe who grew up on a reservation in Montana and attended White River Cheyenne Mennonite Church in Busby, Montana. Littlewolf talked about the arrival of Mennonite missionaries in her context and noted that as attendees at White River, she and members of her community were "recipients of only some of these services." She said members of her community were not invited to participate in Mennonite colleges or given access to other denominational institutions and services.

And Hart referenced a conversation with Leonard Dow, former pastor of Oxford Circle Mennonite Church in Philadelphia, about the ways the Mennonite church used to raise large amounts of money to support primarily white Mennonite individuals who registered as conscientious objectors against war. "Why are we not willing to invest in communities of color in that way?" Hart said.

"Love is a choice we have to commit to," he said. "I'm reminded by Anabaptists about the importance of this, but I don't look to Mennonites to see that on the ground."

Hart said that when he thinks of love in action, he thinks of his cousin Lisa, whose parents were murdered when an armed intruder broke into their home. Lisa was present in the house during the intrusion and survived because her grandfather happened to visit the house and was able to rescue her. As Lisa grew older, she embodied

radical love by going to meet with one of the men who committed the crime in order to extend forgiveness.

"Love is always calling us to see people's full humanity and not to demonize," said Hart. "What does it mean for us to become that kind of beloved community? Our flourishing is bound up together."

Referencing Luke 4, Hart reminded those present that love in action looks like Jesus. Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for

There is a long history of Mennonite Church USA putting an asterisk by our love, so that some belong and some can find intimacy and others cannot.

—Drew G.I. Hart

the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (v. 18-19).

"Jesus was embodying love in very real, practical ways," said Hart.

Hart ended his sermon by telling a story about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's work in Birmingham, Ala. In 1963, SCLC leaders were struggling to find a way forward. People were not responding to the movement in the ways they had hoped, and they were running out of funds to bail out individuals who had been imprisoned while protesting. Easter weekend was approaching,

and SCLC leaders, many of them ministers, were debating what they wanted to do. Should they go home to worship with their communities and congregations or should they stay and continue the work in Birmingham?

At one point during the conversation, Hart said, Dr. King left the room. When he came back in, he had traded his usual plain black suit for a blue work shirt and blue jeans, signaling, as Hart said, “That we’re going to embody the sign of the Good Friday story. We’re going to put ourselves in harm’s way on behalf of our neighbors.”

The group of leaders went out, marched and were all arrested.

“How are we going to put on our old blue jeans and not just continue on with religiosity?” said Hart. “We can put on blue jeans and fight for Shalom... And move from diseased and disordered love to Jesus-shaped love. Go and love.”

After Hart’s call to action, worship leader Sarah Bixler invited attendees to take time to reflect on the week.

“Our hope as worship planners was that you would not leave here the same as you were before,” she said. “Has God shown you a new sense of call to ‘put on blue jeans’? Let’s recognize the places where our love is diseased and disordered... And think, How is God leading me to enact God’s love in my life and in my spheres of influence?”

Attendees were invited to write down on a magnet they took home a concrete way God was leading them to enact God’s love.



Hannah Heinzekehr
is executive director
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BY ERIKA BYLER

In tune with the heartbeat of God

Youth come together to learn about God's love

The lights dimmed as the last few youth groups trickled into their seats. Applause started slowly, with a single clap that grew to a roar. The applause faded as a bass drum played. It was 7:35 p.m. on July 4 and the 2017 Mennonite Church USA youth convention had begun.

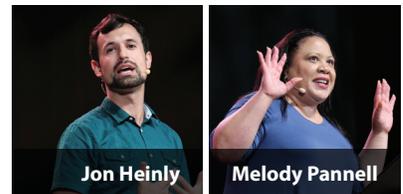
Youth worship for the week followed the theme "Love is a Verb." Most days, youth gathered for worship two times: in the morning and evening.

TUESDAY: Coming together

During opening worship, **Jon Heinly**, worship leader for the youth, explained that each youth worship service would include the sound of a bass drum, played by Onan Alvarez of Houston, symbolizing the rhythm of a heartbeat. Heinly said this represented God's heartbeat and was played to remind youth to consider the question, What does it mean to get in tune with the heartbeat of God's love?

The service focused on music as a way of exploring God's love as a noun.

During the service, leaders asked the youth to turn to those next to them and say, "I will sing your songs with you. Will you sing my songs with me?" to acknowledge the variety of backgrounds and preferred worship styles of the gathered youth and to affirm that diversity.



Jon Heinly

Melody Pannell

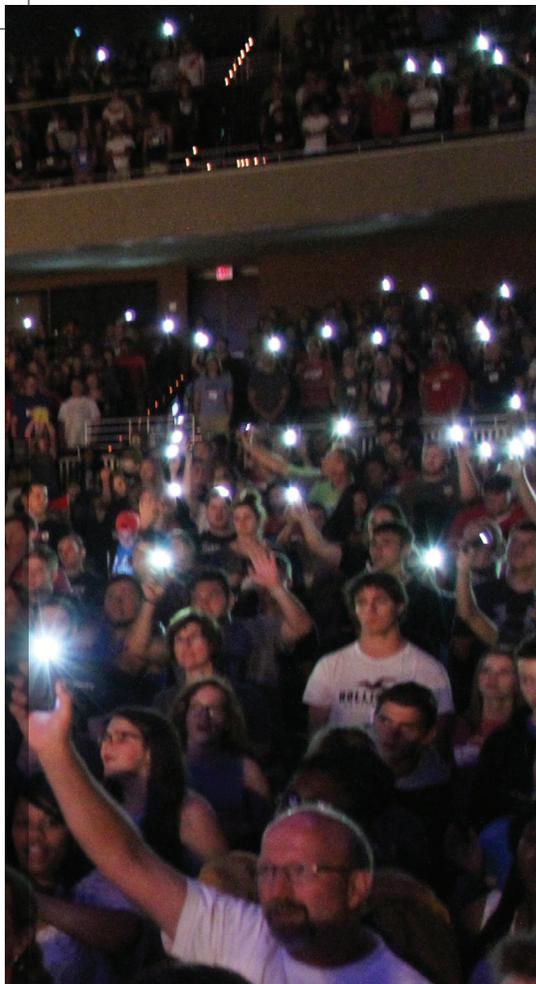


Abby King (left) and
Lisa White Cameron (right)

WEDNESDAY: Beloved by God

This theme of God's love for each individual continued in the Wednesday, July 5, morning worship. **Melody Pannell**, assistant professor of social work at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., encouraged the youth to love God and let God love them rather than focus their energy on trying to please God.

Pannell spoke about growing up in Harlem and how she often felt



disconnected from God because she believed she had to be perfect for God to love her.

“You are God’s beloved,” she repeated several times throughout the message.

Heinly said in his closing words, “You may struggle to claim God’s love, but that will not change God’s love [for you].”

As the youth left the auditorium, they each received a temporary tattoo with the word “Beloved.”

On Wednesday evening, youth were reminded that they are each God’s beloved, and that love includes their enemies as well.

John and Michele Sharp of Hesston, Kan., spoke to the youth via video chat about the death of their son Michael (MJ) earlier this year in the Democratic Republic of Congo. MJ was serving as a UN expert investigating human rights violations in the Kasai region of the DRC when he was captured and killed.

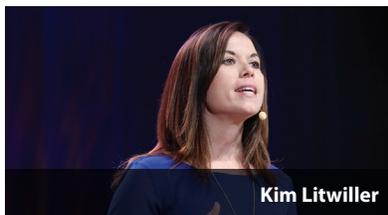
Michele said the rebel groups

MJ worked with looted, raped and killed and were easy to see as enemies. When reflecting on how her son responded when asked how he could love these people, she said, “MJ said, ‘You can listen.’”

“Your convention theme is ‘Love is a Verb,’” John said. “Peacemaking is a verb, too.”

Lisa White Cameron, director of empowerment at the YWCA Lancaster (Pa.), and **Abby King**, sophomore at Goshen (Ind.) College, presented a drama that asked the youth to think about the people they hate and reminded them that those are the same people that God created and loves and that they need to extend love to.

Cameron ended with the line, “Make your list [of people who are hard to love]. The first five could change your life, your heart.”



Kim Litwiller

THURSDAY: Love in the midst of pain

On July 6, the youth were asked to open themselves to God’s limitless love, allow that love to heal their hearts and expand their own limited, human love.

Kim Litwiller, pastor at East Peoria (Ill.) Mennonite Church and Illinois Mennonite Conference associate conference minister, asked the youth to consider what love means to them.

She described how the limits of human love can cause pain and hurt within us and that pain causes our own love to be limited as well. She encouraged youth to let the Holy Spirit open their hearts to the hurts and pains they try to ignore so that God’s limitless love can heal them.

“[God’s love] not only heals us

Make your list [of people who are hard to love]. The first five could change your life, your heart.

—Lisa White Cameron

and heals the pain that is created through the limits of human love, but it expands our ability to love those around us in ways that human words cannot explain,” she said.

Worship leaders invited the youth to be anointed as a way of inviting healing for the pain and the hurt within them and as a sign of being empowered to love more fully.

“Being one-on-one with a person is very powerful, and offering that anointing and healing is very special,” said Thalia Neufeld of Seattle.

“It kind of makes it feel like God is present,” said Jacob Smith Derksen, also of Seattle.



Scott Roth



Remilyn Mondez

FRIDAY: Love where you are

During the July 7 morning worship service, Heinly told the youth that many indigenous tribes lived in Central Florida and were displaced from their land and reminded them that Native Americans continue to be oppressed



The youth worship band leads youth in a song.

and displaced from their land. And some tribes continue to live there.

“That’s been our past and all too often our present, but that can change,” he said. He told the youth they can be the solution now and don’t have to wait until they are older.

Scott Roth of Red Hill, Pa., associate pastor at Perkiomenville Mennonite Church and project manager for Urban Expression North America, focused on youth empowerment in his message.

He addressed the crowd as “Scott Roth, The Tinkerer,” dressed in a top hat covered in keys and gears and with chains holding bottles, keys and a small scoop hanging from his belt.

Roth described how his journey to becoming a superhero began in 1996, when his best friend was killed by a drunk driver. He said he got angry because of the complacency of those around him and his anger turned him away from church for more than five years.

During this time, a dog bit him on the neck, barely missing his carotid artery. This attack also happened on the anniversary of the day his best friend had died.

His mother called him and said, “You know God sent that dog to bite you, right?”

Roth took off his “superhero” outfit as he told the youth, “We don’t need an outfit to be a

superhero. We don’t need an outfit to go hunt down the bad stuff in the world.”

He said a friend had asked him once, “If God is infinite, and God is in us, does that mean we have infinite potential?”

Roth told the youth they are all superheroes and just need to learn to “love God and love people together.”

As the youth left the hall, they received a business card with information on how to join the League of Infinite Potential, a network of youth groups that want to dedicate time and effort to loving God and loving others together in their communities.

In that evening’s youth worship, **Remilyn Mondez**, assistant professor of English and communication at the Malayan Colleges Laguna in the Philippines, encouraged the youth to consider three components of being the global church: love, light and lives.

She cut and filled cups with dye-stained water to demonstrate how we must ask God for a new heart, because often our hearts become broken, stony or filled with pride and jealousy. She asked two youth to pour water back and forth to demonstrate that if we try to get love from each other, we will never have enough.

Mondez then described how we each must shine a light, but if we rely on those around us for the

energy to power that light, we will run out of power. Instead we have to plug in to the original source—God.

Mondez also reminded the youth that when we act as a church, we are dealing with people’s lives. She described how sometimes churches preach truthless grace by assuring people that God has abundant grace, while other churches preach graceless truth by creating and enforcing their own rules.

“As a church, we have to be mindful of how we handle people,” Mondez said. “As a church we have to preach [both] grace and truth.”

The ushers passed out glow sticks and Mondez asked the youth to crack them and hold their glow sticks up in the air if they were willing to accept God’s call to shine God’s light in the world.

“Let’s stop being consumers, like we are waiting for the church to entertain us,” she said. “Rather, let’s step up and be leaders, make a difference, and shine the light.”

SATURDAY: As we go

During closing worship on Saturday morning, July 8, youth were asked to share what they would remember from their week together in Orlando.

“We believe that not only are you the church of the future, but you are the church now,” said Heinly as he explained to the youth why it was important to hear their ideas and feedback. “We hear God best when we listen to each other’s voices.”

Youth shared at mics in the worship hall as well as on Twitter, using the hashtag #MennoCon17Youth.

One attendee said she will remember that “even though I have a bad past...God will show me the way eventually, and everything will be OK.”

Let's stop being consumers, like we are waiting for the church to entertain us. Rather, let's step up and be leaders, make a difference, and shine the light.

—Remilyn Mondez

One youth challenged those gathered to “pray when it depends on God and act when it depends on you.”

One youth shared that she has had heart health complications and often needed a week to recover from one day of attending church. “And yesterday I walked five miles,” she said. The crowd applauded.

One youth said, “You have to invite people to your table that you don't like.”

“No matter how far I fall, [God is] always going to love me, even when others don't,” said another youth.

“We don't go to church, we are the church. So wherever we are is church,” said another youth.

Another said, “It only takes one light to shine through the darkness.”

One of the last youth to share said that, going forward, “I will not be silent out of indifference.”

Heinly closed the service by saying “You are the church. You are an expression of God's love in this world.”



Erika Byler of Shipshewana, Ind. is a 2016 Hesston (Kan.) College graduate and is a Bluffton (Ohio) University senior.



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BY GORDON HOUSER



Participants in the Future Church Summit share their reflections. Facilitator **Catherine Barnes** is fourth from left.

Being Anabaptist in the 21st century

Future Church Summit sends its report to delegates

After more than 12 hours of meeting together July 6-8, participants in the Future Church Summit (FCS) agreed upon major themes to help answer the overarching question for the large-group visioning process, What does it mean to follow Jesus as Anabaptists in the 21st century? The report then went to delegates.

FCS participants included delegates to the Mennonite Church USA Assembly (572 people) plus about 100 more individuals representing MC USA agencies, constituency groups, and others in a concerted effort to build a group representative of the diversity across MC USA. Participants also included 37 high school youth as part of the new Step Up program, for a total of 672 FCS participants.

Participants were assigned into working groups at 97 tables throughout the hall. Catherine Barnes of Eastern Mennonite University's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding in Harrisonburg, Va., led the process, while an FCS "theme team" processed responses from participants. Table groups and individuals sent responses to the team throughout the meetings, using specially programmed iPads located on each table. The theme team then grouped responses under categories and noted trends that emerged in participant submissions.

The summit began July 6, as Patricia Shelly, moderator of Mennonite Church USA, opened with prayer. She talked about the MC USA Purposeful Plan that was affirmed by delegates as a guiding vision and strategic plan for the church at the Pittsburgh convention in 2011. Now, she said, "we need further guidance from the church."

In an opening exercise, Barnes asked participants to share with

another member of their table responses to the following:

1. Share a story of a time when you felt deeply connected within the Mennonite church.

2. What nourishes your spirit by being an Anabaptist? What is most life-giving and essential in your faith?

The group then turned its focus to church history. Barnes said, "Our imagination about our future is affected by what's happened in our past. We need to be aware of our past before we can imagine our future."

She asked participants to respond to the question, What were significant turning points in the church's past?

Leslie Francisco, Jason Kauffman, Erica Littlewolf, Regina Shands Stoltzfus and John Roth reflected on a timeline displayed at the front of the room and highlighted events throughout Anabaptist and Mennonite church history. Earlier in the week, the timeline was on display in the convention exhibit hall and attendees were encouraged to write in key events in the church's history.

Barnes noted after the

presentation that Latina/o history was not included well during the presentation and apologized. She reported that historian Dr. Felipe Hinojosa was supposed to be part of this presentation but was ill and could not attend.

"We (Hispanic Mennonites) are here; we are not invisible; we are pastors, educated, women, youth. We love the church; we serve others; we are the people of God, and the people of God have many colors," said Sandra Montes Martinez, Iglesia Menonita Hispana moderator.

On Friday morning, July 7, Jessica Schrock Ringenberg, pastor at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio, led a prayer that division not be present in the room. At a meeting of the Constituency Leaders Council, a group of leaders from area conferences and constituency groups across MC USA, Schrock Ringenberg had taken shards of pottery that participants held to represent their brokenness and put them together into a mosaic. "God brings together all the inconvenient pieces," she said, and these represent all those present at the FCS process and



Members of the FCS theme team receive responses from participants.



Sarah Thompson, a member of the convention prayer team, prays for FCS participants.

across the church. “We won’t be done until we move into the world [to bring God’s love.]”

During afternoon sessions that day, participants dreamed together about the central question for the FCS: How will we follow Jesus as Anabaptists in the 21st century?

Participants had a chance to share their own dreams for how this gets lived out through large-group plenary sessions as well as discussions around table groups. They also reflected on what witness—peacemaking and evangelism—looks like as the Mennonite church strives to live them out.

Gary Wolfer, of Journey Mennonite Church, South Hutchinson, Kan., reminded attendees that the church needs to keep Christ at the center of all its work. “Peace without Jesus doesn’t make any sense,” he said.

Throughout the sessions, calls for centering the voices of people of color, LGBTQ individuals and other marginalized groups continued to build.

Delcherie Begay, representing Native Mennonite Ministries in the Future Church Summit process, shared with the group her lament, “I don’t see a lot of my people here. We don’t have a voice right now.”

Cyneatha Millsaps, who works for Mennonite Central Committee Great Lakes, reminded people to not forget the ways that class intersects with other forms of oppression as well. “I’ve heard all the diversities named up here but not the poor. And those are the people that Jesus talks about over and over,” she said.

Barnes reminded participants that “sometimes the powerful thing that comes out of a process like this is that we begin to ask the right questions.”

After each session, the theme team reflected back a summary of the trends that emerged in feedback sent by table groups. Following the session dreaming about how the church can best follow Jesus as Anabaptists, the theme team’s summary emphasized that participants hope the church will find ways to create “alternative, countercultural communities” inspired by the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

On Friday evening, FCS attendees participated in a World Café event in which they responded to a set of three questions: What do we gain as part of Mennonite Church USA? How do we best relate within our shared denomination? And, What are the

important things we do together?

Participants rotated from table to table during the World Café, intentionally mixing with members from other table groups. During each conversation, participants sketched and wrote out their ideas on large sheets of paper spread across tables and sent their ideas and notes to the theme team for processing.

Some themes that were highlighted for things the church does together included worship, singing and prayer; sharing life together in community; participating in service and mission; grappling with Scripture together; “integrating difference through new ways of being and doing,” and advocating for peace and justice.

The theme team summarized all the work of FCS participants throughout the process in a Future Church Summit Outcomes report that is available online: mennoniteusa.org/resource/future-church-summit-outcomes-report.

On Saturday, July 8, FCS participants had a chance to vote individually in response to two questions: How confident are you that the common themes presented reflect the content of discussions at the FCS and the discussion in the World Café process? Participants were asked to vote using a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing low confidence and 5 representing high confidence. The votes came in with an average of 4.3 and 4.2, respectively.

Delegates respond to Future Church Summit process

In Saturday’s final delegate session, July 8, Samuel Voth Schrag, a member of the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board and chair of the resolutions committee for Orlando, introduced a resolution on the outcomes of the Future

Church Summit. The resolution was tested by the design team who planned the FCS and the Executive Board, he said.

The proposed resolution read: “We the delegates of Mennonite Church USA affirm the collective work of the Future Church Summit, and we receive the FCS Theme Team’s report as the direction of our national body. We commend this report to the Executive Board, our churchwide agencies, area conferences and congregations as a guide for living into God’s calling for our church.”

Moderator-elect David Boshart said the report will be looked at by the Constituency Leaders Council, a gathering of area conference and constituency group leaders across the church, and there will be a check-in at the next delegate assembly, at Kansas City, Mo., in 2019, to see how the work is developing.

After a time of discussion at table groups, individuals came forward to make comments. Some delegates noted that young adults were not as well-represented in the delegate body as they were in the FCS process.

“This group does not represent the full body,” said Renee Reimer, delegate from Rainbow Mennonite Church in Kansas City, Kansas. “There aren’t youth here.”

Several individuals voiced opposition to the word “direction” in the resolution, and Kurt Horst, Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston, Kan., suggested the resolution be tabled for two years.

“We’re too soon in this process to set a direction,” said Walt Morton, a delegate from Wadsworth, Ohio.

Sandra Montes Martinez, moderator for Iglesia Menonita Hispana, said, “We [IMH] are concerned about the word ‘direction.’ We need to qualify the word ‘diversity’: Ethnic and

theological diversity are different.”

In response to the feedback, Voth Schrag then brought an amendment to the resolution from the resolutions committee.

The new resolution read as follows: “We the delegates of Mennonite Church USA affirm the collective work of the Future Church Summit, and we receive the FCS Theme Team’s report. We commend this report to the Executive Board. We intend that this report be a dynamic document that is offered to the church to guide further discernment for living in God’s calling in agencies, conferences, constituency groups and congregations.”

The amendment was not debated, and delegates voted

What used to be done in back rooms to control the outcomes and processes of Mennonite Church USA has just been done in public at the Mennonite [Delegate Assembly].

—Carol Wise

overwhelmingly to vote on the amendment. (See www.themennonite.org for a response from the resolutions committee.)

The vote passed with about 10 opposed and eight abstentions.

Some individuals expressed concerns about the change in language and the process that led to the friendly amendment. Prior to the vote, some nondelegate attendees yelled out in protest, saying that the delegate process

was undermining the more broadly representative process of the FCS.

“What used to be done in back rooms to control the outcomes and processes of Mennonite Church USA has just been done in public at the Mennonite [Delegate Assembly],” said Carol Wise, director of Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests, referencing the process that led to the change in the resolution’s language. “Let’s continue to challenge our leaders for more transparency and accountability.”

Following the vote, Sarah Thompson and John Stoltzfus, members of the convention prayer team, prayed for the assembly.

The convention antiracism team gave a report, naming that there was little representation of people of color during open mic times; the history and timeline exercise that was part of the FCS process excluded particularly the experiences of Latinos and Asian Americans; both in the timeline and in FCS great harms to people of color surfaced and were named; and while there was an attempt to have people of color serving in various leadership roles throughout the week, the church can still do better.

The session also included greetings from leaders in the Tanzania Mennonite Church.

Boshart succeeded Shelly in the role of moderator, and Joy Sutter became moderator-elect. Delegates also acknowledged that this was the last delegate assembly that Ervin Stutzman attended as executive director of MC USA. Stutzman plans to retire in the spring of 2018.



Gordon Houser
is editor of *The Mennonite*.



Ervin Stutzman (left), executive director of Mennonite Church USA; **Patricia Shelly**, moderator, and **David Boshart**, moderator-elect, confer during a delegate session.



Delegate **Emily Headrick** of Lima (Ohio) Mennonite Church speaks about the resolution.

The beginning of our work together

Delegates pass Israel-Palestine resolution overwhelmingly

BY **GORDON HOUSER**

Mennonite Church USA delegates voted overwhelmingly to pass the “Seeking Peace in Israel and Palestine” resolution on July 6. Only 10 delegates were opposed and two abstained.

The resolution is a revised version of a churchwide statement considered and tabled by MC USA delegates at the 2015 convention in Kansas City, Mo. “As U.S. citizens, as Christians, and as Mennonites, we share responsibility in the harms done to Jews and Palestinians.... This resolution calls us to address both military occupation and antisemitism. As we acknowledge our own complicity in this web of violence, injustice and suffering, we will strive, by God’s grace, to take concrete steps to address these wrongs,” said the resolution.

Andre Gingerich Stoner, former director of holistic witness for MC USA, who helped lead the resolution’s development process, introduced the resolution, saying it tries to take “modest but concrete steps in seeking peace.” He explained that the final statement is the fruit of extensive work, including hearing directly from

Palestinian and Jewish leaders. The resolution was shared publicly for feedback, and the writing team received over 80 comments that they took into consideration in the revision process.

“Engaging a wide range of perspectives makes the work harder,” he said, “but also much better.”

Cyneatha Millsaps, pastor of Community Mennonite Church in Markham, Ill., said she participated in a Come and See Learning Tour, sponsored by Mennonite Church USA. “In Hebron,” she said, “I felt the oppression that reminded me of what African-Americans have experienced in this country.”

Alex Awad, a Palestinian Christian who taught at Bethlehem Bible College and served as a pastor, expressed thanks for how Mennonites care for both Palestinians and the Jewish people. He imagined what various people from Israel-Palestine might say to the gathered delegates. He imagined a young woman who might relate how 75 percent of the land around Bethlehem has been taken from Palestinians by Israeli settlements. He imagined a boy from Gaza, which, according to a 2017 United Nations report, will be uninhabitable in a few years. He imagined an Arab Christian leader who might say that Christians are disappearing from Israel and Palestine.

Awad urged delegates to support the resolution.

Rabbi Brant Rosen, representing the Jewish Voice for Peace Rabbinical Council, said the resolution is “a beautiful statement.” As a Jew, he said, “it’s not for me to give you permission to vote for this. You should vote your conscience.”

Delegates discussed the resolution in their table groups for about 30 minutes. Then MC USA moderator Patricia Shelly, Newton,

Kan., invited anyone who wanted to speak to go to the microphones.

Most spoke in favor of the resolution. Charlotte Lehman, pastor at Reba Place Church in Evanston, Ill., also was on a learning tour. She said, “My eyes were opened and my heart was broken.”

Kathi Oswald, representing Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference, also went on a learning tour, where she talked to both Palestinians and Jews. She, too, found it heartbreaking to see homes destroyed, and thought of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem.

Others expressed concerns about the resolution. Renee Kanagy, pastor of Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship, asked why there was no statement regarding the right of Israel to exist.

Stoner said that there was extensive conversation in the writing group on this matter. He cited passages in the resolution which recognized the “longing for a secure Jewish state” that resulted from persecution of Jews. He noted, however, that the idea of the right of a state to exist is foreign to Mennonite theology; rather, the document emphatically underscores the desire for peace, security and well-being of Jews and all people of the region.

Tim Bentsch of Souderton (Pa.) Mennonite Church said he fears that the use of the phrase “end the occupation” will lead some to ignore the statement.

Others addressed potential benefits of the resolution.

Emily Hedrick of Lima (Ohio) Mennonite Church said that what has brought her to faith were Mennonites’ commitment to peace and justice. “And I see that in this resolution,” she said.

Jenny Duskey of Ambler, Pa., said she has experienced how Arab Christians and Jews can accomplish

more by working together, and “this resolution will help us do that.”

Janeen Bertsche Johnson of Eighth Street Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., said she hopes the church will make available resources that identify products that are connected to the occupation so that individuals can avoid purchasing them.

Following the vote, Shelly said, “This is only the beginning of our work together on this issue.”

You can read the full text of the resolution at MennoniteUSA.org/resource/delegate-resources.



Gordon Houser
is editor of *The Mennonite*.



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BY KATIE HURST

I was interested in what was happening [in delegate sessions] at Kansas City two years ago, but as part of the youth convention I wasn't getting any of it.

—Elizabeth Reimer

Step Up debut to give youth a voice

37 high school youth take part in Future Church Summit and delegate assembly

Thirty-seven high school youth participated in the Future Church Summit and delegate assembly at the Mennonite Church USA Convention in Orlando, Fla., as part of the new Step Up program.

The youth attended a Step Up orientation July 5, prior to delegate and FCS sessions, to receive information about the MC USA structure, the delegate process and expectations for participating in the sessions. The orientation was led by Step Up program coordinators Brook Musselman, Atlantic Coast Mennonite Conference administrator; Shana Peachey Boshart, conference minister for Christian formation for Central Plains Mennonite Conference; and Leah Wenger, a current student at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va.

The program's goal was to "prepare and launch young people into future involvement as denominational delegates and church leaders who are involved with the broader church." Each area conference and constituency group was invited to nominate up to three representatives who were already attending convention and who are active in an MC USA congregation and are high school sophomores or older.



Step Up participant **Mindy Marinko** (left) of Blooming Glen, Pa., speaks at her table.

Full-time Step Up participants were invited to attend and speak directly in the conversations happening in all five sessions of the FCS. Part-time participants were invited to join the opening and closing sessions on July 6 and July 8. Step Up participants were invited to engage in conversation around table groups but were not considered voting members of the Delegate Assembly.

Leah Wenger began working with Mennonite Church USA staff to develop the program after the 2015 MC USA convention in Kansas City, Mo. In Kansas City, Wenger noticed a disconnect between the youth and adult events happening simultaneously. Wenger got the chance to interact with Glen Guyton, chief operating officer and director of convention planning for MC USA, and together they came to the conclusion that there needed to be more space for youth voices to speak at business sessions at MC USA conventions in the future.

Other youth shared similar recollections from the 2015 Kansas City convention.

“I was excited to hear about Step Up because I was interested in what was happening [in delegate sessions] at Kansas City two years ago, but as part of the youth convention I wasn’t getting any of it,” said Elizabeth Reimer of Naperville, Ill. “I had to ask our delegates what happened after every single session, and then I’d have to go to some youth events, and we’d be playing badminton while they were making important decisions, and that didn’t feel right. We were out on rollercoasters while the delegate session was deciding whether or not to be inclusive of LGBTQ people, and that was just a huge shock to me, and I felt like the next time I had to be more involved.”

Musselman and Peachey Boshart joined Wenger and Guyton to develop the program as a way to begin amplifying youth voices in the broader church.

“Leadership is about casting a vision for the future,” said Guyton in a February news release from MC USA. “As we think about the future, how can we not have youth involved? They need to see

and hear the church in action. They need to be involved and start thinking about their faith and the institutions they are a part of.”

This sentiment was echoed by Step Up participants.

“I’m really excited for this opportunity to sit in on the Future Church Summit and participate because going to convention as a youth has always been fun, but I’ve always wondered what exactly goes on in the delegate sessions and how those conversations go,” said Lorren Oesch from Caldwell, Idaho.

Some youth were excited about seeing specific processes in action.

“I’m excited to participate in the delegate session and see how it all works and what the church wants to do with the Israel-Palestine resolution,” said Ariana Perez-Diener of Goshen, Ind.



Katie Hurst is a senior communications major at Goshen (Ind.) College.

Excited for the future

IMH restructures, looks toward future with Mennonite Church USA

REPRESENTATIVES from Hispanic Mennonite Church USA congregations from multiple area conferences met July 3-5 in Orlando, Fla., to reconfigure Iglesia Menonita Hispana's organizational structure through the approval of a revised constitution, vote on a new IMH Executive Board and renew commitments to working in collaboration with Mennonite Church USA. The group met with the theme "Transformados y Renovados" or "Transformed and Renewed."

In a devotional on July 4, Lupe Aguilar, pastor of Iglesia Menonita Rey de Gloria in Brownsville, Texas, said, "The church of God is going to change, and I see that confidence and faith in the men and women here today."

IMH has 66 member congregations and lost more than a third of its total membership and several IMH Executive Board members in 2015, when part of the "Concilio Hispano," the Spanish Mennonite Council of Churches of Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference withdrew from IMH

and MC USA over various topics, including LGBTQ inclusion.

On July 3, IMH passed a revised constitution that included several significant organizational changes. Previously, IMH had only nine representatives from each district that made up a Board of Representatives. Now the board will be made up of a representative from each conference associated with IMH: 18 in total.

"[The representatives] will bring the voice of each conference to IMH," said Sandra Montes-Martinez, who serves as moderator on the IMH Executive Board. "We would like to work with every single conference, respecting how they do things but working with them and being partners with them."

Another significant change in the constitution is that IMH membership is no longer limited to Hispanic congregations as a whole. Constituents who worship at any congregation can now become a member of IMH individually.

"We are excited to work at a conference level, at a congregational level and at an individual level," said Montes-Martinez.

IMH affirmed five new members for the junta general, or IMH Executive Board, on July 4. New board members include Hildalejandra Pellecer as secretary, Suhelen Caceras as treasurer, Ulises Arenas as moderator-elect and Norma Alfaro-Schmucker as an at-large member. Sandra Montes-

Martinez served previously as interim moderator but will begin the new term serving as moderator.

IMH also affirmed Margie Mejia Caraballo as the next IMH representative to serve on the MC USA Executive Board.

"It's really exciting that everyone is new," said Yvonne Diaz, who finished her term as IMH representative on the MC USA Executive Board at Orlando.

Past board members surrounded the new board members and shared words of blessing and praise as they prepared for the transition.

"This is service work filled with love and passion, not just a position of power," said Montes-Martinez. "This isn't where IMH begins, rather this is a new structure of Iglesia Menonita Hispana."

IMH representatives sang, prayed and cried together in a symbolic passing of the executive board membership.

Montes-Martinez said IMH wants to focus on developing leadership and continuing a relationship with MC USA as the group looks to the future.

"One thing we really want to push forward is equipping our pastors, to prepare them for leadership and see them attending our Mennonite colleges," said Montes-Martinez. "We also want to have more theological understanding of the changes that are happening denominationally, and we want to continue partnering with the Mennonite programs that benefit the Hispanic community."

Montes-Martinez said she is hopeful and excited about IMH's future, "that we can work with the whole conference, with everybody. We don't want to work separately from MC USA, we are part of MC USA and want to represent that as we work and make decisions."



Participants pray for the new members of the Iglesia Menonita Hispana board.

Katie Hurst

Katie Hurst is a senior communications major at Goshen (Ind.) College.

A centennial party

Mennonite Women USA celebrates 100 years of Mennonite women's groups

"HAPPY BIRTHDAY, Mennonite Women USA!"

At an evening gathering on July 5, Orlando 2017 convention attendees gathered to celebrate and commemorate the 100-year anniversary of Mennonite Women USA and its predecessor movements. The event built on the theme passage for MW USA's centennial year, John 15:5-6: "I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing."

The event opened with the singing of a new song, "Fruit from the Vine," composed by Linda Dalke for the event.

Throughout the evening, through spoken word and drama, attendees had the chance to hear stories of many of the foremothers and movements that are part of the legacy of today's MW USA.

In a dramatic reading, "Book Talk," written by Carol Duerksen, a variety of readers highlighted excerpts from the recently published book *Circles of Sisterhood*, which traces the history of Mennonite women's groups over the last 100 years.

"God has been central, and all of this work grows out of women's faith," said *Circles of Sisterhood* author Anita Hooley Yoder. "God is bigger than an institution and small enough to touch us through stories. Sing on, sisters. Your stories are sacred."

Berni Kaufman, MW USA



Vada Smider

Mennonite Women USA Executive Director **Marlene Bogard** (left), MW USA board member **Alma Perez Ovalle** and **Anita Hooley Yoder**, author of *Circles of Sisterhood*, perform a skit during the July 5 centennial celebration at Orlando 2017.

executive assistant, shared reflections inspired by her two nieces. "We stand on the shoulders of some strong women," she said. "Who are the women who have sung with you in the ballad of your life?"

Members of the Women in Leadership Project Steering Committee, an organization with Mennonite Church USA that works to address patriarchal systems across the church, read a new translation of Proverbs 31 written by Melissa Florer-Bixler, WLP steering committee member and pastor of Raleigh (N.C.) Mennonite Church. Florer-Bixler was joined in reading by steering committee members Maribel Hinojosa, College Station, Texas, and Linda Gehman Peachey, Lancaster, Pa.

"A woman of strength," they read. "When you find one, she is like a precious ruby. When her spouse is forced to fight in the army, when she's all alone to work and take care of her family, her spouse knows that she'll be all right. She makes good things happen, even when there doesn't seem to be enough."

Sarah Bixler, Princeton, N.J., read a poem inspired by her two daughters, entitled "It Stops with Me." "I realized," she said, "that sexism is alive in my beloved Mennonite church... This is going to stop with me. I refuse to accommodate the generational transmission of sexism."

Rhoda Keener, MW USA Sister Care director, and Katie McKinnell, MW USA communication manager, read an ode to Mennonite Women.

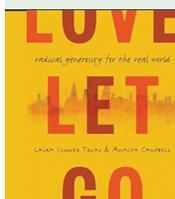
"From two denominations they worked together," they said. "United to persist in serving and learning. Called to be all that God created them to be. We honor our foremothers who refused to be told they could not serve."

Attendees also had the opportunity to watch a Fruit from the Vine dance performed by Talashia Keim Yoder of Goshen, Ind., and to participate in the tangible activity of building a vine that bears fruit together.

Hannah Heinzekehr, executive director of *The Mennonite*.



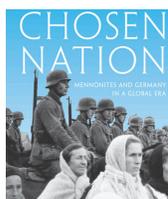
WHAT I'M
READING THIS
MONTH



**Love Let Go:
Radical Generosity
for the Real World**

by Laura Sumner Truax
and Amalya Campbell

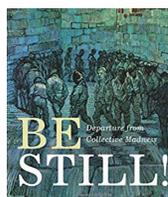
This book tells how LaSalle Street Church in Chicago received a windfall and decided to give each church member \$500 to “do good in God’s world.” The authors show how every day “we receive opportunities to view the world from the vantage point of generosity.”



**Chosen Nation:
Mennonites and
Germany in a
Global Era**

by Benjamin W. Goossen

This academic, extensively researched work explores how Mennonites developed an identity more related to Germanness than faith, which led some to support Nazi ideology. Goossen rejects traditional definitions of religion and nationality: “Mennonitism exposed collectivism as decentered, multivalent and fragmentary.”



**Be Still: Departure
from Collective
Madness**

by Gordon C. Stewart

These 48 short, poetic essays speak to current issues—guns, terrorism, climate change and capital punishment, to name a few—with a wisdom that draws on theology and philosophy. Stewart calls us to stillness in the face of the madness of our times. The title comes from Psalm 46.



Who are the ‘dones’?

MANY HAVE heard of the “nones,” those who, when filling out a questionnaire about their religious affiliation, check the box marked “none.” But who are the “dones”?

Unlike the nones, said sociologist Josh Packhard in his seminar on July 5 at the Orlando 17 convention, the dones are people who are highly engaged in their faith but have left the church. There are 30.5 million of them in the United States, said Packhard in his seminar, “Understanding the ‘Dones’: The Key to a More Vibrant Church.”

Packhard, who calls himself an engaged sociologist of religion, co-wrote the book *Church Refugees: Sociologists Reveal Why People are DONE with Church but not Their Faith*, based on research he carried out, which included extended interviews with 100 or so individuals. This book was one of the inspirations behind the Future Church Summit.

Packhard, who grew up Lutheran and attends a Lutheran congregation, said, “The church has an important role to play in the world.”

He pointed to studies showing the decline of trust in institutions, including the church, while individual belief in God has remained strong. The percentage of those who say religion is very important in their lives has also remained steady over the past 40 years, at between 55 and 60 percent.

While the dones have left the church, they have kept their faith. These are generally people who are highly engaged in their faith, well-trained and very involved in their church before they left. Packhard

says a majority are in their 40s, with an average annual income of \$40,000–\$50,000.

Why then do they leave? He noted four categories of reasons they are often dissatisfied:

1. **They want community, not judgment. Relationships are important.**
2. **They want to be active in the church, but feel stifled by bureaucracy. Churches often have too many rules that discourage innovation.**
3. **They want conversation, not doctrine. One said, “It is in relationships and conversations that I find God.” Belonging precedes believing and activity.**
4. **They want to be involved in ministry, not morality. One asked, “Why aren’t pastors disciplined for neglecting the poor?”**

Packhard noted four strategies for either attracting dones or keeping people who are in church but ready to leave, of which there are an estimated 7.5 million:

1. **Invite participation...but with limits.**
2. **Be truly relational...but don’t compromise your beliefs.**
3. **Undermine bureaucracy...but don’t abandon structure.**
4. **Impact your community...and be impacted by your community.**

Packhard said his impression is that Mennonites already invite participation and have a good opportunity to welcome dones. They are “potential allies,” he said, who can make our churches more vibrant.

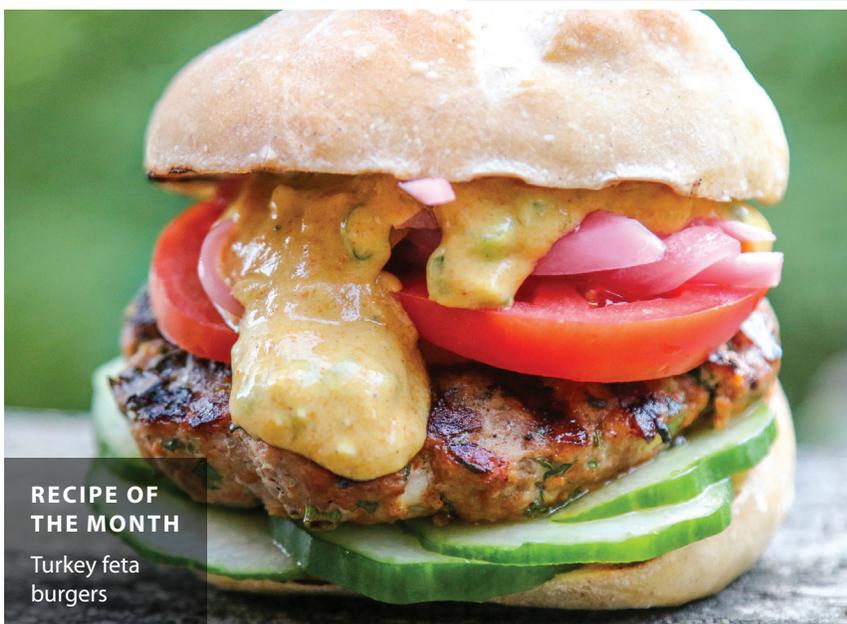
Gordon Houser is editor of *The Mennonite*.



QUOTABLE

“Through this experience, we developed an important relationship with Christ. Our hope was restored, but it wasn’t until we realized the desperate need we had for God’s peace. We experienced healing through people that God placed in our lives. We felt the care from friends at work, church and through our family. We grew to trust the love and care of God and learned how to care for others in their pain.”

—Ann Jacobs, reflecting on her son’s wrongful incarceration



RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Turkey feta burgers



tM

MOST-READ ONLINE-ONLY POSTS

2.9K
Rachel Held Evans on “Keeping the church weird”
by Emma Koop Liechty

2.8K
Executive Board suspends LGBTQ member’s appointment to LDC
by Hannah Heinzekehr

1.6K
Music draws youth into the rhythm of God’s love
by Erika Byler

1.5K
Future Church Summit reflections
by Melissa Florer-Bixler

1.3K
Indiana-Michigan adopts new conference vision
by Hannah Heinzekehr

FROM THE ARCHIVES



The 20th session of the General Conference Mennonite Church of North America was held in September 1914 in Meno, Okla.

Meals were prepared outdoors and served to conference-goers in a dining hall constructed for the event.

Those in attendance slept outdoors in lodging tents (pictured above with New Hopedale Mennonite Church in the background), and the sessions themselves took place in a large, open-air tent.

Photo credit: Mennonite Library and Archives, North Newton, Kan.

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PERSPECTIVES FROM READERS

Looking back in order to move forward

I ADMIT IT. I love being a delegate. I've been a delegate for four different congregations over my lifetime and have attended as many conventions as possible since my first in Nashville, Tenn., in 2001. I like facilitating discussion and being a part of a large-group process, and Robert's Rules of Order are fascinating to me. I lament the time-consuming nature of such an endeavor, as this often means I cannot attend as many seminars as I would like. But for someone who came to this church as a relative outsider, I appreciate being able to experience the "inner workings" of Mennonite Church USA.

In the struggle to be a community 'without spot or wrinkle,' we've ignored and done violence to the very people to whom Jesus came preaching peace.

This year, at Orlando 2017, being a delegate also meant being a part of the Future Church Summit. For several hours each day we shared our hopes and dreams for the future of MC USA. We looked at our past, present and future through the lens of our shared Anabaptist identity, acknowledging our mistakes and voicing our desire to be a church faithful to the teachings of Jesus.

What struck me most about these sessions was the look into our past. A quote from theologian Miroslav Wolf came to mind: "The fiercer the struggle against the injustice you suffer, the blinder you will be to the injustice you inflict."

From our history of martyrdom and oppression, at times we have emerged as the very oppressors we have struggled to dismantle. Whether it be with Native communities, LGBTQ people, women, survivors of sexual violence or with people from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds, Mennonites have been complicit in and instigators of oppression.

In the struggle to be a community "without spot or wrinkle," we've ignored and done violence to the very people to whom Jesus came preaching peace. I don't wish to be misunderstood; Mennonites have done a lot of good in the world. But to ignore our troubled history does a disservice to the future we are trying to build together. In this summit, we were able both to name and acknowledge our history as a denomination.

I've also come to appreciate what we do well together here in the present. From my personal experience at my table group, I felt we came together for these few days and did really positive work. While we were different racially, theologically and geographically, we all came into this process with open minds and hearts. We gave space for listening, while we also felt comfortable to speak when our voices were needed. While historically being known as a people of action in some respects, Mennonites are also great "thinking" people. I was amazed at how deep and thoughtful the

questions posed to us were, and I was even more impressed with our responses. In the plenary sessions, multiple people went to the mic with well thought-out, eloquent reflections that both encouraged and challenged me in my faith.

As I reflect on our week of experiencing the past, present and future together, I've come to realize that I want so much for this church's future. I want a place where everyone feels welcome, where all people are allowed to serve and use their gifts, where differences are encouraged, where there are more people who look like me, where young people are excited and ready to lead. But to do that, we need to acknowledge our missteps and less proudly displayed deeds. Those with power have to loosen their grip, give up some control, and allow room for the Holy Spirit to move and change what has been. That's what I believe it means to live into the resurrection and to be the future church. Whether or not you were a delegate at Orlando, this is a task for all of us to do together.

Let's get to work.



Read more reflections on Orlando 2017 and the Future Church Summit at themennonite.org.



Joanne Gallardo becomes pastor of faith formation at Berkey Avenue Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., on Aug. 14.

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

BY AND ABOUT YOUNG ADULTS

Called to change the world?

IS THE CHURCH called to change the world? In one sense, yes. When we see lives torn by sin and suffering or nations ravaged by war and injustice, we cry out with Jesus for God's kingdom to come, "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). The world is simply too broken for us to leave it the way it is.

In another sense, however, changing the world is not really our job, at least not directly. Jesus does not commission his followers to "go into all the world and fix society." He sends us to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19) and to be his witnesses next door and "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Evangelism is about pointing with our lives and our words to what God has already done in Jesus to change the world. In his cross and resurrection, Jesus dealt with our sin, the source of the world's brokenness. And in his life and teachings, Jesus showed us a different way of living—the kingdom of God—which we can start to follow now through the power of the Holy Spirit.

John Nugent says it this way in his book *Endangered Gospel*: "God's people are not called, in Scripture, to enter all spheres of life and straighten them out to make this world better. God calls his people to a specific way of life. That way of life participates in and invites all people to the new and better world that God has already begun in Christ."

Put differently, God does want to fix our broken world. Yet God's primary strategy for doing so is neither to launch a grassroots protest campaign nor to impose change from the top down. Instead, God has chosen to change the world by creating an alternative

community that models the new world made possible through Christ. This community is called the church.

That doesn't mean we simply watch "the world go to Hades in a handbasket." Being the church is about living out the lordship of Christ in our shared life together and inviting others to join us. How might we live as if Jesus really is in charge? Here are just a few ideas.

Being the church is about living out the lordship of Christ in our shared life and inviting others to join us.

If Jesus is Lord, we may want to reconsider the time we devote to consuming secular media versus communing with Christ. Recent statistics from the U.S. Department of Labor put average American use of TV and other media between two and four hours per day, compared with an average of eight minutes per day in "religious activities." How might we agree together on ways to limit screen time and maximize life-giving pursuits that help us abide in Jesus, the True Vine (John 15:5)?

If Jesus is Lord, we should gladly treat the entire earth and its resources as his property and do our best to make sure other people and creatures can enjoy them, too. In the beginning, God placed humans on earth to lovingly rule over creation and take care of it (Genesis 1:26, 2:15). "That human

mission has never been rescinded," notes Christopher Wright, an Old Testament scholar. What if, for example, more of our churches used their green space for community gardens?

If Jesus is Lord, we will spend less time worrying about who is president of the United States and more time concerned with how we treat our brothers and sisters who claim the name of Christ. Does the world get a glimpse of the reign of God in the way we share our resources, practice forgiveness, speak the truth in love and seek to honor others above ourselves? If we can reach out to Christians across lines the world says should divide us, what would that say about who really is in charge?

If Jesus is Lord, we will humbly yet fearlessly enter the shadowy corners of our world bearing the light of Christ. After all, there is no place we can go where God's Spirit is not (Psalm 139:7-10). That doesn't mean we will always be safe. One hundred thousand Christians are killed each year for their faith, according to the Vatican. Yet the resurrection reminds us that even in our suffering we participate in the birth pangs of God's new creation.

As followers of Jesus, God calls and empowers us to live out the gospel before a watching world desperate for change. To put a new spin on an old phrase, let's join the change God is bringing about in the world through the church.



Aaron Kauffman is president of Virginia Mennonite Missions. Reach him at aaron.kauffman@vmmissions.org.



FROM MENNONITE CHURCH USA

FCS reflections

AFTER HELPING plan for the Orlando 2017 convention during the last two years, I was glad to join seven other participants at Table 3 at the Future Church Summit (FCS). Like many other table groups, we had a rich diversity of gender, age and ethnicity. The week

The process itself reflected who and how we long to be as Anabaptist followers of Jesus in the 21st century.

following the assembly, Jennifer Murch, who was at our table, blogged about her experience:

We were there to be present, to listen. Church leadership wasn't going to tell us what to do or how to be.

Through listening to each other, we got to collectively say how we wanted to be church together. How stunningly simple. How radical.

All the ideas and issues we discussed...were great, but it was the process, a process that allowed all voices to participate, even the ones that have been repeatedly silenced, that I found most inspiring.

I sense that Jennifer's words capture the spirit of the people at Table 3 and perhaps the majority of participants in the summit. For me, there were no surprises or stunning revelations, no hidden aspirations brought to the light of day. Indeed, the themes that emerged rang true with the values I've heard expressed

around the church for some years. But in a church that values communal discernment, it felt so right to see these themes emerge from the table groups during the gathering. The process itself reflected who and how we long to be as Anabaptist followers of Jesus in the 21st century.

I suspect I'm not the only one who was disappointed that we left the summit without a short list of the most important themes to guide us over the next few years. (We reached that goal in our experimental run of the summit process at the Constituency Leaders Council last October). But in Orlando, for different reasons, we didn't quite achieve that end. That means we'll need to find other ways to pursue this prioritization. As executive director, I'll seek ways for the participants in the summit to give further input on this question.

Although the delegate body voted overwhelming on a resolution to commend the outcomes of the summit to the Executive Board and the broader church, some complained that the wording was too weak. However, I am certain the themes of the summit will play a major role in shaping the actions of the Executive Board and staff over the next biennium. Together with other participants in the summit, we'll seek the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to faithfully follow Jesus as Anabaptists in the time and place God has called us to serve.

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

UPDATES

KRATZ RESIGNS FROM ED SEARCH COMMITTEE

Following its first meeting on June 12, the search committee for the next Mennonite Church USA executive director is down a member. Clyde Kratz, executive conference minister for Virginia Mennonite Conference, submitted his resignation to Joy Sutter, the search committee chair, after concerns circulated online regarding his appointment.

MENNONITE SCHOOLS LAUNCH 'LEAD YOUR WAY' CAMPAIGN

Five Mennonite colleges—known to compete in the past—have joined forces to highlight how strong academics and affordability prepare their graduates for successful outcomes. The colleges and universities—Bethel College (North Newton, Kan.), Bluffton (Ohio) University, Eastern Mennonite University (Harrisonburg, Va.), Goshen (Ind.) College and Hesston (Kan.) College—launched the collaborative effort at Orlando 2017.

ALLEGHENY, CENTRAL DISTRICT EXPLORE NEW RELATIONSHIP

Allegheny Mennonite Conference and Central District Conference are exploring the possibility of more intentional connections. At the June 22-24 annual meeting of CDC, the two conferences announced the formation of a group that will focus on building connections between the two conferences. Read more at www.themennonite.org.

A WORD FROM PASTORS

You are Ruth, I am Naomi

“CALL ME MARA,” Naomi says, “for the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me” (Ruth 1:20). She returns home—from Moab to Bethlehem—barren of life. “The Lord has brought me back empty” (1:21). She has nothing for Ruth, except unfulfilled desire, a gnawing emptiness. Yet Ruth, full of life, chooses the desolate Naomi. Ruth relinquishes her family, her nationality, and her religion for the companionship of Naomi. With each other they possess nothing—they have nothing, only the warmth of their togetherness. As women in a patriarchal world, their lives are beyond their control. “One female has chosen another female in a world where life depends on men,” observes the biblical scholar Phyllis Trible. Like Abraham, Ruth leaves everything for an unknown future. But, unlike Abraham, Ruth never hears a call from God; she doesn’t receive a promise of divine blessing. Instead, she joins Naomi without a reason, without calculation, without a vision for the future. She has no explanation for why she goes with Naomi—only that she wants to be with her, to live with her, because she loves her.

“Ruth clung to Naomi,” each joining the other as if they were Adam and Eve born again—the story of the first couple, where they “cling” to one another as “they become one flesh” (Ruth 1:14; Genesis 2:24). Like Eve and Adam, Ruth and Naomi cleave to one another—bone grafted to bone, breast knit to breast: companions.

“Where you go, I will go,” Ruth vows to Naomi, “your people shall be my people, and your God my God” (Ruth 1:16). This is our story, with me at your side, worshipping your God as my God and loving

your people as my people. “Your people”—they are yours, by nature, laws written with genes and blood. For me to call them “my people” presumes a belonging that trespasses into your world, an imposition that disregards the conventions of kinship. I have no claim, only a plea: “Do not press

With us there is no command, only grace. No forceful ‘you must,’ only the forbearance of ‘you may.’ Mercy binds us together, our union as a prayer.

me to leave you or turn back from following you” (1:16). We don’t sign an agreement, neither do we exchange promises. “When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more” (1:18)—my determination, your permission. With us there is no command, only grace. No forceful “you must,” only the forbearance of “you may.” Mercy binds us together, our union as a prayer.

Like Ruth, I give you my hands, open and empty, abounding with lack, because our story begins with hunger: “There was a famine in the land” (1:1). We know how to survive, alone. Yet this time, for no good reason, we let the hunger draw us into an unscripted life, beyond family norms, beyond social codes: two people under no obligation to care for each other, but together nonetheless—on our way to Bethlehem (1:19, 22), the

house of bread. Because we hope for the promise of Communion. We wait for the miracle of God’s provision, when our fingers tear through crust, the bread of life still warm, pressed into our palms—and gathering the crumbs, manna in the wilderness, which you hold in your hands, lifting them to heaven, giving thanks as I beg for more and dream myself into the story where Jesus offers the Canaanite woman the words I want: “Let it be done for you as you wish” (Matthew 15:28).

Like Naomi, I will be a nursemaid for you, my Ruth: “Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom and became his nurse” (4:16). Your people perhaps becoming my people, not by nature but through caregiving, through ministry, as I pastor a people not my own while awaiting their adoption of me. My relationship to your people is fragile, tenuous, an unwritten covenant, known only to the angels who listen to whisperings into the silence of God.

You are Ruth and I am Naomi. But call me Mara, “because the hand of the Lord has turned against me” (1:13). Yet when I’m with you, the others will say, “Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day,” because you are a wellspring in the desert, “a restorer of life” (4:14-15)—my empty life.

And at the end of this life we’ve made for ourselves, you may say to me, “Where you die, I will die—there will I be buried” (1:16-17).



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

Obituaries

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.

Bartel, Martha Y. Stoltzfus, 90, Gap, Pa., died June 11. Spouse: Marvin D. Bartel (deceased). Parents: Enos and Annie Yoder Stoltzfus. Children: Cindy Sohar, Maggi Freed, Rose Weaver, Albert Bartel, Jane Haight, Marvin W. Bartel; 12 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 15 at Landis Homes West Bethany Chapel, Lititz, Pa.

Blank, Mary Lou Lauver, 86, Gap, Pa., passed away at home on May 21 to be with her Lord and Savior. She was the loving wife of Dr. Lester Blank with whom she celebrated 63 years of marriage. Mary Lou and Lester served for 12 years as missionaries in Cuba and Mexico, 1959-1972 under Franconia Mennonite Missions. After returning to the States, Mary Lou served as receptionist in her husband's chiropractic office. She was a member of Rossmere Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., where Lester served as associate pastor for 16 years. Mary Lou taught the younger children in the Sunday school classes for many years. She loved being a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. Once when asked about her hobbies, she said, "I love people." She was the daughter of early Mennonite missionaries, William G. and Florence Byler Lauver, who served over 25 years in Argentina under the (Elkhart) Mennonite Board of Missions. Mary Lou was born in Argentina on Aug. 14, 1930, where she lived until 15 years of age. She graduated in 1951 from the Moline Public Hospital School of Nursing in Illinois. Surviving besides her husband are six children; Beverly (Clark) Gray of Lancaster; Carol (Duane) Longenecker of Atlanta, Ga.; Nelson (Marilyn Kropf)

of Gap; Keith (Brenda Burkhardt) of Lancaster; Miriam of Gap and Paul (Marla Burkholder) of Lancaster. Also surviving are 18 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren. Predeceasing her were her 4 siblings; Lois Lauver; J. Paul Lauver, survived by wife, Lois (Swihart) Lauver; Glenn Lauver and Elton Lauver. Paul served as minister for 28 years at the former Marion Mennonite Church, near Shipshewana, Ind. A memorial service was held May 30 at the Mellinger Mennonite Church, Lancaster, with pastors Todd Gusler, Marilyn Kurtz and Lester Denlinger officiating. Burial was at the Kinzer Mennonite Cemetery, Kinzer, Pa.

Brubaker, Roy Lester, 75, of Mifflintown, Pa., died June 16 in a farming related accident at his family's farm in Cuba Mills, cutting short a life of love and service. He was born on Aug. 22, 1941 in McAlisterville. Son of an early organic farming innovator, Roy spent his childhood establishing deep affections for and commitment to the earth and its inhabitants. An educator, missionary, pastor, and organic farmer, himself, Roy was one of eight children born into the family of Roy M and Elva Brubaker (Auker) of McAlisterville. Roy is survived by his wife, Hope (Anita) Brubaker (Beidler); daughter, Angela Brubaker; son, Roy Dale Brubaker and spouse, Julie Hurst with granddaughters, Frances and Riley; daughter, Phoebe Brubaker; and daughter, Debra Brubaker and spouse, Hannah Smith-Brubaker, with grandchildren, Chandler and Owen. Memorial Services for Roy were held on June 24 from 10-11:30 at Cedar Grove Brethren in Christ Church in Mifflintown. The earth is a better place and we are better people for Roy's love and stewardship.

Kratz, Floyd H., 70, Telford, Pa., died May 5. Spouse: Monique A. Moyer Kratz. Spouse: Mary Jane Halteman Kratz (deceased). Parents: Raymond and Alice Halteman Kratz. Children: Scott G. Kratz, Brenda K. Bechler; three grandchildren. Funeral: May 12 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford.

Landes, Curtis H., 90, Franconia, Pa., died May 28 of congestive heart failure.

Spouse: Ruth M. Allebach Landes (deceased). Parents: Titus N. and Carrie L. Halteman Landes. Children: David Landes, Jane Leatherman, Marlene Clemmer, Lisa Yoder, Curtis Alan Landes; 10 grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 5 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford, Pa.

Martin, Alice Angeline Drudge, 100, Waterloo, Ontario, died June 12. Spouse: Moses Martin (deceased). Parents: John and Lucinda Reesor Drudge. Children: Paul Martin, Shirley Larsen, Carol Weber, Ella Brubacher, Ruth Brennehan, Rhoda Seibert, Richard Martin; 11 grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 16 at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, St. Jacobs, Ontario.

Miller, Owen Eugene, 84, Kalona, Iowa, died June 5. Spouse: Ruby Bender Miller. Parents: Paris and Lydia Briskey Miller. Children: Deb Kaefring, Larry Miller, Sandy Owens; eight grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 9 at Kalona Mennonite Church.

Nunemaker, Marion Grace Eigsti, 97, Sterling, Ill., died May 9. Spouse: Weldon Owen Nunemaker (deceased). Parents: William and Anna Hartzler Eigsti. Children: Carol Shank, Dale Nunemaker; three grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Graveside service: May 25 in Sterling.

Schmidt, Edward Dennis, 82, Waldheim, Saskatchewan, died May 16. Spouse: Waldtraut Louise Regier Schmidt. Parents: Joel Isaac and Helene Goertz Schmidt. Children: Deborah Bergen, Dwight Schmidt; two grandchildren. Funeral: May 22 at Zoar Mennonite Church, Waldheim.

Schrock, Nedra Ruth Miller, 86, Kalona, Iowa, died June 1. Spouse: Leo Schrock. Parents: Thomas and Ruth Brennehan Miller. Children: Leon Schrock, John Schrock; 12 grandchildren. Funeral: June 8 at Kalona Mennonite Church.



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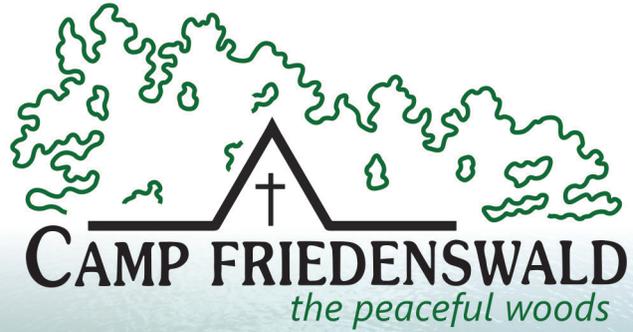
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STORIES FROM THE GLOBAL ANABAPTIST CHURCH

The resilient witness of the Bruderhof

ON APRIL 14, 1937, the Nazi secret police, or Gestapo, raided the Rhön Bruderhof, a small Christian community in central Germany, confiscating its property, expelling its members and arresting three of its leaders. Founded in 1920 by Eberhard Arnold, the Bruderhof was an attempt to live out the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount and to practice communal living according to the model of the early church. The community grew rapidly in the following decades as many people, disillusioned by World War I and the failure of the institutional church, came in search of authentic community and a deeper sense of meaning.

In the early 1930s, recognizing the Bruderhof's need for broader fellowship, Arnold forged a relationship with the Hutterites in North America. He also sought out fellowship with German Mennonites. And in 1936, faced with the rising tide of National Socialism and the threat of war, several Bruderhofers participated in an "International Peace Congress" organized by Dutch and U.S. Mennonites in the Netherlands, signing their names to a courageous statement for peace.

The small community survived World War II by moving first to England, then to Paraguay, where they again encountered Mennonites. A series of painful economic challenges and leadership crises in the 1950s prompted a move to Rifton, N.Y., where the Bruderhof experienced a revival. In the 1960s, they gained widespread visibility through the publications of Plough Publishing and a successful cottage industry of durable playground equipment

known as Community Playthings. During the last decades of the 20th century, the Bruderhof again faced a series of challenges, including a tempestuous end to their relationship with the Hutterites, public feuds with angry ex-members, a failed effort to establish a Bruderhof community in Nigeria, a host of legal battles and renewed leadership struggles.

Today some 2,700 residents of the Bruderhof live in 25 communities scattered across four continents.

Since then, however, the Bruderhof community seems to have regained its footing. In 2012, the group issued a "Foundations of our Faith and Calling Principles of Life," as a public account of their faith and life. A new journal, *Plough Quarterly*, has met with critical acclaim. Perhaps most significantly, leaders at the Bruderhof have sought out new relationships with a wide range of Christian groups, including their Anabaptist cousins. And they have broadened their vision of community life to include a host of smaller households in New York, London and Asunción that serve as mission outposts. Today some 2,700 residents of the Bruderhof live in 25 communities scattered across four continents.

This spring, I visited the Holzland Bruderhof community in Bad Klosterlausnitz, a small town in eastern Germany. Some 15-20

people live there in a sprawling house that once served as a retreat center. Most of the community members are young, sent here from other Bruderhof locations to learn German and pursue vocational training in plumbing, carpentry, furniture making or geriatric care. The community supports itself by manual labor in a workshop and by promoting new markets in Germany for Community Playthings products.

Although Holzland is located close to Luther's hometown of Eisenach, the culture of eastern Germany is thoroughly secular. The members of Holzland are gracious in their hospitality to local inhabitants, actively supportive of the local fire department and other social services. Yet thus far no Germans have joined the community. In sharp contrast to the 1930s, Germans today seem indifferent to their presence.

I am grateful for the Bruderhof's resilient witness through the decades. I admire the radical generosity within their communities and to others, and I am moved by the simplicity of life I witnessed among their young people. They are a part of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition—a bright thread in the tapestry of the global church that testifies to the beautiful diversity of the people of God around the world.



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*.



FROM THE EDITOR

You've got a place

EVERY ONCE in a while, my kids (a 2- and a 4-year-old) like to have a dance party. Days after returning from the Mennonite Church USA convention in Orlando, I walked into the room to find one of these in full swing. And the song they were grooving to? Gospel classic “You’ve Got a Place.”

You’ve got a place at the welcome ta-a-ble, You’ve got a place at the welcome table some of these days.

Hearing them sing these words took me back to the work of the Future Church Summit. The FCS is one of the clearest examples I have seen to try to build a process that was representative of the breadth of diversity across our church. Extra effort went into publicity, translation, funding and more to try to ensure that groups that have been historically left outside of or underrepresented in delegate processes participated.

These efforts were apparent in the connections that began to emerge during FCS conversations. Stories celebrating the development of Mennonite institutions intersected with narratives of

Indigenous, African-American and Latino/a church members being denied access to Mennonite resources. Mennonites from European backgrounds reflected pride in their particular heritage as well as their need to recognize the ways these identities have privileged them at the expense of other

But that’s no reason not to join the ‘dance party.’

Mennonites. LGBTQ Mennonites shared their stories in face-to-face conversation with church leaders. And members from rural and urban settings examined shifting economic challenges facing both contexts.

As an FCS participant, I felt we were wrestling with what it meant to be church together and to make space for one another at the “welcome table.”

When I shared the story of my kids’ “dance party” with friends, I learned that during the days of Jim

Crow segregation, this spiritual used to include a verse that said, “I’m gonna tell God how you treat me some of these days.”

Part of reckoning with our own history and planning for a different future is being honest about the ways we in the church have treated (and continue to treat) one another or the times when we have “put an asterisk on our love,” as Dr. Drew G.I. Hart said in adult worship.

The themes that emerged out of the FCS were varied, but they pointed our church in the direction of setting a more welcoming table with Christ at the center, a table that might be a witness to each other and to the world beyond us.

Among the themes that emerged from our work was that “the Holy Spirit is present and unruly.” Picking up this work together will not be neat, linear and clear-cut. But that’s no reason not to join the “dance party.”

Hannah Heinzekehr,

Executive director of The Mennonite, Inc.



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