

A FORUM FOR MENNONITE VOICES

The Mennonite

MARY'S EXAMPLE

INSIDE

Once upon
a border

Waiting to be
surprised

Fear of strangers

DECEMBER 2017
VOL. 20 • NO. 12



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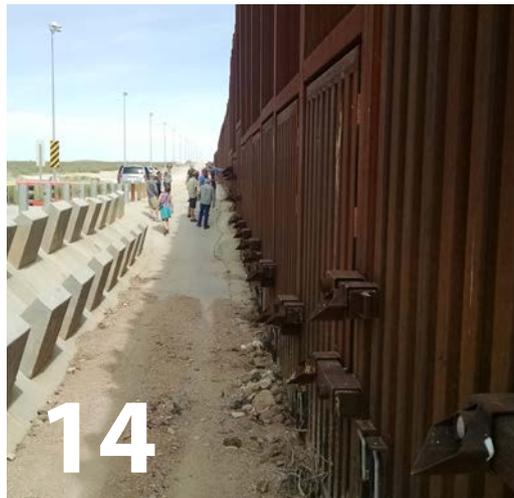


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TheMennonite

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ON THE COVER: *Madonna and Child, hand-painted Orthodox Icon by Antonia Yankova, Bulgaria. Courtesy of Found (www.foundgoshen.com)*

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Letters

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

Reading Joshua

If Keith Jantz wants to humiliate Gordon Houser by applying his formula to Joshua 6:21 and finding the formula lacking (Letters, November), he has his reward. If he wants to get an Anabaptist perspective on the book of Joshua, he can consult the Introduction by Gordon H. Matties in the Believers Church Bible Commentary on the book of Joshua (Herald Press, 2012).

—Daniel Hertzler, *Scottsdale, Pa.*

Loaves and Fishsticks

I really appreciated the Loaves and Fishsticks cartoon (November). As a Mac user, it took me a few moments to realize what it was saying, but then I laughed out loud. I look forward to the cartoons in each issue of *The Mennonite*.

—Dan Weinhold, *Lancaster, Pa.*

Let's talk about wealth

The income of the top 1 percent of U.S. households is between 12 and 20 percent (pretax vs. post tax) of total income.

The wealth of the top 1 percent of households is 38 percent of privately held wealth. The median net worth of white families is now 10 times that of African-American families, mostly because of inherited money. It is doubtful that anyone "earns" a billion dollars. Rather, they receive it.

Credit card debt is dwarfed by mortgage debt. One of the largest government benefits is mortgage interest deduction, which is larger than food stamps and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families combined. Dr. King's sermons are insightful and credible.

—Robert Erck, www.themennonite.org

IN THIS ISSUE

This month's issue considers different aspects of Advent and Christmas. These two seasons in the church year follow themes of waiting for God's coming to bring justice and celebrating God's incarnation in Jesus.

Anton Flores (page 10) recalls Simeon's words to Mary and reflects on a double funeral in his community. Mathew Swora (page 14) retells the story of Joseph and Mary's flight to Egypt with Jesus in light of Swora's visit to the U.S.-Mexico border. Felipe Hinojosa (page 18) relates the power of the Christmas program in his congregation growing up. Melissa Florer-Bixler (page 22) writes about the gift of living in a L'Arche community. And Marv Friesen (page 26) reflects on the gratitude of being welcomed in Allegheny Mennonite Conference.

We are sad for ourselves but happy for Hannah that she will be leaving us to work at Notre Dame (page 5).

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



Heinzekehr to transition from The Mennonite

HANNAH HEINZEKEHR

submitted her resignation to the board of directors of The Mennonite, Inc., on Oct. 30. Heinzekehr began as executive director for The Mennonite, Inc., in October 2015.

In January 2018, she will begin work as the Communications Program Director for the Kroc Institute of International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind. She will continue to work with The Mennonite on a part-time basis as needed to ensure a smooth transition.

Prior to her work with The Mennonite, Heinzekehr served as director of communications and marketing for Mennonite Church USA and as the liaison between the Executive Board and the board for The Mennonite, Inc., from 2013-2015. She also worked as a Convention Planning Coordinator for Mennonite Church USA from 2011-2013.

During her time with The Mennonite, Inc., Heinzekehr led a process to redesign *The Mennonite* magazine, continued to build on the work of former executive director Anna Groff in building a

robust online publication, seeing web traffic and social media engagement increase by over 40 percent, addressed budget challenges and brought *The Mennonite* back into the black in FYE17, and worked with Unlock Ngenuity and Nekeisha Alexis to implement antioppression reviews.

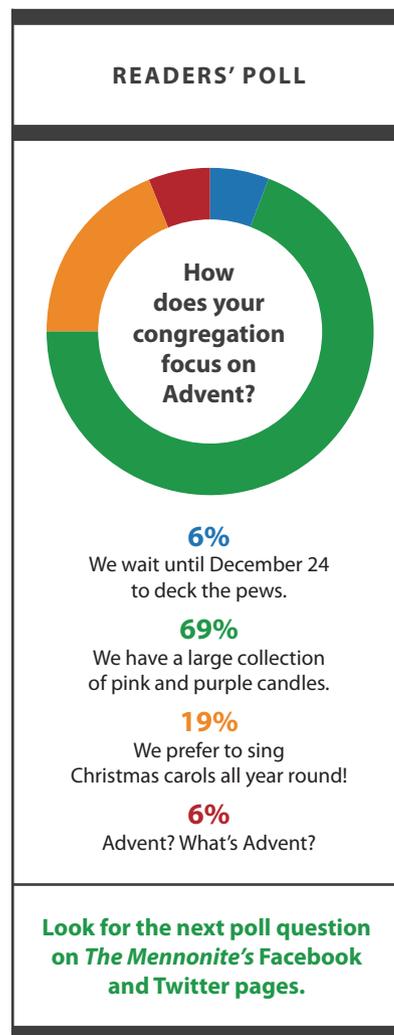
“It has been an honor to serve as part of The Mennonite’s staff,” says Heinzekehr. “I deeply believe in the mission of The Mennonite and of MC USA. I have grown to love so many people and congregations across the church and have been honored that they’ve been willing to share their stories with me and with the broader church.”

Gordon Houser will continue as editor of the print magazine, a role he moved into in 2015.

“In an era where our church is undergoing widespread change and we’re beginning a new process to examine how God is calling MC USA today, I firmly believe that the work of The Mennonite is more vital and important than ever,” says Heinzekehr. “I have the utmost confidence that the staff and board of The Mennonite, and a new executive director, are well positioned to continue this important work.”

The board of The Mennonite, Inc., and the Executive Board of MC USA, which must approve the selection of Heinzekehr’s successor, will coordinate the transition to a new executive director.

“Hannah has been a significant leader in our organization at a time of major change among church-affiliated media,” says Barth Hague, chair of The Mennonite, Inc., board. “She has carefully led us into a full embrace of digital content distribution and helped chart a



future for *The Mennonite*, TMail and other platforms in the midst of transition within Mennonite Church USA. Her gifts will be missed. Our board will work carefully to ensure that the next executive director will be able to continue on the path Hannah has helped establish.”

Heinzekehr, originally from Goshen, Ind., graduated from Bluffton (Ohio) University in 2007 with a degree in communications. She earned a master’s degree in theological studies and leadership from Claremont (Calif.) School of Theology in 2012.

—Gordon Houser, for *The Mennonite, Inc.*, board

News Briefs

COMPILED BY
GORDON HOUSER

MC USA Leaders Council holds first meeting of the biennium

Three weeks after Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board approved plans to implement the Journey Forward, a two-year process building on the outcomes generated by the Future Church Summit process at the Orlando convention in July, the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) of MC USA spent considerable time processing the plan and offering feedback.

Around 60 leaders from area conferences, constituency groups and agencies met during the CLC's first meeting of the biennium Oct. 19-21 in Kansas City, Mo.

The group spent the bulk of its time offering feedback on the three core values proposed to guide the Journey Forward process: "Grounded in the

whole story of Jesus, transformed by the Holy Spirit in community and empowered to join in God's reconciling work."

They also discussed the process itself, which will include six phases resulting in an updated Journey Forward document to be processed by the denomination's Delegate Assembly at its 2019 meeting.

During his executive director's report, Stutzman also invited CLC members to give feedback to the idea of area conferences functioning as a "federation." Stutzman noted that this was a word that occurred over two dozen times during the Future Church Summit and that perhaps best defines the current realities of how area conferences function in the denomination's structure.

—Hannah Heinzekehr for TMail

MennoMedia appoints new executive director and publisher

The MennoMedia Board has named Amy Gingerich as the new executive director and publisher at MennoMedia



and its book imprint Herald Press, effective early 2018.

Gingerich has served as editor at Herald Press books and editorial director at MennoMedia since 2009. Under her leadership Herald Press has targeted its book publishing in two veins: one that helps describe Amish and Mennonites to tourist markets and one that helps Christians unpack implicit Anabaptist values such as community and discipleship. Recent bestselling Herald Press titles she has acquired include the *Mennonite Girls Can Cook* series, *Anabaptist Essentials: Ten Signs of a Unique Christian Faith*, *Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism* and *Very Married: Field Notes on Love and Fidelity*. Her work also involves oversight of Sunday school curricula, periodicals and the forthcoming Mennonite hymnal to be released in 2020.

Gingerich's appointment has already been approved by the boards of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada.

Prior to her work as editorial director, Gingerich was managing editor of the *Gather 'Round* Sunday school curriculum copublished by Mennonite Publishing Network and Brethren Press. She also worked as a newspaper reporter and editor in California for five years.

—MennoMedia



MCC photo/Tifanee Wright

Alternative rites of passage for girls

Ana Laizer, right, who is standing with Paulina Sumayani, director of Tanzania Education and Micro Business Opportunity Trust, participated in TEMBO's Sara and Juma program at her school. Because of the program, Laizer decided she didn't want to undergo female genital mutilation or to be married at a young age.—Mennonite Central Committee

Conference explores breadth and depth of conscientious objection

In the United States and among peace churches, we haven't been

talking as much as we used to about conscientious objection to war and we should be. This was the strong and clear message coming out of a three-day conference exploring the stories of conscientious objectors to World War I and the lessons of these stories for today.

More than 250 participants gathered for “Remembering Muted Voices: Conscience, Dissent, Resistance and Civil Liberties in World War I,” held Oct. 19-22 at the National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City, Mo.

Through plenary lectures, a new traveling exhibit, workshops, paper presentations, concerts and a memorial service, the conference painted a broad picture of conscientious objection, exploring the stories of Anabaptists and other historic peace church objectors, Protestant and Catholic objectors, and secular objectors motivated by humanitarian, environmental and justice concerns.

—Hannah Heinzekehr for TMail

Michiana Mennonite Relief Sale recycles 48 cubic yards of waste

As recently as 2009, all of the waste generated by the thousands of guests at the Michiana Mennonite Relief Sale, Goshen, Ind., went into the trash except for a few aluminum cans. In September, the sale kept a total of 48 cubic yards of waste out of the landfill. If those cubic yards were stacked end to end, they'd be almost as long as three semi trailers. Or you could fill about 250 bathtubs with that much waste.

How did the sale accomplish this level of recycling when greening a large event can seem overwhelming? Leaders of the effort—Steve Shantz, Eileen Saner and David and Fern Gerber, all of Goshen, Ind.—describe a process that evolved each year with plenty of hands-on learning along the way.

They named the following recycling practices as important: Embrace a vision for caring for the earth; start



Celebrating resistance in Colombia

Doña Fany García, co-founder of Cahucopana in Colombia, plants seeds in memory of the victims killed from her region. “To forgive is not to forget; it is to not allow history to repeat itself,” she said. On Sept. 18, the state, through the Victims Unit, acknowledged its responsibility for the violence that Cahucopana and its members had suffered.—*Christian Peacemaker Teams*

with small projects; work closely with the relief sale board, food committee and food vendors; communicate with the public; be reflective.

—Mennonite Creation Care Network

Hmong committed to Jesus despite persecution

In the summer of 2016, government soldiers surrounded a debris field where the chair of the Thupberg congregation of the Hmong Church of Christ in Thailand owned a guest house that he rented to people vacationing in the mountains. They told the owner he did not have proper permits and destroyed the building, a loss to him of some \$166,000.

Ponchai Banchasawan, pastor of the congregation, believes the demolition came from prejudice and persecution. Hmong followers of Jesus are a double minority: people of Chinese descent in a Thai society and Christians in a Buddhist culture.

Pastor Ponchai’s congregation and others from the Hmong people of Thailand are committed to Jesus’ way of peace and forgiveness. Forming the Hmong Seventh District of the Church of Christ in Thailand, they were welcomed as members of Mennonite World Conference by the MWC Executive Committee in February.

—MWC

Salford Mennonite celebrates 300 years

Salford Mennonite Church in Harleysville, Pa., celebrated its 300th anniversary in September. It used the time not only to celebrate its past but to reflect, laugh at and challenge itself moving forward. The celebration centered around the theme “When Hope Meets History.”

—TMail



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

Miscellany

COMPILED BY
GORDON HOUSER

43

U.S. ranking in the 2017 World Press Freedom index, down two spots from 2016. Norway is No. 1.

—*Reporters Without Borders*

People think of themselves as better than average because they think of average as below average.

—*Harper's*

Climate change is bad for your health, study finds

A sobering new report from a commission convened by the medical journal *The Lancet*, released Oct. 30, says that climate change is already harming human health on a vast scale. "Climate change is happening, and it's a health issue today for millions worldwide," said Anthony Costello, a co-chairman of the commission that produced the report, called "The Lancet Countdown." *The Lancet*, one of the world's most prestigious medical journals, is not an environmental advocacy group. The commission says that human-caused global warming "threatens to undermine the past 50 years of gains in public health." But the report also says a comprehensive approach to slow the planet's warming could be "the great health opportunity of the 21st century."

—*New York Times*

Jesuits return land

The Jesuit-run St. Francis Mission, which serves the Lakota peoples in south-central South Dakota, announced it will return about 500 acres to the Rosebud Sioux tribe, a band of Lakotas with a reservation in the same area. The land was given to the Jesuits in the 19th century by the U.S. government.

—*Religion News Service*

Being well-read is a transcendent achievement similar to training to run 26.2 miles, then showing up for a marathon in New York City and finding 50,000 people there. It is at once superhuman and pedestrian.

—*Danny Funt at cjr.org*

Surge in anti-Semitism

A new report shows a continued rise in anti-Semitic incidents across the United States in the first nine months of 2017, partly attributable to the Charlottesville, Va., rally in which white nationalists marched through the city shouting, "Jews will not replace us." The report from the Anti-Defamation League shows a 67 percent increase in physical assaults, vandalism and attacks on Jewish institutions over the same period last year. Specifically, the report cites 1,299 anti-Semitic incidents across the United States between Jan. 1 and Sept. 30 of 2017, up from 779 in the same period in 2016.

—*Religion News Service*



809

In the seven days following the Las Vegas attack, at least 809 people were shot in the United States, 247 of them fatally.

—*The Trace*

Amount awarded to Michael Brown's family in their settlement against the city of Ferguson, Mo.:

\$1,500,000

To a Maryland family whose dog was killed by Anne Arundel County police:

\$1,260,000

—*Harper's*

LOAVES AND FISHSTICKS BY STEVE EDWARDS



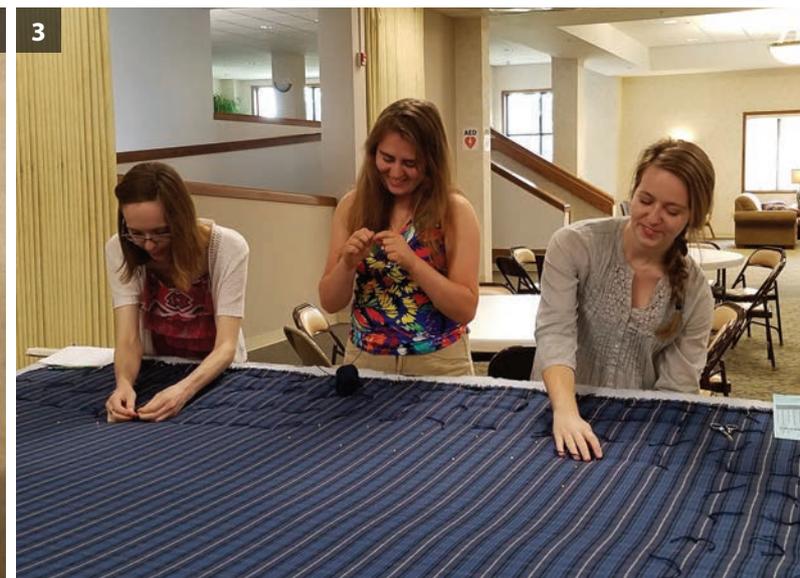
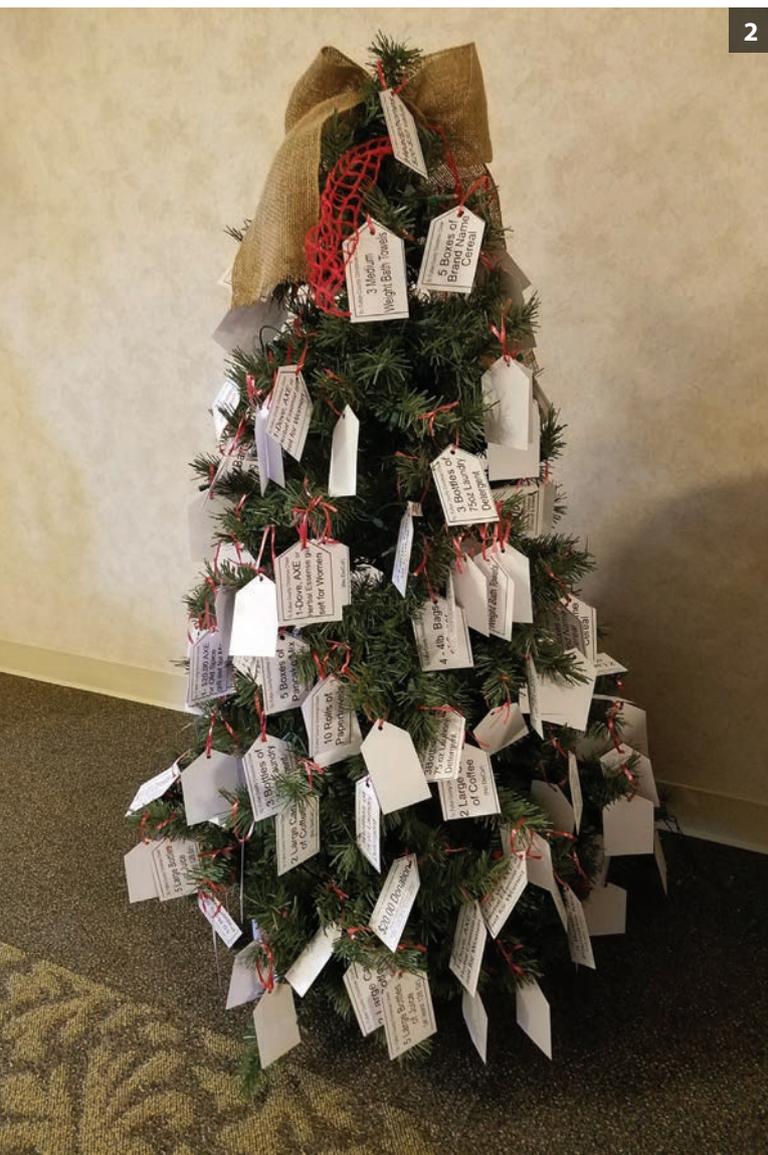
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Zion Mennonite Church

Archbold, Ohio

1. Al Liechty, Ginny Liechty, Hannah Short and Katie Yoder take part last summer in a time of activities, games, projects and fellowship.
2. This Christmas tree is part of an annual event called “Christmas Cheer,” in which people in need can shop in a “store” set up with groceries, household items and gifts donated by area churches and organizations. Each church has a tree with tags of needed items that members of their congregations can donate.
3. Hannah Short, Katie Yoder and Meg Short knot a comforter at church.
4. Bishop Amos Muhagachi (second from right) of the Mennonite Church in Tanzania preached at Zion on Oct. 29. With him from left are Corben Weaver Boshart, Sue Short, Esther Muhagachi and Jessica Schrock-Ringenberg.

Photos by Sue Short, except #4 by Stan Short





BY ANTON FLORES -MAISONET

The wrong choice?

An Advent meditation

Simeon said to Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul, too.” (Luke 2:34-35).

Can you imagine hearing such words at the religious dedication of your infant? What a downer! Even if true, the words feel tactless.

That said, if Simeon’s message isn’t dystopian enough, allow me to infuse a bit of science fiction into this scene. Imagine that upon hearing this prophecy, Mary experiences a flash forward:

MARY: What day is it? Do you know, baby?

8-YEAR-OLD-JESUS: Sunday. Why doesn’t Daddy look at me the same way anymore?

MARY: That’s my fault. I told him something he wasn’t ready to hear.

8-YEAR-OLD-JESUS: What?

MARY: Well, believe it or not, I know something that’s going to happen. I can’t explain how I know, I just do. And when I told your daddy, he got really mad. And he said I made the wrong choice.

8-YEAR-OLD-JESUS: What? What’s going to happen?

This dialogue is obviously not from Scripture. Rather the lines are taken almost verbatim from the 2016 film *Arrival*. Toward the end of that movie, the protagonist, Dr. Louise Banks, tries to explain to her 8-year-old daughter why she and the child’s father got divorced.

The weight of the words she says, “He said I made the

wrong choice,” is lost without understanding the full context. Dr. Banks mysteriously experiences precognitive moments of her own future as the result of learning an alien language, and the dark side of this is that she has visions of a future where her yet unborn child will die prematurely of a rare disease. Through the acquisition of this “gift,” Dr. Banks learns her future child’s suffering will pierce her own soul.

The power of good cinema is that it captivates its audience. We identify with the protagonist and in this film we are left asking, “Did she make the wrong choice?” In *Arrival*, we empathize with Dr. Banks and wonder what we would do under the same, albeit fantastical circumstances. If we knew our future child would bring us immeasurable love and joy but that she would also die a premature death, would we choose to conceive that child? Would we even have a choice?

Of course, we are not gifted with such foresight, so we can only vicariously ponder this scenario via the fictitious, but Scripture states that Mary had foreknowledge that her child was destined for a life filled with great meaning but also great suffering. And it’s in hindsight that her oft-quoted line, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word,” still perplexes us. Did she make the wrong choice? Did she even have a choice?

During Jesus’ temple dedication, the prophecy of Simeon is a precognitive, supernatural moment. It’s filled with divine affirmation of the future and eternal Jesus. The child is God’s salvation, a light for revelation and glory. But Mary is

Advent can be a time that pierces one’s soul with sorrow and robs one of the expectant joy of Christmas.

also told that her motherly soul will be pierced by unspeakable sorrow. Such words can cloud out anything praiseworthy.

Advent is a time when we pray, long and look forward to the day when light dispels darkness, God-with-us comes and ransoms a captive people, and a new kingdom of righteousness comes on earth as it is in heaven. But even with all this hope in a redeemed future, Advent can also be a challenging time for many who have endured loss. It can be a time that pierces one’s soul with sorrow and robs one of the expectant joy of Christmas. It is the tension of both these realities that makes the Marian witness so potent.

In late 2016, my family and our small Anabaptist community experienced a traumatizing double funeral. Over the span of 14 years, two strangers became family and now eternally live in the presence of the One whose piercings redeem our souls.

Norma Martinez passed away at the age of 41 after a courageous 14-year fight against end-stage renal disease. When her son Gabriel (“God’s messenger”) was born, she went from the delivery room straight to the ICU in complete kidney failure. This young mother received news that without a transplant her life would be altered and her lifespan shortened. We knew from that

day forward that one day her mortality would pierce the souls of her sons, husband and even our family. Did we make a wrong choice to love her anyway?

Less than 40 hours before Norma's passing, while on a ministry-related road trip, I was awakened from my slumber to the ringing of my cell phone. On the other end I heard my wife's trembling voice convey to me the utterly unimaginable—our 14-year-old son, Eli, had died in



Norma and Eli Photo provided

a most unexpected and horrific manner. So far away from home and all that I knew as real, my soul, body and mind were deeply pierced with an excruciating grief.

In those early days of grieving, I noted some distinct patterns in how friends sought to offer our family words of comfort. Our Anabaptist circle tangibly reminded us in word and deed that the body of Christ was a compassionate community, a fellowship of suffering. Our evangelical friends reassured us with prayers and Scripture that our God who grieved the traumatic death of a beloved son knew what our loss meant. But it was our Catholic friends who offered us Mary. Through their initiation I found myself intimately identifying with her courage and resilience and found

the examples of her wisdom and faith in times of suffering to be a tangible source of hope.

Yes, God as heavenly Parent suffered the loss of a child, but I would dismiss such identification by thinking, That's God. In my grief I struggled with the very nature of God. Is God great? Is God good? Does God exist? Yet from the depths of my grief, I continued to cry out to God. Mary's witness became a refuge for me. I saw in her a humility and brokenness that comforted me.

Did Mary make a wrong choice? We know how the story ends, but viscerally I cannot fathom the toll her son's suffering took upon her life. She fled genocide as a young mother, only to see Jesus brutally executed as a young man filled with hope and promise.

Yes, we know the end of the story, but this is Advent. Suspend what we know and embrace that this foretelling and much of what Mary experienced as the Mother of God was traumatic. How many sleepless nights did she wonder if she'd made the wrong choice?

Returning to the pivotal scene in the film *Arrival*:

DR. LOUISE BANKS: Your daddy, he got really mad. And he said I made the wrong choice.

8-YEAR-OLD-HANNAH: What? What's going to happen?

DR. LOUISE BANKS: It has to do with a really rare disease, and it's unstoppable. Kind of like you are, with your swimming, and your poetry and all the other amazing things you share with the world.

8-YEAR-OLD-HANNAH: I am unstoppable?

DR. LOUISE BANKS: Yeah.

Death, like love, is unstoppable. Questions are the

Mary's witness became a refuge for me. I saw in her a humility and brokenness that comforted me.

accents to the mysteries of life. My friend and singer-songwriter Brandon Goober penned these lyrics in remembrance of our son:

We're left asking questions and we ask them day to day; there are no new answers but we ask them anyway.

And Sister Joyce Rupp reminds us how we, like Mary, can rise above the questions and ultimately find redemption: "If, like Mary, we live in the fullness of each day, mindfully aware and grateful for what brings us meaning, happiness, contentment and security, we will not be spared the devastating emotions that spring up at a time of unwanted news, but we will also not be burdened with guilt or regrets over not having recognized and appreciated what is being taken from us."

The questions and darkness of Advent are unstoppable. Suffering is inevitable. But our Advent hope is that, like Mary, we can find hope in the redemptive work of God, who took on flesh, who now dwells in our hearts and will reign in glory and reconcile all our questions and choices at the end of time.



Anton Flores-Maisonet is the co-founder of Casa Alterna, a hospitality house in Georgia devoted to witnessing to a love that crosses borders.

LIVE OUT YOUR FAITH

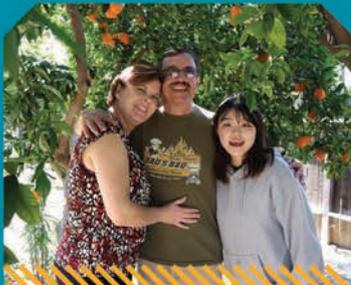


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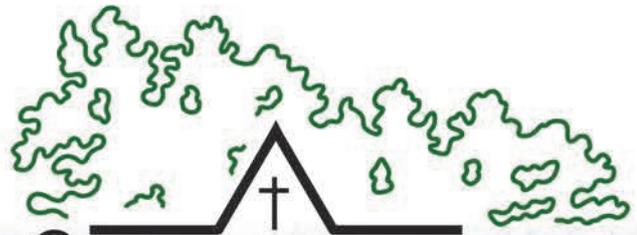
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Relax by the fire and slide down the tube run, all while enjoying the provided childcare, meals, and family entertainment.



BY **MATHEW SWORA**

Once upon a border

The flight to Egypt reimaged

You'll be number 14,378, which means you'll get to appear before an immigration court in about, say, 17 years

This retelling of Mary, Joseph and Jesus' flight to Egypt was shared as a children's story at Zion Mennonite Church in Canby, Ore. Swora composed it after participating in a Mennonite Central Committee Borderlands tour of Douglas, Ariz., and Agua Prieta, Mexico.

Two thousand years ago, on a hot, dry, dusty day, at a checkpoint along the border of Egypt and Israel, some very bored, irritated and edgy soldiers sat around a table under the shade of a large tree. Any excitement they'd once felt about protecting their country had given way to weariness and the disillusionment of suspecting everyone, being lied to so often and having to crush the hopes of so many frightened, desperate people. To the checkpoint came a man and a woman. The man had a large knapsack on his back, while the woman was carrying a baby in her arms. They looked haggard, worn, dusty and frightened, and the baby was crying.

"Your purpose in coming here?" a soldier asked.

"We simply want to enter Egypt and live there a while," the man said.

"Your names?"

After writing down their names on a piece of papyrus, the soldier then asked, "Your places of birth?"

"For my wife and me, Nazareth. For our baby,

Bethlehem."

"Bethlehem? Never heard of it."

"It's just a wide spot in the road near Jerusalem."

"Your most recent address?" the soldier asked.

"An animal stall in Bethlehem," the man said.

"Say, you three wouldn't happen to be Hebrews, would you?" the soldier asked.

"Yes. How could you tell?"

"Just by your looks—and your funny accent."

"That's not a problem, is it?"

"I'm afraid so," said the soldier.

"We don't let more than a few Hebrews into our country any given year anymore. The last time we did, we had so many problems, what with plagues of flies and frogs and locusts, and lightning and hailstorms killing all our livestock, we finally had to round all you guys up and send you home."

"That's not exactly how we remember it," the husband said.

"You guys worked us so hard in the fields and making bricks. It was slavery by another word. But God liberated us and brought us out of Egypt; you didn't deport us."

"And I suppose you just swam the Red Sea to get out of Egypt?"

"No. God split it apart so we could cross on foot."

"Riiight," said the soldier.

"Suit yourself. So if you want to get into Egypt, write your names

on this papyrus. There's quite a waiting list, as you can see. You'll be number 14,378, which means you'll get to appear before an immigration court in about, say, 17 years."

"Seventeen years?" the woman said. "I don't know that we have 17 minutes."

"Well, if you have a verifiable cause to fear anyone, you can apply for asylum."

"Good," said the husband.

"How do we apply for that?"

"You fill out this form, telling us who's persecuting or threatening you. Who are you afraid of, by the way?"

"King Herod. He sent his soldiers to kill our baby."

"Now just why would King Herod even know about your baby, let alone want to kill him?" the soldier asked.

"Because," the mother said, "this is a very special baby, sent by God, to be king in Herod's place someday. He'll even be king of the world."

"Riiight," the soldier said. "I think I liked the first one better, the one about your God splitting the Red Sea to let you walk through. But everyone can have enemies, so write your names on this list, and we can get you an asylum hearing in about six to 15 months."

"So now we can come into Egypt and await our hearing?" the father asked.

"Yes, but you should know



The Flight into Egypt by Lorenzo Monaco

The man and woman signed the visa documents, paid the money and walked past the checkpoint into Egypt, looking and feeling relieved.

1,000 denarii. And you'll need to prove you're worth at least another 10,000, so you won't be begging in the streets or taking jobs away from us Egyptians. Like I said, I don't think that'll work for you, but—

"Wait," the man interrupted him. "Look at what I have here in this knapsack." He slid it off his back and opened its top for the soldier to see.

"Whoa," said the soldier as he looked inside the knapsack. "Where'd you get all that gold, frankincense and myrrh?"

"From some wise men who came from the east to worship our newborn baby," the baby's mother said.

"Riiight," the soldier replied. "I still think I liked better what you said about God splitting the Red Sea. Still, where that money really comes from is none of my business. You've got enough wealth in that sack to bring our whole platoon in with visitors' visas. Pay your money, sign this papyrus and welcome to Egypt, my friends."

The man and woman signed the visa documents, paid the money and walked past the checkpoint into Egypt, looking and feeling relieved. But just a few more paces down the road,

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

"Once Upon a Border" is an attempt to reimagine the biblical story in a 21st-century North American context. It invites some questions.

If you were retelling this story, given your place in today's society, which character would you most identify with?

How can reimaging the biblical story in this particular Western context shape our understandings of this story?

Who in the world today might best identify with Mary, Joseph and Jesus?

this: Unless anyone else can post bail for you—and that's some pretty big bucks—you'll have to spend those months awaiting your asylum hearing in a detention center."

"By detention center, you mean prison, don't you?"

"Well, technically, OK, if you want to call it that, yes."

"I'm not taking my wife and our child into a prison."

"But we can't wait out here on this side of the border, with the chance that Herod's soldiers might still be looking for us," the baby's mother added. By then the baby had stopped crying.

"Look," the father said to the Egyptian soldier, "is there any other way we might enter Egypt and safety now, and legally?"

"There is another way," the soldier said. "But I don't think it applies to the likes of you three, as poor and hard off as you look. You could get a visitor's visa on the spot, but it will set you back

they stopped, talked together and walked back to the checkpoint.

The surprised soldier asked them, “What’re you doing slumming around here for, when just up the road you can rent a chariot with two big horses, hire a driver and go see the pyramids of Giza, play the blackjack tables at Caesar’s Palace in Alexandria or rent your own palace in the most exclusive neighborhood of Thebes? That’s what I’d be doing if I had your kind of wealth.”

“We’re going to stay right here,” the woman said, “and pay for more people’s entry into Egypt, until all that’s left is just what we need to live on.”

“Which won’t be much,” her husband added, “because we can go live with my cousins in Alexandria’s Hebrew community.”

“Riiight,” the soldier said.

“This I’ll have to see to believe. Suit yourself. Here come some more refugees right now. They look as ragged and scared as you did when you first come up to this joint. Are you going to help them?”

“If they need it, yes,” the man said.

“But they don’t look like your people, Hebrews,” the soldier said. “By the looks of them, I’d say they were from Syria, the Gaza or Yemen. That make any difference to you?”

And the woman said, “No.”



Mathew Swora
is pastor of Zion
Mennonite Church in
Canby, Ore.



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BY FELIPE HINOJOSA



EL PROGRAMA NAVIDEÑO

Christmas and the stories we tell ourselves

This is church, *la iglesia*, from one child's perspective. This is my story, my life, with the people I loved and love. People with flaws and desires, people who died too young and people who've lived too long. People that struggled in silence and people that leaned on each other for *ánimo*, support. This is about the Christmas ritual that took place every year at *Iglesia Menonita del Cordero* in Brownsville, Texas, and countless Latino churches in the United States. This is not a church history, just a story from one kid who sometimes came to church with eyes burning red, who played football in the front lawn of the church and who loved reading Bible verses

out loud in Sunday school. I was lucky enough to grow up with a great group of friends at church. Some of us memorized Bible verses, some of us sang really well, and some of us smoked our first cigarettes in the trailers that belonged to the voluntary service unit. That's just how we rolled. I'm pretty certain none of us remembers my dad's sermons, but I know we remember each other. And that's all that matters. I was lucky to have friends like that. Lucky to have friends who shared this experience of growing up as Mexican-American Anabaptists and *evangélicos*. For some reason, it made perfect sense to us and it still does.

Photo provided

El programa navideño, the church Christmas program: Was there really anything better? Next to Easter, this was the church's biggest moment, where we all shined and where our collective efforts came together to produce mediocre dramas about rejection at the inn, a virgin birth and three wise men. The kids—usually in groups from infants all the way to fifth grade—did their manger poses with a restless baby Jesus, several cute little shepherd people milling around, and plastic donkeys, all positioned at the altar as their Sunday school teachers tried (Lord did they try) to sing one or two Christmas carols. *El hermano* with the deepest voice typically played the role of God, hidden in a room behind the altar holding a mic and reading a script. The Christmas songs from the kids were usually in English, but God's deep voice boomed from backstage in Spanish.

To be honest, all that mattered was that you wrapped blue and white sheets around those kids. That's all you needed to turn little Mexican kids into a baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and shepherd boys and girls. Everyone had a part, and we all knew the schedule. From infants to the fifth grade, the setup was almost exactly the same. Parents took pictures, and chaos ensued. As adorable as these presentations were, they were not the reason people from the church and the neighborhood filled the church to capacity on what was usually a cool December Sunday evening in South Texas. And while the junior high and high

school kids put on entertaining dramas that covered either not having sex or not doing drugs (somehow we threw the miracle of Jesus' birth in there), that's still not what filled the church.

You see, everyone was there for the main event, *el drama de los adultos*. *Los hermanos* knew how to put on a show. Nothing compared to the preparation, the production level, the scenes and

There were tears (real ones), dramatic cuts that left us wondering if this would be the year the family wouldn't make it and the father's alcoholism would bring everyone down.

the character angels with their fancy stage-right exits. *El drama de los adultos* had it all. And every year it was essentially the same play, maybe different characters, a different timeline, but at its essence *el drama* was about *la familia*, an alcoholic father, a tired and hard-working mother and the church group that comes in just at the right moment to save this grieving family. There were tears (real ones), dramatic cuts that left us wondering if this would be the year the family wouldn't make it and the father's alcoholism would

bring everyone down. But every year, the actors hit their marks, and every year another family was saved. Year after year, *hermanos* and *hermanas* turned in Oscar-worthy performances as the leader of the church elder board turned himself into an unrecognizable drunk, and some of our strongest *hermanas* transformed into weak housewives in need of rescuing. Yet in the span of about 15 minutes, we witnessed the reformation of machismo and the strengthening of a woman who simply had had enough. It was a standard story, but it meant the world to us. One of the powerful parts of the play comes right after the church group prays for *la hermana* in her home. Right after that prayer she makes a decision—many times against her husband's wishes—to attend church without him. To break the norm and move on with her life for the sake of her children. As the drunk husband makes a dramatic entrance, he is met by his wife, who calmly yet clearly lets him know: "*Si tu no quieres ir a la iglesia, yo y mis hijos si vamos a ir a alabar a Dios.*" ("If you do not want to go to church, my children and I will go to praise God.") The drunk husband, wobbling on stage with the customary unbuttoned shirt and the disheveled look, is surprised and usually responds by ignoring his wife.

We were transfixed. The same babies that for whatever reason always make noise in Latino churches as if their lives depended on it were even quiet at this point. And by the end

of the drama, not only does the husband vow to give his life to Christ, he also makes a stunning declaration: “*Dios me ha llamado al ministerio! Hoy empiezo mi trabajo para empezar una iglesia.*” (“God has called me to the ministry! Today I start my work to start a church.”) Not a dry eye in the room. We all knew the ending, but it didn’t matter. You see, that was my dad’s story and the story of countless other Mexican men who had turned toward the gospel and away from the bottle. We’d all seen it. Destroyed homes, grieving spouses, abusive fathers. I can think of at least five or six *hermanos* in our church who all shared similar stories of turning away from alcoholism and returning to their families and the church.

We loved *el programa de los adultos* because it was us, neatly packaged in the nuclear family that many of us longed for and with a female lead we all recognized—a woman fighting for her family. It was always a woman fighting for her family. The drama usually ended with a bow from the actors, a standing ovation from the crowd, followed by a *corito navideño*. I had friends in single-parent homes, friends whose home situations were rough, friends who even with both parents at home rarely felt the love they deserved. And even those of us in good and stable families had friends who struggled with a rough life at home. For most of us, no matter how well concocted or corny or neatly packed, *el drama de los adultos* made us feel like things were going to be OK. It put us in the Christmas spirit and reminded us that we all are redeemable.

In my experience, no one does church Christmas programs like

For most of us, no matter how well concocted or corny or neatly packed, *el drama de los adultos* made us feel like things were going to be OK.

Latino churches do. We go all in. It’s a massive production. I miss those days. I’m no longer in a church that narrates its own story back to its people, so that we can see ourselves anew. I miss the candy bags at the end of church and the hot chocolate. But most of all, I miss the people that made up that church and that put those Christmas programs together. People we often didn’t thank, people who worked hard in October, November and the first half of December to organize something we could all be proud of.

So this Christmas, go to your church’s Christmas program. Suffer through the cute little shepherds, the long Christmas hymns, the ugly sweaters, the frantic Sunday school teachers. Somewhere among all the chaos—the Christmas songs and manger scenes—somewhere in the middle of all of that, you may just find yourself and your community all over again.



Felipe Hinojosa is associate professor of history at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas.

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Rachel Kasper Fitzsimons '88
(Bethel)

Broadway Star — including *The Sound of Music*, *Nine*, which won a Tony for “Best Revival of a Musical,” *The Addams Family*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, and *Catch Me If You Can*.



Erik Kratz '02 (EMU)

Major League Baseball player since 2002 and part of the Kansas City Royals teams which went to the World Series in 2014 and 2015.



Bethny Ricks Brown '06
(Bluffton)

Senior vice president, Scotts Miracle-Gro Co. Named Ohio’s most influential and powerful woman by the Ohio Diversity Council and named one of Savoy’s top influential women in corporate America.



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PRESIDENT

The Bluffton University Board of Trustees has announced the search for the University's tenth president and invites nominations and applications for this uncommon leadership opportunity to become effective no later than July 1, 2018. Bluffton seeks a visionary leader who will work aggressively to promote the University's reputation as a caring Christian community.

Bluffton seeks a president with vision, energy, strength of personality, and an ability to articulate how a liberal arts-centered, independent, Mennonite university can thrive while addressing the interests of the 21st century learner. Prospective candidates are encouraged to learn more about the expectations for Bluffton's next president and the application process by viewing the Presidential Search Profile at <https://www.bluffton.edu/president/transition/index.html>. All inquiries will be received in confidence by:

Thomas B. Courtice, Ph.D.
President, TBC Search Consulting
tom.courtice@gmail.com

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BY MELISSA FLORER-BIXLER

Waiting to be surprised

The gifts of living in a L'Arche community



As I walked down the street, I could feel my heart pounding in my ears, keeping rhythm with my feet on the sidewalk.

What was I thinking? What was I doing here?

Only two weeks earlier, I'd called up the L'Arche community in Portland, Ore. I talked on the phone with the director about spending time with them, about what it would mean to join their community and share life with them. I'd heard about L'Arche from my seminary professors. I'd heard it was a community for people with intellectual disabilities to make a home with people like me, who were cognitively typical. I'd also heard that L'Arche could teach my heart some things, things about peace and community, about being a sign of God's love in the world, about gentleness.

The folks at Portland's L'Arche had said they'd like to welcome me, but first I'd need to stay the weekend in a community near my home. They wanted me to try it out, make sure it was a good fit. The closest L'Arche home to me was in Washington, D.C., so I hopped on the Metro and made my way downtown.

It hit me all at once as I turned right onto Euclid Avenue: I knew nothing about people with intellectual disabilities. My life had been sheltered from such people: sheltered in school, in the suburbs, by a culture that keeps people with disabilities out of the way of people like me. I didn't know what to expect. I was afraid.

I learned many things over the next three and a half years at L'Arche, but the most important was to always be ready for the

surprise of another person's life. Living among my friends in L'Arche meant anticipating a life of unpredictability. I soon discovered that flourishing in this life, in this community, meant giving up expectations of others, of what people could and couldn't do, of the ways we communicate or pray or sing, and of what it means to be human.

But living in L'Arche also meant releasing the expectations I had for myself. Until I lived in L'Arche, I didn't realize how accustomed I'd become to the narrative of excellence and predictable progression. I'd been trained my whole life to work at perfecting myself. I expected a slow pattern of self-improvement. In L'Arche I came to discover that I was packed with expectations of who I should be, what was good and what was expected of me.

The L'Arche community graciously welcomes those who live there to put all that aside. That's one of its gifts, one of the gifts of people with disabilities. They won't fit our visions of what it means to be perfectable. Their bodies, their minds, their lives are resistant to our expectations. We simply receive one another as we are: in this moment, in this space, around this table, on this walk, as we sing this hymn or wash each other's feet. We simply receive the gift of each other's lives that is available now.

But the community itself was surprising. How could any group of people take so long to prepare dinner each night? How was it possible that these housemates could care so much that everyone was able to participate in the preparation of the meal, that everyone's hand was stirring, chopping or simmering the food

Living among my friends in L'Arche meant anticipating a life of unpredictability.

before us? How could it be that there was always enough, that our food stretched to the stray neighbor or church member or that guy you just met up the block? How was it that so many people could gather round that rickety dinner table?

L'Arche was also a surprise for our neighbors, for the people who saw us every day. L'Arche seeks to undo the kind of separation that happens for people with intellectual disabilities. Instead of large institutions, L'Arche homes look like any other house on the block. They're signs of hope embedded into the landscape, into the neighborhood.

Jean Vanier is the founder of L'Arche. He's a large, imposing man whose career began in the Royal Navy before he was converted to life among the poor. He says he felt the call of God to live in a community of the poor but didn't know where to find them. Like me, he was sheltered from poverty, from brokenness. Jean is a good Catholic, so he took his question to his priest. He said, "Tell me where to find the poor."

His priest brought him to an institution for the mentally ill and disabled. It was the early 1960s, and these were places of horrific squalor: women chained to walls, men naked and lying in their own filth and feces. This is where they kept the poor, hidden away.

Without knowing anything about people with disabilities,



The greatest surprise is that we are loved, really loved by God.

Medicaid waivers feels unbearable and dehumanizing, I find myself turning back to the God of surprises. I know God is for us, for L'Arche, because our God is one of surprises.

I remember that first walk toward L'Arche in Washington, D.C. I think about climbing the steps of the brownstone that led to my first L'Arche home. I remember I was waiting to be surprised.

We're in good company. We worship a God of surprises, a God who is always turning political and religious structures upside down. This God is always hanging out with children and sinners, always condemning those righteous teachers who think they've got the law figured out, always finding God's self woven into the lives of women and Gentiles and eunuchs, always for the poor. L'Arche will keep tagging along after this God, living in these outposts of hope right in your neighborhood. We'll keep tagging along, waiting to be surprised.

with no prior experience, Jean took three men from this institution and moved with them to a farm in the French countryside. They made community. They lived by the Beatitudes, always in poverty but always having enough. Soon others came to see this miracle. Others were drawn to the life of these men. Others joined them. They named the place L'Arche, "the ark," the safe place for God's beloved, protected during the storm.

L'Arche was drawn to other communities. It smuggled its hope into Calcutta and the West Bank, into apartheid South Africa and rural communities in the U.S. Midwest. And wherever L'Arche goes, it surprises.

The greatest surprise is that we are loved, really loved by God. Jean writes that many of us "live with the burden of unconscious guilt." We feel we are not who we should be. So it is a wonder, a profound surprise, to hear you are simply enough as you are. It is a wonder to be told you don't need to defend yourself, don't have to get any better or smarter or be able to put on your shoes by yourself to be worthy of the

attention of another. It is a wonder to hear that the gifts you have are all you need and that nothing is more precious than to feel that gift giving off warmth to others. It is a wonder to be told you are no bother at all and that everything happening around you says, "I love you."

"To love people is to recognize their gifts and help these unfold," writes Vanier. "It is also to accept their wounds and be patient and compassionate toward them." That's the mission of L'Arche, to be attentive to all of it, to the wounds and the gifts, the insecurities and the pain and the hope, to the darkness and the light. The mission of L'Arche is to take all this and remain near the heart of Jesus.

I'm in the midst of a smuggling operation, smuggling a sign of hope into the ordinary neighborhoods of Durham, N.C. I'm on the board of a L'Arche community that has been waiting and hoping and praying and dreaming for a beloved community, a place where people with and without disabilities share life and faith together. When I'm in doubt, when the paperwork of residential group homes and



Melissa Florer-Bixler is pastor of Raleigh (N.C.) Mennonite Church and chair of the board of Friends of L'Arche N.C. She has a forthcoming book with Herald Press. This article is adapted from a "Missional Story" at Virginia Mennonite Conference Assembly on July 23, 2016.

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BY MARV FRIESEN

A JOURNEY OF GRATITUDE

Welcomed at the table with my Allegheny Mennonite Conference family

Seven years ago, my household moved from the familial enclave of southern Ontario to the rugged Alleghenys of central Pennsylvania. We landed in a university town named State College, home to Penn State University, in a Commonwealth state university whose main campus is called University Park. Talk about confusing.

As pastor of University Mennonite Church in State College, I attended my first Allegheny Conference pastors' meeting a few weeks after arriving in town. I knew no one and had no firsthand knowledge of the history that shaped the conference. While I felt welcomed by my pastoral colleagues, I also sensed some wariness. Who was this newcomer with Russian Mennonite roots, born north of the 49th parallel, where they practiced socialized health care

for all and where both Democrats and Republicans were nowhere to be found? And what about him taking on a congregation that had a reputation for being too progressive in its theological leanings? As I left that first meeting, feeling like a fish out of water, a new pastoral colleague expressed some disappointment that I appeared to fit the mold of too liberal, too theologically progressive and too academically inclined.

Several weeks later, I attended my first Allegheny Conference fall gathering, hosted by a small, rural church in Western Pennsylvania. The host congregation led our time of opening worship, including a sermon that seemed heavily weighted with fundamentalist emphases that challenged my comfort level. Once more, I wondered if I'd ever fit in and if there was room for me at this table. With these early,

▲ Attendees lay hands on and bless Michelle Burkholder during a service of licensing by Allegheny Mennonite Conference.

Photo by Jake Short

formative experiences in mind, I determined I would avoid the pastor and conference gatherings as much as possible. But later that year, I attended another gathering, and Conrad Mast, then pastor at Scottsdale (Pa.) Mennonite Church, took me aside and asked if I was in or out. Was I committed to the larger church or not? It was exactly the wakeup call I needed, begging the question, Was it really about room at the table for me or was it more about wanting to sit only with those who were like-minded?

From that point on, I made the commitment to fully participate in all Allegheny Conference pastor and delegate gatherings. And it has been a gift to build relationships with so many folks who seek to be faithful to the way of Jesus, who seek to find common ground and who can live with theological differences while recognizing our shared commitment to serve God and seek clarity in the complexities of daily life.

That is not to say we have not had our share of challenges and heartaches. What helped bring clarity to the wariness I had sensed early on was recognition of the underlying tensions swirling within Allegheny, due to the disciplining of Hyattsville (Md.) Mennonite Church because of its acceptance of LGBTQ people in committed relationships into membership. While the Hyattsville congregational members were not allowed to hold any conference office or vote in any conference decisions, they continued to participate in delegate sessions with a full complement of representatives. For all intents and purposes, they chose to stay at the table.

It seems the tipping point for Allegheny was a decision made at the end of a long process of discerning what reconciliation with Hyattsville might look like. This culminated in a narrow decision to reinstate Hyattsville to full participatory status. In doing so, we affirmed that we are a theologically diverse conference and that this diversity will not hinder us from celebrating our faith, rooted in Jesus Christ as Lord, and living out our witness in the context of our distinctive communities.

For some congregations this was a step too far. Since the decision was made, we have lost 18 congregations and have grieved the loss of sisters and brothers in Christ at the Allegheny table. This loss has been personally painful, since it involves close relationships I had with many of the pastors whose congregations determined they could not remain.

This begs the question, When is it right and appropriate to get up from the table and leave? And what cost is involved in staying? I won't claim to have any final answers on this, but I do wonder about the ways Jesus related with all who came to the table. He welcomed, engaged and challenged those seated with him to greater faithfulness. He never compromised his convictions, never rejected people outright and never wrote them off. I wonder if this is our calling as well, one rooted in an active love for God and neighbor as oneself.

As a conference, we are now exploring what our future holds. These days, when we gather as Allegheny Conference, I sense a renewed joy in a shared kinship and a shared, vibrant faith in the midst of our theological diversity.

When is it right and appropriate to get up from the table and leave?

Yet I know much work needs to be done in expanding the table and reflecting the broader diversities represented in our surrounding communities.

At the same time, we are also exploring our viability as a conference that consisted of 30 congregations when I first arrived and now numbers 12, with the possibility of a few more reconsidering their place at the table. Do we reach out to other congregations in Mennonite Church USA to join us, knowing some wonder about their place at their area conference tables? And how do we navigate all this in a transparent, respectful manner with our sister conferences?

These are the joys and challenges Allegheny Conference is grappling with these days. With this lived reality I am deeply grateful to God and to my fellow siblings in Christ that the invitation to come to the welcome table was extended to me time and time again. This welcome invitation is extended to all who value relationships, who value diversity as gift and who value staying at the table, discerning together how God is speaking into the life of our conference and our congregations.



Marv Friesen served as pastor of University Mennonite Church and moderator of Allegheny Mennonite Conference.

Peace on earth, piece by piece

Family's work teaches restorative justice in South Korea

AS TENSIONS between nations rise and world leaders threaten war—even nuclear war—peacemakers all over the world work to make peace on earth a reality. Jae Young Lee and Karen Spicher, Mennonite Mission Network mission associates in Namyangju, South Korea, are two of those peacemakers.

“Peace on earth” is a term often spoken of during the Christmas season, and Lee sees it as a central tenet of their community and work. “Peace on earth does not end with Jesus’ birth and death,” he says. “It’s the ministry of reconciliation and of peace that should be at the center for the followers of Jesus Christ.”

In South Korea, the differences between the secular and Christian Christmas celebrations are distinct. “[Secular Christmas] is thought of as a romantic holiday,” says Spicher. For many Koreans, she says, Christmas is a day to go out for an expensive meal, attend a concert or try out ice skating.

“It’s just one day, a very secular party,” says Lee. Family gatherings are reserved for other holidays, such as Chuseok (Thanksgiving) and Seollal (Lunar New Year).

For Christians in South Korea, Christmas is celebrated with special church services—large meals or gifts aren’t the focus of the day. “We don’t give gifts in our family,” Spicher says. “It’s felt freeing and life-giving to be

outside of that expectation.”

Instead, Lee, Spicher and their three daughters share skits, songs and poems with the other members of Grace and Peace Mennonite Church, a house church based at Peace Building. Located in Namyangju, Peace Building is home to an intentional community, coffee shop, English language school (Connexus) and four peacebuilding organizations: Korea Peacebuilding Institute

understanding of God’s peace was that it was internal, a peace that God brings an individual in order to overcome and persevere through the challenges of life. However, through studying Anabaptist theology, his definition of peace expanded to not only a state of mind but a way of life. He says more young Christians are realizing that a way of life centered around peacebuilding is “how we make this broken world



Jae Young Lee leads a restorative discipline class at an elementary school in Seoul. Students directly involved in bullying sit in the middle circle. Other classmates sit in the outside circle.

(KOPI), of which Lee is the director, Northeast Asia Regional Peacebuilding Institute, Korea Association for Restorative Justice and Peacebuilding Publishing.

KOPI specializes in teaching restorative justice through lectures and workshops for communities, schools, workplaces and government organizations. Restorative justice is a paradigm of peace that emphasizes the restoration of victims, acceptance of active responsibility by the offender, and healing broken relationships within the affected community.

Lee says that before he knew about Anabaptist theology, his

become [a place] where the justice and peace of God can be proclaimed.”

While the intentional community that Lee, Spicher and their family are a part of is still relatively young (Peace Building was constructed in 2015), they’re excited for the future.

“Peacebuilding is the main work for us,” says Lee. “Some people still wonder how you can make a living by doing peacebuilding, but we do it.”

Travis Duerksen of Mennonite Mission Network

The search for healing

Stutzman meets with former Mennonite Publishing House employees, apologizes

SIX YEARS AFTER Mennonite Publishing House in Scottsdale, Pa., closed its doors, and 16 years after a financial crisis where many MPH employees lost their jobs and retirement benefits, Ervin Stutzman, Mennonite Church USA Executive Director, met with former employees to talk through unresolved issues and offer an apology. Twenty-four people representing more than 541 combined years of service to MPH gathered at Scottsdale Mennonite Church on June 10 for a conversation with Stutzman. The staff represented were both Mennonites and Scottsdale community members.

Stutzman was moderator of MC USA and, along with Jim Harder and Ron Sawatzky, was part of a three-person team appointed by MC USA and Mennonite Church Canada to address the financial crisis at MPH in the early 2000s. As part of its work, the team brought in an outside consultant to handle onsite downsizing, which was a point of great pain for many of the meeting's attendees. The MPH offices in Scottsdale officially closed when Mennonite Publishing Network merged with Third Way Media to form MennoMedia in June 2011. The new organization moved its U.S. headquarters to Harrisonburg, Va.

Stutzman initiated the 2017 meeting with the support

of then MC USA moderator Patricia Shelly, and after a year of conversations with Dorothy Cutrell, a former MPH staffer and wife of Ben Cutrell, who served as publisher for MPH from 1961 to 1988. Dorothy wrote to Stutzman after seeing conversations on a Facebook page for former MPH employees where it was clear there was still a lot of "hurt and misinformation."

"So I wrote a letter to Ervin and posted it on Facebook," Cutrell said in an Oct. 6 interview. "I thought, maybe it's time for an apology."

Cutrell hoped a gathering of employees and a potential apology would offer a chance for healing to continue as well as an opportunity to celebrate the important legacy of Mennonite publishing.

Stutzman began corresponding with Cutrell in 2016 and met for conversation at her home in Elkhart, Ind., in March. Together, they agreed to invite former employees to the June meeting. Invitations were sent to all former employees who lived in or near Scottsdale. David Mishler, pastor of Scottsdale Mennonite Church, agreed to serve as a facilitator for the meeting.

During the meeting, former employees shared stories of the things they loved about working at MPH, from flexibility to the organization's family feel and a sense of being part of a mission that reached beyond themselves. They also told stories of the pain they felt at the way the broader church handled the downsizing and eventual closing, including the ways MPH and its leadership were represented in the Mennonite press.

For Kathy Royer, Cutrell's daughter, allowing people to publicly process their unresolved

feelings about the closing and to have an MC USA representative publicly acknowledge this pain was important.

"I was only the daughter of the publisher, but the closing impacted my life in significant ways," said Royer in an Oct. 9 phone interview. "I believe people felt heard and understood. I don't know if it was for the first time, but it certainly was the first time from an official representative of the Mennonite church."

At the June meeting, following sharing by former employees, Stutzman read a fivefold letter of apology that named expressions of contrition for the loss of retirement benefits promised to MPH employees, "abuse from management," the abrupt nature of some terminations, the lack of financial subsidy for MPH from the broader church and the portrayal of the publishing crisis in Mennonite press that unfairly compared the publishing crisis to broader financial scandals such as Enron.

"For all the failings I have named above, I ask for your forgiveness," wrote Stutzman. "I cannot and will not demand your pardon, which I would have no right to do. In these matters, I am in your debt; you are not in mine. You do not owe anything to me or the broader church. But if it would contribute to your healing, I will gratefully receive any words of forgiveness, lament, grieving, or hope which you have to offer."

In the end, Mishler acknowledged that while the meeting was not the final step in healing relationships between MC USA and Scottsdale, it was an important one.

Hannah Heinzekehr of The Mennonite, Inc.



WHAT I'M
READING
THIS MONTH



**Church in Ordinary
Time: A Wisdom
Ecclesiology**

by Amy Plantinga Pauw

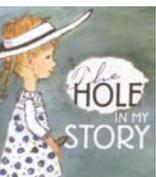
The part of the liturgical year called ordinary time “serves as a metaphor for our creaturely existence as it is sustained by God’s creative blessing and calling,” writes Pauw in this insightful book. She draws on the Wisdom books of Scripture and sees church as “living in the penultimate while believing in the ultimate.”



**The Fiction of Our Lives:
Creating Our Stories
Over a Lifetime**

by Sandra M.
Levy-Achtemeier

This wide-ranging book explores humans’ proclivity to create. “There is a narrative shape to our lives that reflects the way our brain is neurologically wired to make sense of the world around us.” Levy-Achtemeier combines memoir with findings in brain science and psychology and spiritual insights.



The Hole in My Story

by Enid Miller Schloneger

This unique memoir recounts Schloneger’s experience growing up with a cleft palate and being unable to speak clearly. She endured being taunted and rejected as a child while finding strength through friends, family and her church. As an adult, she became a pastor and a hospital chaplain.



The algorithmic curation of news

THAT TITLE refers to how algorithms are used to control what news you receive on social platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Reddit.

How do you feel about those platforms determining what news you see on your feeds?

The Tow Center for Digital Journalism wanted to know everyday news consumers’ attitudes toward the little black boxes that control which news they receive via social platforms and conducted 13 focus groups with news consumers aged 18 to 65 from four cities around the United States: Bowling Green, Ky.; Elkhart, Ind.; New York and San Francisco.

According to an Oct. 24 report at cjr.org by Pete Brown, a senior research fellow at the center, “We came away convinced that the need for algorithmic transparency is more urgent than ever.” The researchers found that some people said they wanted to know more, while others, “underestimating the reach of algorithms, arguably *need* to know more.”

One participant in Elkhart had this to say: “I started watching information about Facebook and found out they were following me enough that they only sent me the stuff that I clicked on. I wasn’t getting both sides of the story... They were just following me and giving me sugar when I was really looking for more.... They were skewing

the news to what I had picked. They personalized it... and that’s not why I was there. I was there to get information that was different or a different viewpoint than I was getting, and I’m very mad at Mark Zuckerberg.”

Some people may want sugar; they want to read what reinforces their views. But those who want a broader view—or don’t want an algorithm to determine what they see—will need to find other avenues to get their news.

I use a news feed that brings me a broad list of articles from various sources, which can feel overwhelming, but at least it gives me the opportunity to read perspectives I might not otherwise.

Brown concludes his report by saying there’s “a pressing need for algorithmic literacy. People have a right to know more about how and why the information served to them is being prioritized.”

However, he notes, “we can’t have algorithmic literacy before we have algorithmic transparency.” That has to come from the tech companies, which have not shown much ethical responsibility. They mainly want to do what will make them the most money.

In the meantime, those of us who use social platforms to gain news about what’s happening in our world need to be “wise as serpents” about what information we are consuming.

Gordon Houser is editor of *The Mennonite*.



QUOTABLE

“In the U.S., we have placed our faith in the false idol of personal protection....We as a society believe that the gun writ large — including semiautomatics, automatics, high capacity clips and bumper stocks—is the guarantor of our well-being.”

—**Horace McMillon**,
pastor at Open Door Mennonite Church,
Jackson, Miss., on the Menno Snapshots blog
of Mennonite Church USA



**MOST-READ
ONLINE-ONLY POSTS**

2.9K
Yoder’s credentials terminated
by The Mennonite staff

1.4K
Willow Creek lead pastor mentored by a Mennonite
by Hannah Heinzekehr

1K
CLC holds first meeting of the biennium
by Hannah Heinzekehr

1K
Conference explores depth, breadth of conscientious objection
by Hannah Heinzekehr

1K
When I’m afraid, I practice dying
by Jessica Schrock-Ringenberg

FROM THE ARCHIVES



Lisa Christano of the Muria Christian Churches of Indonesia offers her testimony at the 12th Mennonite World Conference Assembly in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in 1990.

Christano’s husband, Charles, was president of MWC from 1978 to 1984. Since 1990, Mennonite church membership in Indonesia has grown by almost 70 percent. With 111,372 baptized members, Indonesia has one of the largest Mennonite populations in the world and will host the next MWC Assembly in 2021.



RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Garlic lemon roast chicken

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PERSPECTIVES FROM READERS

The road ahead

LAST SUMMER AT Orlando, our church embarked on a journey into uncharted territory, pursuing a shared future of faithfulness to Jesus Christ from an Anabaptist perspective. I invite you to join us on the path of radical discipleship with Jesus, accompanied by a community of pilgrims seeking God's reconciliation for the whole world. As we left the Future Church Summit (FCS), some worried the ideas shared there would collect dust on some shelf in an administrative office. Not so.

At the close of the Summit, which included a broad spectrum of participants, the official delegates

This is a great opportunity to pursue our common commitments to Christ and the church.

took an action that included the following sentence: "We intend that this report [from the Summit] be a dynamic document that is offered to the church to guide further discernment for living into God's calling in agencies, conferences, constituency groups and congregations."

Moderator David Boshart assured the delegates that the report would shape the priorities of the Executive Board in the upcoming biennium, and that the next convention—Kansas City in 2019—would "serve as a checkpoint" for progress on that work. We're already on the way to making that promise a reality.

We left Orlando with nine pages of notes for the journey, a collection of themes to help chart the course ahead. In the months since then, we've sought to lay out the identity and core values portrayed in the Summit and proposed a process whereby the whole church can help us put shoe leather on those ideas.

We appointed a writing team to prepare a document that lays out our core values and identity in a one-page document we can study and affirm together across the whole church. The team will also prepare a concise guide for congregational study, including a set of Scriptures to illuminate the themes arising from the Summit.

Over the past several months, we've tested these ideas in the Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA as well as the Constituency Leaders Council. Both of these representative groups affirmed the process, including the moniker Journey Forward, to describe this endeavor in three related ways:

- name of two-year process: "Journey Forward: Embracing God's Hope for MC USA";
- name of one-page statement of identity and values: "Journey Forward: Embracing God's Hope for MC USA";
- name of congregational study: "Pathways: A Study for the Journey Forward."

As the congregational study takes its course, the churchwide agencies and other entities within MC USA will also consider their commitments to the Journey Forward process. The board also

will engage in a covenanting process with area conferences to clarify our commitments to each other in our governing structure.

We believe this study can:

- clarify a common core of beliefs and practices in our church;
- strengthen our identity as Anabaptist Mennonite Christians;
- test the themes that emerged from the FCS in the broader church body;
- sharpen our focus on the positive outcomes we seek for our communities.

We're enthused about this process and encourage each congregation to engage in the study, give feedback to the Executive Board and identify the outcomes they intend to pursue in their home communities. This plan may not suit everyone's taste and will not likely bring our congregations to agreement on the theological or ethical issues that divide us. Those who expect this effort to bring us to one mind on the question of same-sex marriage will likely be disappointed.

Even so, we believe this is a great opportunity to pursue our common commitments to Christ and the church.



Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.



Read more about Journey Forward at themennonite.org.

BY AND ABOUT YOUNG ADULTS

Get uncomfortable

I AM A black woman from Kansas. My mother is white, and my father is black. While I am a beautiful blend of both, when I walk outside my home, I am a black woman. Because of this, I don't have the privilege to ignore injustices in the world.

I was raised in a Mennonite congregation. Although, neither of my parents came from a Mennonite background, we found a sense of community in the church. But despite my desire to fit in this community, I struggled, particularly during my teen years.

Regardless, I continued my journey as a Mennonite, going to a Mennonite college and even doing a term with Mennonite Voluntary Service. In these spaces I felt a true sense of belonging for the first time. In college and MVS, I was surrounded by people of diverse backgrounds and some who did not have a family history of being Mennonite.

I remember a time late in my college career when my church asked my sister and me to share on Martin Luther King Jr. day about racism and to touch on peace.

I didn't think twice about it then. I thought there was nothing wrong with asking the only black family in church to give this message. But this is an example of tokenism. I do not think my church was trying to be malicious or insensitive.

This is not to say I don't appreciate Dr. King's message. But Martin Luther King Jr. Day is not "Black People Day."

He fought for black rights, but he primarily fought for equal treatment of all people. His

message was not just for black people or to be given by black folks.

We tend to not think twice about asking people of color

Sometimes we have to be in places where we are not wanted or respected, where our opinion is not respected.

to participate in events meant for a white audience. People of color don't need to have the conversations on racial injustices; we live it.

We tend to make these difficult conversations into something comfortable for all, when in reality they are not comfortable, especially for the people living with these injustices.

But we all know Mennonites don't do discomfort. Mennonites don't like tense situations or conflict. And Mennonites absolutely don't do violence.

Yet we stand on the sidelines of a system that violently oppresses people of color, different nationalities, immigrants, sexual minorities, people in poverty, homeless people and those with mental health issues.

Violence is not only physical or verbal attacks. Passion is violent. Change is violent. Sometimes actions need to be violent.

So while Mennonites stand for nonviolence, we also tend to

stand silently with certain violent injustices. You can say you are strongly and morally against them but be on the sidelines in silence while others must stand against their oppressor.

I often hear privileged people tell those involved in justice movements they don't want to spend money, don't have time and won't get political but still want to help.

I want to say, You can't. If you are unwilling to put your money, time or comfort on the line, there is nothing for you to do.

Jesus laid down everything for those he loved. He lived among the least of these. He broke bread with the ill and the homeless. He reacted passionately when he saw pain and injustice.

I doubt he was comfortable doing what he knew was right.

We have to get uncomfortable. Sometimes we have to be in places where we are not wanted or respected, where our opinion is not respected.

Get uncomfortable. Get political. When you come from a place of privilege, you have to be passionate because you have a platform. This may go against what your church or family teaches. But you have to be violently, passionately and unapologetically vocal in the face of injustice.



Erin Bradley lives in San Antonio, Texas, and works as a page designer.



FROM MENNONITE CHURCH USA

Processing failure

WHAT MAKES A GOOD leader?

Confidence? Decisiveness? Vision?
Ability to build a cohesive team?

What about failure? How comfortable are we as leaders with failure?

I'll be the first to admit failure feels awful, shameful, vulnerable. Whether it's a public, blatant,

What if as leaders we make room for processing failure—messy and authentic?

embarrassing mistake or bad planning; whether you've led your team in the wrong direction and have to backtrack or it was a miscalculation; mistakes are painful. And it is so hard to own them—to really look at what has happened and how it unfolded—to face our failures.

We prefer to appear to have it all together. We ignore our failure or blame someone else. We make excuses or defend ourselves. It feels better—safer—to hide our mistakes away. We aspire instead to perfection, not making mistakes (or appearing not to).

When we hide our failure behind perfectionism, we invest all our energy into maintaining that façade. And it leaves no room for creativity, risk taking or innovation. We become so busy managing our image as a leader that we forget the kind of leader we aspire to be.

What would it look like if instead of hiding our mistakes we created more spaces within our organizations for transparency and authenticity? What if instead of setting the expectation that we have it all together as leaders we make room for processing failure—messy and authentic?

As part of our work together, the Women in Leadership Project steering committee creates space within our meetings for processing—personal and professional.

Recently at a working retreat, we were invited to consider all that we each carried into our meetings. We were invited to see ourselves and one another as whole people, with work, lives, expectations, fears and challenges outside our shared work. We were invited to bring our whole selves into the space.

It takes courage to choose authenticity with one another. It takes risk to trust each other—even when we make mistakes. Because yes, we do make mistakes—that weekend, before and since. But the truth is, our commitment to one another and to authenticity helps us navigate through the pain and disappointment of failure and creates safe space for us to learn, so that we can become the leaders we aspire to be.

Jenny Castro is coordinator for the Women in Leadership Project of Mennonite Church USA.

UPDATES

JONATHAN SHIVELY CPT INTERIM ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR

Christian Peacemaker Teams has named Jonathan Shively of Elgin, Ill., as its interim administrative director. He is an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren and has worked for the denomination in various capacities at the administrative level.

BETHEL NAMES NEW DIRECTOR OF PEACE INSTITUTE

The Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., has hired Sheryl R. Wilson, Cary, N.C., as its new director, beginning Nov. 6. She follows long-time director Gary Flory, who retired this summer. Wilson has a B.S. in mediation and communication studies and a Master of Liberal Studies in restorative justice from the University of Minnesota.

SNYDER REFLECTS ON LESSONS FROM THE REFORMATION

C. Arnold Snyder, professor emeritus of history at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario, examined two narratives concerning Martin Luther's influence on the emergence of modern tolerant societies Oct. 24 at Bluffton (Ohio) University titled "Toleration in the Reformation: Historical Reflections for Today," while sharing lessons for Christians in the 21st century.

A WORD FROM PASTORS

Mary's pierced soul

WHEN MARY consecrates her child to God—there in the temple courts in Jerusalem—Simeon holds Jesus in his arms, then glances at Mary and offers a prophecy: “A sword shall pierce your own soul, too” (Luke 2:35).

The story of Jesus is familiar to us already. He will preach and heal; he'll eat with the unrighteous and forgive sinners; he'll overturn tables and welcome the children; he'll be crucified as a criminal and resurrected on the third day. Mary's role, however, is not as familiar. She's there at the beginning and the end, bearing witness as the story of her son unfolds—and she experiences all of it as a sword piercing her soul, a wounding in her chest, a pounding heartache.

In the sixth century, Romanos the Melodist penned a hymn—Mary's words as our song. “I am overwhelmed by love.” Romanos imagined Mary's soul burning with love, her soul cut open, pouring out her life toward Christ—to feed him, to hold him, to care for his life. This love pulses through her, as she lives by mercy, overwhelmed by love. “I die, you know, of your wounds,” Mary says to Jesus in a 14th-century poem. The poem has her bearing the wounds of Christ's suffering because love has bound them together, love as a needle sewing her soul to his, piercing her, rendering the two of them inseparable. That's why, at the end of the Gospel story, Mary stands by Jesus' side at Golgotha, her life in the shadow of his cross, a fulfillment of Simeon's prophecy. The metal that plunges into his

side is the same that slices through her soul. At the crucifixion, love looks like solidarity: Mary refusing to be absent from Jesus, bearing witness to his life even in his death.

“The best translation of what the early Christians called agape

Communion is our way of reaching into an absence as we conjure a presence.

is solidarity,” writes Dorothee Soelle in *The Mystery of Death*. Christ's birth is like his death, with Mary near him, holding him in her love, the one woven into the other with the intimacies of solidarity. At Christmas she holds him in her arms, and at the crucifixion she holds him in her gaze, her soul reaching out to his.

In a third-century sermon, Origen said we are like Mary, the love of the Holy Spirit overshadowing us as we bear witness to Christ—our bodies like hers as we birth the gospel into the world and as we stand in the shadow of his crucifixion. To bear witness is what “martyr” means in Greek—someone who witnesses to the gospel, like Mary, like us, as we gather at the Lord's Table, holding his body in our hands, to “proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.” Like Mary, our souls have been pierced, our love spilling us toward Christ. Communion is our way of reaching into an absence as we conjure a presence.

“We are at the mercy of others,” Gillian Rose confesses in *Love's*

Work: A Reckoning with Life, “and we have others in our mercy.”

There's a dependency in love, as we learn how to rest into mercy—like the comfort Mary offers the Christ child, offering him her life, a solidarity that endures for a lifetime, love without end, even as the cross separates them. The mercy she offers at his birth lasts until his death. And beyond his death because with his last breaths Jesus extends their love through an offer of adoption, an invitation for his beloved friend and his mother to live at the mercy of each other. “When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, here is your son.’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother’” (John 19:26-27). Jesus gives them to one another.

This story is about us. All of it is about you. We are like Mary, reaching out our hands to hold the newborn Jesus, gazing at the cross, longing to embrace him again and discovering that in Christ's absence God has given us each other. And you are the beloved disciple, held in Christ's mercy—each life bearing witness to Mary, the one who looks upon you, saying, “I am overwhelmed by love,” the one who gazes upon you, saying, “I die, you know, by your wounds.”



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

Obituaries

Bender, Barbara Stutzman, 93, Kalona, Iowa, died Aug. 28. Spouse: Lloyd Bender (deceased). Parents: Ervin and Lydia Bontrager Stutzman. Children: Derald Bender, Dwight Bender, Delwyn "Bud" Bender, Darlene Gingerich; foster son Mike Ferguson; seven grandchildren; three foster grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 1 at Kalona Mennonite Church.

Bitting, Isabel Amelia Eigsti, 76, Tiskilwa, Ill., died Sept. 2. Spouse: Robert D. Bitting. Parents: Howard and Kathryn Stutzman Eigsti. Children: R. David Bitting, Daniel W. Bitting, Kelley Millemon; five grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 7 at Willow Springs Mennonite Church, Tiskilwa.

Brubacher, Ross Denton, 57, Elmira, Ontario, died Oct. 8. Parents: Curtis and Alice Snider Brubacher. Funeral: Dreisinger Funeral Home, Elmira.

Coblentz, Donella M., 88, Canton, Ohio, died Aug. 26, of Alzheimer's disease. Spouse: Jonas J. Coblentz. Parents: Lester and Sara Zook. Children: Rosella Hernley, Judy Vadasz, Gloria Bontrager Randy Coblentz; eight grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Celebration of life: Sept. 2 at Evermore Community Church, Hartville, Ohio.

Dagostino, Vito Joseph, 87, Harrisonburg, Va., died Sept. 30. Spouse: Carmen Rolon Dagostino (deceased). Parents: Fortunato and Agatha Dagostino. Children: Rick Aponte, Lillian Nieves, Nancy Aponte, Cynthia Fracchiolla; seven grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral service will be at a later date at Scalia Funeral Home, Staten Island, N.Y.

Frey, Valetta J. Nofziger, 88, Archbold, Ohio, died Oct. 2, of cancer. Spouse:

Willard Frey (deceased). Spouse: Edwin Beck (deceased). Parents: Harley and Fannie Aeschliman Nofziger. Children: J. Mark Beck, Jane Waidelich, Samuel Beck, Sandra Beck, Jerry Beck; step-children: Sue Ann Overholt, Mary Jo Wilson, Peggy Arndt, Lee Frey; nine grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 6 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

Gunden, Marjorie N., Nafziger, 91, Naples, Fla., died Sept. 26. Spouse: Elton A. Gunden (deceased). Parents: C. Ralph and Katherine Eichelberger Nafziger. Children: Rebecca Smith, Barbara Thomas, Carol Gunden, Steven Gunden; six grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 30 at Yoder-Culp Funeral Home, Goshen, Ind.

Harmon, David Edward Sr., 83, Waynesboro, Va., died Aug. 14. Spouse: Bonnie Glass Harmon (deceased). Parents: Lewis E. and Virginia Frazier Harmon. Children: David Harmon, Jr., Robin Elliot, Lindsie Hall; stepsons: Wayne Wilberger, Michael Wilberger; four grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 18 at Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro.

Hochstetler, Orlin, 86, rural Williamsburg, Iowa, died Sept. 15. Spouse: Lores Brennehan Hochstetler. Parents: Earl and Mary Krabill Hochstetler. Children: Kim Hochstetler, Kathy Lippold, Kirk Hochstetler; 10 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 22 at First Mennonite Church, Iowa City, Iowa.

Hostetler, Pamela K. Willems, 59, Hesston, Kan., died Sept. 30. Spouse: Donnie Hostetler. Parents: Leo and Edna Dirks Willems. Children: Charissa Robertson, Ryan Hostetler; two grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 5 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Martin, Joyce Martin, 56, Elmira, Ontario, died Sept. 20. Spouse: Murray Martin. Parents: Mervin and Lena Martin. Children: Travis Martin, Corey Martin; one grandchild. Funeral: Sept.

25 at Floradale Mennonite Church, Floradale, Ontario.

Miller, Donald Glen, 78, Goshen, Ind., died Sept. 13, of Cutaneous T-Cell Lymphoma. Spouse: Nancy Reedy Miller. Parents: John and Lucy Miller. Children: Karen Miller Hassinger, Elaine Miller, Doug Miller; five grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 17 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Miller, John Henry, 94, Stuarts Draft, Va., died Sept. 18. Spouse: Anna E. Witmer Miller. Parents: Joseph C. and Barbara Kreider Miller. Children: David Miller, John Miller, Daniel Miller, Rhoda Miller, Martha Swartzentruber, Paul Miller, Timothy Miller, Mark Miller; 14 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 23 at Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va.

Miller, Richard L., 91, Engadine, Mich., died Aug. 14. Spouse: Lois A. Troyer Miller (deceased). Parents: Irwin J. and Mildred Yoder Miller. Children: Alan Miller, Roderick Miller, Wendell Miller, Christine Yoder, Jonathan Miller, Rachel Nolt, Leighton Miller, David Miller; 17 grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 19 at Wildwood Mennonite Church, Engadine.

Moyer, Gloria Jean Rush, 64, Telford, Pa., died Sept. 16. Spouse: Harlan Brent Moyer. Parents: Paul W. and Elizabeth Detweiler Rush. Children: Ryan Moyer, Andrea Bessler, Jeffrey Moyer; five grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 23 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville, Pa.

Myers, Myrtle Molly Miller, 99, Manson, Iowa, died Sept. 17. Spouse: Willis D. Myers (deceased). Parents: Dan H. and Lena Egli Miller. Children: Carolyn Raber, Dorie Hochstedler; 15 grandchildren; 27 great-grandchildren; three great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 22 at the Greencroft Meetinghouse, Goshen, Ind.

Nelson, Dawn Ruth, 65, Souderton, Pa., died Aug. 21. Spouse: Paul J.

Nelson. Parents: John and Roma Jacobs Ruth. Children: Sarah Nelson, Pete Nelson, Ben Nelson; Funeral: Aug. 26 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville, Pa.

Pollman, Ruth Kleinsasser, 87, Freeman, S.D., died Sept. 30. Parents: John P. and Katherine Tieszen Kleinsasser. Funeral: Oct. 5 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Schrock, Clayton W., 96, Leo, Ind., died Sept. 30. Spouse: Marjorie Mae Beck Schrock (deceased). Parents: Reuben and Susan Yoder Schrock. Children: Rick S. Schrock, Sharon J. Meyers, Shirley J. Johnson; nine grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren; nine great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 6 at North Leo Mennonite Church, Leo.

Shantz, Mervin B., 91, St. Jacobs, Ontario, died Sept. 26. Spouse: Grace Stevanus Shantz. Parents: Ivan B. and Irene B. Bauman Shantz. Children: Murray Shantz, Larry Shantz, Connie Boshart, Susan Cabral, Wendy Bowman, Robert Shantz, Karen DiSanto, Brenda Wade, Jeffrey Shantz; 20 grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 30 at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church.

Stuckey, Max Eugene, 73, Archbold, Ohio, died Sept. 8. Spouse: Sharon Stuckey. Parents: Denver and Frances Stuckey. Child: Dr. Jordan Stuckey; six grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 15 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Toole, Shirley Ann Amstutz, 82, Goshen, Ind., died Oct. 19, of complications of multiple myeloma. Spouse: Edwin Toole. Parents: Benjamin and Irene Sommer Amstutz. Children: Kendell Toole, Harley Toole; five grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 23 at Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Weber, Carol Jean Roupp, 83, Media, Pa., died Oct. 31. Spouse: Richard Rand Weber. Parents: Paul Ervin and Gertrude Troyer Roupp. Children: Mark Allen Weber, Christine Elizabeth Weber, Rebecca Joyce Weber; two grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 4 at Minsall Shropshire-Bleyler, Media. Memorial service: Nov. 6 at Granite Farms Estates, Media.

Yoder, David W., 97, Elkhart, Ind., died Oct. 24. Spouse: Florence Stauffer Yoder (deceased). Parents: Harvey N. and Eliza Newcomer Yoder. Children: Rosemary Detwiler, Eileen Miller, Marilyn Yoder, Judy Yoder; six grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 27 at Olive Mennonite Church, Elkhart.

Yoder, Harvey Dale, 80, Kalona, Iowa, died Oct. 5. Spouse: Ruby Ann Ropp Yoder (deceased). Parents: Noah M. and Magdalena Hochstedler Yoder. Funeral: Oct. 8 at Kalona Mennonite Church.

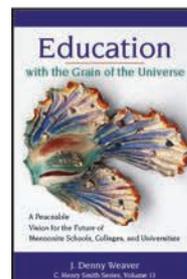


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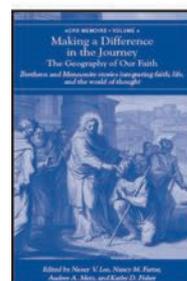
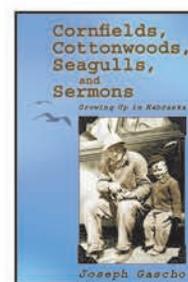
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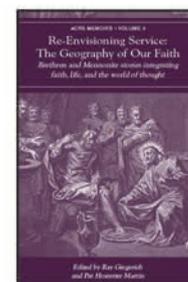
Education with the Grain of the Universe, ed. J. Denny Weaver, links Anabaptist-Mennonite scholars and the church “in advancing a justice-oriented world.” —*Regina Shands Stoltzfus*

In Cornfields, Cottonwoods, Seagulls, and Sermons, poet “Joseph Gascho renders the numinous earthiness of the Nebraska plains and the people who live there” —*Kimberly R. Myers*



The stories in ACRS Memoirs vol. 4, *Making a Difference in the Journey*, ed. Nancy V. Lee, are “wisdom literature, offerings by sages, creative thinkers, professionals in the trenches.” —*Lee Snyder*

Re-Envisioning Service, ACRS Memoirs 3, ed. Ray Gingerich and Pat H. Martin, shows how “humble servants came to understand and demonstrate that service, for followers of Christ, is not simple.” —*Nancy Heisey*



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CLASSIFIEDS

Seeking a **part-time bivocational pastor** for a small congregation in a northern lower Michigan resort community. Contact: Heidi Burkhart, heidi.burkhart@hotmail.com; church phone 231-529-6720. (Please leave a message, we will get back with you.)

Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society seeks an **executive director** to lead a vibrant organization with programming at three sites on two campuses. Information about the position is available at <https://www.lmhs.org/about/employment/>. Applicants should provide a letter of intent that includes their vision for LMHS, a résumé and three references. Submit materials and inquiries at search@lmhs.org. Applications will be considered until the position is filled.

University Mennonite Church (State College, Pa.) is seeking a **full-time pastor** who will primarily be charged with coordinating weekly worship and providing spiritual care for the congregation. The successful candidate shall have a solid biblical and theological education, be a gifted communicator and have a clear calling to serve God and to share the gospel. For more details visit www.universitymennonite.org/pastoral-search.

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

Aaron A. Lehman's book **Memories and Stories** is the Aaron and Winnie Lehman story. Starting in New York and Indiana, the story

continues through voluntary service in Sandy Lake, Alberta, an isolated community in northern Alberta. We now live in Slave Lake, Alberta. This is a memoir with many humorous anecdotes. Check out Aaron's seven other books. aaronwl@telus.net; aaronlehman.wordpress.com.

North Baltimore Mennonite Church seeks a **part-time associate pastor** committed to Anabaptist values, with a readiness to nurture children, youth and families in their spiritual development. NBMC is a growing, vibrant urban fellowship. All candidates, regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation, are encouraged to apply. To express interest, contact Pastor Dave Greiser at dgreiser55@yahoo.com.

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary is hiring a **full-time professor of biblical studies** to start July 1, 2018. Preferred qualifications: Ph.D. or equivalent, expertise in Old Testament or New Testament studies and competence to teach in the other testament, intercultural competency and the ability to inspire students in face-to-face and online learning environments. See a full job description at www.amb.edu/jobs.

Zion Mennonite Church, Souderton, Pa. (Eastern District Conference), seeking **full-time associate pastor for youth, young adults and family life ministry**. Other roles in the three-person ministry team includes a full-time lead pastor and part-time congregational care associate pastor. Healthy church in Southeastern Pennsylvania with average attendance of 206. Zion meets or exceeds MC USA compensation guidelines. For

further information please contact search committee chair James Gunden at gunden5@verizon.net or 215-760-7356.

Salem Mennonite Church, Salem Ore., seeks **full-time solo pastor**. Find full details and job description at <http://www.salem-mennonitechurch.org>.

Encounter Cuba is an up close and personal people-to-people experience sponsored by the **MEDA Sarasota Chapter**. Explore this fascinating country off-limits to most Americans for more than 50 years. Led by expert Cuban guides, you'll experience the sights and sounds of Cuba and see Cuban life through the eyes of artists, chefs, entrepreneurs, students, medical practitioners, farmers, senior citizens and more on this unique and affordable adventure. Dates are March 17-24, and Nov. 10-17, 2018. Scholarships available for full-time students and recent graduates. For further information contact JB Miller at MEDA.Sarasota.Cuba@gmail.com or 574-849-2751.

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., is hiring a **full-time vice president and academic dean** to start July 1, 2018. Qualifications: Ph.D. or equivalent; commitment to Anabaptist Christian faith and practice; ability to inspire faculty, students and constituents; knowledge of administrative, scholarly and pedagogical best practices in graduate theological education; and post-secondary teaching, supervisory and administrative experience. www.amb.edu/jobs

STORIES FROM THE GLOBAL MENNONITE CHURCH

Trumpism in Latin American churches

U.S. MEDDLING in South American political elections is not a new thing. In my country, Paraguay, the rise of the Stroessner military regime in 1954, as well as its decline in 1989, was aided by the local U.S. embassy.

What is new in most South American countries and their evangelical churches, including many Mennonite congregations, is that the Christian views and beliefs allegedly held by the inhabitant of the White House get enormous consideration and impact. This is mainly due to social media, which make ideas global in a way we have not seen before.

Church people followed the presidential race between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump as never before, even with fanaticism. Many Baptist churches identified with the two-kingdom theory of Trump's spiritual adviser, the Dallas Baptist pastor Robert Jeffress. Jeffress insists they don't want to have a Sunday school teacher as president in the White House, that the Sermon on the Mount is not useful at all for politics, that God has given Donald Trump divine authority to bomb North Korea and that the church now needs a president who is tough with ISIS and the danger of Islam.

Church people more on the Charismatic side are excited with the prophetic ministry of Paula White, another spiritual adviser to the White House. They love to quote Old Testament passages where God transforms secular kings like Cyrus and

Nebuchadnezzar into his chosen instruments. And video clips of President Trump promising pastors more political power from the pulpit and asking for more Bible teaching in public schools circulate on Facebook profiles.

All of Latin America, with its Catholic Conquista background, is still strongly marked by the idea of a state-sponsored religion.

When it comes to Christian ethics and worldviews, the White House has a stronger impact on churches in the South than ever.

Contrary to North America, that's the way it was in the last 500 years. And even those who abandoned Catholicism and the paradigm of state religion are drawn to the dynamics of state-enforced Christianity and ethics.

This impacts the Mennonite-Anabaptist churches in Latin America. Some of them have had a tradition of being anti-establishment and are strong in defending Anabaptist distinctives. But many have looked for good relations with the rest of the Christian community in their countries, both Catholic and Protestant. That the Christianity and spirituality of Vice President Mike Pence are claimed by Catholics as well as Evangelicals provides an additional dynamic to the ecumenical panorama.

And although Mennonite churches as a social minority usually have had empathy toward other social minorities, the North American debate about marriage, family, gender and the civil rights of minority groups in matters of sexual identity is confusing and troublesome in the South. At least that is the case for traditional countries like Paraguay. The majority of churches are easily convinced that the time has come to defend the values of the past.

Much wisdom is needed. When it comes to Christian ethics and worldviews, the White House has a stronger impact on churches in the South than ever before. Most of it is incompatible with the Anabaptist vision. The effect is polarizing, rude, confrontational and fanatic. It doesn't help to strengthen the peace witness, the culture of dialogue and the tearing down of walls. It doesn't help build the church as a prophetic alternative society over against a world in darkness. It doesn't help people see Christ and his way of being in the world but not of the world.

Our Anabaptist heritage has always been strong in following Christ in everyday life and stressing the character and attitude of Jesus. But that does not seem to be a priority in "Christian politics" today.



Alfred Neufeld is an ordained minister in the Paraguay Mennonite Brethren Church and lives in Asunción.



FROM THE EDITOR

Fear of strangers

ADVENT IS A SEASON of longing for God to come among us and address our suffering. The coming of Jesus answers some of that longing but also invites us to attend to the suffering around us.

The Isaiah passages for Advent are filled with pleas: “O that you would tear open the heavens and come down” (64:1). “Comfort, O comfort my people” (40:1). “The Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the oppressed” (61:1). And God says, “For I the Lord love justice” (61:8).

This season is a good time to reflect on our own longings and listen to the longings of others.

Mathew Swora (page 14) helps us do that by reimagining Joseph and Mary fleeing to Egypt with their infant son to escape the murderous oppressor Herod.

In the Bible, only Matthew mentions this story (2:13-15). But its outline is repeated daily in our world today, as refugees flee oppression and seek safety in other lands.

As we think about that story, we might ask ourselves, Where would we be in that story? Which character would we identify with most closely?

Given my place in our world, I would be most like an Egyptian who doesn't know anything about Joseph, Mary and Jesus. The border authorities would be acting

How do we respond to this pervasive fear of strangers?

for my benefit without me having to say anything.

In her book *Undocumented: Risking Trust in a Fearful World* (forthcoming from Herald Press), Sarah Quezada notes that “lack of relationship is a breeding ground for fear. Fear and anxiety pervade the conversation about immigrants and refugees.”

Herod feared this infant so much that he sought his death.

Leaders today spread fear and seek to keep borders closed.

If we worship the Lord who loves justice, who seeks to bring comfort, how do we respond to this pervasive fear? How do we follow the biblical call to welcome strangers?

Quezada writes, “Relationships across cultural barriers are an antidote to fear.” Rather than placing people in categories that keep us from them, let us get to know them.

As I've learned to know people in poverty, for example, they are no longer statistics but individuals, parents who love their children, people who struggle valiantly each day to make ends meet.

Come down, O Lord, and bring your comfort and your justice.

Gordon Houser,
Editor of The Mennonite

TheMennonite

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