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INSIDE

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Philadelphia

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TheMennonite

SEPTEMBER 2017

VOL. 20 • NO. 9



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ON THE COVER: Francine Maombi at the Urban Tables booth at a farmers' market in Chicago. Photo by Charissa Johnson Photography

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



Letters

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

Who is Jesus?

Darrin W. Snyder-Belousek's letter (July) criticizing my online article "Who is Jesus?" misrepresents my understanding of Jesus. His quotations from my article leave out my strongest statements about Jesus' identity with God: "He is God's creative Word, God's self-expression, enfolded in a human being.... Now, as the risen Lord of all, he is indeed one with God."

But Snyder-Belousek is correct in pointing out that I refrain from simply saying that Jesus, during his ministry, was God. That is because the New Testament also refrains from saying that. Peter says God made Jesus Lord and Messiah through his death and resurrection (Acts 2:36). Paul says Jesus was declared to be Son of God by his resurrection (Romans 1:4). Philippians 2:5-11 states that Jesus rejected being equal with God but emptied himself, became totally humble and obedient all the way to death, and therefore God exalted him to a new status: Lord of all.

What this means is that Jesus, through his self-sacrifice and resurrection, became something more than what he was before. The doctrine of the Trinity, as important as it is, misses this completely.

In the four Gospels, Jesus is given various titles but is never just called God during his earthly ministry. The title Son of God does not mean God or being God's biological offspring.

In the New Testament, the title Son of God most likely means that Jesus fully represents God. It is a role, not an ontological category (although John 1:18 may be an exception). The general view of the New Testament is that not until after his resurrection can we rightly equate Jesus with God. (For a more detailed exploration, see my book *Sick Religion or Healthy Faith?*)

—Ryan Ahlgrim, *Richmond, Va.*

Print too small

I enjoy the variety of issues covered (July), but the smaller and less dark print make it difficult for older eyes to read.

—Stanley Weaver, *Glendale, Ariz.*

Likes new design

I appreciated the July issue, focusing on what it means to be a peace church. I also liked the new look and design.

—Ryan Springer, *Dallas, Texas*

I like the new format and find it very readable. The layout encourages reading it all.

—Wilma Shank, *Goshen, Ind.*

The formation of MC USA

Recent articles (May) and letters (June, July) reflect on reasons Mennonite Church USA does not display more expressions of unity. One observes that polity differences between the Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonite Church have not been replaced by a new combination of authority. But we need to remember that neither former tradition is uncompromised in its practice. For example, MC and Amish mergers in the early 20th century introduced Amish congregationalism to the MC. Fundamentalism, with its "designated leadership," affected the GCs in the first half of the 20th century.

We are still dealing with understandings of each other that are centuries old. Latino/a people, African-Americans and Asian-Americans have added to the need to understand

differences of thought and culture in the national church.

The most influential reason for the moves toward organizational unity among Mennonites was the acculturation of MCs following World War II. Forms of dress and customs of worship are only two expressions of this. Politically and spiritually, a growing appreciation for each other grew between MC and GC leaders. Joint projects such as shared Sunday school materials were already in practice when the two delegate bodies met jointly for the first time in 1983 in Bethlehem, Pa.

Proportions still play a role in the identity and practices of MC USA. With the church separation of Canada from the United States, GCs lost about 40 percent of their members. Less than a quarter of the membership of MC USA at its inception in 2002 was GC. It is inevitable that the larger group often naturally, even without malice, dominates the smaller group. And the constitution of MC USA was modeled on the old MC constitution, particularly in its definition of MC USA as a denomination of member conferences, not member congregations. In the first decade of MC USA, signs in front of congregations often declare they are members of Mennonite Church USA, not of their conference.

MC USA today can be described as a continuing revision of the old Mennonite Church. Why were GCs so energetic in promoting the union? That goes back to 1860, when several congregations formed the General Conference and proclaimed one of its goals and ideals as promotion of Mennonite unity.

The human and historical aspects of MC USA are part of who we are and how we make faithful decisions about God's calling for what's ahead.

—**Jim Schrag**, *Newton, Kan., former executive director of Mennonite Church USA*

Who has been oppressed?

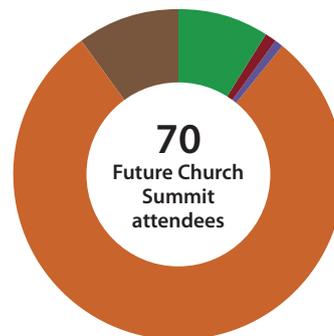
Everett Thomas ("A Federation of Conferences," May) is the most recent person of influence across Mennonite Church USA to call for

"more forbearance for the few conservative voices that still remain in the denomination." Does this imply that conservatives have become the oppressed rather than the oppressors in the struggle for full inclusion of LGBTQ people? Forbearance, to the LGBTQ community, means hope for the cessation of old ways and attitudes that sanctioned oppression.

If those who call for forbearance toward conservatives mean to imply that conservatives are being similarly oppressed, one wonders what examples might substantiate the claim. No individual has been denied church membership on the basis of practicing a "conservative lifestyle." No conservative pastor has had his credentials stripped for refusing to marry two persons of the same sex. No area conference has removed a conservative congregation for refusing to admit LGBTQ people to membership. The experience of conservatives is simply not equal to the last 40 years of official church violence against the LGBTQ community. To imply that it is shows a lack of awareness of the impact of official church oppression on the LGBTQ community. This merits a formal apology and more thoughtful explanation of exactly what is meant by the language of "forbearance for conservative voices that remain."

—**Stephen J. Yoder**,
Harrisonburg, Va.

BY THE NUMBERS



70
Future Church
Summit
attendees

Black: 6
Native: 1
Asian: 1
White: 55
Hispanic: 7

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

IN THIS ISSUE

This month we look at examples of new ways of doing church. We found some interesting perspectives and had confirmed what we suspected, that Mennonite Church USA includes a rich variety of congregations. And these congregations include and are led by people from different backgrounds.

We interviewed Juan Marrero and Aldo Siahaan, who are pastors connected with the Kingdom Builder's Anabaptist Network of Greater Philadelphia (page 10). Brad Roth writes about the rural church and how it is different from the urban or suburban church (page 16). We talked with people at Living Water Community Church in Chicago, a congregation with four pastors and worship services led in English, Khmer and Swahili (page 20). Steve Hartman Keiser writes about his small urban congregation in Milwaukee, Wis., which has no paid leadership (page 24).

Be sure to look for more articles at www.themennonite.org.—*Editor*

News Briefs

COMPILED BY
GORDON HOUSER

Charlottesville renews call to resist white supremacy in community, church

In an Aug. 13 phone interview, Sarah Thompson, executive director of Christian Peacemaker Teams, talked about her role in preparation for the events of Aug. 11-12 in Charlottesville, Va. Thompson was contacted on June 30 and invited to come to Charlottesville as part of the Deep Abiding Love Project's work to prepare and train members of the Charlottesville community in militant nonviolent direct action. She arrived on Aug. 2 and led six trainings and also participated in what she calls a "ministry of encouragement" for local activists who have been planning and actively resisting racist demonstrations in their city.

Since the spring, Charlottesville has been the site for white supremacist

gatherings protesting the removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee from Emancipation (formerly Lee) Park in the city's downtown. Beginning Aug. 11, hundreds of white supremacists, some of them carrying shields, semiautomatic weapons and torches, and chanting racist and neo-Nazi slogans, gathered in the city. Officials declared a state of emergency in Charlottesville on Aug. 12, following violent clashes.

In preparation for what the Southern Poverty Law Center referred to as something that "could be the largest hate-gathering of its kind in decades in the United States," activists in Charlottesville began offering regular trainings in confrontational nonviolent direct action.

Dr. Jalane Schmidt, associate professor of religious studies at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville and one of the leaders of the Charlottesville Black Lives Matter movement, has helped plan counterprotests throughout 2017. Schmidt, now a Roman Catholic, grew up attending New Creation Fellowship Church in Newton, Kan. "You have to disrupt stuff. This won't be a nice forming of a book club and reading Ta-Nehisi Coates in the basement of our

church. It's about disrupting this and questioning the police."

Schmidt helped plan for an Aug. 11 worship and prayer service at St. Paul's Memorial Church.

"The worship services were so inspiring and called on the heart," said Cynthia Lapp, pastor of Hyattsville (Md.) Mennonite Church, who traveled to Charlottesville on Aug. 11 to be part of a line of roughly 30 clergy members who peacefully marched to resist white supremacist demonstrators.

Art Stoltzfus, a community organizer with Faith in Action and a member of Community Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va., also attended the Aug. 11 service. Near the end of the service, attendees were made aware that alt-right demonstrators, many of them carrying lit torches, were gathering across the street from the church. Attendees were instructed to exit the church by side doors, and some were accompanied to their cars with extra reinforcement and security.

Janie and Luke Beck Kreider were also present. On Aug. 12, they attended a 6 a.m. prayer service and joined a nonviolent march that walked first to the Jefferson School African-American Heritage Center and on to McGuffey Park in downtown Charlottesville. Janie serves as director of communications for the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board staff.

Several members of Charlottesville Mennonite Church were also involved in nonviolent direct actions during the day. Pastor Maren Tyedmers Hange regularly attends a multi-racial gathering of women clergy and participated in the Saturday morning walk from the Jefferson School to McGuffey Park. Church members Andy Orban and Becky Scott participated in gatherings with their local chapter Showing Up for Racial Justice and other group demonstrations this spring, and they joined one of the counterprotest marches through the city.

"If your church hasn't done a training, now more than ever, start grappling with this," said Thompson. "We saw coming out of the Future Church Summit that to pay attention to this



Rwandan girls' empowerment camp

Girls show off the word chain they created during a girls' empowerment camp organized by Francine Muhawenimana and two 2016-2017 participants in Mennonite Central Committee's Serving and Learning Together program. Each girl was given three links on which they wrote things they learned throughout the week about themselves or about being a girl.—MCC

stuff is faithful Christian discipleship. I felt really alive as a Mennonite out there on the front lines. This is why we are in this church. We are here because our faith calls us to the front lines, and the front lines are everywhere.”

—Hannah Heinzekehr

Encounter Bible curriculum set to launch

The Mennonite Schools Council (MSC) *Encounter* Bible curriculum writers' week took place June 19-23 at Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite School.

Fifteen writers representing six MSC schools took part in the process, culminating a two-year commitment to the project that has included five weeks of intensive work. Elaine Moyer, senior director of Mennonite Education Agency, said the group “had a wonderful time together” as they created curricular resources for students from pre-K to grade 12.

Encounter, described as “a dynamic curriculum of faith formation where students encounter God, each other and all of creation,” draws on Anabaptist theology and values. It uses the Shared Convictions of Global Anabaptists adopted by Mennonite World Conference as a theological framework, along with the three key statements developed by theologian Palmer Becker that “Jesus is the center of our faith, community is the center of our life, and reconciliation is the center of our work.”

While strongly rooted in Anabaptism, Moyer said, the curriculum also endeavors to be “warmly welcoming and invitational” so that it can also be used with other groups, particularly for international high school students.

—Mennonite Education Agency

WDC celebrates 125 years

Meeting Aug. 4-6 in Arlington, Texas, some 140 Western District Conference members celebrated the 125th anniversary of WDC. A readers' theater presentation during the opening worship session on Aug. 4 recounted some of the history of the conference,



Larry Bartel

Hesston shares leadership resources with company

Hesston (Kan.) College environmental science professor Marelby Mosquera presents to a group of 30 Excel Industries employees during a leadership training program hosted and presented by the college. The idea for the training came from a request from Excel to offer interactive teaching environments that would provide both office and mainline staff with a liberal arts perspective on leadership training with emphasis on conflict resolution, interpersonal communication and inclusion and diversity.—Hesston College

which formed in 1892 out of the Kansas Conference, which had formed in 1877.

In her sermon at the opening worship, Heidi Regier Kreider, WDC conference minister, referenced Colossians 2:1-7, from which the conference's theme, “Rooted and Built Up in Christ,” came.

“It is only in struggling with the painful realities of our history that we discover treasures,” Kreider said. As we claim our history, she said, the integrity of the church will depend on how we live out Paul's call to live lives “rooted and built up in [Christ].”

In the delegate assembly on Aug. 5, WDC moderator Anita Kehr read from a statement from WDC's executive board that objected to a Texas law, known as SB4, that goes into effect Sept. 1. The bill, sometimes described as a “ban on sanctuary cities,” makes Texas a much less welcoming place for immigrants, both documented and undocumented.

The WDC statement “laments the passage of this law characterized by rejection, discrimination and racial profiling and urges that this law be rescinded.” It goes on to call

Mennonites to “stand in solidarity with our Hispanic-Latino/a brothers and sisters and with other people of color in the rejection of this law.”

—Gordon Houser

MDS helps with rebuilding on Pine Ridge Reservation

A youth group traveled from Vincent Mennonite Church in Spring City, Pa., to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, where, as part of a Mennonite Disaster Service Summer Youth Program, they worked alongside local residents building homes for people who lost their residences to storms in 2015 and 2016.

Severe weather between May 8-29, 2015, brought straight-line winds and flooding. A blizzard, a rapid change in temperature and several days of rain mixed with hail the size of tennis balls led to damage across the reservation.

—MDS



Read longer versions of these and other articles at themennonite.org.

Miscellany

COMPILED BY
GORDON HOUSER

We're sicker here than in Central America. In Central America, they're eating beans and rice and walking everywhere. They're not drinking Mountain Dew and eating candy.

—Dr. Joseph R. Smiddy, a lung specialist who has worked on charity health trips abroad, in the *New York Times*

271-to-1

The CEOs of America's largest firms made an average of \$15.6 million in compensation in 2016, or 271 times the annual average pay of the typical worker.

—*The Guardian*



More than 70 rural U.S. hospitals have closed in the past six years.

—*Pacific Standard*

26%

of U.S. couples had their wedding ceremony in a religious institution in 2016, down from 41 percent in 2009.

—*The Wichita Eagle*

Racial bias in reporting on the drug crisis

The racial bias is inescapable: A drug crisis that is largely affecting suburban and rural whites is being treated with a drastically different attitude and approach in words and imagery than those used to characterize heroin use in the 1970s, crack cocaine in the late 1980s and the drug problem plaguing America's people of color and urban poor today. Elected officials, the criminal justice system and the U.S. media have adopted a "kinder and gentler" tone around the opioid crisis. The attitude and phrasing of a recent *New York Times* article—titled "In Heroin Crisis, White Families Seek Gentler War on Drugs"—is both an example and an illustration. As is *Time's* recent photo story, "A caring lens on the opioid crisis." The visual language is just as illuminating. The opioid crisis has been framed as a threat from outside, with drug users facing an "illness" or a "disease" rather than a personal moral shortcoming.

—*Columbia Journalism Review*

Instagram most stressful

After surveying nearly 1,500 young people about their social-media use, the United Kingdom's Royal Society for Public Health found that Instagram was the worst platform for their health and well-being, associated with bullying, sleep loss, body-image issues, anxiety and a fear of missing out.

—*Time*



8 billion

metric tons of plastic have been made since the 1950s, researchers found. Because it does not degrade, most is still in the environment.

—*The New York Times*

Percentage change since 2000 in the purchasing power of U.S. Social Security checks:

-22

Average increase last year in monthly Social Security checks due to cost-of-living adjustments:

\$4

—*Harper's*

LOAVES AND FISHSTICKS BY STEVE EDWARDS



Hyde Park Mennonite Fellowship

Boise, Idaho

1. Hyde Park Mennonite Fellowship's meetingplace
2. Rachel Goochey holds her son Ira during a worship service.
3. Russ Buschert gets some help putting sand in between new pavers on the walkway from (left to right) Jasper Goochey, Laura Burdette, Bushert, Isaac Hassinger and Levi Hassinger.
4. During an intergenerational time in the service, Chayton Welty (left) helps Marc Schlegel put titles on a pole by asking who do we usually listen to more.

Photos by Max Photo Biz, LLC



Juan Marrero preaches.

Photos on pages 10 and 12 are by
Jen Strickland Photography



TOGETHER IN PHILADELPHIA

**Kingdom Builders Anabaptist
Network of Greater Philadelphia
includes 50 diverse groups**

People need an empowerment message that helps them see they can rise above some of the poverty in their community and can lead productive lives.

—Juan Marrero

The Kingdom Builders Anabaptist Network of Greater Philadelphia is a community that brings together Anabaptist congregations and leaders to explore the question, *What can urban Anabaptists in Philadelphia do together in the name of Christ that they cannot do alone?* The Network brings together almost 50 diverse churches and nonprofit organizations, where English, Spanish, Indonesian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Haitian Creole and many other languages are spoken.

Juan Marrero serves as chairman of the Kingdom Builder's Network and is pastor at Christ Centered Church in Philadelphia, a congregation connected to the Koinonia Fellowship of Churches, a network of 24 Anabaptist congregations. Aldo Siahaan is pastor of Philadelphia Praise Center, a congregation of Franconia Mennonite Conference. He also serves as a LEADership minister for the conference.

We invited both pastors to reflect on their congregations' history, ministry and dreams for the future. Parts of their story, shared in conversation with Hannah Heinzekehr, are transcribed here.

Juan Marrero, Christ Centered Church

There's a place called Crossroads Community Center. This center began in 1963 through a ministry of Eastern District Conference, which was then part of the General Conference Mennonite Church.

A Puerto Rican pastor named Raul Mora had a concern. He saw that the neighborhood was changing in North Philly. There were African-Americans moving in and other people of color coming up to work, and he wanted an orientation center for the Puerto Rican community.

At the same time, Ray Linberger, who was serving as pastor of Second Mennonite Church in Philadelphia, saw there was a lot of gang violence in that area of the city. He had a burden for the youth caught in this gang culture but realized the church was not really motivated to reach out to the community. He left the pulpit of Second Mennonite and connected with Crossroads and built a ministry for at-risk teenagers.

These two ministries combined to form Crossroads. My family was heavily involved with this work from the beginning as members of Second Mennonite. Eventually I became a youth worker and then the executive director. I was the first indigenous director of the center. And later, Ron Muse [Marrero's co-pastor at Christ Centered Church]

joined the staff as a prison chaplain. It has really been a fruitful ministry in North Philly.

I love my home church, Second Mennonite, but it still had a traditional flavor to it. These returning citizens (individuals who have served time in prison) we were working with didn't know the Doxology or "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow." They were looking for a place to connect with Ron or for a message that fit them.

In 2011, Ron and I and my wife just felt this burden. If my home church wasn't going to make these adjustments, we should do something different. Second Mennonite did bless us to start Christ Centered Church. We leased space at Teen Haven [a community youth organization in Philadelphia]. The first day we met was a Christmas Sunday, and we had 75-80 people. It was God telling us we were doing the right thing.

Eventually, we moved closer to where Crossroads is located. We now meet in a formerly abandoned storefront that was pretty much a drug house. We began to renovate it and redeem that space for the kingdom.

Our congregation is made up of about 75 percent returning citizens and their families. It's really not that big of a deal. In our community, in the Badlands, or North Philly, it's common for somebody to go to prison. For us, it's all in the flow of the context.



Photos, clockwise from left: (from left to right) Pastor Ron and Courtney Muse, Bishop Lawrence Chiles, Sandra and Pastor Juan Marrero; the church gathers; children mug for the camera.



This seems to be a big deal for people outside to see what we've got going on but it's not as big a deal in our setting. We're just a group of families and people on fire for the Lord.

To help create jobs, a construction company started called Kingdom Builders Construction [see March, page 18] that also partners with Mennonite Central Committee, Kingdom Builders Network and Crossroads Center. We supply pretty much all the staff from our congregation, and I've been on the board since day one. And our youth worker was a returning citizen. His name was James Muldor, and he worked half-time at the center and half-time at the construction company. That was very important.

At the same time, we have a prison guard who attends our church with his family. We've had police officers attend our church. We're really getting into the kingdom mindset when you have returning citizens worshipping with prison guards.

These are people that have the motivation. We empower people and we want people to be transformed through the power of Christ. That's our mission statement.

People need to be empowered. I know Mennonites believe in this "more-with-less" idea, but we've been living on less for years. People need an empowerment message that helps them see they can rise above some of the poverty in their community and can lead productive

lives. They can have a house, access to transportation and be able to feed their families. That's a real contextual gospel message here in North Philly.

In Matthew 25, Jesus said, "I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." We live by those Scriptures and we try to live them out.

Each Sunday, we'll start off with about three songs. I preach with passion and offer an inspiring exhortation and a gospel message. And Ron comes to worship, and he's a teacher. So even though I preach, he's still going to come and speak. Think about having Sunday school, but right in the middle of the worship service. He'll go

through Scriptures and people can raise their hand and ask questions and participate.

We have a lot of guys that just came out of prison and also some people that have been out for five years. [Marrero reports that only 5 percent of returning offenders in the congregation have returned to prison, a number well below the citywide average of 60 percent of individuals returning to prison within three years following their release.] They enjoy the teaching time because you can ask questions in church. It's enthusiastic and high-paced and energetic.

To plant a church, you have to understand and exegete your community. You need to understand what the people are like and what the needs are. If churches are not raising up locally indigenous leadership, then they are missing the mark. I'm all for people coming in and wanting to help but not if you aren't training up local leaders. Paul went on mission trips and raised up local leaders from the places he visited.

Aldo Siahaan, Philadelphia Praise Center

Philly Praise Center started with just a few of us, me and a couple of friends. We went to another church together, but we saw that in South Philadelphia there are many immigrants, not only Indonesian people. It was our desire to reach out to people of other nationalities, and the pastor in our previous church had no desire to do that. He wanted to serve only the Indonesian community.

That's why we had an idea to start a new community and a new church, and that's Philadelphia Praise Center. It started in 2005 because of the desire of a few people wanting to serve others in the community.

Right now in our church, we

have an Indonesian group, an English-language group, a Hispanic group and a Burmese group. We worship at different times, but once in a while we have a combined service.

God calls us to reach out to all people and to serve and disciple nations. He asks us to go into the world. Sometimes we don't need to go to another country to do this, because those people are already in our neighborhood, and that's really important.

South Philly is very diverse and it's growing. It's like a small United Nations here, because there are so many people coming from different parts of the world: Indonesian, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Hispanic folks from different countries, including Guatemala, Mexico, Venezuela and Peru. And more recently, there are immigrants who are Laotian, Nepalese and Burmese.

Being church together is so hard. We come from different cultures, and some people don't speak English, so sometimes language and culture are tricky. We also often have different approaches to problems. We have to humble ourselves to learn other people's cultures and ways of doing things.

We are committed to being a people of peace and being people who are the light and the salt for all people. We want to help people be people of peace in their own context and pay attention to the issues in their own communities.

One example is that here in South Philly, we experience a lot of gun violence. So sometimes we come to the mayor or councilperson's office to ask them to help stop gun violence.

Our church is also constituted by 90-something percent immigrants, and I can say that roughly 60 percent from that group are undocumented. Immigration plays a big role in our church, and our ministry is about helping

immigrants in Philadelphia.

I am an immigrant from Indonesia, so I know the feeling. I was an undocumented person for six years before I got my permanent residency. Even today at 1 p.m., I had a meeting with Councilman [Kenyatta] Johnson, who is responsible for South Philadelphia. I went with a group from New Sanctuary Movement, a community organization our church is part of, and we met with the councilperson to share the need for his office to support and help immigrants in South Philadelphia.

We've built relationships with the Indonesian Muslim community in Philadelphia over the last 10 years. In 2007, we opened our church space so that Muslims could have worship there. At the time, they didn't have a place to worship and meet, and since then our relationship has grown. We try to see the commonality between us, not the differences. There is a tension right now between Christians and Muslims in Indonesia. We are trying to be a witness to the world that Muslim and Christian Indonesians can get along.

As a church planter, one thing I learned is that you need to stay in one place and try to learn about the community itself. You cannot just think you know an area. You need to humble yourself and literally stay and be part of the community. You will get to know the needs of that community; that's one of the keys.

Where I see God at work is here in South Philadelphia and also in our church, where so many people's souls have been saved. There are so many new souls coming to the Lord. And then we see how God gives them strength in critical situations. Like right now with people facing uncertain immigration laws, many people still have hope. They still go to work and try to support their families,

regardless of having legal papers or not. They are still coming to church every Sunday and being a part of small groups and are supporting the church. I see God really working in individual's lives and in families and in our church.

As a church planter, one thing I learned is that you need to stay in one place and try to learn about the community itself.

—Aldo Siahaan

There is one member of the church who worked with a Muslim man. He never preached the gospel to this man, but his life is very open. He invited the man to his house, and they worked

together. Five years after seeing the consistency of our church member, the Muslim man came to my friend and said, "Hey, I want to become a Christian. I want to become like you." And my friend said, "Why?" The man responded, "I see God in your life, and for me that is powerful."

Since then (that was four years ago), he's attended our church. He

got baptized and now he's a faithful member. And he knows the risks of being a convert. The risk is that when he goes back to Indonesia, if his family finds out, he can be disowned or even killed because he converted to Christianity.

We just want to be the instrument of God in this area, and we love building relationships with other people and groups. 

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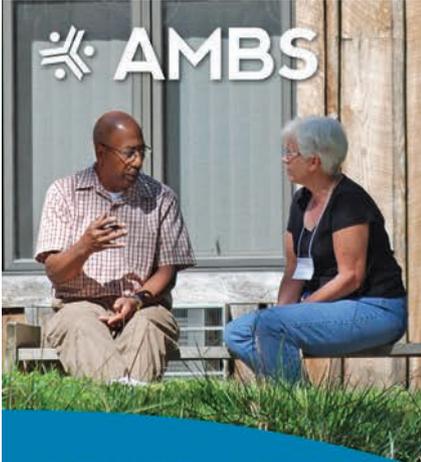
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*Twelve
baskets full*

Photo by Brad Roth



BY BRAD ROTH

The church gathered into one by the Holy Spirit

There is not one “rural” but rather multiple rural identities. The way race factors into rural identity is also widely divergent across the United States and Canada. While some parts of rural America have grown in diversity in recent years, it’s true that many rural communities are largely white. One African-American pastor I interviewed described how he discovered that his congregation had discerned whether or not they wanted to call a black pastor. They were circumspect in describing their motives, following the age-old rule of their southern small town to never say anything overtly negative, preferring to focus on the pastor’s “tone” or “vision” or the fact that he had once preached from his open laptop in the pulpit. “It can be difficult to be a person of color in a rural community,” he said.

Nevertheless, race can play out in various ways in rural communities. The legendary and beloved pastor of one white, rural congregation my wife and I know was a man originally from Sri Lanka. Some parts of the United States—particularly Louisiana, Mississippi and South Carolina—boast substantial African-American populations in rural communities. Various Native American groups make up the majority, or a large minority, in many small towns

in Alaska. And some rural communities in the United States are ahead of national trends, transitioning to majority Hispanic, minority white.

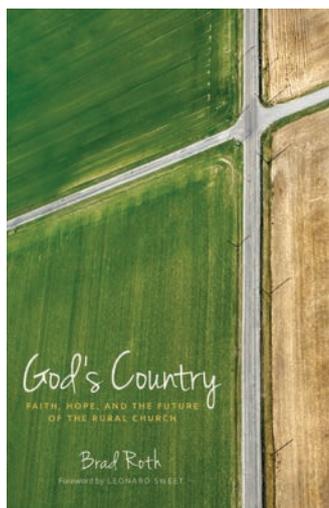
All this is to say that rural identity is complex and diverse. Rural is a kind of spiritual and psychological landscape populated by a relationship to the city, nearness of neighbors, agriculture and a history of marginality and loss. Rural is not just a population designation. It’s a way of seeing the world.

The global church would be incomplete without the rural church. In our ever more urbanizing age, rural people and places have become marginal, and it is at the margins that the church discovers its identity and calling. The church identifies with the margins and commits to being present among “every nation and tribe and language and people” (Revelation 14:6).

Of course, rural isn’t the only margin. Cities have margins as well. Suburbs have fescue-lined margins. And in the U.S. context, outsized power is sometimes wielded by rural states. Wyoming, with half a million people, gets two U.S. senators, just as California, with 39 million, does. As became clear in the 2016 presidential election, the U.S. Electoral College assigns disproportionate clout to low-population rural states. (See Emily Badger, “As American as Apple Pie? The Rural Vote’s

Disproportionate Slice of Power,” *New York Times*, November 20, 2016.)

But marginal isn't just a measure of brute political clout. As in the ancient world, cities are condensations of power and wealth. Cities are capitals. Cities are centers. All roads lead to Rome.



In **God's Country: Faith, Hope and the Future of the Rural Church** (Herald Press, 2017), Brad Roth writes that “caring for the world means caring for a particular corner of it.” For him, that corner is the rural community where he pastors. He uses stories, biblical study and research on rural life to explore the joys and difficulties of serving in rural places. But the lessons he presents go beyond the rural context to apply to wherever we find ourselves. His chapter titles reflect such holistic lessons, as he calls readers to praise in place, abide, watch, pray, grow, work the edges, learn to die, befriend and dream. This is an enriching book that challenges and encourages us in “becoming more Christlike and, in that becoming, offering ourselves to the world.”

—Gordon Houser

The centers of cultural gravity and attraction are urban. The framework for our thinking and the universities that foster it are urban. In this long-running narrative of the West, civilization is urbanization. Cities are like nirvana: the enlightened go there. The allure of the city remains potent, and it's growing more so with each generation. There's energy and innovation and that magic elixir: youth. There's the viscous swirl of cultures and a thumping bigness that reminds us that while we may be individually so small, in the city we can become a part of something grand.

To many, our rural communities are murmuring along in quiet and quaintness. As a friend who settled in New York City once put it, “Once you've lived here, you wonder why people would want to live anywhere else.”

The rural church is a sign of the universal church's identity, for the rural church reminds us that Christ's body is always off-center, always called toward the margins, always skeptical of the claims of the dominant culture. The rural church also represents Christ's commitment to be among all people everywhere, regardless of the value attributed to them by global centers of power. Christ orients the church toward the edges of society.

The church takes after its self-emptying Savior (Philippians 2:7) and stands in contrast to the logic of the world. The church follows the logic of the cross, and thus the church insists on ministering in the most out-of-the-way places, including the villages and open country that make up the anonymous stretches of cornfields between the heaving cities.

The importance of the rural church isn't always obvious, even to rural congregations themselves. I once took an informal poll of the small-town congregation we served.

The rural church reminds us that Christ's body is always off-center, always called toward the margins, always skeptical of the claims of the dominant culture.

I asked, “Why is the church here?” Folks gave me answers that were sincere yet unreflective—along the lines of, “Well, there were a bunch of us living here, so we decided to form a congregation.” True enough. But in my fresh-out-of-seminary earnestness, I was hoping for something more substantial—something theological, even. I wanted an essay-form response, 500 words or fewer: Using the terms vocation and destiny, describe why your rural congregation is here. Alas.

This is the thing: Rural congregations testify to the church's eternally off-center vocation and point forward to the church's destiny in the kingdom. Pastors and rural church leaders need to gird themselves with these convictions.

There's more. The rural church is a sign of the wholeness of the global church. This is part of what Jesus was getting at when he fed the 5,000. His miracle was not only about sustenance, about his role as the “bread that came down from heaven” (John 6:41). It was also a sign of the complete people of God. The crowd declared that Jesus was “the prophet who is to come into the world” after the 12 baskets were gathered together (John 6:14). The “sign” he performed was multiplication and gathering.

The key is the number of

baskets: 12, a number signaling that we're talking about God's whole people. There are 12 tribes and 12 apostles. The book of Revelation is filled with 12's: Twelve gates and 12 angels (Revelation 21:12); 12 foundations and 12 apostles (Revelation 21:14); number of people of God (Revelation 7 and 14); 12,000 from each tribe (Revelation 7); 12 stars (Revelation 12); 12 kinds of fruit (Revelation 22:2).

In the New Testament, bread is a sign of both the sacramental body of Christ offered at the communion table and the gathered body of Christ, the church. The one bread points to the one church (1 Corinthians 10:16).

One first-century text called the Didache describes the teaching of the early church. The Didache picks up the theme of the unity represented by the one loaf of Communion bread: "As this piece of [bread] was scattered over the hills and then was brought together and made one, so let your church be brought together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom."

Thus, when Jesus called the disciples to "gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing may be lost" (John 6:12 KJV), he was pointing beyond bread and baskets to the whole people of God. It was a sign. Jesus was talking about the church. Let none be left behind or ignored or disparaged. Let none be lost. Gather up all the fragments into the kingdom.

Without the rural church, some fragment would be lost. The rural church represents God's commitment to be with all people, everywhere, through the church, which is Christ's "body, the fullness of him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:23). This includes all peoples and all places, big and small. The church cannot remain in the city or suburbs alone and be the church.

It's the nature of the church to cultivate a presence in the country. Not every organization is like this. Take shopping malls. No one is surprised that shopping malls are only found in cities and suburbs. Their aim is commercial, and commerce requires people interested in purchasing products. Miles of wheat fields just don't have the critical mass of ennuistruck teens.

The church, however, is called to be with people in all places, however small. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit upon the apostles so that they might carry the gospel "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8), and rural places are often the consummate ends. There's a way in which the unity of the whole church spread throughout the world must come together to fully embody the life of Christ. All the fragments must be gathered into the 12 baskets. That's what makes

the church whole, and it's why there can be no church without the rural church.

But so, too, there can be no church without the urban church. We need each other. This is why any vision that disparages country or city—or anywhere in between—proves inadequate. We need a kingdom vision, a vision of the church gathered into one by the Holy Spirit.



Brad Roth is pastor at West Zion Mennonite Church, Moundridge, Kan. Adapted and reprinted with permission from Brad Roth's new book, *God's Country: Faith, Hope, and the Future of the Rural Church*. (Herald Press, 2017) All rights reserved. HeraldPress.com

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A NEW KIND OF GRANT



Francine Maombi (center, holding a drink) and others gather at the Urban Tables booth at the farmers' market.

All photos on pages 20-23 are by Charissa Johnson Photography

Living Water pioneers helping members find sustainable employment

Living Water Community Church sits at the crossroads of Pratt Boulevard and Ashland Avenue in Chicago. But this is not the only crossroads the congregation fronts. Located in Chicago's Rogers Park neighborhood, the congregation is in the heart of one of the city's most diverse neighborhoods and the congregation's composition has shifted over time to mirror its community.

If you arrive at the church building on a Sunday morning at 9:30, you'll find simultaneous worship services led in English, Khmer and Swahili. The congregation has four pastors, each with a different role and primary responsibility to a particular community in the congregation and local community. The congregation works hard to identify and raise up leaders from within the congregation and community to serve in staff and leadership roles.

Recently, the congregation has partnered with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Great Lakes to pioneer a new grant program, focusing on empowering some of the most recent arrivals to their congregation, many of them recently resettled refugees who have sometimes had a difficult time finding sustainable employment.

"The grant program came out of the desire to better the lives of our brothers and sisters who we basically don't think are getting a fair shake," said church member Autumn Williams, in a Jan. 31 phone interview. "Sometimes this is because they don't have a traditional U.S. education or strong English-language skills. So even if they have education from other countries, that's not being valued, and the jobs they are getting are substandard at best."

"A big part of this is acknowledging power," says Stephen Lamb, associate pastor of youth ministry at Living Water. "It's about seeing our brothers and sisters as people who have worth and being a part of redistributing opportunities for people."

Lamb was part of a team that worked alongside Jean Marie Bikorimana, a member of the congregation who grew up in Tanzania and recently moved to Chicago with his family. In 2016, Bikorimana was a senior in high school and working 60-70 hours per week to try to support his three brothers and sisters.

The church talked with Bikorimana about ways they could walk alongside him and what emerged was a plan to help him network and get better equipped to find a job after graduation. With support from the congregation, he enrolled in 12 weeks of training

It's about seeing our brothers and sisters as people who have worth and being a part of redistributing opportunities for people.

—Stephen Lamb

at a trade school. By the time he graduated, Bikorimana had found a skilled-labor job that allowed him to earn well above minimum wage and have a regular Monday-Friday schedule.

Once he started work, Bikorimana became aware of other job openings in his company as well as in sister organizations. He used his network to help other members of Living Water complete applications, develop their résumés and get a foot in the door for job interviews.

Lamb says this model of leadership development and the ripples it created inspired the church to dream bigger.

"It felt like Jean Marie was blazing a new trail," says Lamb. "This was something we went to MCC [Great Lakes] with. We told them what was going on and



Francine Maombi serves food at the Urban Tables booth at the farmers' market.

I enjoy what I'm doing and I like the people I'm working with. My kids are close, and I can set my schedule around what my family needs.

—Francine Maombi

basically said, 'We would love to partner with you.'

MCC Great Lakes helped provide a stipend for Bikorimana while he completed trade school and is talking about additional funding for the congregation to help them experiment with new job creation and apprenticeship models. MCC's funding supports 75 percent of the efforts, and the congregation is committed to funding 25 percent of each project.

"We're excited about this model of ministry," says Krista Dutt, MCC Great Lakes Chicago program coordinator. "In order for people to be able to take care of themselves you have to have a way of working at vocational training that emphasizes each person's dignity, and these programs seem to do that."

The congregation has now partnered with another member, Francine Maombi, originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Maombi was involved at the church but struggled to find steady employment that could provide for her family and allow her to be home at reasonable hours. Williams runs a catering business, Urban Tables, at the church and, using grant funds, was able to hire Maombi. While Maombi worked and learned about the business, she earned a food-handling permit that will allow her access to a broad range of food-service jobs.

"I love that this job is in the

church and in my community," wrote Maombi in a March 30 email. "I enjoy what I'm doing and I like the people I'm working with. My kids are close, and I can set my schedule around what my family needs."

"The whole concept of Urban Tables is to decrease stress for urban families by getting work and providing jobs that don't take people away from families," said Williams.

Maombi has also left her mark on Urban Tables' style. She helped host a pop-up café for the congregation and community that featured Congolese food and music and art by local artists.

Emanuel Kalimili, a member of the congregation originally from Tanzania, displayed some of his art at the café event and was able to sell seven or eight paintings in one evening.

"My hope is that Urban Tables will grow so that we can help others from our church or our community

who do not have jobs,” wrote Maombi. “We can train them so that they can work with us instead of going far away to do really hard jobs.”

The congregation also has other pilot projects in the works, with ideas that include hiring teenagers to go out on “bulk shopping trips” to buy basic groceries in bulk that could then be sold conveniently at the church. Williams says she realized getting to a grocery store is sometimes difficult because of transportation and city traffic, and church members may not have the ability to compare costs from store to store and end up overpaying. One example of this is the church selling eggs for \$1 per dozen, roughly \$4 less than many of the people purchasing the eggs were paying at local chain grocery stores.

Several women in the church have also started a small sewing business, making fabric shopping bags and aprons the church is

helping to sell. The business is being subsidized right now in hopes it will eventually grow to be self-sustaining.

“We’re trying to look at the skills already there in our community,” says Lamb. “How can we redistribute opportunities or come alongside someone and say, ‘We see you have gifts, and we want to work alongside you so you have opportunities to use those gifts.’”

“Our faith commitment is to being a part of this neighborhood. When our neighbors do better, we do better,” he said. “That’s part of the gospel: helping people put food on the table no matter who they are.”



Hannah Heinzekehr is executive director of The Mennonite, Inc.



Francine Maombi (left) with **Alexis Ruzahaza, Moises Gonzalez** and **K.T. McClure-Gonzalez** at Living Water Community Church.



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A tween church

Milwaukee Mennonite Church embraces lay leadership

BY **STEVE HARTMAN KEISER**

Above: **Dominic and Juanita Quartullo** with a model of the cosmos they helped create for Milwaukee Mennonite's seasons of creation worship series

Photo by *Steve Hartman Keiser*

Milwaukee (Wis.) Mennonite is a tween church. We began meeting in 2006, so that makes us 11 years old. Being tween is a stage, not a goal. We're old enough to have our own experiences, to know what we like (lay leadership and frozen custard) and don't like (long sermons and small church kitchens), to have survived our first conflicts, and to still be a little dreamy about our future as part of the people of God in Milwaukee.

Our birth story is not unusual: a city develops a critical mass of folks who are drawn to (and sometimes come from) the Mennonite faith tradition; they find each other and other like-minded followers of Jesus and eventually stumble into the hope that they might become a worshipping community.

For us, "critical mass" was about 20 people, most of them children. We adults were white and youngish (25-40 years old). Several were educators, a few were graduate students, several worked at home, others in engineering, IT and medicine. Only one of us had grown up in Milwaukee.

We must have skipped infancy and plunged straight into toddlerhood because we had a surplus of energy and excitement that first year. That energy was spent doing lots of dreaming and hammering out the logistics of being church.

The dreaming was fun. What about the gospel excites us? We imagined what we would put on a

postcard for our church. We made up future news headlines about our church (my favorite: "Local congregation hosts U2 concert at peacemaking festival"). We crafted a vision statement.

Everything was up for questioning and discerning. How do we make decisions? What does leadership look like? Where should we meet? What does worship look like? What is the significance of membership, baptism and Communion?

We discussed these questions at monthly congregational meetings that never started on time because of a premeeting gathering at Gilles, the local frozen custard stand.

God graced us with two gifts to get us through the tumult of becoming a church: holding decisions lightly and holding onto the hands/wisdom of the wider church.

Our practice of holding decisions lightly is reflected in two phrases we use a lot at Milwaukee Mennonite:

- "We can revisit this later."
- "That's a lasagna decision."

"We can decide now, hold the decision lightly and revisit it later." Paul Heidebrecht or Carmen Brubacher made that observation at one of our early meetings when we were feeling paralyzed by the desire to make the "right" decision on some long-forgotten topic. That simple wisdom has become one of our hallmarks.

Yes, we take seriously the task of institution-building as we become part of the body of Christ in the world. But we do not know how or how long we might serve God's

purposes in Milwaukee. Perhaps it will be 10 years or 100. I suppose in a way we take our own existence as a church lightly.

Church member Rachel Stolpe coined the technical term "lasagna decision," which refers to any low-impact, low-cost decision—such as what food to have for a love feast—that does not require officially checking and getting the approval of the rest of the church. It reminds

GIVING OUR MONEY

We are a church with low financial overhead (we lease our worship space and we have no paid staff), so most of our offerings go to support the work of God outside our congregation.

Specifically, we give one-third of our offering to the church international and national, e.g., Mennonite World Conference, Mennonite Mission Network, Mennonite Central Committee.

And we give one-third of our offering to ministries in Milwaukee, such as Milwaukee Inner-City Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAH), Sojourner Family Peace Center, Cathedral Center women's and family shelter, and Friedens Community Ministries food pantry.

The congregation helps decide the exact amount we give to each ministry. On one Sunday each year, everyone receives 20 or so beans and can place them in bowls that represent the ministries we support. The gifts are then allocated based on the number of beans each received.

VISIONING PROCESS

Our first organizational meeting was spent brainstorming. We plastered the walls of Connie and Steve Johnson-Evers' house with poster paper and wrote down everything we thought we as an informal gathering, now becoming a church, might need to address.

Then we formed teams to start getting things done.

The Vision and Identity Team (a.k.a. Vizdentity Team) planned a four-week visioning process: reflecting on and discussing why we felt called to become a church, what we aspired to as a worshiping community. What is the meaning of Mennonite in Milwaukee?

This is what it looked like:

Week 1: "Unleashing our dreams." Share a headline about our church that you might dream of encountering in a media outlet in the distant future (i.e. in five to 20 years). Share a headline about our church you might dream of encountering in either *The Mennonite* or *The Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* in the near future (i.e., in one to three years). Share and write down key phrases.

Homework for Week 2: Write a two- to three-sentence vision statement to guide our church over the next two years.

Week 2: Discuss each of our vision statements in a small group.

Week 3: In the whole group, share conversations from small groups. Following this, the Vizdentity Team will circulate a draft of a vision statement.

Week 4: Discussion and commitment to final text of vision statement.

I'm smiling as I realize we are now in the middle of that "distant future" we dreamed about in August 2006. And the form of our dreaming is being realized in this very article. But I'm wrinkling my brow as I realize that the contents of our dreams are still very much unrealized.

Lay leadership is only possible because we have been blessed to have a continual string of remarkable people join us, people who willingly give their time and energy.

us that some decisions really don't matter that much and that we really do value decision-making by consensus on bigger questions.

A lot of people held our hands in those early years. Martin Luther Lutheran Church opened their space to us for afternoon worship. Our nearest neighbor in Mennonite Church USA, North Suburban Mennonite Church in Mundelein, Ill., not only met with us to share their experience of becoming a church but invited us to join them at their winter retreat. We received visits and counsel from Lloyd Miller, then conference minister for Central District Conference. Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., included us in its listening project. Camp Friedenswald in Cassopolis, Mich., welcomed our children each summer. And we found a family of sibling churches in CDC that have encouraged us to live out the gospel with grace and laughter.

All these connections gave us hope and linked us to the broader church. And we soaked up that hope. The notes from a congregational meeting in October 2008 include the observation, "We're on the cusp of viability."

To our delight, many people have joined us. At least, it feels like many. We're about 60 people in 20 households now. About 25 are school-age children. About

half of us have roots in various faith traditions—Evangelical, Methodist, Lutheran, Catholic, Brethren, Buddhist—and about half of us have roots in the Mennonite faith tradition.

What draws people to us and what keeps us viable? First, there is the calling to live out the radical, enemy-embracing love of Jesus—and we try to put this love to practice in the first instance by knowing and caring for those we worship with. Second, everyone who walks through our doors gets invited to join the work of the church—out of necessity.

Milwaukee Mennonite is a solely lay-led church; we have no paid staff. Our leadership team keeps the pulse of the congregation and guides us to live out our vision. There are about 10 adults in the sermon rotation. Virtually everyone serves on a team (our euphemism for "committee").

Maybe lay leadership is another way we've been acting like a toddler: "I can do it myself." But for some of us, lay leadership continues to be a good practical choice for a small, highly involved congregation with limited financial resources. Lay leadership feels more like a calling—this is what it means to be Mennonite in Milwaukee.

Whether out of simple practicality or out of principle, lay leadership is only possible because we have been blessed to have



Norah Mast Hochstedler and **Ava Christian** at Camp Friedenswald winter junior youth retreat. Photo by **Steve Hartman Keiser**



Steve Hartman Keiser and **Gloria Speed**, aunt of Jay Anderson, who was killed by a Wauwatosa police officer. Photo provided

a continual string of remarkable people join us, people who willingly give their time and energy: gifted listeners, artists, teachers and administrators, as well as people with seminary training.

Tweens aren't typically adept at budgeting, and thankfully we have not had to worry about finances (another benefit of lay leadership and of renting our worship space). Our main budgetary concern has been deciding how to give away our money.

But our tween years haven't all been easy. We have put our communal care and our consensus-making abilities to the test during conversations on sexuality and in revisiting our understanding of Communion. And as we move from tween to teen, we have serious questions about our trajectory.

How are we shaped by these:

Our past? We like to think we are a young, flexible, innovative church. But have we already unconsciously set limits on how we worship God and serve our neighbors?

Our location? Can we engage more intentionally with our host church and with other Milwaukee churches?

Our city? We're a congregation of mostly white faces and much white privilege that is set in a deeply segregated city. That cannot go unchallenged. Some in our congregation who live in a racially and socioeconomically diverse neighborhood are discerning a call to become a household modeled after Catholic worker houses. Some have stood and prayed with the family of Jay Anderson, a black man killed by a local police officer in 2016. Milwaukee Inner-City

Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAHA) has helped us connect with others who are addressing systemic injustice. It is easy to forget the urgency of this work. The fact that we find it possible to forget is an example of our white privilege.

The Bible? Chris Gooding invited us to read and discuss the Gospels in their entirety this summer.

We need courage and resolve to keep following the movement of God's Spirit in Milwaukee. And if we don't get it right, then, by God's grace, we'll revisit that.



Steve Hartman Keiser is a member of Milwaukee Mennonite Church.

Renewing or planting a church

5 essential qualities

PEOPLE SAY it takes a special person to plant or revive a church. But the Great Commission was given to everyone. Below are some key qualities identified by Mauricio Chenlo, minister of church planting at Mennonite Mission Network. And most of them can be learned.

1. Be relational.

Engaging new faces and communities is key to building community. “I never really saw myself as a church planter until some friends said, You’re building a faith community,” says Sarah Jackson, leader of Casa de Paz (House of Peace) in Aurora, Colo.

“It’s just part of who I am as a person,” she says. Jackson can’t stop connecting people across cultures. “There’s nothing that makes us different from each other at the end of the day; we’re all human,” she says.

2. Be a part of a team.

“In larger church cultures, you might be able to find people

who nurture the group along, but [in smaller churches] you have to be able to build a team with the people you have been [given],” says Matthew Shedden, pastor of Defiance Church of Glenwood Springs, Colo. For Shedden, this meant reaching out for help with pastoral care. A woman in the congregation already did this well, so Shedden asked her to join the pastoral care team. “As we grow, we’ll add more people, but two of us are better than just me,” he told her.

3. Be a communicator through your actions.

Jackson doesn’t communicate through a formal sermon but communicates clearly through deed.

One morning, as she was reading the Bible, she came to a new understanding of Matthew 22:37-39: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind...and love your neighbor as yourself.” She was taking care of and loving herself, but “was I really loving my neighbor?” she asked. So Jackson, who lives next to a detention center, decided to take action. She opened her home to immigrants released from the Aurora Detention Center, and offered a home, meals and transportation to visit family members.

Like all things in life, communication is key. But the ability to bring the Word of God to life in a relevant manner in a unique context, says Chenlo, is especially crucial.

4. Be a resilient problem solver.

Most church planters will face setbacks from time to time. “Depending on God’s strength and being able to navigate rough waters are key skills to move forward,” says Chenlo.

Shedden agrees that it’s important to push forward while recognizing that some ideas won’t always be welcome. “If you’re going to make the change necessary for an older church culture to move forward, you’re going to have to develop a way of leading through resistance and even in the face of it,” he says. “For those in reviving work, this may mean getting smaller before you get bigger.”

5. Be called.

Because, let’s face it, when life doesn’t go as planned (and it rarely does), that’s when we rest in the security of God’s call.

Chenlo’s call started at the very beginning of his spiritual journey. Age 18 to be exact. From then on, he’s always felt that the kingdom of heaven was a gift for those outside religious systems. He vividly remembers a discipleship group that focused on how Jesus engaged with unconventional people, like the Samaritan woman, Mary Magdalene and Zacchaeus. “This foundational spiritual formation process set something in motion in my life that never quite left me,” he says. His call led Chenlo to get involved in the ministry of planting churches and leadership development in Argentina, Ecuador and the United States.



Josias Hansen, from St Paul, Minn., and Hilda Zapata Palacios, from West Palm Beach, Fla., share Communion with one another at SENT 2017, an annual church planting conference.

Kelsey Hochstetler of Mennonite Mission Network

'Evil beyond telling'

Situation in Congo grows worse daily

VIOLENCE continues to leave suffering and destruction in its wake in Congo's three Kasai provinces where most of the Mennonite churches are located. The situation worsens and grows more complex daily. For security reasons, no names are used in reporting.

A North American with Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission is in Congo walking with the church leaders of the three Mennonite denominations there. AIMM, Mennonite Mission Network and other organizations collaborate closely in ministry on the African

continent through a partnership council led by African church leaders and mission personnel from Europe and North America.

On July 26, the AIMM staff person texted: "The atrocities are beyond imagination. The evil is beyond telling. [Government and tribal] leaders with tunnel vision have [fanned the flames of ethnic rivalries] that have created a hell on earth."

The person described a conversation with a Congolese church worker who had traveled to Tshikapa, the headquarters of Communauté Mennonite au Congo (Mennonite Church of Congo).

"It was painful for him to speak," wrote the AIMM. "He had seen so many people who saw loved ones hacked to death. They are now living with hunger, lack of medical care, and a dullness of spirit that surely must be some kind of psychic protection against too

much spiritual and emotional pain."

A Congolese businessman who owns a trucking company organized a choir tour to encourage the Mennonite churches in Gungu, Kitwit and Mukedi. The choir from the capital city, Kinshasa, traveled to these communities that are "safe areas" and are welcoming internally displaced people from the Kasai provinces. The choir led in worship and in proclaiming their faith in God—Healer and Protector.

Mennonites throughout Congo are collecting food, clothing and money to help provide for those who have found their way to one of the safer areas. A more extensive, intercontinental response is being prepared by the partnership council. To donate go to mennonitemission.net/donate/causes/Congo.

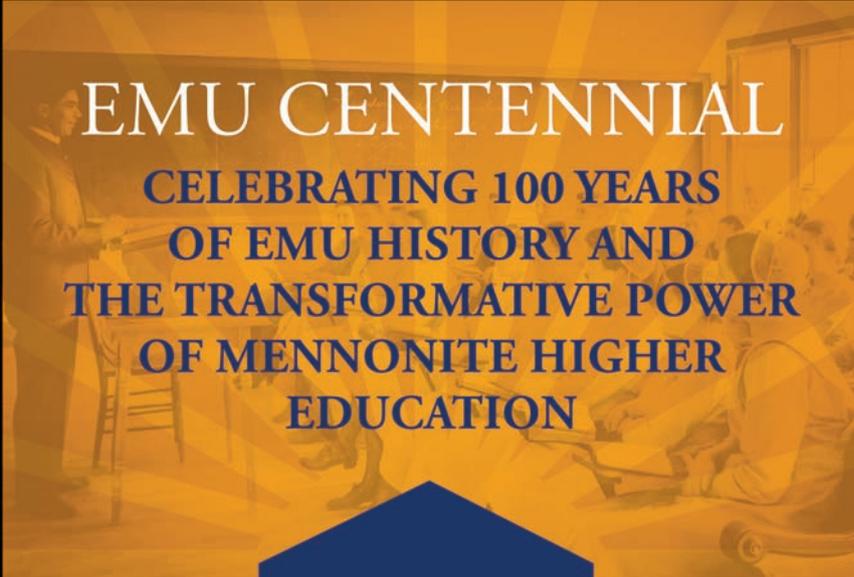
Lynda Hollinger-Janzen of Mennonite Mission Network



**Tips for teaching
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**WHAT I'M
WATCHING
THIS MONTH**



Detroit

Directed by
Kathryn Bigelow

This intense film is based on true events in Detroit in 1967, when riots led to police and national guard troops patrolling the city. Police officers kill three innocent black men and beat nine other people. Difficult to watch, the film is relevant to today's events of police killing innocent blacks and being exonerated.



The Big Sick

Directed by
Michael Showalter

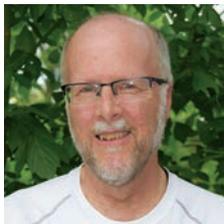
This romantic comedy explores cross-cultural complexity as a Pakistani comic falls in love with an American woman who then contracts an illness and falls into a coma. He bonds with her parents and gains courage to face his own parents' strictures against his not marrying a Pakistani. It's endearing and surprising.



A Ghost Story

Directed by
David Lowery

This original film uses long takes and careful camera work to show a lonely couple in a house. The man dies in a car wreck (unshown) and becomes a ghost, shown as a sheet with eyeholes. Lowery explores the afterlife without offering answers but raising questions that haunt us.



God's call to end poverty among us

WHILE OUR media focus on a multitude of issues, poverty gets little attention. And we hear almost nothing from poor people themselves.

The Bible is almost exactly the opposite. Concern for the poor fills its pages. Were I to list all the verses that mention concern for the widow, the orphan, the stranger—those who are vulnerable economically—it would likely fill the rest of this column.

And while many Christians talk about their faith, little is said about caring for the poor.

Liz Theoharis addresses this subject in her important book *Always with Us? What Jesus Really Said about the Poor* (Eerdmans, 2017). In particular, she addresses Matthew 26:6-13, in which Jesus says, “The poor you will always have with you.”

Over the centuries, those words have been seen as justifying neglect of the poor, that poverty is inevitable. But Theoharis argues that this “is actually one of the strongest statements of the biblical mandate to end poverty.”

She considers the full context of the passage, noting that Jesus himself was poor, along with at least 95 percent of those living in Palestine at the time, that he led a movement calling for justice for the vulnerable and was later executed by Roman authorities who felt threatened by that movement.

Further, while many of us may side with the disciples who complained about the waste of this expensive perfume, Jesus derides their call for charity. Theoharis

quotes Martin Luther King Jr., who said, “True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.”

Jesus' statement comes from Deuteronomy 15:11, which says, “Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, ‘Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land.’”

The import of this passage is that if there are any poor among you, then you are not obeying God's commands. God's will is that there be no poverty.

Theoharis writes: “the anointing of Jesus as a poor person echoes the eschatological feast in Isaiah 25:4-8, where Isaiah presents a song about the justness of God, who will make the ungodly fall and lift up the poor.”

We tend to read the Bible individualistically and see poverty as a personal sin rather than a structural one.

Theoharis writes: “The good news of the Bible has been reduced to an individualized acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, severed from his mission to the world.”

This book is rich in insight and challenges us to join the movement Jesus led, one that heeds God's call to end poverty. That will involve more than charity. It will mean relating to people in poverty and working toward structural change.

Gordon Houser is editor of *The Mennonite*.



QUOTABLE

“I’ll stand in front of the tanks of Tiananmen.

I’ll stand with the 33 million in Tahrir.

I’ll stand in velvet in ‘89 at Wenceslas.

I’ll return day after year striking in hunger with you in Azadi.

All the world over, it comes to this in the end...

I’ll be there because you need me and I know you’ll be there because I need you.”

—Kevin Ressler,
“Under the shadows of statues, we’ll meet”



RECIPE OF THE MONTH
Mole Colorado



MOST-READ ONLINE-ONLY POSTS

3.4K
A call for prayer as tensions rise between N. Korea and the U.S.
by Hyun and Sue Hur and Hannah Heinzekehr

2.3K
Why I abstained from voting on the Future Church Summit resolution
by Darrin Snyder Belousek

1.7K
Orlando 2017: What it looks like to share power and take it right back***
by Annabeth Roeschley

1.1K
Seven roadblocks that get in the way of dismantling racism in the church (and strategies to overcome them)
by Tobin Miller Shearer

FROM THE ARCHIVES



Pictured above is the parole work pass issued to Harry Sommers on Dec. 29, 1918, at the Fort Leavenworth prison in Kansas.

Sommers was drafted in September 1917 and sent to Camp Zachary Taylor in Kentucky, where he declared his position of conscientious objection to military service.

In May 1918, he was court-martialed for disobeying an order and was sent to Fort Leavenworth for eight months. This fall, the Kauffman Museum (in North Newton, Kan.) will launch an exhibit that “remembers the witness of peace-minded people,” including Mennonites, who opposed World War I.

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PERSPECTIVES FROM READERS

A new image of the church

I WENT TO the Future Church Summit as one of the stakeholders from church organizations, agencies and partnering groups who were invited to participate in this churchwide discernment process with the larger group of Mennonite Church USA delegates.

My current life experiences shaped the comments I made at my table group. I serve on the board of Mennonite Health Services (MHS), the church agency that sent me to the summit. I am also an elder at Neffsville Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa., a healthy congregation with a diversity of theological positions

I saw few comments about inviting others to join faith communities that transform the world.

among its members. I am also the executive director of Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society. LMHS relates to both the Atlantic Coast Conference and Lancaster Mennonite Conference. It organizes educational programs that help people from both conferences apply historical thinking skills to reflect on who they are as Anabaptists of the 21st century.

I read the final report from the Future Church Summit several times while preparing for this reflection. The report was a summary of ideas from participants who shared their thoughts in table groups. These thoughts

were converted to messages sent electronically to a Theme Team. The Theme Team summarized thousands of comments from table groups into a final report.

This discernment process created for me a new image of the church: a church that is continuously envisioning, becoming and impacting.

Envisioning. The new Mennonite Church USA is inviting people to envision what the church should be. The people of this church follow Jesus and his teachings, including Jesus' peace witness. The Holy Spirit guides the community of faith to discern what God is calling it to be. The God of our church invites the most vulnerable, marginalized and oppressed people into its fold and be equal contributors. The church addresses privilege within itself through repentance and humility. Its people offer creative gifts so the church can thrive and grow. These gifts come from people's diverse histories, cultures, theologies and understandings of human sexuality.

Becoming. Our new church practices collective discernment to decide what the church will become. The people of this church invite the Holy Spirit to guide them in discerning what God calls them to be by studying Scripture with each other, listening to each other's diverse perspectives and nurturing contemplative prayer. The belief in the priesthood of all believers makes them value the gifts that each person brings. They commit to redistribute power and resources. They confront and restore each other in love. They reach consensus on how they will reach their goals. No one is left behind.

Impacting. The new

denomination's purpose impacts the world. The church is a witness for peace in times of turmoil. It's a church that addresses global economic, health, environmental and migration injustices. The church seeks to address racism, refugee crises, wars, global warming, sexual violence, nationalism, individualism and other societal ills. People in the church join to act together to confront institutional sin.

What is missing from this new image of the church? I saw few comments about inviting others to join faith communities that transform the world. How do we invite those without faith without coming across in a paternalistic way? I also heard few references to how we care for our fragile church institutions in times when budgets and resources are decreasing. How do we care for these institutions, address their flaws and build their financial assets?

When we invite people into our communities of faith, when we care for our church institutions and when we also affirm the unique gifts of congregations, area conferences and the denomination, the church will fulfill its mission to bring healing and hope to the world.



Rolando Santiago is executive director of the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society.

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

Addressing claims of ‘reverse oppression’

People pray to each other. The way I say “you” to someone else, / respectfully, intimately, desperately. The way someone says / “you” to me, hopefully, expectantly, intensely.

—Huub Oosterhuis

ZACH (NOT HIS REAL NAME) and I are still friends. When I was working as a teacher in Philly, Zach remembered the challenges he had experienced during his year of teaching.

Without my asking, he cooked delicious dinners and invited me to a break from my usual peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and instant ramen. In retrospect, his were among the only nutritionally sound meals I ate during my first year of teaching. He also made a point to ask me how I was doing and how my students were doing, and he prayed for us.

In many specific ways, I have experienced Zach as a kind and gentle person. And still, a few years ago, I asked for some space in our friendship.

An increasing number of our conversations were about mine or others’ belonging—how we ought to be, what role we ought to take in church, in marriage, in society.

This was one of several interactions that led to my request:

I said: “I have a hard time attending City Church services. Biblically and empirically, I believe women are equal in their ability to serve, pastor and lead. What is a church saying about women when they do not allow women in leadership? I no longer want to be part of churches that debar women from full participation in church life.”

He replied: “But if women are included, it would hurt me and

cause me to sin. The Bible is clear about men and women’s different roles in marriage and in church life. And it is important for there to be unity in the church. If women were included in leadership, I would need to leave. It would cause disunity.”

I and many others have experienced countless iterations of this exchange. At its core, Zach was making claims of “reverse oppression.” The logic goes: Naming or resisting oppression is

It is frustrating to repeatedly run up against a definition of unity predicated on my exclusion.

the real oppression, or at least just as bad as the initial wrongdoing.

Words like “unity” are defined such that the people who have traditionally been excluded will continue to be excluded. Effectively, “unity” is invoked to reinforce that those who currently belong ought to belong, and those who do not belong ought not to belong.

It is frustrating to repeatedly run up against a definition of unity predicated on my exclusion.

Claims of reverse oppression are not limited to gender. I have been in many conversations in which congregants threaten to leave if X marginalized people group is included in the church. The logic is familiar: Somehow, if LGBTQ people are allowed to become church members, it will hurt a subgroup of straight people and their children, thereby forcing out these members.

If we even need to discuss making changes to include those who have historically been excluded, it indicates there was never unity to begin with. Those in the excluded group calling for recognition of their personhood and belonging do not thereby deny the personhood and belonging of those who have always been included.

Claims of reverse oppression are not limited to church contexts. Claims of reverse racism are made in explicitly religious and secular spaces. Comedian Aamer Rahman deconstructs reverse racism in one of his sketches. In short, while any individual can be biased, we all live in a social reality that includes, historically and currently, colonization, imperialism, war, segregation and new Jim Crow laws. Racism and oppression are about social structure and power.

In my early 20s, I began studying biblical feminism, in part to address the passages being lobbed at women in the church. I was more willing then than now to use the Bible to debate my place in the church body and society at large.

I love feminism (biblical and otherwise) and critical readings of texts, but I have lost interest in needing to justify that across race, gender, nationality, sexuality and religion, I am no more and no less than my neighbors.

People were never meant to be fought on like this.



Sarah Matsui
attends First
Mennonite Church
of San Francisco.



FROM MENNONITE CHURCH USA

New ways of doing church

RELEVANT CHURCHES constantly adapt to their context. Traditional churches struggle with new trends because they assume attaching themselves to forms will guarantee faithfulness to the gospel.

Casa de Paz is a ministry started by Sarah Jackson, who responded

No matter what context people are in, new forms of doing church are emerging across our homeland.

to a call to do something about undocumented immigrants in detention in Aurora, Colo. She didn't intend to start a church or create a nonprofit, but the Spirit led her and a group of volunteers to create Christian community around the specific need of serving the stranger. (Learn more about this creative community at casadepazcolorado.org.)

Hyun Hur and Sue Park Hur from Temple City, Calif., felt a call to create community among Asian-American people in California. They explore ways to create a peace culture in the Asian-American community and equip them to participate in God's reconciling work in relationship with other congregational members, other ethnic people, and northeast Asians and beyond.

Reconciliation is their main goal, and by this they mean to create a community of peacemakers.

See reconciliansian.com.

Judy and Steve Harder live in Mountain Lake, Minn. Judy is a nutritionist, Steve a family doctor. In 2009, they invited me to visit them and explore a possible outreach ministry to the Hispanic community in the area. They asked about a church planter. I told them they were the ones God was calling to plant the seeds of the gospel.

Read their story at mennoniteusa.org/news/spanish-speaking-church-plant-takes-root-in-mountain-lake-minn.

In 2015-16, a group of friends in West Palm Beach, Fla., shared with me the desire to have an Anabaptist presence in the area. A group of Garifuna women, a college professor and an elementary school teacher gathered to pray for God's leading to become a community of witnesses there. A group of families and singles now meet every other Saturday in homes for worship, a meal and fellowship. Students from the West Palm Beach college and others have joined the group.

No matter what context people are in, new forms of doing church are emerging across our homeland. It's exciting to see how ordinary followers respond creatively to the call to be a kingdom presence through new communities of faith. The formula seems as simple and as old as combining a group of leaders who engage with their context and share a passion for how the gospel becomes a transforming dynamic reality where they live.

Mauricio Chenlo is minister for church planting for Mennonite Mission Network.

UPDATES

EANES TO RESIGN FROM MENNOMEDIA IN 2018

Russ Eanes has announced his intention to resign as executive director of MennoMedia and its book imprint Herald Press, effective early 2018. Eanes was named executive director of MennoMedia in 2011, when the new organization was formed from a merger of Mennonite Publishing Network and Third Way Media and set up its headquarters in Harrisonburg, Va.

BUILDING PEACE AMONG NIGERIAN WOMEN OF FAITH

Former journalist and banker Theresa "Tessy" Gusim-Ndasule, a Winston Fellow at Eastern Mennonite University's Summer Peacebuilding Institute in Harrisonburg, Va., works with an interfaith women's group in Kaduna, Nigeria, facilitating dialogue with women of Muslim and Christian faiths.

TRANSITIONS IN MISSION NETWORK

Three Mennonite Mission Network senior executives—Paula Killough, senior executive for advancement, James R. Krabill, senior executive for global ministries, and Rachel Stoltzfus, senior executive for human resources, have all passed their responsibilities on to other individuals. Wil LaVeist takes Killough's role. Lyz Weaver succeeds Stoltzfus. John F. Lapp, former director for Asia, took Krabill's position in January.

A WORD FROM PASTORS

These three words

I WAS LISTENING to an old Stevie Wonder classic, “These Three Words,” and was swept away by the beauty of the message. The song asks, “When was the last time you heard the words ‘I love you’?” It goes on to say that tomorrow is not promised to any of us, that we or our loved ones could be taken away at any time and simply saying these three words will make the unthinkable bearable. I thought about the power of the words and what happens when we don’t hear them. I also wondered, “When did God ever say, I love you?”

As a pastor, too often I work with individuals who have not heard these words or don’t hear them enough. Husbands and wives, siblings and, most egregious of all, parents to children, go without uttering these words and assume or overlook the power within them. The absence of these words opens doors for bitterness, hatred and evil to take over the relationship and infect the spirit of a person, family, community and, yes, nation.

In Jeremiah 31:3 we find these beautiful words: “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.”

The passage goes on to talk about building up, singing and dancing, planting vineyards and enjoying the fruits of the land. I wonder how much different this world would be if we had this kind of love for one another and all of God’s creation.

In a nation where fighting and bickering is the flavor of the day, it would be great if we tried building up, not tearing down.

We spend too much time talking about what negative statement someone made against someone else instead of addressing the real issues facing our country and our world. We don’t talk about poverty at all; we’ve become weary of the talk of mass incarceration, and whatever you do, please don’t

We cannot let the negativity of the day stop us from feeling compassion for our neighbor and our enemy.

talk about immigration. When we discuss these issues, people’s eyes gloss over, their minds check out and/or anxiety builds inside them as they search for an answer that will cut the conversation short and search for an exit from your space. Yet these issues were clearly important to Jesus, the one we seek to emulate. In Matthew 25:35-40 we find these words:

...for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.... Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.

We cannot grow weary in doing what is right and just. We can’t let the negativity of the day stop us from feeling compassion for our neighbor and our enemy. We have to strive to show the love

of Jesus by helping the homeless, welcoming those seeking refuge and taking care of our seniors and children. Jesus was talking about and trying to show us love.

Stevie Wonder reminds us that when it is all said and done, it comes down to these three words. When a family member passes on, when a family member is incarcerated, when a family member becomes ill or when we are under tremendous stress, knowing that we are not alone and that someone loves us can make all the difference in the world.

As I work with young people, I find that those struggling the most don’t hear or believe they are loved. We have far too many people going through life without knowing or even being loved. We have a foster-care system overrun with children in desperate need of a family that will show them love. We have women caught in abusive relationships because they don’t understand or feel true love. We are part of a national system of governance that is devoid of love. And because of things like this, too many people go without knowing the power and freedom found in true love. The love God was talking about in Jeremiah is a love that will make us sing and dance, a love that will make us prosperous and giving.

These three words, “I love you,” can change the world we live in, if only each of us will say them just a little bit more.



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

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.

Bollman, Kenneth Wade, 85, of Fort Wayne, Ind., passed away on April 29. Born on Nov. 28, 1931, in Nappanee, Ind., he was a son of the late Roy A. and Mabel V. Bollman. He was employed in the grocery/food business all his life, from being a stock boy at Kroger's as a teenager to selling homemade noodles across the eastern part of the United States until he retired. Over the years, he was a salesman, calling on grocery stores across northern Indiana, Michigan and eastern Ohio and managed a food brokerage in Fort Wayne. He also served on the board of directors of Fort Wayne Rescue Mission, Fort Wayne Food Brokers Association, the local Ten Thousand Villages Store, the Dove's Nest Thrift Shop and Little Eden Camp in Michigan. He was a member of North Leo Mennonite Church, where he was actively involved on the board of directors, teaching Sunday school and facilities management (tackling many maintenance projects). In addition to his church involvement, he was a bass singer for the Burden Lifters southern gospel quartet. He ministered with this group for 16 years, singing in 13 different states and Canada. The Burden Lifters made six albums, including eight-tracks and cassettes. One of his joys was his family. Being a husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather brought him many blessings. He became an avid Purdue fan after two of his sons graduated from there, and he attended many sporting events with them as well as doing a variety of activities with all family members. He is survived by his wife of 65 years, Oleta Bollman; children Myron (Josie) Bollman, Gerry (Pam) Bollman, Rick (Marj) Bollman and Michele Bollman; grandchildren Emily (Joe) Buller, Jill (Dan) Cassidy, Andrew

Bollman, Brad (Jessica) Bollman, Erika Bollman, Amy (Bobby) Prieto and Sara Bollman; great-grandchildren Kathryn and Madelyn Cassidy, Ella, Amelia, Jackson, Annabelle and Lila Bollman; sisters Glenwyn (Ken) Vos and Shirley (Dan) Bricker; brother Sherlin (Nadine) Bollman. He was also preceded in death by his sister Charlene Ferguson. Funeral service: May 8 at North Leo Mennonite Church, Leo, Ind.

Brenneman, Ruby A., 81, Kalona, Iowa, formerly of Ventura, Calif., died April 15 at Pleasant View Home. She was born Dec. 2, 1935, to Norman and Katie Swartzendruber Brenneman in rural Wellman, Iowa. She graduated from Iowa Mennonite School in 1954 and Eastern Mennonite College in 1961. In 1961-1962, she volunteered through Mennonite Board of Missions, where she taught school in a migrant camp at Stanfield, Ariz. In 1965-1967, she served as hostess at Mennonite Central Committee in Akron, Pa. She made her home in Ventura, where she was active in church by serving in many capacities. She was known for sharing her delicious food, her handwritten letters and cards to her many friends, infectious laughter, love of singing and a joyous life of unceasing prayer of thanksgiving. In 2013, she moved to Iowa to be near her family. She was preceded in death by her parents and a brother-in-law, E.C. Berger. She is survived by a brother, Keith (Mary) Brenneman, Peoria, Ariz., and a sister, Nedra Berger, Missouri City, Texas, six nieces and nephews and 10 great-nieces and nephews. A celebration service was held June 10 at Upper Deer Creek Church, Wellman.

Brubaker, J. Lester, 93, Lititz, Pa., died June 15. Spouse: Lois E. Byler Brubaker (deceased). Parents: Levi H. and Anna G. Brubaker. Children: Rose Kennel, Anne Roth, Ed Brubaker, Charles Brubaker; five grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 16 at Landis Homes Retirement Community, Lititz.

Detweiler, R. Glen, 74, Silverdale, Pa., died March 4. Spouse: Diane R. Detweiler. Parents: Roland M. and

Margaret Landes Detweiler. Children: Steve Detweiler and Sheryl Moyer; five grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral service: March 9 at Blooming Glen (Pa.) Mennonite Church.

Driver, Gladys A., 95, Harrisonburg, Va., died June 25. Parents: Rhodes Homer Driver and Anna May Weaver Driver. Graveside service: June 28 at Weavers Mennonite Church Cemetery, Harrisonburg.

Halteman, Elizabeth G. Freed, 96, Franconia Township, Pa., died July 5. Spouse: Leroy M. Halteman (deceased). Parents: William W. and Mamie Gottshall Freed. Children: Peggy Ann Blosser, Kenneth Halteman; four grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren; seven great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 15 at Souderton Mennonite Homes, Souderton, Pa.

Helmuth, Ida Mae Bontrager, 98, Goshen, Ind, died July 30. Parents: Jacob and Fannie Schrock Bontrager. Children: Edna VanDiepenbos, Darlene Mishler, Shirley Lewis, Trennis "Tony" Helmuth, Leland Helmuth, Quinten Helmuth; 15 grandchildren; 35 great-grandchildren; eight great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 3 at Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Herr, Elwood "Woody" L., 81, Obion, Tenn., formerly of Sterling, Ill., died June 1. Spouse: Brenda Boswell Hughes Herr. Spouse: Janet K. Thomas Herr (deceased). Parents: Victor and Ruth Herr. Children: Jaime Herr, Greg Herr, Denise Lyday, Douglas Herr, Philip Herr; stepsons: Scott Hughes, Steve Hughes; five grandchildren; six step-grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; two step-great-grandchildren. A private Celebration of Life was held at Lake Norfolk, Ark.

Kratz, John D., 78, Souderton, Pa., died Feb. 13. Spouse: Dorothy C. Freed Kratz. Parents: Walter and Hilda Derstine Kratz. Children: Randy and Melissa Kratz, Dr. Richard and Suzanne Kratz, Rodney and Carissa Kratz; six

grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 18 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Landis, Doris M. Halteman, 88, Telford, Pa., died Feb. 25. Spouse: Henry F. Landis (deceased). Parents: Abram A. and Jennie Becker Halteman. Children: Larry and Glen Landis; six grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral service: March 1 at Blooming Glen (Pa.) Mennonite Church.

Martin, Gordon, 82, St. Jacobs, Ontario, died July 3, of congestive heart failure. Spouse: Florence Martin. Parents: Ibra and Melinda Martin. Children: Pauline Martin, Murray Martin Marie Martin Strauss, Ken Martin, Cheryl Martin Tavitian, Emma Martin; nine grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 7 at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church.

Martin, Melvin J., 86, Gap, Pa., died June 30. Spouse: Geneva Kauffman Martin. Parents: Jacob and Elsie Denlinger Martin. Children: Janice Baldauf, Barbara Heisey, Ruth Heatwole, Sheldon Martin; six grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 3 at Forest Hills Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa.

Myers, Pearl Long, 93, Souderton, Pa. died March 8. Spouse: Emerson Myers (deceased). Parents: Ervin and Lizzie Etta Weller Long. Children: Philip Dean Myers; three grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 17 at Souderton Mennonite Homes.

Nisly, Wendell William, 70, Kalona, Iowa, died June 22. Spouse: Muriel Miller Nisly. Parents: William and Edith Swartzendruber Nisly. Children: Brigette Ingersoll, Shane Nisly; four grandchildren. Funeral: June 26 at Kalona Mennonite Church.

Schertz, Lois M. Schertz, 97, Goshen, Ind., died May 24. Spouse: Russell Henry Schertz (deceased). Parents:

Emanuel and Lena Drange Schertz. Children: Deloss Schertz, Dean Schertz, Elaine Schertz; five grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 15 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

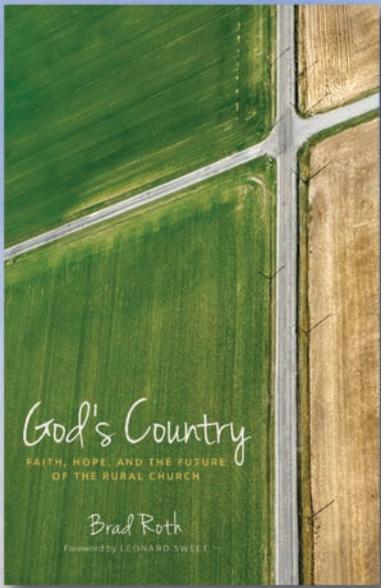
Schmell, Stella May, 98, Souderton, Pa., died April 9. Parents: Samuel and Stella Landis Schmell. Funeral: April 18 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Stayrook, Mildred P. Harshbarger, 94, Belleville, Pa., died April 6. Spouse: Joseph E. Stayrook (deceased). Parents: Edward J. and Margaret "Maude" Miller Harshbarger. Children: Robert E. Stayrook, Cynthia J. Taylor, Sandy Stayrook, Sharon Weaver; six grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 10 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Belleville.

Yoder, Jane Louise Yoder, 62, Belleville, Pa., died Feb. 28, of brain cancer. Spouse: Ray L. Yoder. Parents: Paul T. and Cora Hartzler Yoder. Children: Kristina E. Bonson, Jason M. Yoder; three grandchildren. Memorial service: March 4 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Belleville.

Yoder, Patricia Ann Yoder, 76, West Liberty, Ohio, died April 9, of cancer. Parents: Clarence O. and Grace Brennehan Yoder. Memorial service: April 21 at Bethel Mennonite Church, West Liberty.

Yost, Carolyn Schnell, 82, Phoenix, Ariz., died May 29. Spouse: Jerry Yost (deceased). Parents: Russell and Helen Schnell. Children: David Yost, Robert Yost, Ellen Kaufman; nine grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Memorial service: June 10 at First Mennonite Church, Phoenix.



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STORIES FROM THE GLOBAL ANABAPTIST CHURCH

History and identity

IN HIS LANDMARK book *Latino Mennonites* (Johns Hopkins, 2014), historian Felipe Hinojosa reframes traditional tellings of the Mennonite story in North America by giving Spanish-speaking Mennonites a prominent place in the narrative. The emergence of a distinctive Latino Mennonite identity in the 20th century, he argues—expressed most visibly in new forms of activism in the church and broader society—was not just a parallel thread running alongside the established narrative of Mennonite history. Rather, the newly told story challenges all those who claim the name “Mennonite” to rethink their collective history, as if it was being told for the first time. That exercise, especially for those long familiar with the standard storyline, is both unsettling and exciting.

How “we” tell “our” story is an exercise in power; it defines group identity almost as much as a confession of faith or formal statements regarding church polity. It should not be surprising then, that historical narratives are fraught with tension.

That tension was on full display in early July at the Mennonite Church USA convention in Orlando, Fla., when organizers of the Future Church Summit invited participants to identify crucial historical moments on a massive timeline spanning the past 500 years of Mennonite history. The instructions were not entirely clear—some entered the starting date of their home congregation; others noted key moments in the history of church institutions; events relevant to Native American and African-American Mennonites were represented on the timeline;

and key dates linked to LGBTQ advocacy within the church also appeared.

By itself, a timeline of events is little more than a hodgepodge of dates. The real challenge is to give meaning to those dates by weaving them into a coherent narrative—or by noting what stories may be missing altogether. In the exercise at the convention, I was one of five people asked to offer brief, interpretive observations about the information that had been posted.

How ‘we’ tell ‘our’ story is an exercise in power.

As the process unfolded, I could feel both keen interest and a palpable sense of anxiety in the room: Whose story would be highlighted? Who would be slighted or overlooked? By the next morning, at least a half dozen people had pulled me aside, sometimes with tears in their eyes, to express deep frustration that a specific group, a key theme or a momentous turning point had been overlooked or misinterpreted, such as Latino/a Mennonites.

The anxious foray into history at the convention, like Hinojosa’s *Latino Mennonites*, is a reminder that our historical narratives are forever unsettled. At a time when the future of our denomination seems uncertain, the narratives of our collective past take on even more urgency. Who has the authority to tell “our” history? And will I recognize myself in the narrative?

Mennonite historians wrestled with similar questions

for most of the 20th century. Was the Anabaptist movement a continuation of the radical 12th-century Waldensians, or were they true (step)children of the Reformation? Did Harold Bender’s “Anabaptist Vision” capture the essence of Anabaptism, or, as the polygenesis historians argued, was the movement always fragmented? Is the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition primarily a theological movement or an ethnic sub-culture? Are Spirit-driven renewal movements a sign of new life or a form of acculturation?

In 2013, Mennonite World Conference celebrated the completion of a five-volume “Global Mennonite History” series—the first history of the Anabaptist-Mennonite movement to include substantial narratives written by Mennonite and Church of the Brethren historians in the global South. Most people at the gathering in Orlando likely did not have these fourth-generation Mennonites in Indonesia and India—or first-generation Mennonites in South Korea or Chile—in mind when they anxiously scanned the timeline for evidence of “their” groups. Yet 93 percent of those who are part of the Anabaptist-Mennonite community now reside outside of North America.

How and when will their story become “our” story?



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

Know where you are

YOU'VE PROBABLY looked at a map in a park or a mall and seen the words, “You are here.” Or if you use Google Maps on your phone to check your route somewhere, you find a dot that tells you where you are in relation to where you want to go.

That’s important information.

And, as the articles in this month’s issue illustrate, it’s important to know where we are as congregations.

We looked at examples of new ways of doing church and found some interesting perspectives.

We interviewed Juan Marrero and Aldo Siahaan, who are pastors connected with the Kingdom Builders Anabaptist Network of Greater Philadelphia (page 10).

Brad Roth writes about the rural church and how it is different from the urban or suburban church (page 16).

We talked with people at Living Water Community Church in Chicago, a congregation with four pastors and worship services led in English, Khmer and Swahili (page 20).

Steve Hartman Keiser writes about his small urban congregation in Milwaukee, Wis., which has no paid leadership (page 24).

We can learn much from these congregations, how they learn about their context, the people they encounter, and how they

In order to know our community and befriend our neighbors, we need to be there a while.

reach out to them. This includes returning citizens in Philadelphia, rural people in Moundridge, Kan., recently resettled refugees in Chicago and people from various faith traditions in Milwaukee.

But it won’t work to try to copy them, using some cookie-cutter approach, because each place and church is unique.

We need to know where we are and who our neighbors are. What are the needs in our community?

What are the gifts among us?

And do we as a congregation give freedom to our members to explore new ways of being church? Are we open to the risk of changing the way we’ve done church in the past? I don’t mean changing for the sake of change but being willing to let people take initiative rather than having to do everything by the book.

In order to know our community and befriend our neighbors, we need to be there a while. Siahaan says: “As a church planter, one thing I learned is that you need to stay in one place and try to learn about the community itself.”

In his book *God’s Country*, Roth relates this stability to Jesus’ words about abiding (John 15:5). “Caring for the world means caring for a particular corner of it,” Roth writes.

Besides knowing where we are, we must know Whose we are. We are to abide with Jesus Christ wherever we find ourselves.

Gordon Houser,
Editor of The Mennonite